



WESTERN RECORDER

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When is buying a camel good stewardship?

VICTORIA, Texas (ABP)—
The newest purchase of North-
side Baptist Church in Victoria
comes with one hump, not two.

The church recently acquired
its own live camel for use in an-
nual Christmas pageants.

In the off-season, 7-year-old
Lucille will live on a ranch
owned by a church member. But
this month, she's been a star of
the church's pageant, which ran
twice daily for seven nights in
this Texas Gulf Coast town.

"When she makes her en-
trance in the pageant, the crowd
just lights up," said Mickey Ewing,
associate pastor for worship and
Lucille's up-line supervisor.

Between performances, Lu-
cille greets children on the church
yard.

Northside Baptist has pro-
duced its elaborate pageant for 18
years. For the last several years,
the church rented a camel for a
scene in which the magi come to
visit Jesus.

But this year, the rental price
for a camel "just skyrocketed,"
Ewing said. For the equivalent of
two years' rent, the church could
purchase its own camel.

"It's not something that when
I started in ministry I ever thought
would pass my lips, but buying a
camel was good stewardship,"
Ewing explained.

Besides the initial cost to ac-
quire Lucille, ongoing expenses
will be minimal, he predicted,
noting she eats grass and hay.

Ewing's not sure of all Lu-
cille's vital statistics, but on
height, he has a pretty good mea-
sure: "She's an inch shy of being
door height."

The pageant is held in the
church's sanctuary, where Lu-
cille stoops her head to enter and
then passes her hump under the
door frame with barely room to
spare.

About 12,000 people were
expected to attend this year's per-
formances at the church. About
500 church members work in the
pageant in some capacity, Ewing
reported. "We plug in people
who can swing a hammer but
who can't sing a lick, who can
sew or use a hot-glue gun."

And then, there's Lucille, who
has been gladly accepted for who
she is.

"The church's response has
been delightful," Ewing said.
"She's ours, and she has a per-
sonality. They've already grown
attached to her."

And camels carry a long life
expectancy as well, he added.

"A camel lives to be 40 to 50
years old," he said. "In all like-
lihood, Lucille's ministry will ex-
ceed my own."

Glimpses of giving



SPECIAL DELIVERY Operation Christmas Child, a ministry of Samaritan's Purse, delivers shoeboxes filled with gifts to children around the world. Last year in Honduras, volunteers delivered gifts by mule to a remote village devastated by Hurricane Mitch. The ministry collected more than 5 million shoeboxes last year. (Samaritan's Purse photo)

Bowling Green duo enjoys helping kids worldwide

By David Winfrey
News Director

BOWLING GREEN—Long be-
fore most of us even think of starting
our Christmas list, Betty Harper al-
ready is shopping for holiday bar-
gains.

But these gifts go to places like
Guatemala, South Africa and Roma-
nia, not under her tree.

"I like to get good things, but I like
to look for sales after holidays," said
Harper, a member of Forest Park Bap-
tist Church in Bowling
Green. "If you're careful,
you can do a shoebox for
\$10."

Harper should know.
She's had lots of practice.

For eight years she's
participated in Operation
Christmas Child, a ministry by Frank-
lin Graham's Samaritan's Purse to
provide toys, candy, school supplies
and hygiene products to less fortunate
children around the world.

Volunteers in America, Australia,
the United Kingdom, Canada, Germa-
ny and the Netherlands fill shoeboxes
with gifts, which then are sent to chil-
dren in more than 100 countries.

Last year, Operation Christmas
Child collected 5.4 million shoeboxes
filled with gifts, half of which came
from the United States. This year, or-
ganizers are emphasizing distribution
to children in countries with a high
rate of AIDS, particularly Uganda.

Forest Park Baptist first got in-
volved in 1994. This season, members
donated 177 shoeboxes.

But five years ago Harper and her



GIFT PREPARATION Jerry and Betty Harper (inset), members of Forest Park Baptist Church in Bowling Green, serve as volunteers for Operation Christmas Child. In addition to leading their church to become a regional collection point, the two volunteered recently in Atlanta at a processing center (above), inspecting thousands of shoeboxes filled with gifts and preparing them to be shipped overseas.

husband, Jerry, led the church to be a
regional collection point.

On Nov. 18-25, members collect-
ed 9,779 boxes from drop-
off sites from as far away as
Hopkinsville and Leitch-
field. "We've grown every
year. The first year we col-
lected 2,300 shoeboxes,"
Harper said. "Our goal this
year was 10,000, but we
didn't quite make it."

Forest Park Pastor Mark Baldauff
said the whole church takes part in the
weeklong project to collect boxes
from the region.

"There's just a good spirit around
the church during that week," said
Baldauff, who has been pastor there
for two years. "A lot of peo-
ple come together and do
their part."

During collection week,
church volunteers take in
boxes and prepare them for
shipping to one of the cen-
tral processing centers in
America.

Some church members who can't
do the physical labor help out by cook-
ing lunch or handling other errands,
□ See Kentucky couple ..., page 6



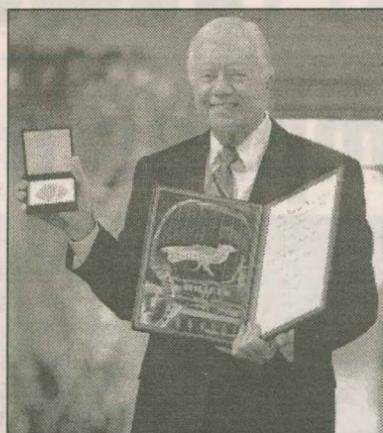
It's better to
GIVE

Dated Material — Deliver by Wednesday, December 18

BAPTISTS

Carter earns Nobel Peace Prize, warns all war is 'evil'

By Robert Marus
Associated Baptist Press



NOBEL PRIZE Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter displays his Nobel Peace Prize given for decades of work for peace, democracy and human rights from the Middle East to Haiti. (RNS/Reuters photo by Bjoern Sigurdson)

"Once we characterize our adversaries as beyond the scope of God's mercy and grace, their lives lose all value."

Former President Jimmy Carter

WASHINGTON (ABP)—Former President Jimmy Carter, the second U.S. Baptist to receive the Nobel Peace Prize, accepted the award Dec. 10 with a warning about U.S. foreign policy.

Carter received the honor in Oslo, Norway, from a five-member Norwegian committee that awards the prize. Committee members said the award was given in recognition of Carter's effort to broker the 1978 Camp David Accords, which ended hostilities between Israel and Egypt, as well as his work on issues of human rights, poverty and justice in the U.S. and abroad since leaving the presidency in 1981.

Another Baptist from Georgia—Martin Luther King Jr.—won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964 for his efforts to end legalized segregation in the South through non-violent means.

In his acceptance speech, Carter cited his faith to describe his principles of non-violence. "The unchanging principle of life predate modern times. I worship Jesus Christ, whom we Christians consider to be the Prince of Peace. As a Jew, He taught us to

cross religious boundaries, in service and in love. He repeatedly reached out and embraced Roman conquerors, other Gentiles and even the more despised Samaritans," Carter said.

In comments many observers viewed as warnings about the U.S. entering into a "pre-emptive" war against Iraq, Carter said all war is

"evil," even when it is necessary. "In order for us human beings to commit ourselves, we find it necessary to dehumanize our opponents, which is in itself a violation of the beliefs of all religions," Carter said. "Once we characterize our adversaries as beyond the scope of God's mercy and grace, their lives lose all value."

Several Baptist leaders around the world sent congratulations for Carter to the Baptist World Alliance, a Virginia-based umbrella group for international Baptists. "All of them mentioned his strong Christian witness," reported BWA General Secretary Denton Lotz, "and how it contributed to their witness overseas in a minority setting where Baptists are often unknown or suffering persecution."

Back home, however, Carter's award received little attention from current Southern Baptist Convention leaders.

Carter, a member of Maranatha Baptist Church in his hometown of Plains, Ga., was a longtime Southern Baptist but now identifies primarily with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

James Lauder, interim director of

the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America, a peace-advocacy organization that unites various Baptist groups, described Carter as "clearly the most visible Baptist involved in global peacemaking."

"His comment in his speech that war is always evil is something that ... everyone needs to be reminded of at this time that our country is thinking of going to war again," Lauder continued. "I also hope that it will be an opportunity in encouraging more Baptists to become involved in reducing the amount of conflict in our world and working for peace and justice."

William Neal, editor of the Georgia Baptist Christian Index, noted that Carter "is greatly deserving of this honor in light of his many efforts over a long period of time to promote peace throughout the world. It is refreshing to see the secular media talk about how Christianity has greatly influenced Carter's position as a peacemaker."

Carter said he will donate the \$1 million award that accompanies the Nobel Peace Prize to the Carter Center, an Atlanta-based charity he founded that works to alleviate poverty and advance human rights and democracy around the world.

Arizona convention settles with foundation trust, investors

By Elizabeth Young
Arizona Baptist Portraits

PHOENIX (BP)—The Arizona Southern Baptist Convention has relinquished its claim to more than \$1.2 million invested in the Baptist Foundation of Arizona as part of a settlement agreement with the Baptist Foundation of Arizona Liquidating Trust and investors in a class-action suit.

The settlement also includes payment of \$750,000 by the Arizona convention's insurance carrier.

In return, the BFA Liquidating Trust and those involved in the class action will release all claims they might have against the state conven-

tion related to the financial collapse of the foundation. Terms of the settlement were approved by the Convention Council of the Arizona Southern Baptist Convention.

"We could have fought this in court—and our attorney believes we have a strong case," said Steve Bass, executive director of the Arizona Southern Baptist Convention.

"As investors ourselves, we were as much a victim as anyone else. We trusted the professionals and the audit firm that issued clean opinions and the foundation president who made annual reports to our convention. None of these indicated a problem."

