

Shine
like
stars
in the
world
Philippians 2:15

WESTERN Recorder

December 8, 2009
Vol. 183, No. 48

FOR THE RECORD

Kentucky
J.H. Spencer Historical Society marks first year.
Page 2.

Kentucky
Western Recorder to drop one issue, add color to all issues in 2010.
Page 2.

Baptists
Down economy forces most state Baptist conventions to reduce budget goals.
Page 3.

Baptists
Great Commission Resurgence Task Force making 'great' progress, report expected in February.
Page 3.

Editorial
Using basketball to point children and families 'upward.'
Page 4.

Financial Forum
Getting out of—and staying out of—debt.
Page 5.

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IMB: More than 500,000 people baptized in '08, down from '07

By Don Graham
International Mission Board

Central Asia—"You could be killed for talking about Jesus around here."

That's what a Muslim named Bershi* told missionary Luke Jenkins* after Jenkins shared the gospel with him.

Bershi was an illegal immigrant looking for work when he came to the Central Asian nation where Jenkins serves as a church planter. But his warning didn't stop Jenkins. He continued to discuss Jesus with Bershi, and as the young man's interest grew, they began studying the Bible together. Eventually Bershi gave his life to Christ and was baptized.

Since that time Bershi has begun to actively share his faith and even baptized three others he led to Christ earlier this year. He also has returned to his own country, a place with severely limited access to the gospel and very few believers.

Bershi's baptism is among the more than 506,000 recorded by the International Mission Board in 2008—an average of one baptism per minute. That figure, unfortunately, is 10.6 percent less than the number reported in 2007.

Southern Baptist missionaries and their partners also reported starting more than 24,650 new churches last year. That number, too, is fewer than were started in 2007 by about 8.6 percent.

Meanwhile, the total number of overseas churches topped 204,000, up from 111,000 just five years ago.

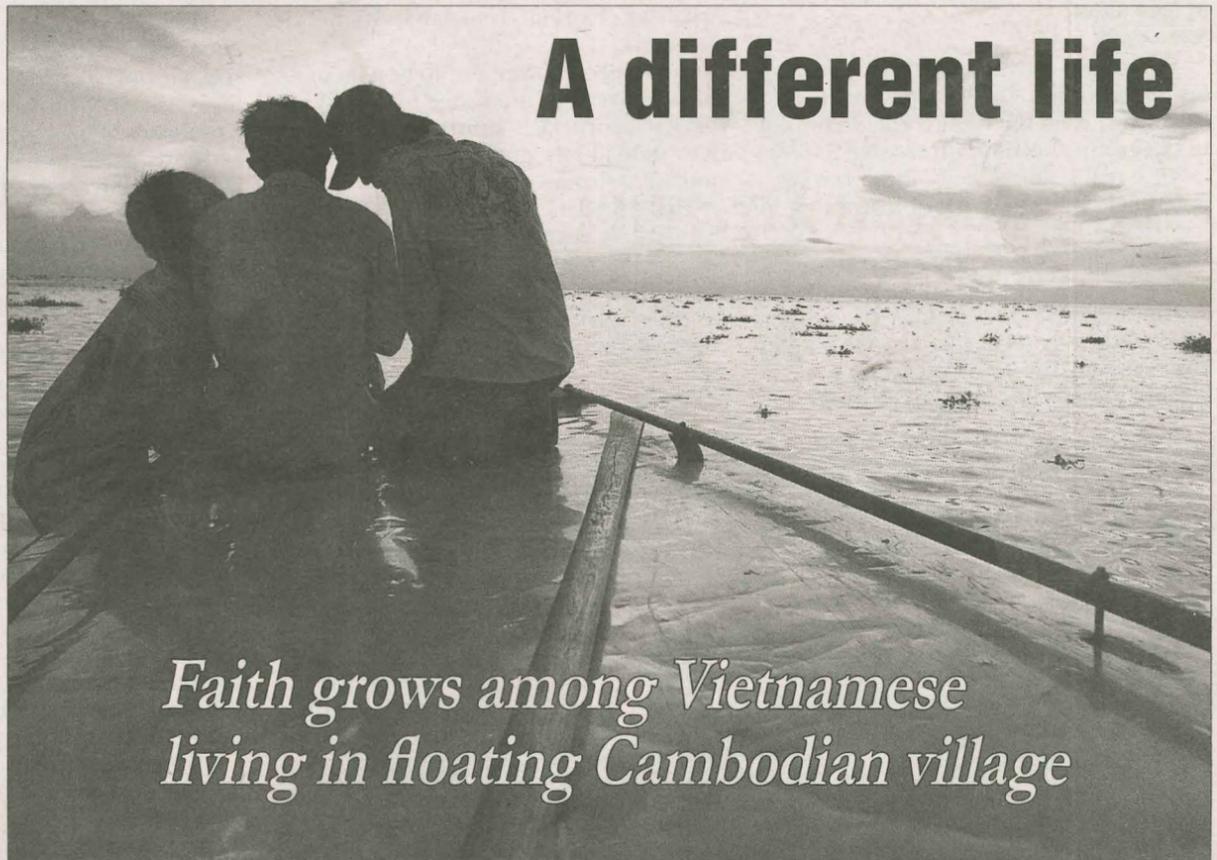
The IMB also reported engaging 93 new people groups with the gospel for the first time.

The numbers are evidence of the way God is continuing to use Southern Baptists to complete the Great Commission task.

Missionaries Karl and Anna Rickman* work with college students in East Asia, an area of the world that sometimes presents some unusual challenges when baptizing new believers.

The Rickmans led a Bible study group where five of the students accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior. As the Rickmans began discipling the students, one of the first lessons focused on baptism. After reading the story of Philip and the

□ See IMB report shows ... Page 3



A different life

Faith grows among Vietnamese living in floating Cambodian village

Young boys visit on top of a boat while the sun sets in the background on Tonle Sap Lake, near Siem Reap, Cambodia. All of the boys are recent believers. (IMB photo)

By Tess Rivers
International Mission Board

Kbal Taol, Cambodia—David* never imagined he'd use ghosts as a way to share the gospel.

A Christian worker in Cambodia, David was surveying floating villages on Tonle Sap Lake, the largest freshwater lake in Southeast Asia, and was in need of a boat and driver. Andrew*, whom David had led to Christ 18 months earlier, agreed to take the job.

It was on one of these survey trips to the village of Kbal Taol that David met Tim*. The two began to talk of spiritual things and David gave Tim a Bible. After several more visits, Tim invited David and Andrew to dinner at his home. Before they arrived, Andrew gave David some advice.

"The way you talk about God is good, but it would be better to start differently," Andrew said.

"How should I start?" David asked.

"You need to talk about ghosts," he replied.

"Ghosts? Why ghosts?"

"Because the people here are afraid of ghosts," Andrew said. "They need to know that this Creator God is more powerful than ghosts."

The close-knit community of Kbal Taol is home to approximately 350 Vietnamese families and 450 Khmer (Cambodian) families. It is two hours by boat from the nearest town—Siem

Reap in Northern Cambodia. Although some residents may claim Buddhism, the predominant religion, most live in fear of spirits they believe can cause harm.

It is difficult for Vietnamese to get land rights in Cambodia, so most choose to live on the water. Since the majority of the men are fishermen, living on the water means they are closer to their work. They go out

□ See Gospel takes hold among lake-dwelling ... Page 6

WHO'S
WHOSE MISSING?
MISSION?

Former drug addict becomes missionary through KBC-partnering ministry network

By Ken Walker
Kentucky Baptist Convention

San Salvador, El Salvador—Formerly a drug addict, Rodney Russell now directs a Baptist mission center in El Salvador's capital, where he preaches at Sunday chapels, manages a feeding program and hosts mission teams from the United States.

Russell handles these and other duties in San Salvador as the first missionary sponsored by the Mountain Mission Development Corporation, a ministry that works in cooperation with Kentucky Baptist Men on Mission.

"From a drug addict to a director of missions and chaplain in a mission center is unbelievable," said Morris Norfleet, president of MMDC. "Only God can perform

such a great miracle. This proves there is a place for everyone who has faith."

Norfleet also is coordinator of Baptist Men on Mission's Professional Christian Service Corps. It was developed in 2001 to enable people with different skills to use them on the mission field.

The corps since has led 15 trips to El Salvador, Nicaragua and other nations, as well as Eastern Kentucky.

Those links to El Salvador, which included building 32 homes after an earthquake in 2004, led to Russell's move to the Central American nation.

Norfleet met Russell after the North Carolina native came to Eastern Kentucky's Wendell Belew Cen-

ter last year. He was visiting a friend he met several years ago in a Nashville drug rehabilitation center.

After a few weeks, Russell came to Berea and volunteered for the drug rehab program Northfleet then was managing. Besides counseling addicts, Russell also expressed a desire for help in his search for direction as a fairly new Christian.

While Russell volunteered at the center, Morris took the opportunity to help him grow in compassion and understanding as he sought to help addicts with their recovery.

About a month after coming to Berea, Russell told Norfleet that he sensed God calling him to become a missionary.

□ See Addict turned ... Page 2

Ky. Baptist historical society marks first year

Group's membership nearly doubled in 2009, includes members from handful of other states

By Drew Nichter
News Director

Farmington—Little more than a year after its formation, the J.H. Spencer Historical Society is on the right track, according to the group's secretary/treasurer.

"It's really going well (and) growing," noted Ben Stratton, pastor of Farmington Baptist Church.

Since the society began meeting last November, the group's membership has nearly doubled to around 40 people. While that may seem like a modest total, Stratton said the Spencer group's membership already has matched the high-

water mark of the former Kentucky Baptist Historical Commission which started in the 1960s and was disbanded in 1999.

At this point, Spencer society members primarily consist of Kentucky Baptist pastors and a few wives, Stratton pointed out. But, he added, interest is coming from other states with members joining from Arkansas, Florida, Louisiana, Tennessee and Texas.

"The only requirement to be a member (is) you have to be interested in Baptist history in Kentucky," Stratton said, noting that individuals outside the denomination are welcome to join as well.

