



# WESTERN RECORDER

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Notice: In keeping with the Western Recorder's Christmas-season publishing schedule, there will be no paper next week.

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Dated Material — Deliver by Thursday, December 26

## 2002 reflections: Catholic scandal, global tensions dominate news

It was Catholics, not Baptists, who dominated religion news headlines in 2002.

Roman Catholics' clergy sexual abuse scandal prompted the Vatican to approve a revised plan for dealing with child sexual abuse among American priests. Fallout continues, including the recent resignation of high-profile Cardinal Bernard Law of Boston.

Beyond the Catholic crisis, major religion-related stories on the international level include ongoing tension in the Muslim world and escalating Israeli-Arab conflict. In Southern Baptist life, issues ranged from unveiling an "Empowering Kingdom Growth" ministry emphasis to debate over affirming the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message.

Significant news of the year included:

■ **January.** President Bush was considered the most-admired man in an annual Gallup Poll. Others in the top five were Secretary of State Colin Powell, New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, Pope John Paul II and Evangelist Billy Graham.

In Southern Baptist life, W.A. Criswell, legendary pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas for more than 50 years, died at age 92. He was considered a major influence in the Southern Baptist Convention's conservative shift in the 1980s and '90s.

■ **February.** Predicting "great clashes" between evangelicalism and Islam, Charles Colson urged Christians to renew efforts to convert Muslims. "What I want is for all Muslims to see the love of Christ in stark contrast to what happened on 9-11," said Colson, founder of Prison Fellowship Ministries.

Reversing an earlier policy, Southern Baptist International Mission Board President Jerry Rankin asked the board's 5,100 missionaries to sign an affirmation of the SBC's 2000 Baptist Faith and Message statement. By year's end, more than 30 missionaries had resigned rather than endorse the revised faith statement.

Meanwhile, trustees of the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board decided that while the agency's Chaplaincy Commission "is committed to endorse chaplains, both men and women," it will no longer endorse women who have been ordained.

■ **March.** Evangelist Billy Graham issued a written apology

□ See 2002 reflections: ..., page 6

## The gift of giving



**MOUNTAIN OUTREACH** Students at Cumberland College's Mountain Outreach ministry organized the 10th annual Christmas gift day for local residents. Parents in need received two toys and clothing for each child. More than 1,000 children are receiving Christmas gifts as a result of the ministry. (Cumberland College photo by Tim Branstetter)

## Christmas ministries help others be heroes

It's better to give than to receive, but what about when you have nothing to give?

Baptists throughout the commonwealth came to the rescue this Christmas, donating gifts to inmates and low-income families who otherwise wouldn't have anything to place under the tree.

One of the largest efforts is in Owensboro, where several churches take part in an annual gift drive for children of inmates at the Daviess County Jail.

The local Daviess-McLean Baptist Association is continuing a tradition believed to have started in the 1980s.

This year, Owensboro churches provided presents for 800 children, ages 12 and under. The record number surpassed last year's previous high of 700 gifts.

With a modest \$10 limit set for presents, people purchased such items as watches, stuffed animals, footballs and basketballs.

Volunteers delivered gifts to area residents Dec. 21, while 350 gifts for children around Kentucky and the nation were mailed earlier that week.

All gifts carried tags identifying the inmate as the giver. Each package included a second gift—a "Here's Hope" New Testament.

"This is an example of 'It's the thought that counts,'" said Jerry Tooley, the association's director of missions. "You take a child who isn't getting that much for Christmas and a basketball or a stuffed animal means a lot."

With 40 people wrapping presents Dec. 14 and an equal number helping



**SANTA'S LITTLE HELPERS** Mary Chamberlain and Pauline Law wrap gifts for children of inmates at the Daviess County Jail. Volunteers from Baptist churches in and around Owensboro donated gifts for 800 children.

It's better to



GIVE

deliver them the following Saturday, Tooley estimates 60 volunteers from at least 13 churches were involved in this year's effort.

Counting those who buy presents boosts the number to more than 100, he said.

"This is a big one," Tooley said of associational activities. "You get a variety of groups working together. It's a good thing and a unifying thing as well."

The tradition began with part-time jail chaplain Don Bratcher in the 1980s and early '90s. It continues under Curtis Daugherty.

(Since it now provides housing for inmates from other counties in the region and the state, the jail has more than 500 inmates, the chaplain said.)

Daugherty, who handles the request forms, estimates 95 percent of the inmates want to participate in the program.

Don James, pastor of Sugar Grove Baptist Church, helps coordinate gift collection from the association's 60 churches. "Folks who work in it seem to get a lot of satisfaction out of it."

Through he has helped with the gift-giving effort since 1996, James still doesn't know what to call it. Some people call it "jail ministry Christmas" or "children's Christmas," he noted, but nothing has stuck.

Regardless of its label, the Sugar Grove pastor knows the effort reaps rewards.

"What I get out of it is hearing about letters from the families," James □ See Kentucky Baptists ..., page 3

# BAPTISTS

## Land joins call for Lott to resign

WASHINGTON (BP)—Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, has joined the list of people calling for Sen. Trent Lott's resignation as Senate majority leader.

Land said he has seen no evidence of racial bigotry in the Mississippi Republican, but Lott's recent comments about Strom Thurmond's segregationist presidential campaign in 1948 reveal "an enormous and glaring blind spot in his personal understanding of just how wrong and evil segregation was and how horrific the privations were that were visited on African-Americans during that period."

Lott "has compromised his ability to be a national leader for the Republican Party, because he will be forever perceived at best as insensitive on these issues and at worst as prejudiced," Land said. "And sometimes you have to put the good of your cause above yourself. If he does that, he will resign."

## Two Missouri entities file counter-suits

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (BP)—Missouri Baptist College and the Missouri Baptist Foundation—two of the five Missouri Baptist Convention institutions that adopted self-perpetuating boards—have filed counter-lawsuits against the MBC.

Named as defendants are the MBC and the six Missouri Baptist churches that have joined in a declaratory judgment petition seeking to restore the five entities' accountability to MBC churches. The counter-lawsuits, also filed in Cole County Circuit Court, allege that the MBC nominating committee violated the MBC constitution by announcing its guidelines for nominations.

Mike Whitehead, the chief legal counsel for the MBC, said the guidelines "sought to give greater representation among the churches by allowing a person to serve on only one agency board at a time and allowing a

single church to have no more than two members serving on boards at one time."

The guidelines also sought to select individuals who would agree to be supportive of the MBC and the Southern Baptist Convention, he said.

Missouri Baptist College's counter-suit contends that the nominating committee did not consult enough with the college about its wishes for nominees. The suit also contends the convention did not give sufficient consideration to the college's requests for nominees.

Whitehead responded that the convention "did what it was clearly authorized to do—elect trustees after consultation."

The Missouri Baptist Foundation's lawsuit asks the court to rule that everything the foundation did in establishing a self-perpetuating board was legal and aboveboard.

The foundation's suit describes the current MBC leadership as "politically motivated Baptists" who have "exerted great influence over the Missouri Baptist Convention, causing great concern for many Missouri Baptists."

In a related development, Bart Tichenor, the former MBC attorney who is seeking to intervene on behalf of the five entities, has filed a motion objecting to the deposition he will be required to give. Tichenor affirms in the motion that he at "no time advised or counseled the defendant corporations relative to taking actions to amend their charters in any form or fashion."

Tichenor charged that the purpose of the deposition is not to obtain admissible evidence but is "for the purpose of harassing" him because of his objection to the filing of the pending suit and because of his efforts to file a brief on behalf of the five entities.

## Shorter College, GBC file competing lawsuits

ROME, Ga. (ABP)—Shorter College has filed a lawsuit against the Georgia Baptist Convention to recover funds the GBC has withheld from the school since last January.

The convention has filed a counter-lawsuit claiming rightful ownership of the college and seeking to regain control of trustee selection.

Shorter created a self-perpetuating board last month after the convention elected trustees other than candidates from a list approved by the college. Shorter adopted a bylaw change last May requiring such approval.

Trustees also voted to seek approximately \$8 million designated for capital improvement and other funds being held in the college's name in the Georgia Baptist Foundation. They filed suit in an effort to retrieve those funds.

The GBC Executive Committee went into executive session during its Dec. 10 meeting to respond to Shorter College's actions. Members attending were required to sign statements pledging confidentiality.

Georgia Baptist officials would not release information from that meeting. However, in a statement released Dec. 16 to the Rome News-Tribune, the convention revealed a counter-lawsuit was filed against the college Dec. 12. The suit claims that Shorter President Ed Schrader and the board of trustees used "scheme and conspiracy" to "illegally convert, take over and steal Shorter from the GBC."

Shorter officials maintain that giving the trustee board more control over the future selection of trustees was a necessary response to concerns raised by a committee reviewing the

school's accreditation. GBC leaders argue that the college trumped up the accreditation issue to justify pulling the college away from the convention out of fear of a fundamentalist takeover.

The college received reaffirmation of its accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Dec. 10, the same day the GBC Executive Committee met behind closed doors.

Meanwhile, in a separate action, a motion to intervene in the GBC lawsuit was filed Dec. 13 by a group of current Shorter trustees who disagree with the college's actions. Included in the group are individuals elected to the board last month by the GBC who reportedly were prevented by Schrader from taking their seats on the board.

