

WESTERN Recorder

December 24, 2013

Shine Like Stars * Philippians 2:15

Volume 187, Issue 48

Lottie Moon's story reenacted at seminary

By Frank Michael McCormack

New Orleans—Laurita Miller gave students at New Orleans Baptist Seminary a vivid picture of Lottie Moon's call to China and her lifetime of service to God.

Starting with Moon's call and the story of her first trip to China, Miller recounted how other missionaries en route to China broke down in tears as they set sail.

Moon, however, saw the journey in a different light:

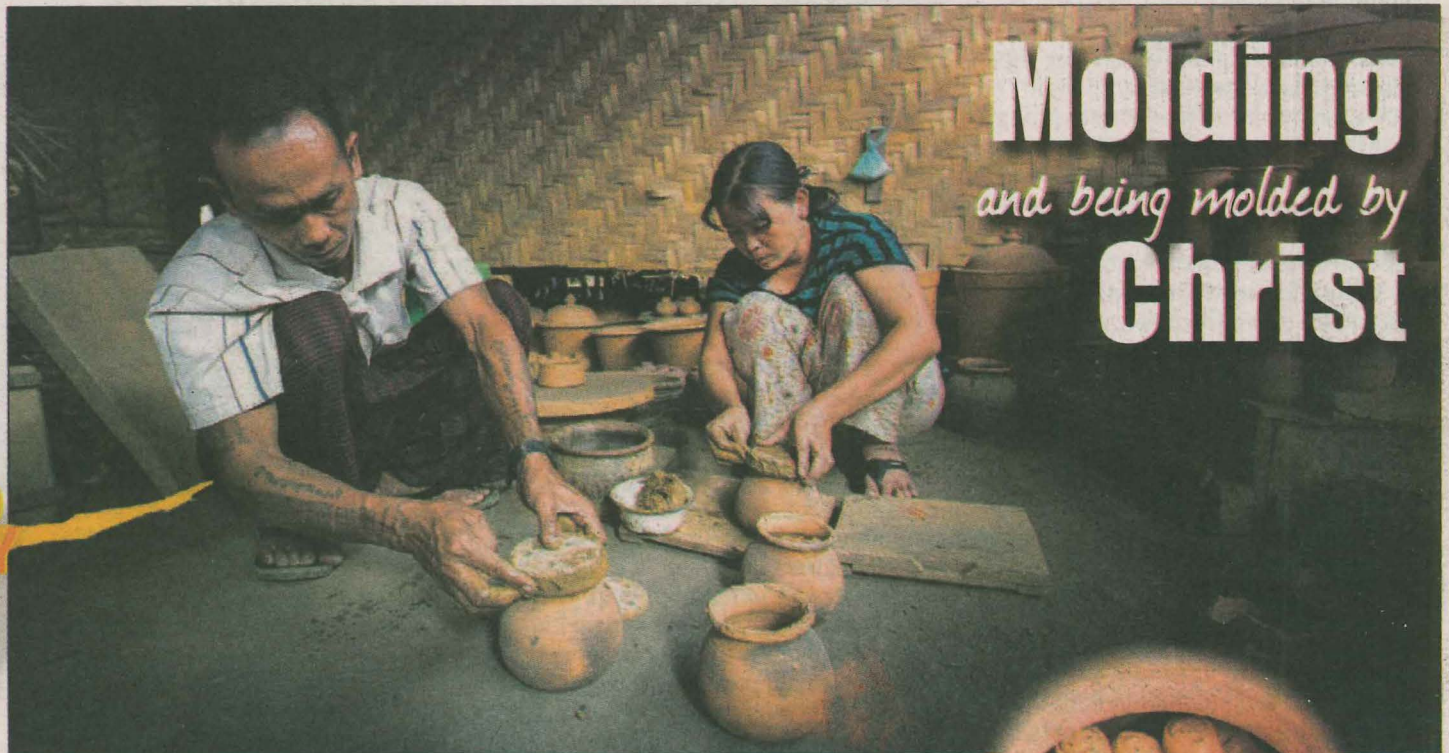
"I could only think with joy that my most cherished purpose was about to be fulfilled," Miller said while portraying. "And in going ... to serve my Lord in north China, I was simply going home, home to the center of what I knew God's will to be for my life."

Miller, whose parents were missionaries to Hawaii and later to Macau, also portrays Ann Judson, William Carey's sister, and women of the Bible including Mary Magdalene, Jesus' mother Mary, Elizabeth, Priscilla, Sarah, Deborah, the woman caught in adultery, and the woman at the well.

