

WESTERN Recorder

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Shine Like Stars * Philippians 2:15

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Bringing Lottie to life

Awareness of missions offering grows through real-life portrayal

By Robin Bass

Stanton—The Lottie Moon Christmas Offering has been a fixture of the Baptist advent season since 1918, but Pastor Greg Webb got the impression some church members just weren't grasping the significance of it all.

"The reason we do this offering is to remember (Moon's) great commitment and sacrifice to world missions," Webb said. "Southern Baptist churches throughout the world use this month to memorialize her death through the giving to world missions. It's important to remember the great heroes of the faith."

About three-fourths of the members at Emmanuel Baptist Church in Stanton come from non-Baptist backgrounds, Webb said, and are not familiar with Moon or the offering bearing her name.

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Tina Pasley, a Vacation Bible School director at Emmanuel Baptist Church in Stanton, speaks to the church's children as Lottie Moon, the missionary pioneer for whom Southern Baptists' Christmas offering for international missions is named. (Photo by Robin Bass)



Plan to realign KBC Mission Board staff due next May

By Drew Nichter

Louisville—In order to respond to "financial challenges" faced by the Kentucky Baptist Convention and its churches, the KBC's executive director has announced a "realignment" proposal that will be presented as early as next May.



Paul Chitwood

Speaking at last week's Mission Board meeting in Louisville, Paul Chitwood said he intends to present a plan to the group at its May 2012 meeting

that will include "some very strategic decisions to align our work with the current level of funding."

The KBC "cannot avoid responding to the current financial challenges," Chitwood noted. He did not specify whether the realignment would involve job cuts, salary reductions or elimination of ministries.

Such challenges include a steady decline in Cooperative Program giving from convention-member churches. Over the last decade, the percentage of congregations' undesignated receipts given to

□ See KBC Mission Board ... Page 2

Christmas ornaments change lives in Thailand

By Caroline Anderson

Bangka, Thailand—Ponpit Sayom uses a silver pen to sketch miniature figures of the wise men from the Christmas story and then cuts out the velvet ornaments that will hang on trees in countless American homes during the holidays.

Christmas, however, isn't celebrated in Sayom's Thailand home. To her unbelieving family, Jesus is just another man. On Christmas Day, Sayom simply goes to church to celebrate her Savior's birth.

Food still must be earned and her grandchildren need to be cared for. Sayom is the main breadwinner for

her family of eight, especially since her husband's work has suffered setbacks from heavy rain and flooding. She prays one day her family will listen to the story represented in the ornaments she makes.

Sayom earns her wages by making hand-stitched Christmas ornaments for Thai Country Trim, a 25-year-old ministry that provides livelihood for rural Thai women.

Thai Country Trim employs 22 full-time workers at the ministry center—all believers who lead Bible studies and small groups. The ministry also employs dozens of women who work from home, which allows them to make an income as they care for

their children.

Thai Country Trim was the first artisan group in Woman's Missionary Union's WorldCrafts program that began in 1996 and now has national artisans in 33 countries.

WMU's support and promotion allows Thai Country Trim to employ more workers, director Cheryl Derbyshire noted. WorldCrafts is one of many ways WMU promotes missions involvement among Southern Baptists.

Derbyshire said she finds great joy in watching lives change as the 22 full-time workers share the gospel with the women who work from

□ See Christmas ornaments ... Page 6



Ponpit Sayom's grandson spends his after-school hours at Thai Country Trim, where Sayom cuts out Christmas ornament designs and stitches them together. (IMB photo)



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Caldwell-Lyon's Reeder honored as state's DOM of the Year

By Drew Nichter

Princeton—Rick Reeder's title might be director of missions for Caldwell-Lyon Baptist Association.

But his heart for missions has extended far beyond the borders of the two western Kentucky counties and into thousands of Mexican homes.

For his 11-plus years of missions-minded work both abroad and in Kentucky, Reeder recently was named DOM of the Year by the Kentucky Fellowship of Directors of Missions.

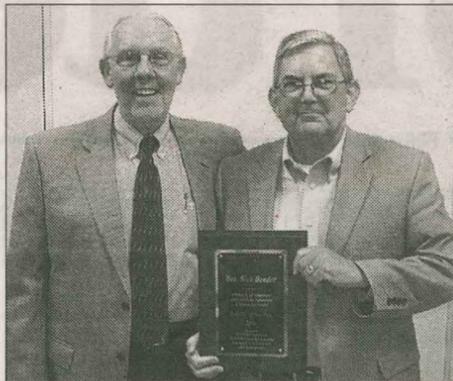
Reeder said he was shocked upon hearing he'd received the honor at the DOM group's meeting last month. "They must've counted the votes wrong," he joked.

The honor is no mistake, according to Larry Baker of the Kentucky Baptist Convention's missions growth team, who works closely with the state's DOMs.

Reeder "is a strong participant in Kentucky associational activities and a personal friend of Kentucky DOMs," Baker noted. "He is well respected by his peers."

Baker described Reeder's passion for "reaching souls for Christ," specifically noting Caldwell-Lyon Baptist Association's strong missions involvement in the Mexican state of Zacatecas.

Caldwell-Lyon is an International Mission Board-endorsed strategy coordina-



HONORED Rick Reeder (right), director of missions for Caldwell-Lyon Baptist Association, is given the 2011 DOM of the Year award by the Kentucky Fellowship of Directors of Missions at the group's annual meeting last month. With him is KFDOM President Jim Castlen, who is DOM of Three Forks Baptist Association. (Photo courtesy of Tom Biddle)

tor association to Zacatecas, which is located in central Mexico. The state is one of the country's smallest in population, but one of its largest in terms of surface area.

Reeder took his first mission trip to the "very unreached" area in 2002. Two years later, he led the association to develop a "strategic partnership" to reach the nearly 1.5 million residents of Zacatecas with the gospel.

The work has been focused in the

southern portion of the state, targeting about 50,000 households in 18 communities. Reeder estimated Caldwell-Lyon volunteers have knocked on the doors of about 27,000 of those homes in the last seven years.

Their work corresponded with an IMB strategy to reach all of to get the gospel into every Mexican home by 2015. Reeder said he believes the IMB may have scaled back that goal, but Caldwell-Lyon isn't easing its aim to connect with everyone in the area.

"Our goal is to go to every house in those 18 communities like we committed to do," he said. "It may be after 2015, but Lord willing and He keeps us alive and healthy, we're going to do it."

A 'pastor to pastors'

Reeder's passion for reaching Zacatecas is equaled by his concern for Kentuckians, according to Caldwell-Lyon's moderator.

"Rick is a DOM who sees himself as a pastor to pastors rather than a king-maker," said Kyle Noffsinger, pastor at First Baptist Church of Fredonia. "He cares about the men who lead the churches in our association. He never meddles, he never seeks to usurp authority, and any pastor knows that if they ask Rick a question, they will get a scriptural answer."

Reeder said he views his job through a pastor's lens: each pastor and his family a member of a congregation.

What makes that job so much more challenging, Reeder noted, is the "congregation" is spread across two counties and rarely if ever gathers in one place at the same time.

Still, Reeder said he attempts to address each minister's needs, whether it's offering advice about a ministry or dealing with a conflict. That, he stressed, can only be done by establishing trust with each individual.

"I think I have to earn their trust and earn that right" to counsel them, Reeder said. "I don't think that I just have it by default."

To further illustrate his role, Reeder echoed the words of Abraham Lincoln who said, "A lawyer's time and advice are his stock and trade."

"For a preacher of any type of ministry, our trust is our stock and trade," Reeder said. "And if people don't trust us, then we have nothing. ... I like to remind myself of that."

During his years of ministry, Reeder seems to have earned the trust of both his peers and those he serves. And as Baker put it, he's glad to have Reeder as a fellow soldier in God's army. "In the war against Satan and his forces, I want Rick Reeder on my side." (WR)

KBC Mission Board

Continued from page 1

CP has dropped off by about one-third, Chitwood pointed out.

That, coupled with a messenger-approved report from the Kentucky Great Commission Task Force in 2010 that calls for a 50-50 division of Cooperative Program funds between Kentucky and Southern Baptist ministry causes by 2020, has forced a re-evaluation of the KBC's structure and ministries, he said.

Responding to such funding struggles requires a "willingness to celebrate the commitment that Kentucky Baptists have made to get more of our resources to the places in the world without a gospel witness," Chitwood noted.