## Martin, pastor in Germany, named director of European convention

FRANKFORT, Germany—Jimmy Martin, pastor of Faith Baptist Church in Kaiserslautern, Germany, has been elected general secretary of the European Baptist Convention.

The EBC, a fellowship of English-language churches and missions in Europe, currently is involved in a mission partnership with the Kentucky Baptist Convention. The European convention is closely related to the Southern Baptist Convention, and is a member of the European Baptist Federation and Baptist World Alliance.

Martin, a native of Texas, was pastor of several Texas Baptist churches before moving to Germany in 1993. Faith Baptist Church is an international congregation, comprised primarily of American military members and their families, and defense contractors. The Kaiserslautern area is home to the U.S. Air Force in Europe headquarters in Ramstein and the Landstuhl Army Regional Medical Center which serves all of Europe.

The European Baptist Convention has 68 churches in 22 countries in Europe and the Middle East. With English as the common language, the EBC has a growing number of international churches in Western and Eastern Europe.

Martin is a graduate of East Texas Baptist University in Marshall and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. He and his wife, Laurie, have three daughters. Martin, who has served as pastor of Faith Church for almost 10 years, is a former president of the EBC. He will begin his new position in January.



## Mohler, others debate biblical authority during 'Donahue' show

NEW YORK (BP)—A lively televised debate about gospel exclusivity Dec. 17 resulted in a sharp contrast between conservative and liberal Christian views.

Al Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, on MS-NBC's "Donahue," defended the belief that Jesus Christ is the only way to salvation.

Although Mohler was called a "spiritual racist" by a Jewish rabbi in the opening segment, it was a debate with Union Theological Seminary President Joseph Hough later in the show that resulted in the most spirited exchange.

Mohler made it clear he believed "Jesus is the only way" and on several occasions quoted John 14:6.

But Hough took exception to evangelicals' beliefs, even saying God could possibly be a "she."

"The basic problem I think here is that their God is too small," Hough said of evangelicals. "For me, I'm passionately Christian. I am a Christian. I believe in Jesus as the One Who showed me the way. But I would be the last person to be so arrogant as to assert that my God has so little imagination that She or He could not reach out to other people in other cultures and other ways."

Host Phil Donahue told Hough, "You speak for me."

Hough also said that "those who claim that they know who is going to be saved" have scandalized Christ's name. "I think God knows who is going to be saved. I'm happy to leave it in God's hands," he said.

Mohler said his views parallel the beliefs of the church since its inception.

"This is what Christianity has represented throughout the centuries," Mohler said. "That's just an historical fact. Liberal Protestants, like Dr. Hough, have moved away from a doctrine of biblical authority."

With Hough responding, "That's not true," Mohler asked: "Do you believe that Jesus said, 'I am the Way, the Truth and the Life, no man comes to the Father but by Me?'"

"I don't know whether Jesus said that or whether John wrote it," Hough responded.

"It was written in the Word," Mohler said.

"Don't you know about historical criticism?" Hough asked Mohler. "If you did, then you would know that that book was written in the second century."

Mohler responded, "You take the Jesus of your scholarly imagination, and I'll take the Jesus of the gospel."

## Graham, Olympic ministry among memories this year

By Trennis Henderson  
Editor

Unity was the key word in Kentucky Baptist Convention life in 2002.

Building on the momentum of the KBC's Baptist Faith and Message study committee proposal adopted last year by state convention messengers, KBC Executive Director Bill Mackey noted, "It is obvious to me that God is at work in bringing a sense of peace, mutual respect and reconciliation to Kentucky Baptists."

Examples of unity during the year ranged from the spiritual—the KBC's "100 Days of Prayer" emphasis—to the political—the election of KBC President Paul Badgett by acclamation.

Badgett, supported both by conservative and moderate leaders in the state, was the first KBC president in more than a decade elected without opposition.

Other top Kentucky Baptist-related stories of 2002 include:

**2. Sept. 11 remembrance.** One year after the devastating terrorist attacks in New York, Pennsylvania and Washington, the tragedy continues to impact the nation and world. Kentucky Baptists, like others throughout the nation, gathered Sept. 11 on the first anniversary of the attacks. In a service of remembrance sponsored by the KBC and Long Run Baptist Association, former Miss America Heather French Henry called on participants to "take off the chains of self-righteousness" and "don the cloak of

compassion."

**3. Billy Graham mission.** For the second year in a row, evangelist Billy Graham led evangelistic services supported by Kentucky Baptists. The Greater Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky Billy Graham Mission, held June 27-30 in Cincinnati, attracted more than 200,000 people and resulted in more than 11,200 public decisions for Christ.

**4. Children's Homes' property sale.** Leaders of the Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children announced plans in February to sell the agency's Spring Meadows and Glen Dale campuses and build two regional care centers. Some Kentucky Baptists, including KBC President Harold Greenfield, opposed the plan. The KBC Executive Board rejected an attempt by Greenfield in May to escrow the KBHC's Cooperative Program budget increase for the year.

KBHC President Bill Smithwick announced in October that officials are negotiating with a development group to purchase the Spring Meadows campus. That sale still is pending and the Glen Dale campus remains on the market.

**5. Mission Study Committee.** KBC leaders established a Mission Study Committee in March to evaluate KBC ministry needs for the 21st century. The 15-member committee, scheduled to present its final report to the KBC Executive Board next May, is responsible for reviewing changing

ministry needs of Kentucky Baptist churches; KBC ministry objectives; leadership and organizations needs to fulfill those objectives; and necessary financial resources.

"I think we need to take a hard look periodically at how we do things and how we're doing," Mackey noted. He said the term "mission" is "intended to include everything we do—the mission from the Lord."

**6. Disaster relief.** From Harlan to Providence and New York to Georgia, Kentucky Baptist disaster relief workers provided physical, emotional and spiritual aid to people in need. Floods in Eastern Kentucky and tornadoes in Western Kentucky were among major disasters that prompted Kentucky Baptist relief teams to mobilize. Several volunteers also traveled last week to Durham, N.C., to assist in clean up in the wake of recent ice storms.

**7. Gambling, alcohol battles.** A push by gambling advocates to legalize slot machines at Kentucky race tracks failed to make it to the floor of the Kentucky House of Representatives for a vote this year. Efforts to liberalize alcohol laws in the commonwealth also were rejected. KBC leaders worked closely with the Kentucky League on Alcohol and Gambling Problems to monitor such legislative issues and stop the spread of gambling and access to alcohol.

**8. Ten Commandments.** The right of schools, courts and other public facilities to post copies of the Ten

Commandments continued to be fought this year in the court system.

In May, a federal judge ordered Grayson County officials to remove from the county courthouse a religious and historical display that included the Ten Commandments. It was the fifth time in two years that a federal judge has blocked the posting of the commandments on Kentucky public property. Similar suits were pending in Garrard, Mercer and Rowan counties.

In October, a federal appeals court ruled 2-1 that a law adopted in 2000 by the Kentucky legislature requiring the erection of a Ten Commandments monument outside the Capitol is unconstitutional.

**9. Olympic ministry.** Though the 2002 Winter Olympics were held hundreds of miles from Kentucky in Salt Lake City, Kentucky Baptists still had a significant ministry presence during the international sports event. More than 30 people with Kentucky ties traveled to Utah to sing, serve and share the gospel with Olympic guests. Beth Ann Williams, a native of Kentucky, headed Southern Baptists' Global Outreach 2002 ministry emphasis.

**10. Baptist Seminary of Kentucky.** Six years after incorporating as Baptist Seminary of Kentucky, the moderate seminary began offering its first classes this fall at Calvary Baptist Church in Lexington. President Greg Earwood announced in October that Dalen Jackson had been elected as the school's first full-time faculty member. The seminary enrolled 14 students in its inaugural classes.



### BLUEGRASS BURGEO

■ **Dannah Prather**, associate director of communications for Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children, has been named communication and grant writing coordinator for Baptist Children's Home and Family Services of Illinois.

■ "Leading Turnaround Churches" will be the theme of the 2003 Deacons, Pastors and Spouses Retreat, Feb. 7-8 at Cave City Convention Center. The Kentucky Baptist Convention's church growth team sponsors the annual retreat. Gene Wood, pastor of Grace Church in Glendora, Calif., will be the featured speaker. Wood has more than 25 years of ministry experience and has led four churches in the turnaround process.

## Kentucky Baptists helping others provide gifts this Christmas

Continued from page 1

said. "We have people saying they read the New Testament and accepted Christ as their Savior.

"One lady called the association office, crying, and said it was the only present her child got. That makes you feel like you're trying to build a bridge to some very needy families."

Some inmates have volunteered to help with the project after their release, one of its many heartwarming aspects.

Daugherty said he's touched every time he gets a call or letter of appreciation. But the most rewarding thing, he said, is learning when someone becomes a Christian because of the ministry.

It reminds him of his own conversion, which took place in 1980 after he heard the gospel from a preacher who visited the Henderson County Jail every Sunday.

Daugherty said he accepted Christ as his personal Savior after he posted bond on a drunken-driving charge. It happened as he stood on the banks of the Ohio River, preparing to drink a six pack of beer.

"The Lord started dealing with my heart," he said. "I threw that six pack in the river and haven't had one since. Some people said I got jail house religion, but I got saved and I've never gotten over it."

### Mountain Outreach

In the mountains of Eastern Ken-

tucky, Cumberland College students help adults and kids have something to give on Christmas.

