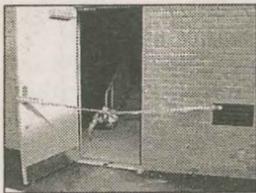


December 9, 2003  
Vol. 177, No. 48

## FOR THE RECORD

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## Americans who claim no religion on the increase

Washington (RNS)—Their numbers have more than doubled in a decade, to nearly 30 million. Organized as a religious denomination, they would trail only Catholics and Baptists in members.

They are the "nones," named for their response to a question in public opinion polls: "What is your religion, if any?"

Some nones are atheists, others agnostics, still others self-styled dabblers in a variety of faiths and philosophies.

Despite their discomfort with organized religion, many consider themselves quite spiritual.

Nones are especially prevalent in the Pacific Northwest.

In Oregon and Washington, where 21 percent and 25 percent, respectively, claim no particular faith, nones outnumber any single religious category.

"If people are interested in hiking on Sunday morning rather than going to church, that's fine. The culture won't say that's unacceptable. In fact, the culture will say that's perfectly acceptable," said Mark Shibley, a sociologist at Southern Oregon University who has studied and written about nones.

Whatever the reason, nones grew from 8 percent of the U.S. population in 1990 to more than 14 percent in 2001.

That's the conclusion of religion experts who compared results of the National Survey of Religious Identification, conducted in 1990, and the American Religious Identification Survey, which in 2001 sought to update the earlier poll.

"That makes nones the fastest-growing religious group in the United States, if you think about them as a religious group," said Patricia O'Connell Killen, a professor of religious history at Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, Wash. "We're just coming to grips with the reality that this group even exists."

Nones could form a powerful constituency for marketing or political causes. But few see them that way, and even fewer try to communicate with them.

"Because of their indifference, they're not in one place," said John Green, a professor specializing in religion and politics at the University of Akron in Ohio. "It's hard to put together a mailing list. It's difficult to get them on the phone. You can't call them together for a meeting."

Many nones believe in God. Nearly half "agreed strongly" that God exists.

"It is more accurate to describe them as unaffiliated than as non-believers," said Ariela Keysar, study director of the American Religious Identification Survey.

## Oh, little town



**LIVING NATIVITY SCENE** This is the centerpiece of Christmas celebrations in the small farming town of Bethlehem, Ky. The pageant, a tradition thought to date to the early 20th century, draws visitors from across the United States and Canada each year. (Henry County Local newspaper photo by Brook Melville)

## Bethlehem, Ky., ready to represent namesake

By Dennis O'Connor  
*Religion News Service*

Bethlehem, Ky. (RNS)—Betty Moody takes a lot of pride in all her angels. Amber, Josh, Belinda and Teresa—Moody's grandchildren—take the compliment seriously.

That's because from Dec. 22-25 every year, they are angels for this Henry County village's Christmas pageant centered on a live Nativity scene, replete with livestock, manger, wise men, angels and townsfolk.

All very appropriate for a town named Bethlehem, one of at least 28 so-named villages across the country that bear the moniker of Jesus' birthplace.

Perched on the gently rolling hills about an hour's drive east of Louisville, this Bethlehem annually welcomes about 2,000 visitors from throughout the United States and Canada to see the pageant.

Bethlehem is just a bend in the road, really, with a post office and general store. But members of this

tiny farming community hold dearly their tradition of celebrating Jesus' birth by gathering family and friends and re-enacting their own interpretation of the first Christmas Day.

For the past 43 years, members of three local churches have donned shepherds' cloaks, angels' haloes and the richly colored robes of the three wise men as they reconstruct one of the most beloved scenes in Christianity.

□ See "Bethlehem, Ky. ..." *Page 3*

## Some catalogs turn gift giving into ministry

By Mark Wingfield  
*Texas Baptist Standard*

Dallas (ABP)—A number of Christian ministries have borrowed a page out of the Neiman-Marcus Christmas Catalog.

Like the upscale retail chain, these ministries use the seasonal catalogs to offer unique gift ideas, ranging from the simple to the extraordinary.

But unlike Neiman-Marcus, which offers a luxury ice-fishing house and a custom-made mermaid outfit, these Christian ministries provide alternative Christmas gift options that benefit third parties.

Organizations such as World Vision and Samaritan's Purse publish Christmas catalogs as an extension of their year-round efforts to help

the world's neediest people.

The idea is to shop for something to help a person in need and then send a gift card to a friend or loved one announcing that this item has been donated in their name.



Walter Cronkite

A pioneer in this field is Heifer International, a non-profit organization based in Little Rock, Ark., that works to end world hunger by providing livestock and small animals to farmers and impoverished families.

The Heifer Christmas catalog features a barnyard variety of gift ideas, ranging from a flock of chicks or ducks for \$20 to a sheep or goat for \$120, a llama for \$150 or a heifer for \$500.

The extravagant giver can choose The Ark for \$5,000, which will pro-

vide a veritable Noah's Ark of animal sets.

For the listed price, Heifer will purchase and transport animals to those who need a sustainable source of nutrition and income. They, in turn, are asked to share the gift with someone else.

For example, a family that receives a heifer obtains a source of protein to nourish children and adults alike. A good dairy cow, Heifer reports, can produce four gallons of milk a day, enough to feed the family and have some additional to sell. Further, a healthy cow may bear a calf once a year, furthering the supply of nourishment for a community.

A family that receives a heifer is asked to donate to another needy family the first female calf born to their cow.

□ See "Some catalogs ..." *Page 8*

## IMB leader: Financial challenges limit response in Iraq

**"I am jealous to see Southern Baptists be a part of God's plan for Iraq."**

John Brady, leader of IMB work in the Middle East and northern Africa

By Mike Creswell  
SBC International Mission Board

Baghdad (BP)—Southern Baptists have prayed for years that Iraq would somehow be opened to the gospel. Now Southern Baptist workers have unprecedented access to what was one of the world's most closed countries.

So what are Southern Baptists doing about it?

Not enough, say Southern Baptist International Mission Board workers risking their lives to meet human needs and share the gospel inside Iraq.

"I must admit I'm disappointed that we have so few workers here," said one Baghdad worker, who cannot be identified for security reasons.

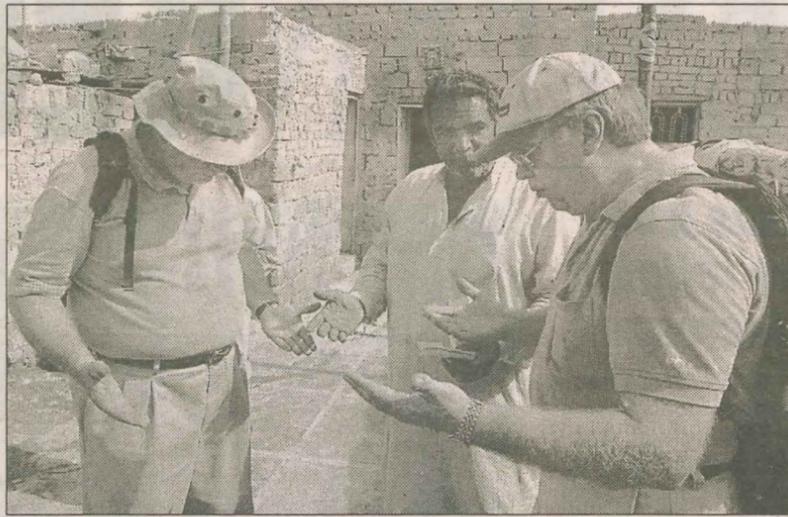
While the IMB has work among almost 1,500 people groups in more than 100 countries, its inability to respond quickly and appropriately to what may be a fleeting opportunity in Iraq shows a poignant side of the board's recent financial challenges.

John Brady, leader of IMB work in the Middle East and northern Africa, admits being frustrated by the situation.

"It aches my heart to see the opportunities that are before us and know what decisions we're having to make," he said.

### "The day of the open door"

"Today is the day of the open door. God has opened doors, not only in Iraq but really in hundreds of spots across the Muslim world," Brady said. "If we're going to walk through that door, Southern Baptists



**PRAYER MINISTRY** Southern Baptist volunteers Hal Newell (left) and Larry Ledford pray with a resident in northern Baghdad to whom they have given food. The two volunteers were part of a five-man team from North Carolina who helped deliver Southern Baptist food boxes during late October. (BP photo by Mike Creswell)

have got to decide if it's worth sacrificing something."

A year or two from now the opportunity in Iraq could be gone, Brady warned. "There are a number of folks willing to come. We just need the money to send them."

The IMB has faced a financial challenge this past year, partially because the number of new missionaries coming forward for overseas service has outpaced giving from local churches. Southern Baptist gifts to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions have increased, but not enough to keep up with the growth of the overseas missionary force.

Southern Baptist churches also have been giving declining percentages of the offerings they re-

ceive through the Cooperative Program, the IMB's other major source of funding.

To compensate for the tight finances, IMB leaders have cut state-side staff, reduced the board's 2004 budget by \$20 million and delayed the appointment of hundreds of short- and long-term workers.

### A war for souls

Southern Baptists must understand that a war for souls is under way in Iraq, Brady said. Even as Islamic leaders try to tighten their grip on the country and its people, cult groups such as Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses are sending hundreds of their missionaries into Iraq to spread their pseudo-Christianity.

God will have His way in Iraq, Brady said. Christian workers from South Korea, Brazil and many other lands are coming to Iraq to share the gospel. But, he added, "I am jealous to see Southern Baptists be a part of God's plan for Iraq. I am praying Southern Baptists will respond to this opportunity, because they are about seeing God's Kingdom grow. I am jealous for Southern Baptists, not to be the only ones working, but not to be left out."

Brady urged Southern Baptists to help meet the needs in Iraq by giving sacrificially this year to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering.

"If you're wanting to invest in the Kingdom of God with your money, your life and your prayers, now is the time," Brady urged. "We need people praying all the time. We need money. And we need people to come be here and say, 'It is up to me!' We need people who will say, 'I'm going to invest in what God has shown me is an open door.'"

"I want to say thank you to Southern Baptists who have given generously year after year to missions," Brady said, "but for the many Southern Baptists who've never even given to the Lottie Moon Offering, this is the year to say, 'Maybe I'll forego buying five music CDs and invest that in eternity for the lost.' Maybe this is the year you say, 'I'll give up drinking milkshakes for a year so I can make an offering.'"

"The only way Southern Baptists can go forward," he emphasized, "is for us to take responsibility for responding in these days of opportunity."

## Efforts to unite Christians, Muslims undermine the gospel, Southern Seminary panelists agree

Louisville (BP)—Should Christians view Muslims as monotheistic allies in the culture wars?

Not according to panelists at a symposium sponsored by Southern Baptist Theological Seminary's Carl F.H. Henry Institute for Evangelical Engagement.

The panelists, depicting Allah as fundamentally different than the God of Christianity, said efforts to unite Islam and Christianity threaten to compromise the gospel.