However, the decision to settle was made so that investors could get as

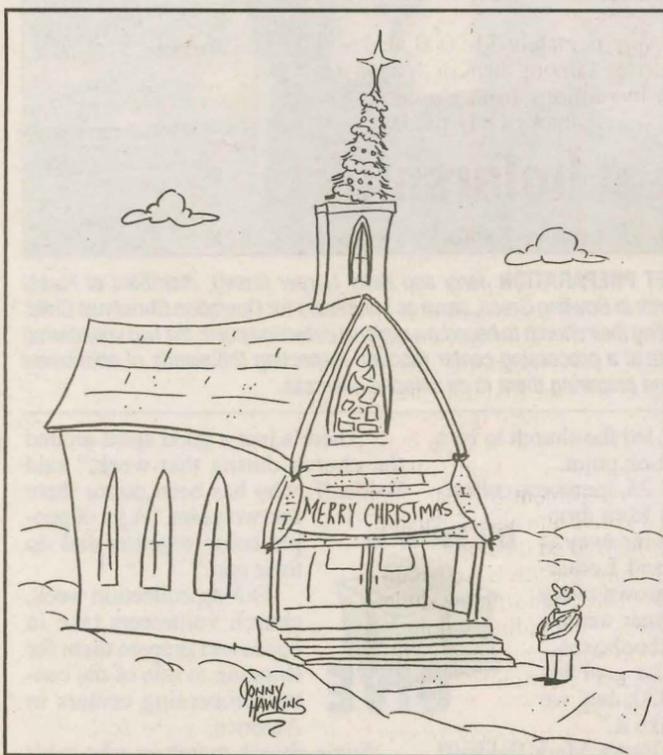
much money back as possible, Bass said. "Ultimately," he said, "the overriding desire of the convention was to have the insurance money used to benefit investors rather than be used to pay for legal costs."

While wanting to benefit investors, the ASBC Convention Council members expressed concern that people would perceive the settlement as an admission of guilt by the state convention. As a result, part of the settlement agreement does not admit any responsibility for the foundation's collapse or for the failure to properly disclose information to investors about the foundation's poor financial condition.

Much of the \$1.2 million relin-

quished by the state convention was given through the years by Arizona Southern Baptists to the Willis J. Ray State Mission Offering. The funds were designated to help new churches pay back loans on land and buildings, under the theory that new churches with their own property would be able to grow more quickly.

"The (ASBC) decision to give up the bankruptcy claims was well-measured," Bass said. "The funds represented by those claims will impact how we start new churches in the future. It will take us a while to replace them so that we can get back to helping new works under the 'accelerated' model. However, we will replace the money and ask God for more."



BAPTIST DIGEST

■ **Hendricks dies at age 73.** Bill Hendricks, a professor of theology at three Southern Baptist seminaries, died Dec. 8 at age 73. Hendricks taught at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas (1957-1978); Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley, Calif. (1978-1984); and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville (1984-1995). "He was able to take great truths and put them in the language of laypeople," said James Leo Garrett, professor of theology emeritus at Southwestern Seminary. After retiring from Southern, Hendricks led the emerging Baptist studies program at Brite Divinity School of Texas Christian University in Fort Worth, retiring again in 1998. He also taught in seminaries in Taiwan, Switzerland, Yugoslavia, Malaysia and Singapore.

■ **Gamble to head school group.** Ed Gamble has been named the first full-time executive director of the Southern Baptist Association of the Southern Schools Association of the Southern Baptist Association. He succeeds John Chandler who is retiring after 10 years as part-time director. Gamble has been headmaster of The First Academy, a ministry of First Baptist Church of Orlando, Fla., since 1991. He also served two terms as SBACS president. The association currently includes 585 Christian schools operated by Southern Baptist churches.

■ **Seminary presidents laud Vines.** Former Southern Baptist Convention President Jerry Vines was honored recently by the presidents of the six SBC seminaries. Vines, pastor of First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Fla., received the first-ever "Certificate of Honor"

presented by the Council of Seminary Presidents. The certificate, presented by Southern Baptist Theological Seminary President Al Mohler, cited Vines' "exemplar as a Christian pastor, evangelist, preacher, friend to pastors and denominational leader."

■ **Warren on 'Larry King Live.'** Rick Warren, pastor of Saddleback Valley Community Church in Lake Forest, Calif., will appear on CNN's "Larry King Live" show Dec. 25. Warren, author of "The Purpose Driven Church" and "The Purpose Driven Life," will be part of a show focusing on Ryan Corbin's ongoing recovery from a brain injury after an accident last year left him in a coma for four months. Corbin is the 25-year-old grandson of entertainer Pat Boone. Corbin's parents are members of Saddleback.

KBC seeks to help pastors in transition, college freshmen

By Trennis Henderson
Editor

LOUISVILLE—Funds to assist ministers in transition, freshmen students attending Kentucky Baptist colleges and statewide ministry projects were among issues addressed during last week's Kentucky Baptist Convention Mission Board meeting.

Board members approved an effort to raise \$800,000 to endow a program to assist ministers in need.

KBC Executive Director Bill Mackey said the effort was proposed by an anonymous Kentucky Baptist donor who will donate an additional \$200,000 to the fund if the KBC is able to reach its \$800,000 goal.

The KBC currently provides limited financial assistance to ministers who experience involuntary termination. The program, which typically assists 30 to 50 ministers per year, is administered by the minister/church relations office of the KBC's leadership development team.

A successful fund-raising effort would allow the KBC to expand the level of financial assistance it gives to ministers and their families as well as the number of families served, according to Guy Futral, leader of the KBC's leadership development team.

With details of the plan still to be finalized, board members approved an amendment instructing KBC leaders to report back to the board in May.

In the meantime, the action approved by the full board authorizes Mackey "to appoint a steering committee of interested pastors and laymen to assist the leadership development team of the Mission Board in developing and implementing a fund-raising effort and program(s) to assist ministers in need." The action also gave the group the authority "to approach individuals, in cooperation with pastors, in order to raise \$800,000 in matching funds."

Raising the full \$800,000 will be a challenge, Mackey said. "We're going into it realistically. The whole idea is to supplement what we're doing."

Charles Barnes, chairman of the board's administrative committee, said KBC leaders anticipate the donor will allow 18 months to two years for the convention to raise the matching funds.

Cumberland student sues state for barring religion scholarships

By Frank Lockwood
Lexington Herald-Leader

LEXINGTON—A Cumberland College junior is asking a federal judge to throw out a state law that prevents religion students from receiving Kentucky Educational Excellence Scholarships.

Michael Woods Nash, 21, argues in the lawsuit that the ban on scholarships for students of divinity, theology and religious education is discriminatory and unconstitutional. The philosophy and religion major filed suit last week against Gov. Paul Patton and leaders of the Kentucky Higher Education Assistance Authority in U.S. District Court in Lexington.

Nash, a member of Coral Hill Baptist Church in Glasgow, is a 4.0 stu-

Study examines what Kentucky Baptists are doing well

LOUISVILLE—A preliminary report on the "best principles and best practices" of selected Kentucky Baptist churches was highlighted during the Kentucky Baptist Convention Mission Board's Dec. 9-10 meeting.

Vernon Cole, leader of the KBC church growth team, presented the study that evaluated the ministries of growing and declining churches across the state.

In other action, board members approved a revised cooperative agreement between the KBC and the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board and heard a progress report from the KBC Mission Study Committee.

The "Best Principles and Best Practices" study included research by KBC staff members among nearly 40 Kentucky Baptist churches. Research included statistical data for the past decade, interviews with church leaders and lay members and a Natural Church Development survey that helps measure a church's numerical and spiritual growth.

The group's 19-page report noted that "one key element that was reflected was: A pastor with a positive, healthy self-image and a sense of humor will blend more quickly with a congregation. Such people skills

reflect his trust and love of the people."

Among "best principles" cited by participating churches are:

- "Ministry is the responsibility and opportunity of each believer."

- The need for "unity within the body and the importance of Kingdom focus."

- An emphasis on "corporate and individual prayer."

Cole said the study indicates that healthy churches typically have a good trust relationship between staff members and lay leaders and that they "hold tradition and transition in a good balance."

Cole said he anticipates completing the study next spring after conducting follow-up retreats with several of the participating churches.

Board members approved a revised cooperative agreement with NAMB without discussion or opposition. The action updates an agreement in place since 1990 with the former SBC Home Mission Board.

Steve Hussung, chairman of the missions growth committee, said current and previous agreements "have been hammered out through years and years of cooperation."

Noting that the agreement "guards the autonomy of each entity," he said the only substantive difference is the name change

from HMB to NAMB.

The agreement maintains previous wording that "selection of jointly supported personnel shall conform with procedures and requirements of both entities." While those requirements are not spelled out in the document, one current NAMB requirement is that new missionaries conform to the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message.

That requirement differs from action taken last year by KBC messengers who voted to "adopt the Bible as the basis of our faith and practice" and to "acknowledge the value" of several historic faith statements, including both the 1963 and 2000 versions of the Baptist Faith and Message.

Scott Kilgore, chairman of the board's Mission Study Committee, said that group has been meeting monthly since August. The committee is responsible for recommending "any changes that are needed in order for the ministries of the KBC to be more effective in the 21st century."

Kilgore said the committee has met with KBC team leaders, agency heads and outside consultants as well as receiving input from directors of missions, pastors and lay leaders. The committee is scheduled to present its final report to board members next May.

Explaining that the fund-raising will be directed toward individuals, not churches, Barnes said the effort will be conducted "on a very selective, low-key basis" rather than a high-profile public campaign.

Board members also approved revised guidelines for the KBC's college scholarship fund. The fund benefits freshmen from KBC churches attending Campbellsville University, Cumberland College or Georgetown College.

The scholarship fund previously offered freshmen up to \$400 per semester. The funds included \$100 each from the student's home church and college and a matching amount of \$200 from the KBC.

The new guidelines, which eliminate matching fund requirements, will provide \$1,000 from the KBC for a student's freshmen year.

Ron Murphy, chairman of the board's agencies and institutions committee, said the available scholarship funds had not been fully used in recent years. He said the purpose of simplifying the application process and increasing the scholarship amount is to provide an added incentive "to try to get more Kentucky Baptist students attending one of our liberal arts schools."

In other action, board members approved the allocation of more than \$500,000 in year-end funds. Though Cooperative Program gifts for the past fiscal year were 1.4 percent below budget, available year-end funds included more than \$31,000 from Restricted Kentucky Only funds, more than \$380,000 from unspent budget funds and interest and \$139,300 from excess post-retirement benefit funds.

Major allocations include:

- \$150,000 for Baptist Student Union facility repairs and capital improvements.

- \$100,000 for new work and church starts.

- \$50,000 for computer equipment and software development.

- \$39,300 for the KBC's annual Shepherding the Shepherd conference.

- \$36,000 for use by the board's Mission Study Committee and for state convention promotions.

- \$30,000 to Kentucky Baptist Assemblies to help fund the planned Calvin Fields building at Cedarmore's Camp RABRO.

- \$28,000 for Super Saturday training events.