For 10 years, the school's Mountain Outreach ministry has provided free toys to low-income families. This year the ministry helped parents of more than 1,000 children, according to Mountain Outreach Director David Honeycutt.

"Our first parent arrived at 7 o'clock Friday night and stayed all night to be able to get toys for his children for Christmas," Honeycutt said, adding that the wind chill that night was 6 degrees.

Parents are asked to show proof that the children live in their home before they are allowed to look for gifts, Honeycutt said. Parents are allowed two toys per child and unlimited clothing.

For the past two years, Mountain Outreach also has offered a day for children to get into the giving spirit.

During the children's gift day, 85 kids took home gifts to give to their parents and siblings.

Working with low-income families has a significant impact on the 22 college students who participated, Honeycutt said.

"A lot of the students have never seen poverty before and have never grown up in these situations, so it changes them," he said. "It changes their perspective on life, makes them very appreciative for what they have."

Several students who work with Mountain Outreach have gone on to do short-term or long-term missions work after graduation, he added.

### Angel Tree

David Parker doesn't stop helping prison inmates when he takes down the Christmas tree.

As coordinator for the restorative justice team for Kentucky Baptist Brotherhood, Parker works throughout the year.

But at Christmastime, Parker coordinates Angel Tree, a project of the Prison Fellowship ministry, at his church, First Baptist of Madisonville.

"This is our fourth year to do it," Parker said. "Our church really loves it."

Prison Fellowship collects requests from inmates around the country. The requests then are forwarded to participating churches.

This year, First Baptist is serving about 90 children of inmates throughout Kentucky as well as in Indiana and Texas.

First Baptist hosts a Christmas party for the inmates' families. The program includes singing carols, a visit from Santa Claus and a reading of the Christmas story. Families also receive a fruit basket from the church.

Volunteers never know what will excite the children, Parker noted. "I can remember one time when we had to deliver the gifts. . . . We had the gifts all wrapped up and the fruit basket and the kid ran to the fruit basket."



Parker said he never envisioned himself involved in prison ministry. "It wasn't my decision, I would have never chosen it."

He said working at an "Experiencing God" weekend at the Eddyville state prison convinced him that God wanted him to get involved in prison ministry.

"I was scared to death going in and coming out I was just stunned, I think," he said. "I changed my life and surrendered my life to do whatever the Lord wanted me to do."

Children's reactions to their gifts often are emotional, he added.

Parker recalled one child who kept touching the gift from his father. "He said, 'This is the first time my dad has given me anything.'"

Compiled from reporting by State Correspondent Ken Walker and News Director David Winfrey

It's better to



**STORY TIME** A volunteer for First Baptist Church of Madisonville reads a story to children taking part in the Angel Tree ministry. The church annually helps approximately 90 children of prison inmates receive gifts from their incarcerated parent.

## WESTERN RECORDER

P.O. Box 43969  
Louisville, KY 40253  
(USPS 679-380)

**TRENNIS HENDERSON**  
Editor

**DAVID WINFREY**  
News Director

**MAURI SMITH**  
Marketing & Business  
Manager

**JOYCE MARTIN**  
Partnership Editions  
Editor

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

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## Teach the next generation

By Larry Burkett

ATLANTA (BP)—Many people have financial problems these days. Will our children's generation be better money managers? There is hope for the future if parents will take the first steps toward achieving the goal of influencing their children.

Children today often aren't even sure what their parents do for a living. If parents have financial difficulties, the children might not even be aware of it. There is little direct correlation between work, money and goods; and, some of us have lost track of the value of money. When we sign our names on credit card slips it doesn't seem like we're spending money. At that moment, we're not. But reality sets in when we're still making payments on items that are consumed, broken, worn out or no longer "in."

However, when we work hard and sacrifice in order to save for things we want, take time to make informed decisions and try to get the best value for our hard-earned money, we're teaching our children something our culture knows little about.

If we show our children how to plan ahead and save, they'll be less prone to emotional impulse buying. And, in doing so, they'll see the results and feel good about themselves and the decisions they've made.

■ **Want versus wait.** Today, in places like Japan, where housing costs are astronomical, 90-year, three-generation loans are offered. Banks and merchants look for new ways to extend credit. Not many years ago a person couldn't qualify for a credit card without a good income, but now unsolicited credit cards are given to high school students.

People are accustomed to living on assumed wealth rather than earned wealth, because people buy things they can't afford with credit so they can have them now.

■ **Creating needs to fill.** One of the biggest offenders in today's atti-

tudes about money is the advertising industry. When advertising first began, its purpose was to tell people about the benefits of a product. Then, if consumers needed the product, they'd buy it.

Then the message changed from telling people about products, to trying to convince consumers of the need for products they never heard of. We've gone from "find a need and fill it" to "create a need and fill it."

■ **Train up a child.** When parents keep silent, advertising and the media become their children's financial teachers.

Joshua led one of Israel's finest generations. They took the Promised Land, but then they got so busy building a life there that they forgot to build a future for their children. The Bible says, "All that generation also were gathered to their fathers; and there arose another generation after them who did not know the Lord, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel. Then the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals, and they forsook the Lord, the God of their fathers" (Judges 2:10-14).

The Israelites began to lose the Promised Land, because they didn't teach their children to follow God. Training children to follow God is the responsibility of parents.

■ **God's training method.** Training our children means more than teaching children that the Bible is our guide and that God's principles are the ones to follow. They need to know why.

God instructs us to teach children this way: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), so that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth. Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:1-4).

We need to show our children that

## COMMENTARY

## PARTNERS IN THE MISSION

### Christmas is Christ's presence

One of the meaningful ways for me to experience the reality of Christmas is through the words of the Gospel writers.

■ **Christmas is Jesus present with us.** "Behold a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a Son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel which being interpreted is, God with us" (Matthew 1:23).

When we gather in celebration and worship and Bible study, Jesus is present. As we come together in families as people of faith, Jesus is with us. During difficult and challenging times, Jesus is with us.

This Christmas, our family will gather at our daughter's home in Philadelphia where we also will celebrate the birth of a new grandson. John William Nepa was born Dec. 18. It will be a special celebration of praise

and thanksgiving to God for a healthy mother and child. God is with us and God is with you.

■ **Jesus is present in our confession of Him as Savior and Lord.** "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11).



Bill Mackey

The writer is very clear that Jesus is a very special gift for you. God has done an awesome redemptive work in providing your Savior and Lord.

When you confess Jesus as Savior and Lord He is present with you. It is the Holy Spirit who enables you to make that confession.

■ **Jesus is present in the life and work of fellow Christian believers.** "And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and

God's ways and principles work out best for us, because God is good and faithful and loves us.

■ **An indicator of the heart.** Understanding biblical financial principles is a critical part of a child's training, because our attitudes toward finances are indicators of our hearts. Jesus said, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:21).

In Jesus' teachings and parables—whether the rich young ruler, the lost son, the widow's mite, the sheep and the goats or many others—He taught that what we do with money and possessions is a direct reflection of what is in our hearts. A person's checkbook is like a thermometer, measuring the heat of his or her love and commitment to God and His principles.

You "cannot serve both God and wealth" (Luke 16:13). You will serve one or the other, your heart will be devoted to the one you serve, and your actions demonstrate which one you serve.

A person's heart will follow where his or her treasure has been buried. So, if we teach our children God's way of handling finances, they will learn His principles and be better equipped to govern their whole lives according to those principles.

■ **Begin today.** Statistics show that 85 percent of the people who accept Jesus as Savior do so before the age of 18. And it is estimated that more than 50 percent of the world's population is now under the age of 18.

Christian parents need to work with their children and train them as godly leaders for the next generation. If their lives are grounded in biblical truths, they won't be carried away like their peers, and they will be ready to reap the plentiful harvest of which Jesus spoke. Prepare your children with lives that are founded on the eternal principles of God, rather than on the passing fancies of popular thought.

Remember Jesus' words: "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Luke 12:34).

Larry Burkett, a Southern Baptist layman based in Gainesville, Ga., is the host of the national "Money Matters" radio program

## CHURCH

### Take initiative to make Christmas season special

By Doug Strader

Christmas is a wonderful time of the year for many people. But for others, it is not such a wonderful time.



Not everyone is a Christian. They do not know the real reason for the

season because they do not know Jesus as Savior and Lord. Then some people live alone without any immediate family living nearby, thus no family with whom to celebrate and enjoy the season. Some others are physically sick and unable to get out and enjoy the Christmas season. There are many other reasons why people do not look forward to the Christmas season. What can we do to alleviate some of these problems?

■ We can be sensitive to those around us who need our prayers and our presence during the Christmas season.

■ Bake some cookies, candy, breads, etc., and share with people who need some special attention. (Be aware that some people have special dietary needs.)

■ Invite someone to your home to have a meal with you and your family during the Christmas season.

■ Offer to go shopping for those who are unable to drive or those who are homebound.

■ Offer to take someone to church for any special Christmas services.

■ Buy gifts for people who live on a limited income and might not be able to purchase gifts this year. (It might be too late this year, but next year you can plan to participate with groups that provide toys and clothes to the less fortunate ones in your community.)

■ Make a gift to your church's Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions. The Southern Baptist International Mission Board depends on this offering each year for nearly half of its budget.

■ Make a contribution through your church for world hunger relief. Millions of people around the world will not know about Christmas Day, but they will still be hungry.