"The most asked-for thing I do next to Lottie Moon is a monologue on the life of Mary," Miller said. "The name of the monologue is 'Just one of ... See Lottie Moon ... Page 7



Laurita Miller presents a vivid portrayal of Lottie Moon for students at the New Orleans Baptist Seminary. (NOBTS/BP)



Molding and being molded by Christ

Potter Thant Lin (name changed) places nativity scene figures in a pot to fire them overnight before painting them to send them to markets in Southeast Asia. (Kelvin Joseph/IMB)

Nativity set maker in Southeast Asia begins learning the real story

By Evelyn Adamson

Southeast Asia—Summer Cole* steps out of a wooden long-tail boat and walks along a narrow path at a lakeside village in Southeast Asia. Straw lays scattered across damp soil while an unmistakable scent wafts through the morning haze. The scent, akin to a barnyard, rises from the large quantities of pottery produced at the village, often sold in tourist markets on the opposite end of the lake.

Behind Cole, Mo Kham* jumps out of the boat and runs to catch up. Cole, an

International Mission Board worker, and Kham, a national believer, step carefully through a maze of broken clay pots, scurrying chickens and bleating goats, en route to the home of potter Thant Lin* in the village populated by the region's Tai people group.

Lin serves a cup of tea to Cole and Kham and then places tiny figures on a low-lying table in the center of the dwelling.

The fragile clay pieces, when assembled in a cluster, depict Christ's birth.



The tiny figures have brought Cole, who is raising four boys with her husband, in contact with Lin and his family. She visits Lin's home a couple of times a year and helps to develop his business while sharing the gospel. See Nativity sets ... Page 7

'Swordsmen' carve new paths with Oldham's influence

By David Roach

Bowling Green—At age 15, Ronnie Hicks visited Glendale Baptist Church for the first time. As Hicks walked out the door, pastor Richard Oldham sensed God telling him, "I want to use this young man." So Oldham told Hicks that God's hand was on him.

Hicks didn't know what to make of the pastor's words that day in Bowling Green. But three years later he felt God calling him to preach and committed his life to vocational ministry, with Oldham serving as his mentor through college at Bowling Green's Western Kentucky University. Forty years later, Hicks retired

"There are things that (Richard Oldham) taught me that I value, that I treasure.

Bill Ricketts



Richard Oldham

from a career of serving as pastor of Southern Baptist churches and it was clear that Oldham's sense of God's will had been correct.

Hicks is not alone in that experience. During Oldham's 56 years as pastor of

Glendale, more than 250 young people have surrendered their lives to full-time Christian service—with their pastor mentoring them all. Often he helped them recognize their callings by saying, "God's hand is on you."

Today, Oldham's protégés, who call themselves "Swordsmen," occupy pulpits across the Southern Baptist Convention and have served as state convention presidents, SBC Executive Committee members, trustees of SBC entities and leaders in many other capacities. For more than 50 years, the Swordsmen gathered each summer in conjunction with the SBC annual meeting.

See Oldham ... Page 2

"For unto us a Child is born ..."

Merry Christmas from the Western Recorder

Our first issue of the New Year will be published Jan. 14.



Western Recorder 12-24-2013

Baptists help make Christmas brighter in Appalachia

By Joe Conway

Williamsburg—Thanks to the efforts of Southern Baptists in nearly a dozen states, thousands of children and families throughout Appalachia are having a brighter Christmas.

"It's been fun watching God do God things," said Bill Barker, describing the collection and delivery of more than 23,000 backpacks stuffed with clothing, school supplies and toys to children across Appalachia.

Barker, director of the North American Mission Board's Appalachian Regional Ministry (ARM), said the bulk of the backpacks came from Georgia Baptists, but churches from Kentucky, Michigan, Missouri, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Texas and Virginia also participated. Each backpack and contents were valued around \$75.

