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Poll: Faith likely to affect next year's election

Lincoln, Neb. (RNS)—Nearly two-thirds of American voters say their religious beliefs will be an important factor when it comes time to cast their votes for president next year, according to a new Gallup Poll.

Sixty-four percent of registered voters say their "personal religious beliefs and faith" will help shape their vote for president; 36 percent say it will not.

Pollsters detected a "gender gap" between women and men: 44 percent of women said faith would be extremely or very important, compared to only 33 percent of men.

Albert Winseman, religion editor for Gallup's Tuesday Briefing report, said the gap presents opportunities and challenges for both parties.

"The challenge for the Democratic candidate, whoever that may be, will be to make a real connection between personal faith and public life, something that most of the Democratic candidates have not yet done," he said.

President Bush, who has been open about his evangelical Christian faith, may have an advantage in areas that are traditional Republican territory—rural areas and suburbs. Only 30 percent of urban voters said religion will dictate their votes, compared to 41 percent of suburban voters and 46 percent of rural voters.

The poll of 867 registered voters has a margin of error of plus or minus 4 percent.

Jesus' forgotten mentor

Some scholars take new look at silent man beside manger

By Kevin Eckstrom
Religion News Service

Washington (RNS)—Poor Joseph. For someone who is otherwise a crucial character in the Christmas story, the earthly father of Jesus often is overlooked, some would say neglected, or worse, ignored.

Each year, the Madonna and child are featured on a postage stamp, but not with Joseph. In the Bible itself, Joseph appears briefly at the beginning in Bethlehem, again when Jesus is 12 years old, but then disappears from the story. There is no mention of his life, or curiously, his death.

"At Christmas, Joseph is always depicted at the nativity, yet the songs sing of the child and mother, the star, wise men, angels and shepherds," writes Ann Ball in the new Encyclopedia of Catholic Devotions and Practices. "Joseph is there, yet hardly noticed."

The few scholars who have examined Joseph seem to agree on one thing. While he might seem to play a minor role in Jesus' life, he was by no means insignificant, and should not be overlooked.

If nothing else, Joseph was an "unsung hero" who provided Jesus with protection, royal lineage, a livelihood and, perhaps, a worldview that shaped his outreach to the poor and downtrodden.

"All of us are kind of bit players in bringing about God's purposes," said Stephen Davis, a professor of philosophy and religion at Claremont (Calif.) McKenna College.

□ See "Some scholars ..." *Page 8*



JOSEPH This mosaic portrait of Joseph is in the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C. Although he plays a central role in the Christmas story, Joseph often is referred to as the "forgotten saint." (Photo courtesy the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception)

Leaders: E. Kentucky centers reaching converts, but not disciples

By Ken Walker
State Correspondent

McDowell—At first glance, God's Appalachian Ministry in McDowell appears to be doing everything right.

Organizers Lynn and Angie Wagoner have a simple strategy to share God's love. They explain how to become a Christian to anyone who visits the center for free groceries.

Approximately 200 people have made professions of faith in Jesus as their personal Savior since the Wagoner's started GAP in 1999.

But when Mrs. Wagoner recently inventoried their records, she could find only 10 families that have developed any church ties.

"We will see a lot of people come in and get saved and baptized and then we never see them again," she said. "We need some discipleship in place for them to go to immediately.

"Most of these people have no church background," Mrs. Wagoner said. "They need someone to walk beside them for a while and teach them to study their Bible and pray. Our relationship with the Lord isn't all salvation."

Others involved in ministry throughout Eastern Kentucky agree that while conversions are up, incorporating these new believers into church life represents a major challenge.

GAP is one of the commonwealth's more outstanding ministry centers, according to David Aker, the Kentucky Baptist Convention's director of mountain missions. For it to report such a small percentage of converts in church shows the seriousness of the problem, he added.

But Aker noted that even the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association doesn't see most of the converts

from its crusades joining churches. Successful connections can take three to five years, he said.

"It is somewhat frustrating," Aker said of the region's low convert-to-church-participation ratio. "I don't want to say local churches are failing. In many cases, churches are trying really hard. But discipleship must be intentional. It won't happen accidentally."

Transportation, space limitations at small churches and perceptions of church exclusivity keep some people away from churches, according to several Baptists who minister in the region.

Still, Mrs. Wagoner thinks initiatives can overcome barriers. First Baptist Church of McDowell began sponsoring community dinners earlier this year as a way to break down barriers between the church and its neighbors. GAP also recently started a monthly children's club at

a community center in Martin.

"We're going to have to reach out," she said. "People are receptive but they're not going to reach to the church."

Such "thinking outside the box" is required if Kentucky Baptists hope to see more newcomers in their churches, said Lonnie Riley, director of the Meridzo Center.

The ministry center in Lynch has recorded 1,500 conversions in the past three years, but Riley said few Baptist churches in his area are growing.

"I think it's tradition," Riley said of failures to assimilate converts into church. "We have tradition in our churches of what we expect people to be and do. Sometimes folks don't fit into our stereotype."

"Number two, we haven't learned to reach beyond the walls," he said.

□ See "Leaders: E. Kentucky ..." *Page 3*

Dated material — Please deliver by Wednesday, December 17

BAPTIST DIGEST

■ **Charles Ashcraft**, who served as executive director of two Baptist state conventions, died Dec. 2 at age 86. He led the Arkansas Baptist State Convention from 1969 until his retirement in 1980. He was the first executive director of the Utah-Idaho Southern Baptist Convention (1965-69) and started the first Baptist church in Las Vegas. He also was a pastor in New Mexico and was founding president of the New Mexico Baptist Foundation (1947-51). He is survived by his wife of 68 years, Sarah, three sons and four grandchildren.

■ **Gary Frost**, the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board's vice president for strategic partnerships, has accepted a call to become executive director of the Metropolitan New York Baptist Association. The move will become effective Feb. 1, pending approval by the association's mission partners—NAMB and the Baptist Convention of New York. Frost previously was pastor of Rising Star Baptist Church in Youngstown, Ohio. He also has served as president of the State Convention of Baptists in Ohio, second vice president of the Southern Baptist Convention and a member of the SBC Executive Committee.

■ **Veteran Texas** Baptist journalist Ken Camp has been named managing editor of the Baptist Standard effective Jan. 1. Camp, 43, has worked in the Baptist General Convention of Texas news office since 1984. For the past seven years, he has been director of news and information and has served as Dallas bureau chief for Associated Baptist Press. At the Standard, he will succeed Mark Wingfield, who has resigned to become associate pastor at Wilshire Baptist Church in Dallas.

Carl Henry, noted evangelical theologian, dies at age 90

Watertown, Wis.—Carl F.H. Henry, a noted evangelical theologian of the 20th century and the founding editor of *Christianity Today*, died Dec. 7. He was 90.

Henry helped shape evangelical thought during the middle of the 20th century by arguing that fundamentalism and its belief in separation from culture was ineffective. Evangelicals, he asserted, must engage the culture.

In the later half of the century, he defended the doctrine of biblical inerrancy, asserting that heresy is rooted in an improper understanding of God's revelation.

Henry, a member of Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington, D.C., was named by *Time* magazine in 1977 as the leading theologian of American evangelicalism. He was president of the Evangelical Theological Society (1967-70) and the American Theological Society (1979-80).

Prolific author

Often called "the thinking man's Billy Graham," Henry was the author of more than 25 books.

"At mid-century, Carl Henry gave enormous gifts of time and talent to America's neo-evangelical movement," said David Neff, editor of *Christianity Today*. "Whereas Billy Graham was the movement's goodwill ambassador and welcoming spirit, Carl Henry was one of its most brilliant minds."

Henry's extensive writings, the most famous of which is the six-volume "God, Revelation and Au-

thority," consistently emphasize the themes of biblical theism, objective revelation, the authority and inerrancy of Scripture and the rational, apologetic defense of Christianity.

"The mission of the church is to embrace both evangelism and cultural impact," Henry said in a 2001 interview. "To neglect either is catastrophic. This is the lesson of both Protestant liberalism and fundamentalism."

David Dockery, president of Union University in Jackson, Tenn., said Henry's death leaves "a huge void" in American Christianity.

"No Christian thinker in this country has done more to advance orthodox theology and full-orbed Christian worldview thinking than Carl F.H. Henry," Dockery said.

Al Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, said Henry "stood at the center of virtually every major development in evangelical life, combining tenacity with restlessness." He said Henry "devoted his long and illustrious career as a theologian to building and defending the 'intellectual struts' of evangelical theology."

Today, Southern Seminary has a Carl F.H. Henry Institute for Evangelical Engagement and Union University has the Carl F.H. Henry Center for Christian Leadership.

Born Jan. 22, 1913, to immigrant parents in New York City, Henry

grew up under a Roman Catholic mother and a Lutheran father. But in 1933—"by the grace" of God he would write later—he made a personal profession of faith in Jesus Christ at the age of 20.

"That very day, had the risen Redeemer commanded, I would have gone to China or to any of the uttermost parts," he wrote in 1958.

Instead, Henry felt a calling to attend Wheaton College, where he became friends with classmates Billy Graham and Harold Lindsell, author of "The Battle for the Bible." Henry earned degrees at Wheaton; Northern Baptist Theological Seminary in Lombard, Ill.; and Boston University.

He met his wife, Helga Bender, at Wheaton. They were married in 1940 and were the parents of two children.

Henry went into teaching, serving first at Northern Seminary and later at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, Calif. While at Northern Seminary, Henry wrote "The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism" in which he critiqued the fundamentalism of the day and argued that evangelicalism must engage the culture intellectually.

In 1956, Henry became the first editor of *Christianity Today*, a publication conceived by Graham and Nelson Bell as an evangelical alternative to the *Christian Century*. Under Henry's guidance, *Christianity Today* became the leading journal-

istic mouthpiece for neo-evangelicalism and gave the movement intellectual respectability.

He resigned from *Christianity Today* in 1968 and later became professor of theology at Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Philadelphia.

Strong Baptist ties

Henry considered himself a Baptist for the last 50-plus years of his life. He spoke at the 1987 SBC Pastors' Conference and in 1994 was given the title by Southern Seminary of senior research professor of Christian theology.

In 2000, Henry joined more than 80 other Christian leaders from numerous denominations who signed the "Chicago Declaration on Religious Freedom: Sharing Jesus Christ in a Pluralistic Society." The document's preamble stated that evangelistic efforts did not undermine a peaceful, pluralistic society, and that such efforts were constitutionally protected.

Throughout his life, Henry stressed the importance of intellectual engagement. Two years before his death, he said he was concerned about the future of evangelical scholarship.

"I am very worried about the loss of the priority of the mind among evangelicals," he said. "This is a matter of great importance in the struggle for evangelical fidelity. It must not be forgotten."

Based on reporting by Baptist Press, Associated Baptist Press and Religion News Service



Henry

Committee to nominate Daniel Akin as Southeastern president

Wake Forest, N.C. (ABP)—Daniel Akin, vice president for academic administration at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, will be recommended next month as president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., according to search committee chairman Timothy Lewis.