■ Give through some mission group in your town or community to help meet basic needs of people in your community.

On Christmas God gave His One and Only to us, and now it is our opportunity to give back to Him, by giving to His children.

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

## How can divorced parents help kids cope with holiday season?

**Q: My husband and I divorced this past year after 17 years of marriage. How can I help my teenagers through the Christmas and New Year's holidays?**

The first year after a divorce or any loss seems to be marked by "trigger events" that call up experiences of grief. Certainly Christmas and the entire holiday season are powerful times that bring back memories from past years.

Be aware that regardless of how hard you try to help your children, you cannot keep them from grief. Be aware that this grief process might consist of shock and numbness; denial and fantasy; anger and guilt; depression, fear and loneliness; and acceptance. There are some things you can do to help your teens deal with their grief in a healthy manner:

- Be willing to talk with them about their feelings and to acknowledge some of your own.
- Release yourself from the expectations that you have to keep every tradition from the past. You might choose to start several new traditions.
- Be flexible concerning visitation and custody issues so as not to make your children pawns in an ongoing power struggle between you and your ex-spouse.
- Recognize that the path of healing is marked by service to others. Involve your children and yourself in some activity that provides tangible help for those who are needy or hurting.
- Help your children focus on how the birth of Christ and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit can speak to them during this season and throughout the year.—*Scott Wigginton*

## Q: How can Christian families effectively celebrate the Christmas season without giving in to secular commercialism?

To celebrate Christmas is to remember Jesus, a humble little baby born into poverty in a manger. It is to remember a young teenage mother. It is to remember Mary's pain in giving birth to Jesus. It is to remember baby Jesus cuddling with her.

To celebrate Christmas is to worship the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Prince of Peace, Wonderful Savior. It is to worship Jesus, the love of our lives. It is to pray for peace on earth.

To celebrate Christmas is to remember the poor, with no presents, no turkey, no dressing, no pies, no nice clothes, no toys, no visitors. It is to remember that they are precious in God's eyes. They are loved by Jesus in a special way, and often their only present is Jesus' presence in their midst.

To celebrate Christmas is to pray for every person who sends you and your family a Christmas card. It is to pray for blessings for the people we love. It is to pray for forgiveness for the people who hurt us. It is to pray for forgiveness for our sins. It is to let God love us as we sit quietly thinking about memories of Christmas past.—*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.*



## Take time to hear the voices of Christmas

As we celebrate the holy season of the birth of Jesus, it's easy to let the blaring sounds of the holiday rush drown out the soft, gentle cooing of a newborn babe in a makeshift crib.

As you tear open packages, feast on turkey and ham and visit with family and friends, take a few moments to consider anew the true voices of Christmas:

■ **The prophet Isaiah:** "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned. You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy. ... For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, and the government will be upon His shoulders. And He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end. ... The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this" (Isaiah 9:2-3, 6-7). Written more than 700 years before the birth of Christ, Isaiah's prophecy eloquently described the far-reaching ministry of the eternal Prince of Peace.

■ **The prophet Micah:** "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me One who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from everlasting. ... He will stand and shepherd His flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord His God. ... And this One will be our peace" (Micah 5:2, 4-5). Micah, a contemporary of Isaiah, prophesied with pinpoint precision about the birth of the Messiah in the tiny Judean village of Bethlehem.

■ **The angel of the Lord:** "Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: When His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she

was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit. And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man, and not wanting to disgrace her, desired to put her away secretly. But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying: 'Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for that which has been conceived in

her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins'" (Matthew 1:18-21). The purpose of Jesus' earthly ministry never was in question, even before His miraculous physical birth. In the clear, concise words of the angel of God, Christ came to earth to "save His people from their sins."

■ **Simeon.** "Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon. ... It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. ... When the parents brought in the

child Jesus, to carry out for Him the custom of the Law, Simeon took Him in his arms and praised God, saying: 'Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, You now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to Your people Israel'" (Luke 2:25-32). The infant Jesus was only a few weeks old when Simeon proclaimed that Christ had come to offer salvation to Jews and Gentiles alike.

Prophets, an angel and a righteous man who held the Christ Child in his arms—surely their voices can point us to the Christ of Christmas. No matter what else you do this season, don't miss the true voices of Christmas.

**STRAIGHT FROM THE EDITOR**



Trennis Henderson

## Where is Jesus during 'happy holidays'?

By Henlee Barnette

The Western Recorder recently carried three interesting articles on Christological ethics: "War with Iraq: What would Jesus do?," "Be prepared to defend the truth about Jesus," and "What would Jesus drive?" (The latter was inspired by the popular slogan WWJD?—"What would Jesus do?")

Some religious leaders are urging people to think about the moral issue of driving large cars that pollute the air. They are arguing that Jesus would drive smaller and more fuel-efficient autos.

Here is another Christological question: Where is Jesus?

Where is Jesus during the "happy holidays" filled with frantic buying compelled by commercialism with the sound of "Jingle Bells," "Frosty the Snowman" and "Rudolph the Red-nosed Reindeer?"

One Christmas we presented our little daughter with a toy telephone. We listened to hear whom she would call. It was Jesus and she asked, "Where are you?" Obviously there was no answer. Then she put the question to me. I gave her the popular runaround: Jesus is in heaven and

everywhere. Later I explained in more detail:

■ *Jesus is wherever there is ministry to human need.* Our service to others will be the criteria of the last judgment (Matthew 25:31-46). "Inasmuch" as we serve another person in need, we serve Christ incognito. Services rendered to Jesus' "brethren" are services rendered to Him. Brethren is a reference to Jesus' disciples who

### FIRST PERSON

have the love of Christ in their hearts. It also extends to all Christians in need to whom we minister. This is where Jesus is. He is incognito in the Christian who is served—the least, the "rank and file," the prisoner, the poor. "Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me" (Matthew 25:40).

■ *Jesus is where two or three are gathered in His name.* "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there I am in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20). The living Jesus is spiritually present in the fellowship of His followers. When we meet together in Jesus' name for worship, we have assurance of His presence. It is not just that He will be there, but He is there.

One does not have to be in a mega-congregation or gathering to witness the presence of Christ. Where only a handful come together in His name, Christ is present. It is not necessarily the crowd that attracts the presence of Christ, but the faith of those who come together, even in small groups.

■ *Jesus is where His followers are carrying out the Great Commission.* The risen Christ meets His disciples on a mountain in Galilee. Here Jesus mandates His followers to "go and make disciples of all nations ... and I am with you day by day to the close of the age" (Matthew 28:19-20). Jesus is present with those who obediently make disciples around the world (missions and evangelism), "immersing them" (Broadus Bible) in the name of the Trinity (doctrine), teaching them all things, the whole gospel (religious education) that Jesus taught them.

"Go," "make," "teach" and "baptize" are strong imperatives essential in meeting the spiritual and moral challenges of the church today. And we have the promise of Jesus: "I am (not 'will be') with you every day, good days and bad days to the end of this age."

*Henlee Barnette is a professor emeritus at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville and a retired clinical professor at the University of Louisville School of Medicine*

## 2002 reflections: Catholic scandal, global tensions dominate news

### Terrorism tops major religion news of the year

By James Rudin  
Religion News Service

WASHINGTON (RNS)—Major religion stories of 2002 include:

1. The lethal terrorism of Muslim extremists and Wahabism, the harsh form of Islam practiced in Saudi Arabia.
2. The Catholic Church was rocked by the continuing sexual abuse scandal involving clergy.
3. Virulent anti-Semitism, both physical and verbal, erupted in the Arab Middle East, in parts of Europe, and on U.S. and Canadian college campuses.
4. A possible American-led invasion of Iraq raised age-old theological questions about determining the criteria for a "just war."
5. As the AIDS pandemic expanded throughout Africa, much of the world's religious community remained indifferent to the galloping number of deaths on that continent.
6. Church-state issues included possible publicly funded vouchers for children to attend parochial and/or private schools and rulings on posting the Ten Commandments.
7. A Vatican commission published a lengthy document that attempted to bring clarity to a 2000-year-old issue: What is the proper Christian teaching about Judaism?
8. After occupying Tibet 50 years ago, Communist China has systematically attacked the exiled Tibetan Buddhist leader, the Dalai Lama.
9. Millions of people throughout the world intensified their individual quest for "spirituality."
10. The deaths of prominent religious leaders, including Israeli diplomat Abba Eban.

Continued from page 1

for statements about a Jewish "stranglehold" on the American media that he held to the President Richard Nixon in a taped White House discussion in 1972. Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League, accepted Graham's apology.

■ **April.** Contemporary Christian music veteran Michael W. Smith garnered six Dove Awards, including Artist of the Year, during the annual ceremony of the Gospel Music Association. Third Day was named Group of the Year and ZOEgirl earned New Artist of the Year honors.

Membership in Southern Baptist churches topped 16 million in the previous year for an increase of more than 92,000 members. While membership grew, baptisms declined by more than 18,000 for a total of 395,930.

Insisting they are tired of denominational politics in the Missouri Baptist Convention, moderate Baptists launched the Baptist General Convention of Missouri. SBC leaders declined to accept Cooperative Program gifts from the new convention. Factional strife has dominated Missouri Baptist life in recent years, as conservatives and moderates faced off in campaigns for MBC leadership posts. Five MBC agencies switched to self-perpetuating boards during the previous year and MBC leaders responded by filing suit against the entities.