Approximately \$14,000 also will be divided among the KBC's agencies and institutions from available Restricted Kentucky Only funds.

dent at Cumberland College, which is affiliated with the Kentucky Baptist Convention. Until now, he has received a KEES scholarship every semester: a total of \$3,650 so far. If he keeps his grades up, he would qualify for another \$2,175 in KEES scholarship money before he graduates.

Such lottery-funded scholarships are granted to thousands of Kentuckians based on high school grades and college-entrance exams.

But Nash was informed by Cumberland College officials in October that he would forfeit his KEES scholarship after he signed up to pursue a religion-related degree.

Lawyers for the American Center for Law & Justice, based in Virginia Beach, Va., are representing Nash, who declined to comment.

Nash's lawsuit says the restrictions on scholarships for religious studies "inhibit religion and religious speech" and "discriminate against the free expression of religious ideas, values, thoughts, viewpoints and opinion."

The state gives these scholarships to non-sectarian "religious studies" at public universities, but won't cover religious education programs offered by church-affiliated schools, Nash alleges.

No secular areas of study are prohibited.

Rick Casey, general counsel for the state agency that oversees the scholarship program, said he hadn't received a copy of the lawsuit yet and couldn't comment specifically.

But he said the restriction on scholarships for religion students was put

in place because Kentucky's constitution requires that "no portion of any fund or tax ... levied for educational purposes, shall be appropriated to, or used by, or in aid of, any church, sectarian or denominational school."

This isn't the first time this type of dispute has resulted in a lawsuit.

In Washington state, a student at an Assemblies of God college sued after government officials there refused to give him his scholarship money if he studied theology.

In July, the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals sided with the student, ruling that withholding scholarships to religion students is unconstitutional because it "discriminates against religious ideas."

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

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Stop assault on IMB

I grow increasingly frustrated and weary at the Western Recorder's continued publication of letters and articles that negatively attack the Southern Baptist International Mission Board in regard to its recent decision to make our missionary accounts to the Baptist Faith and Message 2000.

It seems that almost every week the Recorder goes out of its way to print editorials or letters that attack the position of the Southern Baptist Convention. It has gotten to the point that I will not even recommend the Recorder to members of my congregation.

Why is it that a paper which I pay for with my Cooperative Program dollars and a staff which is paid with CP money is so adamant in their continued assault on the IMB? The overwhelming majority of IMB missionaries have no problem with the current accountability. I for one support it wholeheartedly as a pastor who is accountable to explain to my people where their dollars go.

Furthermore, the Recorder is carrying more and more articles supportive of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and even advertising their "seminary" in Lexington. Why is this?

I want to see some support from the Recorder for the policies of the SBC and IMB which seeks to unite Kentucky Baptists. Stop the constant assault on the IMB.

After all, if the Recorder wants to support alternative conventions, then why not get funding from them? Until then, why is it so hard to understand that the Recorder is a Southern Baptist newspaper printed for the unity and edification of Southern Baptists in Kentucky? Maybe there should be some accountability for the editorial staff at the Western Recorder.

*Terry Leap
Mount Washington*

'Faulty' interpretation

Joseph Phelps' commentary in the Nov. 19 issue, titled, "War with Iraq: What would Jesus do?" basically supports a pacifistic viewpoint with a faulty method of interpretation.

When he says "in Jesus there is a 'new' testament—a clarifying word about the nature of God," does he intend to imply that certain Old Testament passages about the nature of God are misguided or wrong? What about New Testament passages that also speak of the wrath of God and the role of government in war (Jude 5-7; Romans 13:3-4)? Do these need "clarifying" too?

The Scriptures will not be broken. We do not have to pit the words of Jesus against the Old Testament or Paul. The same eternal Word who said "love your enemies" also accurately inspired the Old Testament and inspired Paul to write that the government "does not bear the sword for nothing." Clearly, both testaments condemn taking personal revenge but demand that civil authorities exercise retribution against injustice.

Theologian Loraine Boettner once said, "Man in his present condition possesses a fallen sinful nature... and that if unrestrained there is no limit to the injustices he will commit against his fellow men." The cross itself demonstrates that God is committed to justice, even at the cost of violence, so we must recognize that peace and love are only truly maintained when justice is stoutly upheld. Those who truly desire peace must be willing to defend life against those who would destroy it unjustly.

So yes, we must pray for Saddam Hussein, and we must strive for peace and use war only as a last resort. But if war becomes inevitable, then we must hear all the words of Jesus and

support the government's God-given right to "bear the sword."

*Chuck Fuller
Pellville*

Offer active support

I was almost one of those who experienced "a churchless faith" described in the Nov. 26 issue by Alan Jamieson, had I not found another branch of Christianity.

While I did receive a call from my Baptist pastor after I mailed him a note explaining where I was going, it was worth less than none at all. He called me when he did not have time to talk and had to rush off to a meeting. There was no effort to set up a time when we could talk. I wanted that because I wanted to test, yet again, my reasons for leaving. I left, without going through a disappearance period, from a moderate level of activity to not going there at all, having committed myself to the other church.

To help others understand my reasons, let me ask this: Does your church make room (not a program, but support the way you do for a family member who has unique hobbies or interests) for:

■ The professional woman who is single?

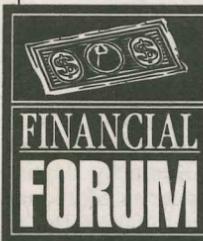
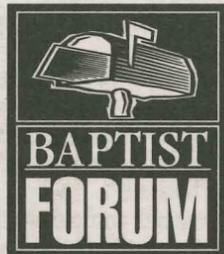
■ The artist, and those who appreciate fine art, music, etc.?

■ The long-term Christian who is not satisfied with the Bible studies more on the level of the new Christian—the preaching/teaching geared toward conversion and almost forgetting long-term growth?

■ The one who plays with ideas and wants guidance on not burning herself?

I write not to encourage others to follow the same path I did—only God should do that if it is right for them—but to try to help keep good people active and very much in love with God, Christ and His church.

*Anna Abell
O'Fallon, Ill.*



FAMILY

Positive financial signs help bolster economic outlook

By Jeremy White

With hints of recession, possible war and the third consecutive year of a declining stock market, economic doom and gloom come fairly easily. While I do not make economic or market forecasts, I do see some encouraging signs:

■ **Lower tax rates.** Recent tax legislation has lowered income tax rates across all income levels. Congress greatly reduced estate taxes by raising the individual exemption amount. Less to Caesar can mean more to God and more to families for saving and spending.

■ **Lower interest rates.** Throughout 2002, interest rates dropped. This helps businesses borrow at more reasonable rates to expand. The government pays out less in interest. Individuals can refinance at lower rates. (Of course, it hurts those living off the interest of their investments.)

■ **Welfare reform.** The recent trend of legislation is fewer handouts and more responsibility by the recipients.

■ **Low unemployment.** Even with the slowdown in the early 2000s, unemployment has remained between 4 and 6 percent. That is the lower range for the past 30 years. Even though some people might not have the ideal job, most willing people can find some type of work.

■ **American productivity increases.** Conventional wisdom said Americans were too inefficient and that Japan would overtake us economically. Japan has been in a recession for more than a decade, but the U.S. has remained strong. The Internet and use of computer technology has fueled significant productivity increases.

■ **Improved financial reporting.** The corporate and accounting scandals, though recently a problem, ultimately will help the markets. Corporate management, boards of directors and accountants are paying more attention to providing accurate, understandable financial information.

■ **Declines in the stock market.** Although this might not seem like a positive sign, I believe it is. The decline is effective medicine for speculative fever. Now people perhaps will have reasonable expectations going forward. Maybe they will be more careful with their investing.

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

PARTNERS IN THE MISSION

'Mission Board' of the KBC

One of the significant decisions made at the Kentucky Baptist Convention annual meeting last month in Williamsburg was the approval of a name change for the Executive Board of the Kentucky Baptist Convention. The board will now be known as the Mission Board of the Kentucky Baptist Convention. It was exciting to see the messengers strongly adopt this new name that I believe better expresses the work of the board and the convention staff.

The name change had been discussed and prayed over for quite some time. It was first brought to the convention's attention in the constitution and bylaws committee's report at the annual meeting in 2000. It was then given a first reading (as required of all constitutional changes) at the annual meeting in Murray in 2001 before receiving final approval this year.

Here are my thoughts about the benefits of the new name:

■ **The term "Mission Board" more**

closely represents the KBC emphasis on missions, evangelism, training, education and ministries. The term "mission" in the singular represents the Great Commission. Mission means all that Christ has called us to be and do. When you put together Mission Service Corps volunteers, church and community ministries, appointed missionaries, church planters, KBC staff, special missionaries and directors of missions who are jointly funded by the KBC, the result is a strong missionary force of almost 300 people. In addition there are

many volunteers who serve in disaster relief, Brotherhood ministries, partnership missions and other ministries.

■ **The word "mission" best relates to needs and opportunities in Kentucky as a mission field.** Kentucky definitely is a mission field. More than 6,000 international students have student visas to study at Kentucky colleges and universities. Hispanics now number 200,000 in Kentucky and are clustering in large numbers in the cit-



Bill Mackey

ies. In addition, Eastern Kentucky has many counties that are less penetrated with the gospel than Kenya and Tanzania. Even when very broad definitions are used to describe religious identity, 41 percent of the people in Kentucky are not claimed as adherents of any faith group.

■ **The term "mission" will communicate more effectively with a post-modern generation.** The term "executive" comes across as institutional and bureaucratic to postmodern ears. "Mission" expresses purpose.

■ **The new name describes more clearly who Kentucky Baptists are as a missionary people.** As I travel across the state, it is clear to me that Kentucky Baptists demonstrate their love for missions by getting involved. Partnership missions, Kentucky Changers and special projects are just a few examples.

■ **The term "mission" is more biblical.** According to Acts 1:8, being witnesses to Jesus must be carried out continuously and simultaneously "... in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth."

Bill Mackey is executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention

Will you overeat this season? Make healthy holiday choices

Q: It's always difficult for me to face the holiday season because of the abundance of food everywhere. I believe I must have a food addiction. How can I make it through the holidays?

Food abuse is a sign of imbalance between the inside and the outside of a person. Fixing it is largely an inside job.

Start with the premise of Robert McGee's book, "Search for Significance": You are deeply loved by Christ; there is nothing you can do to make Him love you more than He does right now. This is truth regardless of what the scale says or what you ate yesterday.

