



# WESTERN RECORDER

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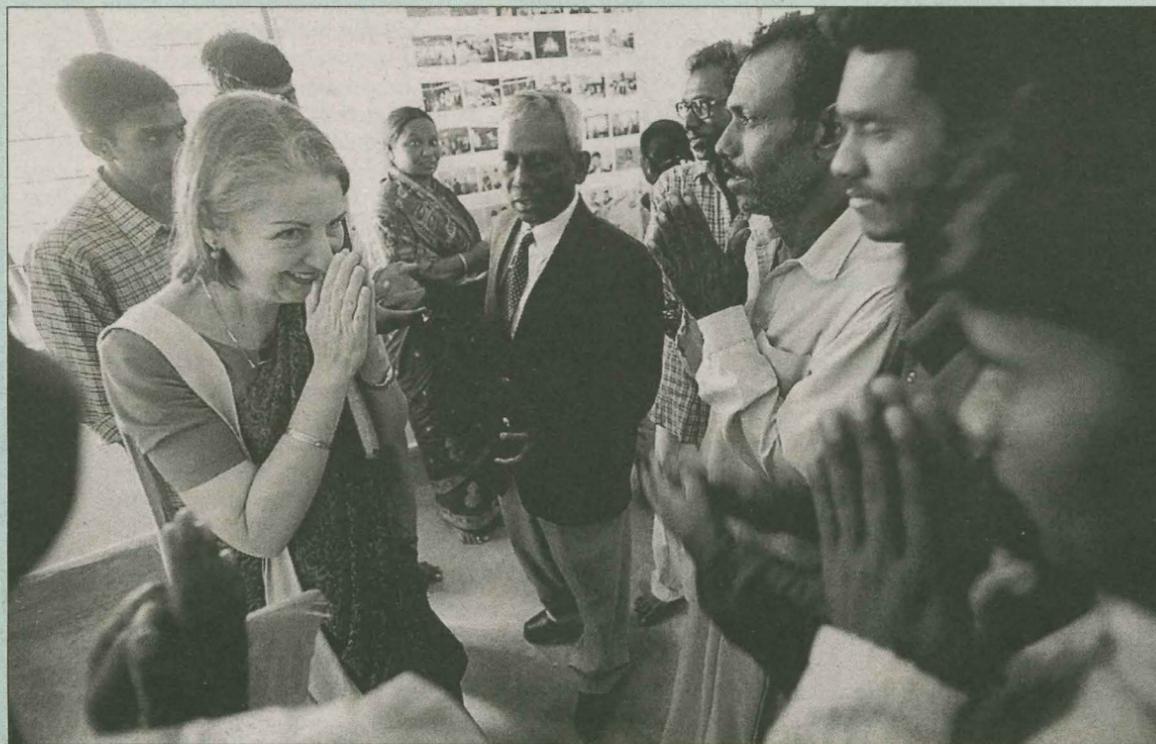
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## Woman of influence



**"AUNTIE"** Rebekah Naylor has served in several key roles at Bangalore Baptist Hospital, becoming accepted more as family than foreign staffer. She is an honorary "auntie" to hundreds of Indian young people. (IMB photo by Mike Creswell)

### Dr. Naylor personifies Christianity in India

By Mike Creswell  
SBC International Mission Board

**Bangalore, India**—Ask people around Bangalore, India, what a Christian looks like and many would describe Dr. Rebekah Naylor, the Southern Baptist missionary surgeon who has labored at Bangalore Baptist Hospital for the past 30 years.

Some have seen Dr. Naylor, the cool, precise, professional medical doctor who has performed countless surgeries and other medical procedures. She has saved lives, delivered babies and relieved suffering for thousands of people over the years.

But others know her through her soft-spoken but persistent

sharing of the gospel, her training and encouragement of Indian Baptists in how to witness and plant churches. In this role, she has helped bring eternal life to thousands of people and relieved the spiritual suffering known by many here who fear Hinduism's vengeful gods.

For Naylor, the missionary calling and the drive to become a physician were one calling.

"I experienced a call to missions specifically when I was 13 years old," she says. "God spoke to me very clearly about personal involvement in foreign missions service," she says. That calling combined with her interest in medicine.

"My ambition in medicine was basically to use it as an avenue to share my faith in Jesus Christ," she says, summing up in her typically precise way a vision for her life she pursued with steadfast devotion through the following decades. Already she had plowed new ground; few women became physicians, much less surgeons, in the 1960s.

By the time she arrived in India as a newly-appointed missionary in 1974, she had managed to get through university, medical school and related training. From a comfortable home in Fort Worth, Texas, the medical and missionary newbie found herself stepping through India's poor who slept on sidewalks for want of homes.

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Dated material. Please deliver by Wednesday, December 15

### Campaign asks: What's wrong with 'Merry Christmas'?

By Kevin Eckstrom  
Religion News Service

**Sacramento, Calif.** (RNS)—Manuel Zamorano is making a list, checking it twice, and Macy's is definitely coming up as naughty, not nice.

Zamorano, a 56-year-old grandfather from suburban Sacramento, Calif., is so irritated that Macy's has removed "Merry Christmas" banners from its stores and advertising that he now chairs the "Committee to Save Merry Christmas" to coordinate a boycott against the retailer.

"I don't have any desire to hurt anybody's bonuses, anybody's income, anybody's Christmas," said

the soft-spoken Zamorano. "But I don't want these retailers to simply use us and sell to us at Christmas and never actually say 'Merry Christmas.'"

While Zamorano's boycott has yet to pick up any real steam, his campaign reflects a growing resentment among many Christians that creeping secularism now has its sights set on Christmas.

It's part of the annual "December dilemma" for people who say the birth of Jesus Christ is increasingly overshadowed by excessive commercialism.

Frustrated over nativity scenes

that are unwelcome in public squares, Salvation Army kettles that have been banned from Target stores and school "holiday" plays that feature Hanukkah songs but no "Away in a Manger," they've had enough. And Macy's will be the first to pay.

Zamorano said he isn't asking for much—"just the words 'Merry Christmas.'" If Macy's will advertise "after-Christmas sales," why not "Christmas" sales, he wonders. If Bloomingdale's will wish customers a "Happy Hanukkah" in the New York Times, where's the ad for "Merry Christmas"?

□ See Campaign seeks to ... Page 9

## What was it?



### Scientists have new theories on Bethlehem star

By Margie Wylie  
Religion News Service

**Washington (RNS)**—In the Gospel of Matthew, it's the apparition that heralds the birth of Jesus.

Today, it features in Christmas trappings from tree toppers to carols to cards. No children's Nativity play is complete without its tinfoil likeness above the storied stable.

But what was the Star of Bethlehem?

Suggestions have included a comet, a supernova, meteors, bright-shining planets—even a UFO. The truth might be more subtle.

Using reconstruction software and the historical record, astronomers increasingly have come to believe that the wise men "following yonder star" might have been interpreting astrological omens so esoteric that only the learned would have noticed anything unusual in the night skies.

While scientists disagree on the particulars, "one thing is absolutely certain," according to Mark Kidger, an astronomer with the Instituto de Astrofisica de Canarias in Spain's Canary Islands.

□ See Scientists offer ... Page 8



## McCall, other former SBC leaders urge BWA support

**"We function within Baptist freedom and the autonomy of every Christian church."**

Duke McCall, former BWA president

By Greg Warner  
Associated Baptist Press

Atlanta (ABP)—About 20 former Southern Baptist leaders met in Atlanta Dec. 4 to try to find ways to rebuild financial support for the Baptist World Alliance, which lost its largest member and funding source in October.

The leaders, who included several former Southern Baptist Convention agency heads and state convention executives, called themselves "Advocates of the Baptist World Alliance." No formal organization has been formed, however.

Last June the Southern Baptist Convention voted to withdraw its membership and final \$300,000 in annual funding from the Baptist World Alliance, effective Oct. 1. The convention's conservative leaders claimed BWA, an international umbrella organization representing 211 Baptist bodies, harbors theological liberalism—a charge denied by BWA and many of its member groups worldwide.

The Atlanta meeting was organized by Duke McCall, retired president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville and a former president of BWA.

### Baptist freedom & autonomy

"Our purpose is to retain Southern Baptist participation in and support of the Baptist World Alliance," said McCall, who also was president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and chief executive of the SBC before conservatives rose

to power.

"We function within Baptist freedom and the autonomy of every Christian church," McCall said in a statement.

Most state Baptist conventions that are likely to support BWA already are doing so, he noted. That includes conventions in Texas, Virginia, North Carolina and Missouri.



Duke McCall

Even though Kentucky Baptist Convention messengers rejected a proposal last month to study how the KBC may relate to BWA, McCall said, "We'll try to win Kentucky over, because it is still up for grabs in my judgment."

In addition to the KBC action, other proposals that could have resulted in more funding for BWA were defeated in the Alabama and Georgia Baptist conventions. But two moderate-controlled conventions—in Texas and Virginia—acted to increase their support.

Other participants at the Atlanta meeting included Grady Cothen and Lloyd Elder, both former presidents of the Baptist Sunday School Board (now LifeWay Christian Resources), and three former chief executives of national Woman's Missionary Union—Alma Hunt, Carolyn Weatherford Crumpler and Dellanna O'Brien.

Two BWA staff members were present—Denton Lotz, general secretary, and Ian Chapman, development director.

The group did not establish a strategy or fund-raising goal in support of BWA but agreed to encourage

churches and individuals to support the international organization.

McCall told Associated Baptist Press a formal organization was a possibility going into the meeting "but it never crystalized. I didn't hear this crowd wanting an ongoing organization." He added, however, that he was "impressed with the vigor of the support" for BWA.

McCall said the best hope for raising money for BWA is from churches and individuals. Although the SBC has withdrawn from the international organization, Southern Baptist churches and individuals are not required to do the same, he noted.

### Expanded membership options

Most support for the Baptist World Alliance traditionally has come from member Baptist bodies around the world, but BWA recently added categories of associate membership for churches and individuals. Supporters are hoping to replace the money lost from the SBC—\$425,000 annually until recent years—from churches and individuals who still value BWA.

"The nature of the case is that's where you have to go now," McCall said.

Catherine Allen, former president of the BWA Women's Department, said many "rank-and-file" Baptist churches have quit participating in the SBC and state conventions but still want to support BWA.

"There are a lot of churches that are SBC-identified who are going to have to make a decision about BWA," Allen said. Encouragement from those former SBC leaders can

be a persuasive factor, added Allen, former WMU associate executive director and now treasurer of Global Women.

### Former state execs join effort

Other participants included former chief executives of state conventions: Jere Allen, District of Columbia; Charles Barnes, Maryland; Bill Causey, Mississippi; James Griffith, Georgia; Jack Lowndes, New York; and Don Wideman, Missouri. Other state executives who expressed support but were not able to attend included Earl Kelly, Mississippi; Ken Lyle, New England; Reggie McDonough, Virginia; William Pinson, Texas; and Roy Smith, North Carolina.

Also attending were Emmanuel McCall, former director of black church relations for the former Home Mission Board; Bill O'Brien, former vice president of the former Foreign Mission Board; Truett Gannon, professor at Mercer's McAfee School of Theology in Atlanta; and three Georgia pastors—David Sapp of Second-Ponce de Leon Baptist Church in Atlanta, Bill Self of Johns Creek Baptist Church in Alpharetta, and Craig Sherouse of First Baptist Church of Griffin.

McCall said the group is "not in a battle with anyone" and doesn't claim to "represent any group we may have served in the past."

"We serve the Baptist World Alliance," he said, "not because its membership includes no sinners, but because it has inspired and instructed world Baptists in their intention to be biblical Christian witnesses to our Savior Jesus Christ."

## Churches of all sizes honored for gifts to 2003 Lottie Moon offering

Richmond, Va. (BP)—As Southern Baptist churches give toward a record \$150 million goal for this year's Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions, two groups of churches have been recognized for their gifts to the 2003 offering.

In addition to the 100 top-dollar givers, the Southern Baptist International Mission Board has for the first time also recognized the churches that gave the most per member.

IMB President Jerry Rankin said last year's record response to the offering indicates missions is a high priority to Southern Baptist churches of all sizes.

"We are grateful for the impressive offerings of many of our larger churches," Rankin said. "But it was an emotional experience to receive testimonies from many smaller congregations that went above and beyond what they had ever given before or would envision being a possibility."

Southern Baptists gave a record \$136,204,648 last year. That total was an increase of almost \$21.2 million—18.4 percent—over the year before when churches fell \$10 million short of the IMB's goal.

The 189 churches that made up the two top-100 lists—11 of them were on both lists—contributed more than \$15.3 million, 12.2 percent of the offering's total amount.

"It's unbelievable," said Billy Hoffman, the board's director of development. "It's not about being a big church, but it's about churches getting a passion for missions and giving to missions."

First Baptist Church of St. Joseph, Mo., topped the per capita list by collecting \$341,368.35. With 374 members, that averages \$912.75 per member. They were the only church to make the top 10 on both lists.

Bettendorf Mission Baptist Church in Bettendorf, Iowa, made the top five list with only three members, collecting a total of \$1,180. That averages \$393.33 per member. Other churches in the top five were Peninsula Baptist Church in Grove, Calif., \$6,000, with 16 members; Peace Haven Baptist Church in Wikesboro, N.C., \$3,020.77, with nine members; West Kemper Baptist Church in Kemper, Miss., \$12,000, with 36 members.

The top five churches in total-dollar contributions gave more than \$2.4 million.

Calvary Baptist Church in Winston Salem, N.C., collected \$763,403.27. The four other churches in the top five were First Baptist Church of Rogers, Ark., \$515,328.77; First Baptist Church of Fort Smith, Ark., \$474,084.89; Prestonwood Baptist Church in Plano, Texas, \$377,600; and Concord First Baptist Church in Knoxville, Tenn., \$344,170.23.



## BAPTIST DIGEST

**Louisiana College placed on probation.** The major accrediting agency for schools in the South has placed Louisiana College on probation for a year for violating the agency's standards related to academic freedom and proper board governance. Officials of the Louisiana Baptist Convention-affiliated college announced Dec. 7 that the school was placed on probation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. In the past few months, the college's president, chief academic administrator and board chairman have resigned. Last month the college's newly elected president withdrew before taking office, citing concerns over "governance issues" with trustees.

