

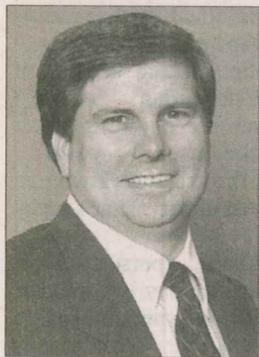
PRactical Resources for Christian Living

WESTERN RECORDER

December 16, 2008
Vol. 182, No. 50

FOR THE RECORD

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Coca-Cola named best pro-family advertiser on TV

Los Angeles (BP)—Coca-Cola, Whirlpool and Hewlett-Packard were ranked among the 10 best television advertisers based on the content in prime-time broadcast programs they chose to support, according to the Parents Television Council.

"The role that television advertisers play in determining what type of content comes into every home in America cannot be overstated," said Tim Winter, the group's president. "We commend the advertisers on our best list that have chosen to associate their hard-earned corporate brands with positive programming."

The 10 best: Coca-Cola, The Clorox Company, Century 21 Real Estate, H&R Block, Ferrero SpA (USA), CVS Caremark Corporation, Whirlpool Corporation, The Hershey Company, State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance and Hewlett-Packard.

The PTC based its rankings on each company's prime-time network television ad buys during the 2007-08 season. Companies with the most ads on green light shows—those determined by PTC to be family friendly—were ranked the best, while those companies with the most ads on red light shows were ranked the worst.

The 10 worst: General Motors Corporation, Nissan North America, L'Oreal USA, Pepsi-Cola North America, GlaxoSmith-Kline Holdings, Reckitt Benckiser, Target Corporation, Kohl's Corporation, Verizon Communications and Toyota Motor North America.

Christmas prayers answered



The Holbrooks pose for their first picture as a family shortly after a Morgan County judge finalized the adoption Dec. 1. Teresa Holbrook said that moment was like a weight being lifted for her and husband, Aaron. "I feel like the Lord knew exactly where to put them and I am glad that he picked us to take on the huge but rewarding change in our lives," she said. The boys are (from left) Chris, 10, Jaylen, 6, and Austin, 8.

Couple looks forward to Christmas with newly adopted sons

By David Winfrey
State Correspondent

West Liberty—The Holbrook family will have a merry Christmas this season, but not because of any gift sitting beneath the Christmas tree.

Aaron and Teresa Holbrook are celebrating the recent adoption of their three sons on Dec. 1. The timing is earlier than predicted and allows everyone involved to face the future a little more confidently.

"Everything's complete," Aaron Holbrook said. "We're more of a fam-

ily. We don't have to worry whether they're going to be here next Christmas or the next one because we know they are."

Teresa agreed.

"It's going to be the best one ever," she said of this Christmas holiday. "The kids are finally ours."

When the boys first arrived for foster care in October 2006, officials with Sunrise Children's Services predicted the stay would be temporary. Like many situations, the boys were expected to be reunited with their

mother eventually.

Some couples might have thought twice about caring for three boys, but Aaron recalled he and Teresa never hesitated.

"I was ready to try it. I wanted to give them a home for however long it may have been," he noted. "I thought we were up for the challenge."

They both acknowledged there were major adjustments going from sharing their two-bedroom house

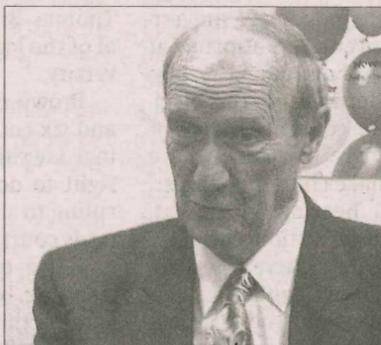
□ See Adoption brings answer ... Page 6

Southern Baptist evangelist sees silver lining in economy cloud

By Laura Erlanson
Baptist Press

DeVille, La. (BP)—In a time when many churches and organizations around the Southern Baptist Convention are cutting budgets and staff, there is at least one evangelist who thinks recent hard financial times provide a great opportunity for the church.

"I think what this will do, it will bring us to desperation, and desperation is the point at which God sends revival," noted longtime evangelist Bill Stafford, referring to the current economic turmoil. "God is going to teach us a principle of trust and faith and show us a dimension of His sufficiency, where people will hunger to come to church. Not to hear about the doom and gloom, but to hear about the living Christ who is in me and all of His sufficiency is my sufficiency."



Bill Stafford

Stafford has been preaching for nearly 57 years, most of those in full-time evangelism. He left a career in combustion engineering when he was called to preach at 19. Since then, he has preached all over the country, even earning the nickname "Wild Bill" within the SBC for his straightforward preaching style.

He also has preached at the SBC Pastors' Conference, and last June, was an inaugural inductee into the Conference of Southern Baptist Evangelists' Hall of Faith. Recently, he has become familiar to a whole new audience for his role as Mr. Rudolph, the grumpy next-door neighbor in the movie "Fireproof."

Stafford preaches a revival each September at Sherwood Baptist Church, which produced the film. Last year, after one of his sermons, Sherwood's executive pastor, Jim McBride, approached him, telling him they had tried out eight people for the part of Mr. Rudolph.

"You have to try out," McBride told Stafford. "We can't find anybody. None of them can say 'Caleb' mean enough."

Stafford laughed recalling the story.

"I said, 'I can't act.' They said, 'You

do it preaching.'"

Stafford agreed to audition, and said, "When they saw it, they said 'That's it. You got it.'"

At almost 76, Stafford shows no signs of slowing down. His 2009 calendar already is full. And while his and his wife Sue's nest egg has not been immune to the recent upheaval in the financial markets, he insisted they continue to do what they always have done—trust God to supply their needs.

"It's not about money," he said in an interview prior to a revival service at Philadelphia Baptist Church in DeVille, La. "It's about dealing with whatever's in my life that would shackle me from living the Spirit-filled Christian life. Money is one of the biggest enemies we have if it's our master. Money's a good slave but a poor master."

□ See Evangelist sees silver ... Page 2

Dated material. Please deliver by Wednesday, Dec. 17.

Economic decline forces WMU to cut back

By Julie Walters
Woman's Missionary Union

Birmingham, Ala.—In a time when layoffs and financial concerns dominate daily headlines, Woman's Missionary Union has announced proactive measures to retain all staff members while continuing with the mission God gave the organization 120 years ago—encouraging personal involvement among preschoolers, children, youth and adults in the Great Commission.

During a meeting Dec. 10, WMU Executive Director Wanda Lee told employees, "Let me reinforce our commitment to you of doing everything possible to preserve all jobs at WMU and maintain affordable health care coverage for every person. These have been our top priorities during these days of evaluating our financial situation."

In addition to reducing budgets and streamlining expenses, Lee announced a hiring freeze on all vacant positions until next September; a reduction on employer contributions to each employee's retirement plan until next September; a freeze on all merit pay increases and no incentive bonuses in the coming year; and the implementation of four weeks of furlough for each staff member until August 2009.

During furlough weeks, when staff members will have time off without pay, Lee encouraged employees to nourish their souls and feed their minds.

"These were very difficult decisions to make and difficult ones for our staff to hear," Lee said, "but all indications are that the economic picture for our nation will worsen in 2009 before it improves. These measures were necessary for us to rise above a worst case scenario during what is projected to be the most challenging economic times for our nation since the Great Depression.

"While we certainly hope this is not the case, we believe the actions we have taken will position WMU to continue to fulfill the mission God has given us, and allow us to care for each person that is a part of the WMU family here in Birmingham."

Coming in 2009

To help facilitate growth, national WMU also has implemented several new initiatives to engage a growing number of people in missions. These include redesigned magazines for children and Hispanic women; new bilingual resources for Korean Baptist churches; online forums that foster community and encourage the sharing of ideas; free, downloadable starter packets to begin any age-level WMU organization; online communities for young adult women on Facebook; and new training opportunities and events that will be launched in 2009.

"God still has a mission for WMU," Lee noted. "In fact, missions education and involvement is more critical in our churches and com-

munities than ever before. In a time when a growing number of people are hurting in our world, it is imperative that a missional lifestyle be instilled in our children, youth and adults to help them see the world with God's eyes and minister effectively."

Headquartered in Birmingham, Ala., the national missions organization has a staff of approximately 100. With a revised budget of \$9.6 million in 2009, the organization is self-supporting through the sale of magazines and products, and from investments. National WMU receives no funds from the Cooperative Program allocation budget of the Southern Baptist Convention, Annie Armstrong Easter Offering or Lottie Moon Christmas Offering.

In 1995, the WMU Foundation was created to support the mission and ministry of WMU. Although giving to the WMU Foundation surpassed \$1 million in 2008, most of the funds and endowments are designated for scholarships, state WMU organizations, and specified ministries.

The WMU Foundation was the single largest contributor to WMU in 2008 and remains the best vehicle for donors who want to financially support the national missions organization. Unlike most non-profit organizations that are donation-driven, only 2 to 3 percent of national WMU's income comes from charitable giving.

Evangelist sees silver lining in economy cloud

Continued from page 1

Stafford stresses this concept of mastery over selfish desires—including the desire to gain or keep money—at every revival he preaches.

"Jesus spoke more about my possessions and about things than He did about my salvation," Stafford pointed out. "He constantly talked about that.

"We've sort of let that slide by. We haven't dealt with it as a real important part of breaking selfishness in me and keeping compassion for others. Selfish people never see anything except what they need. They never get into the truth of giving. That's not just money. That's my whole self."

Stafford said a person's attitude toward money is a good indicator of their spiritual maturity.

"Jesus said so much about it because the money I have and the possessions I've obtained will either be a blessing or a curse according to my attitude toward them," he explained. "Jesus never wants me to trust in things. That's why He taught me faith in Him."

When does revival come?

And Stafford said he believes the move to trust God with one's whole life is the key to revival.

"Revival comes whenever people begin to get sick of themselves and where they are," he noted. Individuals "must put off the old man and appropriate Jesus. That's the way revival comes—when we get into that mode and say, 'Wait a minute, I can overcome this stuff.'"