Begin each day with a prayer asking for help. You're not in this by yourself.

Practice honesty with yourself and God. You connect with God by truth, and you connect with truth when you refuse to lie to yourself. Be honest about your situation and about what you eat.

One of Christianity's most disciplined leaders, John Wesley, found that a vegetarian diet was part of the answer for him. You might not choose to completely forgo the turkey, but at least consider what moderation in meat consumption can do for your budget as well as for your cardiovascular system.

Also, avoid over-processed junk foods. As you and your body work together to make this season successful, try limiting yourself to foods that have been lovingly prepared.

Motivational speaker Zig Ziglar asks the question, "If you had a million-dollar racehorse, would you feed it doughnuts, coffee and cigarettes?" Of course not. Jesus would remind us that we are infinitely more valuable than million-dollar horses. Therefore, we should be much more selective about what we put into our bodies, the temple of the Holy Spirit. Look at every eating opportunity as a time to glorify God in your body and in your spirit.—James Stillwell

Q: How can I help my children gain a healthy, positive view of older adults?

In today's society, children often have little opportunity to engage in meaningful interactions with older adults.

There is a trend away from extended families to nuclear families. Many young couples move away from their hometowns and relocate to places they can find employment and affordable housing, often minimizing opportunities for children to interact with grandparents.

Try using children's literature to help bridge the gap, encouraging your children to select award-winning books at the school library or when purchasing books.

When reading a book that has a negative depiction of an older adult, pause to talk about that depiction. Compare and contrast it to older adults the child knows, highlighting the diversity in ability and activity that exists among older adults.

With improved health care and medical treatments, adults are experiencing longer life spans. As a result, the United States is becoming a society of older people.

With their overall better health, older adults are remaining active. Many older adults own and lead major companies, ride motorcycles and engage in strenuous physical activities. In addition, many older adults are avid Internet users.

Help your children see older adults as vital, healthy, contributing members of society. Through increased education and interaction, future generations can learn that growing old does not mean becoming worthless and waiting for death. Rather, growing old simply is a physical process for everyone that begins on the day they are born.—Jon Rainbow

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



Why report the news? Readers deserve it

A letter writer this week expresses concern about "the Western Recorder's continued publication of letters and articles that negatively attack the Southern Baptist International Mission Board in regard to its recent decision to make our missionaries accountable to the Baptist Faith and Message 2000."

Suggesting that the Recorder "goes out of its way to print editorials or letters that attack the position of the Southern Baptist Convention," the writer urges, "Stop the constant assault on the IMB."

Why does the Western Recorder publish articles, letters and editorials that some readers perceive as "negative attacks"? That is a legitimate question. Though we have addressed such issues before, now is as good a time as any to reiterate the Recorder's editorial philosophy.

For starters, we don't "go out of our way" to publish negative articles about the IMB or any other Baptist entity. We do report what we believe is newsworthy and beneficial to our readers. The vast majority of those articles are positive. A few, however, are open to negative interpretations depending on what the specific news is, who is being quoted or what view a reader brings to the article.

For example, in the past six weeks the Recorder has published 20 articles, letters and editorials related to the IMB. Most of those are extremely positive, including several articles highlighting the ministry impact of the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions, a mission partnership between the IMB and Baptists in Lebanon, a Kentucky Baptist couple appointed as missionaries to France and the growing number of churches involved in the IMB's Global Priority Network.

An article about the IMB's \$290 million budget goal for the coming year cites IMB officials' effort to achieve

a "God-sized challenge ... to meet the need created by the surge of new missionaries." An accompanying article highlights IMB President Jerry Rankin's response to "myths" about the IMB's work.

As for articles some people might consider negative toward the IMB, the Recorder published two news stories recently about a missionary couple who were fired by the IMB over issues related to the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message statement.

The articles, however, quoted both the missionaries and IMB officials. While the stories noted the missionaries believe their termination resulted from trumped-up charges because they refused to sign an affirmation of the revised faith statement, IMB leaders shared their perspective that the issue is "the nature and inerrancy of Scripture."

Is such reporting an "assault on the IMB"? Frankly, no. To the contrary, it is fair, balanced journalism that presents both sides of a complex issue and allows readers to make up their own minds. When Cooperative Program-funded missionaries are dismissed over BF&M-related issues—or any other issue—that is newsworthy information that Kentucky Baptists deserve to know.

What about letters to the editor that are critical of the IMB? Once again, we have published letters on both sides of the issue, just as we do when the issue is the Kentucky Baptist Convention's Baptist Faith and Message study or the Western Recorder's news judgment.

The Recorder's editorial policy affirms "the positive role of a free and responsible press, based upon the highest principles of Christian ethics and responsible journalism, in providing readers with a free flow of information."

That is—and will continue to be—our commitment to Kentucky Baptists.

STRAIGHT FROM THE EDITOR



Trennis Henderson

Discovering what really matters

By Tom Ehrich

DURHAM, N.C. (RNS)—On the morning after the ice storm, my son and I left our powerless, heatless, waterless house to check on damage in our neighborhood.

Next door, we noticed a large limb resting on our neighbor's car. We tried to move it but found it too large. Then the man across the street came over to help, and with three of us, the limb gave way.

For the sheer joy of helping neighbors, we went to the next house and cleared a driveway, so that a woman living alone could get out.

Around the block, my wife and I happened upon an impromptu work party cutting up a large fallen pine that was blocking the street. We joined in.

So it went after a storm that darkened more than 90 percent of area homes, in what our electric utility called its worst damage ever. For the joy of giving, people were extraordinarily kind and generous.

A neighbor with a gas range invited us over for tea. Another with gas logs invited us over for dinner. A man across the street shared pails of water for flushing toilets. We gave what we had, too. On walks, I met more neighbors in one weekend than I had met in four years.

We drew close as a family. Close-

ness went beyond commiseration. Once the sun went down, we had only each other. Huddling together before a fire and listening to "A Prairie Home Companion" felt peaceful.

It took a day to find the new pattern—boil water over a charcoal grill for the morning coffee, add kindling for cooking eggs, five logs per night for the fireplace, sleep under seven blankets, flush once a day. Conquering the cold was a shared victory.

I wrote briefly about this in my e-mail meditations and immediately heard from dozens who have had the same experience. "Enjoy the darkness!" wrote one. "It generates closeness." Said another: "What a miracle that when things get hard, often we become the most humane."

"Sometimes I think we need ice storms to rediscover what it means to be a neighbor," wrote one. Recalling an ice storm in 1998, a reader wrote: "We all cherish those four days. We had four days without the telephone, four days without the television or music, four days of truly caring for each other and our neighbors, four days of intimate conversations."

No tales of heroism. Just the shared joy of discovering, as one reader put it, "what matters."

I wonder if we will remember this once power is restored. I know we will be anxious to get back on track in

Christmas shopping. Parties will be rescheduled. Once Lowe's opened, I bought a new chain saw to clean up fallen trees. We have planned our power-outage survival kit for next time.

After a few days of hot showers, we will forget the relentless cold, and we might forget the joy of neighborliness, too. It seems difficult for us to remember, as I put it last week, that "electric power is a fine thing, but family and friends are everything."

But what if we could? What if we could remember the joy of giving? What if we could remember the thrill of working alongside a little-known neighbor to help a stranger? What if we could remember unexpected acts of kindness? What if we could remember the sense of accomplishment that came from building a fire and sitting peacefully before it?

If we could remember, I think we would get less confused about Who is the Light and who isn't. We would know the things of God, because they already are in us. We would know the truth of God's love, because we had tasted it.

While no one would have requested this hardship as a pre-Christmas sermon, it does remind us why Christmas happened at all, namely, to help us see that God is always with us and that the presence of God usually is simple, kind, generous and quiet.

Tom Ehrich, a columnist for Religion News Service, is a minister and computer consultant in Durham, N.C.

CHRISTMAS

South Shore women minister to KBHC girls

By Dannah Prather
Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children

SOUTH SHORE—It begins as many Christmas projects do.

There is a tree decorated with construction paper ornaments placed at the front of a church sanctuary. On the ornaments are lists of wishes, many of them simple, from children and teenagers who will find themselves separated from family during the holidays.

South Shore First Baptist Church, a congregation that averages 70 people in Sunday worship, is one group making Christmas wishes come true for children in the care of Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children. The church, located in Greenup County, has supported residents of the KBHC Morehead Center for more than four years.

The Morehead Center can care for up to 12 girls. Most residents have been removed from their homes because of physical or sexual abuse or neglect and have emotional and behavioral problems related to their backgrounds or difficult home situations.

Sylvia Robinson, a longtime member at South Shore and supporter of KBHC, said the Christmas sponsorship of the Morehead Center came about as a way to augment the Lottie Moon emphasis on international missions. "It didn't seem like we had a real solid giving emphasis at Christmas."

The women's Bible study group, led by Pastor Mark Lynch's wife, Debra, made the Morehead connection. "They began going out to the center three or four times a year," Robinson said. "It's grown into a mission for them."

Members of South Shore will make the 90-minute drive to the Morehead Center to deliver the presents and host a party a few days before Christmas. Morehead Center Director Mary Bradway said the visits always are important

times for the girls.

"For many of the girls, these are the best Christmas they've ever had. They've told us that," Bradway said. "For some, this will be their first Christmas tree, the first time anyone has ever asked them what they wanted, much less received what they asked for."

"It's a humbling experience," said Sue McDowell, a South Shore participant. "They really light up when they receive the gifts, and they're happy over anything you give them."

It's better to



This year's gift bags will contain such items as stationery, hair brushes, gift certificates to local stores, long-distance telephone cards and the usual pair of Christmas socks. A church member who is a Mary Kay representative is providing cosmetics.

"Christmas brings mixed emotions for the girls," Bradway noted. "To have churches come and spend time with them, sing Christmas carols—from people who the girls see as having no reason to care for them—it baffles them. It takes them a while to understand there's not an ulterior motive. Then they realize they are being shown care and attention from virtual strangers and they didn't get that kind of care from their families. There's a bit of sadness."

McDowell said many church members were overwhelmed when they learned about the children's troubled backgrounds. "The first time we went out there, I think we all probably had trouble sleeping that night," she said. "But we give what we do to God and He blesses it."

Robinson has become the KBHC representative for her church and Greenup Baptist Association. She said the visits to the Morehead Center, especially at Christmas, are a blessing.