The J.H. Spencer Historical Society was formed last year after the Kentucky Baptist Convention's Mission Board approved the dissolution of the Kentucky Baptist Archives Advisory Board. That board had replaced the previous historical commission.

The society is named for J.H. Spencer,

who authored the two-volume narrative "A History of Kentucky Baptists," which chronicles Baptist life in the commonwealth from 1769 to 1885.

The Spencer Society first met in conjunction with last year's KBC annual meeting. The group did so again last month in Elizabethtown.

With 14 people in attendance, members heard messages from Stephen Wilson, vice president of academic affairs at Mid-Continent University in Mayfield and a professor of history, and Joseph Early, an assistant professor of theology at Campbellsville University.

The group also re-elected its three officers during the November meeting: Stan Williams, pastor of First Baptist Church of Cannonsburg, president; Charles Blair, pastor of Poplar Grove Baptist Church in Hickman, vice president; and Stratton.

While the group's annual meeting will be held in conjunction with each KBC gathering, Stratton said plans are in the works to add a second meeting each spring. While plans are not yet finalized, he said the first of the spring meetings may be held in the Ashland area.

The J.H. Spencer Historical Society also released the first of its annual publications in 2009. While still a work in progress, Stratton said the yearly journals will include sermons and writings from well-known Kentucky Baptist pastors and personalities from the past.

Stratton also said the group has thrown around ideas for a Web site to keep Kentucky Baptists informed of the society's work and the state's Baptist history.

"I believe it's very important that we remember our heritage," he noted. "Heritage is something that's very personal—and Kentucky Baptists have a great heritage."

The J.H. Spencer Society is open to all Kentucky Baptist pastors and laypersons. Membership is \$10 for one year; \$17 for two years. For more information about the society or to become a member, contact President Stan Williams at (606) 928-4981, or SDWilliams@ZoomInternet.net.

Western Recorder to drop one issue, add color in new year

Louisville—The Western Recorder will print one fewer issue in 2010, but will add color to its front and center pages beginning in January.

The move was approved by the newspaper's executive committee back in September. It was signed off on by the full Western Recorder board at its Dec. 4 meeting.

While not entirely a cost-cutting measure, the reduction of one issue next year—from 50 to 49—does mean less production costs, according to Editor Todd Deaton.

"The anticipated reduction in printing and mailing costs of not publishing one issue will go a long way toward enabling us to have color in every issue—something Kentucky Baptists will appreciate all year long," he said.

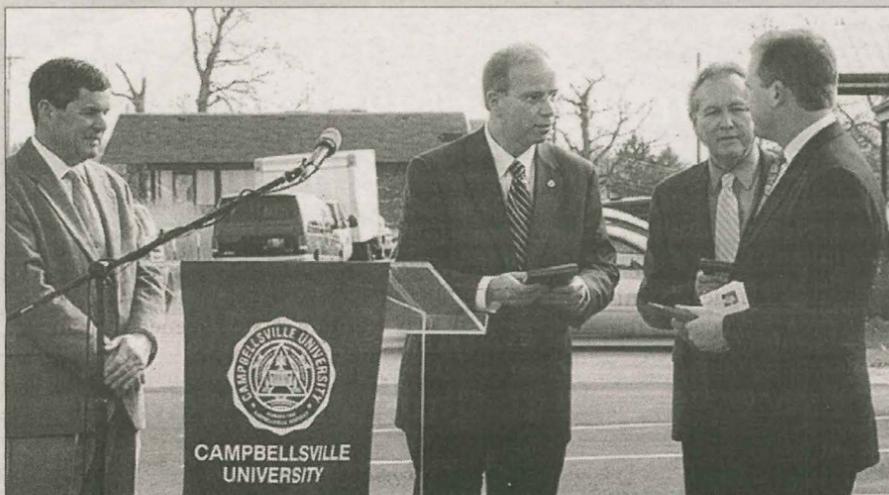
The Western Recorder will not publish an issue Jan. 6, the first full week of the new year. The newspaper already does not publish during the weeks of Independence Day and Christmas.

The move also allows the Western Recorder office to close during the same two weeks the Kentucky Baptist Building—where the newspaper office is located—is closed, giving staff members more time to enjoy the holidays, Deaton said.

Western Recorder production will resume Jan. 12, 2010, with full color on the front and center pages. The newspaper has published color issues periodically in the past, but this represents a permanent move meant to enhance the newspaper's quality and increase "reporting of news from our Kentucky Baptist congregations," Deaton said.

"We are excited about taking this key step in increasing the overall attractiveness of Kentucky Baptists' news journal," he said. "We believe our readers will agree."

Campbellsville University dedicates new Brockman Center at its Hodgenville site



Campbellsville University dedicated its new Brockman Center in Hodgenville with a ribbon-cutting ceremony Nov. 19. About 250 people attended the opening of the 5,500 square-foot facility which currently serves nearly 100 students enrolled in Campbellsville University classes. The building houses the Technology Training Center which features a number of programs for adult students to train for careers in the areas of computer operations, hospitality management, medical service management and hospitality training. ■ Above: Campbellsville University President Michael Carter (center left) presents Britt Brockman (far right), managing partner of the John-Kenyon American Eye Institute, with a plaque as Freddie Hilpp (far left), owner of Hilpp Construction in Lebanon, and Frank Cheatham, Campbellsville's vice president for academic affairs, look on. Brockman and Hilpp were the primary donors for the new facility. It is named in honor of Brockman's parents. ■ Left: Hilpp and Brockman await the ribbon-cutting ceremony. ■ Below: Representatives of Campbellsville University and the city of Hodgenville prepare to cut the ribbon at the Brockman Center. (Campbellsville University photo)



Addict turned missionary with KBC ties serves in El Salvador

Continued from page 1

Since Norfleet—who has been on 28 mission trips in the past two decades—had talked about his experiences in El Salvador, Russell said he wondered if he could go there.

Before Norfleet agreed, he spent time in prayer and asked questions about Russell's sincerity, preparedness and ability to cope with a new and challenging environment.

"I agreed to be his sponsor because I saw his potential," Norfleet recalled.

As a start, Russell agreed to spend a year in Chinameca, a mountain town about two hours from San Salvador. He went there as an assistant to Esau Crespo, pastor of that city's First Baptist Church.

Russell's family in North Carolina was so pleased with his new direction that they agreed to provide financial support for his missions work.

The move also brought a major change in his personal life. Two months after arriving, he met the woman who later became his wife.

In May, Russell contacted Norfleet to ask to be relieved of his one-year commitment so he could accept a position in San Salvador.

"I was totally amazed and said, 'Thank God,'" Norfleet recalled.

Randy Foster, director of Kentucky Baptist Men on Mission, said this success story reflects the wisdom of establishing the development corporation.

MMDC was organized to manage donations of tools, equipment and property for missions work in Eastern Kentucky, Foster explained.

Many of the region's Kentucky Baptist Convention ministry centers got their start because MMDC aided those operations until they were able to become self-sustaining.

There are other success stories because of Kentucky Baptist Men on Mission's emphasis on missions. The pastor of a church for ex-offenders in Crestwood received help from an outreach to former inmates. And, Chris Dalton, a pastor in Middleburg, sensed a call to ministry while on a mission team that visited El Salvador in 2004.

As for Russell, Foster said his missionary status is a great example of how Kentucky Baptist Men on Mission comes alongside men to match their gifts with ministry opportunities.

"We help people ask God what it is He wants them to do and go for it," Foster said. "I can see that happening and it's the kind of thing we hope will happen over and over again."

Economy forces most state Baptist conventions to reduce budget goals

By Bob Allen

Dallas—Feeling the effects of a bad economy, several Southern Baptist Convention-affiliated state and regional conventions reduced budgets in annual meetings, held in recent weeks across the nation.

The Baptist General Convention of Texas, which includes 4,500 churches with 2.3 million members, approved a reduced budget for the second straight year. A 2010 budget of \$44 million represents a nearly 10 percent decrease from 2009. Last year, the Texas convention cut spending by 8 percent. Jill Larsen, chief financial officer for the BGCT, described the spending plan as “a realistic, pretty conservative budget.”

The Georgia Baptist Convention also approved its second-consecutive reduced budget. Next year’s \$45.5 million spending plan is \$4.1 million (8.2 percent) below the previous year. Last year, Georgia Baptists cut spending by 5 percent. The state convention has reduced staff twice in the last year, eliminating a total of 27 jobs.

“This has been the most challenging economy in my memory and has significantly impacted all of us,” Robert White, executive director of the convention, told the Georgia Christian Index newspaper.

The 4,000-church Baptist State Convention of North Carolina approved its smallest budget since 2000. At \$34.8 million, next year’s budget is \$4.8 million leaner than the one in 2009. Next year’s budget also is the first since 1991 that does not include an option for funding national entities outside the Southern Baptist Convention. Last year’s convention voted to combine North Carolina’s four giving plans into one.

Few budget increases

A few state conventions managed to buck the trend. The 2,200-church Southern Baptists of Texas Convention adopted a budget of \$24.8 million, up 1 percent from a current budget of \$24.5 million.

The State Convention of Baptists in Indiana approved a record Cooperative Program budget of \$4.8 million, up 2.8 percent from the current year. Convention leaders followed standard policy of projecting income for 2010 equal to actual receipts in 2008, even though gifts from 370 affiliated churches are running 4 percent behind last year.

“We will closely monitor our 2010 receipts and make adjustments as necessary,” Executive Director Stephen Davis wrote in the Indiana Baptist Magazine. “One thing I know: God will provide for our needs.”

The 1,600-church Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma approved a record 2010 Cooperative Program budget of \$26 million, up 3.2 percent from the current \$25.2 million budget. Most of the increase is driven by increased operating costs.

With 1,400 churches, the Arkansas Baptist State Convention adopted a budget just less than \$21.5 million for 2010. That represents a 2.5 percent increase over this year’s budget goal.

Baptist groups in Alaska, the Dakotas, Iowa, Louisiana and Pennsylvania-South Jersey also managed to increase budgets by small amounts.