Stafford has exemplified this teaching in his own life by never asking for a set amount of money from any church where he has preached.

"Sometimes (a church will) say, 'Let me give you this,'" he said. "And I say, 'No. Let me come and trust God. Just take an offering. Let the people obey. That's the only way I know to operate.' That's been a principle that has set me free. I can go anywhere and never have to worry about my needs."

Stafford said he thinks the current state of the economy could help bring about a similar faith in more believers.

"I think we're going to learn more about faith and obedience and dying to self—how to take the promises of God," he noted. "He's got a promise for everything I need. Every promise He's laid down in the Word is always sufficient and true. We haven't been living by that.

"In America, we thought prosperity was God's blessing, when it may have been a curse. Because we got comfortable in doing what we wanted to do like we please."

BAPTIST DIGEST

Oldest IMB emeritus missionary dies. The Southern Baptist International Mission Board's oldest emeritus missionary, Howard McCamey, was honored in a memorial service in Dallas Dec. 5. He died Nov. 26 at age 102. Longtime members of Gaston Avenue Baptist Church in Dallas, McCamey and his late wife, Georgia, were commissioned by the former Foreign Mission Board in 1940. He served as a missionary dentist in Nigeria for nearly three decades. The McCameys opened a private dental practice in Dallas after their retirement. Georgia died in 1994. McCamey is survived by his sister, Doris Brown, and her family.

Southeastern names new undergrad dean. Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary President Daniel Akin announced Dec. 12 that Bruce Ashford will be the new dean of The College at Southeastern, the school's undergraduate program. Ashford will assume his new role Jan. 1. Ashford currently is the Richard and Gina Headrick Chair of World Missions at SEBTS and director of the Wake Forest, N.C., seminary's Louis A. Drummond Center for Great Commission Studies. He has been teaching philosophy and intercultural studies at Southeastern since 2003, when he graduated from the seminary with a doctor of philosophy degree. Ashford also spent several years on the mission field before coming to serve at SEBTS.

Baptist men called to Jan. prayer thrust. Recognizing both the power of prayer and the urgent need for men to pray, the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board is issuing a call for Baptist men to engage in focused prayer in January. NAMB's mission education team has prepared a 31-day prayer guide to lead men in seven areas of prayer: recognize God's plan for men; a call to holiness; confession and repentance; passion for the church as the bride of Christ; models of mission action; the hearts of men; and workers for the harvest. "We're convinced we won't have clarity of purpose and mission in our churches without a genuine movement of God," said Jim Burton, NAMB's mission education team leader. The January prayer focus comes as NAMB launches the SBC's first-ever weekly men's mission education curriculum, Baptist Men Online. Churches that mobilize men to pray together during January are encouraged to use the new program to begin or strengthen a men's ministry.

Missouri appeals court hears latest round in Windermere, MBC dispute

Kansas City, Mo. (ABP)—Both sides in the legal dispute between the Missouri Baptist Convention and a breakaway agency faced tough questions at a recent hearing before an appellate panel.

The Nov. 25 argument in the Missouri Court of Appeals for the Western District concerned Windermere Baptist Conference Center, which removed itself from the convention's control in 2001. Two members of a three-judge panel suggested that messengers to the 2000 MBC annual meeting did not fully understand the charter under which Windermere would be governed when they approved making the center a separate entity.

The appellate judges also suggested that the convention's attorney at the time should have added restrictions on Windermere in the original charter if the convention did not want Windermere trustees to have the power to make charter changes.

The appeal hearing is the latest round in legal action the MBC took against Windermere, the Baptist Home, Missouri Baptist University, Word & Way and the Missouri Baptist Foundation. The suit is an attempt to force the entities to rescind changes they had made in their corporate charters that allowed trustees to appoint their own successors rather than the convention doing so.

The Baptist Home retirement-home system changed its articles of incorporation in 2000 to elect its own trustees. The other four entities took the same action in 2001. The convention filed suit in 2002.

The latest argument came on an appeal of Cole County Judge Richard Callahan's ruling that Windermere's trustees acted legally when they changed the center's articles of incorporation. His decision centered on two main aspects of the convention's contention—corporate membership and a contractual relationship with Windermere. The judge ruled the MBC is not a member of Windermere's corporation and that no contract exists between them.

The Nov. 25 hearing marked the second MBC appeal in the seven-year legal action. In 2005, appellate judges sent the initial case back to Cole County after the convention appealed former Cole County Judge Thomas Brown's March 11 dismissal of the legal action against the university.

Brown ruled the Executive Board and six churches that filed the original lawsuit did not have the legal right to do so, and he applied the ruling to all five institutions. The appeals court overruled the Cole County judge on the Executive Board's standing, but upheld his decision regarding the six churches.

The MBC filed separate legal action against the conference center in 2006 for selling property. That case has been suspended pending the outcome of the appeal of the original case.

Callahan suspended legal action involving the other four institutions until after the Windermere appeal process has been completed. He had decided to try each of the five separately.

Todd Deaton elected as new editor of Western Recorder

By Drew Nichter
News Director

Louisville—Todd Deaton was elected overwhelmingly Dec. 9 by the Kentucky Baptist Convention Mission Board to become the next editor of the Western Recorder.

Deaton, current managing editor of the Baptist Courier, newspaper of the South Carolina Baptist Convention, told Mission Board members that the Western Recorder “is your Baptist paper” and it “needs to reflect who you are.”

“I would seek to bring to the pages of the Western Recorder accuracy, balance and fairness,” he said prior to being elected, “and I have a fervent desire to tell the stories of what Kentucky Baptists are doing through missions and ministry to further the cause of Christ.”

Deaton, 45, has served in his role at the South Carolina newspaper since 1996. Prior to that, he was associate editor for the Biblical Recorder in North Carolina for seven years. He also worked as an intern for the then-Southern Baptist Home Mission Board in the 1980s.

He holds a bachelor’s degree from Furman University in Greenville, S.C.; a Master of Divinity degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville; and expects to complete a Doctor of Education degree in May from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C. While attending

Southern Seminary, he worked as an intern for the Western Recorder for three years.

“You have already made a profound impact upon who I am,” Deaton told the Mission Board. “This is a way I can return the blessings that you have given me.”

Deaton replaces Trennis Henderson who resigned last March to become vice president of communications at Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia, Ark.

Western Recorder editor search committee chairman Skip Alexander said Deaton “meets and exceeds all of our requirements” to become the newspaper’s next editor.

“It’s not only right for Todd to step into this calling, but we believe he’s right for Kentucky Baptists,” noted Alexander, pastor of Campbellsville Baptist Church. “He is known as a bridge builder and an encourager; someone who will put the faces of our people in print ... and tell what Kentucky Baptists are doing for God’s glory.”

The search committee worked for nearly a year in its task to find an editor. On Dec. 5, the Western Recorder board of directors unanimously voted to approve Deaton as the candidate to present to the KBC Mission Board.

“We’re enthusiastic (and) we’re excited about Todd Deaton leading the Western Recorder,” Alexander said.

Responding to a question about how he would handle controversial issues that might arise in Kentucky Baptist life, Deaton acknowledged that he is entering “untested waters” in becoming an editor, and recognized that “I will not always please everyone in this room.”

“But I hope you would still consider me a Christian brother when I stand firm and say, ‘This is what I believe,’” he said. “In doing that, I would want to hear your side of it and your views ... and then find out where we can build together and work together. Because ultimately, that’s what we’re called to do.”

Addressing the issue of theologically labeling a new editor as moderate or conservative, Deaton told the Mission Board, “The title that I most desire is simply ‘good and faithful servant.’”

He said the Bible verse that guides his ministry is Romans 14:19, “Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.”

Baptist Courier Editor Don Kirkland, who hired Deaton shortly after taking over at the South Carolina paper in 1996, said the news of his colleague’s election was bittersweet.

“He has been a dear friend and a valuable colleague of mine. He’s been my right arm,” Kirkland said of Deaton.

The longtime editor said Deaton will bring to the Western Recorder a



“determination to be fair.” He added that Deaton’s “Along the Way” column in the Baptist Courier has “attracted a great following among our people.”

“I think Kentucky Baptists will learn to appreciate him, respect him (and) love him the way South Carolina Baptists have,” Kirkland noted.

Deaton is expected to begin his new role in mid-January.

He and his wife, Michelle, have two children, Laura Leigh and Caleb Todd.

At 184 years old, the Western Recorder is the second oldest Baptist newspaper in the country. In addition to the weekly newspaper, it also provides publishing services for six frontier-area Baptist convention newspapers.

Q&A New Western Recorder Editor Todd Deaton answers questions prior to his election by the Kentucky Baptist Convention Mission Board last week. Deaton comes to Kentucky after 12 years as managing editor of the South Carolina Baptist Courier (Photo by Dannah Prather)

KBC Mission Board agrees to extend Kentucky Baptists Connect

By Drew Nichter
News Director

Louisville—With the original plan due to end next year, Kentucky Baptist Convention Mission Board members agreed last week to extend the Kentucky Baptists Connect initiative another three years.

The board, meeting Dec. 8-9 at the Kentucky Baptist Building in Louisville, voted to approve the recommendation brought by the KBC’s mission advisory committee, which presented the original initiative.

The initial five-year Kentucky Baptists Connect effort launched in 2004 and is set to expire Aug. 31, 2009. The three-year extension would begin Sept. 1, 2009, and run through 2012.

The extension would give Kentucky Baptists an opportunity to focus on areas of the original plan that did not meet expectations.

According to the recommendation presented by the mission advisory committee, “Some goals have not been achieved ... and seem out of reach during this last year of the current plan.”

The goal that has most notably fallen short is that of baptisms.

The original Kentucky Baptist Connect focus set a target of 125,000 baptisms by Jan. 1, 2010—an average of 25,000 per year.

Kentucky Baptist churches have failed to approach that number, averaging little more 17,000 since 2004. Baptisms declined to 15,503 according to the 2007 Annual Church Profile statistics, the lowest total since 1996.

The three-year extension establishes a slightly more modest goal of 20,000 baptisms per year through

2012. “We do believe that 20,000 is attainable,” Mackey said.