"The hugs from the girls and their appreciation," Robinson said. "It's one of those times that you realize, this is probably the best thing you've done all year."

Kentucky couple helps send gifts to kids around the world

Continued from page 1
Baldauff noted.

"The strength of this ministry and what it adds to your church is a chance for everyone to be involved, no matter how small, no matter how old or how young," he said.

Baldauff said children especially enjoy being involved, adding that his own son and daughter participate in the shopping for gifts. "Who better knows what a 9-year-old girl or 6-year-old boy would want than a 9-year-old girl or 6-year-old boy?"

Harper said many donors take a personal attachment to the ministry. "It's, 'My little girl is going to get this,'" she said.

"Every box that our church has done is full to capacity," she added. "It's amazing how much you can get in a shoebox if you fit it like a puzzle."

Harper's greatest contribution to the effort is her passion, Baldauff said.

"In any ministry, if you don't have a person who's behind it, it's not going to go," he said. "She is a very hard worker too. She gets down and dirty with everyone else."

In fact, the Harpers work wasn't finished after the church filled the two and a half 28-foot trailers.

The duo then jumped in their minivan and drove six hours to Atlanta to work at a shoebox processing center. There they hand inspected thousands of boxes for four days. "It was a lot of fun, a lot of work," she said.

Volunteers check boxes for safety and appropriate gifts, she noted. "Some things are removed, like shampoo. Anything liquid is not allowed. Any toy that has a weapon on it doesn't go. Everything in the box needs to be new."

Harper said she went to the processing center so she could better understand the behind-the-scenes work that goes into the ministry.

Next year, she said, she hopes to travel with a team that distributes the shoeboxes. Reports from the field are especially touching, she said.

"In some countries, the only thing they get is that shoebox and its contents," she said. "Some of those children don't know how to receive a gift. They take one item out of the box and hand it back."

A Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols A Program of Christmas Bible Reading and Songs Sunday, December 29, 7 p.m.

Germantown Baptist Church, Water Street, Germantown, Ky.
Free and open to the public • Call (859) 289-6347 for more information

The Christian discipline of stewardship

Among the services we provide Kentucky Baptists, none is more important than our stewardship education service.

We take seriously our mission to encourage, educate and enable every Kentucky Baptist, from high school students to older adults, to practice at a deeper level the Christian discipline of financial stewardship. Although biblical stewardship involves the totality of our lives—our time, talents and treasures—we focus primarily on "treasures."

No one is born with this discipline. It must be learned and lived in order to experience its rewards. The Bible, our most reliable source of help, has a lot to say about the meaning of money in our lives.

With the Bible as your source, you will discover the most important thing in your life is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind (Matthew 22:37), and to have no other gods before Him (Exodus 20:3). Also you will discover no one can serve two masters; either he will hate the one and love the others or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money (Matthew 6:24).

To assist you in your stewardship development, Laurie Valen-

tine, Jennifer Curtis and I have written a 50-week stewardship lesson series, which will begin Jan. 3. Each new lesson will be available on our Web site on the first Saturday of the month, or your church can arrange to have the lessons on its Web site. To access the lessons, click on www.kybaptistfoundation.org and click the home

page icon "stewardship lessons." If your church is interested in installing them on its Web site, e-mail barbara.spencer@kybaptist.org, or call her toll-free.

The series consists of a weekly lesson concerning some important financial, estate or gift planning issue from a biblical perspective. Each lesson can be studied in five to seven minutes at your convenience, and is in a question-and-answer format with a brief prayer focus at the end. The weekly lessons feature 12 different monthly themes.

May the Lord add His blessings to your life as you use this tool to seek first His kingly rule in your living and giving.

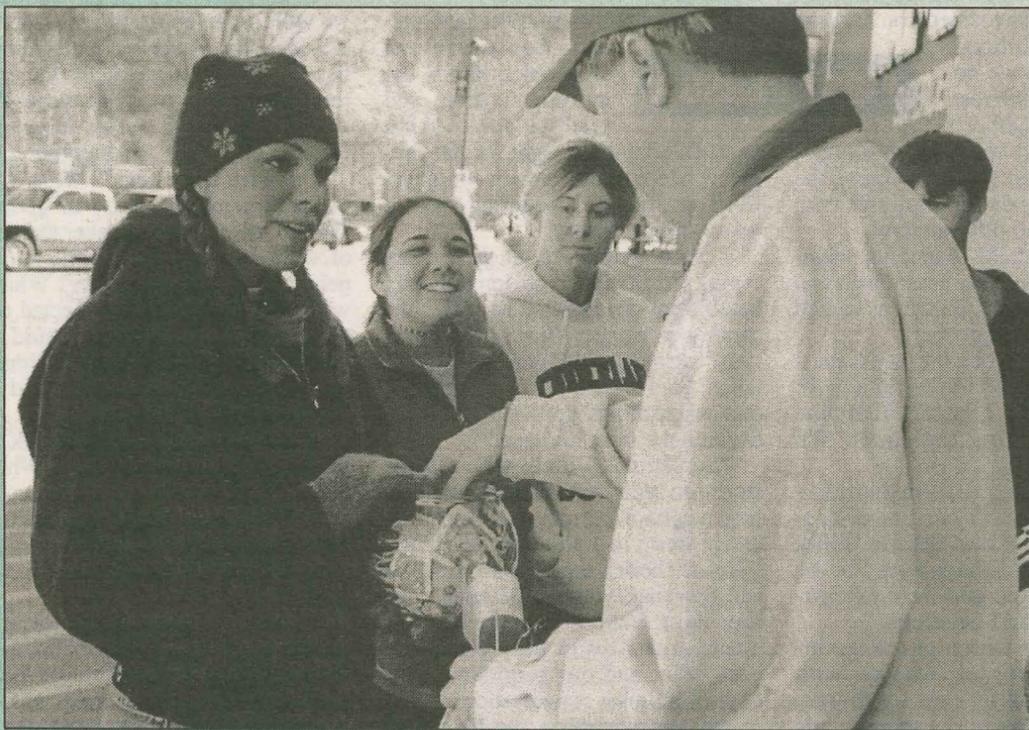
Barry Allen is president of the Kentucky Baptist Foundation, 10605 Shelbyville Road, Louisville, KY 40223; (888) 254-5701; www.kybaptistfoundation.org

KENTUCKY BAPTIST FOUNDATION



Barry Allen

A kick for giving



Members of Cumberland College's women's soccer team collect money for the school's Mountain Outreach Holiday Gift Day, Dec. 7. Members of both the women's and men's teams collected nearly \$880, which was matched by an anonymous donor. The Mountain Outreach event provides gift-buying opportunities for area parents who might not otherwise be able to provide toys for their children at Christmas. (Cumberland College photo)

SMILE

Room for one more

"Every child comes with the message that God is not yet discouraged."

If I had ever had the opportunity to chat with the Indian philosopher and scholar who penned that observation, I doubt we would have found much in common, but I certainly agree with the spirit behind his words.

Children do represent hope and potential. They are that wonderful "what might be" that keeps us striving to do more and be better. We want them to catch the enthusiasm for the future and follow that striving and struggling example, for themselves and the generation behind them.

Do more; be better. Some of you might be saying you're about tapped out. You might be

find a place in your heart, in your life, for another message of His encouragement. Is their room in your life for another child?

Could you become a foster parent in 2003? You could start part-time, providing respite for a full-time foster family one or two times each month. Full- and part-time foster parents receive training and assistance from a dedicated team of Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children staff.

HOMES FOR CHILDREN



Bill Smithwick

It is a strong, supportive network. Opening your heart to a child could mean something else. It could mean promoting KBHC more heavily in your church or Sunday school class. We'd be glad to help you do that. It could mean making a place for a child's future as you make plans for your estate. January traditionally is a time when people are encouraged to make or review their wills or other estate plans. Call us if you need information about how to make KBHC a part of those plans.

Is there room for one more in your heart, your life? I hope so. The world needs all the encouragement it can get!

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

Joy

By Robert Dunston

Cumberland College graduate Lisa Sweatt (class of 1996) wrote this week's devotional on joy. Sweatt worked at Palm Beach Atlantic University for several years and now serves as the freshman dorm director at Bethel College and Seminary in St. Paul, Minn. In her current position, she counsels students as they make the transition to college.

Sweatt's devotional is based on Isaiah 52:7.

"I have never been much of a 'feet lover.' In fact, I struggle with the fact that this verse refers to feet as 'beautiful.' Beauty should be used when referring to things like the sunset, a bride waiting to see her groom or even the shoes that cover the feet. But feet?"

"But it isn't the feet alone that carry the beauty; it is the message of the feet or the 'messenger' who is bringing the news that makes them beautiful.

"It is the message of good news, redemption and God's unbelievable grace. For some people, the most difficult task lies within the journey ahead and how we respond to the message. We hear the songs of joy, the songs of redemption. We see

people celebrating the freedom experienced through Christ. Yet, we still feel we are not good enough to join in, to be forgiven.

"Isaiah 52:9 states, 'Burst into songs of joy together, you ruins of Jerusalem, for the Lord has comforted His people and He has redeemed Jerusalem.' It wasn't 'all of you who have never sinned' in

CUMBERLAND COLLEGE



Jerusalem. It was the ruins of Jerusalem. 2 Corinthians 4:7 states, 'But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.' It is through our weaknesses that God's power can be revealed. It is because we carry a message of hope that our 'feet' are made truly

beautiful. "Christmas often is described as a season of joy, hope and peace. None of these ends after the holidays are over. 'Listen! Your watchmen lift up their voices; together they shout for joy' (Isaiah 52:8). Can you hear the singing? You are forgiven. You will continue to be forgiven. Join the celebration."