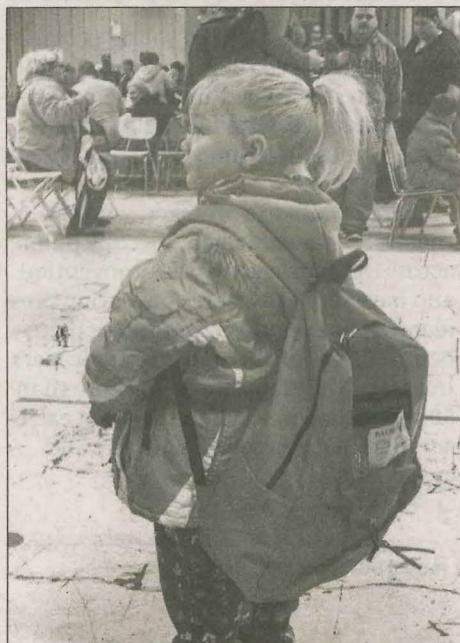
This particular ministry journey began for Barker with a children's sermon 12 years ago. He spoke, for the first time as a missionary, in a church in North Georgia in 2001. Prior to his presentation to the congregation, the pastor unexpectedly asked Barker to deliver the children's sermon.

"I used the Scripture from Romans 10:15," said Barker. "How beautiful are the feet of those who announce the gospel of good things. I had the children take off their shoes, and we talked about the gospel. Then I told them there are children I serve who don't have any shoes or school supplies. The Woman's Missionary Union leader was so struck by that fact that as a Girls in Action project that year the church collected 300 shoe boxes of school supplies that we distributed in McDowell County, West Virginia."

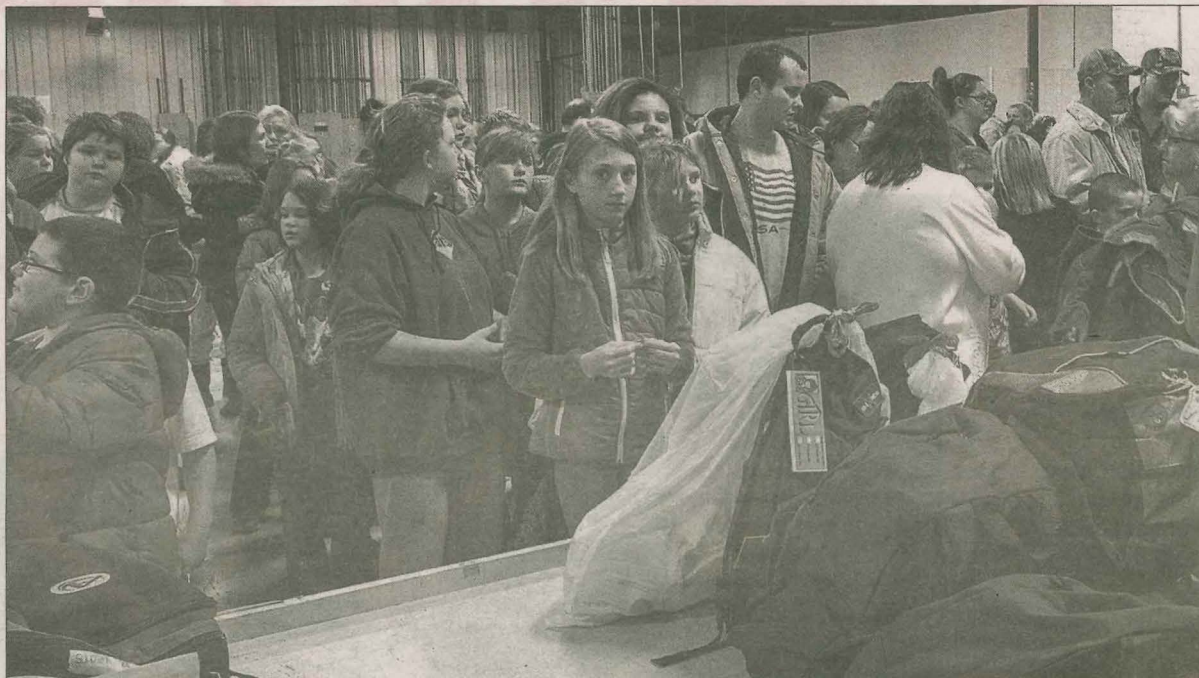
By 2011 more than 5,800 children received gifts throughout ARM's territory.

"A little in the hand of the Lord is a lot," said Keith Decker, director of Cedaridge Ministries in Williamsburg. The Cedaridge site hosted 1,600 recipients for a backpack distribution Dec. 14, 1,000 of them children. And in addition to the backpacks and welcomed boxes of food, the gospel was shared throughout the day. A total of 60 people came to faith in Christ as a result.