While the baptism goal has not been met, the church-planting goal established in Kentucky Baptists Connect has exceeded expectations.

The initial goal was to launch 75 new churches—including 25 High Impact churches—by 2010. While it is not clear whether those goals officially have been reached, the Connect extension is calling for double the original number of new church starts across the state, 45 of those ethnic congregations and nine High Impact plants.

The original Kentucky Baptists Connect plan established 16 goals within six objective areas: evangelism; missions; leader training; networking; strengthening churches; and relationship with agencies and institutions.

While the objectives remain unchanged, several goals in the three-year extension were added or modified.

“There are some new areas that have been addressed. Some of the same areas have continued to be addressed,” KBC Executive Director Bill Mackey told the Mission Board, noting there are 23 goals in the new plan.

“This effort has borne fruit,” said former KBC president Charles Barnes, who chairs the mission advisory committee. “It has changed lives, it has made healthier churches, new ministries have begun and new churches have been started, and that speaks well for the first four years of the program.”

However, the key to achieving any objective set forth in the Connect extension, Mackey noted, is vibrant faith.

“We felt like anything that we might attempt to do would require an attention to vibrant faith in the pew and among us as staff and ... leaders in the churches and the convention,” he acknowledged.

Across Kentucky 2010

In addition to the Connect extension, Mission Board members also approved an ambitious evangelistic outreach effort, Across Kentucky 2010.

The initiative is described as “a massive statewide ‘sowing’ process to get the plan of salvation into 1.5 million homes in Kentucky in early spring 2010,” according to a recommendation brought by the church development and evangelism committee.

The effort is in conjunction with the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board’s “GPS (God’s Plan for Sharing)” National Evangelism Initiative.

Using 2009 to prepare churches and associations, Across Kentucky will culminate on Easter Sunday 2010. In the weeks prior, church members will be encouraged to deliver to homes in their communities plastic bags containing a gospel presentation and other literature, and an invitation to attend a Kentucky Baptist church on Easter.

KBC Evangelism Team Leader Ross Bauscher called Across Kentucky 2010 “a door-to-door saturation of the gospel” and “the largest

evangelistic outreach” the KBC has ever done.

“We’re seeking to reach this entire state,” he noted. “I think this is absolutely something God’s going to bless ... because we’re fulfilling what God wants us to do.”

In other business, Mission Board members:

■ Approved a recommendation from the administrative committee to reorganize two full-time KBC positions and one part-time position into two full-time positions.

The duties of the eliminated position, KBC discipleship and assimilation director, vacated by Steve Rice in October, were reassigned to the KBC regional church development strategist for the state’s South Central region.

Also, the position of Southeast regional church development strategist was changed from a part-time role to full time.

Board members approved Mike James, who currently is the part-time Southeast regional strategist and pastor of Glen’s Creek Baptist Church in Versailles, to assume the South Central regional church development strategist role, effective Jan. 1, 2009. The move vacates the Southeast regional strategist position.

■ Approved the distribution of more than \$500,000 in year-end funds from unspent budget funds and investment income. Major allocations included \$82,000 for partnership missions; \$75,000 for new work and church starts; \$50,000 for Crossover Louisville 2009 evangelistic efforts; \$50,000 for the Across Kentucky 2010 effort; and \$50,000 for replacement and repair of Baptist Campus Ministry facilities.



Mike James

53 Tuesdays?

That’s right, even though there are only 52 weeks in a year, there happen to be 53 Tuesdays this year. And since the Western Recorder only publishes 50 issues a year, we’re taking an extended break this holiday season. So, watch your mailbox for the next issue of the Western Recorder coming Jan. 6.

From all of us here at the Western Recorder, we wish you a Merry Christmas and God’s blessings for you and your family in 2009.

See you next year.

WESTERNRECORDER

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

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Knocking at the gate at Christmas

By **Erich Bridges**

Richmond, Va. (BP)—It's human nature to focus inward, especially during lean times.

We do it as individuals, as families and as a nation. Let the world take care of itself for a while, we say. We've got to worry about home base until things improve. Enough already with endless global crises, foreign wars, etc. Let us have a quiet, peaceful Christmas for a change.

If only the world were so accommodating.

"You may not be interested in war, but war is interested in you," communist revolutionary Leon Trotsky once said.

Trotsky's grim observation was cited recently by The Economist magazine in an analysis of the many overseas challenges faced by President-elect Obama.

Case in point: the November terror attacks on Mumbai, India.

The Mumbai massacres weren't just another blip on the global chaos meter. They illustrate once again the power of a small but well-organized band of murderers not only to kill innocents and paralyze a city, but to spark dangerous international confrontation. The threat of war between India and Pakistan, both nuclear powers, serves the interests of no one—except terrorist organizations seeking to destabilize the region.

The United States and other world powers simply cannot ignore that kind of crisis. So they respond to try to calm tensions and avert far greater violence.

In the personal and spiritual realms, however, it's easier to look away when people are in crisis. I'm an expert at being (or pretending to be) clueless about the needs of folks all around me. You can't help everybody, right?

"I think one human tendency resulting from the fall of man is to protect oneself from being consumed by the needs of others," said a missionary serving in one of the poorest, most violent and least-evangelized

countries of Central Asia. "I've found that fear within and fought it many times in pursuit of love."

FIRST PERSON

When things get tough, she asked, "Does God give me a 'Holy Bible for Chaotic Times' that directs me to give only to family and treat people the best they should reasonably expect me to under the circumstances?"

"Or can He still be telling me, 'Give to everyone who asks of you?'"

She avoided these uncomfortable questions more easily in the United States, where whole communities prohibit "soliciting," where donations for the faceless needy can be dropped in offering plates and collection boxes. In the Muslim nation where she works, the poor are everywhere. Giving alms is expected, but the socially acceptable gift is a tiny amount. If you give more, you will be inundated with constant pleas for help.

All very reasonable—until someone comes to you needing more.

Such a one came to her last year: a desperately poor grandmother pleading for help to care for her orphaned grandchildren. The missionary did what she could and wondered guiltily during a visit home to the United States if the old woman and her grandchildren survived an especially hard winter.

"Maybe I did what I could instead of doing what Jesus could," she admitted. "I was unwilling to love extravagantly for Jesus and excused myself with 'culture stress.'"

The missionary returned to Central Asia this year. The old woman found her again, with the same plea for help. The uncomfortable questions within returned.

"How would Jesus have me 'Give to everyone who asks of you?'" she asked herself.

What are you thinking?

The Western Recorder considers letters on any subject for publication, provided they don't make a personal attack. The maximum length for a letter is 300 words. Submit by mail to Box 43969, Louisville, KY 40253; fax, (502) 489-3565; or e-mail, wesrec@earthlink.net.

Clear Fork dedication

Clear Fork Baptist Church in Rockfield dedicated its new 400-seat sanctuary Dec. 7. It was the fulfillment of a three-year process to provide a facility that will serve the needs of the church and community for many years to come.

The \$1.2-million project was supported by a significant legacy gift left by a church member and was completed with the church borrowing only \$500,000.

During the dedication service, Pastor David Daugherty paid tribute to the building committee and congregation for their sacrificial giving and work to complete the sanctuary, auxiliary rooms and beautiful foyer entry and connector to current buildings.

Special presenters at the dedication included Joe Causey, pastor of the "mother church," Providence Knob Baptist Church; Jeff Crabtree, director of missions for Warren Association of Baptists; and Kenny Chyle, pastor of Liberty Baptist Church in

Auburn.

Special guests also were present from other churches including New Salem Baptist Church, an African-American congregation with roots in the Clear Fork congregation, which began with 21 white members and 11 black members. It was a privilege for me to represent the Kentucky Baptist Convention on this historic occasion and to speak in the morning service, as well as during the dedication service.

The new sanctuary is the latest in numerous facility improvements the church has made over the years. In 1985, an 1,800-square-foot fellowship hall was added, and a parsonage was completed in 1988.

The dedication of the new facility is especially significant in light of the fact that the church also is celebrating its 175th anniversary this year.

According to a brief history of the church, the congregation's origins

"If I had been used all of my life, yet blessed with children and grandchildren, and yet have their orphaned care fall upon my bent back and their little bodies draw close against my thin, bony frame and into my tattered (cloak), and if I saw their dark eyes in smudged faces looking wearily into my emptiness, and if I knew there was a person with great resources living on a certain street in a courtyard behind a certain gate, might I hope that person would charitably give me more than a (five-cent) coin?"

"And if I, standing inside the courtyard gate, knew that the Father loved this beggar woman since eternity and accomplished salvation for her and her loved ones and longed to enfold her in His love this very moment, what might the love of Christ do through me?"

This same beggar woman is standing at your gate and knocking at your door. Not literally, perhaps, but she is there. Whole nations and peoples are there, pleading not just for food but for the Bread of life, the Word of God made flesh.

"What child is this?" they are asking. "Could He give us hope, too?"

Yes, it's easier to ignore the insistent knocking, to pretend they aren't there. But when that missionary in Central Asia feels overwhelmed, she turns to Jesus.

"I consider Him and think, 'Jesus, You love me and I love You. That's all I know for sure.' Then He seems to put His arms around my shoulders, smile and keep walking."

"I want to be able to look back on these days with a smile that I got from Him."

Erich Bridges is global correspondent for the Southern Baptist International Mission Board

STEWARDSHIP

Limited spending equals less stress during Christmas

By **Doug Strader**

As the lyrics of a popular song say, "It's the most wonder-

ful time of the year." Although everyone would not agree with that sentiment, I agree with those words. Since I was a

child, the Christmas season has been one of my favorite times of the year. It seems to me that people are a little friendlier, there seems to be a spring in their step, and they seem to be more generous with their time and resources.

But, in spite of what I have just written, this also is a time of the year that brings much stress into our lives, and it is a time when many people get into financial difficulties because they overspend buying gifts for family and friends.

There are some guiding principles that should govern the way Christians use their financial resources throughout the year—and not just at Christmastime. The things listed below are a good starting place for most Christians:

■ We must always remember Psalm 24:1, "The earth is the Lord's and all that fills it, the world and those who dwell therein."