The symposium featured seminary President Al Mohler; Russell Moore, assistant professor of Christian theology and executive director of the Henry Institute; and Ergun Caner, associate professor of theology and history at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Va. Peter Kreeft, professor of philosophy at Boston College, was scheduled to speak but was unable to attend due to a family emergency.

More than 500 people listened as panelists responded to Kreeft's book, "Ecumenical Jihad," in which he argues that Christians and Muslims hold many beliefs in common as monotheists and must unite in the fight against secularism. Fighting between the two religions, Kreeft writes, unnecessarily detracts from positive work that could be accomplished.

Caner, who was a Muslim for 20 years before converting to Christianity, said Kreeft's view ignores irreconcilable differences between Islam and Christianity.

"To say that our ... monotheistic religions worship the same God, that as sons of Abraham we can unite on a common cause of this

said God against the threat of humanism, in my mind ignores the central tenets of each system and insults the adherents of each system," Caner said.

Though Muslims believe that Allah is the sovereign creator, they deny other facets of the Christian doctrine of God such as the Trinity and the deity of Christ, Caner said.

"It is not the same God," he said. "The Koran is explicit not to say Trinity. ... We're not talking about the same God."

In fact, Islamic eschatology teaches that one day Jesus will return to "break all the crosses" and "kill and send to hell every Jew and Christian who did not accept Allah," Caner said.

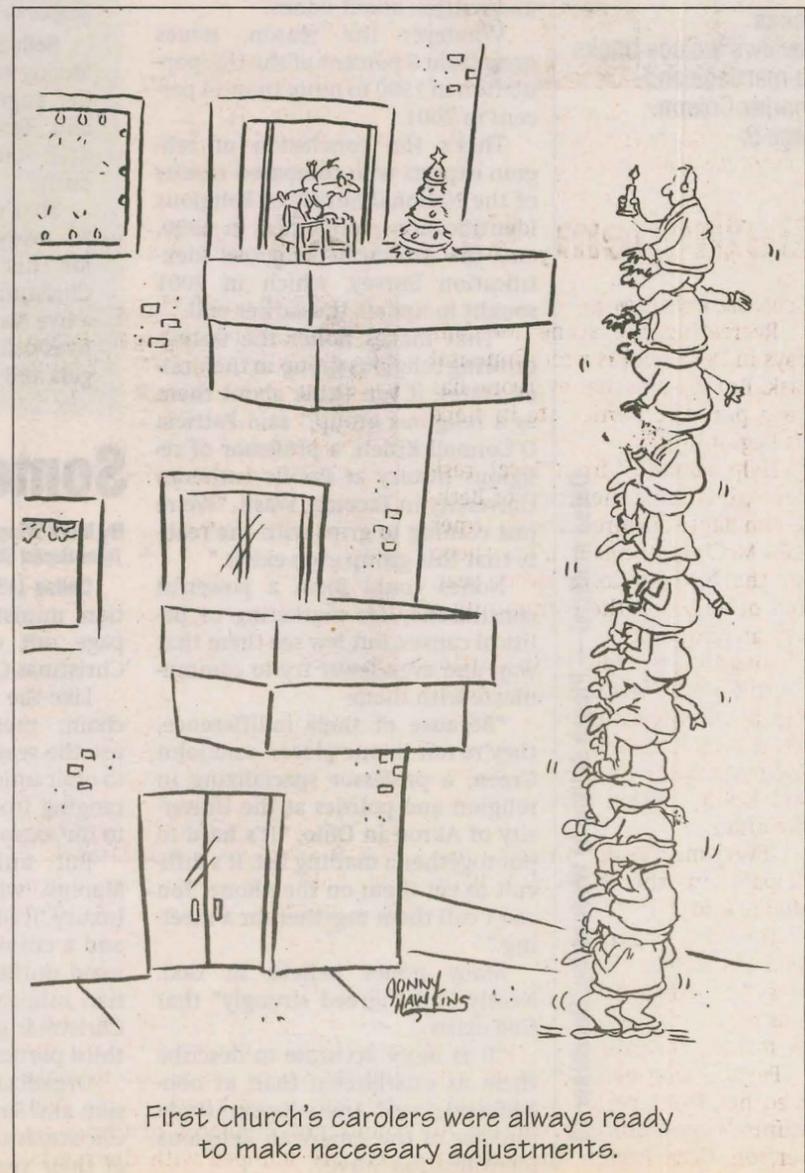
"As much as I would love for there to be ... unity, you cannot unite with those who seek your death for the sole reason of your conversion," Caner said.

Mohler said Kreeft's thesis stems from a false notion that all monotheists share a common worldview.

Among the sharp differences between Christianity and Islam, Mohler said, is Christianity's insistence on the full deity of Christ versus Islam's denial that God could ever have a son.

"The issue ... is the doctrine of the Trinity, in particular the doctrine of Christ," Mohler said. "We must face the fundamental question of how one knows the one true and living God. The Scripture is abundantly clear that God is known through Jesus Christ the Son."

Islam, in contrast, insists that "Allah is one, and he has no son," Mohler said. "The only ground of our Christian identity is ... the confession that Jesus Christ is Lord."



# A home, sweet home for homeless

## Louisville ministry launches new project with long-term apartments

By Ken Walker  
State Correspondent

**Louisville**—For the first time in its 35-year history, Jefferson Street Baptist Center will provide permanent housing for the homeless.

Affiliated with Long Run Baptist Association, the ministry will open a group of efficiency apartments to homeless men later this month. A dedication service for the two-story addition was held Nov. 23.

While the 11 new residences will house only a small percentage of the 150 to 200 homeless people the center serves each day, the apartments represent a significant expansion of the center's ministry, director Rick Brenney said.

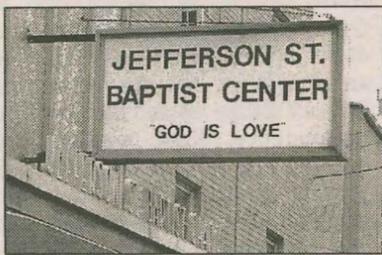
"We're opening 11 units at a time when there are no (new) units in town," Brenney said. "Basically, if you're homeless you aren't getting into subsidized housing right now."

The year-long construction project cost about \$700,000. Funding came from a variety of sources, including the federal government, foundation grants and numerous churches and individuals.

In addition to monthly finan-



**DINING ROOM** Louisville Baptist churches provided at least \$50,000 toward the apartment project.



cial support, Long Run Association provided the initial \$50,000 for the project. That helped complete a feasibility study and enabled the center to obtain other grants, Brenney said.

"We wouldn't be here without Long Run believers," the director said. "We're not in business to stay in business; we're in business to get people off the street. We're here to show God's love in practical ways."

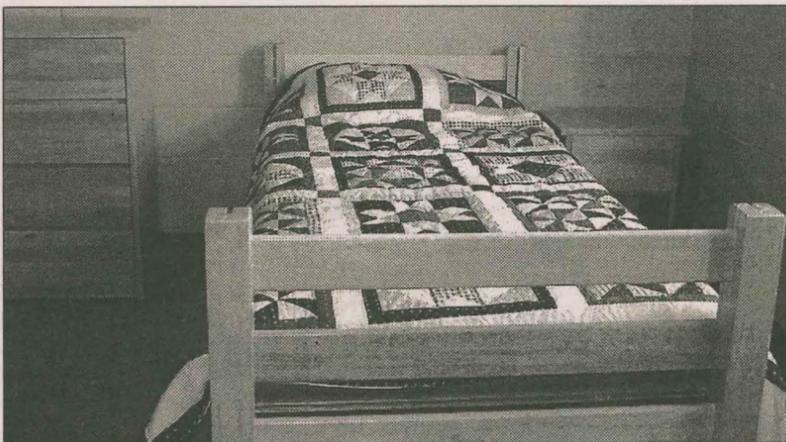
### Helping residents stay healthy

The new residents are men who have been diagnosed with a history of both mental illness and substance abuse problems. Most receive disability checks, a portion of which will go to pay their rent.

Although residents have to be sober to secure an apartment, Brenney said the center will seek to keep them from backsliding.

In the past, center leaders noticed that many homeless people would find housing, only to wind up on the street again after failing to take medication or after getting caught up in drug use.

Brenney said staff members will remind residents about taking medication and offer help with such basic skills as personal



**LONG-TERM HOUSING** The Jefferson Street Baptist Center will offer 11 residency apartments for homeless men in addition to the day shelter ministry the center already runs.

hygiene, budgeting, shopping and cooking.

The new housing spotlights the refining of Jefferson Street's operations, which it initiated in 1997. Previously, the center offered a variety of food, clothing and other assistance to various groups.

But an evaluation led by former director Randall Harvey showed this broad-based approach wasn't effective, Brenney said.

After that, the center's board—mostly members of Long Run churches—voted to redirect all assistance to the homeless.

The director said the ministry particularly wanted to help provide a long-term solution for people with a "dual diagnosis" of mental and drug or alcohol problems, since they lacked coping and socialization skills.

### Ongoing day shelter ministry

In addition, the ministry maintains a day shelter where people can shower, get coffee and doughnuts, store belongings and pick up mail.

Because many employers are re-

luctant to hire transients, having a place to clean up and a stable mailing address helps remove the stigma of homelessness, Brenney said.

The center also provides short-term housing for 26 men working toward obtaining permanent housing.

Its day shelter represents its most active evangelism field, Brenney added. At least 79 people have prayed to receive Jesus Christ as their personal Savior during the past year.

The problem of homelessness is difficult to gauge because of differing definitions and methods of counting, but Brenney said nearly 11,000 homeless people live in Louisville, the state's largest city.

The local Coalition for the Homeless estimates that 1,000 units of the kind Jefferson Street offers are needed, but there are only about 100 available in Louisville.

"It's a drop in the bucket, but instead of taking away units we're adding them," Brenney said. "The amount of needs is discouraging, but I'm glad we can do what we're doing."

## League plans anti-gambling petition

**Frankfort**—Kentucky Baptists will be asked soon to send a message to Kentucky political leaders opposing expanding gambling in the state.

Howard Beauman, director of the Kentucky League on Alcohol and Gambling Problems, said he's sending a letter to all Kentucky Baptist churches to ask them to circulate a petition opposing the expansion of gambling in Kentucky.

The letter likely will arrive early next month, he said.

"I'm hoping to take it to the governor and the leadership of the House and Senate, probably the first week in February," he said.

The petition is spurred by a meeting of Citizens Against Gambling Expansion, a broad coalition of religious leaders in the state.

CAGE members fear budget revenue shortfalls will cause state government leaders to consider allowing more gambling to provide more revenue.

"For the General Assembly, that's going to be their easy way out," Beauman said. "We're still concerned about it, and we just want to give the governor an opportunity to know how the church people of Kentucky feel about it."