"The Great Commission resurgence ... is not an enemy of the work of the Kentucky Baptist Convention," he added. "It is, I believe, a friend."

Listening sessions

Since he became executive director last June, Chitwood has met with KBC Mission Board staff teams and has heard from the state's directors of missions.

"Those meetings have given me a deeper insight into our staff members' perspectives of the role of the Kentucky Baptist Convention," he said.

Regardless of what adjustments are made to convention structure and ministries, Chitwood said the KBC must "remain effective in its mission of helping our churches fulfill their mission" and be "poised to address the pressing needs of our churches in our day."

The KBC also must continue, Chitwood pointed out, "to rise to the challenge of communicating our kingdom role."

Since 2010, Kentucky Baptists have



MORNING DEVOTIONAL Kentucky Baptist Convention second vice president T.J. Francis, pastor of First Baptist Church of Walton, opens the Tuesday morning session of the KBC Mission Board with a devotional. Francis challenged his fellow Kentucky Baptists to "boast about Jesus." (Photo by Robin Bass)

embarked on the "More for Christ" campaign which calls for, among other things, increased Cooperative Program giving from churches and individuals. Growth in CP funds means not only more money for world missions, but for Kentucky ministries as well, Chitwood said.

"If these vital kingdom ministries will be sustained, we must find more ways to effectively champion them, especially to our pastors," he said.

Ultimately, he explained, the Cooperative Program needs to be seen once again as the "key vehicle for accomplishing the Great Commission."

KBC President Adam Greenway, in

addressing the Mission Board, also lamented the challenges of insufficient CP giving, declining baptisms and lagging Sunday School involvement.

While the trends are discouraging, it is important to remember "our God still rules and reigns over all circumstances (and) over all statistics," Greenway said.

The president challenged Mission Board members to "re-dream the KBC dream." That dream, he warned, "must be drawn out of the word of God."

"Everything we do in the life of the convention ought to have a biblical and theological rationale," he charged.

Capturing God's vision for the KBC also requires greater obedience and to

listen for what God is saying. Doing those things concurrently "can result in absolutely incredible achievement for the things of God," Greenway said.

In other business:

■ Board members approved the distribution of \$154,000 of unspent budget funds, short-term interest funds and Kentucky Baptist Connect funds. They also voted to retain \$264,333 of the unspent budget funds to be used as income for future budget years, beginning with the 2012-13 fiscal year.

Prior to the vote, a question was raised about alternative uses for the extra monies.

Rob Gibson, pastor of North Oldham Baptist Church in Goshen, asked if the business and finance committee, which brought the recommendation, had considered sending the funds to the International or North American Mission boards.

"I'd prefer to trust the Lord to provide what we need next year and pass this on to the mission field so we don't pull more missionaries off the field," Gibson said.

Business and finance committee chair Don Mathis said the group did consider such a move, but because of an anticipated shortfall in funding for the 2012-13 fiscal year, retaining the funds "would be prudent and good stewardship."

■ Board members approved the transfer of \$15,407 of board-designated funds from two completed missions partnerships to a pair of new endeavors.

A total of \$8,000 was allocated for the Send St. Louis partnership, which was formalized at last month's KBC annual meeting. The remaining \$7,407 was moved to the "All the World" fund, which is used for overseas partnership missions projects. (WR)

Campbellsville to partner with Cuban Baptists

By Christina Kern

Campbellsville—Campbellsville University plans to partner with the Hispanic Baptist Bible Institute and the Baptist Convention of Eastern Cuba to provide training for professors at a seminary in Santiago, Cuba.

CU administrators recently met with Joel Luis Dupont, president of the Cuban convention, and Ernesto Font, who is pastor of Hispanic churches in Springfield and Danville and a professor at the Hispanic Baptist Bible Institute, to discuss the potential partnership.

"The Eastern Baptist Convention of Cuba has one seminary, 264 pastors and 490 churches. Just these few numbers highlight the need for additional leadership training, and the experience and expertise of Campbellsville University could be highly beneficial," said Twyla Hernandez, an assistant professor of Christian missions at CU and director of the Hispanic Baptist Bible Institute.

The institute began its relationship with the Baptist Convention of Eastern Cuba in 2010. Last June, the school raised enough funds to start its own extension center in Cuba.

"Because the average salary in Cuba is \$20 per month, we cannot charge tuition or even books. With various donors, we were able to raise funds to supply the textbooks for 10 students," Hernandez said.

"Currently, we have approximately 30 students studying in the extension center in Contramaestre, Cuba, all sharing the 10 books per course that we were able to provide," she added. "We hope to be able to expand this important ministry in the future."

In the 1990s as the Soviet Union and Communism fell, Cubans began "turning to the Lord in record numbers," Hernandez said.

"The harvest is indeed plentiful, but the Cuban convention needs more trained leaders in order to assimilate the many new believers who are being incorporated into the body of Christ."

The Cuban government also has asked the Baptist Convention of Eastern Cuba to provide additional training for seminary professors.

"This moment in Cuba's history is very important as restrictions are beginning to loosen for the first time in 50 years," Hernandez said. "I believe that if we could come alongside our Cuban brothers and sisters at this moment, Campbellsville University could have a long-lasting impact on the health of the church in Cuba."

Faculty members from Campbellsville's School of Theology are planning a mission trip to Cuba for 2013. Hernandez will also make a trip to the island nation in May or June of 2012. (CU)

Historical society continues work on compilation

By Drew Nichter

Louisville—Lately, Bill Whittaker has become a regular visitor to the Western Recorder offices.

The retired pastor has spent hours combing through page after page of newspaper archives searching for information about notable Kentucky Baptists from the 20th century.

The time-consuming work is part of a project Whittaker has undertaken that eventually will become a biographical compilation of more than 350 Kentucky Baptist ministers, missionaries and laypeople who served primarily in the 1900s.

The book is a project of the J.H. Spencer Historical Society, an independent group formed in 2008 after the dissolution of the Kentucky Baptist Archives Advisory Board. The society is not officially connected with the Kentucky Baptist Convention, but does have ties to its archives office and receives a modicum of funding from the KBC.

Whittaker, the book's editor, said it likely will be completed by the spring and be published in time for the 2012 KBC annual meeting.

The book is meant to preserve Kentucky Baptist history and tell the stories of some "very active and faithful Southern Baptists," said Whittaker, the former



Bill Whittaker



Ben Stratton

president of Clear Creek Baptist Bible College.

The book's purpose parallels that of the J.H. Spencer Historical Society, the group's treasurer, Ben Stratton, noted.

"We are who we are today because the present is determined by the past," said Stratton, who is pastor of Farmington Baptist Church.

In the last three years, the society has grown to around 70 members and is open to all Kentucky Baptists. It holds a pair of meetings each year, including one prior to the KBC annual meeting each November.

The group's meeting last month in Florence had its largest crowd to date. Those who attended heard a pair of messages on Kentucky Baptist history and re-elected a slate of officers for the coming year: Charles Blair, pastor of Pop-

lar Grove Baptist Church in Hickman, president; Stan Williams, pastor of First Baptist Church of Cannonsburg, vice president; and Stratton, treasurer.

Stratton said the Spencer society is open to all Kentucky Baptists—ministers and laypeople—who are interested in learning more about and preserving their history.

The group also is looking to fill in some gaps in the book project, specifically in finding writers for several Kentucky Baptist biographies that remain unwritten. Each bio should be approximately 700 words in length.

Whittaker said about 64 people have agreed to contribute their time and energy to the project thus far. For those interested in helping out, the deadline to do so is Feb. 1, 2012, he added.

The project also is in need of funding help. The estimated cost of the publication is between \$10,000 and \$12,000. Whittaker and Stratton said they are looking for partners, either churches or individuals, to contribute \$100 or more. Doing so will earn a free copy of the book and a mention in its acknowledgments section.

To contribute to the book or to join the J.H. Spencer Historical Society, contact Stratton at BenStrattonKY@gmail.com. Society membership is \$10 for one year or \$17 for two years.



SHOPPING SPREE Employees of the Williamsburg Walmart store pose with University of the Cumberlands students and faculty who collected more than 800 toys that were distributed to Whitley County children this Christmas season. (UC photo)

Cumberlands students, faculty collect gifts for area children

Williamsburg—University of the Cumberlands' Mountain Outreach organization held its sixth annual Midnight Toy Shopping Spree at the Walmart in Williamsburg Dec. 2. The students and others involved said the event was extraordinary example of what it means to give back during the holiday season.