A special meeting of Southeastern's trustees is set for Jan. 15, when the recommendation will be presented, Lewis said.

If elected, Akin will succeed Paige Patterson, who left to become president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in his native Texas. All three seminaries are owned by the Southern Baptist Convention.

"Dr. Akin is a man with great vision, keen insight and spiritual understanding," Lewis said in a news release. "His enthusiasm is contagious and genuine. We do not feel any other man in Southern Baptist life could better follow Dr. Patterson than Dr. Daniel Akin."

Akin, 46, is vice president for academic administration and dean of the School of Theology at Southern in Louisville. He was professor of theology, dean of students and vice president for student services at Southeastern from 1992 to 1996.

Akin holds a bachelor's degree from Criswell College, a master of

divinity degree from Southwestern, and a doctor of philosophy degree from the University of Texas at Arlington. He has been a pastor in Florida, Alabama and Virginia.

He was New Testament editor of *The Believers Study Bible* by Thomas Nelson Publishers and he has written the volume on the epistles of John for the *New American Commentary* series.

He also recently wrote "God on Sex: The Creator's Ideas About Love, Intimacy, and Marriage" and a volume on *Songs of Songs* for the *Holman Old Testament Commentary*.

In 1996, *Christianity Today* magazine named Akin as one of 50 emerging Christian leaders under the age of 40. He is a member of several professional organizations, including the Southern Baptist Historical Society, the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion and the Evangelical Theological Society.

Akin and his wife, Charlotte, have been married for 25 years and have four children: twins Daniel and Jonathan, 22; Paul, 20; and Timothy, 18.

Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, with its main campus in Wake Forest, N.C., was founded in 1951. In 1987 it was the first of the six SBC seminaries to come under the control of conservatives, who rose to power in 1979.



Akin

Jerry Johnson, Boyce College dean, elected president of Criswell College

Dallas—Jerry Johnson, dean of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary's Boyce College since April 2002, has been elected president of Criswell College in Dallas.

Trustees of the Criswell Center for Biblical Studies unanimously elected Johnson Dec. 5 as president of CCBS, which includes Criswell College and Criswell Communications.

Johnson, 39, a 1986 Criswell graduate, likely will assume his duties Feb. 1, said Mike Deahl, search committee chairman.

Johnson told the board he sensed a strong calling to Criswell though, initially, he resisted because he and his family were happy in Louisville. He explained how as a young Southern Baptist college student he became disillusioned with Christian education and considered leaving the Southern Baptist Convention, only to discover Criswell College after coming to Dallas to hear Criswell preach.

Johnson said he would work to maintain the school's foundational principles developed by Criswell, which include a commitment to the inerrancy and sufficiency of Scripture, the centrality of expositional preaching and the priority of evangelism.

Johnson, a graduate and former trustee chairman of Southern Seminary, gained national attention in Southern Baptist life in 1990 during his first year as a trustee. He charged former Southern Seminary President Roy Honeycutt and several professors with "doctrinal infidelity." Johnson later sent a letter of

apology to the board, noting that some of the language in his 16-page document "was ill-chosen and too harsh."

In 1999, after joining the Southern Seminary staff, Johnson again made news when he used seminary resources to recruit students to enlist conservative voters for the Kentucky Baptist Convention annual meeting. He later acknowledged that using seminary letterhead to enlist students in the effort was "a mistake."

Al Mohler, president of Southern Seminary, congratulated Johnson on his election as president of Criswell.

"Jerry Johnson is a man of rare gifts and solid conviction," Mohler said. "He combines first-rate scholarship with evangelistic passion and stellar leadership ability."

Based on reporting by Baptist Press and Editor Trennis Henderson



Johnson

KBC's mission plan prompts several staff changes

By Trennis Henderson
Editor

Louisville—Taking steps to implement the Kentucky Baptist Convention's mission study plan and staff reorganization, the KBC Mission Board approved several personnel changes last week.

The actions, approved during the Mission Board's Dec. 8-9 meeting in Louisville, include new assignments for three KBC employees and the addition of two staff members. The board's administrative committee also approved a new part-time contract position.

Among the new employees, Wayne Jones was elected assistant team leader for the church development and evangelism team, and French Harmon was named a church development strategist for North Central Kentucky.

Among current staff members, Karl Babb, director of the family ministry department, was elected leader of the leadership development team; Alan Witham, an associate in the extension-ministries department, was named a church development strategist for South Central Kentucky; and Wendy Dever, preschool and children's director in the Sunday school department, will become preschool/children's strategist on the church development/evangelism team.

The administrative committee named Jim McGee as a part-time church development strategist for South Eastern Kentucky.

Five of the six staff changes involve positions that relate directly to the expanded church development/evangelism team headed by Dan Garland. The team combines the work of the former church growth and evangelism growth teams.

Wayne Jones, who has served 15 years as executive pastor of churches in Florida, Tennessee and Virginia, will supervise KBC ministry in the areas of Sunday school, discipleship, stewardship and new member connection and engagement.

Jones currently is executive pas-



Babb



Dever



Harmon



Jones



McGee



Witham

French Harmon has served since 1997 as pastor of Fort Mitchell Baptist Church. He previously was pastor of First Baptist Church of Allen, associate pastor of First Baptist Church of Russell and assistant pastor of Unity Baptist Church of Ashland. He is a graduate of Marshall University in Huntington, W.Va.; Southern Seminary; the University of Louisville; and Reformed Theological Seminary in Charlotte, N.C.

Garland said Harmon "brings insight and innovation of a successful pastorate to this newly formed position as a church development strategist." The regional strategists will work closely with local churches and associations to provide ministry resources and assistance.

Alan Witham, whose role as a church development strategist was announced when the KBC staff reorganization was unveiled in October, officially was elected to that position last week. Witham has served on the KBC staff since 2000. He previously was pastor of Hyland Baptist Church in Henderson; Chaplin Baptist Church in Lebanon. He is a graduate of Campbellsville University and Southern Seminary.

"Alan Witham has proven himself both as a pastor and a denominational leader," Garland said. "Alan will help our churches become more effective in development and growth through his quiet yet confident insight and expertise."

Jim McGee has served since 1980 as minister of education, administration and associate pastor of Porter Memorial Baptist Church in Lexington. He previously was minister of education and recreation at Central Baptist Church in Corbin and minister of education and evangelism at Rosemont Baptist Church in Lexington. He is a graduate of Murray State University.

McGee "has proven himself as a leader in his church and association," Garland noted. He said McGee "has a passion to help churches be more effective in evangelism,

discipleship, stewardship and new member connection."

Wendy Dever, who will continue to coordinate preschool and children's ministry, is being promoted to a department director level position. She will be responsible for developing and implementing strategies for faith development for children and networking church specialists in preschool/children's ministries.

Dever has served on the KBC staff since 1998. She previously was on staff of churches in Georgia. She is a graduate of the University of Florida in Gainesville and Southern Seminary.

Dever "has done an excellent job helping churches be more effective in ministering to children," Garland said. "This will broaden her work as she continues to serve in the areas of preschool and children."

Karl Babb, whose promotion also was announced in October, will succeed Guy Futral who is retiring April 30 as head of the leadership development team.

Babb has served as director of the KBC family ministry department since 1999. He previously was director of the South Carolina Baptist Convention's family ministries department and a family enrichment specialist with the former Baptist Sunday School Board. He also served 16 years as a Southern Baptist missionary, including four years as president of Philippine Baptist Theological Seminary in Davao City. Prior to missions service, he was pastor of Poplar Grove Baptist Church in Owenton. He is a graduate of Florida State University in Tallahassee; Southern Seminary; and the University of Florida in Gainesville.

Babb's ministry background has "helped prepare him for this role," noted KBC Executive Director Bill Mackey. "Karl has been involved in the leadership development process and shares the vision for developing leaders through self-understanding and learning."

Leaders: E. Kentucky centers reaching converts, but not disciples

Continued from page 1

"Most churches are so introverted it's difficult to look beyond that," he added.

Riley hopes to get more new Christians involved in his area through Lynch Baptist Church, which reopened this summer.

After a new heating system is installed and the church is in full operation, he hopes to start discipleship classes and pastoral training to teach more people about daily Christian living.

Riley said leadership training, mission awareness and church growth are keys to the future.

"We expect people to express their faith by coming to church, but they also have to express it by service," he said. "We're going to give people (that) opportunity. We can expand what we do at the center because we'll have a bigger base."

Working with volunteers, centers

In addition to church members

reaching out, Aker said mission teams already coming to Eastern Kentucky can help with discipleship projects.

Instead of focusing solely on vacation Bible schools and evangelistic outreaches, teams could devote a day to connecting converts with churches, he explained.

"Some groups could specialize in this kind of thing, following up on last week's VBS," Aker said. "They could start working with people on something like 'The Encourager Plan,' which is a one-on-one mentoring plan."

Ministry centers and churches also should work more closely, Aker said.

He noted that a study found long-term Christians will drive several miles to find a church, but converts generally seek one close to home.

"It's important for center directors and others to inform that convert what the nearest church is," said Aker, who oversees a 47-county

region. "If there isn't one close in that person's community, it would help to start some home Bible fellowships, right in the hollow."

Such initiatives have begun in the Three Forks Baptist Association, based in Hazard. John Morris, pastor of Lothar Baptist Church, is helping lead a monthly Bible study at a family's home near Hazard.

The church also sponsors special dinners or other quarterly events. Members hope to start sending a van to the area for a couple families interested in attending Sunday services.

Starting new Bible studies

Churches often are structured around a middle-class mindset, Morris said. But reaching out to people in poverty requires seeing them with Christ's eyes and meeting their needs so that the person doing the ministry earns the right to share the gospel, he added.

"When people are living in battered conditions and you talk about

the love of Christ, their greatest need is food or shelter," Morris said. "It's very relational based. It takes a while to develop relationships and get people to trust us."

In Leslie County, Mission Service Corps volunteer Jack Hester hopes to start a home Bible study soon in Middle Fork, halfway between Hyden and the Harlan County line.

Jim Caslin, director of missions for the Three Forks association, said there are no Kentucky Baptist churches in the area and people there won't leave to attend an existing one.

A former missionary to the Philippines, Caslin said such efforts are needed to extend discipleship to all those who want to follow Christ but need to know what that means.

"Discipleship is an ongoing thing," Caslin said. "It's all going to stand or fall on whether the local pastor is going to fill the role as an equiper of the saints and involves his leadership in mentoring and discipling those who come in."

KBC Mission Board approves 4.39% CP budget cut

Louisville—Seeking to bring the current budget in line with recent giving trends, the Kentucky Baptist Convention Mission Board voted last week to reduce the KBC's 2003-04 Cooperative Program budget goal by 4.39 percent.

The revised budget of \$22,181,335 is a reduction of approximately \$1 million from the previously approved budget and an increase of almost \$370,000 above last year's receipts. The move comes after two consecutive years of CP budget shortfalls.