■ Southern Baptists should make an effort to be sure our largest monetary gift is one given to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions.

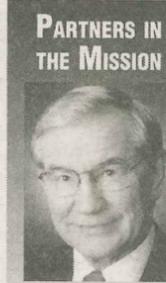
■ Most of us can look around our neighborhood, church or workplace and find someone who is in need of food, clothing and friendship and help to fulfill those needs.

■ We want to give Christmas gifts to family members, but we do not need to be extravagant or try to impress others by how much money we spend for those gifts.

■ We do not need to go in debt in order to give gifts to anyone. It is best to save money throughout the year for our gift buying at Christmas. If you failed to do that this year, plan to do so next year and follow through with those plans.

Remember the words of Jesus, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." You can make this season a wonderful time for someone by just visiting with them and sharing some home-baked cookies, or maybe taking them out for a hamburger and coke. It doesn't take much money to give some of the most important gifts that money cannot buy.

Doug Strader, retired director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention's stewardship department, is pastor of Farmdale Baptist Church in Louisville



Bill Mackey

PARTNERS IN THE MISSION

Seek Jesus' light during time of short days and long nights

Q: I have a really hard time in mid to late December facing the longest nights and shortest days of the year. It's just depressing. Do you have any suggestions?

In the short days and long nights leading up to and surrounding the winter solstice, it can be naturally harder to simply cope with life. Add to that the cultural expectation that everyone is happy and joyful in the weeks around Christmas and it can be an incredible challenge.

Jesus said, "All who are weak and heavy laden" can come to Him to find "rest for your souls." That seems most appropriate this time of year. Gather with others for this purpose. You will then know you are no longer alone. As hard as it might be to force yourself to be sociable, find a Bible study or support group where you feel at home.

If these feelings are extreme to the point of suicide, social withdrawal, problems at work or substance abuse, seek professional help. Seasonal Affective Disorder is something doctors have come to understand and is actually very common. Psychologists sometimes categorize this as a subset of either depression or bipolar disorder. If so diagnosed, lean into professional expertise for the appropriate medications, psychotherapy and light therapy.

What is a practical plan of action? Increase the amount of light in your daily life. Open the blinds. Go outside. If you have been diagnosed by a doctor, stick to the treatment plan. Practice a good balance of exercise and rest. Eat right, cutting back on carbohydrates. Socialize. If possible, take a vacation somewhere that has a more agreeable climate.

The Jesus who said, "I am the Light of the world" can help you get through these short days and long nights. Remember, "Where two are three are gathered in his name." He is there. Find His light in others. Then you can reach out and shine that light on someone else who needs to see it from you.—James Stillwell

Q: How can Advent add meaning to my child's Christmas?

I was unfamiliar with Advent until I moved to Louisville in 1975 and joined St. Matthews Baptist Church, where Advent played an important part in Christmas worship. Years later, I am grateful for the meaning Advent has added to our family's celebration of Christmas, and I highly recommend it to parents as a way to help children keep Christ at the center of Christmas.

The word Advent means "coming," and celebrating Advent helps us prepare for the coming of Christmas and the coming of Christ. From a practical standpoint, Advent expands the holiday season from one day to 25. From a spiritual standpoint, it gives handles for focusing on the various dimensions of the birth of Christ as the days of December unfold.

Resources abound for guiding families and children in a celebration of Advent. The basic observance involves a wreath with four candles—one for each of the Sundays preceding Christmas, plus one candle in the center to represent Jesus. Various traditions assign different meaning to each candle. Advent guides typically include Scripture readings, background information and guided prayer to accompany the lighting of each candle.

A variety of Advent calendars are available at Christian bookstores. These typically consist of a free-standing Christmas scene, such as a manger, with numbered "windows" to be opened each day during December. Google search "Advent resources for children" and you will find all kinds of ideas ranging from downloadable coloring pages to crafts, kitchen projects and prayers.—David Garrard

Family Forum writers are:

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

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

Valerie Vincent, Christian counselor with Hardy Associates in Louisville. E-mail: dr.vincent@insightbb.com.

Scott Wigginton, associate professor of pastoral ministries and counseling at Campbellsville University and minister of counseling at Campbellsville Baptist Church. E-mail: sewigginton@campbellsville.edu.

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



Western Recorder to welcome a new editor

In just a few weeks, our country will begin the peaceful transition of power when President-elect Barack Obama is inaugurated as the 44th president of the United States. Our country's 301 million citizens will be greatly affected by his leadership.

On a much smaller scale, in just a few weeks, Todd Deaton will assume the responsibilities of editor of the Western Recorder. The 4 million citizens of our commonwealth and the members of our 2,400 Kentucky Baptist churches also will be greatly affected by his leadership of our state Baptist paper.

The Western Recorder board of directors presented Deaton as our nominee to become the editor of our historic paper. The Mission Board of the Kentucky Baptist Convention overwhelmingly elected him as editor last week.

Deaton meets and exceeds all of the Western Recorder editor search committee's criteria for an editor. He brings more than 20 years of experience in denominational print journalism. He holds an undergraduate degree in English from Furman University in Greenville S.C.; a Master of Divinity degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville; and expects to complete his doctoral dissertation on organizational leadership from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C.

Deaton served as an intern for the then-Southern Baptist Home Mission Board (now North American Mission Board), South Carolina Baptist Courier and Western Recorder. He also has served as associate editor at the Biblical Recorder with the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina. He has served since 1996 as managing editor for the Baptist Courier in South Carolina.

The editor search committee and the Western Recorder board of directors, along with the KBC Mission Board affirm God's call upon Deaton's life to serve in this capacity. The "calling of the pen," as he refers to

his ministry, began at a Royal Ambassador camp in South Carolina, and was later confirmed through life events. Our new editor commented, "I view Christian journalism as the ministry to which God called me, and my deepest desire is to use the writing skills that God has given me in service to my fellow believers."

As to Deaton's journalistic style, one does not have to look further than the writings in his column in the Baptist Courier titled, "Along the Way." When given freedom to write on any topic or direction by his editor, Deaton placed the focus of his column on those people in the pews doing ministry that makes a difference in the Kingdom of God.

In his ministry he has been characterized as a "bridge-builder" and an "encourager." The theme verse he has selected is Romans 14:19, "Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify one another."

I am confident that Kentucky Baptists will discover Todd Deaton to be theologically conservative and a traditional Southern Baptist whose life is the result of the very best of our denomination. As editor, Deaton will continue the longstanding editorial freedom past Western Recorder editors have enjoyed, and will exercise his "calling of the pen" with accuracy, balance and fairness. He has indicated that he will lead the newspaper to tell the story of what Kentucky Baptists are doing to fulfill the Great Commission.

Just as we will in a very short time welcome a new commander-in-chief and commit ourselves to pray for him, we also will welcome a new editor and his family to the Kentucky Baptist Convention. Please join me and many others across the state to welcome and pray for our new editor.

Skip Alexander is pastor of Campbellsville Baptist Church and was chairman of the Western Recorder's editor search committee.

GUEST EDITORIAL



Skip Alexander

An atheistic Grinch

By Kelly Boggs

Alexandria, La. (BP)—"It is not a religious display," Dan Barker told Seattle's KING-TV. "It is an attack on religion."

The president of the Wisconsin-based Freedom from Religion Foundation was referring to a placard his group placed in the Washington State Capitol designed to counter the message he believes is conveyed by the presence of a nativity scene.

"If there is going to be a nativity scene that's pro-Christian, which basically insults those of us who are not Christian, by telling us we're going to go to hell unless we bow down before that baby Jesus, then we want an equal time, too," Barker said during an interview on Fox News.

So what in Barker's mind constitutes equal time with a simple display of a nativity scene? A sign that reads:

"At this time of the winter solstice, may reason prevail. There are no gods, no devils, no angels, no heaven or hell. There is only our natural world. Religion is but a myth and superstition that hardens hearts and enslaves minds."

Washington Gov. Christine Gregoire apparently agrees with Barker that the message contained on the placard constitutes equal time because she approved its placement in the Capitol.

It must be noted that the nativity scene, which was placed by a private group, is accompanied in the Cap-

itol's rotunda by a "holiday tree" and a menorah. While the atheist sign constitutes an attack on religion in general, Barker makes it clear that his beef is with Christianity.

"December is not a Christian month," Barker said in his interview on Fox News. "Nobody thinks Jesus was born in December if He was born at all. We all love this time of year. And if Christians are going to stick their foot into the season, we're going to put ours in as well."

While there is no doubt that offense is in the eye of the beholder, I have found that a person's reaction to a benign display reveals more about the person than it does about the display.

Barker contends that a simple nativity scene, void of any written message, communicates that people are going to hell unless they bow down before the baby Jesus. And at that, he is offended.

Atheists like Barker simply need to get over it. Jesus was born. He is the One and Only Savior of the world. But to many others He was simply a good teacher, and to some simply a moral philosopher.

You see what you want to see when you look at a nativity scene. I see hope for a troubled world. Barker sees religion, which he hates. I am not Jewish, but I am not offended by a menorah being placed on public property. December is when Jews celebrate Hanukkah. It is appropriate.

COMMENTARY

A "holiday tree" could easily be considered a Pagan symbol—there is nothing in Judaism or Christianity that relates to decorated evergreen trees as a symbol for anything. That said, I am not bothered by their placement in capitol rotundas.

If Barker had wanted to place a symbol somehow relating to the celebration of his religion, which happens to be atheism, perhaps it would have been somewhat appropriate. However, the placard he placed is nothing more than an attack on religion. And Barker made it clear that is what it was intended to be.