But those conventions were few and far between among the 42 state and regional bodies made up of the 44,848 churches affiliated with the SBC.

Kentucky Baptists reduced their 2010-11 Cooperative Program budget by 4 percent, to \$23.5 million.

The 3,200-church Alabama Baptist Convention passed a budget of \$46 million for 2010, the same bottom line as in 2009, providing no salary increases for staff but avoiding any job cuts.

The Tennessee Baptist Convention adopted a reduced budget of \$36 million for the 2009-10 fiscal year. That is 7.7 percent less than the 2008-09 budget of \$39 million.

The 2,300-church Florida Baptist Convention approved a 2010 Cooperative Program budget of \$35.4 million, a less than 1 percent increase from a 2009 spending plan twice reduced from an original \$39.2 million approved at the annual meeting last year.

Baptist conventions in South Carolina, Mississippi, Missouri, California, Virginia, New Mexico, Colorado, Nevada, Illinois, Kansas-Nebraska and Montana also passed budgets below the current year.

Allocation questions

State conventions aren’t alone in feeling the pain. They are the primary funding channel for the SBC, which raises money through a unified budget that divides funds between state and national conventions. The state convention determines the formula for dividing funds contributed by local churches. While the standard is to divide funds evenly between the state convention and the SBC, the average percentage of funds that are forwarded to the national body is closer to 38 percent.

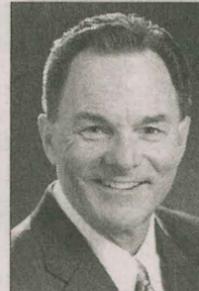
Last year Cooperative Program allocations through the SBC declined by more than 2 percent.

As a result, the International Mission Board said recently that reduced revenues could force the agency to shrink its current 5,600-member missionary force by as many as 600. (ABP)

Resurgence group making ‘great’ progress, expects to present report in February

By Mark Kelly

Atlanta—The Great Commission Resurgence Task Force reported significant progress in its Nov. 30-Dec. 1 meeting in Atlanta and plans to present a substantial report during the February meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention’s Executive Committee in Nashville, according to task force chairman Ronnie Floyd.



Ronnie Floyd

“We made great, enormous progress today,” Floyd told Baptist Press after the meeting. “We’re wrestling; we’re going through it. But the group has been great. Yesterday and today we ended with tremendous oneness, tremendous togetherness.”

The 23-member task force heard reports from North American Mission Board leadership; Ed Stetzer, director of LifeWay Research; and Morris Chapman, president of the SBC Executive Committee, Floyd noted. The NAMB updates came from trustee chairman Tim Patterson; interim president Richard Harris; and Ted Traylor, chairman of NAMB’s presidential search committee and GCR task force member.

That report was followed later in the day by Stetzer’s presentation, which focused on church planting in North America. Stetzer had been co-chairman of a 24-member task force appointed by NAMB’s then-president, Geoff Hammond, to “take a fresh look at how Southern Baptists should look at the Great Commission in times such as these.” But that group dissolved after Hammond’s resignation Aug. 11. After Stetzer completed the report, task force members discussed issues related to NAMB.

The Tuesday morning session opened with an address from Chapman, Floyd said.

“Dr. Chapman spoke to us about the status of the Executive Committee, what was on his heart, and then talked to us about some future thoughts about the SBC,” Floyd explained. “The rest of our day was talking about how to reach North America (and) the role of some of our denominational entities in that.”

Chapman announced Sept. 21 that he will retire Sept. 30, 2010, after 18 years as Executive Committee head.

Task force members engaged in “a lot of open dialogue” during their meeting, Floyd said.

“It was lively but never in the wrong spirit, by any means,” he explained. “It’s all about passion. There’s passion about touching this nation. We want to reach North America for Christ; we want to see the world come to Christ. We believe God has given us the commission—to our churches—and our convention’s role is to come alongside our churches to help them fulfill the Great Commission that was given to the churches.”

The issues before the task force are serious but not a matter of “good versus bad,” Floyd added.

“We’ve been asked and charged by the Southern Baptist Convention to find ways, to bring recommendations concerning how we can more faithfully and effectively fulfill the Great Commission together as Southern Baptists,” he noted. “That’s what our heart is, to try to do that together.”

Floyd said the task force has notified Chapman’s office that they intend to present a substantial report to the Feb. 22-23 Executive Committee meeting in Nashville.

“We’re pretty committed that’s when we’re going to have our coming-out party,” Floyd said. “Will we be bringing a once-and-for-all final report? ... No, I don’t think we’re going to be able to get there at that point. Our goal would be to get what I would call the body of the report—the things that would require cooperation and understanding of why we are doing what we want to do and this is what we want to do and how do we get there.”

Prior to the February meeting, Floyd said the task force plans to work on its report through a process of conference calls and e-mails, in addition to a Jan. 26-28 meeting in San Antonio. (BP)

IMB report shows drop in baptisms

Continued from page 1

opian eunuch in Acts 8, one of the students, Esther*, raised her hand. “I want to be like that Ethiopian eunuch,” she said. “I want to be baptized now.”

“When she responded to the story so quickly my husband looked at me and said, smiling, ‘I think you should go prepare the bathtub,’” Anna recalled. “We knew that the Holy Spirit was leading her.”

But the typical Asian bathtub is a lot smaller than the tubs most Americans are used to—only about 3 feet long. Esther is 5’8”. She had to scrunch up her knees to sit down in the tub and leave enough room to be immersed. Karl proceeded with the baptism, but even with the tub filled to the brim, Esther’s knees remained dry.

“She looked at Karl and pointed to her dry knees and said earnestly, ‘What about these? Can you please baptize my knees, too? I want to be completely clean,’” Anna said. “So Karl helped slide her legs back into the water so they would be covered.”

*Names changed for security reasons

Coppenger, longtime Baptist professor, dies at age 100

Arkadelphia, Ark.—Longtime Ouachita Baptist University philosophy professor Raymond Coppenger died Nov. 24 following a bout with pneumonia, according to a news release from the Arkadelphia, Ark., school. He turned 100 in September.

Coppenger joined the Ouachita faculty in 1954. Serving as chairman of the department, he taught at the university for 20 years until his retirement in 1974.

“I have long known of Dr. Raymond Coppenger,” Ouachita President Rex Horne said in a statement. “We are proud to have the legacy of this good man as an important part of Ouachita’s history and legacy.”

“On a personal note, I am most proud that I have known him and could call him a friend,” Horne added. “I have been blessed to know Dr. Coppenger’s children and to respect the contributions they have all made.”

Coppenger celebrated his 100th birthday Sept. 20 with a large gathering of family and friends in Arkadelphia. He received televised birthday greetings from former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee, a Ouachita alumnus, who closed his Fox News Channel show that day by noting, “Dr. Coppenger is

one of the most brilliant scholars I’ve known, and his Edinburgh-trained intellect was matched by his humble and gracious spirit. As he and his family celebrate his 100 years, I thank him for his investment in my life.”

A Tennessee native, Coppenger earned degrees from Mercer University in Atlanta, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville and the University of Edinburgh in Scotland. During his years of ministry, he served as pastor of churches in Tennessee and Virginia, was a Navy chaplain in the Pacific during World War II and served as Baptist Student Union director at the University of Kentucky and Auburn University. Before joining Ouachita’s faculty, he taught philosophy and religion at two Tennessee Baptist schools.

Coppenger was preceded in death in 2000 by Agnes, his wife of 56 years, and in 2007 by his daughter Anne. He is survived by two other children, Susan and Mark, who is a pastor and a former president of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo., five grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

The funeral was held Nov. 28 at First Baptist Church of Arkadelphia, where Coppenger was a member. (ABP)

Open hearts, committed hearts

A phrase from the Christmas story has captured my heart in recent weeks: "And she (Mary) brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn" (Luke 2:7).

Partners in the Mission



By Bill Mackey

The phrase about the crowded inn becomes an eternal parable of the human soul. Why was there—and is there—no room for the Christ child who is at the door?

It may have been because the inn was crowded. Often Jesus is excluded from our hearts because they are filled with common concerns, and there is no room for the spiritual enrichment He brings.

Or perhaps there was no room in the inn because no one recognized Mary and Joseph's importance. If the innkeeper had known the significance of the pending birth, he surely would have rearranged his guests to welcome them.

Yet even we who do know of Christ's significance often struggle to make room for what He offers. When Christ comes to bring us new possibilities, we wave Him away because we think our lives are too full.

His coming may be in the joy of new possibilities in our work, or in an impulse toward generosity and love.

It may be that Christ's coming will be in people of simple faith like a mother who sacrificially cares for her children, a man who foregoes financial advantage due to his integrity, or a teenager who keeps a pure heart and life.

The truth is that when Christ enters the heart, there always will be less room for that which distracts us from true spiritual enrichment.

I recently learned about the incredible discipline and commitment required of soldiers who guard the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. Guards have kept watch over the tomb 24 hours a day, seven days a week since 1937.

According to the Society of the Honor Guard, guards are hand-picked and rigorously trained. More than 80 percent of those who try out for this duty do not make it.

Each soldier must have strong military bearing, discipline, stamina and outstanding soldierly appearance. They all must be able to perfectly perform a variety of walks, honors and ceremonies, and are required to retain vast amounts of knowledge concerning the tomb, Arlington National Cemetery, the United States Army and their unit.

The guards at the tomb are so dedicated to their duty that they consider it an honor to stand watch regardless of the weather. They even continue their duty through severe weather such as blizzards and thunderstorms.

As Christians, how much more should we honor our living Savior with the devotion of our hearts, regardless of circumstance?

May we always live with an open door to Jesus Christ.

Bill Mackey is executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

Using basketball to point kids, families 'upward'

Some things are meant to go together. Peanut butter and jelly. Ham and cheese. Pen and paper. Cups and saucers. School and books. Trains and whistles. Kentucky and basketball. O.K., that last one probably depends upon your locale.