Lowell Ashby, leader of the KBC's business services team, said receipts in the first quarter of the fiscal year are less than 0.2 percent below the revised budget.

Board members also approved three new funds to implement the KBC's mission study plan approved earlier this year.

The Kentucky Connect Support Fund was allocated \$140,000 from unused new program start funds and post-retirement income funds. The new fund will support mission study plan implementation and year-end budget requests.

The New High-Impact Church Fund was allocated \$527,100 from post-retirement income funds to help launch 25 high-impact churches by 2010.

The Mission Study Report Transition Fund was allocated \$200,000 from post-retirement income funds to support start-up programs and other transition expenses involved in implementing specific mission study plan objectives and goals.

Board members also approved allocations for excess restricted Kentucky-only funds and unspent budget funds. Of those, a total of \$40,000 allocated to executive office special projects will fund such efforts as the work of a properties study committee reviewing the KBC's facility needs and a \$730 allocation to the Baptist World Alliance approved last month by KBC messengers.

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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The gift that keeps on giving

By Ginger Plowman

Opelika, Ala. (BP)—The hustle and bustle of the holiday season finds us all seeking the answer to the same question, "What gifts will I buy for my loved ones this Christmas?" We rack our brains for just the right items. Like crazed bloodhounds we bound from store to store eager to pounce on the perfect presents, ones that will please the receiver without depleting the pocket of the purchaser. Searching for the ideal gifts can be frustrating. If we're not careful, the hot pursuit of gift buying can hinder us from celebrating and enjoying the reason for the season.

Determined to find a better way to spend my time, last December I came up with the perfect solution to end my shopping frenzy. Shrink-wrap. You simply wrap the clear paper around an item, apply warm air from a hairdryer, and wait as the paper "shrinks" to wrap tightly and flawlessly around the item. With just a flick of the switch on my hair-dryer, I could make used items appear new while cleaning out my closets and attic at the same time.

"Ginger," I said to myself, "you have just revolutionized your holiday season!"

With newly found purpose and determination, I purchased a \$4.99 roll of shrink-wrap and climbed up the attic stairs. Oh, the treasures I found! I gleefully ran from box to box as I talked out loud to myself,

"The comedy video of Dennis Swanberg would be perfect for Aunt Emily! Terri Blackstock's suspense book would be just right for my mother-in-law, and my brother would absolutely love the multi-sized wrench set!" It was a brilliant plan ... or so I thought.

The glitz and glitter of Christmas Day was in full swing. The stockings were hung by the chimney with care and "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas" played softly in the background. Laughter echoed throughout the living room, and hugs were exchanged as we opened our gifts. A twinge of guilt tugged at my heart as I thought, "Should I feel bad for passing off used items as new? Naaaaa, what better gifts than ones I have personally tested and approved?" I convinced myself

FIRST PERSON

God offers certainty

If anyone wants to know why a majority within the Southern Baptist Convention during the past 20 years have, in a concerted manner, sought to restore our seminaries and mission boards back to ministries consistent with their historical confessions of faith, read Henlee Barnett's letter in the Dec. 9 issue of the Western Recorder.

Did not Jesus say: "He that has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14:9)? Jesus is "the image of the invisible God," ... "the express image of His person (Co-

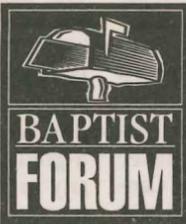
lossians 1:15, Hebrews 1:3). Or are those references included in Barnett's catalog of biblical "errors"?

Only believers "absent from the body (and) present with the Lord" have seen Him to date, but we will.

That truth makes it possible for us to "sorrow not ... as others (sorrow) who have no hope."

The God of hope has not abandoned His children to theorize their ways to some kind of "certainty." "The holy Scriptures are able to make (us) wise unto salvation" (2 Timothy 3:15).

Donald MacDonald
Louisville



Board implements mission study

The Mission Board of the Kentucky Baptist Convention took significant steps last week toward implementing the Mission Study Report it adopted last May. Steps to implement the emphasis—to be called Kentucky Baptists Connect—included the election of church development strategists and other key staff leaders.

The Mission Board selected French Harmon, Alan Witham and Jim McGee to serve as church development strategists. French Harmon, an experienced pastor and past moderator of Northern Kentucky Baptist Association, will serve the area encompassing Northern Kentucky, Frankfort, Lexington, Danville, Richmond and Ashland.

French has a very clear call of God to this ministry and will be making personal sacrifices in order to respond. He will have the lead role for stewardship development.

Alan has served as an effective pastor at Hyland Baptist Church in Henderson and on the KBC staff for the past four years as a church planter strategist. He has worked

effectively with association and church leaders and knows well the process for starting and developing churches.

In his new role, Alan will have the lead role for starting new high-impact churches. He will serve the areas contiguous to Louisville, Bowling Green, Hardinsburg and Campbellsville.

Jim, recently retired minister of education and outreach at Porter Memorial Baptist Church in Lexington, was introduced to the Mission Board as a part-time church development strategist. He will work in Southeastern Kentucky, including the areas south of Danville along highways 27 and 127, and will work in concert with Mountain Missions Director David Aker.

The church development strategists will provide KBC services for the associations and churches in a proactive way as they visit leaders each working day. They will learn what is working and share it with other churches, as well as with KBC staff. It is our prayer that the church development strategist for



Bill Mackey

I had chosen the perfect gifts.

I had almost pulled it off, when suddenly my mother-in law opened the cover of her suspense book. "Hey!" she called out, "this book is signed to Ginger, from Dad!" The music stopped, and the room grew uncomfortably quiet. A ball fell off the tree. So much for my brilliant plan.

While we may find the right size, the right color and the right price, there is only one perfect gift. It won't wind up in the attic or at a yard sale, and it lasts forever. It's the only gift that is ancient, yet new every day. The gift of salvation was purchased especially for you by Jesus Christ. He paid for it with His own life. All you have to do to receive it is admit that you are a sinner, ask Jesus to forgive you and surrender your life to Him.

If you would like to receive the gift that truly keeps on giving, unwrap the presence of Christ this holiday season.

"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

Ginger Plowman is the author of "Wise Words for Moms" and "Don't Make Me Count to Three!"

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.

Western Kentucky will be recommended in May.

The Mission Board also approved Karl Babb as Leadership Development Team leader and Wayne Jones as assistant team leader for the new Church Development and Evangelism Team. Karl, who has been serving as our Family Ministry Department director, brings a diverse background as a seminary president in the Philippines and denominational leader with LifeWay and state conventions in South Carolina and Kentucky.

Wayne, a native of Northern Kentucky where he served several churches, has also served two large churches as executive pastor. He has experience in church development and growth and is an accomplished writer. He is co-author of "Growing an Evangelistic Sunday School" with Ken Hemphill.

Wendy Dever, former associate for preschool and children in the Sunday School Department, was named director of the Preschool/Children Ministry and Sunday School Group.

Please pray for all of these staff persons as they begin their work!

Bill Mackey is executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention

GIVING

Review tax saving strategies before 2003 ticks away

By Laurie Valentine

With Dec. 31 right around the corner, now is a good time to review tax saving actions that you already have taken this year and determine if there are other things to do before year-end to further reduce your 2003 income taxes.

If you will be in a lower tax bracket in 2004, it could

be prudent to defer some of this year's income until next year and to pay deductible items that you normally would pay in early 2004 before Dec. 31, 2003.

Business and professional people who use the cash accounting method can defer the receipt of income by not billing until year-end for services rendered in 2003. The receipt of a bonus that your employer is free to give or not give can be deferred into next year to lower your 2003 compensation income.

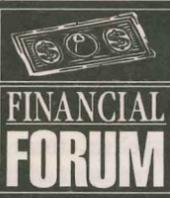
Pay real estate taxes and the Jan. 15 installment of state and local income taxes before Dec. 31 to accelerate these deductible items into the 2003 tax year. If possible, pay all medical bills, if the total will exceed 7.5 percent of your adjusted gross income, before year-end to be able to use that expense as a deduction.

Another income tax deduction that is very easy to accelerate is the charitable deduction. You have total control on when this deduction will be available; all you have to do is complete your charitable gifts before Dec. 31.

Your tithes and offerings are "charitable gifts" that can be deducted on your income tax return. You also can deduct gifts of appreciated securities, mutual fund shares, real estate, business interests, artworks and life insurance policies to your church, Kentucky and Southern Baptist causes or other qualified charities.

Charitable income tax deductions are available for both outright gifts and life income gifts such as charitable gift annuities and charitable remainder trusts.

Make time for year-end tax planning; it can pay off for you and the charitable causes you wish to support.



Laurie Valentine is trust counsel for the Kentucky Baptist Foundation

Be sensitive in revealing truth about Santa Claus to children

Q: When should I tell my child the truth about Santa Claus?

What should a parent say when a child asks point blank, "Is Santa real?" or "Are you Santa?" Because the innocence and magic of childhood fly by all too fast, children should be allowed to enjoy the days as much as possible. At the same time, sooner or later children will need to know about Santa and be ready to move on in their development.

When do you tell? A lot depends on the age of the child. Other children should not be allowed to ruin the fun for younger ones. Parents can be creative, but still truthful in helping protect the secret and allowing their children to enjoy this dimension of Christmas.

Most children will first find out about Santa from other children, but will turn to parents for verification. Asking your child, "What do you think?" will help you gain insight into where he or she stands on the "need to know" scale. Again, age plays a big factor. At some point, classmates and friends might begin to taunt and tease a child who persists in a belief in Santa. Sensitive parents might see such teasing as a sign that it is time to tell.

Your explanation might include background information on the real St. Nicholas and how the tradition of Santa began, as well as how it is honored in other countries and cultures.

Christian parents can take the opportunity to emphasize that all Christmas gifts are given in celebration of God's gift of Jesus. Once your child knows, help him or her understand the importance of keeping the magic alive for younger children.—David Garrard

Q: As a primary caregiver of an older adult in our family, I sometimes feel overwhelmed with responsibility, especially during the holiday season. What can I do to help make the season special for both of us?

Whether you are the caregiver for someone who needs a little help shopping and wrapping gifts or someone who needs round-the-clock care, the holidays can be especially trying.

The holiday jobs of baking, decorating, shopping and wrapping gifts usually fall to women; and these women often care both for children and aging parents at the same time. It's easy to feel overwhelmed when so many demands are pulling you in different directions.

Sitting down for a meeting with extended family members before the holidays might be an ideal solution, but it is not possible for many families. Instead, the primary caregiver can take the lead in talking to individual family members about the help needed during the holidays. You might also want to ask for help with specific chores.

Clearly communicate what you think you can do, but don't promise things that will overextend what is possible for you to accomplish.

Remember to ask the older adult you are caring for what is important to him or her. You might find that baking cookies as a family or having a family meal is more important to the older adult than decorating the house or exchanging gifts.

Be selective and choose to do only the traditions and activities that have special meaning for your family. A caregiver who thinks she can do it all likely is setting herself up for failure.—Jon Rainbow

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: jrainbow@campbellsville.edu

James Stillwell, minister to singles at Immanuel Baptist Church in Lexington. E-mail: james@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.