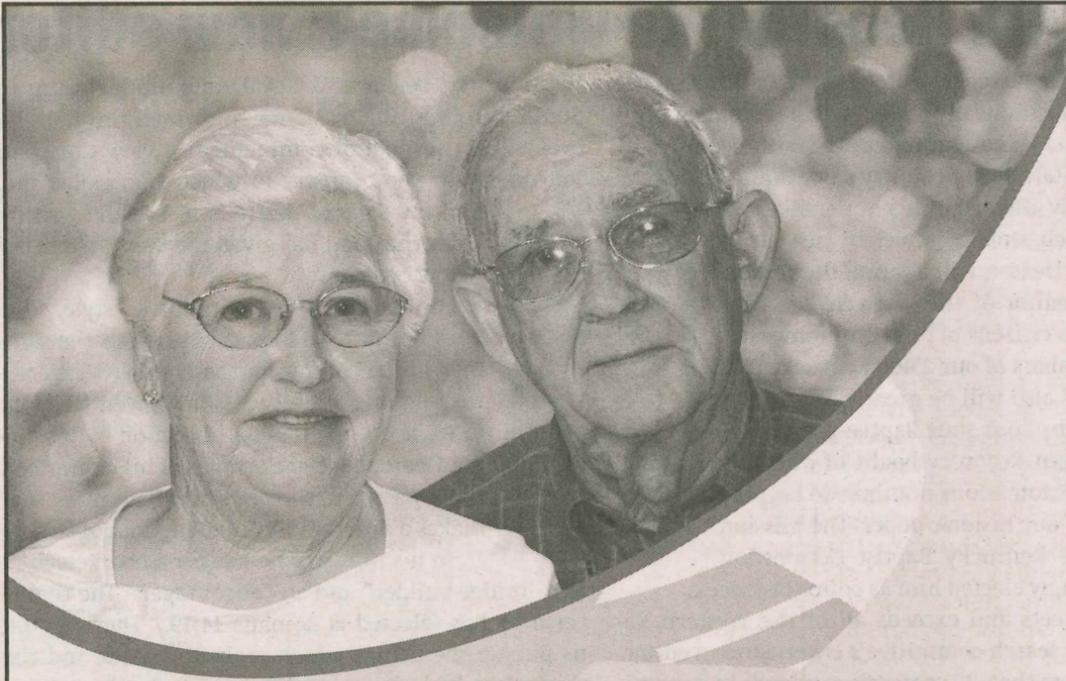
The attack on religion that is on display at the Washington State Capitol is designed to be provocative and to raise hackles. The best way to deal with it is to turn the other cheek.

Barker wants you to be angry and offended. Don't give him any satisfaction. Ignore him. He is just another Ebenezer Scrooge—a Grinch—disgruntled by the joy inherent during the Christmas season.

Recognizing time-honored religious traditions hardly constitutes an endorsement of a single religion by the state. However, a written message conveyed with the intent of an attack on religion—and a single religion at that—seems to run counter to the intent of our constitution.

By allowing an unprecedented attack on religion in the public square, Washington Gov. Gregoire may have opened a Pandora's Box of future protests with which she is ill-equipped to deal.

Kelly Boggs is editor of the Louisiana Baptist Message.



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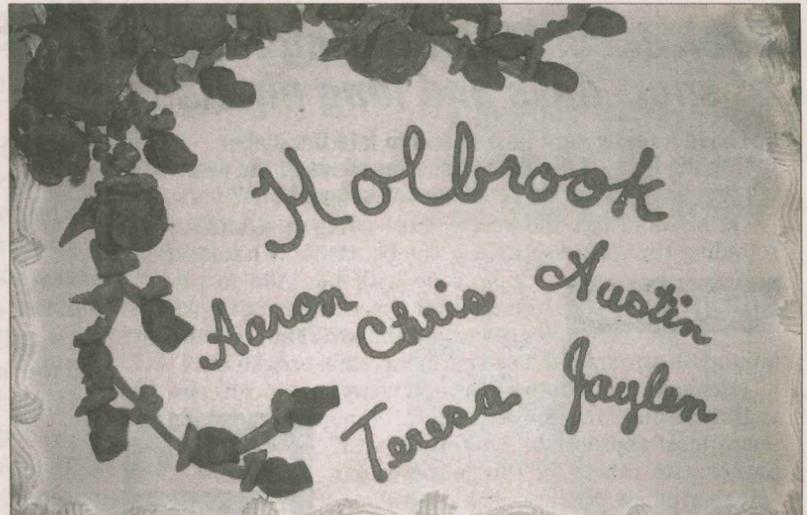
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CELEBRATION The Holbrooks celebrated their new family with a cake displaying all of their names. (Photo courtesy of the Holbrook family)

Adoption brings answer to family's Christmas prayers

Continued from page 1

with a housecat named Lucky to adding three rambunctious boys, then ages 4, 6 and 8.

"They were wild," Teresa recalled. "I woke up one morning to a baby powder fight in the bathroom. They looked like little snowmen. They were just wild."

Aaron said the new living situation was not overwhelming but was a shock. "It was just a big change from my wife and I and a cat to us, a cat and three boys who were chasing the cat and bouncing around and hollering and playing."

Ground rules were laid: No fighting, no cussing, and use an inside voice while in the house.

"We loved them like they were ours"

But the foster parents' biggest rule was to provide a loving environment, Teresa added. "The first day they came, we loved them like they were ours."

Aaron recalled when the boys arrived. Seeing the oldest boy, Chris, get out of the car, Aaron remembered an old picture his mom had of himself. "He could have passed for me at that age. I was ready (to adopt them) right then."

Teresa added: "Everybody says they look like ours."

Eventually it became evident that the boys would not be going back to their mother, Teresa explained.

"They had visitation with their mother. As months went by, she quit showing up, and I think they realized we were there for them always," she said.

Eventually officials took away the original parents' rights, clearing the way for Aaron and Teresa to

adopt the boys. A social worker told the Holbrooks that the adoption was moving forward but that it probably would not happen until early 2009.

Meeting with a group of men for a weekly prayer time, Aaron shared this information and requested prayer that the adoption happen sooner.

"We prayed about it that night," he recalled. "The next morning the attorneys called to say that the adoption would be going through Dec. 1, which was less than a week away."

Crystal Prather of Sunrise Children's Services remembered getting the call from Aaron. "He was so happy, he called and said 'God gave us our Christmas wish.'"

The adoption was processed at the Morgan County courthouse. Aaron and Teresa said Chris, Austin and Jaylen are adjusting well to their new status. "The oldest one, he's just now beginning to call us Mom and Dad, now that the adoption is final," Teresa noted.

Since the boys arrived, family members have helped out, dropping off clothes and other resources. Aaron acknowledged they have made some financial adjustments to care for three boys, but added that he really has not worried about it.

"To me, it doesn't matter from a financial situation because they're worth it," he said. "Whatever it costs or whatever it takes, it's worth it."

Everyone in the family has a little more elbow room these days. In June, they moved into a three-bedroom house in anticipation of the adoption. They also bought an SUV.

Teresa said she's thinking of yet another upgrade. "I'm already ready for a van."

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Paducah church members meet for first time since fire

By Laqueta Perry
The Paducah Sun

Paducah—The congregation of Immanuel Baptist Church in Paducah gathered for worship as usual Dec. 7, but in an unusual place.

Fire destroyed the church sanctuary Dec. 4, so members filled the seats in Paducah Tilghman High School's auditorium. Choir members wearing white robes accented with purple sang from the balcony, before later moving to the stage with those who played instruments.

"I'm just grateful everyone is here," Pastor Jamie Broome said shortly before the service.

Broome said the church building's only working lights are in the office and that there is no electricity, light or heat in the rest of the building. He added that soot covered everything.

The fire broke out shortly after 2 p.m., Dec. 4 when the heat from a light ignited a curtain. Firefighters contained the fire damage to the sanctuary building.

"Hopefully in a week we'll have use of the CLC and Educational League," he said. "And in a couple more weeks have use of the fellowship hall."

The church's 25th annual "The Life of Christ in Living Pictures" program, originally scheduled for Dec. 11-14, was replaced by a concert titled "Come Celebrate Jesus" held last weekend.

Father and son Chris and Will Hutson talked about how they ended up attending 12 years ago when

they lived across the street from the church.

"It's not the structure on Buckner Lane, instead it's God," Will Hutson noted. "Immanuel is where we all gather together. While we're not at 3465 Buckner Lane this morning, we're at Immanuel."

Lasting images

While the choir sang "Blessed Jesus, Bless us Now," images of the church's sanctuary were shown as part of a slide show.

Broome suggested that members who did not wish to see the images bow their heads.

The first pictures showed the church steeple, stained glass windows and the pews in the sanctuary in their former glory. The latter pictures showed the charred sanctuary as it stood after the fire. Many of those pictures were very dark.

Some members audibly sniffed and wiped away tears.

Broome hugged and shook the hands of his congregants as they walked into the lobby where sodas and hot cider were served.

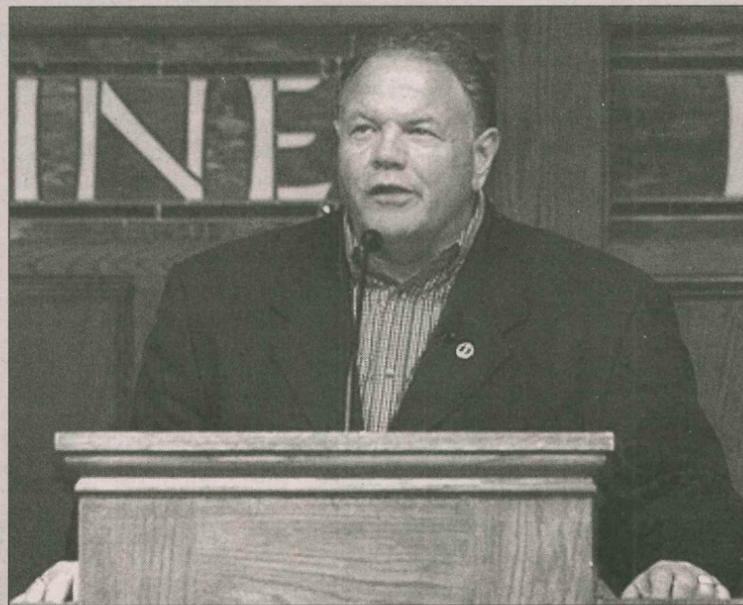
"I think it's important today for us to stay around and be together," he said.

That afternoon, the main sanctuary entrance was opened to the members who wanted to take a look at the damage.