"We needed 800 toys and got 805 gifts on Friday night," Mountain Outreach Director Marc Hensley said.

Altogether, 48 students and three faculty members showed up to help shop for Christmas gifts for kids throughout Whitley County. The toys collected ranged from those for infants all the way up to gifts for 14 year olds.

Although Mountain Outreach helps so many families and children around the community, the events the group takes part in provide a lot for those who participate as well, Hensley said.

"We forget sometimes that just a few

years ago these students were children," he pointed out, "and then they come to college where they are expected to be mature. This gives them the opportunity for a break from class and fun themselves."

The evening was a special one for all involved, including the university's golf team which decided to help out with this year's shopping spree. The team helped collect toys, bag them at the registers and load the gifts into a U-Haul truck to take to storage.

Hensley expressed his gratitude and appreciation on behalf of Mountain Outreach for those who either helped shop or who raised funds for the event.

"Can you imagine four or five people trying to choose 800 gifts for children ages infant through 14?" he asked. "The event would not have been possible without those who reached out a helping hand." (UC)

Ky. Baptists give \$1.83 million to CP in November

Louisville—Kentucky Baptists' gifts to missions through the Cooperative Program totaled more than \$1.83 million in November.

Total gifts last month were \$1,836,925, which was \$39,975 short of the monthly workable budget goal of \$1,876,900.

Overall giving to CP for the first three months of the fiscal year is \$5,092,482, a total of \$538,218 (9.56 percent) below the workable budget goal, according to Lowell Ashby, leader of the Kentucky Baptist Convention's business services team.

"Historically, CP gifts are the highest in December and January," Ashby said. "Our prayer is for increased CP giving in 2012 to support missions and ministries in Kentucky, our nation and around the world."

Billy Compton, the KBC's executive associate for Cooperative Program and resources, said he sees Kentucky Baptists becoming inspired by the More for Christ emphasis launched this year.

Kentucky Baptists have embarked upon More for Christ to challenge themselves and fellow Christians to a greater commitment to Christ and the Great Commission.

"It is obvious we face a significant challenge in reaching our budget goals," Compton said. "However, several churches are beginning to respond to the More for Christ emphasis."

"Hopefully we can look forward to improved Cooperative Program support in the coming months," he added. "The ministry and missions opportunities are greater than ever." (KBC)

Thanking God for Kentucky Baptists!

As we prepare to celebrate the Savior's birth, Paul's words to the Colossian believers express sentiments that we, as your Kentucky Baptist Convention staff, feel toward the Savior's people we serve in Kentucky. Allow me to share them.

Together We are the KBC



Paul Chitwood

To the holy and faithful brothers in Christ in Kentucky:
"Grace and peace to you from God our Father. We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints—

the faith and love that spring from the hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that you have already heard about in the word of truth, the gospel that has come to you. All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God's grace in all its truth ...

"For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.

"For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation ... he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

"Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—if you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel" (Colossians 1:3-6, 9-23 NIV).

Merry Christmas!

Paul Chitwood is executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

Discovering the Wonder of Christmas

What does "the Wonder of Christmas" mean to you? In the last few weeks, I have been led to ponder this question.

To a young child, I suppose, the Wonder of Christmas might be confused with a fantastical trip aboard a train called "The Polar Express" to the North Pole, where elves dressed in red load a gigantic sack filled with gifts on a sleigh. Or, maybe trying to figure out how Rudolph got a glowing red nose that enabled him to guide Santa one foggy eve, or how a snowman came to life when an old hat was placed on his head.

For many Christians, though, the Wonder of Christmas evokes images of a babe lying in a manger on a silent night in Bethlehem. Or, it may be contemplating the beautiful melody of a multitude of angels singing the humble shepherds on a hillside. Or, perhaps pondering how a magnificent star guided some wise men on their way "until it came and stopped above the place where the child was."

For some older adults, the Wonder of Christmas may also involve reflecting on special candlelight services, where strains of old, familiar carols bring an air of nostalgia and holy awe. Treasured memories emerge as friends and family praise God together: "Away in a Manger," "O Little Town of Bethlehem," "O Come, All Ye Faithful" and "Silent Night, Holy Night."

In a recent article in USA Today, "Advent a make-or-break chance for churches, visitors," Jeffrey MacDonald reminds us that the Wonder of Christmas also means a golden opportunity when "the curious who seldom darken the

door just might drop by for a taste of the season's spirit." Scott Thumma, author of "The Other 80 Percent: Turning Your Church's Spectators into Active Participants" observes, "If you just have the Advent season without also calling people to a more significant, disciplined sense of what the Christian life is, then you run the risk of letting people come in once a year and feel that they've done their Christian duty." Similarly Ed Stetzer, president of LifeWay Research, challenges us: "When we get caught up in all the celebration and don't take time to think about communication, we miss a point of the Christmas season."

Agreed, the Wonder of Christmas does draw people with nominal ties to church—

those whom we may only see at Christmas and Easter, the "Chreasters" as McDonald calls them—where they may contemplate having a deeper, meaningful relationship with Christ. For the Wonder of Christmas is more than a babe in a manger, shepherds keeping watch, a chorus of angels or an unique shining star; it is God's wondrous love—a love so powerful it would lead His Son to a cross. The Apostle Paul was amazed at this wondrous love: "But God proves His love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us!" The Wonder of Christmas is this Christ-child who would become our Savior and Redeemer, our Emmanuel—"so man might live forevermore."

In discovering the Wonder of Christmas, a joyous heart gushes, "O how He loves you and me. O how He loves you and me. He gave His life, what more could He give? ... O how He loves you and me."

After Thought

By Todd Deaton



Thanks, CP!

Some occasions in life provide opportunity for pause and reflection upon God's grace. For those of us graduating from Southern Seminary this December, our privileged opportunity to study theology comes to a close. However, the unique set of circumstances in which we find ourselves should cause us to stop and look to the faithful saints who, in large part, made this occasion possible.

To the men and women who wake up every morning, go to work, bring home a paycheck, tithe their income to a church that contributes to the Cooperative Program, I thank you. It is the relentless dedication of generations of Southern Baptists who faithfully and sacrificially give so that those whom God calls to the gospel ministry may receive ministry training.

This day was made possible by parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and countless friends who never failed to obey God's call to give to their church. Without such generosity from every Southern Baptist, my training at the world's greatest seminary would never have occurred. I do not leave this season indebted to a financial institution or a lender, but I leave with an enormous debt of gratitude to Christ for His

faithfulness alone to save me and to every Southern Baptist who invested in me personally and the ones who faithfully gave so that I could be trained.

I am and remain forever indebted to the work of the saints who made sound theological education possible for a poor Southern Baptist kid whom God called to the ministry. I have learned and studied in halls that others envisioned and built, and I remain appreciative of the vision God continues to give Southern Baptists for training pastors, missionaries and educators. May God always bless your faithfulness to the gospel and your generosity to the Cooperative Program.

Nicholas Clark, pastor
Cash Creek Baptist Church
Henderson



Cart before horse

Without question the two main emphases of the Kentucky Baptist Convention (and the Southern Baptist Convention) are the Holy Bible and the Great Commission. To be sure, these are good ... necessary ... godly. Still, I wonder if we are constantly putting the cart before the horse. I mean, in all of our sermons, meetings and writings, how much do we emphasize the Holy Spirit and the

Great Commandment?

It seems to me that we emphasize the Holy Bible to the neglect of the Holy Spirit and the Great Commission to the neglect of the Great Commandment. Just do the math and compare how much each of these is emphasized. The Holy Spirit is God, not the Holy Bible. The Great Commission without the Great Commandment is shallow, at best.

The Holy Spirit inspired the Holy Bible, will inspire our interpretation and will lead us to bear fruit, especially love. As Jesus said, when we love we show the world that we are His disciples and that those good works of love will glorify the Father. When we love we earn the right to be heard and thus are better able to fulfill the Great Commission.

It just seems to me that we have our priorities out of order. I encourage everyone to think about it, pray about it, talk about it, and let the Holy Spirit lead.