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

Kudzu

Doug Marlette



For Heaven's Sake

Mike Morgan



Bible Crossword

Across

- 1 "and if a son, then an ___ of God" (Galatians 4:7)
- 4 Energy
- 7 Printer's measures
- 10 Eastern U.S. state
- 11 "For there is hope of a ___, if it be cut down" (Job 14:7)
- 12 Churchill gesture
- 13 High school ___
- 15 Nard
- 17 Twelve lions stood around his throne (1 Kings 10)
- 19 Vowels in chorus of children's song
- 20 Carter cabinet member
- 22 North Atlantic food fish
- 26 Deborah accompanied him
- 29 They travel through the Loop
- 31 Year (Sp.)
- 32 "And the king of the south shall be moved with ___" (Daniel 11:11)
- 34 "The ___ pot is for silver" (Proverbs 17:3)
- 36 Small bit
- 37 "Eat not of it ___ ... but roast it with fire" (Exodus 12:9)
- 39 To tend
- 40 Father of Peleg and Joktan (Genesis 10:25)
- 42 Sister of Absalom
- 44 Preposition
- 46 "___ shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling" (Psalm 91:10)
- 50 After dusk (poet.)
- 54 Congolese river that forms Ubangi

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58				59					60			

- 55 Light touch
- 56 Sanction
- 57 Egyptian sun deity
- 58 Tropical bird
- 59 Son of (Heb.)
- 60 Fencing implement

- 23 Absalom's defining feature
- 24 Yearbooks (abbr.)
- 25 Venetian magistrate
- 26 Alphabet sequence
- 27 Jezebel's "better" half
- 28 The ___, Douglas novel
- 30 "the Lord spake unto Moses in the wilderness of ___" (Numbers 3:14)
- 33 Rodent
- 35 "Bring them up in the ___ and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4)
- 38 "your children shall ___ in the wilderness" (Numbers 14:33)
- 41 Tore
- 43 "And if it be ___ that I go also" (1 Corinthians 16:4)
- 45 Puncture
- 47 Amass
- 48 Building extension
- 49 To advise; counsel
- 50 Greek letter
- 51 Actor Johnson
- 52 Spire ornament
- 53 Philippine tree

Down

- 1 Rose seedcases
- 2 "an ___ is nothing in the world ... there is none other God" (1 Corinthians 8:4)
- 3 Dismissal
- 4 "the ___ of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2)
- 5 Even (poet.)
- 6 St. ___ (FL cty.)
- 7 Palindromic name
- 8 "Quit you like ___" (1 Corinthians 16:13)
- 9 Arrange
- 11 Sat. TV fare (colloq.)
- 14 Recto (abbr.)
- 16 Wrong (prefix)
- 18 "Woe unto him that striveth with his ___" (Isaiah 45:9)
- 21 Mischievous one

Last week's solution

N	A	R	D	S	A	H	S	A	F	E			
G	U	E		A	B	E		L	T	E	R		
D	E	T	S	N	B	A		M	O	T	E		
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Study affirms positive impact of holidays and family traditions

WASHINGTON (RNS)—Family routines and rituals, such as eating meals together and celebrating holidays, help make stronger relationships and healthier children, according to a new report issued by the American Psychological Association.

The study, a review of 50 years of research on family life, found that family routines and rituals are associated with marital satisfaction, children's health and individual feelings of well-being.

They also aid families in balancing the demands of work and home and help children adapt after divorce, the study said.

The review examined findings from 32 separate studies. It described routines as regular activities such as dinnertime, bedtime, chores and visiting relatives.

Family rituals, on the other hand, "involve symbolic communication and convey 'this is who we are' as a group and provide continuity in meaning across generations," said psychologist Barbara Fiese, who conducted the review with colleagues from Syracuse University.

Young children with regular household routines, such as at bedtime, were found to sleep more soundly, be in better physical health and be better behaved—leading parents to feel more competent.

Routines and rituals also were found to change over the family life cycle, the report said. Families with infants had "fewer predictable routines" and drew less emotional merit from family gatherings than those with preschool-age children, a time when children can participate more actively in family life. As children grow older and become parents themselves, they often attach more meaning to family rituals.

Several of the studies found that routines and rituals in "non-traditional families"—single-parent, divorced or remarried households—helped protect children from greater emotional stress and enabled them to adapt better in times of disruption.

Preschool/Children's Ministry Meeting

Jan. 31–Feb. 1

First Baptist Church
Middletown

All Preschool/Children Ministers, Pastors
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Cost will be \$30

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A big ol' mountain boy

For me, working with young people is exciting. Individual needs vary from student to student. City kids are much more streetwise than those from the country, and the opportunities to get in trouble seem to be much greater for our students from the city.

There is something special, even innocent, about a boy or girl from the country. Their exposure to the world is quite different from that of city kids. I consider it a privilege to work with students from the country.

"Jamie" (not his real name) came to us last spring from deep in the Cumberland Mountains. He was a big boy, about 300 pounds and well over six feet tall. His parents divorced when he was young. He lived with his dad and step-mother for a time but ended up with his mom. Being a single parent is bad enough, but his mother had her hands full raising a boy the size of Jamie.

Jamie needed a full-time dad. Though he talks to his dad by phone, he needed someone to keep him in line 24/7. The teachers at his school knew that time was running out. If Jamie didn't get the discipline and male role modeling he needed, he might drop out and be another mountain boy with no future.

Fortunately, some of his teachers knew about Oneida and believed we were just what Jamie needed. He had gotten into some serious trouble at school and was told he could not return until 2003. His grades already were very low; and he simply could not afford to miss months of school.

Jamie was excited about coming to Oneida, but he certainly did not have a clear understanding of our work program. One of the things city and country kids share is a lack-of required chores at

home. They don't know how to work, and they don't want to.

My first real experience with Jamie was last summer. He was brought to me because he would not work and he irritated everyone who worked with him. He did as little as any boy could possibly do. I gave him a stern talk and provided some special work details for the rest of the day.

Jamie was not particularly interested in our academic program, either. His mid-term grades for the first quarter of this school year indicated that he was failing some classes. His first quarter final grades were not much better, and he failed three classes. His mid-term second quarter grades are much better with only one failing grade. Considering his grades when he enrolled, he is beginning to make some progress. It might be a while before he earns honor roll status, but the potential is there.

He also has made much progress with his peers. For a while, it was difficult to find roommates who were compatible with him. He is doing better now. His room is considerably cleaner than it used to be, and he has even joined the choir. He is head and shoulders taller than any other choir member, but he really seems to enjoy the positive recognition he receives from being in the choir.

As for work, he is still not exactly a bundle of energy. But he has learned to take responsibility for his attitude and for the work he has been assigned to do. Who knows? Someday he might even enjoy working.

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

THIS IS ONEIDA



W.F. Underwood

A house full of children for Christmas

Bob Whitter attended Clear Creek in 1991-93 but left to take care of some family health needs. While pastor of Ghent Baptist Church, he realized the need to return to school. "I saw my professors knew what they were talking about," Whitter said. "We prayed about returning and experienced an unbelievable transition."

The Whitters were foster parents and wanted to continue care for and eventually adopt four children assigned to them by the state. But regulations prohibited foster children moving outside the region.

"We committed the issue to prayer. Our social worker, Mary Easterly, is a Christian and also prayed with us," Whitter said. "One day she told us the fantastic news (that)

it would be possible to move with the children, three regions away." Easterly, a native of Somerset, is a former college Baptist Student Union president.

A month after the decision to move to Clear Creek, the Whitters received news that the children were available for adoption. Five other children of the family of nine are in the care of Les and Lisa Newton, a Baptist family in Florence. The siblings visit each other.

The Whitters already had two children, Bobby, 12, and Rachael, 11. "They enjoy being big brother and sister, but sometimes it is tough on them," Whitter said. "We moved into a small house, but it has helped us come closer together as a family."

After her husband graduates, Rhonda Whitter will enroll and also take classes at Lincoln Memorial University. "My goal is to be a Christian social worker. I could attend other schools, but God called us to Clear Creek," she said.

On Mondays, a day without classes, Whitter and the children take a walk down the old railroad bed, across Clear Creek and through the woods. "We walk and talk; the kids love it here.

They tell me everybody is nice and they're not used to that," Whitter shared. "They're adjusting well." Churches and friends of the college helped provide the Christmas Shopping Spree that was a blessing to the Whitter family, that now includes Jacob, 11 months, Isaac, 2, and 4-year-old twins Brianna Elizabeth and Joshua.

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

CLEAR CREEK CHRONICLE



Bill Whittaker

Bush signs orders to help faith-based non-profits

Orders enact goals stalled in Congress

By Adelle Banks
Religion News Service

WASHINGTON (RNS)—Unable to increase federal assistance to faith-based organizations through legislation, President Bush last week signed executive orders to accomplish many of the same goals.

President Bush's orders, signed Dec. 12, call for equal treatment of religious organizations in the funding process and creating offices in two more federal departments to further links between the government and social service groups.

The actions, announced at a White House conference of about 1,800 leaders of faith-based and community groups in Philadelphia, enact some of Bush's goals that were included in legislation that stalled on Capitol Hill earlier this year.

"If a charity is helping the needy, it should not matter if there is a rabbi on the board, or a cross or a crescent on the wall, or a religious commitment in the charter," Bush said. "The days of discriminating against religious groups just because they are religious are coming to an end."

The president cited instances in which social service organizations were denied federal funds or discouraged from pursuing them, saying "I don't intend to compromise" on the effort to work for their fair treatment.

Lost opportunities

One example was Victory Center Rescue Mission in Clinton, Iowa, which lost its chance to open a shelter in 2000 when the Department of Housing and Urban Development said its board of directors was too religious.

Ray Gimenez, executive director of that evangelical Christian ministry, said he had to sell the desired property to a secular entity and scale down his plans.

"We felt we lost our incentive, we lost our hope," he said. "What the president did (signing the executive orders) was bring hope back

to us. This isn't about religion. This is about the homeless, the poor, the needy."

Jim Towey, director of the White House Office of Faith-based and Community Initiatives, said a "big change" by the president is his amendment of a previous executive order to ensure religious groups receiving federal contracts of more than \$10,000 can now have the right to hire employees of a particular faith.

In general, he said the president, through executive orders and a new information booklet, is providing clarity on a confusing issue.

"It's insane ... soup kitchens where people get grants from two different federal programs that have two different sets of hiring rules," he said.

Bush said he has directed HUD and the Department of Health and Human Services to change their regulations to provide equal opportunities for funding of religious and nonreligious organizations. He also has ordered the Federal Emergency Management Agency to change its policies so religious nonprofits can qualify for emergency relief after natural disasters.

In a second executive order, he expanded the number of federal departments with "Centers for Faith-based and Community Initiatives" to seven, now including the U.S. Agency for International Development and the Department of Agriculture.

Praise and criticism

Organizations that have closely watched the evolution of Bush's plans regarding church, state and social services reacted quickly with criticism and praise.

"Bush is giving his official blessing to publicly funded religious discrimination," said Barry Lynn, executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, which has long opposed the initiative.

"Under this scheme, taxpayers will be forced to support churches they don't believe in, and workers will be denied publicly funded jobs because they don't conform to religious mandates."