**Baylor faculty vote against president.** In a non-binding referendum on the leadership of embattled Baylor University President Robert Sloan, 85 percent of voting faculty members oppose retaining Sloan as president. Among 838

faculty members eligible to vote, 487 cast ballots, voting 418 to 69 against Sloan's leadership. The vote organized by Baylor's Faculty Senate was boycotted by many professors who support Sloan. He has been under fire from many regents, faculty and alumni for his long-range plan for the Baptist-affiliated school and for the debt incurred to implement the plan.

**Southwestern honors Baptist leaders.** Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary recently inaugurated the James T. Draper Jr. Chair of Pastoral Ministry and the Dick Baker Chair of Music Missions and Evangelism during a special chapel service on the school's Fort Worth, Texas, campus. Draper, a Southwestern alumnus, is president of LifeWay Christian Resources and a former Southern Baptist Convention president. Baker has composed numerous hymns and served 12 years as minister of music at Prestonwood Baptist Church in Plano, Texas.

## KBC committee prepares to fight casinos in 2005 legislative term

Louisville—Members of the Kentucky Baptist Public Affairs Committee are gearing up to battle expanded gambling efforts in the state.

A pair of bills (BR 4 and BR 5) prefled by Sen. David Boswell of Owensboro call for a constitutional amendment to allow casinos in the commonwealth as well as regulations about casino locations and distribution of revenue.

The measures are expected to be introduced when the Kentucky Legislature convenes in January.

Howard Beaman, executive director of the Kentucky League on Alcohol and Gambling Problems, told the Public Affairs Committee last week that both measures are "snakes in the grass and both are very poisonous."

Citing the call for a constitutional amendment, Beaman said, "I look for a push to get this one through" the legislature. "The more they bring this us and the more they talk about it, the more palatable it becomes to some people."

Concerning the accompanying legislation, he added, "It looks like they're going to go for full casinos, rather than just slot machines."

### "Growing epidemic"

If casinos are allowed, "this is going to create a lot of compulsive gamblers across our state," he warned. "It's a growing epidemic across the nation."

Bill Mackey, Kentucky Baptist Convention executive director, suggested "educating Kentucky Baptists through the churches and through the directors of missions" as well as providing "public education, making people think so they don't swallow hook, line and sinker what they are hearing from the gambling industry."

Committee chairman Chip Hutcheson, a member of Southside Baptist Church in Princeton, urged committee members to "be proactive in getting one or two op-ed pieces distributed" to newspapers throughout the commonwealth.

Committee members agreed to ask KBC President Hershael York and others to write letters opposing gambling to be submitted to various publications.

Mackey also called for Kentucky Baptists to "contact their representatives and let them know we are going to be opposing" the proposed gambling bills.

More information about the gambling issue is available at [www.kybaptist.org/publicaffairs](http://www.kybaptist.org/publicaffairs).

# Meet needs, share Jesus

*Speakers encourage Kentuckians to put emphasis on gospel with any ministry*

By Dannah Prather  
Partnerships Editor

Louisville—For Type "A" Kentucky Baptists, the new "Kentucky Baptists Connect" initiative means one thing: doing in Jesus' name.

The challenge is choosing what to do and how to do it.

Two Kentucky Baptists encouraged a recent audience to develop ministries that create opportunities to share the gospel as they meet both physical and spiritual needs.

"The main thing is Jesus Christ," said Kathy Strange, director of community ministries for The Answer Center in Henderson.

Strange and Matt Smyzer, executive director of the Baptist Fellowship Center in Louisville, spoke to messengers and guests attending a breakout session during the recent annual meeting of the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

The Answer Center opened four years ago in a house beside Immanuel Baptist Temple in Henderson, Strange said.

"We called the center The Answer Center because we believe Jesus Christ is the answer for the world today."

A ministry of Green Valley Baptist Association, The Answer Center provides clothing, household items and literacy tutoring. Its "Kid's Korner" seasonal ministry distributes donations for Easter, back-to-school and Christmas gifts to needy children and families.

Last year, The Answer Center distributed nearly 1,150 Bibles, and at least seven people made professions of faith.

Often, a brief exit interview opens the door for clients to talk about spiritual matters, Strange said. Interviewers always ask to pray with the client. Rarely does someone say "no."

"They reveal their heart to you," she said. "Many times we get the feeling that they come in just to get to the interview."

When opportunities arise, Strange said, volunteers ask the clients a question that opens the door to sharing the gospel.

The exit interviews also are used to compile prayer request lists for volunteers.

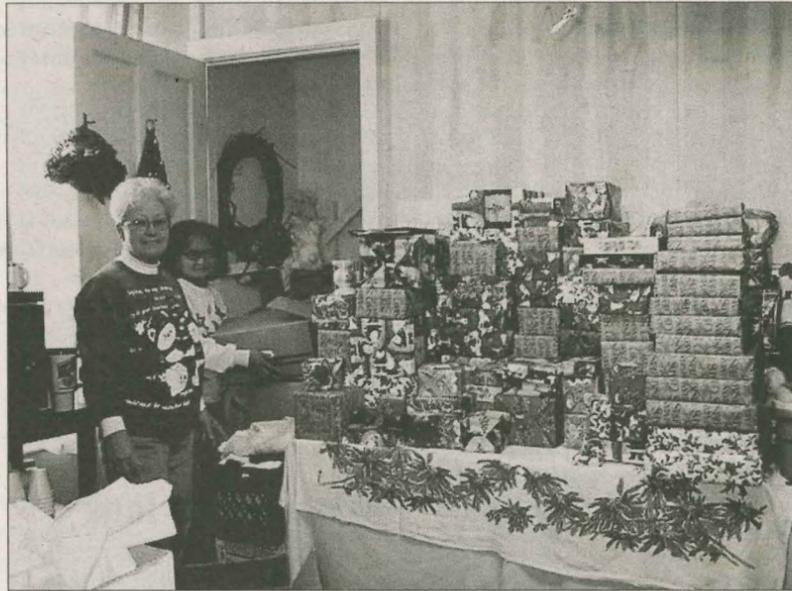
### Tips for new ministries

Strange offered several suggestions to churches looking to start a needs-meeting ministry:

■ Start with prayer. Look for leaders who are called by God and will be committed.

■ Focus on Jesus. To keep the evangelical mission the primary focus, Answer Center officials offer leadership roles only to people who are active members in a Green Valley Association church. But, she added, "There are many denominations helping us."

■ Take inventory. The Answer Center uses surveys through



**FOR MOM & DAD** Sharon Dickerson and Tena Fulkerson coordinate the Kid's Korner Ministry at the Answer Center in Henderson. In addition to offering gifts and Christian materials to children, the ministry lets kids pick out gifts for their parents. All items are donated and available at no cost to the families. Kid's Korner provides similar assistance prior to Easter and back-to-school time. (Photo courtesy of The Answer Center)

churches, newspapers, welfare offices and other venues to discover what people in their community need, Strange said.

■ Keep it simple. "Proceed with one lead ministry," she said. Don't overwhelm volunteers.

■ Flexibility is key. "Remember a ministry is not a static thing. It changes from day to day and year to year," Strange said. As an example, Strange noted that when the center first opened, it had a free medical clinic. That service has been suspended but new ones are in place.

■ Be professional. "I'm a believer in treating God's business as real business," Strange said. Background checks on volunteers, good record keeping and accounting practices, and adequate insurance coverage are acts of stewardship, she said.

■ Use other volunteers. "World Changers, Men on Mission, Kentucky Changers. We wouldn't have made it in this building without those groups."

■ Ask the authorities. Consult other groups, such as the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board for resources to operate a social ministry.

### Understanding the audience

Matt Smyzer, executive director of the Baptist Fellowship Center, focused his remarks on the attitude believers should have when pursuing non-Christians and the unchurched. "If you're going to be successful, you have to understand the streets," he said.

"We are working with people whose spirits have been broken and they are giving into every whim and vice."

The Baptist Fellowship Center is 90 years old, and, Smyzer said, "was the nation's model for cooperative ministry between African Americans and Anglo Americans—especially at a time when racial tensions were very high."

Located in a Louisville neighborhood riddled with poverty, crime, domestic violence and other problems, the Baptist Fellowship

Center provides a day care center, after-school programs, tutoring, a food pantry, rent and utility assistance, and many other services.

The center is supported by the Central District Baptist Association, Long Run Baptist Association, the Kentucky Baptist Convention and many individual churches.

Children and teenagers must meet specific responsibilities each time they come to participate in an activity, Smyzer said.

Homework is a priority. Children who might not have homework on a certain day will spend time working on a subject that they find difficult, he said.

The children also write and present essays that reflect godly principles, he added.

### Replacing issues with programs?

A computer lab, recreation facility and many regular activities make the center a haven. The center closes at 7 p.m.

"There are always those who don't want to go home to the pain," Smyzer said, adding that the center's van drivers report consistently of children requesting, "Let me be last today."

Even with the scope and history of the Baptist Fellowship Center, Smyzer said he sometimes becomes discouraged, wondering if the program is making a lasting difference.

He told session participants about an exchange he had on the sidewalk with a 17-year-old boy who asked Smyzer about the services available at the center.

"You're trying to replace my issues with programs," the boy said. "You've got to make me deal with my issues."

Smyzer said the boy's response was humbling.

Ministry must involve investing time and energy to build relationships with hurting people, he added.

"We show folks that God cares about you no matter your condition," Smyzer said. "That's the bottom line, letting them know you care."

## Churches urged to update expense policies for 2005

Louisville—How will your church reimburse staff members' business travel expenses for 2005?

Don Spencer, director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention annuity department, said the most effective option is an accountable reimbursement plan in which churches reimburse staff members for actual ministry-related expenses.

One of the major expenses typically incurred by ministers is the cost of travel for ministry-related activities.

"Effective for 2005, the IRS is increasing the mileage rate to be used in reimbursing business travel expense from 37.5 cents per mile to 40.5 cents per mile," Spencer noted. "This larger-than-usual increase is due to the recent significant increase in the cost of gas."

Spencer encourages churches to "reimburse business (ministry) travel expenses for their ministers and other employees using a valid accountable reimbursement plan using the 40.5 cents per mile rate in 2005."

"In the past, many churches used an expense allowance approach which resulted in taxable income," he added. "In recent years, most churches have moved to the accountable reimbursement approach."

For more information, contact Spencer at (502) 254-4732, toll-free in Kentucky at (888) 254-5703 or visit [www.kybaptist.org/annuity](http://www.kybaptist.org/annuity).

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

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## Christmas witness

"Since it is illegal to put a manger scene on the courthouse lawn or on the public school yard, why don't we put it on our lawn?" my wife, Dorothy, suggested two years ago. It was too late that year to begin, so last fall we bought material and went to work.

We built what we call "our Christmas card to our neighbors." A sheet of plywood cut in two and painted with the words, "God loves you and sent His Son," 1 John 4:10. In front of the "folded" card we placed a simple manger scene and floodlights. Behind it, at the top of the gable of our house, we hung a star.

We received a number of complimentary thank you's but no rotten eggs. We have been told there will be at least one more Christian greeting in our neighborhood this year.

I am not boasting about what we did, but suggesting to all our Christian friends: This is a way to share the gospel with our neighbors and may be a way of opening the door to larger opportunities to witness.

I hope this may be used as a means of witnessing during the Christmas season by many Christians.

Richard W. Luebbert  
Shelbyville

## We need the Light

The fruits of walking in darkness are negative—hopelessness, war, unhappiness and fear-hate. When we walk in darkness, we are out of sync with ourselves, our Creator and all humankind. We are arrogant, disconnected and divided.

Darkness blinds us to the possibilities that light offers—hope, peace, joy and love. The birth, life and death of Jesus were and continue to be the light that enables us to see and know God. Jesus, the Great Uniter, showed us how to be at peace with ourselves, with God and with all our brothers and sisters everywhere.

Jesus, the Light of the World,

walked in the light of peace. To walk in Jesus' steps requires us to do justice. Justice is the mother of peace. Where there is no justice, there is no peace. Greed, selfishness and lust for power are the chief causes of war among individuals and nations.

God created an interdependent world that requires nations and individuals to depend on God and each other. We cannot go it alone; we need the Light of the World and each other in order to achieve lasting peace. Jesus is the One who holds our lives and the planet together. That's good news!

Paul L. Whiteley Sr.  
Louisville

## Take a closer look

If recent elections were won on morals, Americans need to take a closer look.

Let's examine those politicians who touted morals as a reason to vote for them. Let's see how often they actually pray, attend church, employ the Ten Commandments in their personal lives and political work, etc. It's easy to claim morality—it's much more difficult to live it. "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he have faith, and have not works?" (James 2:14).

This brings me to voters. Many voters who were scandalized at the prospect of gay marriage are either sexually involved outside the bonds of marriage, living with someone, cheating on a spouse or divorced and remarried (often more than once). Where is the logic? Is sexual sin not sexual sin? "But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matthew 5:28).

Let's move on to what Americans enjoy as entertainment. Would we continue to listen to music or watch many of the TV shows and movies that are filled with profanity, nudity, explicit sexual acts and violence if we were truly concerned with morals? "Finally, brethren, whatso-

ever things are honest, whatsoever things are pure ... think on these things" (Philippians 3:8).

While many religious organizations claim God is proud of America for taking a moral stand, I feel it is much more likely He would refer to us as "a generation of vipers" (Matthew 23:33) or "whitewashed tombs" (Matthew 23:27). I strongly suspect right about now God might be feeling a strong urge to vomit! "So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth" (Revelation 3:16).

Brenda Boyd  
Hardinsburg

## 'My turn in preschool'

As a pastor, I took my turn in extended session last Sunday morning. The missionary speaker preached the sermon, and I took a turn at loving preschoolers for one hour.

Boy, did I learn a lot. I learned that the congregation should be released on time and not abuse the good help of extended session workers. I learned that 4-year-olds learn all they need to know in four minutes or less, then they are ready to move to the next event.