## Bethlehem, Ky., ready to represent its namesake for Christmas

Continued from page 1

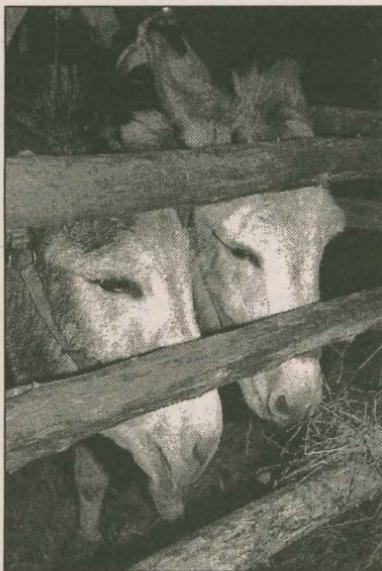
Recreating the scene for four days in December is a monumental task. But it's one that everyone has been proud to participate in since its beginnings.

Help abounds from local residents, including members of Bethlehem Baptist Church. Local farmer Tom McClain brings in a few sheep for the Nativity scene every year, and others loan the community a cow and burrows.

Long-time resident Math Martin, 74, still helps erect the rough-hewn logs at the beginning of December for the manger setting. Alvin Lee Roberts takes care of advertising, and Kevin Croxton directs the entire affair.

"Everyone's really proud to participate in the Nativity," Betty Moody said.

The rich tradition in Bethlehem also extends to its mailing address: the village has its own Christmas postmark, designed years back by former postmistress Anna Laura Peyton, who half a century ago used her front parlor as the community's post office, according to her son, Cecil Peyton, the village's



**LIVE CAST** Two donkeys peer out from their wooden pen during the town Christmas pageant in Bethlehem, Ky.

recently retired postmaster.

The post office is run part-time now, Moody said, but it is open during the Christmas season to make its famous postmark. Every year, thousands of pieces of Christmas mail are stamped with the special

image of the Three Wise Men on the Bethlehem postmark. Peyton said visitors often will come by to have their mail given the special mark, then visit briefly at the Nativity scene.

It's a chance for visitors to enjoy the village's history and heritage.

Opel Heightchew, who has written historic pieces about Bethlehem over the years, said that Bethlehem's happy marriage to the Christian celebration was born sometime after the turn of the 20th century, when village farmers changed the name of the village from Moble's Stand to its present name.

"Nobody's really sure how it did get the name," she said, "but it's been Bethlehem since the early 1900s."

Betty Moody noted that her 96-year-old mother, Fanny Spear, remembers a story about town fathers naming the village after a Kentucky racing horse named Bethlehem Star. But, as is often the case with folklore, nobody can prove the tale one way or another.

Regardless of the name's genesis, a tradition of recognizing Jesus' birth was begun.

"Years ago, one of the pastors in a local church thought it would be a good idea to have some kind of recognition of our namesake town where Christ was born," Moody said. "So people here all got together, and we came up with the idea of doing the live Nativity scene. That first year, we wore bathrobes or whatever we could get our hands on. It's improved every year since."

"We've had people come from all over the country to see the Nativity," history buff Heightchew said. "They come by the busloads, and we try to have it set up so they can pull off the road and walk right up to the scene. The actors are asked to be as still as possible, and one year, a woman was startled when she realized that the 'figures' in the scene were live actors."

About 200 people put on the Nativity each year, Moody said. Already crews have begun construction of the manger, and schedules for actors are being drawn up.

"We're all ready for it again," Moody said. "This is a lot of preparation and work to get it all done, but come Dec. 22, we'll have our live Nativity here for all to see."

## WESTERN RECORDER

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

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## Are God and Allah one?

This is in response to the article in the Dec 2 issue of the Western Recorder titled: "Some Christian leaders upset over Bush quote about Muslims."

While I agree with Professor William Lane Craig's remark that President Bush probably should have left the question to theologians, I do not think his response was incorrect.

What Craig and Richard Land seem to be saying is that the God Christians worship is the only One Who can be worshipped. Most Christians believe in the Trinity, a godhead with three aspects: God the Father; God the Son, Jesus the Christ; and God the Holy Spirit.

Other non-Christians do not agree with the Trinity concept, and while I disagree, I understand their thinking.

Jews, as a religion, do not worship the Trinity, but we say they are worshipping the same God Christians do—except that they don't worship the other two parts of the Trinity. Muslims take as their heritage the same patriarch, Abraham, as do Christians and Jews and thus their worship is, in my opinion, of the same God as the Jews. The difference is that Muslims worship Allah. So unless Allah has a different meaning than I think, Allah, the God of the Jews, and the God (the Father) of the Christians are the same God.

As to who will be saved in eternity, I would agree that only faith in Jesus will be our salvation, as Jesus said, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." This tells me that those not believing in Jesus will not have eternal life.

But to tell non-Christians that they do not even worship the same God is wrong. Even Paul did not do that—though his message was more to the non-Jew than to the Jew.

Lee H. Hoffman  
Mt. Sterling

## Searching for certainty

Search for certainty is a basic human instinct. All have a desire to know the truth.

As a college student, a professor of philosophy asked me: "Mr. Barnette, what do you really know?" As a young man from Sugarloaf Mountain, N.C., I could have given him an empirical fact: "A black snake cannot straddle a log." But I didn't dare.

Most of my adult life has been wrestling with Emmanuel Kant's three questions: What can I do? What can I hope? What can I know? Much of my time has been on what can I know for certain.

Some find certainty by absolutizing the finite, especially in theological matters. For example: The pope becomes infallible; baptism becomes absolutely essential to salvation; so does the Eucharist and other doctrines.

Some Protestants absolutize the Bible, claiming it has no errors. It is made God rather than a witness to God. This is called "bibliolatry," the worship of a book. It is idolatry because it objectifies the Divine.

Even abortion is absolutized by religious leaders who would never save the mother's life even when the fetus is the enemy of the woman's health.

To make God a visible object is to domesticate Him for ecclesiastical control and political power. To infinitize the finite is to take a part of the finite and invest it with the quality of the infinite. This inevitably results in arrogance, paranoia and hardness of heart.

Henlee Barnette  
Louisville

## What are you thinking?

The Western Recorder considers letters on any subject for publication, provided they don't make a personal attack. The maximum length for a letter is 300 words. Baptist Forum is limited to Western Recorder subscribers, unless someone is responding to a story or editorial of which they are the subject. Submit by mail, Box 43969, Louisville, KY 40253; fax, (502) 244-6474; or e-mail, wesrec@earthlink.net.

## Chinese pen pals

I am writing this letter on behalf of Chinese students who are taking English in their country and who want American pen pals.

The National Fellowship of Baptist Educators is seeking Christian young people who will answer at least one letter from Chinese students who have written letters "To an American friend." After the first exchange of letters, the correspondence might be continued by e-mail or regular mail. We will provide guidelines on ways that students may share their faith and be a Christian influence in a country where missionary work is restricted.

This makes a great project for a Sunday school class, Acteen or Challenger group or any Christian youth organization. Individual students also may participate.

To request letters or further information, contact John Carter, Executive Director of NFBE, Samford University Box 292305, Birmingham, AL 35229; phone (205) 822-4106; e-mail jfcarter@juno.com. Give name and address of the group leader to whom we may send the letters as well as telephone number and an e-mail address if available. Tell the number of letters needed from students in grades 7-9 and the number from grades 10-12. Give the name of the group that is participating, and if an American teacher would like to correspond with a Chinese teacher, let us know.

Requests for letters must reach us by Jan. 15. Letters will be sent during the two weeks following. We'll look forward to hearing from any person or group who is interested.

John T. Carter  
Birmingham, Ala.

## Thanks for the blessing of family

God is due wonderful praise and gratitude for blessing us with family members to love!

The recent Thanksgiving holidays provided an excellent time for my wife, Kay, and me to spend time with our family. Our grandchildren are young but they are old enough to respond in such indirect and creative ways.

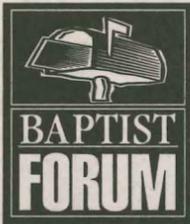
Kay has more practice in being a grandmother than I do in being a grandfather. She was present for several weeks during and following the grandchildren's births, so she has some precious memories. My initial role was just to pray, call, encourage and visit briefly.

During the Thanksgiving holidays, we were all together at my daughter Anonda's home in Philadelphia. She and her husband, A.J., have a son, Will, who will be a year old on Dec. 18. He is a big boy and very personable, with a ready smile and unique laugh.

My other daughter, Beth, and her husband, Bartley, drove up from Charlotte, N.C., with their children, Lilly, who is 3, and Mack, who is three months. Lilly is very verbal and gets excited about visits by her "Nana," Kay.

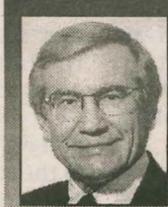
In addition, Dorine and Kimm Rowe have become a part of our family in recent years. We first met Dorine, who is from Brazil, when my family sponsored her while she was a student at Furman University. She and her husband have two daughters, Alena, who is 4, and Alex, who is 2. This family joined us as well.

I have shared this background so you will understand how my role has changed. I quickly discovered that I was no longer a long-distance encourager. Every time I could finish with one grandchild there was another one to feed, rock to sleep, entertain, protect from an older playful cousin or watch while the parents went shopping. Although I



BAPTIST  
FORUM

## PARTNERS IN THE MISSION



Bill Mackey

## GIVING

## Target founders affirm need for targeted giving

By Jeremy White

George Dayton founded the Dayton's department store in Minneapolis, the beginning of a very successful retail empire. His sons and then his grandsons grew the retail business and expanded the Dayton Corporation by acquiring Hudson's, Mervyn's and Marshall Field and Co.

The Dayton grandsons created a discount store concept in 1962, called Target, which became the company's most profitable store. The company renamed itself in 2000 from Dayton's to the Target Corporation.

Even before possessing great wealth, the founder, George Dayton, was committed to giving to God. He strongly believed in tithing because it "is putting evangelism into action." In his biography, he said that tithing was the starting point for giving. His meticulous records showed he was later giving away 40 percent of his income.

Concerned about the possible effect of wealth upon his children, Dayton encouraged his offspring to be generous givers. Kenneth Dayton, a grandson of George Dayton, became a public advocate for giving. In what would make Grandpa Dayton proud, his grandson identified nine stages of giving in his publication, "The Stages of Giving":

1. *Minimal response.* Giving only because we were asked.

2. *Involvement and interest.* As soon as one becomes involved, giving becomes more meaningful.

3. *As much as possible.* Giving this amount requires a plan and a budget.

4. *Maximum allowable.* Giving the most that IRS allows as deductible.

5. *Beyond the max.* No longer would we let the IRS tell us how much (or how little) we could give.

6. *Percentage of wealth.* Until we started to measure our giving against our wealth, we did not fully realize how much we could give away and still live very comfortably.

7. *Capping wealth.* Giving each year a percent of one's wealth forces one to start thinking about the relative importance of increasing giving vs. increasing wealth.

8. *Reducing the cap.* This takes courage.

9. *Bequests.* Having given our heirs enough assets, we are able to leave almost all our remaining assets to charities.