Have yourself a greedy little Christmas?

Forget about trying to discern the subtle differences between Generation X, Gen Y and other generational subgroups in modern American society. If you want to know the most influential letter in our 21st century culture, it's a great big capital "I."

The "Me" Generation of the '70s and '80s has come full circle with "Generation I" taking center stage among people of all age groups across the nation. Sadly, one of the most obvious times when Gen I rears its self-centered head is smack-dab in the middle of the Christmas season.

At a time when we should be sincerely proclaiming "peace on earth, good will to men," we are bombarded with glitzy advertising that urges: "Pamper yourself." "Indulge." "You deserve it." "It's all about you."

Even for those who break out of the "me, myself and I" syndrome, Christmas often lapses into a competition over who can lavish the most expensive gifts on family members or throw the biggest party for friends and neighbors. We tend to focus the bulk of our time, energy and money on those relatives and friends in our inner circle and let the needs of the rest of the world go by with scarcely a thought.

How can we shift from Generation I to Generation U, taking time amid our Christmas festivities to minister to those in need? Consider a few suggestions:

- Organize a neighborhood drive to collect canned goods or blankets to donate to a homeless shelter or local food pantry.

- Invite your Sunday school class or other small group to spend an evening caroling at a nearby retirement home or to shut-in church members.

- Collect gift cards for the Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children or other ministries that reach

out to families in need.

- "Adopt" an international student for the holidays from one of our Baptist colleges or state universities. Welcome that student from another culture into your home for a holiday meal; invite him or her to join your family for traditional Christmas worship services at your church.

- Make a donation to Habitat for Humanity, Heifer International, Samaritan's Purse or some other ministry providing creative assistance to needy families here in the States and around the world.

- Ask your pastor or director of missions for the name and address of a family in need. Request permission from the head of the household to provide food, toys and other gifts for family members. Invite your children or grandchildren on a shopping trip to buy the needed items.

- Donate gently used clothing or toys to Goodwill, the Salvation Army or other groups that provide resources for economically underprivileged families.

- Provide a gift for Prison Fellowship's Angel Tree ministry or similar efforts sponsored by other Christian organizations.

- Make a generous gift to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions or some other ministry project dear to your heart. Some families have the tradition of determining the most expensive Christmas gift they have purchased and donating a comparable amount to the Lottie Moon offering.

Whatever other options you choose on the list, make certain that your giving in honor of Christ's birth includes helping spread the gospel around the world.

"For God so loved the world that He gave" Surely we can do the same as we move from Gen I to Gen U during this holy Christmas season.

STRAIGHT FROM THE EDITOR



Trennis Henderson

Take a stand for Christmas

By James Draper

Nashville (BP)—Are we losing Christmas?

No one wanted Jesus, it seemed. Arrogant kings and conniving thugs throughout the Old Testament sought to exterminate the Jews and sever the bloodline God established for the coming Prince of Peace.

Before the angel appeared to him, Joseph determined he would privately divorce his pregnant fiancée Mary. Later, the innkeeper in Bethlehem didn't seem to care that Mary was on the verge of childbirth. The best he would offer was a stable that no doubt smelled of animal manure. Herod certainly didn't want Jesus. He murdered every boy 2 years of age or younger in and around Bethlehem in a bloody dragnet hoping to eliminate Him. The Jewish leadership of the day finally did what Herod couldn't do when they succeeded in having Him nailed to the cross.

Jesus was God's gift to mankind. Never has so great a gift been so poorly received. Never, that is, until now.

The attack on Christmas rages across our country with Herod's intensity. Instead of Herod's hit squads, constitutional revisionists use our legal system to wage their war. They stand on a faulty interpretation of the First Amendment

and rigorously apply the idea of separation between church and state, a declaration never made in the Constitution.

However, their double standard belies their logic and reveals that their true goal is not to prevent government from establishing a state religion but to expunge all things Christian from the marketplace.

The proof is in their actions. Within the past few weeks the New York City school system continued its ban on Christmas along with Nativity scenes while simultaneously authorizing expressions of the Jewish Hanukkah and the Islamic Ramadan in hallways and classrooms. Hundreds of similar instances across our country verify the frequency of such attacks on Christmas.

Revisionists know that if they can kill Christmas, they've greatly pushed Christianity from the center of our culture. They are willing to overlook the use of public funds that "endorse" other religions if they can exclude Christianity.

Christians can't let that happen. Christmas represents the focal point of divine incarnation. To ignore Christ's coming to earth through the virgin birth is to forfeit any opportunity mankind has for salvation. Jesus said, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except

through Me" (John 14:6). It is that exclusivity that our culture finds offensive.

It is our duty—it should be our passion—to vigorously defend Christmas even in the face of such animosity. We must fight for Christmas on behalf of the very people who would like to silence it. We carry within us the message that He came in order to reconcile man to God. If Christians don't share that message, then "how can they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how can they believe without hearing about Him?" (Romans 10:14).

Christmas represents the beginning of God's physical presence with us. It is easy to get lost in the story of a baby and the tranquility of the Nativity scenes we display. Jesus in a manger could not save us, but the Man on the cross could—and did. My father used to say that Christmas is not a time for remembering a small child but for following a magnificent Man.

The baby Jesus does not threaten secular culture; it's the Man the baby grew to be. Christian, don't leave Jesus in the manger this Christmas or cower to the brashness of secularists. Imitate the angel of Luke 2:10 and boldly announce "the good news of great joy that will be for all the people."

James Draper is president of LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention

Publication names Habitat's leader top executive

Washington (RNS)—The NonProfit Times has named Habitat for Humanity International President Millard Fuller as its "2003 Executive of the Year."

"At a time when charities nationwide are struggling to make ends meet, Fuller's innovation and success with such a vast and necessary movement is noteworthy," the semimonthly publication for nonprofit management wrote in its Dec. 1 issue.

The publication said one of Fuller's more recent ventures is the Global Village and Discovery Center in Americus, Ga., an attraction that gives visitors a sense of ghettos abroad and models of Habitat homes built in those regions.

It also recognized Fuller for his promotional prowess, evidenced by Habitat's use of the terms "sweat equity" for hard work and "theology of the hammer" to emphasize action.

The ministry's total revenue has almost doubled since 1996 to \$747.9 million in 2002, the publication reported. Public support jumped from about \$196.8 million to \$416.6 million in the same period.

Fuller: Help keep Habitat Christian

Ministry's witness will weaken unless more Christians take part, founder insists

By Marv Knox
Texas Baptist Standard

Dallas (ABP)—Habitat for Humanity needs Baptists to help preserve its Christian character, founder Millard Fuller pleaded.

Fuller and his wife, Linda, launched Habitat in 1976 to provide "a simple, decent, good place in which to live" for every person on earth. Since then, Habitat has built almost 160,000 homes for nearly 1 million people all over the globe, Fuller reported.

"I have a deep concern that Habitat for Humanity remain firmly a Christian ministry," said Fuller, the organization's president. "From the beginning, I have seen Habitat as a new frontier in Christian missions—a creative and new way to proclaim the gospel.

The burden of success

Ironically, success might be the biggest impediment to Fuller's vision, he conceded. Habitat has attracted millions of volunteers who want to help end poverty by providing affordable housing.

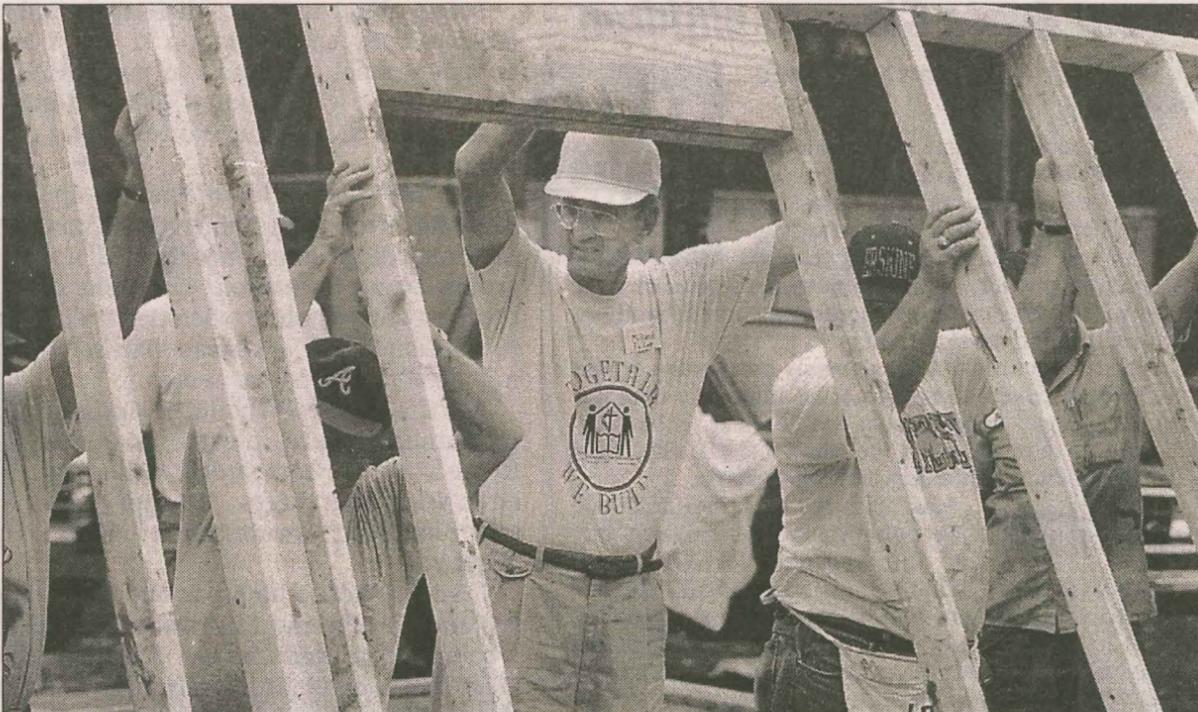
"Some of them are not Christians," he noted. "We have an open-door policy" to accept all volunteers who want to build homes in order to end poverty. Consequently, people of all kinds of faiths and no faith have stepped forward to help.

This trend offers a couple of benefits. First, more homes get built. And second, since Habitat crews begin each day with a devotional and prayer and Christians work on the projects, the non-Christian workers theoretically receive a spiritual witness when they work on a project.

But if evangelical Christians don't do their part, if they get crowded out, then Habitat could lose its Christian flavor and the spark of its witness, Fuller fretted.

"My greatest concern for Habitat for Humanity is going secular," he said. "All that it will take for Habitat to go secular is for Christians to stay away from it."

Fuller has focused his atten-



HARD AT WORK Millard Fuller, founder of Habitat for Humanity, recently urged Baptists to take part in the Christian ministry. "All that it will take for Habitat to go secular is for Christians to stay away from it." (Photo courtesy of Habitat for Humanity)

tion on challenging Baptists and other evangelical Christians to get involved in Habitat. "We urgently need (Baptists), not just to saw boards and pound nails, but to have a presence on site that introduces people to Jesus," he stressed.