I learned that I was not stuck in the nursery as people often complain. I was raising spiritual champions. The church has a short window to plant the one truth that will influence every decision they make later in life, "God loves you." If the church is to shape the future of our culture, we must start with the children.

Finally, I learned that I was strengthening families. While I helped with the children, Mom and Dad were focused on loving God and each other. It is critical for young parents to sit in worship, undistracted, for at least one hour to renew their commitment to God, to each other and to their family. Parents leave church with a stronger resolve to make it through another week.

Raising spiritual champions and strengthening families was my pastoral ministry last Sunday morning.

Tom Curry  
Louisville

## Two mission leaders retire

During the past week, the Kentucky Baptist Convention Mission Board staff has celebrated retirement events for two fine servants of our Lord and of Kentucky Baptists—Larry Martin and Tony Hough. I say "celebrate" because these men have both contributed greatly to the cause of Christ and it was a blessing to take time to commend them as they make this important transition.

Larry Martin has served 10 years as leader for the missions growth team. He is an entrepreneur who can see possibilities in the lives of others and has a great eye for ministry opportunities.

He has been a catalyst for the development of ministries in Eastern Kentucky and has provided encouragement and coaching for many missionaries, including Lonnie and Belinda Riley in Lynch who recently were recognized as the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board's Mission Service Corps mis-

sionaries of the year. Larry also serves on the board of a reconciliation group that conducts international conferences on reconciliation.

Larry has a heart for revival and spiritual awakening and has coordinated regional prayer meetings in Kentucky for seven years. His vision for Mission Service Corps resulted in Eric Allen joining our staff as MSC consultant. The number of MSC missionaries in Kentucky has grown from 30 to 151 in three years. MSC Missionaries Jerrell White and Harrell Riley, who serve as Job Corps chaplains, have seen dramatic results as they have witnessed about 500 professions of faith in three years.

Larry also has been an encourager for Morris Norfleet, the former president of Morehead State University, and others like him who have a passion for economic development in Eastern Kentucky. The Mountain Missions Development Corporation, organized by Norfleet, has received a

federal grant for economic development in Eastern Kentucky.

Larry will continue with KBC as a part-time consultant to give leadership in some of the areas mentioned above, as well as with Kentucky Baptists Connect.

Tony Hough has served with KBC for 12 years. Tony has a passion for KBC ministries and for new work, and looks forward to a place of service where he can utilize his spiritual gifts and teaching skills.

During Tony's tenure, the Hispanic work has grown to 63 ministry groups. Currently 30 of these groups have a leader serving as pastor. A training institute has been established to train these eager new leaders and pastors. There are five Hispanic consultants serving areas in Kentucky.

In addition, there are 51 other language works with 20 leaders serving them as pastor. This is only a part of the exciting growth in ministries across Kentucky.

Please pray for Randy Jones, new missions growth team leader, as he builds on this great work.

Bill Mackey is executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention

## FAMILY

## Be aware of tax code changes for 2004 and beyond

By Jeremy White

In October 2004, during the heat of an election season, Congress passed two significant tax acts. The happy beneficiaries include all individual taxpayers due to lower tax rates, people with children, soldiers, small businesses and tax preparers.

Tax preparers? Yes, because tax simplification was not the result of these two bills that create more than 300 Internal Revenue Code amendments and more than 200 new provisions. All taxpayers will pay less tax, but will have a more difficult time trying to figure out how to pay less tax.

Here is a brief overview of the provisions that will affect most individuals:

- Extended the \$1,000 child tax credit through 2009 and increased the refundable portion of child tax credits.

- Simplified the definition of a child. (Only the government could boast of doing this! Previously, a child was defined five different ways under various provisions.)

- Excluded combat pay from income but allowed it to be included for earned income tax credit if it results in a higher credit.

- Expanded the lower tax brackets. The lowest 10 percent tax bracket applies to more income.

- Allows sales tax to be deductible if it is greater than the state income tax paid. If a taxpayer itemizes, he can deduct either the sales tax paid or the state income tax. This may be helpful to people who purchase vehicles during the year.

- Increased the standard mileage rate for business miles from 37.5 cents in 2004 to 40.5 cents in 2005.

- Increased the maximum amount to contribute to a Roth IRA or traditional IRA for 2005 to \$4,000 per person. If older than 50, a person can contribute \$4,500.

- Increased for 2005 the maximum contribution amount for 401(k) plans.

- Restricted the deduction for vehicles donated to charity beginning in 2005. (If you are going to donate a car to charity, do so in 2004.)

To be a good steward and render as little as possible unto Caesar, be aware of the new provisions affecting you and seek professional assistance during this tax season.

Jeremy White is a certified public accountant in Paducah. See his Web site at [www.consultcpa.com](http://www.consultcpa.com).



BAPTIST FORUM

FINANCIAL FORUM

BAPTIST FORUM

FINANCIAL FORUM

## Consider simplifying Christmas plans to focus on true message

**Q: Every year my husband and I eagerly look forward to several days off during the Christmas holidays with our children. It seems that we're always disappointed, even at odds with each other by the end of our vacation. Is this common for couples with teenagers?**

The experience of feeling disenchanting with holidays or vacations is quite common, especially in these days when the two-career marriage has become the norm.

### MARRIAGE

Several factors contribute. First, much of the holiday preparation such as food, gifts and even scheduling often is left until the last minute. Spouses are overwhelmed just trying to keep up with their jobs and homes, not to mention the additional demands that holidays bring. Second, holiday expectations often are exaggerated. When the rushing family feels the crushing weight of their crashing expectations, conflict often is the result.

Take some time and carefully decide what each of you would like out of the Christmas season this year. Would you like to simplify travel? Perhaps you would enjoy taking a year off from sending Christmas cards. Suppose you gave yourselves permission to say no to several holiday parties and opted for quiet evenings at home? Remember, if you don't make the decisions, others will be more than happy to make them for you.

The Bible tells the story of Simeon and his lifelong wait for the Messiah. Let me encourage you to simplify your season. May this be a time that you de-schedule and re-focus so that the Prince of Peace may bring His finest presence to your home this Christmas.—Scott Wigginton

**Q: As we plan Christmas activities for our family, should we take our children to see "The Polar Express"?**

"The Polar Express," based on the classic book by Chris Van Allsburg, tells the story of three children who take a mysterious train trip to the North Pole on Christmas Eve. The adventure opens their eyes to things they had hoped were true, but were having a hard time believing.

### PARENTING

Unless you have a problem with the story of Santa Claus, "The Polar Express" contains nothing objectionable or inappropriate for children. Children and adults alike will marvel at the animation and tap toes to the music. You will find the story tender and touching—full of the kind of magical imagery that characterizes childhood and the fantasy aspect of Christmas.

Although "The Polar Express" does not tell the story of Jesus' birth, the movie can create opportunities for parents to talk with children about God and about the true meaning of Christmas. Don't get symbolic and make the mistake of comparing Mr. C to Jesus or God. Simply look for statements and situations in the movie that remind of biblical truth. For example:

■ The conductor says, "Christmas may not be important to some people. ... But it is very important to most of us." Why is that so? Explore the statement with your child.

■ Billy, the lonely little boy from the poorer side of town, says, "Christmas doesn't work out for me, never has." However, even Billy finds a present with his name on it. Economic realities often limit the Santa side of Christmas, but Jesus is God's gift of love for everyone who believes.

■ The hero boy was having a hard time believing in Santa because he couldn't see him. For younger children, believing in Santa Claus might not be much different than believing in God. What does God want us to believe about Him? How do you learn to believe in Someone you cannot see?

(Polar Express preaching and teaching resources, prepared by Jim Burns and Max Lucado for pastors and parents are available at [www.ThePolarExpressDownloads.com](http://www.ThePolarExpressDownloads.com).)—David Garrard

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## Do Christmas memories include worship?

Pause for a moment and recall one of your favorite Christmas memories. Got it? Good.

Does your Christmas reflection involve a special gift you received from a loved one—or a heartfelt gift you gave someone? Perhaps your thoughts drift back to a festive family gathering or a cherished holiday tradition from your childhood. What about the delightful aroma of home-baked goodies or the familiar strains of a favorite Christmas carol?

Among the many Christmas memories joyfully gathered and carefully tucked away over the years, do your Christmas reflections include moments of awestruck worship of the Christ Child?

Whatever else Christmas has come to mean in today's society, the sincere worship of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords deserves the central focus of our Christmas celebrations.

Many of the memories of the first Christmas recorded in Scripture clearly revolve around worship. Consider the following examples:

**The heavenly host who appeared to the shepherds (Luke 2:13-14):** "And suddenly there appeared with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.'" Praising and declaring "glory to God" are pure acts of worship accompanying the angel of the Lord's announcement that "today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord."

**The shepherds who "came with haste" to see Baby Jesus (Luke 2:16, 20):** "And they came with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. ... And the shepherds went back, glorifying and praising God for all that they had heard and seen, just as had been told them." Once again, spontaneous worship expressed through glorifying and praising God was the immediate response once the shepherds caught a glimpse of the promised Messiah.

## Don't let Christmas become financial crisis

By Howard Dayton

**Gainesville, Ga. (BP)**—For the past month, it's been impossible to forget that Christmas is coming. Most homes are decorated with Christmas trees and festive lights. Children are captivated by the sights and sounds of all that is Christmas.

Until a couple of centuries ago, Christmas generally was a noncommercial religious holiday and gifts were exchanged on New Year's Day. In fact, most Christmas gifts typically were limited to feeding the poor or special gifts to pastors, teachers and missionaries.

It wasn't until the prosperity of the 1950s that expensive gifts, giving more than one gift per person, giving gifts to adults as well as children and a month-long shopping season became prevalent.

The way we observe Christmas these days is a far cry from the tranquil manger scene that welcomed Christ into the world 2,000 years ago.

Most Christians don't intentionally lose the significance of the Christmas season, but the excesses of gift giving and rushing about can drain Christians of their joy. This is especially true as they try to combine added obligations of the season with being gracious, sensitive, compassionate and caring—

and then attempt to have enough money left after Christmas to be able to buy groceries in January.

Americans steadily have increased holiday spending in the last 10 years, and families often spend hundreds of dollars more than they spent the previous year. The result is debt, stress and worry.

Christmas isn't the time to throw caution to the wind and allow a well-meaning generous spirit to dictate spending. Instead, it's the time to honor the One Whose birthday we're celebrating and be good financial stewards of all He has entrusted to us.

Exchanging meaningful, well-planned presents with friends and relatives can be an important part of Christmas, but we never should let ourselves feel pressured into buying gifts we can't afford under the guise of showing love for others.

Set a realistic budget and plan ahead. It's possible to have a Christmas focused on Christ and not a financial crisis.

Get together with your family and pray about the amount of money you should spend for Christmas. Establish a holiday spending budget that fits within your family's financial means and be committed to spend no more than the amount

**Wise men from the East (Matthew 2:11):** "And they came into the house and saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell down and worshiped Him; and opening their treasures they presented to Him gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh." Although the magi arrived long after the first Christmas night (perhaps up to two years later), their motivation was evident: "Where is He who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east, and have come to worship Him" (Matthew 2:2).

**The prophet Isaiah's pre-Christmas memory (Isaiah 9:6):** "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulders; and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." Sounds a lot like worship, doesn't it—even 700 years before the birth of Christ?

**King Herod (Matthew 2:8):** Speaking to the magi, Herod said, "Go and search diligently for the young Child; and when you have found Him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship Him also." Herod would be the last person we would expect to associate Christ's birth with worship. Obviously, Herod's words were simply a ploy in his attempt to murder Jesus. Yet even an evil king knew which words to say to sound sincere.

The point is that if the angels, shepherds, magi, Isaiah—and even King Herod—knew that worship was the appropriate response to the birth of the King, surely we also can make joyful, reverent worship of Jesus Christ the top priority in our annual Christmas celebrations. Otherwise, we risk burying the true message of Christmas beneath a glittery pile of lights, gift bags, bows and self-indulgence.

Among all the words we use to describe the Christmas experience—love, peace, hope, joy, wonder—is "worship" part of your Christmas vocabulary? Be as wise as the ancient magi—make it a personal priority this Christmas season to "bow down and worship" the eternal Prince of Peace.

budgeted. Then stick to it and keep track of all spending.

Mail all out-of-town gifts well in advance to avoid rush delivery charges. Do a family service project such as purchasing food or toys for needy families. Commit to give at least a tithe of the budgeted Christmas spending amount to charity causes and for the spread of the gospel.

Remember that the best gift parents can give children is their love and their time. Often after the holidays have passed, parents have to work overtime, taking time away from their children, just to pay for accumulated Christmas debt. Ask grandparents for practical gifts for the children instead of more toys. These could include money for ballet lessons, athletic uniforms, music lessons or tutoring.

Stamp out Christmas credit, because as bad as commercialized Christmas is, commercialized Christmas on credit is even worse.

As this Christmas season draws near, remember that Christmas gift purchases and gift giving are something totally under your control.

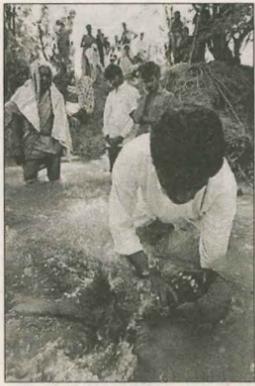
You can choose to buy or not buy, to go into debt or not. There's nothing wrong with giving gifts at Christmas. Just be careful not to divert your attention from Christ to material possessions.

Howard Dayton is CEO of Crown Financial Ministries

### STRAIGHT FROM THE EDITOR



Trennis Henderson



### Frequently asked questions

#### What is the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering?

Baptist churches collect this offering for the sole purpose of supporting international missions. Every penny of the offering goes to support the International Mission Board's overseas budget, thus supporting our missionaries.

#### What is the goal of this year's offering?

The 2004 offering goal is \$150 million. Meeting this goal will sustain the new missionaries Southern Baptists sent when they exceeded 2003's goal of \$133 million. It also will send new missionaries qualified and preparing now to go.