Jeremy White is a certified public accountant in Paducah



## Creative traditions can help preserve true Christmas spirit

**Q: My husband and I are fed up with gift giving that is out of control. We are about to rebel and give no gifts, period! Any suggestions?**

If you're like most Christian couples, you enter the holiday season intent on focusing your family's celebrations on the "true meaning" of Christmas. We set up our Nativity sets, bake birthday cakes for Jesus, and reenact the birth of the Savior so that our children aren't confused about what Christmas is about. Some of us even choose to keep Santa out of our holiday to prevent our children from losing sight of Jesus' birth.

But Santa or no Santa, most families find that the whole gift-giving commotion ends up fizzling our focus anyway. Even if Mom and Dad try to reign in the gift explosion, kids get oodles of presents from Grandma and Grandpa, Uncle Bob and Aunt Susie. As a result, our visions of a meaning-filled Christmas get buried under all the wrapping paper.

In an effort to maintain some control over the lessons learned at Christmas, here's one way of giving gifts that seems to work beautifully. Maybe you've tried limiting your giving to three gifts per child to echo the three gifts Jesus received from the Magi. But take the plan a step further. Let the three gifts themselves symbolize those that Jesus received from the wise men in Matthew 2.

With a little creativity, these three gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh will remind your children that Jesus is our King of kings, our Emmanuel and our Sacrificial Lamb. When the extended family arrives bearing more gifts, your children already will be focused on Christ and can receive additional presents gratefully and graciously.

Have fun with this approach. You and your family might not get it at first, but as the years go by, it can become a treasured family tradition. No matter how many gifts come flooding through your door, the three gifts will help your family remember that the most important gift given on that first Christmas came not from the wise men, but from God: the gift of His Son and our Savior, Jesus Christ—*Jon Rainbow*

**Q: What is the best gift I can give my child this Christmas?**

What will be the "to die for" Christmas gift of 2003? Transformers are making a comeback. Computer and video games are always a hit. Beyond the toys, parents can give their children a gift that cannot be wrapped and that won't fit under the tree: The gift of love for each other.

A small placard in my office reads, "The most important thing a father can do for his children is to love their mother." Other than pointing a child to God and helping him or her choose to follow Jesus, I can think of nothing greater a parent can do. Research shows that children benefit from living in healthy homes while experience shows that divorce causes long-lasting pain and confusion.

Willard Harley's recent book, "His Needs, Her Needs for Parents," reminds parents of the importance of nurturing the marriage relationship once children arrive in the home. Harley reminds parents that caring for children can make it difficult to care for each other. However, without such care, love gradually fades and the marriage finds itself in trouble.

In the midst of caring for your children, recommit yourselves to caring for each other. Be especially intentional about meeting each other's intimate emotional needs (for her, affection and conversation; for him, sexual fulfillment and recreational companionship). As Harley writes, "Doing what it takes to stay in love with each other will help your children grow up to be happy and successful." That's what I call a gift that keeps on giving!—*David Garrard*

Family Forum writers are:

**David Garrard**, minister to children at St. Matthews Baptist Church in Louisville. E-mail: dgarrard@smbclouisville.org

**Jon Rainbow**, a clinical gerontologist and professor at Campbellsville University. E-mail: rainbow@campbellsville.edu

**James Stillwell**, minister to singles at Immanuel Baptist Church in Lexington. E-mail: jamess@ibs-lex.org

**Scott Wigginton**, director of LifeCare Counseling at Walnut Street Baptist Church in Louisville. E-mail: swigginton@sbts.edu

Send questions for Family Forum to Western Recorder, Box 43969, Louisville, KY 40253 or e-mail wesrec@earthlink.net.



## Recorder board & staff 'revision' priorities

Just as the Kentucky Baptist Convention has been refining its mission and objectives in recent months through the work of the KBC Mission Study Committee and staff restructuring, the Western Recorder also has been engaged in in-depth research related to our work and ministry.

Working in cooperation with a Christian communications research firm based in Nashville, the Recorder has conducted a series of six focus group sessions in three regions of the state. Research also has included e-mail surveys to dozens of Kentucky Baptist leaders across the commonwealth, including directors of missions, ministers of education and youth ministers. KBC Executive Director Bill Mackey and other Mission Board staff members also have provided helpful input.

Goals of the research include determining how the Western Recorder can more effectively serve Kentucky Baptists, with particular attention on producing resources to help turn current non-subscribers into regular readers.

As part of that process, Western Recorder's board of directors reviewed a 35-page report of findings and preliminary recommendations last week during our regular board meeting.

While the Recorder board and staff still are in the early stages of responding to the findings, the research provides a strong foundation for future plans and priorities.

Floyd Craig, president of the research firm, suggested that one of the starting points is for Western Recorder leaders to "revision" the five key provisions of the 1988 covenant agreement between the KBC and the Recorder. Those provisions emphasize that primary goals of the Western Recorder are to:

- Maintain "the historic Baptist principle of a free press."
- "Further the cause of Christ."
- "Inform Baptists of Kentucky about matters of general interest to the churches."
- "Describe, interpret, promote and cooperate with the programs and ministries of the Kentucky Baptist Convention."
- "Provide all Kentucky Baptists a forum for the exchange of ideas of interest to all Kentucky Baptists."

Striving to maintain a free press is a given.

Without full freedom to report both positive and negative news affecting Baptist life, any state Baptist paper quickly would lose its credibility, relevance and purpose. While reporting difficult news isn't always well received by some readers, it is essential that we keep Baptists informed about issues of concern.

Helping further the cause of Christ is one of the great joys of Christian journalism. Whether reporting about mission needs, training opportunities, prayer requests or publishing a plan of salvation column each month, the Recorder staff is dedicated to enhancing ministry efforts for the sake of the gospel.

Informing Kentucky Baptists about matters of interest is a major part of each issue of the Recorder. Ranging from our "Mountains to the Mississippi" column about local church news to timely national and international news and feature articles, the Recorder strives to keep our readers informed about diverse topics.

Describing, promoting and cooperating with KBC programs and ministries also is an ongoing emphasis. We regularly provide in-depth coverage about the KBC annual meeting, evangelism conference, Super Saturday training, disaster relief, partnership missions and a host of other efforts. Interpreting as well as covering such events is a vital service for the benefit of our readers.

Providing Kentucky Baptists a forum for the exchange of ideas includes our "Baptist Forum" letters column as well as guest editorials and frequent features about the ministries of local churches and associations throughout the Bluegrass State.

That's not to say we're always successful in covering everything of interest to Kentucky Baptists. God is accomplishing far too much through Kentucky Baptists for any publication to fully cover it all.

However, our staff remains committed to doing our very best to produce a timely, informative, helpful publication for the benefit of all Kentucky Baptists. As we continue to evaluate and refine our efforts in the months ahead, we welcome your input. Feel free to contact me by e-mail at [trennis.henderson@kybaptist.org](mailto:trennis.henderson@kybaptist.org) or by fax at (502) 244-6474.

STRAIGHT FROM THE EDITOR



Trennis Henderson

## Practice informed, effective prayer

By Wanda Lee

**Birmingham, Ala. (BP)**—Do you believe that praying for missionaries makes a difference? That they covet your prayers for their protection and strength? That praying for the people missionaries are trying to reach helps prepare hearts to receive the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ?

Time and time again, Southern Baptist missionaries express their appreciation for the invaluable prayer support from members of Woman's Missionary Union and Southern Baptists as they share the incredible ways God is at work in our world.

Praying for our missionaries and giving our resources to aid in the work of overseas missions is at the heart of who we are in WMU. While it is a daily activity for most of our members, once a year we seek to draw the attention of our entire congregation to focus on international missions. We call this the Week of Prayer for International Missions and the Lottie Moon

Christmas Offering for International Missions.

WMU's commitment to overseas missions began with their love for Lottie Moon, who served as a Southern Baptist missionary to China from 1873 to 1912. When WMU was

founded in 1888, one of its first actions was to establish an offering goal of \$2,000 to send two missionaries to help Lottie in China. More than \$3,000 was received in that first-ever Christmas offering—enough to send three missionaries.

While money is vital for the ongoing work overseas, missionaries consistently say the thing they need most is prayer. Scripture supports their requests with the words of James 5:16, "The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective."

Learning about the needs of unreached people groups and those who are ministering among them provides insight to effective prayer. Praying "God bless the missionaries" once you are informed is not specific enough to open these dark

places to the light of Jesus Christ. It will take informed, inspired praying to reach our world with the message of salvation.

As you participate in Southern Baptists' focus on international missions and during your personal prayer times this month, would you pray consistently for those working among the unreached people groups? Ask God to grant them an abundance of patience and creativity as they seek to establish a credible witness with their group. Ask God to protect them and support them in the difficult places.

Also pray for the people they are trying to reach. Ask God to create openness to the gospel in their hearts. Pray that the Bible will be available in their language so they may know for themselves that God loves them and has a purpose for their lives.

Your informed prayers for missions could be the inspiration you need to give sacrificially this season.

Wanda Lee is executive director of Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union

## Northern Kentucky study: Does true love really wait?

**"Behavior is changing. It has not changed for every teenager."**

Richard Ross, founder of the True Love Waits abstinence campaign

By John Hall  
Associated Baptist Press

Highland Heights (ABP)—Signatures on most sexual-abstinence commitment cards may not be worth the paper they are written on, according to a recent university study.

A survey by Northern Kentucky University revealed that 61 percent of students who made abstinence promises broke them. And of those who said they kept their pledges, 55 percent indicated they participated in oral sex.

The survey queried 527 Northern Kentucky students, 16 percent of whom made pledges not to have sex until marriage.

The study noted, however, that pledge breakers delayed sex for a year longer than non-pledging teens—until an average of 17.6 years old. But pledge-makers who became pledge-breakers were less likely to use protection, such as condoms, when first having sex.

Angela Lipsitz, a professor at Northern Kentucky University who was involved in the study, said the information should serve as a warning sign. But further study is needed before nationwide conclusions can be drawn, she said.

"To me it sends up cautions," she said. "I would say we need to be skeptical at this point. It is only one study. I would say this is showing some interesting things, but I would like to see them replicated."

Richard Ross, a spokesman for the grassroots abstinence effort True Love Waits, indicated the survey's findings did not surprise him.

Following the enormous popularity of True Love Waits, the government started funding more than 200 abstinence programs that are used in the majority of school systems across the country.

### Lacking a divine influence

Often these efforts consist of a short lecture about reasons for abstinence and a request for students to sign a piece of paper in a notebook, he said. There is sparse follow up and the pledge carries little weight, he said.

"Even though I am very supportive of any programs that talk about abstinence, I think many of the pledges signed lack the power to shape long-term decisions," Ross said.

Ross said True Love Waits is more effective because it adds an element that secular efforts lack: God.

The addition of the supernatural gives the promise more power, he said. "Promising a notebook means almost nothing," Ross commented. "Promising to God is extremely important to most young people."