Are you an evangelical?

Fuller gets most frustrated with his "evangelical brethren" who tell him they're uncomfortable on a Habitat work site with non-Christians.

"How can you say you're an evangelical if you don't want to work around folks who aren't Christians?" he asked.

Because of the scope of Habitat's mission—"to end poverty housing on earth"—the organization cannot afford to turn away volunteers, Fuller said.

"In that sense, we are no different from a church. The church says, 'Whosoever will may come,'" he noted. "A church should rejoice if an atheist wants to come ... but the pastor doesn't alter the sermon. If anything it is stronger."

In urging Baptists to take part, Fuller said Habitat's principles are distinctively Baptist, pointing out the ministry's Baptist lineage.

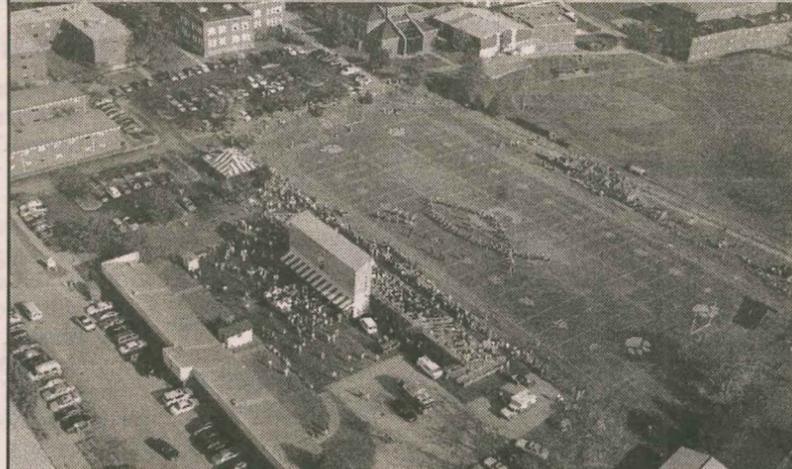
The Fullers founded Habitat in 1976 out of Koinonia Farm, a Christian community near Americus, Ga. Two Baptist couples—Clarence and Florence Jordan and Martin and Mabel England—sought to model Christian justice and racial reconciliation on the farm.

The Fullers are members of Ma-

ranatha Baptist Church in nearby Plains, Ga. Habitat's most famous volunteers, Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter, also are members there.

"From the very beginning, the leadership of Habitat for Humanity has been Baptist," Fuller said. "But that deep Baptist connection is not known by a lot of Baptists."

Campbellsville UNIVERSITY



Baptist Leadership Award

Campbellsville University, as one of the south's leading Christian universities, would like to invite you to be considered for our Baptist Leadership Award (BLA). As you are finding out from your recent college searches, financial aid is a big factor in making a final decision. At Campbellsville, we offer generous financial aid awards as well as opportunities such as this for students who are committed to Christian Higher Education.

What does it take to be considered? Commitment. All students who are active members of their Baptist churches and who are high school seniors will be considered for this scholarship. You will need to fill out an application for admission to C.U., complete the scholarship application, submit a written letter of your personal testimony and provide a letter of recommendation from your pastor or another church staff member. Scholarships are awarded to students who demonstrate Christian commitment and service to their church, school and community.

These awards range in value from \$500 to over \$6,000 per year. The BLA may be rewarded for up to a total of four years as long as the following criteria are met:

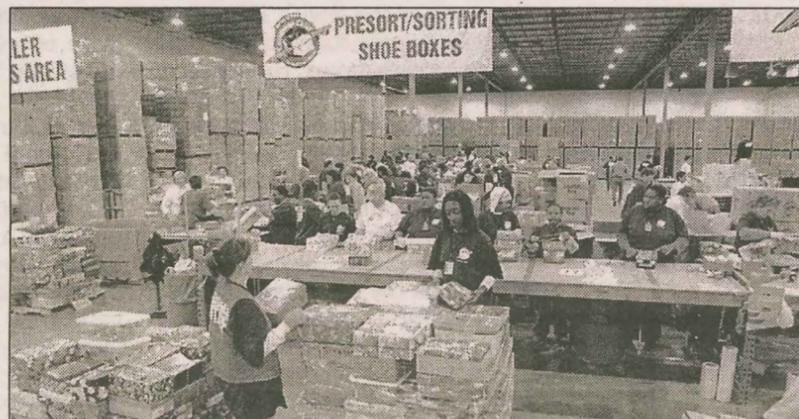
- Continue as a full-time student at Campbellsville University
- Maintain a minimum 2.0 grade point average
- Assist the Office of Admissions in occasional campus activities

We urge you to discuss this opportunity with your pastor and/or youth leader. The deadline for the BLA application and all supporting documents is February 1, 2004. If you feel that you have the characteristics and qualities of a BLA recipient, get the process started today!

To schedule a campus visit or more information, contact the Office of Admissions at 1.800.264.6014 or at 270.789.5220 or online at www.campbellsville.edu.

Campbellsville University, it's a great place to "Find Your Calling."

Operation Christmas Child



HOLIDAY BUSTLE Workers at the Operation Christmas Child processing center in Charlotte, N.C., inspect and prepare shoe box gifts for shipment to needy children in 95 countries. Samaritan's Purse expects to collect 7 million boxes this year from people in the United States, Canada, Australia and Europe. Gospel literature also is offered with the boxes, and many children enroll in follow-up Bible study courses. (Samaritan's Purse photo)

That all peoples may know Him

"... It isn't enough for you merely to be my servant, you must do more. ... I have placed you here as a light for other nations; you must take my saving power to everyone on earth" (Isaiah 49:6).

This is what God told the great prophet, Isaiah, to say to the nation of Israel more than 2,800 years ago, and to us, "the new Israel," today. If that is not a missions motivating message, I don't know what is.

God has placed us here on this earth to deliver the good news of the gospel, which is God's saving power through Jesus Christ, which is the light all people need to be saved.

And, that is what the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention is all about, namely, helping us Southern Baptists deliver the good news of the gospel "that all peoples may know Him."

The international mission fields are beyond where most of us can do or what we can see, but they are full of people we believe are God's children, a people who need what we have to offer. Although sharing the gospel with the whole world seems at first an intimidating thought, it is what

God has called us to do.

In a recent communication, Ken and Beth Perkins, our missionaries in Ethiopia, shared an incident he had with a Muslim background believer. The believer was asked, "What do you see as the role of the missionary in the midst of such lostness that is also defined by widespread persecution?" His response was, "If you can come to live among us, then come. If you cannot come, send someone. If you cannot send someone, write us a letter of encouragement."

The Lottie Moon Christmas Offering provides you and me a simple, yet effective way to keep sending and encouraging missionaries "that all peoples

know Him." Prayerfully consider increasing this year's gift by 33 percent so those whom God has called, but funds are not available to send, may go.

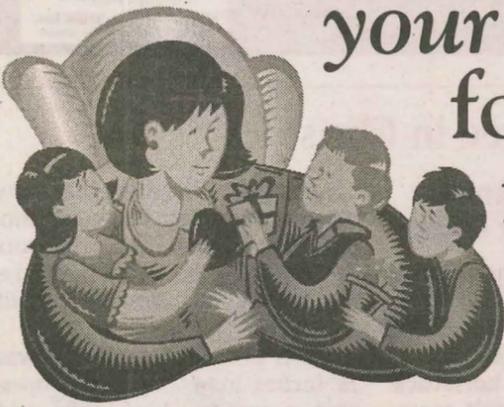
KENTUCKY BAPTIST FOUNDATION



Barry Allen

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

Is there room in your heart for one more?



Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children

needs caring foster families to provide safe and loving homes for children and teens. The young people come from backgrounds of abuse and neglect. They desperately need your love.

Is there room in your heart and home for just one more?

Training, financial assistance and around-the-clock support are provided. Foster parents can be single or married and can foster full- or part-time.

To find out more about foster parenting in your area, visit www.kbhc.org and click on Foster Care or call:



Kentucky Baptist Homes for Children

1-800-456-1386 or (502) 245-2101

www.kbhc.org E-mail: info@kbhc.org

PRACTICAL RESOURCES FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING

WESTERNRECORDER + Your church newsletter

Two great publications, one less post office headache

Kudzu



Doug Marlette

For Heaven's Sake



Mike Morgan

Bible Crosswords

Linda Nunn

Across

- 1 "Joshua the son of ____" (Deuteronomy 34:9)
- 4 "And I sent the ____ before you" (Joshua 24:12)
- 9 "Blessed are ____" (Matthew 5:11)
- 11 One of the kings of Judah (1 Kings 15:11)
- 12 "He had compassion ____ him" (Luke 10:33)
- 13 "Intending after ____ to bring him forth" (Acts 12:4)
- 15 "Thy father made our ____ grievous" (1 Kings 12:4)
- 16 "The ____ shall be first" (Matthew 19:30)
- 17 "____ burden is light" (Matthew 11:30)
- 18 "There was one ____, a prophetess" (Luke 2:36)
- 21 "And a certain woman named ____" (Acts 16:14)
- 24 "When I am weak, then am I ____" (2 Corinthians 12:10)
- 25 "____ strong" (1 Samuel 4:9)
- 26 "I am that bread of ____" (John 6:48)
- 28 "As the apple ____" (Song of Solomon 2:3)
- 29 "What must I do to be ____?" (Acts 16:30)
- 31 "Better is it that thou shouldst not ____" (Ecclesiastes 5:5)
- 34 "O generation of ____" (Matthew 3:7)
- 37 "The glory of the Lord abode on mount ____" (Exodus 24:16)
- 39 Seeds that can be made into soup
- 42 A natural substance containing a valuable metal
- 43 New Testament, abbr.
- 44 Latin that is, abbr.
- 45 "____ man can serve two masters" (Matthew 6:24)
- 46 "And whatsoever goeth upon his ____" (Leviticus 11:27)

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- 50 "He hath ____ great things" (Joel 2:20)
- 52 "There shall be weeping and ____ of teeth" (Luke 13:28)
- 55 "Though they be ____ like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18)
- 56 "Rebekah ... the daughter of Bethuel the ____" (Genesis 25:20)
- 57 "We remember the ... ____" (Numbers 11:5)
- 18 "Thou ____ my King" (Psalm 44:4)
- 19 Compass direction, abbr.
- 20 "Rock of ____, cleft for me"
- 21 Pounds, abbr.
- 22 "____, though I walk" (Psalm 23:4)
- 23 French word for island
- 27 "I will fear no ____" (Psalm 23:4)
- 30 "I am the true ____" (John 15:1)
- 32 "Who is worthy to ____ the book?" (Revelation 5:2)
- 33 "So they two ____ until they came to Bethlehem" (Ruth 1:19)
- 35 Right, abbr.
- 36 Yes, in Italian or Spanish
- 37 "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and ... spiritual ____" (Ephesians 5:19)
- 38 Sarcasm
- 40 "Fine ____ is the righteousness of saints" (Revelation 19:8)
- 41 "Some ____ fell by the way side" (Matthew 13:4)
- 46 23rd letter of the Greek alphabet
- 47 Expression of triumph
- 48 "That I may ____ Christ" (Philemon 3:8)
- 49 Chemical symbol for tin
- 51 Spanish word for gold
- 53 "To the dwelling of ____" (Numbers 21:15)
- 54 "____ ye therefore" (Matthew 28:19)

Down

- 1 "I tell you, ____" (Luke 13:3)
- 2 United Service Organizations, abbr.
- 3 "I was afraid, because I was ____" (Genesis 3:10)
- 4 "____, everyone that thirsteth" (Isaiah 55:1)
- 5 "Believe ____, and she shall be made whole" (Luke 8:50)
- 6 "Birds of the air have ____" (Luke 9:58)
- 7 "Arise, Peter; slay and ____" (Acts 11:7)
- 8 Poet Elliot's initials
- 9 "Sing unto the Lord, O ____ saints" (Psalm 30:4)
- 10 One of the sons of Judah (Genesis 46:12)
- 14 A male voice part
- 17 "And (Jesus) called, saying, ____ arise" (Luke 8:54)

Last week's solution

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| 61 | A | A | R | O | N | 62 | H | O | S | E | A | | | | |

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Authors have host of seasonal reading options for gifts or self

Washington (RNS)—From Christmas time prayers to a simplified holiday, this year's harvest of holiday books offers a variety of seasonal reading.