#### What is the International Missions Emphasis?

This is simply an umbrella term for all events and efforts that lead up to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. The traditional Christmas-season emphasis includes the Week of Prayer for International Missions and the International Mission Study.

#### What parts of the world are being spotlighted this year in the International Missions Emphasis?

This year the International Mission Board began a focus on South Asia where nearly 1.4 billion people need to know the Lord. This area includes India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Maldives.

#### What materials can I order for my congregation?

Free videos, brochures and magazines can be ordered on the Web at <http://resources.imb.org>.

## Rebekah Naylor has 30-year impact on India for Christ

Continued from page 1

She arrived at Bangalore Baptist Hospital when it had been open for just six months. The building sat then on a bare, 15-acre site outside the city. Anxious though she was, the Indian staff and the 12 patients present welcomed the American warmly.

"The foreign doctors were supposed to know something more than others, so they came hoping that they would find excellent care," she says. "They did find excellent care, but they also found people who really cared about them."

As years passed, the city grew out to surround the hospital compound and the hospital also grew, from 80 beds to 160. The hospital began to help educate doctors and train Indians to become X-ray and lab technicians.

Today the hospital delivers 1,500 babies a year (average of about four a day), treats more than 100,000 patients a year and impacts five times that many for the gospel.

Naylor served in several key roles at the hospital, including administrator, coming to be accepted more as family than foreign staffer. She also became honorary "auntie" to hundreds of Indian young people and children.

From its inception, the hospital maintained pastoral ministry and outreach. "Its reason to exist was to tell people about Jesus Christ," Naylor says.

#### Many churches

Today, Indian Baptists point to a map of Bangalore that is dotted with Baptist churches, most the result of the hospital's outreach. When workers went to one community a couple of miles from the hospital years ago, there were no Christians and no churches. Within a year there were 20 baptized believers. Today, Trinity Baptist Church is a thriving congregation that has started 18 other churches and is working in many other communities to start more.

When a man died at Baptist Hospital some years ago, the staff presented the man's wife and family

a Bible. Though they grieved, they began reading this strange book they never had seen before.

It was years later when the hospital staff learned the family had turned to Christ and that all the children had become ministers.

Naylor has a treasury of such stories.

One family she ministered to was that of Mutes Khan, a Muslim social worker and community leader. Naylor got to know the Khan family when his first wife developed breast cancer. After his wife died and he remarried, Naylor delivered his new son.

As Baptist Hospital was looking to extend its medical care to villages outside Bangalore, Khan was seeking someone to take over a small medical clinic he had developed. Because he had come to know and trust the hospital through Naylor, he donated the clinic to the hospital in 2003.

Although Khan remains Muslim, he has heard the gospel from Naylor and works to maintain good relations between the two faiths. That's important in India, where militant Hindus, Indian Muslims and Christians have often clashed in recent years.

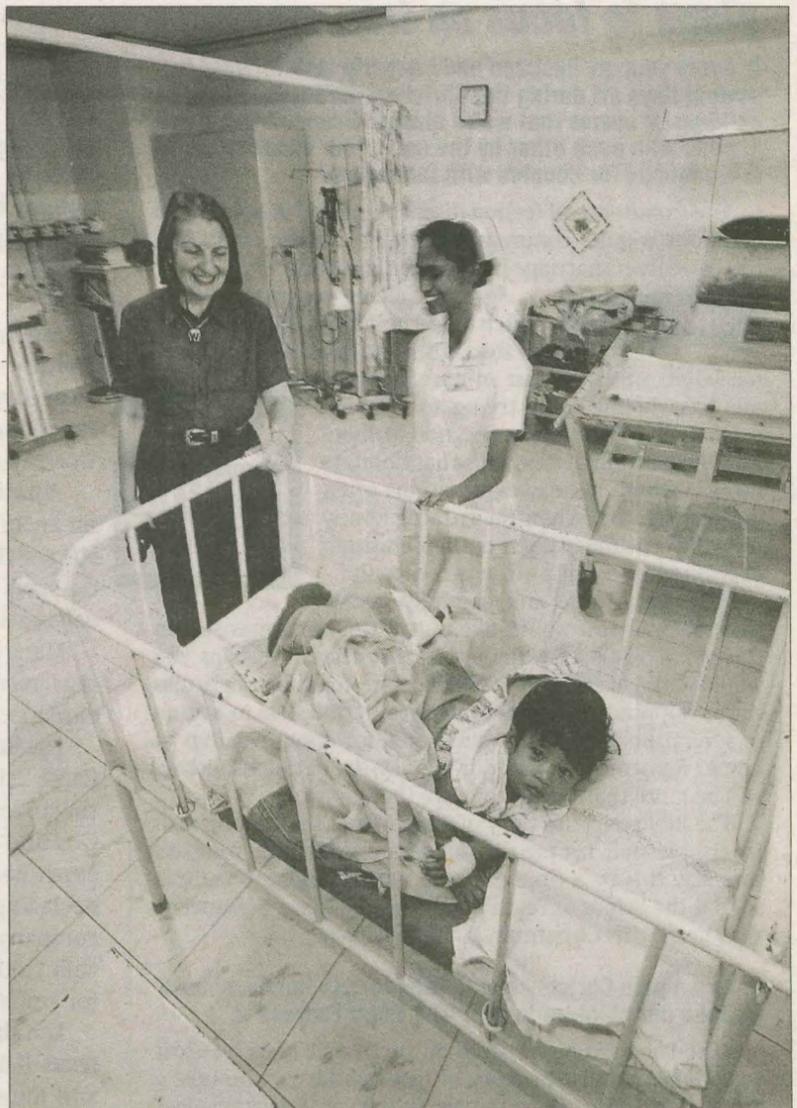
#### A new vision

Despite a career most missionaries and physicians would envy, in recent years Naylor has realized that even the many churches started through the hospital's ministry will never be enough to reach all of India.

In Karnataka state alone, 52 million people represent 300 language/cultural groups. Missionaries have learned that when a group begins to respond to the gospel and start new churches, the growth stays within the group and only rarely crosses into another.

To reach the lost people in this one state, Christians must deliver the gospel in 300 languages and in 33,000 villages, towns and cities linked by few roads.

"I think this gives you just a small picture of one part of India as to how difficult it is and challeng-



**DOCTOR NAYLOR** In 30 years, Bangalore Baptist Hospital has grown from 80 beds to 160. Each year, the hospital delivers 1,500 babies, treats more than 100,000 patients and touches five times that many for the gospel. The hospital, however, has steadfastly kept its focus on its primary mission: telling people about Jesus Christ. (IMB photo by Mike Creswell)

ing it is to access all these different communities and people groups and languages and to communicate effectively," Naylor says.

Beyond the people group divisions, she says, India's social castes create still more barriers. "It is difficult for a person of one caste to reach into another, but I firmly believe that this can happen," she says.

Her experience has made Naylor into a cheerleader for the whole nation and its peoples.

"When we think of all of India,

our vision is that we would like to see at least 1,000 workers come into India," she says.

Southern Baptist workers have identified 50 mega cities (with populations over 1 million) and 1,100 unreached people groups in South Asia, most in India.

"In order to engage them with the gospel, I think it's evident that many, many, many workers are needed," she pleads.

India's millions are open to the gospel, Naylor insists, and they constitute an open door.

## India's recent election results has implications for Christians

By Erich Bridges

SBC International Mission Board

Delhi, India—Pride goeth before a fall.

India's ruling Hindu nationalists tasted the bitter truth of Solomon's warning earlier this year.

Popular, confident and riding a wave of economic expansion, then-Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee called early parliamentary elections. He fully expected the nationalist alliance dominated by his Bharatiya Janata Party to win.

He was wrong.

The nation's voters, though overwhelmingly Hindu, soundly defeated the BJP alliance. The secular-minded Congress Party swept back into power, led by Sonia Gandhi (widow of the late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, assassinated in 1991).

Why the stunning election result—and why should Christians care?

Political analysts say the main reason for Congress' victory was the anger millions of rural poor and low-caste Hindus took to the polling stations.

They rebelled against the whole idea of "India Shining"—the BJP slogan for the nation's rapid economic progress—while they see little except poverty and corruption at the local level.

Now the pressure is on Congress Party leaders to help deliver prosperity to the villages. If they don't, they'll be the ones turned out next time. India's Muslims and Christians, however, hope to be major beneficiaries of the vote.

"Justice has shined over the peoples in India," an elated Christian leader said after the defeat of the Hindu coalition. "Christians, Muslims and the poor have suffered (under BJP rule). We lost lives,

property, the right to worship and to proclaim the gospel. Now is the time to praise our Savior and proclaim the good news."

#### Fighting "India is for Hindus"

Both minorities have endured persecution by Hindu militants who believe "India is for Hindus." Thousands of Muslims have died in anti-Islamic riots. Christians in several states have been vilified, attacked—and in some cases, killed—in dozens of incidents over the last decade.

India's 130 million-plus Muslims remain by far the biggest and most despised "enemy" for Hindu extremists. But Christians, at less than 3 percent of the population, present an easier target. And their evangelistic success—particularly among responsive low-caste Hindus, Dalits ("untouchables") and

tribal peoples—infuriates radicals. Some Hindu groups carry out regular campaigns to "reconvert" new Christians by force.

National BJP officials consistently downplayed or denied the involvement of radical Hindus in the persecution of Christians and Muslims. That may well have contributed to their election loss.

Christian persecution "will continue and perhaps increase" in states where Hindu fundamentalists still rule, cautioned Joseph D'Souza, president of the All India Christian Council.

"But at the national level, we expect change," he said. "We expect the freedom to exercise all our spiritual and social rights."

A proposed national "anti-conversion" law aimed at stopping Christian evangelism is now "out of the question," D'Souza added.

## Byrdwell calls herself product of Kentucky Baptists' best

By Dannah Prather  
Partnerships Editor

Louisville—Anna Mary Byrdwell has been described as faithful, enthusiastic, a cheerleader for missions and a super encourager.

But the Grayson County native, who's retiring after 37 years of service through Kentucky Woman's Missionary Union, considers herself simply a product of the very best of Kentucky Baptist life.

"My parents and teachers who have gone before me are responsible," Byrdwell said.

Missions education—that broad and vital discipline that keeps the lifeblood of support flowing to the Great Commission—has been the focus of Byrdwell's life through WMU.

She has taught children what missionaries do and why. She has encouraged adults to hands-on ministry and greater support of worldwide Baptist efforts.

Byrdwell said it began with the "rich foundation" of Christian service demonstrated by her grandparents and parents. She remembers the "little pot" in her grandmother's china cabinet that held tithes from the sale of butter and eggs.

Her father was a deacon, her mother a Sunday school teacher at Little Clifty Baptist Church near Leitchfield. Like many Kentucky Baptist children of the day, Byrdwell learned about missions in a Sunbeam Band club that her mother

started. A 1949 trip to then-Campbellsville College made an impression on the adolescent Anna Mary Hack. "It was my first G.A. House Party," Byrdwell said—an event that a few decades later might be described as a lock-in.

Every summer was spent at G.A. camp, and by 1957, Byrdwell was a counselor herself.

### Experiencing God's call

After graduating from Campbellsville College, Byrdwell taught chorus and band in LaRue County public schools.

At 23, she said she knew God was calling her to "a full-time church-related vocation." Byrdwell said she told God she was willing to be a missionary, but discovered, "You don't call yourself to God." He had other plans.

She and her late brother, John Albert Hack, attended Southern Baptist Theological Seminary together. He later worked for the then-Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

Byrdwell graduated from seminary in 1964 and went to work at Campbellsville Baptist Church as director of the elementary school department.

In 1967, she joined WMU leadership as state director of Sunbeam Band. Through the years, she wove herself into the very fabric of WMU, serving as state director of Acteens and Baptist Young Women, then as

consultant to both Baptist Young Women and Baptist Women. Her current title is general consultant.

Although her responsibilities and titles changed through the years, Byrdwell's philosophy of Christian service remained the same.

"Jesus came to reach out to other people, to give His love to other people," she said. "WMU is not an end to itself, it exists to channel our energies into missions."

Kentucky WMU President Cathy Chinn said she met Byrdwell in the 1970s, when Chinn first became a Kentucky Baptist.

"She's the most enthusiastic person I've ever known," Chinn said. Coming to Baptist life as a young woman, Chinn said Byrdwell became a mentor, encouraging her to take advantage of training opportunities through WMU.

As Chinn "got into the meat of Baptist life," she said her faith became stronger. "Anna Mary is responsible for a lot of my growth."

### Testimonies of influence

Kentucky WMU Executive Director Joy Bolton said many women have had experiences similar to Chinn's. "Countless people across this state share a WMU testimony that starts out, 'I got into this because of Anna Mary Byrdwell. She saw something in me and encouraged me to get involved.'"

As WMU director of Hurstbourne

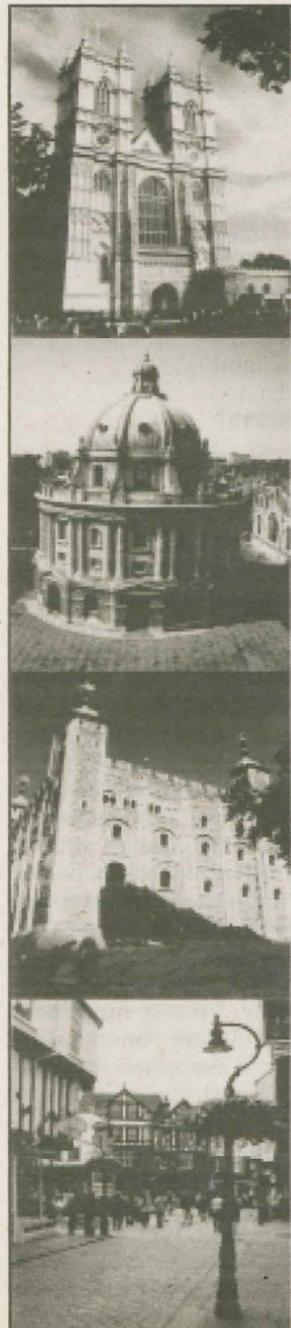


Baptist Church in Louisville, Byrdwell will stay connected to the ministry she loves. Even in retirement, she is receiving a new title: promotions specialist. She will travel the state on a limited basis, speaking on behalf of missions and WMU.