True Love Waits works through local churches and with families, a key element in providing accountability, support and encourage-

ment that differs from secular programs, said Ross, who started the movement in 1993 at Tulip Grove Baptist Church in Nashville.

Additionally, large True Love Waits events, like stacking the pledge cards up to the roof of the Georgia Dome in Atlanta, provide celebratory occasions that help teens know they are not alone in their commitments, Ross said.

Such celebrations create a bond among students and encourage them to be proud of their stance, he said.

David Hager, director of the obstetrician and gynecology training program at Central Baptist Hospital in Lexington, affirmed the need for continuous support for a pledge to be successful.

Supportive friends and family are key to encouraging young adults to stick to their promises, Hager found. When an individual's support group becomes less supportive of a sexual purity pledge, the chances of keeping that oath drop drastically.

### Abstinence "not a one-time event"

"The teaching of abstinence and abstinence education is not a one-time event," he said. "It has to be a continuous thing."

Joe McIlhane, director of the Medical Institute for Sexual Health, a nonprofit educational group based in Austin, Texas, goes even

further to say that the pledges should be renewed to keep them fresh on the teen's mind.

"The kids are really asking for help staying sexually abstinent," he said. "They just aren't receiving the support."

Such support will not guarantee all teen pledges will be followed, McIlhane said, but the longer young adults delay their first sexual encounter, the less likely they are to contract sexually transmitted diseases.

Ross said True Love Waits has worked so well that it helped account for a statistical national drop in teen sexual activity during each year of the program's large-scale work. Slightly more than 50 percent of middle and high school students are virgins, he said.

"Behavior is changing," Ross stated. "It has not changed for every teenager."

Other research suggests large-scale abstinence events, such as a majority of students in one school signing abstinence pledges, might actually limit success, according to the U.S. government's 2001 National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health. As the number of pledges in a school increases, the study found, compliance decreases.

When the pledges are successful, the report said, it's because students get a sense of community apart from their peers.

## Put Your Faith Into Action with The Latest Study From Beth Moore!

Originating from a concept introduced in Isaiah 43:10, *Believing God* examines what it means to believe God rather than only believe in Him. Participants study the lives of Abraham and others from Hebrews 11 as examples of people who believed God. This study parallels a personal journey Beth took in coming to understand what it means to believe God.

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The highlight of our fall

Employee's decision for Christ has lessons for all

As you read this, our retreat season is almost over for the year. After Dec. 7, we do not have guests until Jan. 2 for either property. This is a great time during the year to rest and complete some much-needed improvements that cannot be done while guests are coming each weekend.

During the Thanksgiving season, we had an amazing event. Allen Fortner, an employee at Cedarmore since May of 1977, has experienced a great change. Imagine being Allen. Allen has served our camp by working in the dish room. Not the most glamorous of jobs, but a very important one. Perhaps more than anyone, Allen knows how many guests we have. After all, he washes all the dishes. Allen has watched literally tens of thousands of people over the last 26 years come to the property to find or experience Jesus Christ. Allen has no doubt seen the good and the bad during such a long tenured employment.

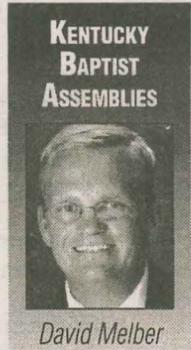
After years of witnessing life changes, Allen finally has experienced a life change himself. Allen accepted Jesus as his Lord and

Savior about two weeks ago. Think about it, after 26 years of working in a Christian environment, it was finally Allen's time.

Allen's story of salvation should challenge us in three ways. One, we never should give up on someone. We as believers must know that it is never too late for someone to come to Christ. Two, we must realize that people do watch our lifestyle. This might not be a pleasant thought, but our actions speak louder than words. Third and finally, we must take the initiative to speak and witness to people. We cannot assume a person who is in church or comes to camp knows about Jesus. In simple terms, we must proclaim who Jesus is and what He can do.

I am thankful for Allen's decision. The decision was first the result of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit worked through the lives of many people throughout a 26-year time period, and I am thankful for the intentional witness of our employees at Cedarmore. They are blessed to be witnesses of the change in Allen Fortner's life.

David Melber is president of Kentucky Baptist Assemblies. Contact him at 3043 Beal Road, Hardin, KY 42048; phone (270) 354-8355.



David Melber

Kudzu

Doug Marlette



Church of the Covered Dish

Thom Tapp



Bible Crosswords

Mary Louise DeMott

Across

- 1 God sent this man a dream of a ladder with angels ascending and descending on it (Genesis 28:12-16)
- 6 God called this man, from a burning bush, to free Israel from Egyptian bondage (Exodus 3:1-12)
- 11 Full of cheerful good humor
- 12 Jesus called this man to follow Him (John 1:43)
- 14 Osmium, chem. symbol
- 15 Delirium tremens, abbr.
- 17 Manganese, chem. symbol
- 18 Maine, abbr.
- 19 Not existing before, recently made or invented
- 21 Belonging to the church's first missionary (Acts 9:15-16; 13:1-2)
- 24 Suitable or quick at learning
- 25 Tailless monkeys, or large uncouth men
- 27 Unwell
- 28 Without payment, costing nothing
- 29 His Highness, abbr.
- 30 Lanthanum, chem. symbol
- 32 Milliliter, abbr.
- 33 Rural route, abbr.
- 34 Jesus called this man to follow Him (John 1:44-51)
- 35 Society of Jesus, abbr.
- 37 Physical Education, abbr.
- 38 In the matter of, about, concerning, abbr.
- 39 Printer's unit of measure
- 41 Electrically charged particles
- 43 Fodder
- 45 A narrative or story
- 47 Life-support system, abbr.
- 48 Carried
- 50 Central Intelligence Agency, abbr.
- 51 Exclamation of satisfaction

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									62				

- 52 Laughter sound
- 53 Eastern Time, abbr.
- 55 Rue, Amer. abbr.
- 56 Excellent, most impressive or splendid
- 59 Person who worked iron
- 61 God called this man to become Israel's first High Priest (Leviticus 8:2)
- 62 God called this man to marry a harlot as a picture to Israel of their relationship with God (Hosea 1:1-4)
- 16 The territory of a sultan
- 20 Us
- 22 Artificial Intelligence, abbr.
- 23 Lines, abbr.
- 24 Argon, chem. symbol
- 26 Strikes with open hand
- 28 Moving swiftly, nimble
- 31 Consumed
- 32 To damage, to spoil
- 35 This man was called to help Paul (Acts 15:40)
- 36 God called this man to lead Israel into Canaan (Joshua 1:1-9)
- 39 God called this man to be the successor to Elijah (1 Kings 19:16-17)
- 40 Fleшы or full of subject matter
- 42 Not specified, abbr.
- 43 "\_\_\_\_\_, every one that thirsteth" (Isaiah 55:1)
- 44 KJV you
- 46 Actinium, chem. symbol
- 48 Tropical plant with a tuberous root used for food
- 49 Item used for demonstration
- 52 Opposite of him
- 54 It is, poetic contraction
- 57 Ma's mate
- 58 Battalion, abbr.
- 59 Hush!
- 60 Tellurium, chem. symbol

Down

- 1 Sold into slavery by his brothers (Genesis 37:27-28)
- 2 Authorized Version of the Bible, abbr.
- 3 Criminal Investigation Department of Scotland Yard, abbr.
- 4 Hardy cereal plants grown in cool climates
- 5 Barrel, abbr.
- 6 Military Policeman, abbr.
- 7 Units of electrical resistance
- 8 Breaking of religious or moral law
- 9 Elevated railway
- 10 An affected smile
- 11 God called this man to warn Nineveh about coming judgment unless it repented (Jonah 1:1-2)
- 13 Jesus called this fisherman to follow Him (Matthew 4:18-20)

Last week's solution

1	A	S	A	4	C	U	R	7	S	9	10	11		
12	N	E	T	13	A	N	E	E	L	14	I	C	E	
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21	D	R	E	S	S	23	K	N	E	A	D	24	25	
26	R	A	T	E	27	H	E	A	T	S	28	N	E	
29	O	N	E	30	N	O	R	T	H	31	O	D	E	
32	O	G	33	H	I	R	E	S	34	A	P	E	D	
35	P	E	L	36	I	C	A	N	37	S	L	E	D	S
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45	H	I	P	46	O	B	T	A	I	N	48	I	N	G
49	A	L	S	50	R	E	A	L	M	51	N	O	E	

Is there room in your heart for one more?

Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children

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At [www.WESTERNRECORDER.com](http://www.WESTERNRECORDER.com):  
Poll Question: How much does Christmas affect your charitable giving?

## Some catalogs help turn holiday gift giving into Christian ministry

Continued from page 1

This year's Heifer International catalog features a plethora of celebrity endorsements, from Walter Cronkite and Jimmy Carter to author Barbara Kingsolver.

World Vision, an international Christian humanitarian relief organization based in Federal Way, Wash., offers a similar catalog but one that stretches beyond animals.

Through World Vision, donors may give Christmas gifts of water wells in Haiti (\$10,000), wheelchairs for disabled children (\$250), education for an orphan child for one year (\$150), or immunizations for a child in a developing country (\$25).

This is the eighth year for World Vision's Christmas catalog. Last year, the catalog raised \$5.8 million from more than 30,000 donors.

"The gift catalog vividly communicates the needs of our global neighbors and explains the help that caring individuals like you can provide," explains a promotional piece. "It's a great educational tool for families that also helps instill compassion in children."

Alternative gifts from a ministry catalog provide children a personal illustration of the greater meaning of Christmas, World Vision spokeswoman Karen Kartes said.

Officials at Heifer International agreed, noting in a news release: "While kids might have difficulty understanding what it means to write a check to charity, they can easily grasp the power of giving an animal ... to poor families in 48 countries around the world."

Samaritan's Purse, the international relief ministry headed by Franklin Graham, is best known for its Operation Christmas Child drive of shoebox gifts. However, the North Carolina-based ministry also offers a Christmas gift catalog. Available gifts include wheelchairs for disabled people who cannot afford them (\$75), Bibles in a variety of languages (\$10), training for international evangelists (\$25) and airfare to transport sick children to the United States for specialized care (\$2,000).

In addition to the specific gifts available in Christmas catalogs, many ministry organizations—including child-care agencies, family ministries, schools and hospitals—rely heavily on year-end donations. These agencies often will provide acknowledgement cards to those in whose name gifts have been made.

## Supreme Court hears religious scholarship case

WASHINGTON (RNS)—The U.S. Supreme Court heard arguments last week on whether a Washington state college student should have been eligible to use a public scholarship to pursue a theology degree.

Lawyers for both sides agreed that the case holds important implications for school voucher programs in the 37 states, like Washington, with constitutional bans on using public money for religious education.

Joshua Davey, who attended Assemblies of God-affiliated Northwest College, said his religious freedom rights were violated when he was denied a state Promise Scholarship in 1999 after he declared a double major in business administration and pastoral ministries.

The two-year scholarships are available for any major except theology because the state constitution bans public money for "any religious worship, exercise or instruction, or the support of any religious establishment."