"We may be here (Tilghman) next Sunday, but as soon as possible we want to be as close to our home as possible," Broome noted.

Reprinted with permission from The Paducah Sun

Final word



H. Dean Haun, pastor of First Baptist Church of Morristown, Tenn., delivers the final convocation message of the fall semester at University of the Cumberlands in Williamsburg. A member of UC's class of 1978, Haun told students, faculty and staff, "It is wonderful to be back on campus and to see all the changes that have taken—and continue to take—place." He recalled his days as a roommate of Bill Henard, pastor of Porter Memorial Baptist Church in Lexington and Southern Baptist Convention first vice president, at what was then known as Cumberland College. He said that the two of them had been voted the "least likely to succeed as ministerial students." Haun called himself and Henard, who also is former Kentucky Baptist Convention president, good examples of what God can do in a person's life, examples that students should remember when they have doubts and worries about the future. Since graduating from Cumberland, Haun has served as pastor at a number of Southern Baptist churches, most notably, First Baptist Church of Jonesboro, Ga., the home of Chick-fil-A founder Truett Cathy.



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'I'll be home for Christmas'

By car, bus & plane, Oneida students prepare to join families for the holidays

As you are reading this, our students are preparing to go home for the Christmas holidays. For some, it is only a short drive down one of the local roads here in the county. Others will be greeted by family members who have traveled several hours to get here. Still others will ride the Greyhound bus for what will seem like an endless trip.

Most of the rest will be taken to the airport for a more comfortable—though possibly long—flight home. Some will sleep in their own beds Friday night; others will travel more than 30 hours to reach the four corners of the earth.

Frequently I am asked how students from halfway around the world hear about OBI and why so many want to come to the U.S. to go to school. One of our Chinese students recently told us why. "My father has a good friend whose son came to America. I was excited. It's a good opportunity. America is the most popular (country) in the world" to get an education.

It is sad that more Americans do not take seriously the opportunity to obtain a good education. Many international students tell about less-educated teachers back home doing the best they can to teach in a classroom with 50 or more students. They say there often is little or no time for questions or discussion. Frequently they have no textbooks to take home. Many of those classrooms do not have even the basic teaching aids found in nearly all of America's schools.

On Jan. 1, Oneida will begin its 110th academic year. OBI has survived two World Wars,

a Great Depression, major flu epidemics, several military conflicts and numerous economic recessions. Oneida even has been forced to send students home because funds were not available to keep the school operating.

Numerous times the faculty had to work for months with little or no compensation. Small gardens, the creek and river provided most of their food. Very few students and only a handful of staff have any idea of how difficult it has been.

Our school was founded to provide an education for the boys and girls from up the creeks and hollows that surround the community of Oneida.

Many years ago, the Lord opened the door of opportunity to help students from other counties, states and eventually other countries. As God has opened those doors, the Oneida administrations have felt the call to meet the needs of students from different backgrounds and from a host of cultures.

Our students have understandably been looking forward to this mid-year break for some time. While we are thankful for each of our students, it will be a time of much-needed rest for the faculty and staff who have worked many tiring hours.

Like our students, most of our faculty and staff also will travel to visit loved ones in several different states. While we all look forward to this time of rest, we will be equally as excited when it is time for them to return and continue their Oneida journeys. We hope you have a wonderful Christmas as well.

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



Life in the 'lower 48'

Webb experiences sense of family far from her own

Sharon Webb, a junior from Prince of Wales Island in southeast Alaska, easily has the distinction among the current student body of traveling the farthest to study at Clear Creek.

"I knew about Clear Creek from my cousin who came here a year before I did," Webb said. "Clear Creek also took a mission trip to my dad's church in Coffman Cove, Alaska. After the mission team left, God began to deal with my heart about coming to Clear Creek."

"It was a real surprise to me because it was July when the group left and school started in August. I had planned to transfer to a school in Colorado. ... I remember it was all kind of sudden to me," Webb continued. "There I was one night sitting at dinner with my parents and telling them that God was calling me to Clear Creek."

"Both my parents were very supportive of my decision," she recalled. "They told me if I was sure this was what God wanted me to do then they would support me every way they could."

"The first few days here was an adjustment for me," Webb said. "I

was really homesick. Once classes started, though, I began to realize what a special place this is where God prepares people for ministry.

"I really fell in love with Clear Creek. God has really given me a sense of family here with the other students and their families," she noted.

"I have actually had families invite me to share Thanksgiving and Christmas with them. I am thankful that God has given me a new sense of family here among my fellow students since my family is so far away."

The move to Clear Creek may be one way God is preparing Webb for her ministry calling.

"I am studying in the missions and evangelism track," she said. "God has given me a heart for people who do not know Jesus Christ as their Savior. I don't know where that will lead—maybe the Journeyman program or seminary to prepare for a career missionary appointment. Whatever God wants, I know He will show me where I need to go, no matter how far away it may be."

Donnie Fox is president of Clear Creek Baptist Bible College, 300 Clear Creek Road, Pineville, KY 40977; toll-free: (866) 340-3196; Web site: www.ccbcc.edu; e-mail: dfox@cbbcc.edu

CLEAR CREEK CHRONICLE



Survey: Churches need to better address global poverty

Ventura, Calif. (RNS)—Slightly more than half of Christian church leaders surveyed said their own congregation should be doing more to address global poverty and health.

The survey of 1,024 Protestant and Catholic leaders found that almost two-thirds of them—64 percent—said U.S. churches in general should increase those efforts. But while 57 percent said their own congregation should be doing more, 43 percent said they believed they were doing enough.

"The church is really split when it comes to their interest in dealing with international poverty," said David Kinnaman, president of The Bar-

na Group, which conducted the research for the ONE Campaign, a secular advocacy organization that has started a ONE Sabbath effort to engage religious congregations.

While the vast majority of clergy—90 percent—said political leaders should talk about how the country can address international poverty and health matters, the typical Christian leader may only preach about poverty issues once a year.

"Usually poverty is something that's mentioned once or twice a year," noted Kinnaman, who added that African-American, mainline Protestant and Catholic churches tend to bring up such issues more of-

ten. "It doesn't really become a main theme for many congregations as they talk about the kinds of things they're trying to activate people in their church to do."

Mark Brinkmoeller, national coordinator of ONE Sabbath, said the campaign is offering online resources to congregations—from sermon and hymn suggestions to materials that might be used to influence service projects. The emphasis is timed to the first 100 days of the administration of President-elect Barack Obama and the new Congress.

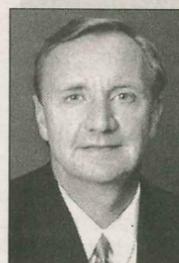
"It's a bit of an on-ramp for congregations," Brinkmoeller said in a news teleconference Dec. 3.

Leaders from the Jewish, Muslim and Hindu communities who support the ONE Sabbath effort said keeping things simple is crucial for congregational involvement. They cited examples of the Nothing but Nets Campaign, recently endorsed by the Union for Reform Judaism, where \$10 can save a life with a malaria-preventing net.

Cizik resigns from NAE over support of same-sex unions

By Adelle Banks
Religion News Service

Washington (RNS)—The top Washington lobbyist for the National Association of Evangelicals, who had already faced criticism for his embrace of environmental activism, resigned Dec. 11 after signaling support for same-sex civil unions.



Richard Cizik

Richard Cizik, who had worked in the NAE's Washington office for 28 years, resigned after being harshly criticized for the civil union comments and saying he voted for President-elect Barack Obama in the Virginia primary despite Obama's support of abortion rights.

NAE President Leith Anderson said Cizik's comments in a Dec. 2 interview with National Public Radio's "Fresh Air" program were problematic because they did not reflect the views of many NAE member organizations.

"I think that what people did communicate ... is that he cannot continue as a spokesperson for NAE, and the implication of that is that he resign," Anderson noted in an interview last week.

Anderson, a Minnesota megachurch pastor, said he and Cizik talked for "hours" Wednesday after Cizik returned from an overseas trip and flew to Minneapolis. Both men came to a joint decision that Cizik needed to resign.

Cizik, 58, who was the NAE's vice president for governmental affairs and public face in the media and on Capitol Hill, declined to comment.

In the NPR interview, he spoke on an array of topics, from gay marriage to abortion to last month's elections. The controversy marked the second time in as many years that his comments sparked an outcry from more conservative Christian leaders.

"It's possible for me to disagree with a candidate on high-profile issues and still believe that, on the basis of character or philosophy, he's the better of the two candidates," Cizik stated in the interview.

"So, in this case, it would be possible, as evangelicals did, to disagree with Barack Obama on same-sex marriage and abortion and yet vote for him. We know they did, not because of those positions ... but in spite of those positions."

In the NPR interview, Cizik said he voted for Obama in the Virginia primary but did not disclose how he voted in the general election. He also remarked that his views about gays and marriage were evolving.

"I'm shifting, I have to admit," he said. "In other words, I would be willing to say I believe in civil unions. I don't officially support redefining marriage from its traditional definition, I don't think."

Critics from conservative groups, including Concerned Women for America and the Institute on Religion and Democracy, blasted Cizik, saying he did not represent "biblical orthodoxy" or "millions of other evangelicals."

Evangelical leaders, including Focus on the Family founder James Dobson, had called for Cizik to be fired in 2007 because of his "relentless campaign" against global warming. At that time, the NAE board stood by Cizik and reaffirmed the group's commitment to caring for the environment that was included in a 2003 statement on "public engagement."

In the interview with "Fresh Air," Cizik said Christians should care about both family and environmental issues.

"It's strategically important for Christians to care for this earth, just as it's important for Christians to care for the family," he said. "These are equals. They're both part of God's concern. They're both part of His heart."

Asked if Cizik's resignation puts the NAE in a difficult situation just two years after former NAE president Ted Haggard resigned because of a sex and drug scandal, Anderson said the two departures were entirely unrelated.