Whether it is telling children about Lottie Moon and Annie Armstrong, equipping new leaders or sharing the gospel, Byrdwell said she derives great joy from Christian service.

"The excitement of seeing the expression upon the face of someone when you have just met their most-evident need is a greater reward than anything else you can imagine," Byrdwell said. "That is when Jesus is smiling back at you."

**LOOKING AHEAD** Anna Mary Byrdwell, who's retiring this month after 37 years with Kentucky WMU, says her outlook has never changed. "WMU is not an end to itself. It exists to channel our energies into missions. (Photo by Dannah Prather)



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- Olney, where John Newton, the author of Amazing Grace, lived and worked.
- Kettering and Fuller Baptist Church where the Baptist Missionary Society was formed.
- Moulton, where William Carey had his first pastorate and his vision that showed him he must take the gospel to the whole world.
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Billy Graham, Founder, Billy Graham Evangelistic Association

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## Scientists offer theories about Bethlehem's star

**Kidger argues that what the Magi observed was a series of astrological portents, each of which has been individually suggested as the star.**

*Continued from page 1*

"Whatever the Star of Bethlehem was, it was not an extraordinarily spectacular object."

King Herod hadn't seen the sign that drew the Magi to Judea. Even the meticulous astronomical observations of the Chinese show nothing truly spectacular in the years around Jesus' probable birth date.

In fact, some astronomers believe the "star" might not have been visible at all.

Michael Molnar proposes that the heavenly sign was an eclipse of the planet Jupiter that took place in the constellation Aries, among other regal portents, on April 17 of the year 6 B.C.

That morning, just before dawn, Jupiter, a planet associated with kings, emerged from behind the sun to rise in the east, appearing as a morning star. Later that day, the moon moved in front of—or occulted—Jupiter.

While such events can be dramatic, this one was invisible, lost in the glare of the noonday sun. Even so, the Magi would have predicted it, argues Molnar, a retired Rutgers University astronomer who lives in Warren, N.J.

"It was something very subtle, only something an astrologer would have seen as important," he said.

The occultation happened in Aries, which ancient astrologers thought ruled the fate of several Near East kingdoms—including Judea, which was struggling under the yoke of Roman rule. Hence, Molnar concludes, the wise men would have read the birth of a new Jewish ruler, perhaps even the long-prophesied Messiah, in this configuration of heavenly bodies.

### Series of astrological events?

Kidger, author of "The Star of Bethlehem: An Astronomer's View," disagrees.

Occultations aren't rare and so wouldn't have excited seasoned skywatchers, he said. He noted that the moon occulted various planets almost 200 times between 20 B.C. and 1 B.C.

Kidger argues that what the Magi observed was a series of astrological portents, each of which has been individually suggested as the star.

Together, they led up to a not particularly brilliant, but long-lived nova a distant, exploding star—recorded by the Chinese in 5 B.C.

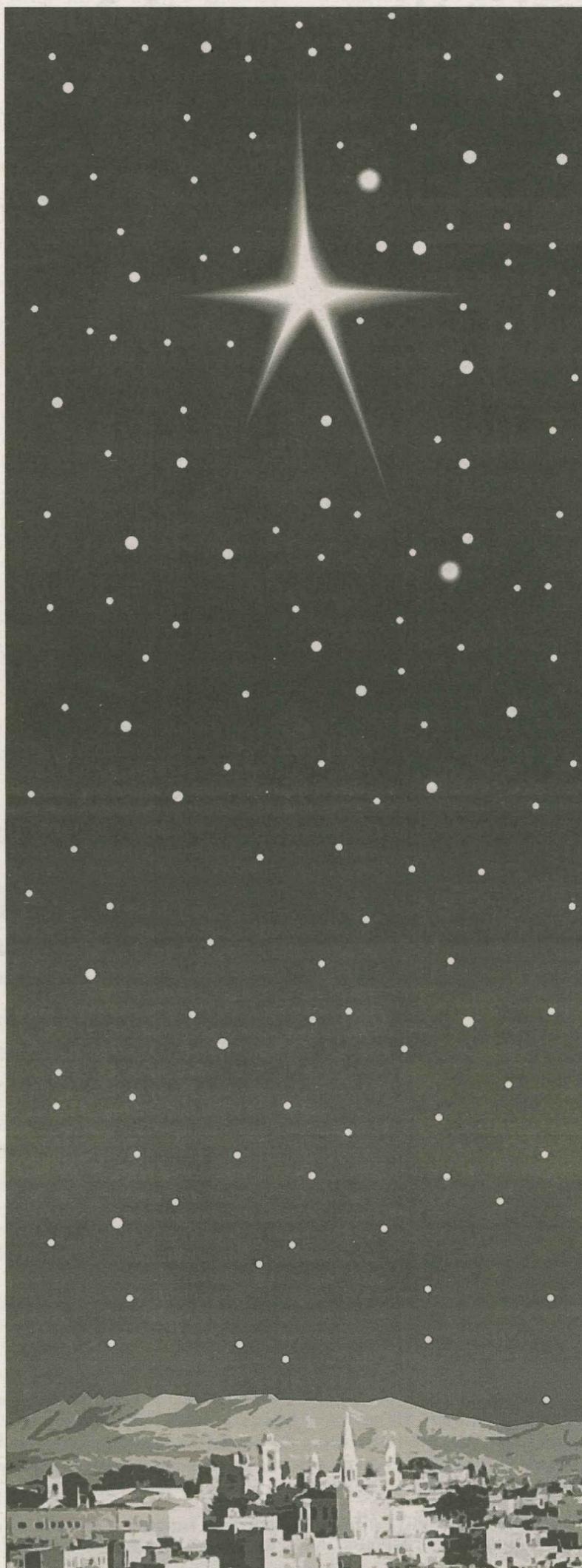
Three times in a few months during 7 B.C., Jupiter and Saturn came close together, or were in conjunction, in Pisces. In 6 B.C., Kidger notes, there was both a massing of planets in Leo and Molnar's occultation in Aries.

To the Magi, "any single event wouldn't have been special enough," Kidger said.

Instead, "They saw something that made them sit up and pay attention and cast their horoscopes and wait."

As sign followed sign, culminating in the appearance of a "new star," they struck out for Jerusalem, site of Herod's court.

According to Chinese records,



the 5 B.C. nova appeared low in the eastern sky in the constellation Aquila and lasted 70 days.

If the Magi arrived in Jerusalem two months after they set out, Kidger said, the new position of the Earth would have made the nova appear to hover in the south over Bethlehem—where Herod directed them.

Molnar begs to differ.

Tying a rational explanation of the star to pagan superstitions can make scientists uneasy, so they often start by searching for a unique astronomical event and then attempt to tie it into the astrology of the time—as Kidger has done, Molnar said.

But, he argues, Hellenistic astrol-

ogy was the high science of its day and surely the lens through which the Magi would have viewed the world.

Astrologers' associations of Pisces or Leo with Judea date to the 15th century or even later—long after the time of Jesus, Molnar said.

Likewise, he sees no reason for ancient astrologers to associate a nova, even one lasting 70 days, with Jesus' birth, since new stars were ignored in Hellenistic astrology.

But in the case of the 6 B.C. occultation of Jupiter, he argues, there were many impressive portents in play.

Not only was Jupiter occulted by the moon, which greatly increased its power and influence, but the planet had just emerged from behind the sun and was stationed in the east—two more factors pointing to a regal birth.

In addition, the sun, moon, Jupiter and Saturn all were massed in Aries, characteristics of the horoscope of a "divine and immortal person," as one prominent Roman astrologer wrote.

Molnar's theory uses the astrology of the day to explain several aspects of the star story that have defied logic for years.

When they arrived in Jerusalem seeking a future Jewish king, the wise men said they had "seen his star in the east." Yet they were traveling westward to reach Judea, probably from Persia or Babylon. And when they left Jerusalem, the star "went before them" on their southward journey, then "stood over" Bethlehem.

"If you're going to take the Gospels literally, then you'd better go for the miracle explanation, because no star acts that way," said David Dearborn, an astronomer with California's Livermore National Laboratory and co-editor of *Archaeoastronomy: The Journal of Astronomy in Culture*.

### Optical illusion?

Molnar, however, said the wise men were using common Greek astrological jargon to describe Jupiter's movements.

In modern terms, what they noted "in the east" was Jupiter's re-emergence from behind the sun and its appearance as a morning star on April 17, the day it was occulted by the moon.

Then, on Aug. 23, the planet appeared to change its direction of movement across the sky because Earth overtook Jupiter as each traveled along its orbital path.

It's the same optical illusion a car or train rider experiences when an overtaken vehicle appears to stop, then move backward.

Astronomers call it retrograde motion today, but the Magi saw the planets "move before" the stars—travel in the same direction across the sky—as they made their way south to Bethlehem.

Finally, on Dec. 19, Jupiter seemed to stand still in the skies, or to "stand above," for a number of days before it changed directions once again.

Called stationing, this is what planets appear to do just as the Earth overtakes them.

## Campaign seeks to restore 'Merry Christmas' in stores

Continued from page 1

"Whose idea was it to remove 'Merry Christmas' from the stores? They certainly didn't ask me," said Zamorano, who attends an Assemblies of God church. "Personally, I think it's political correctness gone amok."

Since his first letter to Macy's officials late last year, Zamorano said he's received about 200 supportive e-mails.

Beyond the Web site, [www.save merrychristmas.org](http://www.save merrychristmas.org), there is no central office, no budget, no board of directors.

Zamorano hopes his boycott against Macy's and its parent company, Federated Department Stores (which also includes Bloomingdale's and Lazarus) will yield a single-digit percentage decrease in sales, enough to force Federated to take him seriously.

Other retailers soon might find themselves targets of the boycott, he said. So watch out, stores: Manuel Zamorano is coming to town. "Once a boycott starts, it takes on a life of its own," he said. "We're doing it one (store) at a time."

### Macy's: "Take a number"

For its part, Federated said that would be the ultimate Miracle on 34th Street. Federated spokeswoman Carol Sanger called the boycott "unfortunate." Last year, the company's 460 stores raked in \$5 billion in fourth-quarter sales. This year, officials expect the same or better.

"I think our sales will be quite fine, thank you," she said. "People are always boycotting. It's sort of like get in line and take a number."

Neither Macy's nor the National Retail Federation has any formal policy on "Merry Christmas," and both encourage clerks to be inclusive of all shoppers. "Retailers are not in the business of alienating their customers," said Ellen Tolley, a spokeswoman for the retailers' group.

While Zamorano may seem to be a lonely voice crying out in the bleak midwinter, he is not alone.

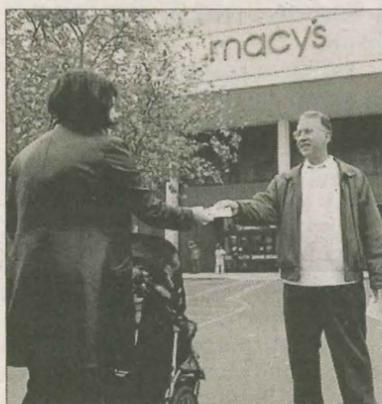
Robert Knight, director of the Culture and Family Institute at the conservative Concerned Women for America, said Macy's is symptomatic of a larger coordinated campaign to "single out Christmas for destruction."

"Happy Holidays' is starting to grate in many a Christian's ear as not so much a friendly greeting but as a way to avoid saying 'Merry Christmas,'" said Knight, who has joined the Macy's boycott.

Even some Jews—although not many—say generic phrases like "Season's Greetings" dilute the richness of America's diversity. David Elcott, the U.S. director of interfaith affairs for the American Jewish Committee, said "Happy Holidays" may be too neutral.

"Happy Holidays' doesn't excite me," Elcott said. "But I recognize and respect the sensitivities with which people say it."

Not everyone, however, is buying it. Bill Donohue, president of the



**MERRY CHRISTMAS** Manuel Zamorano passes out flyers urging shoppers in Citrus Heights, Calif., to boycott Macy's because he says the retailer no longer uses the phrase "Merry Christmas." (RNS photo by Hector Amezcua)

New York-based Catholic League, has battled "cultural fascists" for years to erect public nativity scenes. But targeting Macy's seems futile, he said.

"That wouldn't be my tactic, going after Macy's," he said. "Quite frankly, on a scale of one to 10, that's hardly going to be on my list of priorities."

While slogans like "Jesus Is the Reason for the Season" and "Put Christ Back in Christmas" are nothing new, scholars caution against seeing Christmas in America as a purely religious affair. In fact, often times it has been anything but. In the mid-1800s, Christmas more closely resembled Mardi Gras, with roving bands of drunken revelers.

"I don't know if it ever had an extremely strong religious component in America," said Karal Ann Marling, a University of Minnesota art historian whose book, "Merry Christmas!" chronicled the evolution of Christmas. It has always been "more secular than sacred," she said.

### America's "mixed motives"

In early America, religious celebrations of Christmas were shunned by many Puritan-minded Protestants, and Dec. 25 was a relatively quiet feast day for liturgical Catholics and Anglicans. It wasn't until about 1850 that trees and gifts entered the scene, and merchants really caught on by the 1880s, around the time Macy's unveiled its landmark storefront windows brimming with holiday goods.

Leigh Schmidt, a professor of religion at Princeton University, said there have always been "mixed motives" for celebrating Christmas, from families who celebrate its sacred roots to retailers mindful of their bottom line.

"They're all overlapping," he said. "The churches get more into it, the family customs become more involved, the stores start to get into it. It all goes together, it all overlaps."

Bah humbug, says Zamorano, who insists he will not budge.

"There is still time," he told Federated CEO Terry Lundgren in a recent letter, "to resolve our differences and make this a Merry Christmas for everyone."