Davey was approved for the \$1,500 scholarship for low- and middle-income families, but was told two months later he was no longer eligible after he declared his major. A lower court ruled for the state, while the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled for Davey last year.

Davey's lawyers argued it is unconstitutional to deny the scholarships only to theology students while business, medicine or other majors are eligible.

"This is the plainest form of discrimination because the person who wants to have a belief in God ... is the one who is singled out for

discrimination," said Solicitor General Theodore Olson, who argued for Davey on behalf of the Bush administration.

Narda Pierce, solicitor general for Washington, said the state had "not overstepped our bounds" and was seeking to protect the "freedom of conscience" for citizens who oppose state-funded training of clergy.

"All the state has done is to decline to fund religious education wherever it occurs," she said.

The most intense questioning came on the program's implications for public voucher programs at religious schools, which the court upheld last year. Justice Stephen Breyer called the potential impact "breathtaking."

Justice Antonin Scalia, a leading conservative on the court, asked how the policy could treat religion differently than nonreligion. "Why

is that not a violation of the principle of neutrality?" he asked.

More liberal justices, meanwhile, appeared skeptical that Davey's rights to practice his religion were infringed when he was denied the scholarship. "He can practice it, but he can practice it at a price," Olson said.

"He can practice it without a subsidy," Justice John Paul Stevens replied.

Other justices wanted to know why the program singled out only theology majors, while other students presumably could take many of the same classes as long as they declared a separate course of study.

"What is the state's interest in denying the funds simply because of the major he chooses?" asked Justice Anthony Kennedy.

The court is expected to rule on the case, *Locke vs. Davey*, sometime next summer.

## 15-Passenger Van Safety is Big News these Days!

LifeWay has the solution—a 15-passenger mini-bus that meets Federal safety standards.



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## 'Missions Beyond the Edge,' part 2

### Oneida Baptist Institute's ministry brings non-Christians to our door

The second international student who recently was saved and baptized is Anu. Anu is from Mongolia and, like Soo Young, was not brought up in the Christian faith. Anu was raised a Buddhist. She came to Oneida in August and was our second student from Mongolia.

Anu's father died five years ago after a long illness. Her older brother moved to the U.S. two years ago and settled in North Dakota. Even though it was a difficult time financially, he was able to move Anu, another sister and their mother to the U.S. Anu's brother heard about Oneida, but could not afford even our modest room and board.

He wrote, "I am the only person who is working, so I am alone supporting my mom, my two sisters and myself. I am also sending some money to Mongolia to pay some bills. ... My salary is for four people, ... making our life pretty hard. ... My sister's good friend is studying at Oneida. He said this is a very good place, very good education, very strong discipline, which is very good for today, especially in America. He is living in peace and in love of God. I wish my sister to be there. ... Sometimes we are discriminated against by other people. ... The kids here do not like my sister. They say things like 'Hey Asian girl, why are you here?' and some bad words."

"Probably I made lot of gramatic mistakes, sorry about that, because I learned English by myself and it is far from perfect, but I am working on it.

"I am 99 percent sure that you are not taking my sister to your institute, which is totally understandable for me! So I don't know why I am writing this letter. I guess because my sister beg me to do that, because my sister so wanted to go there, because I wish to have possibility to give her that chance, because maybe God will help."

Why are we interested in international students? "How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Romans 10:14).

Since Oneida cannot send missionaries around the world to those who do not know Him, the next best thing is to bring them to us.

I cannot tell you that every international student becomes a Christian while attending our school. I can tell you that Oneida has a unique opportunity to help spread the gospel to the four corners of the earth for middle and high school students.

Since Anu's brother was not able to pay the modest fees Oneida charges, we provided her with a full scholarship as we do for many other students.

Some people might question our commitment to help our international students. Since it was His purpose to "seek and to save those who are lost," we hope that you will rejoice knowing that Oneida is providing "Missions Beyond the Edge."

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

## The witness of genuine faith

### Weeks of heavy stress help student wife grow in faith

In recent months, Maryanna Wilcox, academic office secretary, has experienced several major stresses: marriage, surgery and a death in the family.

"I always knew God provided in difficult times, but He has really demonstrated that in the different trials we've experienced," Maryanna said.

"It started with appendicitis at the end of October, and then my husband's grandfather died. I worked 32 hours in four weeks and wondered how we could pay the bills," she recalled. "My husband, James, kept reminding me that God would provide; that happens at Clear Creek."

Her initial skepticism vanished a few days after Maryanna left the hospital.

"We received \$150 cash in our mail from an anonymous donor," she said. "We went to Bristol, Va., for the funeral and spent \$80 for groceries to help James' grandmother. We came home and the mailbox had a check with an extra \$80. This is a great witness to folks at home. Not only did God

provide; He gave us the exact amount."

Maryanna's parents were atheists and did not want God mentioned in the house.

"My older sister became a Christian at age 13 and had to read the Bible and listen to Christian music in the garage," Maryanna recalled. "I saw the new hope and joy she had; I had to have it. People ask me, 'Why are you always so happy?' It's the joy He gives me."

She met James in Abingdon, Va., where he led a singles ministry that her younger sister attended. They married after his first year at Clear Creek.

In the academic office, Maryanna enjoys the interaction with professors and students.

"I'm blessed by the friendships and relationships of the campus family," she said. "I also like the beautiful campus. I grew up in Los Angeles, and it is amazing to see God's creation. I expect to continue growing in faith at Clear Creek."

Bill Whittaker is president of Clear Creek Baptist Bible College, Pineville, KY 40977; (606) 337-3196

### CLEAR CREEK CHRONICLE



Bill Whittaker

## Billy Graham 'moved to tears' at screening of Gibson's 'Passion' film

Washington (RNS)—Evangelist Billy Graham said he was "moved to tears" while screening Mel Gibson's controversial film on the death of Jesus Christ, and said the film does not blame "any particular group" for His crucifixion.

Gibson, who has been criticized by Jewish groups for his upcoming film "The Passion of Christ," personally met with Graham, along with actor Jim Caviezel, who plays Jesus, at a West Virginia conference center.

"I have often wondered what it must have been like to be a bystander during those last hours before Jesus' death," Graham said in a statement. "After watching 'The Passion of The Christ,' I feel as if I have actually been there. I was moved to tears."

Jewish groups have expressed concern that the \$30 million film, scheduled for release next Ash Wednesday (Feb. 25, 2004) blames Jews for the death of Jesus and will fuel anti-Semitism.

Graham said "the film is faithful to the Bible's teaching that

we are all responsible for Jesus' death because we have all sinned. It is our sins that caused His death, not any particular group."

Gibson, a conservative Catholic, has screened the film for numerous evangelical and Catholic leaders, but so far has refused to show the movie to most Jewish groups, including the Anti-Defamation League, which has voiced the most concerns.

In a statement issued June 13, Gibson vigorously denied that his film casts Jews in a bad light, and said he has made revisions to ease some concerns. "To be certain, neither I nor my film are anti-Semitic. ... Nor do I hate anybody, certainly not the Jews," he said.

The film has also received the endorsement of the National Association of Evangelicals. NAE President Ted Haggard screened the film in July.

Graham did not mention Jews by name in the statement released by his public relations firm, which is also handling some publicity for Gibson's Icon Productions film company.

## LifeWay links with 'Left Behind' on evangelism

Nashville (BP)—LifeWay Christian Resources is partnering with the creators of the popular "Left Behind" series to help individuals and churches use the apocalyptic thrillers as tools to share the gospel.

The evangelistic strategy, called "Share Eternity with Someone Today," is available to download for free at LifeWay.com.

The Web site-based campaign, which runs through December, is aimed at equipping readers of the Left Behind fiction series, based on the prophecies of the Book of Revelation, to use the novels as discussion starters for sharing their faith in Christ.

LifeWay's Web site features "A Discussion-Starter Guide" complete with more than 30 ideas for using books, CDs and cassette tapes from the Left Behind series designed to spark a conversation about Christianity.

With more than 58 million books sold since the series' debut in 1995, the "Left Behind" novels, co-written by Southern Baptist Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins, have set all-time sales records for Christian

fiction.

Since 2000, five of the series' novels have topped The New York Times best-seller list in consecutive releases. The Left Behind series title, "Desecration," claimed the No. 1 best-selling hardcover fiction novel for 2001, unseating legendary author John Grisham, who had held that honor since 1994.

LaHaye and Jenkins estimate that they have heard from more than 3,000 readers who made professions of faith in Christ or recommitted themselves to Christ after reading these end-times thrillers.

Such was the impetus for the book, "These Will Not Be Left Behind—True Stories of Changed Lives," released in July by Tyndale House Publishers, which has published 11 novels in the Left Behind series to date. The 12th book in the series is due out in spring 2004.

"These Will Not Be Left Behind" is a collection of 30 true stories, compiled by Norman Rohrer, about readers whose lives or those of their family or friends were transformed eternally after reading part of the Left Behind series.

**How Jewish Is Christianity? 2 Views on the Messianic Movement.** Senior Editor Stanley Gundry. Zondervan Publishing, 2003. 207 pages. \$16.99. ♦♦♦♦ (out of five)

Most evangelical Christians are aware of the growth of the Messianic Jewish movement through the activities of groups such as Jews for Jesus and Chosen People Ministries. Most of us have viewed this movement as an extension of the evangelistic work of the church. In fact, some denominations have incorporated support for starting Messianic congregations as a part of their missions program.

At first blush, this book appeared to be an examination of the legitimacy of this approach to evangelizing Jews. This topic is approached, with most contributors expressing concern about the movement's effectiveness in converting Jews to faith in Yeshua (Jesus). Only David Stern, in his concluding essay on "The Future of Messianic Judaism," sees the movement as pivotal to calling Jews to authentic Jewishness, i.e. faith in Yeshua.

The bulk of the book consists of various Jewish Christians debating William Varner, a Gentile Christian, over the necessity and advisability of fostering a specifically Jewish form of Christian worship and practice, or maybe more appropriately a specifically Christian form of Jewish worship and practice.

I found myself intrigued and challenged by the debate, which offered insights into the history of the church of which I was unaware, as well as perspectives on passages from Acts and Paul's letters that were new to me.

At times both sides in the debate offered challenging things to think about. At other points they both seemed to be grasping at straws or offering ill-conceived arguments. But overall, they challenged me to reflect not just more deeply on the Jewish roots of Christianity, but on how this new thing that Jesus came to do should be lived out. *Jim Holladay*

**Charles Colson: A Story of Power, Corruption and Redemption.** John Perry. Broadman & Holman, 2003. 258 pages. \$22.99. ♦♦♦♦

For all of my adult life, I have known who Charles Colson is, first as legal counsel to President Nixon, then attached to the Watergate break-in and cover-up, next as the founder of Prison Fellowship and lastly as a prolific author.

I remember as a teenager reading Colson's "Born Again," his spiritual autobiography of his coming to Christ. While I have not always agreed with him theologically (less than more) or politically (rarely), I always respected his witness to the Christian faith in the face of those who would doubt his sincerity.