Mike Dixon
Middletown

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The real Santa Claus is worth remembering

By James Parker III

In reflecting on this season of the year, I have often wondered how a Martian reporter would write a story about Christmas. If one only had the dominant cultural icons of TV, movies, news media and retail stores, my guess is that the Martian-viewing audience wouldn't have a clue as to what Christmas is about.

They might think it has something to do with snowmen or reindeer or retail store sales. And if any particular person rose to the top in the public's awareness, it would be a jolly secular guy at risk for stroke or cardiac arrest who likes to dress in red and let his beard grow. Rather than bemoan this fact, I assert that we need to reimagine the myth of the modern-day Santa Claus.

Most people simply do not realize the rich heritage behind the Santa Claus story. The secularized and sanitized contemporary version pales in comparison with the deeply Christian ethos and content of the original.

The story goes that Nicholas was born in A.D. 280 to pious and wealthy parents who raised him in the fear and admonition of the Lord and taught him "sacred books" from the age of 5. He was forced to grow up quickly upon the sudden death of his parents.

Inheriting his family's wealth, he was left rich and lonely, but he had the desire to use his wealth for good. The first opportunity happened when he heard about a father who, through an unfortunate turn of events, was left destitute with three daughters. Without marriage dowry, the daughters would be condemned to a life of singleness and prostitution, so Nicholas threw some small bags of gold coins into the window of the home (some traditions say down the chimney), thereby saving the children from a life of misery.

As a teenager, Nicholas made a pilgrimage to Egypt and Palestine. Upon returning home he felt called to ministry and was subsequently ordained. He spent time at the Monastery of Holy Zion near Myra until an old priest had a vision that he was to be the new bishop.

The congregation overwhelmingly elected him

FIRST PERSON

bishop, and he became known for his holiness, passion for the gospel and zeal. He challenged the paganism at the temple in his district (to the god Artemis), and it was said that evil spirits "fled howling before him."

But the old deities did not go easily. In A.D. 303, Emperor Diocletian directed the persecution of Christians, and "as he was the chief priest of the Christians of this town and preached the truths of faith with a holy liberty, Nicholas was seized by the magistrates, tortured, then chained and thrown into prison with many other Christians."

With the Edict of Milan, Emperor Constantine ordered the cessation of all persecution. Those who survived Diocletian's purges were called "confessors" because they wouldn't renege on their confession of Jesus as Lord.

When Bishop Nicholas walked out of the prison, the crowds called to him: "Nicholas! Confessor!" He had been repeatedly beaten until he was raw, and his body was the color of vermilion. Bishop Nicholas was also said to have intervened on behalf of unjustly charged prisoners and actively sought to help his people survive when they had experienced two bad harvests.

One of the most interesting stories connected with him was his role during the Arian controversy. St. Methodius asserted that "thanks to the teaching of St. Nicholas the metropolis of Myra alone was untouched by the filth of the Arian heresy, which it firmly rejected as death-dealing poison."

One weak tradition has him actually attending the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325, when Arian doctrine was rejected. The story goes that he got into a heated debate with Arius about whether there was a time when the Word (Jesus) did not exist. Nicholas strongly disagreed.

The debate ended suddenly when Nicholas punched Arius then and there on the floor of the council. The mental image of Santa Claus punching Arius on the floor of the Council of Nicea with Emperor Constantine looking on changes the way one ever sees Santa Claus again. While I might not agree with his methods, I certainly admire his passion for Christological orthodoxy and doctrinal purity.

So when you think of Santa Claus, think of a godly Christian bishop who was persecuted and imprisoned for faithfully proclaiming the faith under the most dangerous of circumstances. Think of someone who had a sensitive caring pastoral heart. Think of someone who provided support and defense for children, the weak and poor, the helpless and victims of injustice. Think of someone with an unparalleled passion for doctrinal purity. And to top it off, think of someone whose whole purpose in life was to point people to Jesus.

Now that's my kind of Santa Claus. (BP)

James Parker is professor and associate dean of worldview and culture at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Giving and enjoying it

By Jeremy White

What is one of the most meaningful gifts that you have given? Whether it's something you have given at Christmas or another time, think about that great gift and how you felt giving it.

As I reflect over years of gift giving, there are many gifts given that don't register in my memory or heart. The more meaningful gifts I remember are ones that I worked hard to make, spent effort in planning and personalizing, or indicated a strong relationship I had with the person. When I gave gifts along those lines, I had such a joy in giving.

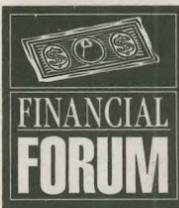
You have probably experienced that same thing because the biblical truth Jesus expressed is that it's more blessed to give than receive. If I were to express this in a mathematical formula, it would look like "Giving > Receiving."

Just as we can experience joy in giving, consider how much joy God must have experienced in giving to us. We sometimes focus more on the sacrifice that God made in giving His Son. Certainly there was considerable cost in that sacrifice. But there is also great joy. Bear with me as a numbers person, the mathematical formula for this would be "The joy in giving > The cost of the gift."

We are made in God's image and we can experience some of the joy in giving, too. Though we are evil and know how to give good gifts to our children, how much more will our heavenly Father give good gifts and enjoy it.

Of course, this season we are celebrating the gift of Jesus entering into the world and the ultimate gift of salvation. As we think of the wonder of that and later of the sacrifice of His death upon the cross, may we not forget the great joy our heavenly Father experiences as we accept the gift He offers.

Jeremy White is a CPA with Blythe, White and Associates in Paducah.



Approaching Christmas as a single

By James Stillwell

Q: As a single person, it seems that the world in general, and the church in particular, lines everything up in pairs, two-by-two, like Noah's Ark. As I approach Christmas, I begin to be filled with some anxiety as to how to approach the holiday.



A: You know the story of the single adult, Joseph, who has been told in a dream to marry a girl who has become "with child" simply by the power of the Holy Spirit. If there was

ever a story of one who lived "by faith" it was Joseph.

Of course, there is Mary. Mary became an "espoused wife, being great with child," and she seemed to keep her wits about her along the way, in spite of her youth and her unique circumstances.

As far as we know, there were single adults among the shepherds that fateful night.

Later, as Mary and Joseph took Jesus to be dedicated, two older single adults, Simeon and Anna, who had "waited for the time of consolation from the Lord," found they had lived to see it. So, how does one celebrate it?

■ Like Joseph, be open to God's dreams in your life. As you face the end of the year, spend time in quiet reflection asking God where He might lead you in the coming year. It could turn out to be an incredible adventure. Consider going on a "solo retreat" to inventory the year past and anticipate the year ahead.

■ Like Mary, be receptive to what God brings your way. Rather than focusing on what others may expect you to do or be, see every day as an opportunity to find God at work. Look at the meeting of every new individual as a friend whose friendship is a gift. Live in the moment, knowing that God is always here, bringing to pass miraculous purposes.

■ Like the shepherds who celebrated Christ's birth that very night, know that in your places of work and fellowship, God may show up so bright that your world may be changed forever. Know God in community. The kingdom of God, one translation says, is among you. Have some fellowship in your life. Reach out to someone who may be facing the season alone. The shepherds had each other. Who can you contact to accompany you through the events of these days?

■ Like Simeon and Anna, inventory the dreams of your life, and how it might be that God is bringing them to pass in the day-to-day service and ministry you are offering to Him. Spend time in service, worship and prayer during this season. No other season has as many opportunities for unique and beautiful worship.

Reprinted from Western Recorder, Dec. 21, 2010. James Stillwell is minister to singles at Immanuel Baptist Church in Lexington.

A mission without borders

By Kevin Ezell

On his first day at the International Mission Board in Richmond, I had the privilege of meeting with my friend, IMB President Tom Elliff, to discuss how the IMB and the North American Mission Board can work more closely together to reach unreached people groups throughout the world.

As Southern Baptist churches partner with IMB to pray for unreached people groups around the world, our closer cooperation will allow us to help those churches connect with those same people groups that have significant populations in North America.

We will be working to find many more ways we can cooperate to make our work more effective and to make it easier for churches to

fulfill the Great Commission at home and abroad.

But there is another aspect of NAMB's new focus that I believe will ultimately have an even greater impact on Southern Baptist efforts to reach the world for Christ. Our "Send North America" strategy to start new churches—thousands of them in the coming years—will lead to a new generation of churches focused not only on reaching North America, but reaching the world.