Still, Caz McCaslin believes sports and evangelism work well together, too. In less than 15 years, his brainchild, Upward Basketball, has expanded from one church with about 150 participants to more than 2,600 churches and 520,000 kids involved in playing basketball, soccer and football or cheerleading in 46 states and four countries.

Last year, more than 129 churches in Kentucky alone had Upward programs, including 95 Southern Baptist churches. Broken down by individual sports, 19,743 children participated in basketball; 3,078 played soccer; 1,773 were involved in flag football; another 3,943 were cheerleaders. Signs promoting the upcoming basketball season are popping up everywhere.

McCaslin, who spoke during a recent chapel service at Georgetown College near Lexington, started the Upward Basketball ministry at First Baptist Church, Spartanburg, S.C., in 1986. The ministry proved to be so popular that children soon were being turned away. Disturbed by that possibility, McCaslin began looking for the means to build another gym. That's when a layman told him that what he really needed was not one gym, but 1,000 more. So in 1995, McCaslin resigned as minister of recreation at the Spartanburg church to found Upward Unlimited, with a vision "to reach unlimited lost children and their families for Christ."

Upward basketball, football and soccer leagues have a different, positive focus from traditional, competitive sports programs, however. While the youth sports ministry teaches children the fundamental skills of a sport, the focus is on individual effort and improvement, not on winning ballgames. In his book, "Every Child is a Winner," published by Broadman & Holman, McCaslin explains, "We've got to get to the point that people understand that just because you're not number one, doesn't mean you're not a winner." Winning in life, he aptly asserts, has nothing to do with scoring a basket, kicking a goal or hitting a home run.

But the primary focus of an Upward league is on outreach. At practices, coaches not only teach players the importance of teamwork and sportsmanship, they also give devotionals about halfway through each practice, which lead up to sharing the plan of salva-

tion. During halftimes, church members share their testimonies with the players' parents. Every player plays the same amount of time and after each game is awarded a colored star, denoting whether he or she has demonstrated character qualities such as best efforts on offense or defense, sportsmanship or, more importantly, a Christ-like attitude. At an awards ceremony, every child is recognized and parents, grandparents and friends are invited, providing yet another opportunity for sharing the message of salvation with families.

At Georgetown, McCaslin used the Bible story of the woman at the well to convey the mission of Upward sports. "You are at the well," he told the students, referring to their presence in chapel on a Christian college campus. "Fill up your hearts; fill your souls. Then (like the woman at the well) leave here with a passion to gather up all those people because of what you've learned and bring them back to the well to meet Jesus," he urged.

A major goal of the faith-based basketball ministry, he emphasized, is to enable churches to reach out to families who might not otherwise attend church. Indeed, some people are more willing to come in through a gym door than through the front door of a church sanctuary.

Citing the research of George Barna, McCaslin observed that the vast majority of people who accept Christ do so as children, between ages 5 and 13. "By the time a child turns 14 years old," McCaslin continued, "he has already decided everything he believes about the Bible, the church, and how it will affect him for the rest of his life." Sounding a note of urgency, he borrowed a Barna quote: "It's a race to the heart of the child, and the first one there wins."

Spoofing the name of a popular Nike basketball shoe, McCaslin cleverly promoted "Upward AIR," urging Georgetown students—as well as Upward coaches and volunteers—always to be:

- **Aware** of people around us who do not know Jesus;
- **Intentional** about finding ways of getting these people into our place to share the Lord with them;
- **Ready** when they show up to share God's love.

That's not just good advice for college students; it's the Great Commission mandate for all believers. And just as McCaslin uses a ball to share Christ, each of us has a skill or talent that can be used to share God's love with those around us who may not attend a church service.



After Thought

By Todd Deaton

What if your faith was on trial?

By David Jeremiah

Many Christians around the world are on trial for their faith. The persecution of Christians in Islamic, communist and totalitarian lands is increasing at a frightening rate.

Most of us never will stand as a defendant in the courtroom, having to defend our faith. But in another sense, we're on trial every day. The world is watching us, weighing our testimonies and looking for evidence of our faith. Our teammates, school friends and work associates are quick to detect inconsistencies in our lives. Our unsaved family members will be influenced by our examples—whether good or bad.

Could a case be made against you that you really are a Christian? At least four pieces of incriminating evidence should convict you of being a Christian. If you were on the jury considering the evidence, what verdict would you reach?

Physical evidence. Consider: the places you go; whether the neighbors see you going to church on Sunday or out working in the yard;

the way you dress; the attitudes you exhibit; the language you use; the magazines you subscribe to; your driving habits; and other behaviors you practice. Are you living like a Christian? Guilty or not guilty?

Testimonial evidence. It's hard to be a witness for Christ if people never see your changed life or hear your testimony. Would your life convince another that Christ really does possess transforming power? Have you shared Him with a friend recently? Has anyone asked you a reason for the hope that is within you? How would you vote? Guilty or not guilty?

Behavioral evidence. Colossians 3:1-3 says, "If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God." Do you exhibit Christ's peace in times of crisis? Show others His love in times of tension? Demonstrate His values in this age of materialism and entertainment?

How would a jury find you on this count? Guilty or not guilty?

Fingerprint evidence. Are you leaving an imprint on this world for Christ? Is your devotion to the Scriptures leaving a mark on someone else? Your integrity? Your prayer life? Do you have an enduring testimony that still will cast a shadow after you're gone? Ladies and gentlemen of the jury, how do you find the defendant? Guilty or not guilty?

Most of us underrate ourselves. We often feel like failures when it comes to the Christian life. But remember: "It is God who works in you both to will and to do His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:13). Jesus said that as we follow Him, He will make us become fishers of men (Mark 1:17). Only one person has ever lived the Christian life to perfection—and that is Christ Himself. Now He wants to live through you, giving you the wisdom, strength, desire and ability to shine His light, bear His name, and advance His cause every day.

Let the world catch you in the act of being His disciple. (BP)

David Jeremiah is the founder of the radio and television program "Turning Point for God" and senior pastor of Shadow Mountain Community Church in El Cajon, Calif.

WESTERN
Recorder

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

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Western Recorder is published weekly 49 weeks a year by Western Recorder Inc., an agency of the Kentucky Baptist Convention, Box 43969, Louisville, KY 40253. For general information, to give news tips, or to place an advertisement, call (502) 489-3535. Periodicals postage paid at Louisville, Ky.

POSTMASTER: Send address corrections to:
Western Recorder, Box 43969, Louisville, KY 40253.

To subscribe: Send \$12.50 for a one-year, individual subscription. Group subscriptions on the church budget plan are \$10 per year. An additional church newsletter service is available for churches of all sizes.

Getting and staying out of debt

By Don Spencer

Debt is a major cause of the recent financial crisis in our country, and it is the main cause of financial problems for most individuals. So many people are hurting because of mounting debt. On average, I recently read that Americans are spending \$1.25 for every \$1 they make. You never will have financial freedom as long as you are a slave to debt. You cannot ignore it. How do you solve this problem?



- 1. Commit to becoming debt free.** None of the other steps matter until you take this step. People do not just happen to get out of debt. They must be intentional. It must be a top-priority goal.
- 2. Stop adding to your debt.** Before you address existing debt, you must stop the cycle by not adding more debt. Don't use credit cards. Don't borrow more money. The reason for most debt is people not wanting to live on what they make. Failure to live within one's means is a denial of everything Scripture teaches about stewardship. Living within one's means is an affirmation of everything Scripture teaches about stewardship.
- 3. Pay God and yourself first.** Tackle the debt problem God's way, which means tithing is a priority, even when in financial trouble. Don't neglect saving, even if the amount is modest.
- 4. List your assets, income and debts.** You must keep basic records. Use a budget. It keeps you in control so you know where the money goes instead of wondering at the end of the month where it went.
- 5. Set up a plan for eliminating debt.** Pay the required amount for all your debts. Then, select either the smallest debt or the one with the highest interest as the first one to eliminate. Pay all you can and pay extra on that debt. With that debt cleared, use those funds to tackle the next debt.
- 6. Be disciplined and stick to it.** There may be times you are tempted to quit—instead, go back to step 1.

Don Spencer is a certified financial planner and directs the Kentucky Baptist Convention's church financial benefits department.

Are students involved in supporting the Lottie Moon offering?

I always am amazed this time of year by the amount of energy we spend as churches on celebrating Christmas. We have pageants, musicals, special candlelight services and class parties to celebrate.

While thinking about this, I began to wonder how much energy we give to teaching our students about the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering and getting them involved in helping support our missionaries who are taking the message of Christmas all around the world. So, I e-mailed several youth ministers from across Kentucky and asked, "How are your students involved in giving to and promoting the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering?"

Responses were mixed. About half of those who responded (and probably most of those who didn't) did not involve their students at all in giving or promoting the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering.

One said, "We don't really do anything." Another said, "We haven't done much with students regarding the Lottie Moon offering. We give toward it, but haven't connected students to it very well."

Now before you all get discouraged and go running to your youth minister's office with promotional materials for the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, let's note that all of those who responded are in churches that give to and support the Lottie Moon offering. It is just that they did not do anything special with their students.

I was encouraged by what some of the youth ministers were doing, however, and I want to share a few of their ideas with you.

Rob Marquess, youth minister at Ashby Lane Baptist Church in Louisville, said, "Our ladies have a tea to raise money for the Lottie Moon offering, and two girls in our youth group are sponsoring a table at the tea." He added, "Most years, several of our guys volunteer to serve at the tea. Yes, we're all real cute in our white shirts, red bow ties and aprons."

Tree Akers, minister to students at Northside Baptist Church in Elizabethtown, replied, "We have a few students who assist with physical illustrations and repre-

sentations for the Sunday morning services in December." Akers continued, "One of our ladies comes up with a list of different things we can pray for, and she frequently will have students assist her." He also noted, "Our church does a Lottie Moon Christmas post office. Cards to various church members are placed in a church post office and are sorted and sometimes delivered by youth." To help raise money toward the church's offering goal, members are asked to make a suggested donation per card, he explained.