In this unauthorized biography (nevertheless done with Colson's support; he even "speaks" an epilogue to the book), Perry covers much of the material Colson

does in "Born Again." But as biography there is a (mostly successful) attempt at distance to the events, which helps the reader evaluate Colson's story in a new light.

Perry does offer important background to the public Charles Colson by placing Colson's life in its social and historical setting from early in his life. This is a real benefit in understanding fully the heights and power to which this man had risen and then the change due to his acceptance of Christ.

For me, this brings even more appreciation of the impact of Christ on Colson's life. Perry is rarely critical beyond Colson's own avowed political ruthlessness. No attempt is made to prove Colson knew things he claims he did not, or to confirm his accounts. Colson's words appear to be accepted at face value. In that sense it might not be the best of histories, but it is a good and engrossing biography of Colson's spiritual life. *Wayne Hager*

**Optimize Your Marriage.** Phil and Susy Downer, with Ken Walker. Christian Publications Inc., 2003. 264 pages. \$13.99 ♦♦♦♦

Phil and Susy Downer draw heavily on their own troubled and healed marriage as they seek to help other couples. Their aim is not simply to enrich or strengthen marriages, but to create marriage relationships that make "an eternal impact on family and friends."

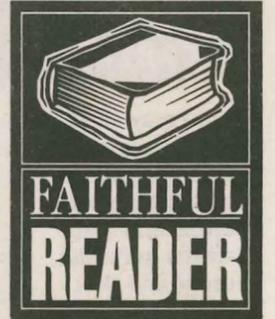
At first, I was dubious about the overall value of this book to the field of family and marriage enrichment. After all, why would a couple who "have conducted conferences on a variety of topics" need to employ someone to take their anecdotes, experiences and insights and write it for them (at least I am assuming that was Ken Walker's role). But I was pleasantly surprised.

Building on the near failure of their own marriage, and with an eye to being honest about the contribution each of them made to its near collapse, the Downers offer insight into the factors that: contribute to unhealthy marriages, bring healing to wounded marriages, build sound and lasting relationships and help couples witness to the love of God with their children and all those around them.

That last factor is, perhaps, the unique contribution the Downers make to the general discussion of marriage. It is not just about what happens between the husband and wife, but how that relationship fits into their lives as disciples of Jesus Christ.

Each chapter concludes with questions for reflection, designed to hone in on the content of the chapter. In some instances, I found the questions more challenging than the content of the chapter.

I am not sure I would urge you to rush out and buy this book, but it might be a useful resource for couples who are beginning to feel their marriage is getting off-track, or for pastors to give to newlyweds. *Jim Holladay*



By Wayne Hager, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Mt. Airy, N.C.; and Jim Holladay, pastor of Lyndon Baptist Church in Louisville. They welcome feedback or suggestions for book reviews. Contact them via e-mail at: [jcwhager@earthlink.net](mailto:jcwhager@earthlink.net); or [docholladay01@aol.com](mailto:docholladay01@aol.com)

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WESTERN RECORDER

## PRAYER PARTNERS

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

■ **Extremadura**, a region of Spain, where "hundreds of towns and cities are without even one known person professing to be a Christian," according to a missionary.

■ A team of missionaries in Prague, who recently made a prayer walk through the city. "This is giving us insights as to how we can minister to the people living in this city of 1.2 million," a missionary writes.

■ Several evangelical Christian missionaries serving in southern Romania who are having health problems.

■ The witness of workers at an English lessons class in Budapest, Hungary, and a young father who is getting closer to becoming a Christian.

■ A young woman in the Czech Republic who wants to start a church in the town of Hradec Kralove.

## MOUNTAINS TO THE MISSISSIPPI

COMPILED BY STAFF

■ **BARDWELL**—Antioch Church recently honored Pastor **George Gardner** and his wife, **Mildred**, in recognition of his 50 years in the ministry.

■ **BURLINGTON**—Burlington Church's worship choir will present the musical, "I Have Seen the Light," Dec. 13-14, 6 p.m.

■ **CECILIA**—Cecilia Church will present the cantata, "The Thrill of Hope," Dec. 14, 7:30 p.m.

■ **CORBIN**—Lynn Camp Church recently called **Tim Bargo** as full-time associate pastor. The church has begun construction on an outreach center that will include 26 Sunday school classrooms, a kitchen, gym and walking track. The adult choir will present its Christmas program Dec. 14, 7 p.m. **Carl McCray** is pastor.

■ **COVINGTON**—Latonia Church called **Lynn Smith** as associate pastor for senior adults and health ministries effective Dec. 1. **Steve Hollaway** is pastor.

■ **ELIZABETHTOWN**—Immanuel Church will present its preschool and children's Christmas musicals Dec. 14, 6 p.m. **Charles Darland** is pastor.

■ **FLORENCE**—Greenview Baptist Church celebrated its 40th anniversary Nov. 16 with special services and a concert by The Joyful Messengers. **Steve Turner** is pastor.

■ **FRANKLIN**—First Church's adult choir will present "The Wonders of Christmas" Dec. 14, 6:30 p.m. **Bob Sutton** is pastor.

■ **GLENDALE**—Gilead Church recently called **Chris White** as minister to students.

■ **HAWESVILLE**—Hawesville Church will host The Specks in concert, Dec. 18, 7 p.m. The church's worship choir will join The Specks in singing "Christmas Is Jesus." **Steve Ross** is pastor.

■ **HODGENVILLE**—South Fork Church recently ordained **Bryan Durham** and **Glenn Howell** as deacons. **Norm Brock** is pastor.

## Retired Murray professor writes 'biblical history' of Baptists

By Victoria Moon  
State Correspondent

**DeBary, Fla.**—James Carlin is looking to remind younger Baptists of their heritage with a new history he has written about Baptist beliefs.

Carlin said he wrote "Identifying the Lord's Kind of Churches: A Biblical History" as a way of remembering his own past and sharing it with others.

Carlin, a Paducah native and retired professor of reading methodology and language at Murray State University, said he grew up hearing about the history of Baptists from

his father.

"My father was a Baptist pastor for 56 years, and he taught me about our history from when I was a child," he said. "As I got older, I read from many writers about similar topics, and that was how I became interested in this topic."

Carlin said he began to think about writing a history of Baptists after he realized that many of the books he was reading that shared his landmark perspective on the topic were no longer generally available, and hard to locate.

"The history of our Baptist people has been written in the past, but

■ **IRVINE**—Beech Grove Church recently called **Sam Berryman** as pastor.

■ **LaCENTER**—First Church recently called **Andy Shelton** as worship and adult ministries leader. **Mark Bond** is pastor.

■ **LEXINGTON**—The Church at Andover recently called **Josh Landrum** as minister of students. **Adam Greenway** is pastor.

■ **LOUISVILLE**—Beechmont Church will host the dinner theater, "Twas the Last Mailing Day Before Christmas," Dec. 13, 6:30 p.m. The sanctuary choir will present "Christmas Is Jesus" Dec. 21, 6:30 p.m.

Broadway Church will present "The Magnificat" Dec. 14 and Handel's "Messiah," Dec. 21, 11 a.m.

Carlisle Avenue Church's sanctuary choir will present the musical, "I'll Be Home for Christmas," Dec. 13, 7 p.m., and Dec. 14, 6 p.m. **Shawn Merithew** is pastor.

Gethsemane Church will present the cantata, "The Old Fashioned Christmas," Dec. 21, 6 p.m.

Lyndon Church recently honored **Bill Cox** for teaching the men's Fellowship Class for 40 years. **Jim Holladay** is pastor.

West Broadway Church will present "A Christmas to Remember" Dec. 14, 6 p.m. **Sherman Ramsey** is pastor.

■ **MOUNT WASHINGTON**—First Church called **Paul Chitwood** as pastor effective Dec. 21. He previously was pastor of First Church of Somerset.

■ **OWENSBORO**—Buena Vista Church recently called **Brian George** as minister of children and youth.

Lewis Lane Church will present its annual Advent Journey Dec. 14, 3 to 5 p.m., Dec. 18-19, 6 to 8 p.m., and Dec. 21, 5 to 7 p.m. For information, call (270) 684-4266.

■ **RICHMOND**—Eastside Church recently called **Johnathan Tussey** as associate pastor. He previously was youth minister. The church also called **Tim Vice** as worship leader, **Ben and Bekah Klave** as part-time youth ministers, **Jenny Stephens** as part-time children's minister and **Linda Mason** as part-time business manager. **Virgle Grant** is senior pastor.

■ **UNION**—Union Church recently called **Buddy Crabtree** as pastor.

■ **WACO**—**Lloyd Rose**, the oldest member of Panola Church, died recently at age 98.

## Studies evaluate effectiveness of faith-based job training programs

**Washington (RNS)**—In the long-running debate about faith-based organizations receiving government money, there are many questions. Do they violate church-state separation? Do they proselytize? Do they foster hiring discrimination?

But the biggest question—Are they more effective than secular groups?—has prompted far more rhetoric than research. Slowly, some specific studies are starting to shed light on the answer to that query.

Two studies discussed by scholars this fall give two different answers: No and sometimes. But in both cases there are caveats that show the research has only begun.

An evaluation of data from 5,683 people involved in job training in two Indiana counties found that clients who were placed in jobs after being trained through faith-based providers were as likely to get employment and had similar wages as those trained through secular providers. But those clients of faith-based organizations were less likely to have health insurance and less likely to have full-time jobs.

Overall, 31 percent of clients in faith-based programs and placed into jobs got full-time employment

compared to 53 percent of clients in secular programs.

Partha Deb, an associate professor of economics at Hunter College, worked with other scholars on the Charitable Choice Research Project at Indiana University-Purdue University in Indianapolis.

Despite the number of people studied, Deb said the findings should be viewed cautiously because they reveal the situation only in two counties and they focus on one aspect of social service.

A separate study by Pepperdine University professors conducted on welfare-to-work programs in Los Angeles offered more mixed results.

The study found that faith-based providers who explicitly integrated religious elements into their programs were most successful in helping boost clients' sense of optimism and in keeping in touch with clients after the program had concluded. Employed participants in these kinds of programs also were the most likely to say they still had jobs six months later.

But the study also found that these kind of faith-based providers were least successful at moving clients off welfare.

much of it is out of print now," Carlin said. "I thought it was good for this perspective of Baptist history to be kept in the public view during these current times."

Carlin called "Identifying the Lord's Kind of Churches" a "biblical history." It traces the New Testament roots of Baptists and ends with a look at what the church will look like after the return of Christ.

One of the best features of the book, he said, is his extensive use of biblical texts.

"Most books I've seen on this subject only mention the reference of a Scripture passage in parenthe-

ses," he said. "I've found that when writers do this, the reader rarely takes the time to stop and look up the passage of Scripture. In my book, I printed the references out in full, right within the text each time, and I think that will help readers."