Prayerful people and those yearning for spiritual quiet in the midst of commercialism will appreciate "Christmastide" by Phyllis Tickle and "Celebrate Simply" by Nancy Twigg.

"Christmastide" offers daily prayers, psalms and readings from the Bible and hymns of praise and worship drawn from Tickle's landmark work, "The Divine Hours."

The book, which moves its readers from Advent, the penitential church season preceding Christmas through Dec. 25 and on to Epiphany, Jan. 6, is best described as a manual. It is not arranged for casual or random use, Tickle writes in her preface, but "for doing fixed-hour prayer during the holy weeks of wintertime."

Tickle traces the history of fixed-hour prayer to the devout, practicing Jews who were Jesus' first disciples.

Twigg, editor of the e-zine "Counting the Cost," self-published "Celebrate Simply: Your Guide to Simpler, More Meaningful Holidays and Special Occasions" to offer practical solutions for holiday stress and overspending.

She and her husband, Michael, emphasize they've found peace of mind and pocketbook. They own just one car, buy their clothes at yard sales and have neither cable TV nor caller ID. Their mortgage is their only debt. Twigg's book shows readers how to scale back on spending and to return to the spiritual significance of holidays such as Christmas and Easter.

A Leo Tolstoy short story inspired the new children's picture book, "The Candle in the Window" by Grace Johnson. Tolstoy's story, "Where Love Is, There God is Also," tells of a humble shoemaker who takes in hungry and tired guests while awaiting a visit from Christ. In Johnson's story we read the legend of Gunther, a German cobbler and meet the mysterious visitors who change his life.

Popular author and speaker Ace Collins takes us deep into the history, mystery and meaning behind Christmas music, hymns and great gospel tunes in "Stories Behind the Great Traditions of Christmas."

Collins' book explores the holiday's evolution, the beginnings of Christmas cards and gift-giving and other traditions.

Some scholars take closer look at Joseph

Continued from page 1

"The vast majority of us, like Joseph, will not get headlines or our 15 minutes of fame, but we all have our parts," Davis said.

The main reason Joseph is such an enigma is that the Bible says so little about him—only that he was a pious carpenter from Nazareth, although some think he was an architect, or maybe a general contractor.

Other texts that were never accepted as Scripture go into much more detail. The Protogospel of James, written about 150 A.D., says Joseph was an elderly widower when he was chosen by lot to be with Mary, who was only 12.

Both Matthew and Luke trace his lineage back to King David, which provides the family pedigree necessary for Jesus to be the Messiah.

After Jesus is born, Joseph fled with the family to Egypt to escape the death sentence imposed by a paranoid King Herod. Paul Perry, author of the new book, "Jesus in Egypt," spent two years tracing local legends about the refugee family and discovered a "rousing chase scene up and down the Nile."

"Jesus kept getting the Holy Family into trouble in Egypt," Perry said. "He was destroying idols and getting them run out of town. That was a concern for Joseph because he wanted to slow down and rest easy."

When the family returned to Israel—Perry said Jesus was probably 7—they resettled in Nazareth. There is no biblical mention of the family again until Jesus goes missing at age 12 and is found by Mary and Joseph instructing rabbis in the temple. From then on, Joseph

is not mentioned. The popular explanation is that he died without so much as an obituary.

Some scholars think Joseph, like other members of Jesus' family, takes a secondary role in order to keep the focus on Jesus. Others say the family was strained to the point of dysfunction because of Jesus' radical ministry.

"The truth of the matter is, we're not surprised not to hear about the demise of Joseph, because frankly, the family had little to do with Jesus," said Ben Witherington, a professor at Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore.

"Jesus was so out of the box, such a radical figure, that His family couldn't figure Him out."

Most Protestants say it is clear that Joseph and Mary had other children after Jesus. Catholics disagree. They believe Mary was a perpetual virgin and say Jesus' siblings

are actually cousins.

So, where does Joseph fit into the gospel stories?

Bruce Chilton, an Episcopal priest and executive director of the Institute for Advanced Theology at Bard College in upstate New York, says Joseph is crucial because his unorthodox paternity made Jesus a type of 1st century social outcast who never really was accepted by community leaders.

That isolation, especially after Joseph's death, gave Jesus a "particular sensibility" for other untouchables, one of the hallmarks of his ministry.

"One of Jesus' pre-eminent gifts to religion is the idea of addressing God as Father," Chilton said. "Joseph is the one protection Jesus has from becoming an (outcast). When Joseph dies, Jesus emerges as the religious teacher who will call His Abba, His Father, God."

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Two of a kind, almost

Siblings find success in school and activities at Oneida Baptist Institute

One of my greatest challenges is finding time to really get to know my students. Prior to being president, my daily responsibilities kept me in constant contact with students. Watching them mature and succeed, and observing the healing that takes place in their families is what makes this ministry exciting.

We are not as successful with every student as we would like to be. However, if the student will give us a chance, wonderful things can happen. Two sisters from Louisville enrolled at the beginning of the 2001 fall term. They came to Oneida Baptist Institute because of poor choices and family conflicts. The older girl had personal difficulties that were having a negative influence on her sister. Their mother had heard about OBI from a friend. The older sister told us, "I decided to give it a try. I knew I wouldn't like it (unless) the choice was mine."

It did not take the girls long to see the opportunities Oneida provided. True, they didn't have as much privacy as they were accustomed to at home. But privacy in any dorm is a rare commodity. There was the normal homesickness and adjusting, but the girls did very well.

Both girls have been on the honor roll since they enrolled. The older sister has been a cheerleader; a member of our student government association, yearbook staff and Beta Club; and has played softball and volleyball. She always has done well academically, but at Oneida she has done very well. Teachers in her old school described her as "a good student but she talks

too much." We have noticed that, too! However, she has a wonderful personality and gets along with peers and staff.

The younger girl is a lot like her sister. Her grades have always been good, but are better here. She, too, has found that success at Oneida depends on being busy and involved. She has worked as a dorm aid and in the school grill. She is in our student government association and plays softball and volleyball. She also gets along well with staff and peers.

These girls were being raised in a single-parent family. Like many teenagers, they were beginning to make some bad choices. Every parent knows this can happen, but single parents often have a more difficult time keeping the family on track. When their mother shared some of her concerns for her daughters with a friend, she told her about OBI. Fortunately, this mother did not wait until things were completely out of control; she recognized that the girls needed help. Often parents wait too long to get help or to consider Oneida.

These two girls have been a blessing to our campus. They have positive spirits and attitudes. The older sister has a bit of a temper from time to time, but all in all they are wonderful girls.

Kentucky Baptists and many other friends helped to make it possible for these girls to find success at a critical time in their lives.

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

THIS IS ONEIDA



W.F. Underwood

Learn to be free in Christ

Morganfield single enjoys life, studies at Clear Creek

Second-year student Hattie Carr headed back to Morganfield for the Christmas holidays. She'll enjoy the family, home cooking and probably do some horseback riding if the snow doesn't come. Hattie's easy smile and outgoing spirit bless our campus.

As part of campus Baptist Student Union, Hattie recently helped with a "Mystery Night" program at the Pomeroy Family Life Center.

"We wanted to dramatize the national problem of losing liberties and how we have to stand together so they will not be lost," Hattie said. "The format was a party going on through the night with the disappearance of people representing our liberties. At the end we brought our liberties into a courtroom scene, but the liberties were not on trial. The people present faced accountability for what they had done or not done to lose their liberties."

About 60 people attended and had fun while learning. Hattie helped write the script and looks forward to other BSU events.

What influenced her to attend

Clear Creek? "One thing that drew me was the unity I saw on campus," Hattie said. "The professors are also able to individually relate to students. Here we are not a number."

Born prematurely, Hattie was 13 inches long. Her father operated a woodworking shop and got his measurement for handmade cradles by doubling her length. Hattie's life now influences young girls at Harlan Baptist Church. She works with Girls in Action; on most Wednesdays about 12 first-through third-grade girls meet.

In addition to missions education, Hattie would like for the girls to know, "It is OK to be who they are, to be free and not fit a mold."

Hattie's parents are active in First Christian Church of Morganfield. Her father still fashions cradles. This Christmas, we pray that other children laid in a cradle stamped, "Hattie Cradles," will grow up to be free in Christ.

CLEAR CREEK CHRONICLE



Bill Whittaker

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

Expanded gambling is bad for business

BUSINESS: Directly *and* indirectly hurt

After Mom and Dad lose the family's money, businesses lose because their patrons are broke.

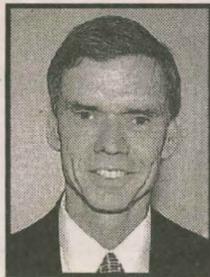
PROPOSERS OF GAMBLING have tantalized business leaders with promises of increased tourism and economic development. However, the promises rarely, if ever, materialize.

Robert Goodman, author of *The Luck Business*, said when making their case for expanded gambling to the public, the gambling industry typically trivializes the negative impacts while inflating the positive ones.

Of all the arguments favoring gambling expansion, perhaps the most attractive is that new gambling opportunities will benefit the overall economy. Unfortunately, over and over again, the statement proves to be deceptive.

While capital investment and immediate job creation seem to immediately follow new gambling projects, the long-term impact on most businesses and the economy is usually negative,

according to John W. Kindt, professor of commerce and legal policy at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Kindt, who grew up in Louisville and is a



Kent Ostrander is the executive director of The Family Foundation

nationally recognized expert on gambling's effect on the economy, actually calls for re-criminalizing gambling because it is a "catalyst for economic downturn." Numerous studies support his position.