At First Baptist Church of Richmond, where Steve Coleman is the minister to students, they stress that the Lottie Moon offering is a way to give a gift to Jesus during the Christmas season. "Everyone else gets a present on Christmas, so how can you give Jesus a gift?" they ask their students. Coleman tells them, "Give to Lottie Moon so that missions can be carried out all over the world. Cash works best; you can put it into a Christmas card and place it on the altar or the remembrance table on the last Sunday before Christmas."

"We talk about Lottie Moon with our students and encourage giving to the main offering that our church collects," said John Beach, minister of students at First Baptist Church of Bowling Green. "Recently, we were at Southern Seminary, and we took a little time to show them the desk display that they have in the Honeycutt Center and talked about Lottie Moon's life and ministry while we had the opportunity."

While I was at Edgewood Baptist Church, each year we would do the International Missions Study that was provided by our church's Woman's Missionary Union. We would teach the youth study and use that as an opportunity to teach how the monies from the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering were spent.

Let us all do our part to find ways to involve our students in giving to and promoting the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering.

Joe Ball, a former youth minister at Edgewood Baptist Church in Hopkinsville, is youth strategist for the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

Youth Ministry Corner



Joe Ball

Getting over our love for Darwin's theory of evolutionary change

By William Dembski

Charles Darwin published his "Origin of Species" in 1859. There he presented the classic formulation of his theory of evolution. Lady Ashley, reacting to the theory at the time, remarked, "Let's hope that it's not true; but if it is true, let's hope that it doesn't become widely known." Lady Ashley's second hope has failed: Darwin's theory is everywhere and now has become textbook orthodoxy. This year, universities around the globe are celebrating the 150th anniversary of Darwin's Origin of Species as well as the 200th anniversary of his birth.

But what about Lady Ashley's hope that Darwin's theory is false? Darwin presented a bleak picture of ourselves: We are mere modified apes; we are the "winners" in a brutal competitive evolutionary process, most of whose players are "losers," wiped off the evolutionary scene before they could leave a legacy; the traditional Christian view that we are made in God's image is simply a story we tell to convince ourselves that we're special.

Intelligent Design supporters like me view Darwin's theory as untrue and even as laughable: The theory purports to give a materialistic account of life's development once life already is here, but it has a gaping hole at the start since matter gives no evidence of being able to organize itself from non-life into life. The fossil record, especially the sudden emergence of most animal body plans in the Cambrian explosion, sharply violates Darwinian expectations about the historical pattern of evolutionary change. The nano-engineering found in the DNA, RNA and proteins of the cell far exceeds human engineering and remains completely unexplained in Darwinian terms.

Darwin lovers are quick to reject such complaints. After all, as novelist Barbara Kingsolver declares, Darwin's idea of natural selection is "the greatest, simplest, most elegant logical construct ever to dawn across our curiosity about the workings of natural life. It is inarguable and it explains everything." Kingsolver is no fan of Christianity. Yet many Darwin lovers are Christian. Francis Collins, who directs the National Institutes of Health, is a Christian Darwinist. Leaving aside a healthy skepticism that regards every scientific theory as refutable in light of new evidence, Collins exempts Darwinian evolution from such skepticism: "Evolution, as a mechanism, can be and must be true."

Any theory that explains everything and that can and must be true is either the greatest thing since sliced bread or the greatest swindle ever foisted on gullible intellectuals. The Intelligent Design community takes the latter view, siding here with Malcolm Muggeridge, who wrote: "I myself am convinced that the theory of evolution, especially the extent to which it's been applied, will be one of the great jokes in the history books in the future. Posterity will marvel that so very flimsy and dubious an hypothesis could be accepted with the incredible credulity that it has."

FIRST PERSON

Still, it's easy to understand why so flimsily a supported theory garners such vast support. It provides the creation story for an atheistic worldview. If atheism is true, then something like Darwinian evolution must follow. Hence, any attack on Darwin becomes an attack on the atheistic secularism that pervades our culture. Nonetheless, even though atheism implies Darwinism, the reverse is not true: Darwinism does not imply atheism. Indeed, Christian theists who embrace Darwin abound.

The wedding between Darwinism and Christianity, however, is an uneasy one. To be sure, plenty of marriages are uneasy, and uneasy marriages often are endured because divorce can entail more difficulties than endurance. Thus, when I got involved with the evolution controversy 20 years ago, I naively thought that any Christian, given sufficient evidence against Darwinism, would immediately jump ship.

Little did I realize how infatuated many Christians are with Darwin. Having convinced themselves that design is an outdated religious dogma, they embraced Darwinism as a form of enlightenment. Having accommodated their faith to Darwin, they became loathe to re-examine whether Darwinism is true at all. In this year of Darwinian bacchanalias, let us soberly reassess whether Darwin's theory is indeed true. And if the evidence goes against it, as the Intelligent Design community is demonstrating, then let's be done with it. In that case, reconciling Christianity with Darwinism becomes a vain exercise, solving a problem that no longer exists. (BP)

Editor's note: November 24 was the 150th anniversary of the publication of Darwin's "On the Origin of Species." William Dembski is research professor in philosophy and director of the Center for Cultural Engagement at Southwestern Seminary.

Teaching your child to give

By David Garrard

The Christmas season provides parents an excellent opportunity to teach children important lessons about giving. Here are three areas which parents can model and emphasize.



Attitude. What kind of attitude should we have toward money and about giving? Money must not become the most important thing in our lives. The Bible says that loving money causes all kinds of problems (1 Timothy 6:10). In Matthew 6:24, Jesus tells us it is impossible to serve God and money. Instead, we are supposed to love God and put our trust in Him. Giving is one way to show that. 2 Corinthians 9:7 says that God loves a cheerful giver. God wants us to give because we want to, not because we have to.

Actions. What kind of actions should a Christian take when it comes to giving? Simply stated, we should put God first, give faithfully and trust God to take care of us. It is amazing how our money goes farther than seems possible when we trust God and give faithfully. God knows our needs and wants to meet them if we will trust Him to do so. Matthew 6:33 reminds us to seek first the Kingdom and everything else will find its proper place.

Arithmetic. The Bible talks about giving a tithe. The word means a tenth. That means if you have a dollar, you give a dime. If you have \$10, you give \$1. If you have \$100, you give \$10. The more you have, the more you give. Teach your children how to figure a tenth. It's simple. With any amount, you just move the decimal one place to the left and drop the zero on the far right.

Insist that your children give at least 10 percent of any money they have, whether it be earned, received as a gift or even found. You will be training them to trust God, instead of money. You will be freeing them from the grip of greed. You will be helping them discover that giving brings happiness, because as Jesus said, "It (really) is more blessed to give than to receive."

David Garrard is minister to children at St. Matthews Baptist Church in Louisville.

Gospel takes hold among lake-dwelling villagers

Continued from page 1

at night to drop their nets and collect them early the next morning. The women spend their days harvesting fish from the nets. The fish then are taken to Siem Reap to sell.

Taking care of each other

"The Vietnamese who live on the water are different from those who live on the land," David said. "They are more community and family oriented. If a mother dies in childbirth, the entire communi-

ty will take care of the baby. They will share their food with each other when food is scarce."

The children attend school—which Tim teaches—or help with fishing during peak season. Instead of riding their bicycles to visit a neighborhood friend, children as young as 6 or 7 hop in a boat and paddle next door or down the "street" to see their friends.

Until 2008, no one in this village had ever heard the story of Jesus.

But that changed the night David and Andrew arrived at Tim's house for dinner.

Tim had invited a few neighbors to join them, including Andrew's father, who lived next door. After dinner, the talk turned to spiritual things. Tim had begun reading the Bible David gave him and had many questions.

"Tim and I had been talking for about three hours and the other men were falling asleep," David said. "Then about 9 o'clock Andrew pulled me aside."

"Now is the time to talk about ghosts," Andrew told him.

Story of Lazarus

So David began a discussion about ghosts by sharing the story of the rich man and Lazarus from the Gospel of Luke. He explained that ghosts are not spirits of the dead but rather fallen angels and evil spirits sent out from Satan.



BUYING LUNCH Andrew (foreground) purchases lunch from a floating vendor on Tonle Sap Lake in the floating village of Chong Khneas. Christian workers purchased a barge for holding medical clinics, English classes and Bible clubs for the people of Chong Khneas. During Andrew's first two years as a follower of Jesus, he led eight people to the Lord. (IMB photo)

"The men woke up," David laughed. "They were paying close attention."

At midnight, however, the visitors left to get some sleep before their early morning fishing trip. But Tim still had questions.

Finally, Tim asked David, "Now, tell me how someone can become a child of God."

David explained the gospel and

Tim prayed to receive Christ. It was 3 a.m.

"That is the longest visitation I've ever had," David said with a smile.

Tim said life is better since he placed his trust in Christ.

"I (still) teach children ... (but now) every day I pray and ask God to help me..." (BP)

*Names changed for security reasons

Every penny given to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering is used to support more than 5,600 Southern Baptist missionaries as they share the gospel overseas. This year's offering goal is \$175 million. For resources about the offering, visit www.IMB.org/Offering.

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Thankfulness

Give thanks because God works for us, not against us

With the passing of Thanksgiving, the bulk of our retreat season for 2009 is over. This year has been the largest year of attendance in our history. Reflecting back over the year, we have much for which to be thankful.

As I ponder Thanksgiving, being "thankful" is something that is key to the Christian life. We are commanded to be thankful in all circumstances as stated in Thessalonians. Also, in Philippians, Paul tells us that we are to present all our requests to God with an attitude of thanks.

In life, we can choose one of two ways—to be thankful or to not be thankful. While this may be obvious, the fact is that whichever path we choose it will reveal much about our attitudes and our belief of God.

If you believe that God is sovereign, you must realize that nothing happens outside of His control. God is not surprised about anything and He uses all circumstances to the good of His people as we read in Romans 8.