He said he hopes the book, which is published by Challenge Press, "will be used as a supplemental textbook in colleges and Bible schools, and I hope it will be used as a study guide for ministerial students and Bible study groups. I also see it being used as a companion handbook for church members."

## CLASSIFIED ADS

**SEEKING:** Church with exceptional growth potential seeks a God-called, prayer- and Scripture-based motivation speaker that keeps congregation excited about following God's Word. Passion for the lost is a must. An openness to various worship styles and highly developed people skills are essential as well. Please send resumé and a non-returnable video to: Pastor Search Committee, Kings Baptist Church, PO Box 380, Mt. Washington, KY 40047.

**SEEKING:** Minister of youth and activities for First Baptist Church, Hopkinsville, Ky. College/seminary degree required. Send resumé to: Search Committee, First Baptist Church, 1400 South Main St., Hopkinsville, KY 42240.

**SEEKING:** Part-time youth minister for Central Ave. Baptist Church. Please submit resumé to: Minister of Youth Search Committee, PO Box 736, Elizabethtown, KY 42702.

**SEEKING:** Minister to preschool/children/families. Experience in large church setting and seminary degree preferred. Resumé to Westside Baptist Church, 10000 W Newberry Road, Gainesville, FL 32606, Attn: Office Manager. E-mail: dmcalfany@westsidebaptist.org; fax: (352) 333-9009, Attn: Office Manager. No calls, please.

**SEEKING:** Music director, Mt. Vernon Baptist Church, Woodford County. Please call: (502) 863-1433 after 5 p.m.; or (859) 873-3337.

**SEEKING:** New Friendship Baptist Church in Auburn, Ky., is currently seeking a part-time music director. Interested applicants should forward resumé to NFBC, c/o Greg Hale, 6387 Friendship Road, Auburn, KY 42206, or e-mail to gah@logantele.com.

**SEEKING:** Associate pastor. Ovesen Heights Baptist Church in Hodgenville, Ky., is receiving resumé for part-time associate pastor. Primary ministry is with teenagers, but includes some preaching and pastoral responsibilities. Send resumé with references to: Personnel Committee, Ovesen Heights Baptist Church, PO Box 253, Hodgenville, KY 42748, or inquire to: DRichC@aol.com.

**SEEKING:** Associate pastor of youth and single adults. We have a fast-growing congregation with an average Sunday school attendance of more than 600. Desired candidate should have a seminary degree and 3-5 years experience leading youth ministries. Resumé with references should be submitted to: Search Committee, Zion Baptist Church, 8158 Highway 351, Henderson, KY 42420.

# Many faiths, hidden truth in India

## Assamese Muslims observe Hindu & Christian holidays, don't know beliefs

Guwahati, India (BP)—It's 4:30 a.m.—night still lingers in Guwahati, capital of India's northeastern Assam province. A sleepy cow stands at the Fancy Bazaar intersection.

Drizzle falls.

A loudspeaker at the nearby mosque breaks the drowsy silence, calling Muslims to the day's first prayer.

The sleepy cadence stops. Another loudspeaker crackles nearby. This time it's the Sikh temple with its own melodic chant, accompanied by a single drum.

The cow remains in the Fancy Bazaar intersection, nonplussed by the various invocations.

A few hours later, Tashin and her mother, Iraki, take local tea and cakes baked for Bihu, the Assamese (ah-suh-MEEZ) New Year celebration.

The women live in a Muslim neighborhood behind a white mosque. The area looks like any other in Guwahati except that topis—Muslim prayer hats—crown elderly men, and pedestrians lack Hindu forehead markings.

"This may be a Hindu holy festival, but we celebrate anyway," Tashin says of Bihu. "We (Muslims and Hindus) live together well. You could say there is no difference; you could say we are all the same here."

Tashin and her family also celebrate Christmas—calling it "Big Day"—as well as Muslim holidays like Ramadan.

Multiple faiths, languages and ethnicities color India's Assam region—Islam is just one of the hues.

### Laissez-faire religion

Six men pray the afternoon "namaz" at the well-kept Burha mosque in dusty Jalah village. Facing Mecca, they kneel and fulfill their five-times-daily duty.

Outside the mosque, however,



**PRE-WEDDING RECEPTION** The parents of the bride hire workers to build a large colorful tent. All day long before the wedding ceremony, which happens at midnight, the bride sits in a small stage/box, dressed in a fine sari and bespeckled with jewelry, and receives visitors and the gifts they bring her. She responds by offering candies and mints. The Assamese Muslims of India are among the people groups who are being profiled as part of the International Missions Emphasis of the Southern Baptist International Mission Board. The national goal for this year's Lottie Moon Christmas Offering is \$133 million, with a challenge goal of \$150 million. The International Mission Board relies on the Lottie Moon offering for approximately 50 percent of its annual support. (IMB photos)

many more Muslim men disregard the prayer. Teenage boys wrestle. A man slices a mango. A group of men chat with foreign visitors.

"We don't go to namaz because we are either lazy or unwilling. Besides, life is good right now," one truant explains.

Some urban Muslims and clerics study their faith and hold a tight theological line. Rank-and-file Muslims, however, are Muslim in name only.

"I haven't spoken to a single Muslim in 10 villages who has ever read the Koran in their own language," says a Baptist worker in the region.

The worker tells of visiting a village and telling the stories of creation and the fall—both of which are in the Koran.

"After the story, the eldest son of the village leader said, 'Thank you

for coming so many miles to bring us this story we have never heard. We should know these stories but our imam has never taught us.'"

Sociologists call the phenomenon "high identity"—identifying culturally with a belief but not knowing well its theology or practicing faithfully its disciplines.

Islam first visited Assam with Mogul invaders in the 13th century and lingered after the army's defeat. Islamic practice revitalized under visionary reformers in the 1600s then leveled until the 20th century when waves of Muslim immigrants from neighboring territories swelled the ranks.

This immigration, coupled with high birth rates, has steadily expanded Islam in Assam.

### Soft but unserious

Among Assamese Muslims, lukewarm religion breeds a benign re-

ceptivity. The few Christians engaging Muslims find they readily listen to the gospel but hesitate to wrestle with its meaning.

"They're almost Hindu, with a very universalistic mindset—you have your way and we have ours," explains a Baptist worker. "It creates no desire to know the truth. If all you need to do is be a good man, then what's the point?"

Ironically, some evangelists think Islamic revival could trigger Christian growth. "The Koran says that a good Muslim should know the Pentateuch and the gospels," explains the Baptist worker. "Teach them what their own book says—because they don't know—then transition. Use their book as a bridge."

Only a handful of Assamese and foreign Christians have started works among Muslims, and only in the past few years.

"The Christian message is here but there's no one to take it (to the Muslims)," observes an international Christian worker. "There are thousands of Muslim villages in Assam that have never been presented with the truth."

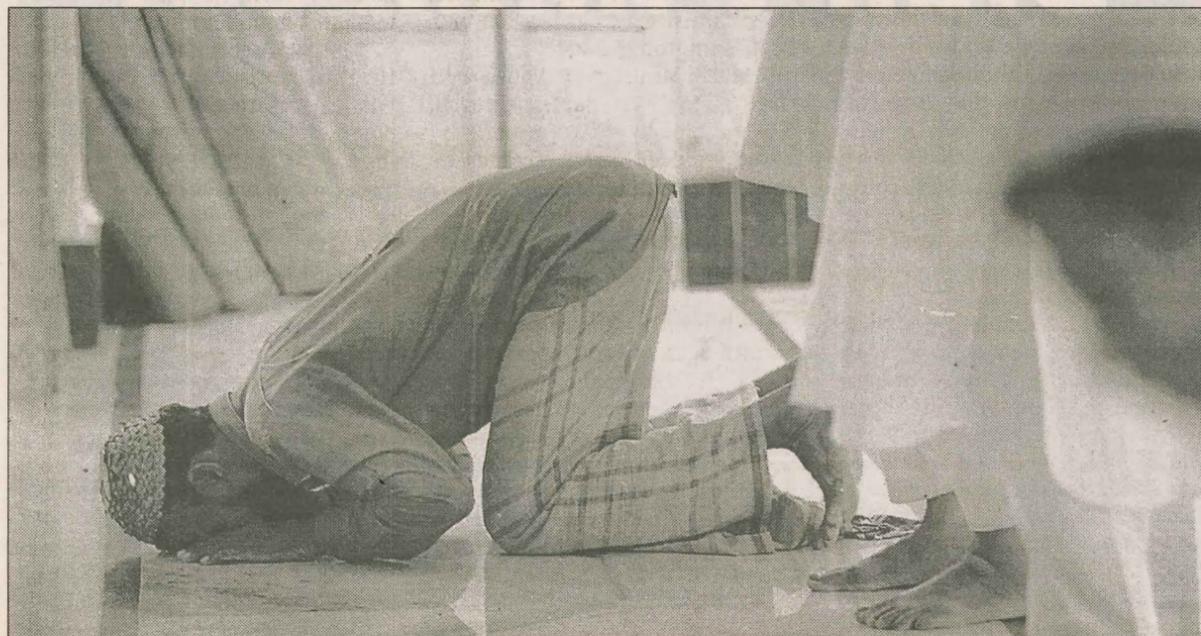
Assam, a state of 26 million people, holds only a few dozen known Christians from Muslim backgrounds.

If the Assamese church decides to engage its Muslim neighbors, it will find an unreached people ready for dialogue.

"Milk is better than water; diamond is better than rock. If you see the one of high quality, you will choose it, will you not?" asks Anul Hoque, a Muslim lawyer in Guwahati.

"Not all religion is true or real. We should discuss to understand," Hoque adds. "We should investigate to see which is real and then follow it."

**That all peoples may know Him**  
Follow God's Purpose



**CALL TO PRAYER** A Muslim prays at the Mochaquwa Mosque in Guwahati, India.

## Hindu militants ransack church to protest conversions

Bhubaneswar, India (BP)—A fresh round of violence by Hindu militants in the northern Indian state of Orissa has put Christian residents in the grip of fear.

About a dozen members of the militant Hindu movement Bajrang Dal broke into a local church in the city of Deogarh in late November.

They ransacked bookshelves in the church and took out hundreds of religious books and burned them, police reported.

The Bajrang Dal is notorious for its role in the murder of Australian missionary Graham Staines and his two sons in January 1999.

Two cases have been registered against 12 suspects in connection with the latest attacks, but police have arrested no one. One of the attackers has been identified as Pranab Guru, who worked as a reporter with a local Orissa daily newspaper. "We are taking steps to nab them," an official said.

According to police, extremists opposed the recent conversion of four tribal families in Ambulpani village under the ministry of John Nayak, a Protestant preacher. They broke into the church/residence rented by Nayak and ransacked it while he was away.

Newspaper offices received handwritten statements threatening that if police fail to take action against those who are converting poor tribal members to Christianity, "people may take the law into their own hands."

The Global Council of Indian Christians protested the latest attacks against Christians in Orissa, calling for measures to protect minorities from attacks by Hindu militants.



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