2004 CHRISTMAS CAMPAIGN

# We Need Your Help!

With winter fast approaching, our thoughts begin to focus on the less fortunate in rural Appalachia, and what we can do for them during Christmas. Most of us are blessed with life's necessities, but there are thousands of people within a few hours drive that live in extreme poverty. We continue to discover communities with high free lunch percentages and extreme needs. This year we will be assisting over 12,000 children and their families.

Needs are great in new toy items for boys and girls; new coats and warm clothing; non-perishable food items and hygiene items (toothbrush, toothpaste, soap & shampoo). New items are requested because this is the only time many of these children receive new things all year.

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THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT AND FOR HELPING EXTEND THE HOPE.



**BROOKLYN TABERNACLE CHOIR** The choir, which has won five Grammys, is once again nominated in the Best Gospel Choir or Chorus Album category. (Photo courtesy of Brooklyn Tabernacle)

## Grammys adding new award to gospel music categories

**Los Angeles (RNS)**—The Grammy Awards introduced a seventh category to highlight gospel music as nominees were announced last week for the 47th annual Grammy Awards.

The new "Best Gospel Performance" category will honor solo, duo and group work in collaborative performances and include nominations of singles or tracks with vocals containing gospel lyrics.

The awards ceremony, to be broadcast live on CBS, will be held Feb. 13 in Los Angeles.

The first nominees are:

Shirley Caesar and Ann Nesby, "The Stone."

Ray Charles and Gladys Knight, "Heaven Help Us All."

Dr. John and Mavis Staples, "Lay My Burden Down."

Fred Hammond, "Celebrate (He Lives)."

Ben Harper and the Blind Boys of Alabama, "There Will Be a Light."

Other nominations in the traditional gospel categories include:

### Best rock gospel album:

"Take Me Away" by Sarah Kelly.

"Collide" by Skillet.

"Lose This Life" by Tait.

"Wire" by Third Day.

"Welcome to Diverse City" by tobyMac.

"Holy Hip Hop 'Taking the Gospel to the Streets'" by various artists.

### Best pop/contemporary gospel album:

"The Creed" by Avalon.

"All Things New" by Steven Curtis Chapman.

"Who We Are Instead" by Jars of Clay.

"Everyday People" by Nicole C. Mullen.

"Rising Son" by RainSong.

### Best Southern, country or bluegrass gospel album:

"Driven" by the Crabb Family.

"20th Century Gospel: From Hymns to Blackwood Brothers Tribute to Christian Country" by the Jordanares, Art Greenhaw and the Light Crust Doughboys and Nokie Edwards.

"Universal House of Prayer" by Buddy Miller.

"Worship & Faith" by Randy Travis.

"Amazing Grace 3: A Country Salute to Gospel" by various artists.

### Best traditional soul gospel album:

"The Live Experience" by the Rance Allen Group.

"There Will Be a Light" by Ben Harper and the Blind Boys of Alabama.

"The Water I Give" by Dottie Peoples.

"The Praise & Worship Songs" by Richard Smallwood.

"Still Here" by the Williams Brothers.

### Best contemporary soul gospel album:

"Somethin' 'bout Love" by Fred Hammond.

"Live From Another Level" by Israel and New Breed.

"He-Motions" by Bishop T.D. Jakes.

"Nothing Without You" by Smokie Norful.

"Out the Box" by Tonex and the Peculiar People.

### Best gospel choir or chorus album:

"Can't Nobody Do Me Like Jesus" by Shabach Praise Co.

"Live in New York" by New York Fellowship Mass Choir II.

"Live ... This Is Your House" by the Brooklyn Tabernacle Choir.

"Spirit & Truth" by New Birth Total Praise Choir.

"Unplugged ... The Way Church Used to Be" by New Generation Chorale.

# Stem-cell strategies

## Can scientists' new ideas solve ethical concerns?

By Kathi Wolfe  
Religion News Service

**Washington (RNS)**—A Stanford University biology professor and two Columbia University physicians told a presidential advisory council recently that new approaches could resolve the thorny ethical problems swirling around embryonic stem cell research.

Several members of the President's Council on Bioethics reacted with enthusiasm to the two reports, but some conservative religious groups remain skeptical.

Stanford professor William Hurlbut, a member of the advisory council, made one of the Dec. 3 proposals. He suggested an unproven scientific technique that would enable stem cell research to go forward without creating or destroying human embryos.

### Avoiding "political solution"

Hurlbut said he is convinced the scientific community must come up with such solutions to bridge the ethical divide holding up research that has the potential to cure diseases and save lives.

"A purely political solution," he said, "will leave our country bitterly divided, eroding the social support and sense of noble purpose that is essential for the public funding of biomedical science."

Donald Landry and Howard Zucker of Columbia University made the other proposal jointly to the council, a high-profile advisory board that doesn't make policy but influences the White House and Congress, which control federal funding of stem cell research.

Several members of the 18-member council—made up of scientists, lawyers, doctors, theologians and others—said the proposals show promise to bridge what has been

## Johnathan Edwards biographer wins Grawemeyer Award in Religion

**Louisville (RNS)**—A Notre Dame professor who wrote a definitive biography on 18th century colonial preacher Jonathan Edwards has won the prestigious 2005 Grawemeyer Award in Religion.

George Marsden was awarded the prestigious honor for his biography of the colonial preacher and theologian, who is considered to be one of the most important American theologians and orators.

"We need to use history for the guidance it offers, learning from great figures in the past—both in their brilliance and in their shortcomings," Marsden said in a written statement. "Otherwise we are stuck with the wisdom of the present."

Edwards is most famous for his sermon "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," but that sermon is often misunderstood and taken out of the context of Edwards' complex life and thought, said award coor-

dinator Susan Garrett, professor of New Testament at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary.

Marsden offers a much more rounded and nuanced picture of Edwards, Garrett said.

Marsden has served as the Francis A. McAnaney professor of history at Notre Dame University since 1992. He is an expert on the history and present state of fundamental-

ism in America and the culture of American university education. His 2003 biography of Edwards, titled "Jonathan Edwards: A Life," is one of more than a dozen books he has published.

The annual religion award includes a cash prize of \$200,000 and is given jointly by Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary and the University of Louisville.

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The annual religion award includes a cash prize of \$200,000 and is given jointly by Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary and the University of Louisville.

### Idea 1: Similar, but not embryos

Hurlbut wants to develop an entity that would produce cells that would act like embryonic stem cells, but which would not, he says, become a human embryo. Through a cloning technique called "altered nuclear transfer," the genetic structure (the genome) of a human egg would be altered, so that it would not, Hurlbut says, become a fully developed embryo.

This procedure would take out the gene that would allow a placenta to form. Without a placenta, this mass would not become an embryo, Hurlbut argues.

### Idea 2: "Brain-dead" cells

In "The Journal of Clinical Investigation," Landry and Zucker, Columbia medical professors, make a different argument.

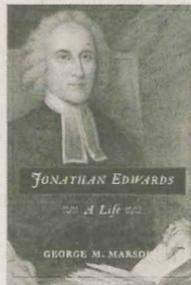
They say that "a reality of human embryonic life" is that many of the embryos die (become non-viable) within a few days of fertilization. Landry and Zucker argue that these embryos are "organismically dead" and should be viewed in the same way as people who are considered to be "brain dead."

Just as some organs, such as hearts, can be healthy (and used in organ transplants) after a person is considered "brain dead," Landry and Zucker say, extracted stem cells from embryos should be viewed in the same ethical framework.

Some religious ethicists aren't buying the argument, including Tadeusz Pacholczyk, director of education for the National Catholic Bioethics Center in Philadelphia.

"You can't say an embryo is dead just because its cells have stopped dividing," he said.

Everyone is anxious for ways to move stem cell research toward therapies, said Ben Mitchell, professor of bioethics and contemporary culture at Trinity International University in Deerfield, Ill. The proposals might in some way do this, he says, but it will take time for nuances to be explored.



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## Publishers offer ideas for book lovers on gift list

By Cecile Holmes  
Religion News Service

**Columbia, S.C.** (RNS)—Newly published religious titles offer gift-givers and book lovers the sort of choices one wishes for this time of year.

From scholarly titles to devotional readings, here are a few to consider for that reader on your gift list:

**"It's Better to Build Boys Than Mend Men"** by Truett Cathy, founder of Chick-fil-A restaurants.

Cathy, benefactor to more than 135 foster children, is well known as a positive role model for business associates and his natural and foster offspring.

"Children all around us are growing up without strong positive guidance from their parents who are busy, distracted, absent or choose to be buddies instead of parents," he writes.

In his new book, Cathy tells stories to illustrate principles of trust, discipline, reputation, generosity, common sense, peer pressure and family stability. His well-told tales will enrich readers' lives.

**"I Have a Dream: Martin Luther King Jr. and the Future of Multicultural America,"** edited by James Echols, president of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago.

This book proffers intriguing essays linked to the nation's future.

A book fit for serious thinkers and more casual readers, it features essays by seven leading

religious and theological thinkers from African-American or Hispanic communities.

The book assesses the ethics of King's vision, decries social ills linked to ethnic divisions and racism and explores King's long-term impact on U.S. culture.

At least one essayist takes an urgent tone, noting the diverse nation King envisioned has already come about. "The question is not, will America become multicultural? The question is rather, what will become of an America that is already multicultural?" asserts Justo L. Gonzalez, visiting professor of church history at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Ga.

**"Keeping Spiritual Balance As We Grow Older: More than 65 Creative Ways to Use Purpose, Prayer and the Power of the Spirit to Build a Meaningful Retirement"** by Molly and Bernie Srode.

Retirees, and even workers, seeking meaning beyond the workplace will find it in this new book.

Designed in a nondenominational way, the Srodes' book highlights how spirituality enables one to overcome the obstacles of aging, attain one's goals and find meaning in everyday life. The couple is a Catholic husband-and-wife team. They lecture and lead workshops across the country.

**"Prayers from Around the World and Across the Ages"** acknowledges the enduring power of prayer and

offers the means to enrich one's prayer life.

This book crosses cultures and traditions, including prayers from Thich Nhat Hahn, Dwight Moody, W.E.B. Du Bois, St. Francis of Assisi and others.

**"Wonderworker: The True Story of How St. Nicholas Became Santa Claus."** Perfect

for this time of the year, "Wonderworker" tells readers the true story of the man who overcame relative obscurity in a small Mediterranean city to become a cultural icon.

Authored by Monsignor Vincent Yzermans, the book describes how Nicholas soon made a name for himself by helping children in need, mothers in labor and sailors at sea.

In the mid-19th century, Nicholas was popularized in Clement Clark Moore's famous poem, "A Visit from St. Nicholas," which is also known as "The Night Before Christmas."

In a commercialized world frantic about the number of shopping days left till Christmas, this book focuses on the true meaning of the Christian holiday.

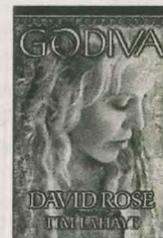
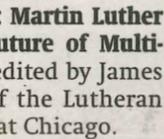
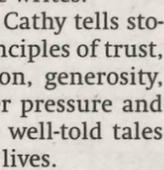
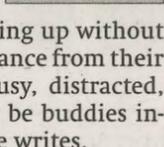
**"The Bramble Thicket,"** a children's book by teacher and toy maker Deborah Thomas.

Adults who love gifts with a teachable twist will enjoy giving this book, which tells the story of eight bears stranded in the forest.

As the bears strike out to find a new home, their kindness, persistence and teamwork pay off. The book helps teach reading, problem-solving, manners, honesty and other virtues.

**"Godiva,"** a religious novel written by David Rose with a foreword by Tim LaHaye, co-author of the "Left Behind" series.

In Rose's new book, a Scandinavian king and his Viking legions invade England in 1016. The invasion destroys the English town of Coventry, turning young Godiva's life into a nightmare. Ten years later, the young maiden has become Lady Godiva when she realizes she stands alone between Coventry and destruction.



## Enough leftovers to feed 200

### Oneida students, faculty and staff unite for a special Thanksgiving celebration

I trust you had a wonderful Thanksgiving. How special it is to have a house full of family and friends. Most moms were up early cooking and filling the house with delightful aromas.

For our faculty, staff and students who spent Thanksgiving here on campus, it was a little different. Many of our staff and their families elect to join our students here for a tasty feast in the school's dining room.

Therefore, those staff moms got the morning off, and their families did not get to enjoy the smell of cooking food. Our students could sleep in a little longer, actually several hours longer than usual. I have never quite understood that aspect of teenagers. When you want them to sleep, they are not interested and insist on staying up. On the other hand, when you want them awake, they insist on sleeping. Nearly every year, five or six sleepy-eyed boys will enter the dining room after everyone else has already been seated and begun to eat.

About 11:30 a.m., the crowd began to gather outside the dining room. No one can enter until they are given permission. From 11:30 until noon, the cooks were busy placing on the tables dozens of bowls of green beans, cranberry sauce, mashed potatoes and gravy, sweet potatoes, fresh-baked dinner rolls and enough large platters of turkey to feed more than 200 people. The cooks worked hard preparing the food. Then they faced the challenge of getting the food on the tables and keeping it hot until everyone was seated.

Since many of our staff traveled hundreds of miles when they moved to Oneida, it is very

difficult for them to travel back home to spend Thanksgiving with their families. Additionally, many of our students live too far from Oneida to make the journey home for the holidays, so we cordially invite staff and students' family members to join us here on Thanksgiving Day.

The crowd grew larger until finally I opened the dining room doors and invited everyone to enter. I realize that most of our students do not understand that the food they are about to enjoy is made possible by the donations of a much larger group of friends of this ministry. Before the food is blessed, I always remind our students and staff of the financial gifts from our friends and the blessings from God that make the delightful feast possible.

Our international students who were spending their first Thanksgiving in America seemed to be a little unsure of the importance of the day. Hopefully before they leave Oneida, they will come to appreciate the significance of this holiday.

After stuffing the last spoonful of food in our mouths, everyone was free to leave. Several staff pitched in to help clean up so the cooks could join their families. Each year we invite our staff to take four to a dozen students home with them for the evening. After all the leftovers have been gathered together, the staff helped themselves to enough food to feed the students their evening meal. It is a wonderful time for our students to get off campus and to be in the homes of our staff. There were enough leftovers to feed more than 200 staff and students.