We at Cedarmore and Jonathan Creek have much for which to be thankful. While we have witnessed

many ups and downs, history's perspective proves that God has used all circumstances to our ultimate benefit. In the midst of difficulties, it sometimes is hard to see the good, but we must trust that God has a purpose in all circumstances. On several occasions, I do look back

and think of numerous instances that proved to be for our future good, but in present, seemed only to be to our detriment.

As believers who have celebrated the holiday of Thanksgiving, we must make this attitude part of our daily lives for it truly speaks of how we see God. Thanks to all our staff members who give so much to this ministry. I also

would like to take this opportunity to thank the countless numbers of volunteers who come to serve at our properties and those who pray for us on a regular basis. We truly are thankful!

Ky. Baptist Assemblies



David Melber

David Melber is president of Kentucky Baptist Assemblies. Contact him at Box 99918, Louisville, KY 42069-0918; phone (502) 491-7000.

For Heaven's Sake

Mike Morgan



Preacher's Kids

David Ayers



Bible Crosswords

By Evelyn Boyington

Across

- 1 Horned mammal, often mentioned in the Bible
- 4 Son of (Hebrew)
- 7 ___ of Man
- 10 Tizzy
- 11 Compass pt.
- 12 One from Tarsus
- 14 "The younger son ... ___ his substance with riotous living" (Luke 15:13)
- 16 "Aaron and ___ stayed up his hands" (Exodus 17:12)
- 17 Exclamation of relief
- 19 Many moons
- 20 Mother ___
- 21 Jeanne d'Arc, for one (abbr.)
- 22 Hive dweller
- 24 "Exalt him that is ___" (Ezekiel 21:26)
- 25 To dam up
- 26 Simile syntax
- 27 "___ thou on my right hand" (Mark 12:36)
- 28 Legume
- 29 ___ eagle (skating stunt)
- 32 Almost
- 35 Cereal grain
- 36 Baseball great Drysdale
- 37 That is (abbr.)
- 38 "What do ye, loosing the ___" (Mark 11:5)
- 40 "Ye are grown ___ as the heifer at grass" (Jeremiah 50:11)
- 41 Appeal
- 43 Hole-making device
- 44 Put down
- 45 Nemesis, certainly
- 46 Exist
- 47 Outward appearance
- 48 "Do I seek to ___ men?" (Galatians 1:10)

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							56				57	

- 51 "___ thyself now with majesty and excellency" (Job 40:10)
- 53 ___ Dolorosa
- 54 "All the rivers ___ unto the sea" (Ecclesiastes 1:7)
- 55 Consumed
- 56 "Go to the ___, thou sluggard" (Proverbs 6:6)
- 57 Mamie Eisenhower, ___ Dowd

- 23 Slithering one
- 24 Put a ___ on it
- 25 Galilee, for one
- 27 Made a lap
- 28 Do a scribe's work
- 30 Bagel's basic kin
- 31 "And he said unto me, Take it, and ___ it up" (Revelation 10:9)
- 32 Slangy negative
- 33 "I speak the truth in Christ and ___ not" (1 Timothy 2:7)
- 34 Yes, to King James
- 36 "The ___ of the Lord is at hand" (Joel 1:15)
- 38 NYC sight
- 39 "One ___ five hundred pence, and the other fifty" (Luke 7:41)
- 40 ___ East
- 41 "Annabel Lee" poet
- 42 "Go ye and ___ what that meaneth" (Matthew 9:13)
- 44 Word in Valley Girl's vocabulary
- 45 Slipper, for example
- 47 Form of legislation
- 48 Bobby, for one
- 49 Feminine nickname
- 50 Compass pt.
- 52 Apiece (abbr.)
- 53 One of the thirteen colonies (abbr.)

Down

- 1 Unrefined
- 2 Michigan town near Grand Rapids
- 3 Brother of Miriam
- 4 Has ___
- 5 Kind of game
- 6 Quadrant in D.C.
- 7 "All the women ... in wisdom ___ goats' hair" (Exodus 35:26)
- 8 Paddle
- 9 Greek letter
- 13 Better than never
- 15 Big ___: circus site
- 16 "___ thee two tables of stone" (Exodus 34:1)
- 18 It gets let down
- 20 Kind of plate
- 21 "We have seen his ___ in the east" (Matthew 2:2)
- 22 "And there ___ light" (Genesis 1:3)

Last week's solution

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11			
B	A	D		B	R	I	D	E	B	A	R		
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57	B	E	D	58	H	O	L	E	S	59	T	E	A

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Texas church extends God-centered compassion to those with HIV/AIDS

By Mark Kelly

Fort Worth, Texas—It could have been just another evening meal at Samaritan House in Fort Worth, Texas. Another church group dishing up the usual potluck fare in the cafeteria. They haul the food in and set up. Plop the servings on plates with pleasant but tense smiles. Then a quick clean-up and out the door again.

But this group from Alsbury Baptist Church in Bursleson, Texas, was anything but typical to Joe and Julia, long-time residents at the home on Fort Worth's south side for people living with HIV/AIDS or other special needs.

"A lot of churches come ... to feed supper," said Joe, a clean-for-four-years drug addict who accepted Christ six years ago in an Arlington, Texas, jail cell. "But almost everyone from this group came out from behind the serving counter to talk with us. For them to actually take the time to walk out amongst us and want to know about us personally, it was wonderful."

Belinda Koenig was shocked at the residents' reaction to their team's simple gestures of handshakes, hugs and small talk.

"Many of the residents had tears in their eyes," said Koenig, an Alsbury member who went to that first "Supper Club" at Samaritan House. "They were surprised that we weren't scared of them. They told us most people don't want to shake their hands or give them a hug."

Many people living with HIV/AIDS feel like outcasts, even from their own families, Koenig explained. Strangers can be judgmental, mistakenly assuming that every person with HIV/AIDS is sick because they were living a homosexual lifestyle. Others, she said, simply are uneducated about the disease, thinking they could contract it through

innocent contact like a handshake or a hug.

"Few of the people living at Samaritan House get to see their children or grandchildren very often," Koenig said. "One resident's daughter wouldn't have anything to do with him, wouldn't let him see his grandchildren. For them to see that

we really cared about them, that we weren't afraid for our kids to be there and give them hugs, they were deeply touched by that. One lady told me, 'I can feel God when you hug me. It's like God giving me a hug.'"

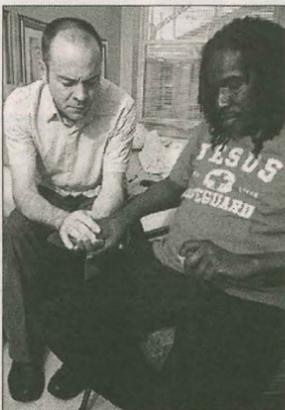
Koenig's Sunday school class at Alsbury had been talking about ways to get their children involved in missions, and she mentioned the opportunity to serve dinner at Samaritan House. A couple of members "jumped right in," she said, and as others heard how rewarding the ministry experience was, more and more joined in.

Twelve Alsbury members participated in the first Supper Club early in 2008 and by autumn the number had swelled to about 30 a week, with a total of nearly 60 members helping at one time or another, said Darrel Auvenshine, who was the church's minister of missions at the time.

Lonely hearts respond eagerly to the love of Christ, when His people simply take the time to care for others, Auvenshine said.

"One of the residents hadn't seen his mother in the 12 years since he was diagnosed," Auvenshine said. "He had come home to find all his belongings on the porch with a note that said, 'Gone to Walmart. Won't be back today.' Many of Samaritan House's residents are in that kind of situation."

"That's why we wanted to be there at Thanksgiving and Christmas, to be family to people who have been rejected by their families." (BP)



IN PRAYER Darrel Auvenshine (left) prays with Jerry, a resident of Samaritan House. (BP photo by Jonathan Blair)

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At this special time of year we pause to think of all of the friends who pray for us, volunteer with us, tell others about our ministry and support us with contributions and donations. Thank you for joining us in sharing Christ's love with teenagers from right here in Kentucky, across the United States and around the world.

'Thank you'

Two simple words mean so much to so many people

Recently I was reminded of how significant those two little words, "thank you," can be to people we come in contact with each day.

I was traveling with my family over the holiday to visit my siblings and their families for a Thanksgiving meal together. During our trip, we stopped to eat.

When we approached the front door of the restaurant, there was an elderly man holding the door open for a group of people going in.

As I approached the doorway, I noticed the people went right on through the open door and never acknowledged the kindness of the gentleman who was holding it open for them. I watched the man's facial expression as he stood there and watched them walk past him. I could tell he was disappointed.

As we approached, the elderly man continued to stand there and hold the door for my entire family. As I passed him, I thanked him for holding the door for us. The moment I said that to him, I saw a smile come over his face as he told me, "You're welcome."

The more I thought about this encounter, the more I realized

that a simple "thank you" meant so much to him. That's all he was looking for.

During this season of Thanksgiving and Christmas, I want to say "thank you" for your support of this ministry.

Our students, faculty and staff are truly blessed through your kindness. A church provides holiday groceries for every student family on campus; two associations provide a turkey, stuffing and vegetables for every family for Thanksgiving; hundreds of alumni, friends and churches provide a turkey, potatoes, a cash gift and Christmas presents for a shopping spree for our students at Christmas.

Your kindness provides our students the opportunity to experience a blessed Thanksgiving and Christmas during a time of their lives when they normally would not be able to do so.

Thank you. We could not do what we do without your support.

Clear Creek Chronicle



Donnie Fox

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@ccbbc.edu

NIH approves stem cell lines, Obama revamps ethics panel

Washington—The National Institutes of Health has approved the first human embryonic stem cell lines for research after President Obama lifted Bush-era bans on such research last March.

"In accordance with the guidelines, these stem cell lines were derived from embryos that were donated under ethically sound informed consent processes," said NIH Director Francis Collins in a Dec. 2 announcement.

"More lines are under review now, and we anticipate continuing to expand this list of responsibly derived lines eligible for NIH funding."

While critics of embryonic research object to the destruction of embryos required to harvest the stem cells, supporters say it holds the potential of treatment for a range of diseases.

NIH guidelines released in July stipulate that federally funded research only would be permitted on excess embryos at fertility clinics that otherwise would have been discarded.