I believe that as we start new evangelistic churches that are reaching new people for Christ, many of these new believers and new Southern Baptists will have a passion for reaching the unreached of our world. They will live out that passion by supporting Southern Baptist mission efforts through

their offering dollars, but also by becoming personally involved. Many will travel overseas for a short-term mission trip. Others will answer God's call to long-term missions.

There are so many people in North America who live in regions where evangelical churches are hard to find. It is exciting to think about all of those who will be reached when Southern Baptists increase church-planting efforts. And it's even more exciting to think about how God will use those yet-unreached people to take His message of salvation to the world.

The global mission field is all around us. God's work is without borders and without limitations. And God wants to involve every one of us in a very personal way in what He is doing to reach the unreached at home and throughout the world.

Kevin Ezell is president of the North American Mission Board.



Christmas ornaments change Thai women's lives

Continued from page 1

home who aren't believers. Sayom, who has worked for Thai Country Trim for 20 years, is one of the full-time workers.

Sayom seems like the type of woman who'd spend her time in a rocking chair, sipping tea while rocking a grandchild to sleep. But she rarely has an idle moment.

She spends her days and nights meticulously checking the stitching on Christmas ornaments. If a stitch is out of place, the entire ornament must be scrapped.

Sayom rises at 5 a.m. to get her grandchildren ready for school. Then she heads to the Thai Country Trim center and draws and cuts out the figures of Christmas characters.

After working from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., she returns home to cook for her family, feed and bathe her grandchildren and tend to her aging father who has Alzheimer's disease.

After the others are in bed, she sits on her linoleum floor and sews angel ornaments by the light of a fluorescent bulb until midnight as a way to earn extra income.

To pass the time as she sews

and decorates ornaments, Sayom sings praise songs and whispers prayers for her family.

A friend introduced Sayom to Thai Country Trim and helped her get a position making ornaments. She never had love before, she explained. Her father always was mean to her, she said, and her mom died when she was 7. Sayom said she grew up lonely and longing for love.

"When he's old, I don't want to take care of him," Sayom once said of her father.

Sayom finds new life

But things changed when Sayom started working at Thai Country Trim. She learned she had value. She received praise for her handiwork and began taking pride in that work.

In weekly Bible studies that are a part of the workday at the ministry center, Sayom heard God is like a father and loves her unconditionally. She saw His love in her coworkers' lives.

"My Christian friends loved me," Sayom said. The love the Christian workers showed her stirred her to believe in Christ.

Because of Christ's love, she said she's able to love her father.

After a major surgery, he needed to live with one of his children. He asked if he could live with Sayom.

"I didn't want to," she admitted. "But thanks to God, because when I came to know God, God changed my mind to love my dad."

God is changing her father's heart, too. Though still not a believer, he treats Sayom with more respect now.

Derbyshire has watched Sayom's transformation. As her self-esteem rose, she began to reach out to others. Sayom started working at home and now has moved to a full-time position at the center. She also helps lead weekly Bible studies with women who haven't believed yet.

Because of Thai Country Trim, Sayom is able to support herself and her family, and she has a Christian community that supports and nurtures her.

Life remains difficult for Sayom. Her family has yet to believe. As mother to both her children and her four grandchildren, she must continue to provide for them financially.

But, with a smile, she said: "God's greater." (IMB/BP)



LIFE-CHANGING WORK Like most Thais, Yupha Hanuman was a Buddhist. When her daughter caught dengue fever, Hanuman's Christian coworkers at Thai Country Trim covered her in prayer. God healed her daughter and, at a Christmas party, Hanuman chose to believe the message behind the ornaments she makes. Thai Country Trim allows Hanuman to provide for her aging mother. (IMB photo)

The Invitation Stands

Consider This Your Invitation to Save a Life.

If you believe in the sanctity of life but aren't sure what to do about it, this invitation is for you. Southern Baptists across the nation are seeking to build closer relationships with our pregnancy resource centers, for the purpose of evangelizing center clients and helping women to choose life for their unborn children.

How to Help Your Local Pregnancy Care Resource Center:

- Donate baby clothing, baby furniture, car seat, or formula
- Provide food, clothing and a safe place for an expecting mother
- Train ladies in the church to mentor expecting mothers
- Sponsor a baby shower for the center with gifts of clothing, furniture, diapers or formula
- Partner with the center to teach young women good parenting skills
- Plan a mission trip to the center for maintenance, painting and re-decorating, if needed

How Do I Get Involved?

- Find a pregnancy care center near you.
- Pray that God will use that center for his glory.
- Contact the center to see how you can help.

To find a center near you, visit www.kybaptist.org/pregnancycare for a list of Southern Baptist-affiliated ministries in Kentucky.



KBC
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For questions, please contact the Mission Service & Ministries Department 502-489-3530 or 866-489-3530 (toll free in Kentucky).



Church helps bring Lottie Moon to life

Continued from page 1

The pastor decided two years ago it was time to bring the missionary to life. To do so, he enlisted the theatrical talents of member Tina Pasley.

"She loves to dress up and tell stories to the children," Webb said. Pasley often uses this teaching method in her role as Vacation Bible School director and as co-director of Teen Kids. When she did her Lottie Moon monologue in 2009, "it was extremely moving. So much so that even she began to weep," Webb recalled.

Being Lottie

After a brief hiatus, the role was revised and performed for the church family at Emmanuel Dec. 11. Pasley, with her dark hair and diminutive stature, slightly resembled the 4'3" Moon during the production. A professional stylist had twisted her wavy locks at the crown much like Moon's hairstyle shown on a screen above.

After the performance, Pasley talked about her admiration for the young missionary woman.

"When I tell Lottie's story, I put myself in her shoes and I really think about what she did. Could I really do that?" Pasley said.

During her research for the role, Pasley uncovered facts about Moon of which she previously was unaware.

For example, Moon was among the first wave of single women allowed to be foreign missionaries. While serving in China alongside her sister, Moon often would use fresh-baked cookies to meet and gain the trust of Chinese women and children.

Moon gained further respect by learning the culture and adopting their style of dress. But she became heartbroken when she discovered the torturous practice of foot binding. Moon worked with women's societies back home and opened a boarding school for young women, saving a third of them from a life of broken toes, malformed feet and constant pain.

Tina Pasley:
"When I tell Lottie's story, I put myself in her shoes and I really think about what she did. Could I really do that?"

Giving until her death

The missionary was exposed to smallpox and other diseases while serving in China during the late 1800s, but it was her sacrificial giving that resulted in her death.

At the age of 72 and weighing only 50 pounds, Moon left China aboard a steamship. When the Foreign Mission Board (now the International Mission Board) said there were no more funds available, Moon gave her money and even the food on her plate to help feed the starving people in her adopted home.

Moon died aboard the ship. Her final gesture was to raise two closed hands toward the sky. Those who witnessed



SHARING LOTTIE'S STORY Tina Pasley was enlisted by Pastor Greg Webb to bring Lottie Moon to life at Emmanuel Baptist Church in Stanton as a way to educate the congregation, many of whom come from non-Baptist backgrounds, about the late missionary's life and the international missions offering that bears her name. (Photo by Robin Bass)

the Chinese salutation said Moon was greeting her Lord.

"Her true mission was working with the poor," Pasley said. "Her heart was for these people and she basically gave her life for them."

Pastor's challenge

Webb told the congregation his hope is they would embrace Moon's selfless, sacrificial giving.

"The reason for the shortage of food and the reason Lottie Moon died was because there wasn't enough funding to support the mission work," Webb said. "That is not true today. We live in a land

of abundance. No one should starve or go without resources while in service to Christ."

Webb noted that the average amount spent by Americans on Christmas is about \$935 a person.

"We have the opportunity to invest much in the kingdom of the Lord," he said. "We have the opportunity to be sacrificial givers."

The 2011 goal for the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering is \$175 million and features the theme "His heart, His hands, His voice—I am Southern Baptist missions." For more information, visit www.ymb.org. (WR)

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Looking back at 2011 ...

Bin Laden's death rated top religion news story of the year

By Josef Kuhn

Columbia, Mo.—The death of Osama bin Laden and the reactions it produced among people of faith was rated as the No. 1 religion news story of 2011 by the nation's leading religion journalists.

The Religion Newswriters Association polls its members annually to compile a list of the top 10 religion stories of the year. About 90 religion beat writers took the poll this year.