Study finds church financial support for benevolences hits all-time low in 2000

CHAMPAIGN, Ill. (RNS)—Congregational giving to benevolences, which support the broader mission of the church, hit an all-time low in 2000, according to empty tomb, an Illinois-based research organization.

As a portion of church members' incomes, giving to benevolences declined 39 percent from 0.66 percent in 1968 to 0.40 percent in 2000.

Benevolences include a range of expenditures beyond the operations of the local congregation, from soup kitchens to seminaries to international ministries.

Although benevolences continued to decline during the period studied, giving as a percentage of income to congregational finances recovered to

mid-1970s levels.

"These numbers suggest that churches are not transforming people but rather servicing them," said Sylvia Ronsvalle, who co-authored "The State of Church Giving Through 2000" with her husband, John Ronsvalle.

"People are concerned about keeping the lights on and the staff paid at their churches, both of which are valid needs," she added. "But those activities ought to be the platform from which to reach out to a hurting world as Christians practice their religion."

"Instead, congregation members appear to be emphasizing their own comfort over the needs of their local and international neighbors."



Ex 'faith czar': 'Mayberry Machiavellis' stalled measure

By Mark Wingfield and Robert Marus
Texas Baptist Standard & Associated Baptist Press

PHILADELPHIA (ABP)—President Bush's former "faith czar" says the White House's desire to advance faith-based welfare stalled in Congress because of "Mayberry Machiavellis" in the administration who are more concerned with politics than policy.

John DiIulio has since retracted his comments. But some Bush critics are unconvinced by the retraction.

DiIulio was appointed by Bush as the first head of the newly created White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives but served only eight months, resigning in August 2001.

He was responsible for spearheading legislation that would have expanded the government's ability to provide direct grants for social services to overtly religious charities.

That legislation still has not passed, but last week Bush signed executive orders achieving some of its goals.

DiIulio's assessment is reported in the January 2003 issue of Esquire magazine, in a story on Bush political adviser Karl Rove.

After the Esquire story broke, White House spokesman Ari Fleischer lambasted the article as "groundless and baseless." DiIulio then quickly offered an apology and called his comments in the magazine "groundless and baseless due to

poorly chosen words and examples."

Esquire later posted on its Web site the entire text of a lengthy letter DiIulio wrote to reporter Ron Suskind.

In that letter, DiIulio praises Bush as a "godly man and a moral leader" who is smarter than people give him credit for being and who is genuinely compassionate.

The problem, DiIulio wrote, is that the White House is driven by political decisions designed to rally popular support, rather than policy decisions based on research and conviction. That opinion contrasts with Bush's promises during the 2000 presidential campaign, in which he pledged to be a "compassionate conservative" not motivated by poll numbers or political maneuvering.

In his eight months serving as an adviser to Bush, DiIulio wrote, "I heard many, many staff discussions but not three meaningful, substantive policy discussions. There were no actual policy white papers on domestic issues. There were, truth be told, only a couple of people in the West Wing who worried at all about policy substance and analysis. ..."

The result, he suggested, was "Mayberry Machiavellis—staff, senior and junior, who consistently talked and acted as if the height of political sophistication consisted in reducing every issue to its simplest, black-and-white terms for public consumption, then steering legislative initiatives or policy proposals as far right as possible."

C. Welton Gaddy, executive director of The Interfaith Alliance, said the president's action "usurps congressional power" and provides inconsistent limits on funding of religious entities—not paying for preaching but allowing federal contractors to display distinct religious symbols.

"All who know religion know that symbols within a religious tradition are a primary form of delivering a message within that specific tradition," he said.

Others say there is no immediate constitutional threat from the president's moves.

"This executive order does not create a constitutional crisis but merely removes barriers for churches and religious organizations and ensures that

they will not be discriminated against in consideration for federal funds," said Jay Sekulow, chief counsel of the American Center for Law and Justice.

Bob Tuttle, a law professor at George Washington University Law School, said the president's action is not likely to make a major change in hiring practices by faith-based groups receiving federal money.

"If the legislation that funds the program has among its conditions that you can't discriminate, the president's executive order can't change that," he said.

Towey said he anticipates debate in Congress over issues of hiring rights for years to come.

"It's one, big tangled knot," he said in an interview.

Clergy ratings at lowest point ever, Gallup says

PRINCETON, N.J. (RNS)—The Roman Catholic sexual abuse scandal has sent the public's view of clergy spiraling down to its lowest point ever, 12 points lower than last year's rating, according to a new Gallup poll.

Asked to rate the honesty and ethics of 21 professions, just 52 percent of Americans gave high marks to clergy, down from 64 percent last year. This year's rating are the lowest ever—they reached their peak, at 67 percent, in 1985.

Catholics gave lower honesty ratings to their priests than did Protestants, according to the poll.

Just 50 percent of Catholics gave high ratings to their clergy, compared to 57 percent of Protestants. Both ratings are down from five years ago.

Gallup pollsters said clergy ratings also dropped between 1992 and 1994, the last time the Catholic Church wrestled with a sex abuse scandal.

Overall, clergy ranked fourth among all professions for a high level of honesty, behind nurses (79 percent), military officers (65 percent) and high school teachers (64 percent). Others in the poll included policemen (52 percent), funeral directors (39 percent) and journalists (26 percent).

Business executives, who also suffered this year in the wake of the Enron, WorldCom and Martha Stewart scandals, drew just 17 percent approval ratings, down from 25 percent last year.

The telephone poll of 1,017 adults has a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points.

PEOPLE

PRAYER PARTNERS

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

■ God's discernment for missionaries in Hungary as they plan a national outreach strategy and share the plan with Hungarian Baptist leaders.

■ Praise God for six bicycles the Southern Baptist International Mission Board purchased for Romanian church planters among Roma/Gypsies in Buzau, Romania. "Now the distance of six miles each way to lead Bible studies is much easier," missionaries write. "Praise God for the sacrifice and dedication of workers like 'NE,' 'S' and 'NI.'"

■ "M," a Bulgarian Baptist who works with Bulgarian Muslims.

■ Pray that a church planting movement will develop among the young people of Sofia, Bulgaria.

■ A growing reliance on prayer among believers in Silesia, Poland.

■ Work among refugees who are flocking to Belgium.

Mountains to the Mississippi

Compiled by staff

■ ADAIRVILLE—Forest Grove Church called Gary Johnson as interim pastor.

■ ASHLAND—C.J. Adkins resigned as pastor of Ashland Church effective Dec. 8 to accept the pastorate of Westmoreland Church in Huntington, W.Va.

■ BROOKS—Brooks Church ordained Don Clark and Mike Raymer as deacons Dec. 8. Eddie Maynard is pastor.

■ BROWNSVILLE—Brownsville Missionary Church called Mark Perko as pastor.

■ CADIZ—Locust Grove Church will hold its first service in the church's new 10,000-square-foot facility Dec. 22. The previous facility was destroyed by fire in July 2001. The Dec. 22 service will feature the cantata, "Come Let Us Worship the King," 11 a.m. Archie Brock is pastor.

■ CAMPBELLSBURG—Russell Winn recently resigned as pastor of Campbellsburg Church.

Pleasant View Church recently called Matt Boyd as pastor.

■ CAMPBELLSVILLE—Campbellsville Church ordained Ron Benningfield, Brian Clifford, Ken Mc-

Donald and Tim Woodcox as deacons Dec. 1. Skip Alexander is pastor.

Saloma Church will hold a Christmas Candlelight and Communion service Dec. 22, 6 p.m. John Chowning is pastor.

■ CORBIN—Calvary Church called Kevin Roach as pastor. He previously was minister of youth at Corinth Church in London.

■ COVINGTON—Immanuel Church called Calvin Perry as interim pastor.

■ EMINENCE—Eminence Church called J.T. Patton as minister to students.

■ ERLANGER—Erlanger Church will present the children's Christmas pageant "Meet Me at the Manger" Dec. 22, 6 p.m.

■ FORT MITCHELL—Fort Mitchell Church will present "The Christmas Story Through the Eyes of the Friendly Beasts" Dec. 18, 7 p.m.

■ HENDERSON—Watson Lane Church recently called Kyle Shannon Long as pastor.

■ LEXINGTON—Boone's Creek Church recently called Wendell Romans as interim pastor.

■ LONDON—First Church recently

honored Pastor Terry Lester and his wife, Jan, for 15 years of service.

■ LOUISVILLE—Gethsemane Church will present "Home for Christmas" Dec. 22, 6 p.m.

Melbourne Heights Church will present the one-act play "The Christmas Miracle of Johnathon Toomey" Dec. 22, 6:30 p.m. The church also will host a candlelight Communion service Christmas Eve, 5 p.m.

Rockford Lane Church's choir will present the cantata "There Is a Bethlehem" Dec. 22 during the morning worship service.

■ MURRAY—Westside Church called Eric Miracle as youth minister. Glynn Orr is pastor.

■ PELLVILLE—Pellville Church recently called Drew Darnell as minister of youth.

■ PLEASUREVILLE—Orville Church called Jason Meyer as pastor.

■ RICHMOND—Kirksville Church called Ronnie "Butch" Pennington as pastor effective Dec. 8. He previously was pastor of Petrey Memorial Church in Hazard.

Unity Church will hold Silent Communion Dec. 24, 5:30 p.m.

■ SMITHS GROVE—Lawrence Chapel Church called Adam Trent as interim pastor.

■ VERSAILLES—New Hope Church will host a Christmas Eve service at 5 p.m. Wesley Noss is pastor.

Kentucky team aids relief work

DURHAM, N.C.—Kentucky Baptist disaster relief workers are among volunteers responding to recent ice storm damage in North Carolina.

Approximately 20 volunteers from Kentucky are working in Durham, N.C., this week, said Larry Koch, leader of the Kentucky Baptist Brotherhood department's disaster relief efforts.

The chainsaw crew is working to remove downed trees and other debris from yards and streets. The volunteers, based at Rose of Sharon Baptist Church in Durham, are working alongside other Baptist disaster relief teams from North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee.

Relief teams will work this week and return home for the week of Christmas. Koch said additional volunteers might be needed after the holidays.

Trained disaster relief workers available to serve may contact Koch at (502) 244-6489, toll-free at (888) 254-5720 or by e-mail at larry.koch@kybaptist.org.

NAIA officials endorse self-imposed sanctions by Campbellsville

CAMPBELLSVILLE—NAIA officials have approved self-imposed sanctions by Campbellsville University administrators in the wake of a rules violation by former coach Ron Finley.