Professor I. Nelson Rose, professor at the Whittier School of Law in Los Angeles and a professional legal consultant for many casinos, puts it succinctly, "A casino acts like a black hole, sucking all the money out of the local economy."

Kentucky native Joe Koester lives and works in Vicksburg, Mississippi, home to four riverboat casinos. "A lot of the gain they bring is in the first two to three years, but after that it levels

"A casino acts like a black hole, sucking all the money out of the local economy."

Professor I. Nelson Rose, Whittier School of Law and legal consultant to casinos



out.... the shine wears off," Koester said. "There is a saturation level. A state can have only so much gambling." Koester, who earned a master's degree in civil engineering from the University of Kentucky, noted that prior to casinos, there were one or two pawn shops in Vicksburg. Now there are over twenty—one sign of an unhealthy economy.

Critics say gambling is inherently antithetical to good business. It undermines sound economic principles of thrift, diligent labor, and savings. Gambling "produces no product, no new wealth, and so it makes no genuine contribution to economic development," said Jack Van Der Slik, senior scholar in the Illinois Legislative Studies Center.

Kindt's assessment is similar. Existing businesses lose the most when gambling is legalized. It cannibalizes discretionary dollars from consumers who would have purchased groceries, clothes, consumer goods, and restaurant meals. And non-gambling-related businesses will not be competing for consumer dollars or recre-

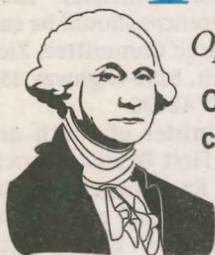
ational dollars on a level playing field, according to Kindt, "because legalized gambling activities can cater to an addicted and potentially addicted market segment."

With the exception of the cluster services (food services and delivery, alcoholic beverage companies and pawn shops) associated with it, Kindt explains that new businesses tend not to locate in areas allowing legalized gambling because of the associated social and economic costs.

Surprisingly, gambling expansionists targeting Kentucky have pointed to all the money that Indiana has gained by Kentuckians going to the Indiana riverboats. What they haven't emphasized is that Indiana has had some of its worst economic times since gambling was expanded there, losing 120,000 jobs and causing the late Gov. Frank O'Bannon to speculate earlier this year that the downturn would shape his political legacy. O'Bannon died September 13 following a stroke.

Kt

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"Please work against ANY expansion of gambling"

If you voted for him, be sure to explain that one of your reasons (or THE reason) you supported him was his opposition to expanded gambling. Unfortunately, the other side has been quietly pushing all kinds of proposals, including Keno in their recent debacle.

Together we can strengthen Fletcher's resolve and create support for a good, no-expansion policy, surprising the expansionists. Call the governor's message line **NOW**:

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To help The Family Foundation disseminate information on this issue in your community, please call us at (859) 255-5400 or email us at tffky@mis.net

And these guys should know!



"People will spend a tremendous amount of money in casinos, money that they would normally spend on buying a refrigerator or a new car. Local businesses will suffer because they lose customer dollars to the casinos."

Donald Trump

(casino owner, interviewed by the Miami Herald)

"Get it straight...there is no reason on earth for any of you to expect for more than one second that just because there are people here [at casinos], they're going to run into your store, or restaurant, or bar."

Steve Wynn

(casino owner, speaking to small business leaders in Connecticut)



For more information, visit:

www.SayNoCasino.com

www.kybaptist.org Web site of the Kentucky Baptist Convention

www.kentuckyleague.org Web site of The Kentucky League on Alcohol and Gambling Problems

www.kycage.org Web site of the Coalition Against Gambling Expansion

PRAYER PARTNERS

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

■ **Missionary Vickie Stewart**, who works with the women among the urban poor in Curitiba, Brazil, requests prayer for the spiritual growth of participants in a women's Bible study and young adult group.

■ **Missionaries in Silesia, Poland**, are thankful for two new small groups that have formed.

■ **Missionaries in the Canary Islands** rejoice over the 21 people who made professions of faith in Christ recently during a door-to-door evangelism campaign. The missionaries request prayer that the local team and the two churches involved will be faithful in encouraging and discipling these new believers.

■ **English and computer classes** being led by an International Service Corps worker in Bulgaria. Please pray that participants will be drawn closer to God through the classes and Christmas activities this month. Workers also request prayer that a church planting movement will start in Stara Zagora, Bulgaria.

■ **Missionaries in Bucharest, Romania**, request prayer for their research about the need for a church-planter training center in Bucharest.

MOUNTAINS TO THE MISSISSIPPI

COMPILED BY STAFF

■ **CADIZ**—South Union Church recently called **William Eugene Powell** as pastor.

■ **CECILIA**—Cecilia Church will hold a Christmas Eve service Dec. 24, 6 p.m. **Mike Rodgers** is interim pastor.

■ **EAST BERNSTADT**—Hazel Patch Church will present "A Christian Miracle" Dec. 21, 6 p.m. **Brian Hammack** is pastor.

■ **EDDYVILLE**—First Church will present "Sing Noel" Dec. 21, 7 p.m. Participants include the sanctuary choir, young adults and children. The church also recently licensed **Heath Carlton** and **Josh White** to the gospel ministry. **Tim Perdue** is pastor.

■ **ELIZABETHTOWN**—Severns Valley Church will hold Christmas Eve worship services Dec. 24, 5 p.m. **Billy Compton** is pastor.

■ **FRANKFORT**—Immanuel Church's sanctuary choir and instrumental ensemble will present "The Winter Rose" Dec. 21, 6 p.m. **Naomi Walker** is music pastor.

■ **GREENVILLE**—Second Church will hold a candlelight Christmas service Sunday evening, Dec. 21.

■ **HENDERSON**—Bellfield Church's adult choir will present "He's Still the King of Kings" Dec. 21, 6 p.m.

■ **HOPKINSVILLE**—Casky Church's youth choir will present "A Strange Way to Save the World," Dec. 21,

6:30 p.m. Christmas Eve services will be held Dec. 24, 4 p.m. **Will Stone** is pastor.

■ **LOUISVILLE**—Clifton Heights Church called **Anthony Harwell** as minister of youth.

Lakeside Church recently called **Craig Crawley** as minister of music. **Wes Brockway** is pastor.

St. Matthews Church will hold a Christmas Eve candlelight and communion service Dec. 24, 5 p.m. **Leslie Hollon** is pastor.

■ **MADISONVILLE**—Pleasant View recently Church called **Brodie Ambrose** as pastor.

■ **MAYFIELD**—New Vision Church recently called **Chad Frizzell** as pastor.

■ **MIDDLETOWN**—First Church will hold a Christmas Eve candlelight service Dec. 24, 5:30 p.m. **James Cobban** is pastor.

■ **MOUNT VERNON**—Maretburg Church's choir will present "Come to Bethlehem" led by Jill Stevens, Dec. 21, 7 p.m. **Wayne Harding** is pastor.

■ **OWENSBORO**—Bellevue Church will present Christmas Eve Lord's Supper services Dec. 24, 5 and 6:30 p.m. **Greg Faulis** is pastor.

■ **PROVIDENCE**—Green Grove Missionary Church recently called **Brian Browning** as pastor.

■ **SEBREE**—First Church called **Linda Epley** as youth director.

Kentucky congregations help CBF provide textbooks for Albanians

By **Melanie Kieve**
Associated Baptist Press

■ **Skopje, Macedonia (ABP)**—"A jeni ju Baba Dimri?" Translation: "Are you Santa Claus?"

That's what Serxhane, an 11-year-old Albanian orphan, asked Rick Shaw—who serves with his wife, Martha, as Cooperative Baptist Fellowship global missions field personnel in Skopje, Macedonia—a few weeks after receiving textbooks from Mrs. Shaw and CBF volunteers.

But according to Shaw, it wasn't the gift as much as God's love demonstrated through giving that created the mistaken identity. "I told the young Albanian that, like Baba Dimri, we love people—especially the children of the world," he said.

Serxhane was one of approximately 500 children who received textbooks, along with backpacks and school supplies. The textbook project was part of the Shaws' ongoing ministry among orphan and indigent children in Skopje and surrounding villages.

The children who received textbooks are either orphaned or have only one parent who is employed. "Many of the children are very bright and ... dream of a better life," Mrs. Shaw said, but they face obstacles to learning, such as having to provide their own books. "You can imagine what a challenge this is when no one in the home is working," she added.

When Highland Baptist Church in Louisville learned of the textbook shortage, members quickly responded. They spread the word to

other churches in the area, while the Shaws contacted churches in the Balkan region. In all, more than \$40,000 was raised.

In August, three Highland members—Phil Collier, Terri Connolly and Angela Dennison—along with Mary Thompson of Calvary Baptist Church in Lexington—traveled to Skopje, where they distributed textbooks and visited in schools and orphans' homes. They were joined by several local Albanian and Macedonian church members.

Since the volunteers' return, Highland members have discovered that many Albanians live in Louisville. The church hosted a Thanksgiving meal for local Albanians as part of an emerging cultural exchange ministry, Collier said.

"Our church has been energized by this project," he added. "We have become more missions-oriented, with a large percentage of our members becoming involved in missions work and justice issues." Collier noted that Highland also has enjoyed the connections created by the project with new Albanian friends and sister churches such as Lexington's Calvary Baptist.

Calvary members collected money for the textbook project and donated school supplies for distribution. The church's deacons also held a dessert auction to help send Mary Thompson on the textbook distribution trip.

"It meant the world to me to have the opportunity to go and help the Shaws," Thompson said. "I felt God's hand throughout the experience."



QUEST FOR CHRIST *Quest, a weekend Christian celebration held Nov. 21-22 on the campus of Cumberland College in Williamsburg, attracted more than 1,200 young people from Kentucky and surrounding states. More than 80 participants made public decisions for Christ during the weekend, including more than 40 who made personal professions of faith. Others rededicated their lives to Christ or committed to serve God through missions and ministry. Above: Youth evangelist Clayton King prays for a group of young people who responded to an invitation. Left: Janna Long, a member of the contemporary Christian music group Avalon, sang during the weekend event.*

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SEEKING: Gethsemane Baptist Church, Danville, Ky., is seeking a full-time worship leader. Primary responsibilities: leading our church in a blended style of worship. Send resumés to: Gethsemane Baptist Church, 123 Quisenberry Ave., Danville, KY 40422.

SEEKING: Part-time youth minister for Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church. Submit resumé to: Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church, 954 Stackler St., Lewisburg, KY 42256, or brojoe@logantele.com.

SEEKING: Powell River Missionary Baptist Association of Lee County, Virginia, is seeking a director of missions. Anyone who is interested in this position, please send a resumé to: DOM Search Committee, PO Box 222, Jonesville, VA 24263. Deadline is Jan. 30, 2004.

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

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

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. Resumés with references should be submitted to: Search Committee, Zion Baptist Church, 8158 Highway 351, Henderson, KY 42420.

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

SEEKING: Associate pastor. Ovesen Heights Baptist Church in Hodgenville, Ky., is receiving resumés 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.