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



W.F. Underwood

## Depend on the Lord and work hard

### Floyd Switch Church has positive building program

In his first two ministry assignments, Pastor Chris Blevins, a 1999 Clear Creek graduate, experienced anxiety attacks. But now, at Floyd Switch Baptist Church in Eubank, he declares, "I'm having the time of my life."

What made the difference? "I came to the place of dependence on the Lord; I decided I would watch Him work. It doesn't depend on me, but I do work hard," Chris stated.

Described Chris, member Linda Abbott said, "We have a very good pastor and preacher. He tells it like it is."

In August 2000, Chris became pastor of a group numbering about 30 in worship. They started growing. With classes in the kitchen, sanctuary and pastor's office, they considered mobile classrooms.

"One visitor came, saw the full sanctuary and left," Chris recalled. "We agreed on a new building that doubled our existing space. We thought it might be too big, but believed God was in the plan and He was adding people to the church. We agreed this was His will before we knew what the state would pay us for the old building."

The old building stood in the way of the Highway 27 expansion. Later, Floyd Switch secured the building back from the state at salvage value. The structure was removed in four sections, transported on flat bed trucks and reassembled for an African-American church in Pioneer, Tenn.

Floyd Switch now has 130 people in worship attendance and uses a 10,000-square-foot facility adequate for all ages. The church has added two part-time staff members to help coordinate youth ministry and outreach. A youth program involves 40-50 youth; Pioneer Clubs work with younger children. Four outreach teams rotate in weekly visitation. The church has a ministry to nursing homes. Once a month, a church team conducts services at the Pine Knot Federal Prison, where Chris is a volunteer chaplain.

"I was hesitant about a building program; I'd heard too many bad experiences," Chris said. "God wanted to see our faith, then things started happening. I've seen God's faithfulness, people saved and excitement from the people." Bill Whittaker is president of Clear Creek Baptist Bible College, Pineville, KY 40977; (606) 337-3196

### CLEAR CREEK CHRONICLE



Bill Whittaker

# Innovative missions education

*Church adds art gallery to teach its members about missions, missionaries*

By Bill Bangham  
SBC International Mission Board

Temple, Texas (BP)—Warm walls, wood floor and generous lighting set the stage for simply framed photographs spaced precisely about the room.

People circle the exhibit while a string ensemble and keyboard play beneath the murmur of quiet conversation.

It could be a Saturday night gallery opening in the art district of many American cities. But this isn't New York or San Francisco—it's Temple, Texas. And the gallery isn't in an art district, but in First Baptist Church.

Still, it is an opening in the truest sense, with all the scramble of a new enterprise featuring the work of an internationally known artist.

Called The Great Commission Gallery, this is a new ministry for First Baptist, and it's the first exhibit related to the church's Fellowship of Christian Artists.

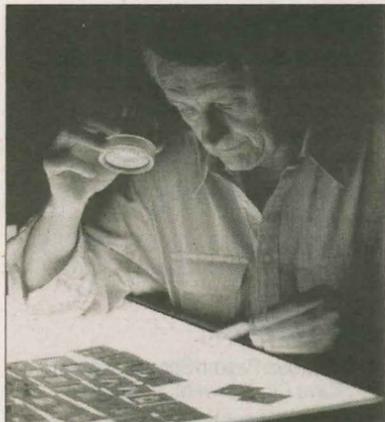
The Nov. 20 event focused on the photography of Don Rutledge, whose work documented Southern Baptist mission efforts across the globe for more than 25 years.

The idea for the gallery began last year while First Baptist member Linda Schuchmann was reading Rick Warren's book, "The Purpose-Driven Life." Schuchmann is a painter but had become deeply involved in other ministries around the church and it had been years since she applied paint to canvas.

"That book helped me to realize the gift of art God had given me had to be used," Schuchmann said. So she began painting again.

A discussion with Doug Young, First Baptist's minister of education and administration, led to setting up a small display of her recent painting along with several other pieces of Schuchmann's art in his office. When she returned to collect them, Schuchmann got affirmation from staff members. "Go for it," they said. "Find a way to share this work."

What began as a desire to share her work quickly evolved. Schuchmann began seeking a way to help other Christian artists share theirs. In March, the first meeting of Fel-



**DON RUTLEDGE** The award-winning photographer who has worked for both the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board and International Mission Board, was the first artist whose work was displayed at the gallery of First Baptist Church of Temple, Texas. (Photo courtesy of Don Rutledge)

lowship of Christian Artists was held at the church.

Today, 25-30 graphic designers, photographers, painters and other artists meet monthly. They chose as their mission statement: "Drawing all people to Christ."

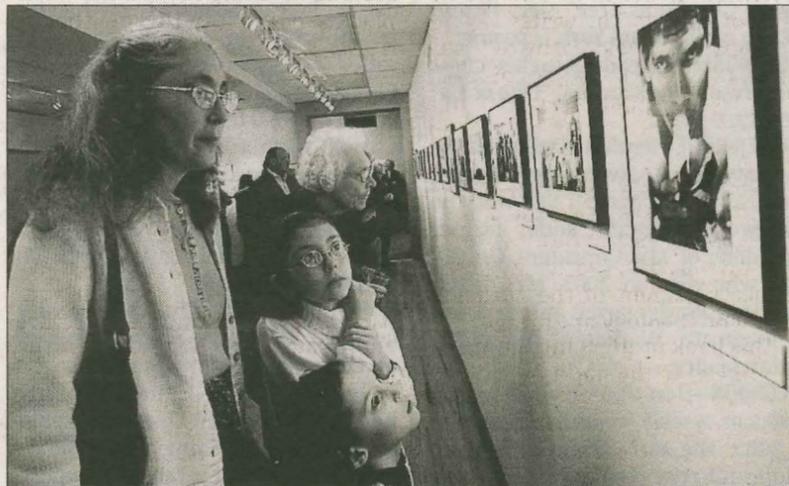
They usually meet in homes. At each meeting, an artist gives his or her testimony and makes a presentation of their work. Students from the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor and Temple College attend. "We have little children attend too," Schuchmann added. "We're encouraging them in their development as artists."

## Rutledge's work chosen

Early on, the fellowship began talking about holding an exhibit, and they quickly settled on Don Rutledge's photography. "We had to have Don," said Nan Dickson, a fine art photographer. "The work is beautiful, it's missions-related. It was a no-brainer."

"In a sense we had to have an exhibit before we had a gallery," Schuchmann said. "The gallery wasn't a gallery, it was just a room."

That room—the future gallery space—was created when renovations opened a new passage connecting the sanctuary with one



**ART FOR THE WORLD** Twenty-plus missions photos by Don Rutledge from around the world are featured in the first exhibit at The Great Commission Gallery at First Baptist Church in Temple, Texas. (BP photo by Bill Bangham)

of the educational buildings. The room appeared to be of little functional value. It was dark. The carpet was stained and dingy. The walls needed painting. With an open entrance at each end, it was essentially a large, open hallway.

When it was offered to the fellowship for exhibit space, "We were content to use it as is," Dickson said. But the church offered to paint it and replace the carpet. "We were thrilled," she said.

"The closer the exhibit came, the more church members became involved," she continued. When the old carpet was removed, the wood flooring was discovered. The church agreed to refinish it, install a new ceiling and add track lighting. Signage was donated. The result is a first-class gallery space.

On the same weekend that First Baptist kicked off its Lottie Moon Christmas Offering effort for international missions, the gallery also opened.

The exhibit drew people from the community, students from the local university and college, photographers and friends of Rutledge, and missionaries he photographed both overseas and in the United States during his 15 years with the International Mission Board and his 10 years with the Home Mission Board.

Rutledge and his wife, Lucy, were

scheduled to attend, but last-minute health issues prevented their attendance. But Rutledge's son, Mark, and daughter-in-law, Peggy, IMB missionaries to Haiti, were there.

The crowd wandered among the 20-plus prints, including images from Rutledge's missions coverage across the globe—South America, Asia, Africa, Europe, inner-city America, rural Alabama and Alaska—as well as several prints produced for John Howard Griffin's 1950s groundbreaking and controversial book on civil rights, "Black Like Me."

"It all came together," Dickson said, "the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering promotion, Mark and Peggy being stateside. It all came together."



**LOUISVILLE IMAGE** A volunteer at Louisville's Baptist Fellowship Center teaches children in this 1968 photo. (SBC North American Mission Board Photo by Don Rutledge)

**COMMUNION** Baptists prepare the Lord's Supper for an Easter service in Tbilisi, Georgia of the Soviet Union in this photo, taken in 1988. (SBC International Mission Board Photo by Don Rutledge)



**"HOME MISSIONS"** Rutledge took this 1967 photo while working for the SBC Home Mission Board. This Eskimo family lived inside the Arctic Circle in Alaska.

## PRAYER PARTNERS

Please pray for the following Kentucky Baptist missionaries and ministries:

**Mission Service Corps Missionary Arlene Miller of Hopkinsville.** Miller directs IMPACT, a ministry of Christian County Baptist Association that offers food, clothing and spiritual counseling to low-income families. IMPACT also conducts a weekly Bible study for women who have visited the ministry. Pray that God will direct them to and provide resources for a larger building that will allow them to offer additional ministries such as money management classes, job skill training and parenting classes.

**Wednesday night ministry at Premium Baptist Church of Whitesburg.** Under the leadership of Pastor Doc Frazier, the church led its association in baptisms this year. Many of the new believers who have been baptized became Christians as a result of the church's Wednesday night AWANA ministry for students led by Steve Boggs. Pray that God will provide additional transportation (bus or van) so the church can continue to reach out to children and families in the area. Pray also that the church will effectively assimilate and disciple these new believers who are merging with their church family.

If you would like Kentucky Baptists to join in praying for a ministry of your church or association, please send the information to Eric Allen at [Eric.Allen@kybaptist.org](mailto:Eric.Allen@kybaptist.org) or call (888) 263-5080.

## MOUNTAINS TO THE MISSISSIPPI

COMPILED BY STAFF

■ **ALBANY**—First Church recently called **Jeffery Brown** as pastor. **Michael Watts** has been serving as interim pastor.

■ **ALLEN**—First Church recently called **Larry Brashear** as associate pastor.

■ **BOONES CREEK**—New Hope Church recently called **Jeffrey Ryder** as pastor.

■ **COLD SPRING**—First Church's choir will present "Christmas Is Jesus" Dec. 18, 7 p.m., and Dec. 19, 6 p.m. **Larry Davis** is pastor.

■ **ELKHORN CITY**—Elkhorn City Church recently called **Shawn Bruce** as pastor.

■ **ELKTON**—The adult choirs of Elkton Church and Calvary Church will present "One of Us" Dec. 19, 6 p.m., at Elkton Church. **Jerry Tracy** is pastor of the host church and **Randy Davenport** is pastor of Calvary Church.

■ **FRANKFORT**—Buck Run Church's music ministry will present "The Living Christmas Tree" Dec. 17 and 19, 7 p.m. **Hershael York** is pastor.

■ **GLENDAL**—Gilead Church's choir will present the cantata, "One of Us" Dec. 19, 6 p.m.

■ **LIVERMORE**—**Beulah Kirtley Rone**, a member of Livermore Church, died Nov. 15 at age 91. She was the widow of Wendell Rone, former president of Mid-Continent University, who died in 2003. Mrs. Rone, a retired kindergarten teacher, was a longtime Woman's Missionary Union leader.

■ **LONDON**—Hart Church will begin an 8:30 a.m. weekly worship service Jan. 2, 2005. The early service will be in addition to the church's 11 a.m. worship service. **Jeff Jackson** is pastor.

■ **LOUISVILLE**—Bethany Church recently called **Greg Wills** as interim pastor. **John Spencer** was ordained as a deacon Nov. 21.

The choirs of Crescent Hill Church, Highland Church and St. Aloysius Catholic Church will present "Magnificat" Dec. 19, 3 p.m. at Crescent Hill Church.

**Nathan Platt** has joined the staff of Highview Church where he will supervise ministry interns. He previously was minister of music at Jeffersontown Church.

Melbourne Heights Church's sanctuary choir will present the cantata, "One Incredible Moment" Dec. 19, 6:30 p.m. **Bill Shoulta** is pastor.

Midlane Park Church will present the Christmas program "Gifts to the King" Dec. 19, 10:45 a.m. **Gary Bozarth** is pastor.

First Church of Middletown's sanctuary choir will present the cantata, "One Incredible Moment" Dec. 19, 6:30 p.m. **Jim Cobban** is pastor.

Ormsby Heights Church will host a children and youth musical Dec. 19, 6:30 p.m.

Rockford Lane Church's Celebration Choir will present "Journey to the Manger" Dec. 18, 7 p.m., and Dec. 19, 11 a.m. **Randal Pollock** is pastor.

■ **MAYFIELD**—Trace Creek Church ordained **Ronnie Stinson Jr.** to the gospel ministry Nov. 21. He recently was called as associate pastor of Trace Creek. **Ronnie Stinson Sr.** is pastor.

■ **OWENSBORO**—Buena Vista Church's sanctuary choir will present "One Incredible Moment" Dec. 19, 6 p.m. **Bruce Treon** is pastor.

Seven Hills Church ordained **John Lewis** to the gospel ministry Nov. 21. **Bob Coons** is pastor.

■ **PADUCAH**—First Church recently honored **Dale and Shirley Binford** on their 50th wedding anniversary.

Lone Oak First Church recently honored **James and Clara Champion** on their 50th wedding anniversary.

■ **PRINCETON**—**Sue Tackett**, whose husband, Tommy, is pastor of Northside Church, died Nov. 25. She was a retired nursing supervisor.

■ **SCOTTSVILLE**—Scottsville Church's music ministry will present "The Sounds of Christmas" Dec. 19, 6 p.m. **Dale Darley** is pastor.

■ **WILLIAMSBURG**—First Church's adult choir will present "For This He Came" Dec. 19, 11 a.m.