■ **May.** Embattled accounting firm Arthur Andersen, reeling from ties to the Enron scandal, reached a settlement related to the bankruptcy of the Baptist Foundation of Arizona. The \$217 million settlement followed an earlier agreement that fell through when Andersen said its insurance carrier could not pay. The foundation collapse cost about 13,000 investors an estimated \$570 million.

North Korea, Turkmenistan and Sudan head the list of nations violating religious freedom, according to the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. The organization urged Congress to fund a study to expose human rights abuses in North Korea and elsewhere.

An 81-year-old tax break for clergy housing expenses became law after President Bush signed a bill that protects it from possible court action.

The Clergy Housing Allowance Clarification Act, adopted in response to a lawsuit filed by California pastor Rick Warren, allows clergy to deduct from their taxable income the portion of their salary devoted to housing expenses.

■ **June.** With anger, despair and hunger soaring among Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, teams of Southern Baptist volunteers delivered food and hope. "Project Future and Hope" involved volunteers working alongside Arab Baptists in Palestinian towns and refugee camps.

American missionary Martin Burnham and Filipino nurse Deborah Yap were killed in a gun battle June 7 a little more than a year after they were kidnapped in the Philippines by Muslim extremists. Burnham's wife, Gracia, was injured as Philippine troops fought with their captors. The Burnhams had served in the Philippines with New Tribes Mission since 1986.

Southern Baptist Convention messengers elected Texas pastor Jack Graham as SBC president and adopted the "Empowering Kingdom Growth" ministry emphasis during their June 11-12 annual meeting in St. Louis. During the pre-convention Pastors' Conference, former SBC President Jerry Vines sparked controversy by calling Mohammed a "demon-possessed pedophile."

■ **July.** The Southern Baptist North American Mission Board, at odds with the District of Columbia Baptist Convention, notified the D.C. convention that it will end the cooperative agreement between the two entities next summer. NAMB, which has provided nearly \$500,000 annually to the DCBC, sought to gain greater accountability from the D.C. convention. DCBC Executive Director Jeffrey Haggray called the proposal an "ultimatum" that violated the convention's autonomy.

The 11-year conflict between the SBC and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship reached the international stage at a Baptist World Alliance meeting in Seville, Spain. Despite SBC leaders' opposition, the BWA's membership committee issued a report outlining the criteria for CBF to

be recommended next year for BWA membership.

■ **August.** In a lawsuit similar to one pending against Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children, a Methodist shelter for Georgia foster children has been sued by gay rights activists who claim the agency uses state money to discriminate in hiring and fund religious indoctrination. An ACLU suit against the KBHC was filed three years ago after children's home officials fired a lesbian staff member.

The "Jesus" film, the most translated film in history, has passed a new milestone with viewership exceeding 5 billion people. The film has been viewed in every country of the world.

■ **September.** Joining hands and prayers, worshippers at Washington National Cathedral gathered as did others across the country Sept. 11 to mark the date of last year's terrorist attacks. At the Pentagon, President Bush said, "Here, and in Pennsylvania and in New York, we honor each name and each life. We ask God to bring comfort to every home where they are loved and missed."

■ **October.** As President Bush narrows his sights on Iraq, prominent Baptist ethicists are voicing differing views on the moral criteria for war. James Dunn, former head of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, said Bush could make a case for war but has not convinced the public there is no other alternative. Richard Land, president of the SBC Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, said mili-

tary action against Saddam Hussein's regime can be justified under "just war" ethical standards.

A limestone ossuary dating to approximately A.D. 63 is being heralded as "the first-ever archaeological discovery to corroborate biblical references to Jesus," according to Biblical Archaeology Review. An inscription on the box reads "James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus."

■ **November.** White House officials pronounced President Bush's faith-based initiative dead in the Senate. The plan's chief sponsor, Sen. Rick Santorum, R-Pa., tried to bring the measure to the Senate floor Nov. 14 but was blocked by Sen. Jack Reed, D-R.I., who is concerned that federal money could be used for proselytizing and discrimination.

The Ten Commandments monument placed in the rotunda of Alabama's judicial building by Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore was ruled unconstitutional Nov. 18 by a federal judge. U.S. District Judge Myron Thompson gave Moore 30 days to remove the 5,300-pound granite monument he had secretly installed in July.

■ **December.** Former President Jimmy Carter, the second U.S. Baptist to receive the Nobel Peace Prize, accepted the award Dec. 10. In a warning about U.S. foreign policy, Carter said all war is "evil," even when it is necessary.

Unable to increase federal assistance to faith-based organizations through legislation, President Bush signed executive orders Dec. 12 to accomplish many of the same goals.

2002  
A year in review

### Calling all Campers on Mission!

For the last few years, one of the keys to our summer success at Cedarmore has been the active support of Campers on Mission. These Campers on Mission arrive at various times during the summer, willing to do just about anything to help us operate the various camp ministries taking place at Cedarmore.

Many of the Campers on Mission are retirees who still have lots of energy and commitment to our ministry. Most come in their RVs and hook up at our Guy King RV Park while they are with us. They work all over Cedarmore, doing everything from driving the "food vans" to working in the dining room to selling concessions to working the front desk to caring for the grounds and maintenance.

Over the course of the summer, relationships grow as the Campers on Mission get to know one another. Many already come with friends.

Ed and Wanda Lyons coordinate the Campers on Mission at Cedarmore. For the last several summers, they have provided valuable assistance to our Cedarmore staff as they arrange arrival dates, times and work with the Campers on Mission and our leadership to determine responsibilities. Even as you read this,

they already are working to recruit volunteers for the summer of 2003.

I have written in the past of my sincere appreciation for the work of the many volunteers who help us at both Cedarmore and Jonathan Creek. Each spring a big group of Kentucky Campers on Mission join us to help us make improvements in our properties and get ready for summer. Last spring this group made a huge difference at Jonathan Creek, even building our "gate house" at our front entrance to the property.

I thank each of you who have come at one time or another over the last five years. We would not be where we are today without the help of volunteers and Campers on Mission. Won't you consider joining our volunteer team next summer at Cedarmore? If you are interested, contact Ed and Wanda Lyons through our Cedarmore property. Call Cedarmore at (502) 747-8911. We'll put you in touch with them. We need your help next summer. Come see God at work in the lives of nearly 3,000 teens and children at the various Cedarmore camps!

Rusty Ellison is president of Kentucky Baptist Assemblies, Box 43364, Louisville, KY 40253-0364. Call (502) 499-8655

#### KENTUCKY BAPTIST ASSEMBLIES



Rusty Ellison

A Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols  
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- Charitable Organizations and Child Transportation Businesses are at Risk!



## NATIONAL NOTES

■ **Judge to appeal Commandments ruling.** Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore has filed notice that he will appeal a federal court order declaring his monument to the Ten Commandments in the state judicial building unconstitutional. "Federal district courts have no jurisdiction or authority to prohibit the acknowledgement of God that is specifically recognized in the Constitution of Alabama," Moore said in a written statement. "Our constitution provides that to establish justice, we must invoke 'the favor and guidance of Almighty God.'" The 5,300-pound monument features the King James Bible version of the Ten Commandments sitting on top of a granite block.

■ **Wiccan wants to pray for county.** A Wiccan priestess is suing her county for the right to offer prayers at meetings of county officials. Cynthia Simpson contends that the Chesterfield, County, Va., Board of Supervisors discriminated against her on the basis of her faith when it denied her request to offer the opening prayer at a board meeting. For many years, the supervisors have opened their board meetings with prayers offered by local Christian ministers and priests or Jewish rabbis. But when Simpson volunteered, the county attorney rejected the offer, stating that only "Judeo-Christian" clergy could offer prayers at county board meetings.

■ **AIDS orphans not on evangelicals' radar.** A minuscule percentage of evangelical

Christians say they would help children orphaned by AIDS, a recent survey shows. The survey, sponsored by the evangelical Christian humanitarian organization World Vision, found that 3 percent of evangelicals said they "definitely" would help children orphaned because of AIDS. Overall, 5 percent of 1,000 adults surveyed said they would help children in such a situation. "Nearly 2,000 years after Jesus gave us the parable of the Good Samaritan, we are still asking the question, 'Who is my neighbor?' And we're still getting the answer wrong," World Vision President Richard Stearns said.

■ **Many pastors differ with denomination.** Four out of 10 of the nation's Protestant pastors don't agree with their denomination on political and theological matters, a new survey shows. Ellison Research of Phoenix found that 19 percent of pastors are more liberal theologically than their denomination, 23 percent are more conservative and 59 percent say their views align with their denomination's teachings. The numbers add up to more than 100 percent because of rounding. "Theologically, about as many pastors feel their denomination is too conservative as feel it is too liberal," said Ron Sellers, president of Ellison Research.

■ **Religious freedom panel head named.** The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom named Joseph Crapa as its new executive director. Crapa will

lead the independent federal agency that advises the Bush administration and Congress on how countries treat people of faith. Crapa previously served as chief of staff to Sen. Charles E. Schumer, D-N.Y., and served as assistant administrator at the U.S. Agency for International Development during the Clinton administration.

■ **Christian Men's Network chief resigns.** The leader of the Christian Men's Network has decided to leave his position after three months. A.R. Bernard, pastor of the Christian Cultural Center, a Brooklyn, N.Y., megachurch, succeeded Ed Cole, the founder of the network, who died in August. Under Cole, the organization pioneered men's ministry, with an emphasis on discipleship and Christian character development. Bernard said, "Sadly, the philosophical and financial management differences between the late Dr. Cole's family and me are irreconcilable."