The al-Qaida leader's death topped

the ranks because of the national discussion it sparked among people of faith on issues of forgiveness, peace, justice and retribution.

The No. 2 story was a series of controversial congressional hearings focused on American Muslims. Hearings were held in the House on the alleged radicalization of U.S. Muslims, and in the Senate on hate crimes reported against U.S. Muslims.

RNA also typically names a Religion Newsmaker of the Year, but did not do

so this year because of a virtual three-way tie between failed doomsday evangelist Harold Camping, Pope Benedict XVI and Texas Gov. Rick Perry.

Rounding out the 10 religion news stories in 2011 were as follows:

3. Catholic Bishop Robert Finn of Kansas City, Mo., is charged with failure to report the suspected abuse of a child, becoming the first active bishop in the country to face criminal prosecution in such a case.

4. The Catholic Church introduces a new translation of the Roman Missal throughout the English-speaking world, making the first significant change to a liturgy since 1973.

5. The Presbyterian Church (USA) allows local option on ordination of partnered gay people.

6. Pope John Paul II is beatified as a

saint in May.

7. California evangelist Harold Camping attracts attention with his predictions that the world would end in May and again in October.

8. A book by Michigan megachurch pastor Rob Bell, "Love Wins," presenting a much less harsh picture of hell than is traditional, stirs discussion in evangelical circles.

9. The Personhood Initiative, designed to outlaw abortion by declaring a fetus a person, fails on Election Day in Mississippi, but advocates plan to try in other states.

10. Bible translations make news, with celebrations of the 400th anniversary of the King James Version; criticism about gender usage in the newest New International Version; and completion of the Common English Bible. (RNS)

Thank you

Campus family at Clear Creek thankful for Ky. Baptists' support

It seems as though the old saying, "My, how time flies," becomes more realistic for me each year as I am getting ready to head into my sixth year as president of Clear Creek. It is hard to believe that another year has come and gone so quickly.

I have spent some time reflecting on this past year, and it is amazing how God has used so many people to bless this ministry. You are a major part of these blessings that support and sustain this ministry, and for that we want to say thank you from all of us here at Clear Creek Baptist Bible College.

We want to thank you for your gifts to the Cooperative Program through your local church. As one of the Kentucky Baptist Convention's educational institutions, Clear Creek receives a portion of your CP gifts. These gifts are a lifeline to us that enable us to equip God-called men and women for ministry.

Thank you for providing ministry opportunities in your churches for our students. Many of our students pastor local churches or serve on staffs while they continue their studies. These min-

istry opportunities allow our students to gain practical ministry experience outside of the classroom, which helps them tremendously.

We also want to thank many of you for all the blessings you have provided during this Thanksgiving and Christmas season. We have had associations

and churches that have provided abundant blessings to our students this year. Thanks to many of you, our students were provided with a turkey and all the trimmings for Thanksgiving and Christmas. Through your support of our Christmas shopping spree, our students will be able to provide a Christmas for their children.

Most of our students have left good jobs, sold their homes and moved to our campus in obedience to God's call on their lives. Some of them still are trying to sell their homes and struggle to make a house payment while going to college. When you support our Christmas shopping spree, you are providing a way for our students to bring some holiday joy to their families.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

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@ccbcc.edu.

Clear Creek Chronicle



Donnie Fox

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Study: Atheists embrace religious traditions

Houston—Some atheist scientists with children embrace religious traditions for social and personal reasons, a study by Rice University has found.

"Our research shows just how tightly linked religion and family are in U.S. society—so much so that even some of society's least religious people find religion to be important in their private lives," said Elaine Howard Ecklund, a Rice sociologist and coauthor of the study.

Research indicated that 17 percent of atheists with children attended a religious service more than once during the past year, and some atheist scientists said they want their children to know about different religions in order to determine their own preferences.

Among the noted reasons atheists integrate religion into their lives:

Scientific identity—Those surveyed wanted to expose their children to all sources of knowledge and allow them to make their own choices about religious identity.

Spousal influence—Some were involved in a religious institution because of the influence of their spouse or partner.

Desire for community—Some atheists wanted a sense of moral community and behavior, even if they didn't agree with the religious reasoning.

"We thought that these individuals might be less inclined to introduce their children to religious traditions, but we found the exact opposite to be true," Ecklund said. (BP)

Merry Christmas

from the faculty, staff and students of
Oneida Baptist Institute

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 here in Kentucky, across the United States and around the world.

"...I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all people." ~ Luke 2:10

Parents, pastors wrestle with Santa's place at Christmas

By Adelle Banks

Weare, N.H.—When John McCausland crafted his Christmas Eve sermon at his church in Weare, N.H., he always followed a basic formula.

There had to be a brother and a sister in the story. Jesus and the holy family played a prominent role. And there always was an appearance from Santa Claus.

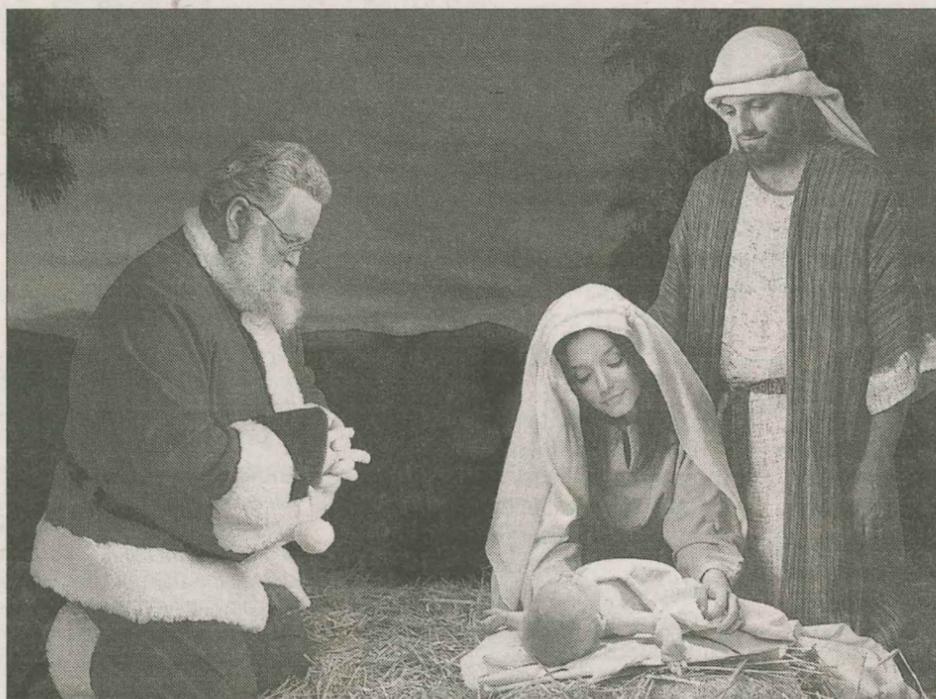
"If we never mention Santa Claus, then you create a parallel universe," said McCausland, who retired in June. "What I try to do in this story is to tie the two together, but not make Santa Claus primary."

McCausland kept the Jesus-and-Santa story tradition for 14 years. Children would carry the figures to the creche display and sit for McCausland's story, in which Santa often joins in the adoration of the Christ child.

Just where to place the jolly elf in the original Christmas story can be a perennial dilemma for both parents and pastors. This year, two new products draw on educating kids about the origins of Santa, or inspiring them to become Santas themselves.

Phil Vischer, creator of the popular VeggieTales characters, has launched a DVD that answers the question, "Why Do We Call it Christmas?" The video, hosted by Vischer and featuring puppets and animation, spends 45 minutes detailing the origins of Christmas traditions, including Santa Claus.

One puppet on the DVD credits American TV shows and movies that "mushed up Christmas" by melding stories of St. Nicholas and the Nativity. "How did this guy become such a big part of Jesus' birthday party?" Vischer asks as the video opens.



In an interview, Vischer said he hopes to diffuse tensions between Christian parents who want nothing to do with Santa and those who think there's room for both Jesus and Santa.

"We have the ability to get kind of paranoid," Vischer said. "I think it's easy for some Christians to say there's got to be some plot, there's some evil organization, that is foisting Santa upon us to steal Jesus."