Finley, Campbellsville's only head football coach since the program began in 1988, was forced last month to retire. The action followed an internal

investigation that found he had provided "unauthorized financial assistance outside of institutional control" to an unnamed football player.

Campbellsville President Mike Carter said Finley, 69, had a lapse of judgment while trying to assist a player in financial need.

"Coach Finley realizes his mistake and regrets it," Carter said in an inter-

view with the Lexington Herald-Leader. "We needed to take corrective action to show we had control of the program."

School officials suspended the player for the remainder of the 2002 season and the entire 2003 season. The team also forfeited two games, making it ineligible for the 2002 NAIA bowl game.

NAIA officials also suspended Finley from coaching at any NAIA school for the next three seasons.

"Never have I seen an institution that worked as quickly and efficiently as Campbellsville University" to address a violation, said Mike Pollio, commissioner of the Mid-South Conference. He said school officials "made the best of a bad situation."

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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 resumé 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: Year-round part-time camp director for Kentucky WMU Mission Adventure Camp for Girls. Requires full-time work during summer camping season. Experience with children's camp and WMU organizations for children required. For additional information, contact Joy Bolton, executive director, Kentucky WMU, (502) 245-6485.

SEEKING: Pastor for rural church (SBC affiliation). Send resumé and references to: Search Committee, 425 Pope Ave., Harrodsburg, KY 40330.

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 resumé to: Richard Landers, First Baptist Church, PO Box 697, Richmond, KY 40476-0697, or via e-mail to rlanders@firstbaptist.net.com.

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 resumé to: Personnel Committee, First Baptist Church, PO Box 58, Liberty, KY 42539. Phone: (606) 787-7360.

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

SEEKING: Pastor. Send resumé to: Eastview Baptist Church, 1017 Earl St., Henderson, KY 42420. Phone: (270) 521-7120.

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

SEEKING: Interim part-time WMU consultant. Experience with Women on Mission required. Position includes leadership training and directing fall retreats. For additional information, contact Joy Bolton, executive director, Kentucky WMU, (502) 245-6485.

SEEKING: Ohio River Baptist Association, a 41-church association in Western Kentucky, is prayerfully seeking a director of missions. Resumes will be received through Dec. 31, 2002. All responses will remain confidential. Please mail to: Search Committee, Ohio River Baptist Association, PO Box 9, Salem, KY 42078.

SEEKING: Full-time minister of activities for First Baptist Church of Mt. Washington, Ky. Need energetic, outreach-minded person to schedule and oversee activities for all ages in our new Christian life center. Send resumé to: Personnel Committee, First Baptist Church, PO Box 315, Mt. Washington, KY 40047, or call (502) 538-7361 for more information.

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CHRISTMAS

Some atheists plan to celebrate Christmas season

NASHVILLE (BP)—While atheists don't believe in God, a recent study found many of them don't have a problem with celebrating the gift of His Son.

Nearly half of adult Americans surveyed said they personally know someone who doesn't believe in God but will celebrate Christmas this year anyway, according to a recent study by Scripps Howard News Service and Ohio University.

"Historically, it has been a struggle for America to find meaningful holidays that include a sufficiently broad number of people. But Christmas seems to have many modes of interpretation upon which we can set our own personal needs," said Penne Restad, a University of Texas historian and author of the report "Christmas in America: A History."

"Christmas has become as much a celebration of community as it has a celebration of religion," she said.

The survey of 1,001 people conducted in October found that more people will set up a Christmas tree than will attend a worship service on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day. Americans also overwhelmingly believe Christmas has become less focused on the birth of Jesus than it used to be, the report said.

The survey also found that younger people and people living on the West Coast are more likely to know others who are atheists but will celebrate Christmas anyway.

Gift book options abound this Christmas

By Cecile Holmes
Religion News Service

COLUMBIA, S.C. (RNS)—The spirit of Christmas reigns in several books for children and adults suitable for giving this holiday season.

From master storytellers who spellbind with their retelling of the ancient birth narrative to spinners of more modern yarns, these authors seek to reimagine Christmas as it can be. They help restore the sense of wonder and hope that is so easy to lose in the mayhem of crowded shopping malls and crammed holiday schedules.

New on the children's market is "Angels & All Children, A Nativity Story in Words, Music and Art." Once again, Walter Wangerin enlivens our faith and our capacity to see beyond the literal with his storytelling.

In this tale, people are walking in darkness. They have so turned away from God that the world is too dark. A terrible sadness befalls the earth and all the children fall asleep. They cannot awaken because morning does not come.

When God sees what has happened and realizes "that the earth was stuck like a clock at midnight," He decides to intervene. He calls to the archangel Gabriel and sends him to see a youthful Mary. She, in turn, begins to prepare for the birth of Jesus. And, in this telling of the famous Christian birth narrative, all of the children sing of Jesus' birth.

The book ends with a postscript, urging parents and grandparents to read the story aloud. Sunday schools, congregations and other groups are urged to act out the story. They can get information about the script and

the musical score at www.WalterWangerinJr.org

Adult readers eager to see, and remember, Christmas with fresh eyes will appreciate "Christmas Presence: Twelve Gifts That Were More Than They Seemed," edited by Gregory Pierce. In his introduction, Pierce explores the ephemeral nature of most gifts under the tree. Many are unwrapped and quickly forgotten, he says.

"All except a few, that is. In each of our lives, there has been at least one special present that transcended its immediate value and even the intent of the giver," he writes, going on to tell a story about receiving such a gift.

His tale introduces 12 other stories, ranging from the humorous to the sad. Pierce asked 12 spiritual writers to share their own stories of a particular Christmas gift. The resulting collection evokes emotions and nostalgia without being overly sentimental.

In another book appropriate for reading (and laughter) in front of a toasty fire on a chilly winter day is Philip Gulley's "Christmas in Harmony." One of Gulley's most memorable characters in the Harmony series is Dale Hinshaw. He stirs up trouble once again in this book, brainstorming the idea of a "progressive" Nativity scene to involve the whole town of Harmony. At first, Pastor Sam Gardner is as dismayed as ever with Hinshaw's antics, but eventually he realizes the Nativity scene is Hinshaw's attempt to find meaning in Christmas, something we all crave.

For the younger folks, three books from Zonderkidz are good titles for giving. Two are adaptations of previ-

ously published titles, presented this time as "board books," those thick-paged books designed for children age 4 and under.

The two titles are "The Legend of the Candy Cane," written by Lori Walburg and adapted by Pat Matuszak, and "The Legend of the Christmas Tree," written by Rick Osborne and adapted by Matuszak. The first connects the shape and the stripes of the candy cane to Jesus; the second explores how Christian thinkers from the monk Boniface to Protestant reformer Martin Luther helped the evergreen tree become a Christmas symbol.

The third book, "The Star of Christmas," is a BigIdea book based on the VeggieTales video, "The Star of Christmas." In this story, two well-meaning Veggies hope to teach the city of London to love. Set in the 1880s, the book surprises and amuses as the two main characters, Cavis and Millward, try to mount a Christmas extravaganza, only to find themselves learning a lesson about love and the real star of Christmas.

Gift givers who want to mark the season but are looking for a title with more year-round appeal should take a serious look at "Breakfast Epiphanies, Finding Wonder in the Everyday." Written by David Anderson, rector of a Pennsylvania parish, this is a gentle collection. In 41 tales taken from real life, Anderson nearly always begins in the ordinary—dealing with a family argument, taking his daughter to a father-daughter dance or listening to a crying baby on an airplane. But he also manages to offer insight, blending spiritual counsel with reflections on relationships, family life, gardening and even taking out the trash.



Potential conflict complicates Christmas preparations for chaplains

By Adelle Banks
Religion News Service

NORFOLK, Va. (RNS)—When the U.S.S. Harry S Truman shipped out of Norfolk, Va., heading to the Mediterranean and Arabian seas in early December, Chaplain Alan Baker already knew how Christmas would be celebrated aboard the vessel.

Not far from the spot where the ship's anchors are stored, there will be Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services for Protestants and Catholics. There'll be a tree in the captain's cabin and Christmas caroling around the ship on the Sunday before the holiday.

But for Baker—and many military members deployed across the world from their loved ones—the rituals and observances started long before the physical separation that occurs this holiday season with the additional pressure of a possible war in Iraq.

From on-ship baptisms to early at-home Christmas celebrations to outreach from religious leaders concerned about their



BIG SIGN SENDOFF Virginia Baptists signed huge sheets with good wishes for military members at their November convention. (Virginia Religious Herald photo by Robert Dilday)

welfare, spiritual and physical preparation began more than a month before Dec. 25.

Baker, a member of the Reformed Church in America, said more christenings and baptisms occur in the days ahead of a ship leaving port.

"Those are the kind of moments that I think really cause a community to gel," Baker said the day before his routine, six-month deployment. "It's just what I would call community building, and it's built around the sacrament or the ritual."

Although much of the religious support for the military comes from chaplains of a variety of faiths, clergy across the country may be sending encouraging e-mails, praying regularly or spearheading acts of community service for sailors and soldiers.

At the annual meeting of the Baptist General Association of Virginia in November, leaders staged a multifaceted "Operation Appreciation" to recognize the military personnel near the meeting site in Virginia Beach.

Huge sheets were available for participants to sign below the words "Godspeed from Virginia Baptists," in preparation for delivery to outgoing ships. Some Baptists purchased children's books that would be enclosed with blank videotapes. Deployed sailors can read the books for their children while being videotaped and mail the videos back home.

Chaplains with no immediate plans for overseas travel spend pre-holiday time helping family members of those who have been sent to foreign territory.

Chaplain Michael Klepacki, the assistant

command chaplain at Naval Station Norfolk, said he recently aided the wife of a sailor on a submarine who was delayed from returning home, leaving her to manage the "double stress" of a move to another state at the holidays.

"I think the main thing is not potential conflicts," said Klepacki, a Roman Catholic. "It really is just being away from your family during the holiday. That's the main thing on everybody's mind."

Jeffrey Watters, a brigade chaplain in the 82nd Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, N.C., expects to be sent to Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, the military effort combating terrorism.

Before soldiers are deployed, they talk with Watters and other chaplains about the stress of separation. Chaplains offer counseling, programs to help couples communicate and videos on relationships.

"We're sort of the family expert in our battalion or in the brigade," he said. "We understand that a strong family makes a strong trooper and makes for a strong army."

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