Explore the MISSIONAL RENAISSANCE

with Reggie McNeal

Thursday, January 22, 2009

10:00 am - 3:00 pm | Kentucky Baptist Building, Louisville

Pastors and church staff: join us for the 2009 Pastor/Staff Forum with Reggie McNeal! In his new book, *Missional Renaissance*, McNeal outlines the three shifts required of churches and church leaders who desire to be part of the missional church movement.

Registration is just \$8.00 per person and includes lunch.

For details and registration: www.kybaptist.org/forum
502-489-3576 or 866-489-3576 (toll free in KY)



Reggie McNeal is an author and missional leadership specialist at Leadership Network



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PRAYER PARTNERS

Please pray for the following requests associated with the Kentucky Baptist Convention's partnership missions efforts:

■ Pray that Kentucky Baptist associations, churches, pastors and laity will respond to the call to fill numerous missions project requests in Maryland/Delaware and internationally.

■ Pray for the All the World 2009 focus nation, Nicaragua, and the teams that already are committed to projects there.

■ Pray for the projects planned by Christian County Baptist Association in Piauí, Brazil, and that other Kentucky Baptists will join with those efforts.

■ Pray for Paulo Paiva, a Brazilian church planter working with the Maryland/Delaware Baptist Association to start new churches among the 3,000 Brazilians in that area.

■ Pray for volunteers to participate in a mission project next summer working alongside the Brazilians in Maryland/Delaware.

■ Pray for Kentucky Baptist Convention efforts to assist Tanzanian Baptist Convention leaders in forming a strong convention structure to support Baptists' work in that country.

For more information about partnership missions opportunities, contact the KBC partnership missions department at (502) 489-3529, toll free in Kentucky at (866) 489-3529, or visit www.KyBaptist.org/Partnership.

MOUNTAINS TO THE MISSISSIPPI

COMPILED BY STAFF

■ **CAMPBELLSVILLE**—Saloma Church's adult choir will present a Christmas cantata Dec. 21, 11 a.m. The church's children and youth will present their Christmas musical at 6 p.m. **John Chowning** is pastor.

■ **CLOVERPORT**—Cloverport Church recently called **Raymond Ward** as interim pastor.

■ **HARDINSBURG**—Goshen Church recently called **Kyle McDanell** as pastor. He previously was youth pastor at Greenup Fork Church in Owenton.

New Clover Creek Church recently called **Joey Harness** as pastor. He previously was associate pastor at New Hope Church in Moreland.

■ **HARRODSBURG**—Harrodsburg Church recently called **Wayne Spivey** as pastor. He previously was pastor at Cynthiana Church.

■ **HAWESVILLE**—New Life Church recently called **Wallace Gooch** as interim pastor.

Pellville Church recently called **Jerry Adamson** as interim pastor.

Union Church recently called **Franklin Suggs** as interim pastor.

■ **HENDERSON**—The Hyland Church adult choir will present "Emmanuel: God Is With Us" Dec. 21, 10:15 a.m. **Don Moore** is pastor.

■ **LONDON**—Laurel River Church recently hosted the ordination of **Craig Morgan**, who recently was called as pastor of Old Salem Church in London.

■ **LOUISVILLE**—Broadway Church will hold Christmas Eve services Dec. 24, 5:30 & 11 p.m. **Chris Caldwell** is pastor.

Spotlight on ...

Henderson



First Church will present "Festival of Carols" Dec. 21, 6 p.m., featuring the church's worship choir, handbell choir and orchestra. **Todd Linn** is pastor.

Carlisle Avenue Church recently called **Matt Swain** as music minister and minister to senior adults. **Jason Allen** is pastor.

■ **MADISONVILLE**—First Church will present "The Glorias of Christmas" Dec. 21 at 6 p.m., featuring the church's choir and orchestra performing Christmas and seasonal anthems and instrumental works. **Joe Leonard** is pastor.

■ **MAYSVILLE**—Stonelick Church recently called **Harry Brooks** as pastor.

■ **SHELBY, N.C.**—Former Kentucky Baptist pastor **Richard Prassel** died Nov. 26 at his home in North Carolina. He was 46. Prassel served as pastor of Wallaceton Baptist Church in Paint Lick and First Baptist Church of Junction City. He was pastor of Poplar Springs Baptist Church in Shelby, N.C., at the time of his death. Prassel is survived by his wife, Beth, daughter of longtime Kentucky Baptist pastor Curtis Warf; and three children, Anna, 16, Joel, 13, and Jacob, 10. Funeral services for Prassel were held Nov. 29.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

January 2009

15-17 Shepherding the Shepherd, Lexington Downtown Hotel & Conference Center.

22 Pastor/Staff Forum, Baptist Building, Louisville.

22-23 Quarterly Prayer Meeting for Spiritual Awakening, Hope Community Church, Lawrenceburg.

23-24 Region 1 Disaster Relief Recertification and Training, Lone Oak First Baptist Church, Paducah.

28-31 Southeast Conclave, Atlanta.

30-31 Preschool/Children's Ministry Meeting, Baptist Building, Louisville.

30-31 Regional Women on Mission Retreat, Laurel Lake Baptist Camp, Corbin.

For more information, call (800) 266-6477 or visit www.kybaptist.org

Christmas missions



Members of Sullivan Baptist Church in Union County strike a pose after wrapping up its sixth year of participating in the Operation Christmas Child shoebox project. This year the church, which averages about 55 in attendance each Sunday, prepared 120 shoeboxes filled with gifts to send to needy children in India. Operation Christmas Child is a ministry of Samaritan's Purse, the international relief organization led by Franklin Graham. Despite its size and rural location, Sullivan Baptist member Phyllis Parker said the church is "very missions-minded" and encouraged other Kentucky Baptist congregations to get involved with the Christmas shoebox project. (Photo courtesy of Phyllis Parker)

CLASSIFIED ADS

FOR SALE: Church buses and vans—new and used. Call American Bus and Accessories, Inc., (800) 582-7118.

FOR SALE: Christian, patriotic and military neckties, \$6. Humor book, "500 Laughter Doeth Good Like a Medicine" (over 1,000 sold), \$6. Booklet, "Death: How to Prepare," \$6. (606) 285-3051.

FOR SALE: 12 pews with orange backs and seat cushions. 10.5' long by 2' wide. \$100 each or make offer. (502) 680-0551.

SEEKING: Part-time minister of music (10-15 hours per week) for FBC Prospect. Worship style is content-driven and Christ-centered. Instrumental ability is helpful, not mandatory. Music leadership experience preferred. E-mail resumé to Pastor Jon Cyrus (joncyrus1@gmail.com).

SEEKING: Part-time pianist for Sunday morning service. We sing traditional and contemporary songs. Please send resumé to Melbourne Heights Baptist Church, 3728 Taylorsville Road, Louisville, KY 40220, Attn: Personnel Dept. Hours and pay will be discussed at interview. You may call church at (502) 454-4681.

SEEKING: Full-time pastor for Providence First Baptist Church. Send resumé and, if possible, a photo, DVD or cassette, and references, to Mr. Ray Gobin, 214 Benjamin Terrace, Providence, KY 42450. Phone: (270) 667-2302.

SEEKING: Full-time pastor with experience who demonstrates a godly

character, strong leadership skills, has a heart for evangelism, and believes the Bible to be the inerrant Word of God. Send resumé to Parkway Baptist Church, 1915 N. Broadway, Lexington, KY 40511.

SEEKING: Full-time student minister/associate pastor for Southern Heights Baptist Church, 1400 Nashville St., Russellville, KY 42276. Please contact Barry McReynolds, (270) 847-0861, or barrymc3853@hotmail.com. Deadline for submitting resumé: Dec. 30.

SEEKING: Mid-Continent University, a Baptist institution in west Kentucky that teaches the inerrancy of the Scriptures and Biblical creationism, seeks full-time professors in: 1. Economics with a possible 18 graduate hours in Finance; 2. Management; 3. Human Resources; and 4. Nursing Management for the 2009 calendar year. Applicants must have terminal degrees in their respective fields and should have some experience in accelerated adult business programs. Major duties include teaching and related tasks such as curriculum development. Willingness to travel is also required. Salary and benefits are negotiable. Applicants should forward a cover letter, resumé and list of references to Dr. Stephen Wilson, Vice-President for Academic Affairs, Mid-Continent University, 99 Powell Road East, Mayfield, KY 42066. Send official transcripts of all college work to the same address. No e-mail submissions

or incomplete submissions will be considered. Mid-Continent University does not discriminate in the employment of individuals on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, disability, gender, or age. However, to the extent allowed by law, Mid-Continent reserves the right to give preference in employment based on religion. The application deadline is 12-31-2008.

SEEKING: Part-time minister of recreation (25 hours per week) for Hall Street Baptist Church. Please send confidential resumé with cover letter to: Hall Street Baptist Church, 1102 Hall St., Owensboro, KY 42303, Attn: Personnel Committee.

SEEKING: Part-time music minister for Evergreen Baptist Church, Frankfort, Ky. EBC has 150-plus congregation, traditional and contemporary. Send to EBC, 2698 Evergreen Road, Frankfort, KY 40601, Attn: M. Hughes; or e-mail to office@evergreenbaptistchurch.us.

SEEKING: Full-time high school/college pastor for Valley View Church in Louisville. Candidates should have a verifiable track record (8-10 years) of successful student ministry experience (ministry growth and spiritual development) with a group of approximately 60 students within a larger church context. Candidates should possess skills in communicating God's Word in practical ways, a vision for building a team of volunteers, and an understanding of current student cultures. We seek candi-

dates prepared for a long-term commitment. In addition, we prefer candidates to have formal youth ministry training, past focused concentration on high school ministry, experience with college students and experience in a church of approximately 700. Administrative and budget-conscious skill sets are a plus. More details are available upon request. Candidates should send a cover letter, resumé and message sample, along with a current photograph, to the following address or e-mail: Valley View Church, 8911 Third Street Road, Louisville, KY 40272, Attn: High School Position; studentpastorresearch@valleyviewchurch.org.

SEEKING: Senior pastor. First Baptist Church, Morganfield, Ky., is looking to call a pastor who is community-minded for a church having an existing community outreach presence. FBC is located in a small, western Kentucky town and has an average attendance of 200-250. We have two Sunday morning services, one contemporary and one blended. This is an awesome church that has a strong potential for growth. Send resumé to: Pastor Search Committee, First Baptist Church, 200 North Morgan St., Morganfield, KY 42437.