Vischer's video trip back through history details the celebrations of Christ's Mass (which became Christmas) to mark Jesus' birth, and the Feast of St. Nicholas that recalls the giving saint who helped poor children.

"I think it would be awesome if Christian parents could bring back a more overt celebration of St. Nicholas because,

effectively, you can have your Santa and Jesus, too," Vischer said.

Kelly Moss, author of the new book "The Santa Club," is doing just that by encouraging children to join "millions of Santa Clauses" around the world in being generous givers modeled after St. Nicholas, who she considers the first Santa, as well as a follower of Jesus.

Her book was inspired by the answer her mother-in-law gave to her older son, Jonathan, when she and her husband were baffled about how to handle his inquiry about Santa. He stayed up that night with his grandmother and helped place gifts for his younger brother, Jameson, under the Christmas tree.

"The following year, when Jameson asked (about Santa), Jonathan said, 'I'll

handle this, Mom,' and he welcomed him into 'The Santa Club,'" Moss recalled of her sons, now 22 and 20.

Others make only one choice, focusing on Jesus rather than Santa.

Michael Chanley, the former parenting minister at Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, said he stuck to the Bible and never intentionally taught about Santa.

"When children have asked, as they always do, I simply ask them what they believe. Regardless of what they say, my response is, basically, the same," said Chanley, now the executive director of the International Network of Children's Ministry.

"I tell them Christmas is a celebration of the birth of Christ. Then, I share with them the story of the real Santa Claus, St. Nicholas, and how his generosity inspired many of our traditions."

Gerry Bowler, author of the 2005 book, "Santa Claus: A Biography," said discomfort with Santa has been around for centuries, even as some opposition has waned, with an image of Santa kneeling at the creche that's become popular in recent years.

"The warning really took place about 150 years ago and there've been frequent outbursts of resistance and then a gradual accommodation," he said.

"You'll find a rationalist streak that says I must not tell my kid a lie: If this is a lie then when I tell them about Jesus, well, that's just like Santa," added Bowler, who teaches a college course on the social history of Christmas.

But McCausland doesn't buy it. The father of two grown daughters and grandfather of two can't recall a child who concluded Jesus didn't exist if Santa does not. "I think literal grown-ups worry about that," he said. (RNS)

His heart, hands, voice

Christmas reminds Ky. Baptists to support international missions

As Christ followers we are called individually to be part of the solution to fulfilling the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20).

Our churches, as the gathered people of God, also have the missions mandate to extend their witness and ministry beyond their own fellowships.

Acts 1:8 declares the scope of our mission task. Jesus said: "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." This assignment was not intended to be sequential except for the first-century New Testament church and apostles.

Today, this Acts 1:8 assignment of our Lord is intended to be carried out constantly and simultaneously. And that's exactly what we Kentucky Baptists are doing collectively through our local churches and associations, the Kentucky Baptist Convention and the Southern Baptist Convention. Cooperation still is the most effective means to fulfill the Great Commission of our Lord and to carry out His mission assignment.

Throughout the year, we are called upon to focus prayerfully and

financially on the different aspects of the Acts 1:8 missions task. The annual Christmas season focus is on international missions ("to the ends of the earth") and the Lottie Moon offering.

Ky. Baptist Foundation



Barry Allen

The Apostle Paul reminded us in Romans 1:14 that we are debtors; because we know the gospel we "owe" it to those who do not know. Even though sharing the gospel with the whole world seems, at first, an intimidating thought, we have been commissioned by our Lord to do it.

How fortunate we Southern Baptists are to have 4,887 persons under appointment with the International Mission Board engaged to the ends of the

earth with 763 people groups. How staggering it is to realize there are 3,629 unreached people groups not yet engaged. These are people beyond where most of us can ever go or see, but they are God's children in need of what we have to offer.

So, extend His heart, hands and voice through your prayers and unprecedented giving through the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering.

Barry Allen is president of the Kentucky Baptist Foundation, PO Box 436389, Louisville, KY 40253; toll-free (866) 489-3533; www.kybaptistfoundation.org

Making Christmas bright

Sunrise provides happier holiday for state's abused, neglected kids

It's the most wonderful time of the year—at least that's the refrain of the Christmas song. However, for many children, they've spent the past few weeks wondering if the Christmas season will bring presents and joy or just another day of abuse and neglect.

Abuse rarely takes a holiday, and thousands of children across Kentucky suffer regardless of the season. In 2010, 18 of these children died from abuse and neglect in the commonwealth, and countless others endured pain and lifelong physical and emotional scarring.

Sunrise Children's Services strives to provide a refuge for the hurting children, and we rely on the churches of Kentucky to help us in our endeavor. Since our beginning in 1869, Kentucky Baptists have been the lifeline of our support, and through the annual Thanksgiving Children's Offering, you continue that tradition of caring for "the least of these."

Recent news headlines have raised awareness of the growing problem of abuse and neglect in Kentucky. While the harsh reality presents some

depressing facts and figures about real children enduring real suffering, know that your support of Sunrise does make a difference.

On the average day, we provide care to 400 children through our statewide

Sunrise Children's Services



Bill Smithwick

network of foster homes, residential programs and other services. That means these children are in a safe place and a stable environment where they receive the support and care they so much deserve. It's heart-breaking to see the broken lives of young people who come to us, but so rewarding to watch their improvement and healing.

With your continued support, we will be able to help even more children in the com-

ing year. Abuse is not going to disappear, which means it is vital that Sunrise remains in a position to offer the help they so desperately need. For more than 142 years, Kentucky Baptists have been supporting our ministry, and we know you'll continue to do so.

As we strive to give the children in our care a Merry Christmas, we wish the brightest of holiday blessings to you and your families.

Bill Smithwick is president of Sunrise Children's Services. Contact Sunrise at (502) 538-1000 or www.sunrise.org



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

January

- 19-20** Disaster Relief Chaplain Training, Buck Creek Baptist Church, Calhoun.
- 19-21** Shepherding the Shepherd, Hilton Downtown Hotel, Lexington.
- 20** Disaster Relief Volunteer Training Phase I and II, Buck Creek Baptist Church, Calhoun.
- 26-28** Southeast Conclave, Chattanooga Convention Center, Chattanooga, Tenn.

February

- 3-4** Disaster Relief Chaplain Training, First Baptist Church, Shelbyville.
- 4** Disaster Relief Volunteer Training Phase I and II, First Baptist Church, Shelbyville.
- 6** Strength in Numbers Deacon Ministry Training, First Baptist Church, Danville.
- 7** Strength in Numbers Deacon Ministry Training, Westport Road Baptist Church, Louisville.
- 9** Strength in Numbers Deacon Ministry Training, Lone Oak First Baptist Church, Paducah.
- 9-11** Basic Training Journey for Church Planting, Kentucky Baptist Building, Louisville.
- 10-11** Imagine Preschool and Children's Ministry Conference, Parkway Baptist Church, Bardstown.

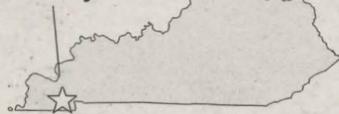
MOUNTAINS TO THE MISSISSIPPI

COMPILED BY STAFF

- **DRY RIDGE**—Dry Ridge Church recently called **Daniel Wilson** as pastor. He previously was an evangelism department associate with the Alabama Convention's State Board of Missions.
- **EUBANK**—Oak Grove #2 recently called **Barry Vaught** as pastor. He previously was pastor of McKinney Church in Science Hill.
- Polly Ann Church recently called **Terry Holt** as pastor. He previously was associate pastor of Freedom Church in Stanford.
- **LOUISVILLE**—Deer Park Church will hold its annual Christmas Eve service Dec. 24, 5:30 p.m., with music provided by the **Deer Park Ringers**, trumpeter **Charles Ammerman** and keyboardist **Sandra Turner**. **David Platt** is pastor.
- **MAYFIELD**—High Point Church will show the movie "Courageous"

Spotlight on ...

Murray



Glynn Orr announced he will retire as pastor of Westside Church. He has served the church for 26 years.

- Jan. 1, 6 p.m. **Rick Hatley** is pastor.
- **SOUTH SHORE**—First Church recently called **Mark Lilly** as pastor.
- **STANTON**—**Jake McPheron** recently resigned as minister of students and music at Emmanuel Church.
- **WACO**—Panola Church will hold its Christmas cantata Dec. 25. **Philip Ronk** is pastor.