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Turning 30 disciples into 100,000

Southern Baptist missionaries' primary strategy involves church planting movements

By Erich Bridges
SBC International Mission Board

East Asia (BP)—The revolution started with 30 doubting farmers.

It was long after dark. Weary from working all day in the fields, they sat in the church—the smallest of only three churches in a county of nearly 700,000 people—and listened to “John,” a visiting Southern Baptist missionary.

John told them of his vision: at least one church in each of the 200-plus towns and villages in the East Asian county within three years. And they were the seeds God would plant to make it happen.

The farmers looked at each other, and then stared at the missionary as if he was crazy.

“Everyone here can start by holding a ‘family Bible group’ in your own home,” John said.

“How can we do that?” they asked. “Who will teach?”

“You will be the teacher,” John replied.

Frowns. Shaking heads. “But we don’t know how,” was their common reply.

Training trainers

“I will teach you right now how to do it. It’s a very simple way. You have your own story of how you became a Christian. Just write it down on one page.”

John asked them to read their “story” aloud five times to themselves, then tell it to each other.

Next, he told them to list everyone they personally knew who

didn’t follow Christ, starting with relatives and friends. Most could easily think of 50, 60, 100 or more.

“Divide them into groups of five,” John said. “Find them in the fields, in the restaurant, at home, anywhere. Bring them to your place and share your story.”

He returned two weeks later to see what had happened. Only 11 of the trainees had shared with anyone. He asked them to tell of their experiences to encourage the others. Several had shared with two or three people; one had told 11.

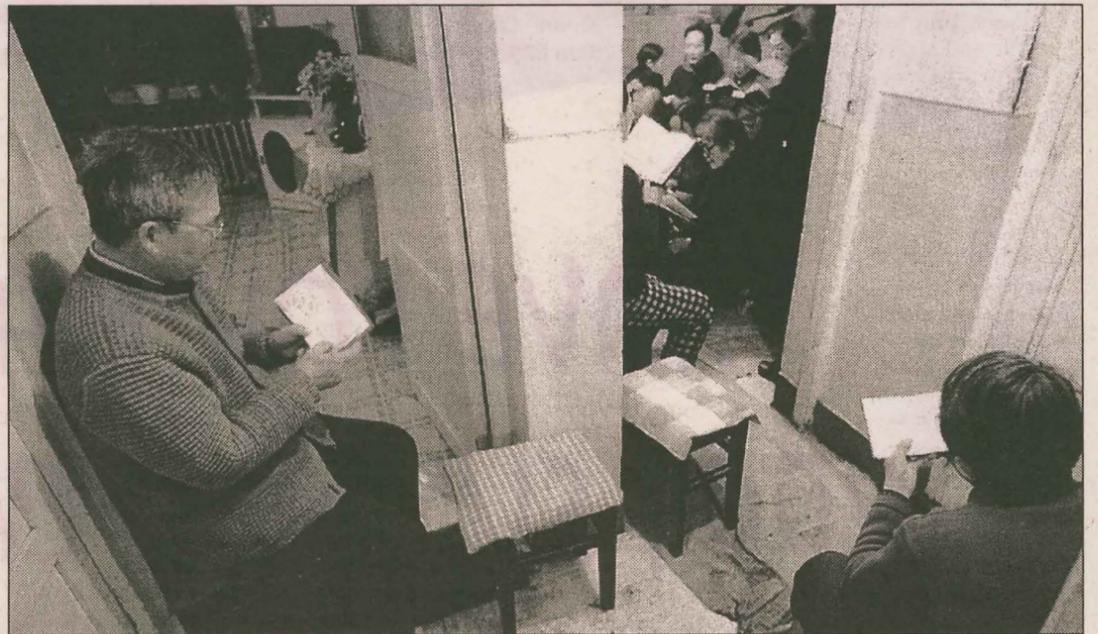
John again challenged the “silent 19” to share with people on their list

or not bother coming to the next training session. To the rest, he began teaching a series of simple Bible lessons they in turn could teach and train others to teach.

By January 2001 (two months later), 20 small worship groups had sprung up. Four months after that, 327 small groups with 4,000 newly baptized believers were meeting in 17 towns. By the end of the year, more than 12,000 new believers were worshipping in 908 house churches.

“We don’t train teachers. We train trainers,” John explains. “One generation teaches a second generation, and the second generation teaches the third generation. Monday you can teach one group, Wednesday another group, Thursday another.”

One old farmer took up the challenge—and started more than 100 churches in a year. He rises each day at 5 a.m. with two hours of Bible reading and prayer, works in the fields until 5 p.m., then goes home to



his family.

At 7 p.m., he heads back out. “I work in God’s fields until midnight,” he proudly says.

John repeated the process in the sprawling urban center nearby, where millions of workers toil in thousands of factories. Many come from surrounding provinces and live in factory dormitories.

Churches planting churches

“They eat, they work, they sleep inside the factory,” he says. “Every dormitory room has maybe eight or 12 people. They are very lonely. If one person becomes a Christian, he can lead the whole room to Christ.”

Once, the Christian trainers “lost” a factory worker, a new believer they had trained to teach. One day he simply disappeared.

“After six months we found him again,” John reports. “He had

been transferred to another large factory with 10,000 workers in it. During those six months, he had started 70 small groups and seen 10 generations of reproduction.”

Churches were planting churches that were planting more churches.

By mid-2003, less than three years after 30 tired farmers gathered to listen to a missionary they suspected was crazy, the church-planting movement had produced more than 9,300 churches and more than 104,000 baptized believers.

John, the missionary who once rejoiced over one church start a year, admits he doubted it could happen until he saw it with his own eyes.

“Jesus said, ‘Go!’ He said to teach them to become disciples, not just church members,” John says. “We train everyone to become trainers. That is the CPM (church-planting movement) way. It is very simple, but it is a good way.”

HOUSE CHURCH House churches in Harbin, China, meet weekly for several hours at a time. To avoid attracting too much attention, the groups often move from home to home, meeting in different locations each week. Still, many groups, like this one, have grown as curious neighbors are led to Christ. (IMB photo)

Messiah sing-alongs have become lively Christmas tradition

By Adelle Banks
Religion News Service

Arlington, Va. (RNS)—Messiah Sing-alongs. Messiah Sing-ins. Messiah Sings.

You name it, many cities have one or more. And this time of year is when many singers, professional and amateur alike, come together to belt out the “Hallelujah” chorus and other parts of this famous musical piece.

“Handel’s ‘Messiah’ is probably the most popular or famous choral work ever written. I mean ever,” said Barry Hemphill, music director of Washington’s Metropolitan Chorus, of the oratorio written in 1741.

Two weeks before serving as principal conductor of the 33rd annual “Messiah Sing-Along” at Washington’s Kennedy Center, Hemphill led his group’s 16th annual sing-along at First Presbyterian Church of Arlington, Va.

In the sanctuary decorated with wreaths and red candles, the orchestra consisted of a string quartet, organist and harpsichordist and the soloists were members of Hemphill’s chorus.

But most of the singers were in the pews; people with a range of performance levels, from those who were not quite in tune and

missed some entrances and cutoffs to seasoned singers with scores highlighted in yellow or orange.

As the performance concluded about an hour later, after such choruses as “For unto us a child is born” and “Glory to God,” the crowd gave itself a warm round of applause.

Variations around the country

Variations on this theme occur worldwide, perhaps hundreds of times every Christmas season.

In New Haven, Conn., community members are marking the 21st annual “Messiah Sing-In” sponsored by the Yale University Glee Club.

Across the country at Stanford University’s “Sing- and Play-Along Messiah,” singers as well as instrumentalists appear for the impromptu performance. And, unlike some other sing-alongs, soloists aren’t chosen ahead of time.

“It might more properly be called a ‘Messiah free-for-all,’” said Beth Youngdoff, publicist for Stanford’s music department.

In the country’s midsection, about 7,000 people attend the “Do-It-Yourself Messiah” over two nights at Chicago’s Civic Opera House.

The American tradition dates to at least the 1960s when about 3,000 people filled what’s now called Avery Fisher Hall in New York City.

The 36th annual performance of the “Messiah Sing-In” in that hall, sponsored by New York City’s National Chorale, now features 18 choral conductors, each taking turns in leading the singers in the seats. Audience members pay \$33 to \$85 to join the one-night chorus.

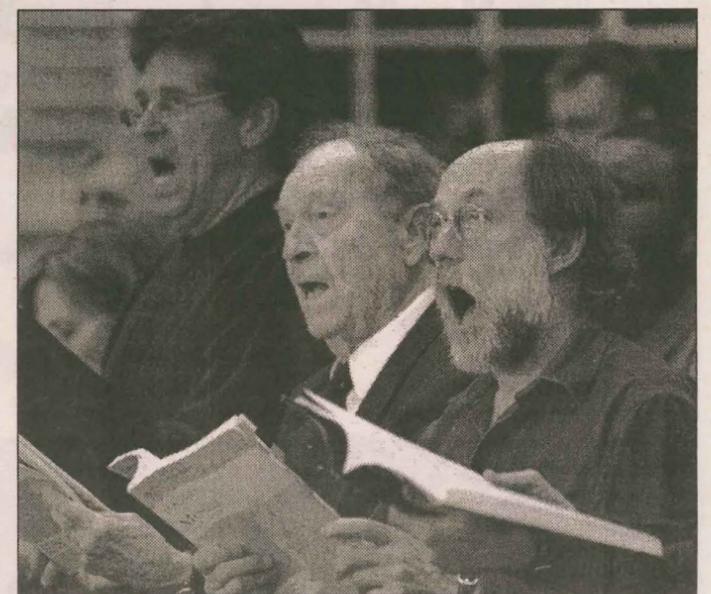
Not long after that New York ritual began, the Kennedy Center’s “Messiah Sing-Along” started in 1971.

Though free of charge, ardent singers-along pay in another way two weekends before the performance.

“People camp all night to get the tickets,” said Mary Johnson, a spokeswoman for the Kennedy Center, which spends about \$40,000 on the production attended by 3,000 people.

Don Monro, promoter of “Messiah From Scratch” at London’s Royal Albert Hall, was “devastated” to learn the Kennedy Center sing-along started three years before his popular Christmastime event. About 3,000 people fill that prestigious hall, with the bass section on the stage. He estimates about two-thirds come to sing and one-third come to listen.

“This year’s performance is the practice for next year, so it keeps



getting better,” he said.

Reilly Lewis, founder of the Washington Bach Consort, said one unfortunate byproduct is that singers associate the “Messiah” as only Christmas music. “The ‘Messiah’ is really an Easter piece and some of the most glorious music takes place in the second and third parts.”

But conductors say no matter what portions they lead, they never can omit the “Hallelujah” chorus.

“Not and make it to the parking lot,” Hemphill joked.

SING-ALONG Members of Washington’s Metropolitan Chorus sing Handel’s “Messiah” at a sing-along performance at the First Presbyterian Church in Arlington, Va. (RNS photo by Tyrone Turner)



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