SEEKING: Full-time pastor for Petrey Memorial Baptist Church in Hazard, Ky. Please forward resumé and, if possible, DVD, CD or tape, to Pastor Search Team, Petrey Memorial Baptist Church, 141 Alto St., Hazard, KY 41701. www.petreymemorial.org.

History's most notorious rude host likely misunderstood

Historians suggest innkeeper's wicked image undeserved

By G. Jeffrey Macdonald
Religion News Service

Pittsburgh (RNS)—'Tis the season for Christmas pageants everywhere to dramatize one of Scripture's most familiar scenes and cast a cold-hearted innkeeper, who shoos away the holy family to a lowly stable.

But pageants and sermons castigating the infamous innkeeper are giving him an underserved bad rap, scholars say, and are feeding dangerous misconceptions about how Jesus' contemporaries received Him.

"We're so brainwashed into this idea of the mean old innkeeper and no room at the inn, we don't even notice that this is a violation of the text that we've just read," noted Kenneth Bailey, a Bible scholar and author of "Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes."

The innkeeper's reputation stems from a single, oblique reference in Luke 2:7. The verse says Mary wrapped the newborn Jesus in cloth "and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn." From this text, Christian communities through the centuries have inferred that the Savior was rebuffed at birth.

The reality was possibly much different. The "inn" (or "lodgings" in some translations) was not a hotel or hostel but perhaps a guest room in the private residence of one of Joseph's relatives, according to Mikeal Parsons, a Baylor University New Testament scholar who is writing a commentary on Luke. Because that room already was occupied, Parsons explained, hosts may have made room for Mary and Joseph within their own family quarters and cleaned up an animal feeding trough (manger)



NATIVITY SCENE Oscar Isaac (left) stars as Joseph and Keisha Castle-Hughes (right) stars as Mary in New Line Cinema's release of Catherine Hardwicke's drama, "The Nativity Story." (RNS photo courtesy of Jaimie Trueblood/New Line Productions)

to serve as a crib.

Such details are important, scholars say, in part because the birth narrative is rich with symbolism. The divine infant's portrayal in modest circumstances suggests, for instance, that God humbled Himself to join the commonest of humankind. Hence for later generations to conjure a fictitious innkeeper and make him into something of a villain may be to read a new, unwarranted and potentially misleading significance into the story.

"It's kind of a 'gotcha' moment to recognize there is no innkeeper or reason to castigate an innkeeper, but that's what we tend to do," said Thomas Stegman, associate professor of New Testament at Boston College School of Theology and Ministry. "It's an easy thing to cast judgment on this figure, (but) anything that gives us an out from examining ourselves first is not a good thing in the spiritual life. ... We need to consider instead how hospitable have we been?"

Surrounding the innkeeper's im-

age is the question of who welcomed Jesus and who rejected Him. Boston College theologian Harvey Egan noted that some Christian traditions have presumed an innkeeper's rudeness foreshadows Jesus' rejection by religious authorities on the eve of His death. Bailey cautions that Christians need to be careful not to let innkeeper legends perpetuate harmful stereotypes about Jews as people hostile toward Jesus or insensitive to the plight of a pregnant woman.

"It's important for us as Christians to look at our text and say, 'We have read an anti-Jewish undercurrent into a lot of stories where it's not there, and here's one of them,'" Bailey said. "The message is not: 'Bethlehem did not open its hearts. Are we willing to?' The message is: 'Bethlehem opened its hearts. Are we willing to?'"

Scholars are taking steps to set the record straight. Bailey, for instance, published in 2005 "Open Hearts in Bethlehem," a musical now performed by church groups to underscore the hospitality that baby

Jesus received. Marcus Borg, co-author of "The First Christmas: What the Gospels Really Teach About Jesus' Birth," wrote that the elusive innkeeper figure could be understood as a low-status employee who welcomed what Jesus represented.

"Those who are in the peasant class, the bottom 90 percent oppressed by Roman imperial rule, provide hospitality for the newborn Jesus—and that would include the innkeeper as well the shepherds, (who) are intrigued by an alternative lord who brings a new kind of peace," Borg said.

Not everyone is ready, however, to see the innkeeper as open-hearted from the get-go. Mac McConnell of Fort Lauderdale, Fla., has for years used his one-man drama ministry to portray the innkeeper as a respectable businessman who was just too busy to put up with a crying child and offered a spot among animals just to get the family out of his way. Last month, he published his tale in a book he described as historical fiction: "Hadad, The Innkeeper's Journey."

McConnell's innkeeper "is not generous at all," he insisted, in offering a manger to the holy family. The portrayal of a guy too busy for the Lord "is a dramatic foil to a degree, but it's also there because those in Bethlehem missed (the signs of a Savior's birth) even though it was obvious."

Scholars meanwhile continue to press for a new image of a redeemed innkeeper (or host) who never hesitated to show respect—and who now deserves a little reciprocity.

"Luke is highlighting the hospitality of the anonymous household (friend or relative) and not condemning the inhospitality of an insensitive innkeeper," Parsons said. "His point seems to be ... that Jesus came to His own and His own received Him."

"We're so brainwashed into this idea of the mean old innkeeper and no room at the inn, we don't even notice that this is a violation of the text that we've just read."

Kenneth Bailey, Bible scholar and author of "Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes"

Tough economic times don't dim lights on Living Christmas Trees

By Bob Allen
Associated Baptist Press

Huntsville, Ala. (ABP)—Rather than cutting back on lavish Christmas programs this year due to the economy, some church leaders insist hard times make them more valuable than ever.

Billy Orton, minister of music and worship at First Baptist Church of Huntsville, Ala., said his church did not even consider cutting back its annual Living Christmas Tree performance, now in its 24th year.

"The message of hope, peace, joy and love is needed now more than ever," he declared.

While a major investment of resources, Orton said the church views the Living Christmas Tree—with free admission and no offering taken—as a gift to the entire community.

"We are thinking there might be even larger crowds due to the fact that folks will hold back on purchasing tickets to other holiday concerts and presentations in the area and instead choose to attend one of our six performances," he noted.

Steve Poole, minister of music and worship at Oak Grove Baptist Church in Bel Air, Md.—a congregation born during hard economic

times in 1932—said he volunteered to trim his music budget along with other expenses being reduced in 2009, but so far many members have remained faithful to support missions and ministries of the church.

It costs Oak Grove about \$15,000 each year to present 11 performances of the Living Christmas Tree, Poole pointed out. The church collects an offering, with any money received over expenses going to a benevolence ministry to help needy families in the surrounding county.

"If the tough financial times we are in now bring about a reduction in the free-will offerings, then we may need to cut back on some of our plans for the 2009 program," he said.

Longstanding tradition

The idea of lining up choir members on risers stacked cone-shape to resemble a Christmas tree has been around for decades. The outdoor Singing Christmas Tree at Belhaven College in Jackson, Miss., thought to be the oldest, has been a tradition since 1933.

The advent of the megachurch in the 1970s, however, introduced cavernous worship centers large

enough to accommodate bringing such massive structures indoors.

While it is unclear where the idea got started, one of the early pioneers was Bill Shadle, longtime music minister at First Baptist Church of Denton, Texas. He asked Millard Heath, a heating-and-air-conditioning contractor, about building a tree-shaped platform out of metal pipe for his 103-voice choir in 1972.

Figuring pipe would not handle the load, Heath instead designed a platform using structural steel.

He patented the design and started a company that since has sold more than 200 trees for churches in 30 states and overseas.

M.H. Specialties in Bertram, Texas, now offers custom-built models ranging from 18 feet to 48 feet accommodating from 30 to 450 singers or more. Packages cost from \$12,000 to nearly \$100,000, but according to the company Web site some churches cover the initial cost within two years of purchase thanks to offerings taken at performances.

Jeffrey Smith, who purchased the company in 2003, said he has not seen any downturn in business due to the economy.

"Ninety percent of our trees this

year are replacement trees," he explained.

Smith said he just finished putting a tree stage up in Knoxville, Tenn., in a church that has been performing a Living Christmas Tree for 35 years, but just now is upgrading from a wooden stage to steel.

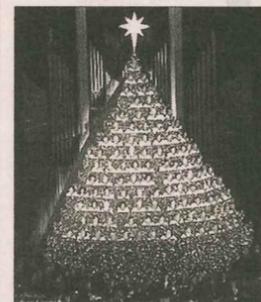
Recognizing the impact

A church in Bradenton, Fla., he noted, had one tree taken down and replaced it with two. A church in Ormond Beach, Fla., is considering purchase of a 60-foot tree to go outdoors on the beach.

In addition to its impact on the Huntsville community, Orton said his church's Living Christmas Tree also is important to its own membership.

In addition to more than 200 musicians in the chorus and orchestra, he said, the program involves the skills of a wide cross-section of the congregation, from construction workers, technical people and decorators to car parkers. This year's program also features the church's children's choirs.

"I am praying that the impact of the 2008 Living Christmas Tree is significant and eternal," Orton said.



LIGHTS ON First Baptist Church of Huntsville, Ala., builds a pageant around its Living Christmas Tree every year. (ABP photo by Michael Misanowicz/Harvest Action Photo)

Estate Planning Myths

You don't need a Will if you and your spouse own everything in joint names

It is best to leave everything to your children, rather than make provision for both your children and grandchildren in your estate plan

Outright distribution to all beneficiaries, no matter their age or capacity, is the best plan for distribution of assets at death

Creating an estate plan that "avoids" probate will avoid death taxes

Only wealthy people include bequests to charitable organizations in their estate plan

Most people want recognition for including charitable gifts in their estate plan

Your spouse has authority to deal with jointly-owned assets if you become incapacitated

The Kentucky Baptist Foundation's private, confidential Estate Planning Consultation Services can dispel these estate planning myths and assist you in developing a Christian estate plan.

For more information contact:

Barry G. Allen, President

or

Laurie W. Valentine, Trust Counsel

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