■ **Faith leaders name porn distributors.** Comcast Corp. and General Motors are the country's two biggest distributors of pornography, according to a broad-based coalition of church leaders. By carrying pay-per-view adult programming on their cable networks, the two Fortune 500 behemoths are responsible for the "mainstreaming of pornography," according to Roman Catholic Archbishop William Cardinal Keeler of Baltimore,

co-chairman of the Religious Alliance Against Pornography. Members of the broad-based group took their concerns about "white collar pornography" to Attorney General John Ashcroft earlier this month.

■ **Ohio school ends Bible distribution.** Finding a Gideons' Bible in a hotel room is nothing unusual. Finding one in a fifth-grade science class is another matter. That discovery prompted a parent's complaint in Rushville, Ohio. Rushville Middle School Principal Gene Scott has agreed to stop the practice of allowing representatives from Gideons International to enter the school to distribute copies of the New Testament. "This is my third year here, and we had not received a complaint until about a week ago," Scott said.

■ **Ad to Bush invokes Jesus about Iraq.** More than 125 Christians and Jews urged President Bush to allow Jesus to "change your mind" on war with Iraq in a full-page New York Times advertisement. The ad, paid for by Religious Leaders for Sensible Priorities, warned of a "strong faith-based revolt against war in Iraq" and said the president should listen to religious leaders. The ad said the war would be "an unprovoked, preemptive attack on a nation which is not threatening the United States." Bob Edgar, general secretary of the National Council of Churches and a former Democratic congressman from Pennsylvania, spearheaded the ad.

## Lottie would be pleased; James Burns would be surprised!

Every Southern Baptist knows that December means international missions. What does that have to do with Oneida Baptist Institute? A lot!

I doubt if the founder of our school, James A. Burns, thought in 1899 that his little mountain school someday would attract students from around the world. For 50 years, we have had students from many nations. We now have students from a dozen countries.

Southern Baptists know that Lottie Moon dedicated her life to missions in China. I believe that Lottie Moon and James A. Burns would be happy to know that OBI's ministry has reached around the world to China.

Jun Yi Bo (we call him "Gene") came to us three years ago from China. He lives near Nanning, in the state of Guangxi. Gene heard about Oneida from Christian workers serving in China. Gene's mother is a medical doctor, and his father is a professional businessman. When the opportunity was presented to Gene's parents for him to come to the United States, I am sure they had mixed emotions. They were excited at the opportunity for their son to be educated in the U.S., but they were most likely anxious about their only child leaving China. You may know that Chinese families are allowed to have only one child. Allowing that child to leave their country and care must have been a very challenging decision.

Gene made the trip halfway around the world by himself. Mrs. Underwood is the admissions director for our international students. Gene spoke no English, and she did not speak Chinese. With the help of a Chinese/American dictionary and two hours of intense effort, little by little they be-

gan to understand each other.

One can only imagine how difficult it must be to be in a foreign country trying to get an education, but not speaking or understanding the language. Possibly even more challenging was the fact that Gene did not have anyone to talk to on a daily basis. With the help of his roommates, teachers, house parents and other concerned staff, Gene began to speak and understand the English language.

We were extremely pleased, but a bit apprehensive, when he went forward during a worship service. We weren't sure he understood what he was doing. On the next school break, Gene stayed with a Christian couple who had a unique connection with him. The husband is American but his wife is Chinese. We told them about Gene's decision at church and that we were not really sure if he fully understood it. When Gene returned after the break, the couple assured us that he had, in fact, invited Christ into his life and he fully understood what he was doing. By the way, this couple now is serving in China as Christian workers.

Gene is on the honor roll and is very studious. He is focused and wants to do his very best. I am sure his parents are proud of him.

The 2002 WMU Lottie Moon Offering material says, "China is one of the most difficult places to send Christian workers. Some ... Chinese believers will return to their homeland and take with them the gospel of Jesus Christ." Oneida is helping to send the gospel around the world!

W.F. Underwood is president of Oneida Baptist Institute, P.O. Box 67, Oneida, KY 40972. [www.oneidaschool.org](http://www.oneidaschool.org); e-mail: [president@oneidaschool.org](mailto:president@oneidaschool.org)

### THIS IS ONEIDA



W.F. Underwood

## 'I was in prison and you visited me'

Saturdays and Sundays are visitation days at Bell County Forestry Camp, a minimum-security prison about 12 miles from Clear Creek. On the two weekends before Christmas the inmates presented toys to their children. Clear Creek senior Robert Lair, a volunteer chaplain, and other students organized a toy drive to help inmates secure toys for about 150 children.

Born and reared in California, Lair moved to Lexington a year after he and Debra married. His work as a truck driver exposed him to the hurting people of the cities: homeless, addicts, the physically and spiritually destitute.

"The Lord stirred my heart to go into the highways and hedges to help people know Him," Lair said.

His call to ministry came while he and his wife were members of Cane Run Baptist Church in Lexington. "The pastor and people have encouraged us so much with prayers and financial help," Lair stated.

Lair's chaplain duties include a Sunday afternoon chapel service, Bible studies and ministry/evangelism projects. "When I started, only one inmate attended," Lair said. "Now as many as eight come. My

goal in preaching is to disciple the believers and help them live for Christ when they leave." The group loves music; some inmates sing solos while others play the piano, organ and guitar. "One man feels the call to preach," Lair said. "He has preached some, and I've seen amazing growth in his life."

Local churches cooperated in a recent outreach event and also helped meet hygiene needs. Each resident received a clear plastic bag with soap, toothpaste, deodorant and a New Testament. "We reached all the inmates with God's Word," Lair said. "This also gave an opportunity for inmates to serve the Lord. One told me, 'It was good that I could give this to some who have been persecuting me and tell them Jesus loves you and died for you.' The event helped us all."

Lair is grateful for the ministry training and practical advice he receives at Clear Creek. "Prison work is difficult, but my teachers have great experience and wise counsel."

He and Debra will graduate next May and plan to enroll in New Orleans Seminary.

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

### CLEAR CREEK CHRONICLE



Bill Whittaker

# RESOURCES

## Bone box's inscription raises questions

TORONTO (BP)—Possible differences of the handwriting in the inscription on the James bone box have led critics to suggest that the phrase about Jesus could have been added by a forger.

In October, a press conference announced the discovery of an ossuary, or burial bone box, roughly 20 inches long, 10 inches wide and 12 inches high.

An inscription on the outside of the box reads, "James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus."

The box was purchased about 15 years ago for \$700 or less by a private collector in Jerusalem.

But some critics claim the inscription appears to be written in two different hands.

Experts discussed the validity of the inscription at a conference of biblical and archaeological researchers in Toronto, where the box currently is on display. Andre Lemaire, the French specialist in Aramaic who first proposed the inscription's connection to Jesus, defended its authenticity.

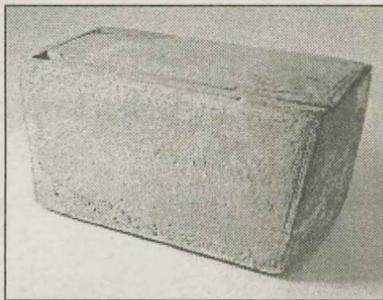
"When you look at the inscription, there are not two parts," he said. "In the second part, you also have formal script. Only two letters are cursive. ... That mixture of cursive and formal script is well-known from other inscriptions."

### Phrase added later?

Some scholars have suggested that the second part of the inscription may have been added during the Byzantine period in Jerusalem when pilgrims coming to the Holy Land began seeking out objects related to Jesus so that they could venerate them, according to an article in the Baltimore Sun.

But Peter Richardson, archaeologist and professor emeritus at the University of Toronto, explained that by the Byzantine period James was almost universally referred to as "the brother of our Lord," not "the brother of Jesus."

Richardson said he believes the second phrase was added sometime



**BONE BOX** An ossuary, or bone box, was used by many wealthy families in the first century in the Middle East, according to Joel Drinkard, a professor of Old Testament and archeology at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville. (Photo courtesy of Biblical Archaeology Society, Washington, D.C.)

between the middle of the first century and the early second century by a Christian community that knew James, as "a reinforcement of the first part of the inscription, rather than a forgery."

Kyle McCarter Jr., a noted Johns Hopkins University expert in ancient Near East languages, agreed.

"It is possible that someone in a community that venerated James, who had an awareness of this ossuary, perhaps even knew that it was indeed James the brother of Jesus' ossuary, simply wanted to make it explicit," McCarter said.

A Louisville archeologist who has viewed the box said he hasn't seen anything that would suggest it is anything other than what it has been professed to be: a centuries-old bone box with an equally old inscription.

"The ossuary itself appears to be ancient," said Joel Drinkard, professor of Old Testament and archeology at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville.

Drinkard said it's possible that the inscription is from two different hands, but said the whole inscription appears to be "ancient."

"I say that both in terms of the forms of the letters and the reports

from the Israeli scientists," he said

Israeli scientists who inspected the box reported finding centuries-old patina, resulting from chemical or mineral deposits, on both the box and the inscription. "It's virtually impossible to fake that kind of patina," Drinkard said.

He called the handwriting "semi-professional," meaning it is neat (better than mere graffiti) but not the kind that would be found on royal inscriptions. That could be the reason for any differences, he added.