While pro-life advocates had expected this step in funding embryo-destructive experimentation since Obama was elected in 2008, they still lamented the news.

"This is a tragic day for the cause of life in America," said Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics & Reli-

gious Liberty Commission. "As of today, our government is going to provide taxpayer funding for embryo-destructive research, killing supposedly excess babies left over from fertility clinics after it has obtained parental consent. ... Each of these babies has the same potential to live the full and complete life God had planned for them if their lives weren't snuffed out to harvest their stem cells."

Richard Doerflinger, a pro-life specialist for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, told The Washington Post, "Ethically, we don't think any taxpayer should have to fund research that relies on destroying early human life at any state."

The NIH announcement follows the creation of the Presidential Commission for the Study of Bioethical Issues on Nov. 24.

"As our nation invests in science and innovation and pursues advances in biomedical research and health care, it's imperative that we do so in a responsible manner," Obama said in announcing the commission.

Obama's executive order notes that commission members "may examine issues linked to specific technologies, including but not limited to the creation of stem cells by novel means."

Compiled from reporting by Religion News Service and Baptist Press

LifeWay study

Protestant pastors share views on same-sex marriage and abortion

By Rob Phillips
LifeWay Christian Resources

Nashville—With the recent release of the Manhattan Declaration—a 4,700-word statement from evangelical, Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox signers declaring their commitment to the sanctity of human life, biblical marriage and religious liberty—newly released data from LifeWay Research describe the beliefs of Protestant pastors on these issues and how often they discuss them in church.

In a survey of more than 1,000 senior church leaders conducted in October 2008, Protestant pastors who identified themselves as politically conservative or very conservative are more likely to speak to their churches on homosexuality and the unborn than their liberal counterparts, according to Ed Stetzer, director of LifeWay Research.

Eighty-nine percent of very conservative Protestant pastors said they speak to their churches at least once a year on the unborn, and 79 percent indicated they address the topic of homosexuality about once a year or more often. This compares with 25 percent of liberal or very liberal pastors who address the issue of the unborn at least annually, and 53 percent who speak on the topic of homosexuality.

"When you use the language 'the unborn' in your question, it impacts your answer," Stetzer noted. "Sixty-five percent of all Protestant pastors, regardless of political ideology, talk about the unborn at least once a year. When you filter out the number who would be pro-choice and perhaps would not use that language, 80 percent are speaking on it at least once a year."

Most Protestant pastors whose political ideology is conservative do not believe gay marriage should be legal, but almost half of liberal pastors do. Ninety-nine percent of very conservatives surveyed strongly disagree with the statement, "I believe gay marriage should be legal," compared with 16 percent of pastors who are liberal or very liberal.

"It appears that Protestant pastors are much more vocal about the unborn than about the issue of homosexuality," Stetzer said. "It is interesting to note that in many cases their fervency of belief does not line up with their frequen-

cy of comments. For example, 42 percent of all Protestant pastors rarely or never speak on the subject."

On the issue of the unborn, 98 percent of very conservative pastors describe themselves as pro-life, compared with 14 percent of pastors who are liberal or very liberal.

When forced to choose, three-fourths of all Protestant pastors surveyed said they are pro-life, and 13 percent said they are pro-choice.

According to Stetzer, "Although the self-identified liberal clergy indicate different views, the vast majority of Protestant pastors consider themselves pro-life."

Among pastors who speak to their congregations on homosexuality several times a year or more, 84 percent also speak on poverty that often. This is significantly higher than among pastors who rarely or never speak on homosexuality, of whom 78 percent speak on poverty several times a year or more.

Likewise, among pastors who speak to their churches on the unborn several times a year or more, 85 percent also speak on poverty that often.

"Many will debate which is the driving force: the political beliefs or religious beliefs of these pastors," Stetzer explained. "The fact is that most pastors who speak up on the unborn and homosexuality also speak up on poverty and consider Scripture their authority."

Among pastors who strongly disagree that gay marriage should be legal, 98 percent strongly agree

with the statement "Our church considers Scripture to be the authority for our church and our lives." In contrast, among pastors who do not strongly disagree that gay marriage should be legal, 71 percent strongly agree that Scripture is their authority.

Similar differences occur between pro-life and pro-choice pastors. Ninety-seven percent of pro-life pastors, compared to 65 percent of pro-choice pastors, strongly agree with the above statement regarding scriptural authority. Also, 97 percent of pastors who speak to their churches on the unborn several times a year or more strongly agree that Scripture is their authority.

For full survey results, visit www.LifeWayResearch.com.

"It appears that Protestant pastors are much more vocal about the unborn than about the issue of homosexuality. It is interesting to note that in many cases their fervency of belief does not line up with their frequency of comments."

LifeWay Research
Director Ed Stetzer

NATIONAL NOTES

Same-sex marriage loses in N.Y.—Religious activists on both sides of the same-sex marriage debate vowed to continue their work after the New York State Senate rejected a same-sex marriage bill Dec. 2. The 34-28 vote, coming after debate in which state senators evoked various religious traditions and texts, was a blow for proponents of same-sex marriage. They had hoped a victory in New York would give them a needed boost following a defeat in Maine, where residents voted last month to repeal a bill that legalized same-sex marriage. Opponents of same-sex marriage, meanwhile, were buoyed by the move and said it confirmed their belief that public momentum is on their side. Meanwhile, the District of Columbia City Council Dec. 1 gave preliminary approval to a bill to legalize same-sex marriage in the nation's capital. A second vote, tentatively scheduled for Dec. 15, will be required before Mayor Adrian Fenty can sign the bill. Congress would have 30 days to reject the measure, but most experts say such a move is unlikely.

Land hopeful for troop increase—Southern Baptist ethicist Richard Land expressed both anxiety and hope regarding President Obama's Dec. 1 announcement of 30,000 additional troops he is committing to a counterinsurgency in Afghanistan. "First, I'm nervous that the president has given our generals on the ground less than they've requested as the resources they believe necessary to finish the job of defeating the Taliban in Afghanistan," noted Land, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission. "Second, I am of course hopeful that the president's plan will work," Land said. "If anyone can make it work, it is our wonderful military with its tens of thousands of dedicated patriots and citizens serving voluntarily to defend their country in difficult and dangerous places." Land added: "I would encourage all Americans to pray for our commander in chief and for all of those who serve in our nation's armed forces as they seek to defend our freedom."

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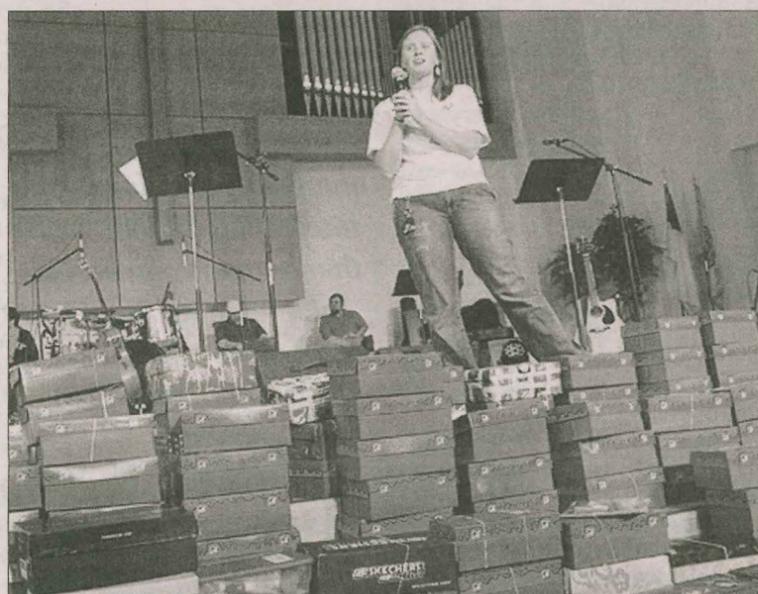
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Operation Christmas Child



Many Kentucky Baptists participate in the Operation Christmas Child shoebox ministry each year. This year marked the first time the Woman's Missionary Union of Evergreen Baptist Church in Frankfort participated in the Samaritan's Purse project that provides gifts to needy children in Third World countries. The Evergreen WMU set a goal of 100 boxes. One month later at the deadline, the group had collected 119 gift-filled shoeboxes. The women pictured are (from left to right) Wanda Propes, Anita Moore, Shirley Cardwell, Brenda Hedden, Joyce Combs, Dawn Harrod, Ann Pulliam, Mary Mitchell and Barbara Hockensmith.

Laura Clark, who was in charge of Campbellsville University's FIRST CLASS Operation Christmas Child shoebox collection, talks to fellow students about the gift ministry at a recent chapel service on campus. FIRST CLASS, a program for freshmen and other first-year students at Campbellsville, participates in OCC each year, but this year partnered with nearby Columbia Baptist Church. Combined, the students and the church collected 375 gift-filled shoeboxes. Columbia Baptist, where Campbellsville professor Ted Taylor is pastor, also agreed to underwrite the shipping costs of the boxes, \$7 per box. (Campbellsville photo by Munkh-Amgalan Galsanjamts)



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SEEKING: Part-time worship leader/music minister with an out-going, aggressive personality who is not afraid to try new things, to lead in blended-style services for a vibrant rural church with a morning worship service attendance of 140-150. Contact Parkville Baptist Church, PO Box 33, Perryville, KY 40468.

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SEEKING: Part-time pianist/organist. Must have musical experience and demonstrate godly character. Sundays and Wednesdays required. Send resumés to Parkway Baptist Church, 1915 N Broadway, Lexington, KY 40505; or gale48@insightbb.com.

SEEKING: DOM for Boones Creek Baptist Association. Conservative Southern Baptist with pastoral experience. Send resumé to Calvary Baptist Church, 21 Glory St., Irvine, KY 40336.

SEEKING: Part-time youth minister. Send resumé to Dawson Baptist Church, 5880 Hwy 54, Philpot, KY 42366; or e-mail to craig@dawsonbaptist.com.