GRANT At its annual meeting Nov. 14, the Kentucky Fellowship of Directors of Missions awarded \$3,000 to Clear Creek Baptist Bible College for its scholarship fund. The check was the result of contributions by Baptist associations in Kentucky to the A.B. Colvin Mission Fund, which promotes missions efforts across the state and beyond. Presenting the check to Clear Creek President Donnie Fox (left), is Robert Morrison, chairman of the KFDOM projects committee. Fox said the grant provided by the directors of missions has the potential to help up to six students meet their financial obligations.

Conservative group rates 'naughty, nice' Christmas retailers

Tupelo, Miss.—Don't let the strains of "Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas" over the store's audio system fool you. Barnes & Noble is "against" Christmas.

So says the conservative Christian group, American Family Association, in its message to supporters in its annual "Naughty and Nice" Christmas list, which rates retailers' marketing campaigns on whether they properly recognize the holiday that celebrates Jesus' birth.

The big-box bookstore chain is on the naughty list compiled by the Tupelo, Miss.-based group, along with 14 retailers from Banana Republic to Victoria's Secret to Old Navy.

AFA reviews the websites, media advertising and in-store signage of national retailers to determine the list.

The litmus test is whether retailers use "Merry Christmas" or "Happy Holidays" in their ads. The latter is considered offensive because it takes away the focus on Jesus, according to the organization, which urges supporters to send a message to retailers by shopping elsewhere.

"If a company has items associated with Christmas, but did not use the word 'Christmas,' then the company is considered as censoring 'Christmas,'" according to the organization's website.

"Most national retailers are

now using 'Christmas,' but there are some that are still clinging to a losing strategy of political correctness," the group said in calling out PetSmart for erasing "Christmas" from its website.

The pet chain responded by pointing out that it mentions Christmas in ads along with other faith-based celebrations. That apparently satisfied AFA, which put PetSmart on its nice list.

Most retailers now make AFA's nice list, from Amazon.com to Wal-Mart to Ace Hardware and Target.

Starbucks is one of 10 retailers, along with Bath & Body Works and Whole Foods, that landed on the "marginal list" between

naughty and nice because their ads "refer to Christmas infrequently."

AFA contends that its campaign against the "war on Christmas" has paid off because its nice list has grown, but the group's efforts may be lost on some shoppers.

Exiting a Barnes & Noble in Holland Township, Mich., Jan Metzler said she would like to see retailers send the message of "Merry Christmas," but she wasn't ready to commit to a boycott either.

"Christ is the reason for the season," Metzler said, but "Christ is out of Christmas as far as most people are concerned." (Grand Rapids (Mich.) Press/RNS)

CLASSIFIED ADS

DEGREE: Earn your seminary college degree at home. Ministry, biblical studies, pastoral leadership, more. Free academic evaluation. www.newburghseminary.com.

FOR SALE: Books by Glenn Mollette; prayer, care giving, inspirational, nursing homes, fitness, more. Amazon.com or BarnesandNoble.com.

RESOURCES: If your church is in need of help with sound, projection, theatrical lighting, go to jcamediasolutions.com; or call Jim Cottrell at (270) 862-9586 or 312-7492.

SEEKING: Part-time music minister needed in Georgetown, Ky. Familiar with blending hymns, modern music and a choir. Send resumés to safeharborpastor@gmail.com.

SEEKING: Minister of children and recreation for Shelbyville FBC. We are a Bible-driven ministry with a weekly attendance of 500-600 with great potential for continued growth. Candidate should be energetic, self-motivated, well organized, and a creative team player who can relate to children, families and other adults on a personal and spiritual level. A bachelor's degree is required and a master's degree with related experience is a plus. Send or email resumés by Jan. 8, 2012, to Dr. Stephen C. Rice, 1516 Midland Trail, Shelbyville, KY 40065; srice@shelbyvillebaptist.com. Phone: (502) 633-1317; website: www.shelbyvillebaptist.com.

SEEKING: Part-time (20-25 hours) ministry assistant/staff secretary. Ideal candidate for this position will love people and serving the church, possess excellent computer skills (including Word, PowerPoint and desk-top publishing) and administrative skills. Responsibilities: receptionist, general office work, prepare all church publications, manage purchase order system, etc. To apply, send resumé by Jan. 3 to staffsearch@highlandbaptistky.com; or Highland Baptist Church, 511 Mt. Eden Road, PO Box 104, Shelbyville, KY 40066.

SEEKING: Full-time minister of youth at Lakeland Baptist Church, located in the heart of the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex. Individuals considered will have a seminary degree and at least five years successful experience. Lakeland offers a competitive salary and benefits package. Please email resumé to Dr. Ron Osborne, rosborne@lakelandbaptist.org.

SEEKING: Full- or part-time minister of church administration. A degree in church administration is required with a minimum of five years experience. Shelby computer software experience is a plus, as well as the ability to provide pulpit relief for the senior pastor. Please submit your resumé and salary requirements to: personnel@calvarybapcbc.comcastbiz.net; or mail: Personnel Committee, Calvary Baptist Church, 163 N. Jefferson Cir., Oak Ridge, TN 37830.

SEEKING: Full-time Southern Baptist pastor for Wickland Baptist Church, Bardstown. Contact pastorsearchwbc@gmail.com; or WBC, 510 Bloomfield Road, Bardstown, KY 40004.

SEEKING: Bivocational, God-called director of music for conservative Southern Baptist church. Applicant would be responsible for leading congregation and adult choir in traditional, Bible-based worship. Please submit resumé to Hedgeville Baptist Church, PO Box 626 Danville, KY 40423, Attn: Don Smothers. Resumés accepted until 1/31/2012.

SEEKING: Part-time interim middle school/high school youth minister for Pinckard Looking for someone to provide direction and leadership for our youth through Bible study, discipleship training, outreach, fellowship and mission action. This position has the potential to lead into a permanent part-time position. College or seminary degree is preferred, plus experience. Please send a resumé to Pinckard Baptist Church, 3401 Pinckard Pike, Versailles, KY 40383. Phone: (859) 873-6260. Email: pinckardchurch@aol.com.

SEEKING: Part-time worship leader for blended services and leading an adult choir at Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church, Nicholasville, Ky. Phone toll-free: (877) 770-1677 or (859) 224-0383. Email: stan.n.frazier@gmail.com. Web: www.mtpleasantbaptist.net.

To place an advertisement:

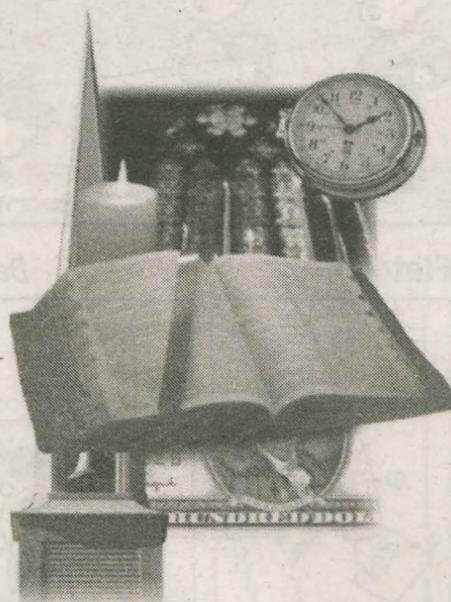


Rates are available upon request. Call (502) 489-3428; or visit WesternRecorder.org. Claims made by advertisers are not necessarily those of the Western Recorder's staff or directors.

SEEKING: Full-time Southern Baptist pastor for Pioneer Baptist Church in Harrodsburg, Ky. General Sunday attendance: 80-plus. Parsonage on property. Send resumés to Pastor Search Committee, Pioneer Baptist Church, 260 Sparrow Lane, Harrodsburg, KY 40330; or email to pioneerbaptistchurchpsc@gmail.com by Jan. 17, 2012.

SEEKING: Full-time minister of music for Gardenside Baptist Church. Applicant must have two years experience, be an excellent, experienced musician, worship leader and educator, and must exemplify strong spiritual maturity. Please email resumé including references to gbcjobsearch@gmail.com. For more information about Gardenside and a full job description, go to www.gbc-lex.com. Resumés will be accepted through Dec. 31. If you have specific questions, please contact the church office at 1667 Alexandria Drive, Lexington, KY 40504; or call (859) 277-7391.

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