### Skeptical of which James

But that doesn't mean that Drinkard is convinced that the box belonged to the James. "While I think that the ossuary is an authentic ossuary, I am less convinced that it would be our James, James the brother of Jesus and the leader of the first century church in Jerusalem."

His reason: Jesus was laid in a borrowed tomb.

"I have no real evidence to believe that that early church in Jerusalem was a wealthy church or that he (James) himself was wealthy," Drinkard said. "And both family tombs and ossuaries tended to be used by the wealthy or the aristocratic."

Many of the questions associated with the ossuary can never be answered, he added, because of the source of the bone box's discovery.

"It didn't come out of an excavation, it came out of a black market purchase," he said. Had it been found during a controlled archeological dig, researchers could have further explored the family tomb and other evidence in the region.

"The fact that we have none of that hurts the potential of drawing conclusions from that," he said.

The limestone box is scheduled to return to Israel at the conclusion of its exhibition at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto at the end of December.

With additional reporting by News Director David Winfrey

## Advisers offer tips to teach young boys' Sunday school

By Brandy Campbell  
SBC LifeWay Christian Resources

NASHVILLE (BP)—If you've ever taught a Sunday school class full of little boys, you know they're made of more than snakes and snails and puppy dog tails.

They also have a keen sense of adventure, a flair for mischief, a dash of curiosity and lots of energy.

But if you have them in your Sunday school class at all, count yourself lucky, said Jan Marler, childhood ministries specialist for LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Marler and her husband, Ken, adult growth specialist for the Tennessee Baptist Convention, led a "Don't Lose the Boys" conference earlier this fall.

Since 1981, boys have spent 71 percent less time in church compared with girls at 25 percent less time, according to a report in American Demographics magazine, Jan Marler said.

Boys are six times more likely to have a learning disorder, three times more likely to be drug addicts in life and 12 times more likely to commit murder, she said the report revealed.

Males make up 80 percent of suicides under age 20, and 90 percent of people in drug treatment programs are men, she said.

"We've lost a generation of boys," she said. The Marlers, who have four girls, said they learned quickly that boys learn "in a very different way from girls" when they began leading a TeamKID class at their church.

"Boys are very visual learners," she said. "So, if a boy hits a girl in your Sunday school class, it doesn't do a lot of good to say, 'Johnny, you hurt Cindy, and you need to apologize.' What you have to do is show him the bruise, and say this is what happens when you hit people."

Because boys tend to learn visually, classes for them should incorporate pictures, role-playing and concrete examples in the lessons.

### Discipline and role models

When disciplining boys, a visual form of punishment, like taking away privileges or toys, is often effective.

Because boys also respond to a deep, stern voice, enlisting a male teacher is helpful, she said.

"Sometimes women need to enlist men to help with discipline," Marler said. "Boys often respond better to men. The male teacher should be stern, but loving. He needs to be a spiritual role model, not just a Sunday school bouncer."

Because boys come into the classroom "raring to go, teachers should have a plan of action," Ken Marler said. "You can't just tell them to hush and sit down. That's not how they work."

The key to channeling their energy is through diversion and distraction, he said.

"When you have a 2-year-old, the way you keep him happy is to keep him distracted," he said. "It's the same with older boys. But don't distract in the same way every week. When they figure you out, they're already two steps ahead of you."

Jan Marler suggested using games whenever possible. "Games can communicate to children on a different level," she said. "If you find new ways to communicate the truths of the Bible, they will remember those truths."

Ken Marler warned against games with winners and losers. Boys are competitive, he said, so games must be played in ways that everybody wins, and everybody holds an important role.

The Marlers stressed unconditional love and acceptance when dealing with boys.

"It's so hard to tell what kind of home life they're coming from," Ken Marler said. "This may be the only love some of these kids are getting. If we show them the love of Christ, we can save the next generation of boys."

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## PRAYER PARTNERS

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

■ **Boldness for believers** in Silesia, Poland.

■ **Missionary nurse Kara Kelley** in Bucharest, Romania, as she develops booklets on health issues to use with Roma/Gypsy women.

■ **Missionaries Gordon and Amy Moore** in the Canary Islands as they teach English as a Second Language classes. They write: "Ask that many gospel seeds will be planted, watered and harvested."

■ **Kentuckians Doyle and Arlee Searcy.** Mrs. Searcy has been diagnosed with inoperable cancer. Searcy is pastor of Bethel International Baptist Church in Frankfort, Germany.

■ **Baptists in France** who will be distributing gospel portions throughout the Ile-de-France region during 2003. "Ask that thousands of French families will have open hearts and minds to receive and read the message from the Word," missionaries write.

■ **Wisdom for missionaries** working with the deaf in Moscow, Russia. More than 40,000 deaf people live in the city and surrounding suburbs.

## Mountains to the Mississippi

Compiled by staff

■ **CALIFORNIA**—First Twelve Mile Church called **Cohen Copley** as pastor. He previously was minister of education and youth at Fort Mitchell Church.

■ **CAMPBELLSVILLE**—Campbellsville Church called **Cyndi Crowder** as interim minister of youth and **Bruce Warf** as interim minister of college students.

Green River Memorial Church recently dedicated a prayer room sponsored by the church's Woman's Missionary Union. **Gary Durham** is pastor.

■ **HOPKINSVILLE**—First Church will host Christian vocalist and songwriter **Luke Garrett** in concert Dec. 29, 6 p.m. He also will provide special music during the morning worship service.

■ **LOUISVILLE**—Walnut Street

Church presented its 25th annual Living Christmas Tree this month. **Gene Sutherland** was music director/producer.

■ **MANCHESTER**—**Walter Campbell**, a retired Kentucky Baptist pastor, died Dec. 3. Campbell, a graduate of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, had taught at Oneida Baptist Institute. He also had been pastor of Hyden Church and West Point Church in Centertown. His funeral service was held at Manchester Church.

■ **META**—Brushy Creek Mission ordained **John Hinkle** and **Ronald Robinette** as deacons Dec. 15. **John Blackburn** is pastor.

■ **PADUCAH**—**Tony Whitfield** retired as minister of music at Immanuel Church effective Dec. 22. **Jamie Broome** is senior minister.

## Grant, Boone, Blind Boys of Alabama named to Gospel Music Hall of Fame

**NASHVILLE (RNS)**—Singer Amy Grant will be inducted into the Gospel Music Hall of Fame next year, along with the Blind Boys of Alabama and Pat Boone.

The Gospel Music Association said the three musical luminaries will be honored during its 34th annual Dove Awards on April 10 in Nashville.

"This is a particularly exciting class of inductees for the Gospel Music Hall of Fame," said Frank Breeden, president of the Nashville-based association. "Here are represented three distinct exceptional artists who have been incredibly influential in gospel music's history and yet continue to have a musical impact today."

Established in 1971, the Gospel Music Hall of Fame has inducted 122 members since its inception, including Elvis Presley, Mahalia Jackson, Andrae Crouch, Bill and Gloria Gaith-

er, the Oak Ridge Boys and Billy Graham.

Grant has won 20 Dove Awards and five Grammy Awards and is credited with helping contemporary Christian music become a force on the music scene.

"Being a part of the Hall of Fame feels like a handing down to the next generation, a celebration of roots," Grant said in a statement.

The Blind Boys of Alabama formed their group in 1939 at the Alabama Institute for the Negro Blind and officially took the name they now use in 1944. Known for their soul gospel music, the group's members have recorded more than 50 albums.

Boone has had 60 hits on the U.S. singles charts during his career and recorded more than a dozen Christian albums in the 1970s. His work continues with "Under God," a successful single released this year.



**HOLIDAY FEAST** Cumberland College student Brad Helm presents the ceremonial boar's head during the school's annual Madrigal Singers performance. The boar's head is the traditional invitation for guests to begin eating the main course at the event. The Madrigal Dinners are held each year at Cumberland College during the first weekend of December.

## Former pornography peddler accepts Jesus as Savior, starts selling Bibles

**PUTNEY (BP)**—Call it a case of switching from trash to treasure.

A store once stocked with pornography merchandise is now stocked with Bibles and other Christian products because the store's owner recently converted to Christianity.

"This shows that the Lord loves and wants to save everybody," said Shaun Aslinger, a Harlan evangelist, "even the man who runs the adult novelty store."

According to an Associated Press story, neighbors in the small, conservative Kentucky town have embraced the change, helping the man restock his five-year-old store with Christian merchandise.

Other residents are buying groceries for him, his wife and daughter until the new business begins to

make a profit.

"Morally, I couldn't sell it any longer," shop owner Michael Braithwaite said about the sexually explicit merchandise.

After becoming a Christian, he said God convinced him to burn the \$10,000 worth of X-rated material, so a local pastor helped him haul everything out to the parking lot and set it on fire with 10 gallons of diesel fuel.

"When the Lord gets ahold of you, you make some changes," Braithwaite said.

Braithwaite still faces misdemeanor obscenity charges that were brought against him before his conversion, but the lawyer for Concerned Citizens of Putney now hopes the case can be resolved with a small fine, AP reported.

## CLASSIFIED ADS

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**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:** Red House Baptist Church is now accepting applications for a full-time minister of students/education. Please send resumé by Dec. 31 to 2301 Red House Road, Richmond, KY 40475.