SEEKING: Full-time youth minister for Calvary Baptist Church in Danville, Ky. We are looking for an experienced individual with a passion for reaching and discipling youth. Resumés may be e-mailed to info@calvaryindanville.com; or mailed to Calvary Baptist Church, 214 Lincoln Ave., Danville KY 40422. Deadline for submission is Wed., Dec. 2.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

December

14-15 KBC Mission Board Meeting, Baptist Building, Louisville.

January

14-16 Shepherding the Shepherd, Downtown Hilton Hotel, Lexington.

22-23 Region 2 Disaster Relief Recertification and Training, Second Baptist Church, Madisonville.

26 Pastor/Staff Forum, Living Hope Baptist Church, Bowling Green.

28-30 Southeast Conclave, Chattanooga, Tenn.

29-30 Deacon/Pastor/Spouse Retreat, Holiday Inn Plaza, Bowling Green.

29-30 Preschool/Children's Ministry Meeting, Baptist Building, Louisville.

29-30 Regional Women on Mission Retreat, Laurel Lake Baptist Camp, Corbin.

February

5-6 Region 4 Disaster Relief Recertification and Training, Ninth & O Baptist Church, Louisville.

15 Regional Church Financial Benefits Conference, First Baptist Church, Calvert City, and Oakland Baptist Church.

16 Regional Church Financial Benefits Conference, CrossPointe Baptist Church, Owensboro, and Versailles Baptist Church.

17 Regional Church Financial Benefits Conference, Baptist Building, Louisville.

20 Kentucky Changers Crew Chief Training, Baptist Building, Louisville.

20 Women's Chorale Winter Retreat, TBA.

22-23 Kentucky Baptist Evangelism Conference, Severns Valley Baptist Church, Elizabethtown.

27 Region 3 and 7 RA Congress, South Fork Baptist Church, Hodgenville.

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

MOUNTAINS TO THE MISSISSIPPI

COMPILED BY STAFF

■ **CAMPBELLVILLE**—The Saloma Church choir will present the Christmas musical "Celebrate the Gift" Dec. 20, 11 a.m., while the children and youth will present their Christmas musical at 6 p.m. The church also will host a Christmas candlelight communion service Dec. 23, 7 p.m., which will include special music, Scripture reading, lighting of candles and the passing of the Christmas light.

■ **EDDYVILLE**—Hebron Church recently called **Sam Haulk** as interim pastor.

■ **FULTON**—**Jack Acree** recently resigned as pastor of First Church.

■ **HENDERSON**—Hyland Church will present "Christmas Joy" Dec. 13, 10:15 a.m. **Don Moore** is pastor.

Immanuel Temple's Kingdom Kids Choir will present "Happy Birthday Jesus: The Best Christmas Present Ever" Dec. 13, 6 p.m. **Michael Eldridge** is pastor.

■ **LOUISVILLE**—Hurstbourne Church held a note-burning ceremony Dec. 6, retiring a \$2 million loan that was secured in 1998. The congregation recently raised more than

Spotlight on ...

Tompkinsville



The choirs of First Church of Tompkinsville and Gamaliel Church will present "Hope Has Hands" Dec. 13, 6:30 p.m. at First Church, and Dec. 16, 6:30 p.m. at Gamaliel Church. **Richard Easterling** is pastor of First Church. **Thomas Stokes** is pastor of Gamaliel Church.

\$1.6 million to retire the debt. **Mike O'Neal** is pastor.

■ **MILBURN**—Milburn Church will host its 2nd annual "Live Nativity Walk Thru" Dec. 12-13, 5 p.m. **Glen Stewart** is pastor.

■ **SIMPSONVILLE**—Simpsonville Church will present its production of "The Christmas Post" Dec. 11-13, 7 p.m. **Steve Boyd** is pastor.

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Christian students party at dry tailgates on game days

By Roy Hoffman
Mobile (Ala.) Press-Register

Auburn, Ala.—Setting up on the grassy area outside their dorm, grilling burgers and passing out drinks, the young men known as “College Kids Tailgate” are like scores of other Auburn University students on game day—full of good cheer, camaraderie and cries of “War Eagle!”

Their unofficial uniforms—orange jumpsuits—make them visible, but so does the “wine” they serve, a non-alcoholic cherry-flavored soda called Cheerwine that’s popular across the South.

“Two or three of us are under 21, so (serving alcohol is) illegal,” said Auburn junior Michael Nunnally, one of the 15 organizers of the student-run group.

But age is hardly the only factor, he explained.

“As Christians we don’t need (alcohol) for a good time,” Nunnally said. “There are people we know who would be uncomfortable around alcohol, so we decided not to have it. We expect our own lives to reflect our character. Being alcohol free is only a small part of it.”

A larger part, Nunnally explained, is fellowship provided by a welcoming—and intentionally nurturing—group. He said the three years of sober tailgating has morphed into a “ministry opportunity.”

“We tried to get people to come who are church-ed, unchurched; it’s not like we’re witnessing, doing street evangelism. But we’re hanging out, meeting people, having a good time,” Nunnally said.

He said he hopes the good times “will spark into one-on-one relationships,” which might well give way to religious discussions afterwards.

“That’s the best way,” he noted, “getting to know somebody first.”

Another one of the organizers, Kevin Johnson, knew Nunnally from growing up in Birmingham, Ala.

“It has a lot to do with creating community,” Johnson said. “A lot of students don’t have anywhere to go on game day. We didn’t start out with a goal of things getting this big.”

Since the group formed with 15 students three years ago, it’s grown twenty-fold: The group now welcomes more than 300 revelers on game day, and that surge is no accident, Johnson insisted.

“It’s a lesson from God,” he said, “how successful it’s been.”

“We made a decision from the beginning we didn’t want tailgate to be a place where we were preaching or passing things out,” Johnson added. “My whole view of evangelism is that it comes through relationships. If we were preaching on a Saturday, it would hit you in the face and bounce off.”

Johnson said students come from a variety of denominations and all are welcome. An article in The Alabama Baptist newspaper about the group even got the attention of the Cheerwine company, based in North Carolina.

Nunnally said the company—“Cheerwine’s like a cherry Coke in reverse,” he explained—had contacted the group about a possible ad campaign in 2010.

“My desire is to live my life in a way that glorifies God in every arena,” Johnson said. “It’s not going to involve alcohol. That’s a personal conviction that runs through the guys who run the tailgate.” (RNS)



STAYING DRY At their tailgate party on game day against West Virginia, Auburn students of College Kids Tailgate enjoy a “dry” party out of religious conviction. Standing are (from left) Michael Nunnally, Garrett Cheney, Kyle Bumpous, Kevin Johnson, Brandon Campbell (feet in the air), Zack Carrol, Jordan Bellar, Ian Middleton, Luke Hasha and Michael Watford. Kneeling are (from left) Andrew Pearce and Ben Mahaffey. (RNS photo courtesy of Kevin Johnson)

NFL Sunday



The New Hope cheerleaders rally at New Hope Baptist Church in East Orange, N.J., during the church’s 4th annual “NFL (New Found Life) Sunday Football Service,” which is designed to attract more men. Church members wear the jerseys of their favorite football players and follow up the high-energy service with a tailgate party. (RNS photo by Jennifer Brown/Newark (N.J.) Star-Ledger)

N.J. church attempts to destigmatize church for men with annual New Found Life football-themed Sunday

By Tanya Drobness
Newark (N.J.) Star-Ledger

East Orange, N.J.—Dwight Gill figures if there is one thing that will bring more men to church, it’s football.

So on a recent Sunday at New Hope Baptist Church in East Orange, N.J., NFL didn’t stand for National Football League, but rather for New Found Life—as in the church’s annual NFL service and celebration.

The service drew nearly 2,000 people, including a bevy of newcomers who were in for a worship service that was anything but ordinary.

“There’s more to it than just a church service,” said Michael Carrington, 48, of Newark, N.J. Carrington said he is not a regular churchgoer but was so impressed with what he saw and the spirit of the congregation that he wants to become a member.

Like a church on game day

He stood in awe, looking at scores of men wearing their favorite football jerseys over their slacks and suits. In the church lobby and sanctuary, football banners and posters were plastered on the walls and hung from the rafters. Between worshipful songs of praise, the congregants broke out in a stadium wave, briefly standing and throwing their arms in the air.

A tailgate party, including sandwiches, hot dogs and chips, followed the music-filled service.

“A lot of people can get bored during a service, but this brings a sense of excitement, and at the same time, a sense of hope,” said Carrington, who wore a No. 88 Lynn Swann Pittsburgh Steelers jersey.

Gill’s football service could be called the Hail Mary

pass of religion: Get men into the church, then give them God’s message. He started the event four years ago and used the sports analogy because, quite simply, “men like football.” He said women outnumber men at the church by a 3-to-1 ratio, and women’s involvement in church tends to override men’s participation nationwide.

The pastor said he believes he has found a fun remedy to what he calls a “longtime challenge with no easy solution.” He wants to dispel any perception among men that church is just for women.

Professional help

To help accomplish that, Gill also invited former New York Giants player Lee Rouson—now an associate pastor of a church in Harlem, N.Y.—to preach about “God’s promise for salvation” during the two-hour service.

Rouson praised the football worship concept.

“It’s a familiarity. Men gravitate to sports. It’s physical, emotional and mental, and those analogies are all part of the spirit life as well,” Rouson noted. “Men compete, they understand competition. But the competition here is to be a real man.”

Church member Samantha Roberts, 32, said many people have a misperception of church life, as women tend to be more involved.

“Women are the ones who hold the family together,” she said. “They know with God in their lives they make a positive place for men and women.”

Gill has been keeping score and said he has been able to draw about 10 new men to the church each year following the event.

“If we can attract one man to come to church,” he said, “heaven will be happy.” (RNS)

“It’s a familiarity. Men gravitate to sports. It’s physical, emotional and mental, and those analogies are all part of the spirit life as well. Men compete, they understand competition. But the competition here is to be a real man.”

Former pro football player Lee Rouson, who is now an associate pastor in Harlem, N.Y.

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