## IMB appoints 2 Kentucky couples

**Del City, Okla.**—Two couples with Kentucky ties were among 68 missionaries recently appointed by the Southern Baptist International Mission Board.

The appointment service was held Nov. 16 during the closing session of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma's annual meeting.

**John Putman**, former pastor of Oakland Avenue Baptist Church in Covington, and his wife, **Jennifer**, were appointed as community outreach workers to Eastern and Southern Africa.

**Brad and Cassie White**, natives of Paducah, were appointed to South America where he will serve as a strategy coordinator and she will be involved in community and home outreach.

The Putmans, former IMB Journey men to Liberia, currently are International Service Corps workers in South Africa. They both are graduates of the Baptist College of Florida in Graceville and attended Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville. They have two daughters,



John Putman



Jennifer Putman



Brad White



Cassie White

**Aubrey Hope and Mya Brianne.**

White has served since May 2003 as pastor of Iglesia Bautista Nuevo Mission in Crestwood. Mrs. White has served as family literacy coordinator for the Oldham County Board of Education. The Whites are graduates of Union University in Jackson, Tenn., and he also will graduate this month from Southern Seminary.



## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### December

**24-31** KBC Christmas Holidays, Baptist Building closed.

### January

**13-15** Shepherding the Shepherd Conference, Lexington.

**25** Pastors' Forum, Severns Valley Baptist Church, Elizabethtown.

**27-28** Quarterly Prayer Meeting for Spiritual Awakening, Maple Grove Baptist Church, Louisville.

**28-29** Preschool/Children's Ministry Meeting, Trinity Baptist Church, Lexington.

### February

**4-5** Deacon/Pastor/Spouse Retreat, Cave City Convention Center.

**4-5** Great Commission Prayer Conference, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville.

**15** Regional Annuity Conference, Baptist Building, Middletown.

**15** Regional Annuity Conference, Living Hope Baptist Church, Bowling Green.

**17** Regional Annuity Conference, Broadway Baptist Church, Lexington.

**17** Regional Annuity Conference, First Baptist Church, Hazard.

**19** All-State Youth Choir/Orchestra Auditions, Eastwood Baptist Church, Bowling Green.

**26** All-State Youth Choir/Orchestra Auditions, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville.

**26** Regional Keyboard Festival, First Baptist Church, Murray.

**26** Regional Keyboard Festival, Eastwood Baptist Church, Bowling Green.

**28-March 1** Kentucky Baptist Evangelism Conference, Valley View Baptist Church, Louisville.

For more information, call (888) 266-6477 or visit [www.kybaptist.org](http://www.kybaptist.org)

## Four Kentucky musicians honored

**Louisville**—The Kentucky Baptist Music Conference recently honored four musicians for outstanding ministry.

**Jack Gordon**, who recently retired after 25 years as minister of music for Second Baptist Church of Hopkinsville, and **Z.T. Lester**, minister of music at Buck Run Baptist Church in Frankfort for 33 years, received the Musician of Note award, which honors music ministers with longtime service to Kentucky Baptist churches.

**Donald Hustad**, a composer, ar-

ranger and senior professor of music at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, was awarded the Eugene Quinn Award for outstanding ministry. He has served as organist for the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and as editor of nine hymnals.

**Wayne Johnson**, a composer, arranger and music professor at Georgetown College for 39 years, died in 1999. He was honored posthumously with a Quinn award which was presented to his wife, **Carolyn**, and son, **Christopher**.

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**SEEKING:** Full-time youth/children's pastor. Please send resumé to: Search Committee, PO Box 239, LaCenter, KY 42056.

**SEEKING:** Part-time youth minister. Edgewood Baptist Church in Nicholasville, Ky., is seeking a person for Wednesday evenings and Sunday worship services. Call: (859) 885-6211, or send resumé to church at 717 South Main St., Nicholasville, KY 40356.

**SEEKING:** Minister of youth (full-time or 3/4-time) for active and growing rural Southern Baptist church meeting in all-new facilities and currently averaging 195 in worship. Church prefers a young man who is passionate in leading youth and able to assist the pastor in preaching and teaching. The candidate may be single or married, and may or may not be a college or seminary student. Salary, benefits and housing provided. Please send resumé to: Youth Search Committee, Pellville Baptist Church, PO Box 3, Pellville, KY 42364.

**SEEKING:** Part-time pastor for Pine Knot Southern Baptist Church. Send resumé to: Search Committee, PO Box 327, Pine Knot, KY 42635, or contact **Leland Ross**, (606) 376-9027.

**SEEKING:** Part-time youth minister (paid position; grades 6-12) for Mexico Baptist Church in rural western Kentucky. Also seeking a part-time music minister. Average Sunday school attendance: 135. Send resumé to MBC Youth Council, 175 Mexico Road, Marion, KY 42064, Attn: **Brent Highfil**, or call (270) 965-2149. [turnerchandler@hotmail.com](mailto:turnerchandler@hotmail.com).

**SEEKING:** Full-time minister of music and worship for a CBF-affiliated congregation in Southside, Va. Appreciation and understanding of and ability to lead in traditional and creative worship styles required. The minister will play the organ and direct the chancel choir and develop a comprehensive music and worship arts ministry. We are seeking a graduate from an accredited school of music. Direct inquiries or videotape of playing and conducting to: Music Search Committee, Franklin Baptist Church, 208 North High St., Franklin, VA 23851.

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## Appeals court upholds inmates' religious rights

Washington (BP)—The federal judiciary has delivered another victory for prisoners' religious rights.

The 11th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA) does not violate the First Amendment's ban on government establishment of religion.

The court became the fourth federal court of appeals to uphold RLUIPA. The Fourth, Seventh and Ninth circuits also have ruled in favor of the law's prisoners provision.

The Sixth Circuit is the only appeals court to strike down the law, and the Supreme Court has agreed to review that decision to determine RLUIPA's constitutionality. Oral arguments in the case, which is *Cutter v. Wilkinson*, have yet to be scheduled by the high court but will be heard in February or later.

RLUIPA, which was signed into law by President Clinton in 2000, bars government policies that substantially burden free exercise of religion by prisoners and, in land-use cases, by a person or institution. The government, however, can receive an exemption if it can demonstrate it has a compelling interest and is using the least restrictive means to advance that interest.

The 11th Circuit's Dec. 2 affirmation of RLUIPA came in *Benning v. Georgia*, which involves the state prison system's refusal of an inmate's requests to practice his Jewish faith. Ralph Benning asked prison officials to allow him to wear a yarmulke and eat only kosher food.

RLUIPA's prisoners provision passes the Lemon test, the three-part examination established by the Supreme Court in establishment clause cases, a three-judge panel ruled. It has a secular purpose, does not promote or inhibit religion, and does not excessively entangle the state with religion, the judges said.

## Art vs. idolatry

*Today's reformers accept visual images more than art-smashing forebears*

By Jeffrey MacDonald  
Religion News Service

Charlotte, N.C. (RNS)—As an evangelical preacher, the Bruce Marcey belongs to a sermon-centered spiritual tradition that took root nearly 500 years ago with the Bible, the pulpit and the elimination of all distractions—including art.

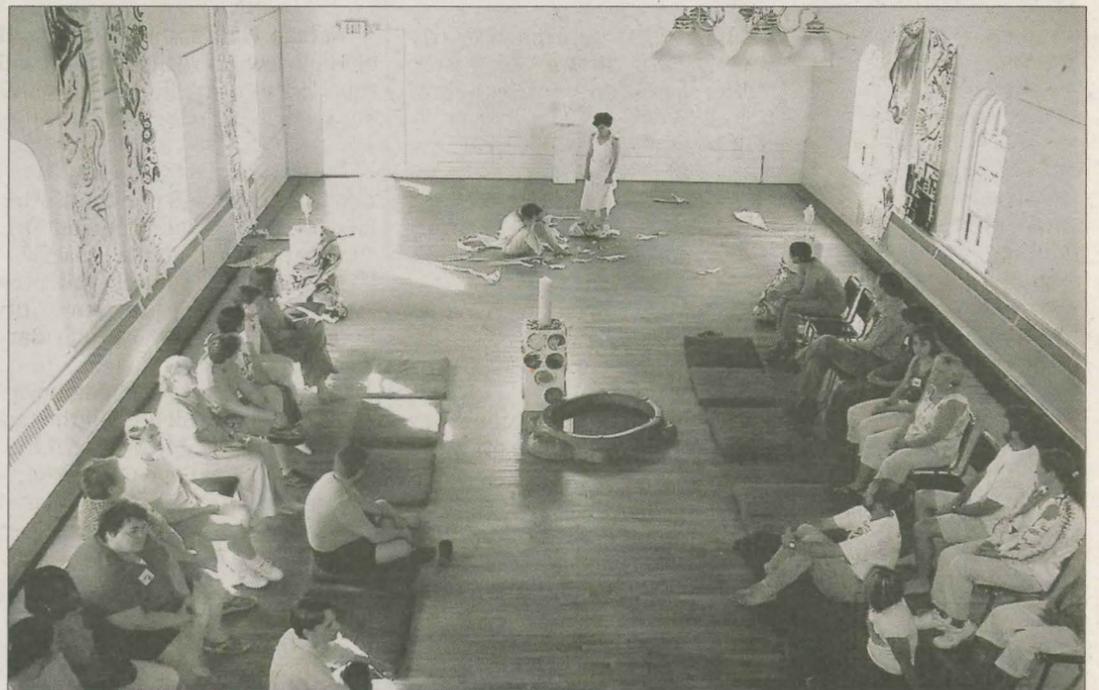
Imagine how shocked his forebears might be to see what Marcey does with visual images each week at Warehouse 242, the loft-style church in Charlotte, N.C., where he serves as lead pastor. In his view, no worship service is complete until the congregation has pondered not just the Word proclaimed but also the Word illustrated through a homegrown photograph, painting or film clip.

"We believe the Reformers missed something big," says Marcey, a doctoral candidate in visual rhetoric at Regent University in Virginia Beach, Va. "When we limit the gospel message to the written and spoken text, we short-circuit it. We truncate it. ... The soul is moved by more things than the word."

Marcey's church is not alone. Across the nation, visual images are fast becoming a part of religious life for millions of Reformed Protestant Christians whose tradition has for centuries regarded pictures with great suspicion. Wariness of the image's power to become an idol or otherwise deceive a lost soul has largely given way to confidence in the power of images to reach souls for the good.

### Art classes in Reformed seminary

Claiming lineage in the Reformed tradition means tracing a spiritual ancestry through John Calvin, the 16th century Geneva theologian whose "Institutes of the Christian Religion" has endured for centuries as a guiding vision for a church purified Protestant-style. Splinter groups have made Reformed Protestantism into a vast tent with such American incarnations as Presbyterians, Baptists, Congregationalists and many non-denominational evangelicals.



Examples of a growing confidence in images span the spectrum of Reformed religious life.

In the seminary: At Andover Newton Theological School, which trains future Reformed pastors in Newton, Mass., enrollment in the Worship, Theology and the Arts specialization track has jumped from five in 1999 to 46 in 2004.

In the overseas mission field: Reformed Protestants and others who once relied on translated Bibles to convert indigenous peoples now routinely introduce Christianity through the "Jesus" film, which has been translated into 858 languages. In small group ministries: The video-based Alpha Course has attracted more than one million North Americans over the past 10 years and currently is offered in more than 5,000 church and home settings, including some Reformed congregations.

Reformed Christians are examining what it means for them to seek God apart from the spoken and written word of Scripture. Answers vary, especially since the craze has touched both conservative evangelicals and liberal mainliners, who sometimes have different agendas for the use of images. But on at least one point, there is agreement: A longstanding hallmark of Reformed tradition is disappearing.

"Generally speaking, there has been a visual impoverishment of architecture and in terms of design

across the Protestant spectrum in North America," said Calvin Schultze, professor of communication at Calvin College and author of "High-Tech Worship? Using Presentational Technologies Wisely." "Now we're seeing a widespread acceptance of the visual in worship across the Protestant landscape ... and the idea of an austere, pew-lined, wooden-floor sanctuary is disappearing."

### Making Word more accessible

In the final analysis, some Reformed preachers argue, what mattered most to Reformers was to make the life-changing Word of God as accessible as possible.

In the 16th century, more rigorous analysis and fewer imprecise images might have helped convict the masses that what they believed was true. But today, many Christians are willing to trust that the opposite approach will be more effective.

"Some folks hear and say, 'OK, that may be true, but I don't care. It doesn't motivate me or encourage me. It's just a block of information,'" Marcey said. "We put up an image (in worship) when it communicates something we're having trouble saying with words. ... The Reformers ought to be pleased because their idea was to take it out of the hands of the elite and put it in the hands of the people. And that's what we're doing."

**VISUAL AIDS** Artistic images hanging on the walls are designed to help participants enter into a spirit of worship at the Andover Newton Theological School in Newton Center, Mass. Such images once were considered idolatrous by Reformed Protestants, but they have been increasingly accepted in Reformed circles. (RNS photo by Judy Medeiros)

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## Towey: Bush's faith-based initiatives will continue

Washington (RNS)—The director of the White House office dealing with faith-based initiatives said President Bush remains committed to supporting government funding of religious social service programs even as the administration fends off lawsuits against its efforts.

"The president will continue to look at what ... executive actions he can take to further the faith-based initiative to make sure that equal treatment takes place not only in Washington but at the state and local level," Jim Towey, director of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, said in an address to the annual conference of the Roundtable on Religion and Social Welfare Policy on Dec. 9.

But as administration officials make plans to continue to work with Congress on the is-

sue, Towey predicted opposition to their efforts would not end.

Towey said the administration is faced with a "handful" of lawsuits but believes it is on "solid constitutional ground."

He noted that a significant part of a suit against his office by the Freedom From Religion Foundation was dismissed in November. The Wisconsin-based foundation had argued that the initiative's actions unconstitutionally favored religious organizations.

In a report released at the roundtable, law professors Ira Lupu and Robert Tuttle of George Washington University said that case "now has been reduced to a small thorn in the initiative's side rather than the large threat it initially appeared to be."

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