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

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

**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:** 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:** Full-time pastor. West Broadway Baptist Church is seeking God's anointed to lead our church. WBBC is a growing, loving church averaging 275 in worship and 200 in Sunday school. Please send resumé to: Pastor Search Committee, 8420 Six Mile Lane, Louisville, KY 40220.

**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:** 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](mailto:pastorj@eastky.net). Video or audio tapes would be very helpful.

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

**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.

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## Crackdown in Belarus

*Propaganda and ignorance result in persecution for Baptists and others*

By Frank Brown  
Religion News Service

GOMEL, Belarus (RNS)—One morning late in November, Pastor Dmitry Podlobko arrived at his small Church of the Living Faith to find that vandals had destroyed the church's sign and wooden fence.

It wasn't the first time the Pentecostal church in Gomel, Belarus, had been targeted. And Podlobko says it won't be the last.

In fact, the 27-year-old pastor says he and his flock of 150 are bracing themselves for worse as a draconian new religion law takes effect in Belarus, the former Soviet republic known as Europe's last dictatorship.

"Today, a drunk might tear down a fence or throw a rock through our window. Tomorrow, God forbid, drunks might take clubs and attack our parishioners," Podlobko said the day after the Nov. 26 vandalism.

"I think it is a result of all the anti-church propaganda. Just this week there was a long, negative article in the government newspaper Respublika about charismatic and Pentecostal churches. People read this stuff. It has an effect on them," Podlobko says.

Propaganda, ignorance and Soviet-ingrained suspicions of religions other than the dominant Russian Orthodox Church mean that Belarusians often know little about the country's fast growing Protestant minority.

Podlobko says there is a widespread belief that charismatic Christians engage in human sacrifice.

Dmitry Lazuta, a Baptist pastor in the capital Minsk, adds, "A lot of people think that we drink blood, that we sacrifice children. I would think that half the population thinks this. ... The term 'Baptist' is a scary word here."

In this environment, the country's estimated 100,000 evangelical Protestants are especially nervous that the new religion law will be used to legitimize and expand what had been unofficial discrimination against minority faiths—from Jews to Roman Catholics to dissident Orthodox Christians.

### Protection or discrimination

In principle, the law is designed to protect Belarus' 10 million citizens from dangerous religious cults. In practice, the law buttresses the dominant position of the Russian Orthodox Church through a series of restrictions ranging from a requirement that legal congregations have more than 20 people to a ban on group prayer in private homes.

This last requirement is especially disruptive for Protestant congregations that rely heavily on home Bible study to engage believers between Sunday services. A Pentecostal missionary from Amarillo, Texas, who works for a secular charity in Minsk says the rule on home prayer makes her especially vulnerable.



"You never know until you get a knock on the door," says the woman, who asked not to be identified. "We assemble more than the law says we can assemble. I have ladies' prayer in my home. You never know what will happen ... I get my marching orders from my Father in heaven. If He sees fit that I am kicked out of the country, then there are disciples here who will continue."

The number of Western Protestant missionaries working openly in Belarus appears to have dwindled into the single digits as authoritarian president Alexander Lukashenko, a fan of Adolf Hitler and Josef Stalin, has cracked down steadily on dissent, free speech and foreign influence.

But Roman Catholics rely heavily on the scores of foreign men, mostly Poles, who account for more than half the clergy serving Belarus' 600,000-strong Roman Catholic minority. The new law threatens their presence in the country by requiring all foreign religious workers to get special government permission every year. The country's Catholic hierarchy, however, chose not to oppose the law, much to the dismay of at least two Catholic factory workers who staged a two-man Nov. 8 protest in Minsk and were arrested.

The leader of one of the country's largest non-Orthodox congregations, Pastor Vasily Moskalenko of the 1,500-member Pentecostal Grace of Christ Church in Minsk, says protest is useless.

"For what? Why do we need it today?" he asks. "We need to learn how to live with this. This is my opinion. Most people are in a panic, but I don't think this helps. We need to see what God brings."

### Belarus: A bastion of nuttiness

So far, the new law is serving mainly to add to Belarus' growing reputation as a bastion of nuttiness. Spurned in his attempt in November to join world leaders at the NATO summit in Prague, Lukashenko threatened to unleash narcotics and migrant workers on Europe from his country,

which borders Poland and Lithuania. Subsequently, the United States and all the European Union nations except Portugal forbade Lukashenko from visiting.

That leaves Belarus with its principal ally as Russia, where Lukashenko has cordial relations with president Vladimir Putin and a seemingly warmer relationship with the ailing head of the Russian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Alexy II.

The 80-million member Russian Orthodox Church benefits the most from the new law which has a clause denying government registration to religious associations that were not recognized by the staunchly atheist Soviet government in 1982 or earlier. Back then, Russian Orthodoxy was also the favored faith, albeit one on a tight leash.

Orthodox Church leaders backed the new law, as does the head of a Minsk human rights organization associated with the church, Andrei Aleshko.

"Thanks to this law, our citizens will be better protected from totalitarian sects," says OZON director Aleshko, who identifies "dangerous cults" as including the already banned Scientologists and the Unification Church of Sun Myung Moon.

### Church bulldozed

While the law will help the Russian Orthodox Church in Belarus, it almost certainly will hinder the work of the tiny Belarussian Autocephalous Orthodox Church. That church's leader in Belarus, Yan Spasyuk, said he is working with Protestants to work out a strategy for coping with the law.

"The Protestants have a lot more experience. They were underground for many years," Spasyuk said during a recent visit to Moscow.

Spasyuk's 300-member parish in the village of Pahranchny, located less than a mile from the Polish border, is still reeling from the Aug. 1 demolition by government bulldozers of its brick church constructed on Spasyuk's property—allegedly over a building code violation.

## WORLD VIEW

■ **Moscow: Protestants, Catholics a security 'threat.'** Protestant and Catholic leaders reacted with befuddled indignation Dec. 6 to an apparent government report classifying the two faiths as severe threats to Russia's national security. The internal report, excerpts of which were published in the respectable Moscow daily *Gazeta*, ranks the Roman Catholic Church as the most dangerous "religious extremist" organization operating in Russia today. Protestants are ranked No. 2 while Satanists, Jehovah's Witnesses and Scientologists come in third. They are trailed by Russia's 20-million strong Muslim minority, a tiny element of which is waging a separatist war in Chechnya.

■ **Church thefts raise alarm of antiquities ring.** The theft of a 14th-century stone font from the chapel of Usk Castle in England—coming a month after the theft of a 15th century statue from Prinknash Abbey—has aroused fears that a gang of thieves may be stealing ecclesiastical antiques to order for foreign collectors. Nick Tolson, the director of Churchwatch, an organization which advises churches and congregations on how to keep their treasures safe, estimated England's churches lost about 2,000 items last year to thieves compared with the theft of only 42 from the country's museums.

■ **Israel backs off Bethlehem Christmas withdrawal.** Israeli President Moshe Katsav said Dec. 13 that Israel made no commitment to withdraw from occupied Bethlehem during the Christmas holiday—a day after indicating to Pope John Paul II that the army might pull back from the city of Jesus' birth before Dec. 24. "We will make every effort to ease the situation in Bethlehem," Katsav told Israel Radio one day after his meeting with the pope. "But the call from the Vatican must be directed toward the Palestinian Authority." Katsav said that nearby Israeli population centers continue to face the threat of terror bombers coming from Bethlehem.

■ **Uzbekistan Baptist church contests closure.** A Baptist church continues to wait for a reply to a letter it sent to Uzbekistan's justice ministry complaining about official claims that its registration in 1998 was only "temporary" and that it needs to be re-registered to be allowed to function. Stanislav Kim, pastor of the United Church of Evangelical Christians/Baptists in the Tashkent suburb of Chirchik, maintains that authorities are trying to close down the church on trumped-up grounds. The church registered in August 1998, but the government agency ordered a halt to church activity in July.

■ **British Muslims reject Bin Laden, terrorism.** A survey of British Muslims has found that 85 percent of those polled said the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, on the United States were not justified and just 8 percent thought they were. A slightly higher percentage—13 percent—said they believed Osama bin Laden was justified in launching attacks against Western targets and 50 percent said he was not. Twenty-six percent said he didn't launch the Sept. 11 attacks.

■ **Jailed Chinese church leader on hunger strike.** The leader of an underground Chinese church who is in jail has been on a hunger strike for more than a month. Gong Shengliang, the 47-year-old founder of the South China Church, originally was sentenced to death in December 2001, but those charges were thrown out. In an October retrial, Gong was given a life sentence. Gong has been on strike to protest his jailers' confiscation of documents he had to document his treatment and prepare for an appeal.

■ **Three killings in Vietnam called part of crackdown.** Three ethnic minority Christians were executed by Vietnamese authorities as part of a recent crackdown on "illegal" Christian churches, according to the Montagnard Foundation, a human rights watch group. The three Montagnard believers reportedly were killed Oct. 29 after being convicted of participation in anti-government activities in February 2001. Foundation officials claim Vietnamese authorities have been on a systematic campaign to force Christians out of unregistered churches, which they believed had been infected by American Protestant thought that, as one source put it, "opposes the programs of the country."

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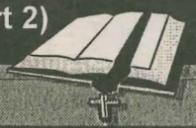
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Kentucky Baptist Foundation  
P O Box 436389  
Louisville, KY 40253-6389  
(502) 244-6466  
(888) 254-5701