Crystal Hall is a single mom and



A young girl receives one of 1,000 backpacks recently distributed at Cedaridge Ministries. (Amanda Blair/NAMB)



Cedaridge Ministries hosted 1,600 recipients for a backpack and food distribution Dec. 14. The site was one of 19 in which backpacks were given to families across the Appalachia region as part of the North American Mission Board's Appalachian Regional Ministries annual outreach. More than 23,000 backpacks were distributed this year. Sixty people came to faith in Christ at the Cedaridge distribution. (Amanda Blair/NAMB)

struggles to provide for her children in the best of times.

"I'm here because I need help," said Hall. "With Christmas coming up I'm thankful for anything we can receive." Hall said she appreciated the dignity she and her children received adding that it allowed her to not feel ashamed to ask for help.

"If we don't get involved, these families may not have any help," said Decker. "This is what He has called us to do."

The North American Mission Board's Disaster Relief Team assisted with logistics and volunteers to help load,

transport and deliver the backpacks. Seven semi-trucks full of backpacks were unloaded at 19 distribution sites. All of the loading and unloading was done by the hands of volunteers.

"I can't say enough about all of the help, the donations, the volunteers," said Barker.

Even with 23,000-plus backpacks and others remaining in outreach this year, needs remained. Barker recently shared with a congregation about the project's limitation saying that three requests in New York and Pennsylvania would not make this year's list. There was simply

not enough to fill those needs.

"A few weeks later I received a letter in the mail," said Barker. "It was from a new widow who heard me speak. She said she knew her late husband would want to help, so she sold his woodworking tools and shop contents. In the letter was a check for \$5,000." The three locations were added to the distribution list.

Barker said plans are already taking shape for next year, and Baptists in Alabama, Kentucky, North Carolina and Virginia are inquiring about joining with Georgia and ARM. You can learn more at namb.net/arm. (NAMB)

Oldham

Continued from page 1

"His legacy is not a megachurch," said Mike Routt, a Swordsman who pastors Circle Drive Baptist Church in Colorado Springs, Colo., and is the SBC Executive Committee current vice chairman.

"But more than 250 people have surrendered to ministry under his leadership," Routt said. "If all of those 250 people and their families were back at Glendale, he would have one of the largest churches in America. But his legacy is not there at Glendale Baptist Church. His legacy is at churches and preaching points across America and around the world."

Nurturing the young

Oldham was called to Glendale on July 21, 1957. Five decades later, at age 83, Oldham hasn't felt God call him into retirement. Though he has difficulty breathing because of a lung condition, he still preaches, performs funerals and makes hospital visits as he is able—and of course spends time with college and high school students.

In the past two years, four new Swordsmen have surrendered to vocational ministry.

"I met with some last night until 11 o'clock," Oldham recently said.

From day one at Glendale, he felt called to spend much of his time with younger people in the church. Often he can be found in a local restaurant

surrounded by an entire section of students, and on Sunday nights he produces a local radio program called "Teentime" on which his young disciples preach, sing and give their testimonies.

As he spends time with young men and women, Oldham said a key to guiding so many into ministry is exposing them to outstanding preachers. For previous generations, that meant hosting at Glendale men like Vance Havner, R.G. Lee, J. Harold Smith, Angel Martinez, Jerry Falwell and W.A. Criswell.

More recently Oldham has hosted SBC leaders like Albert Mohler Jr., Hershail York and Richard Land.

"When these men come, I get our young people to spend time with them," Oldham said. "They go out and eat with them. I purposely had these men come to expose our young people to greatness."

Soul-winning

During his ministry Oldham has baptized more than 6,000 people. Many of them went on to be Swordsmen.

Routt is among those won to Christ under Oldham. As a freshman at Western Kentucky, "God was very far from my thoughts," Routt said. But he began attending Glendale and fell under conviction from the Holy Spirit through Oldham's preaching and the personal witness of Oldham's nephew Roger "Sing" Oldham, another Swordsman who serves today as vice president for

convention communications and relations at the SBC Executive Committee.

"The very night that I became a Christian was the night that I surrendered to full-time vocational ministry," Routt said. "... On that night my freshman year at Western I walked the aisle and gave my life to Christ and surrendered to vocational ministry."

A vast network

Bill Ricketts, a Swordsman, former Georgia Baptist Convention president and pastor of Prince Avenue Baptist Church in Bogart, Ga., said he still uses witnessing methods he learned from Oldham.

"The first time I ever learned about sharing the gospel was with Richard Oldham, and he taught me the old Romans Road," Ricketts said. "I still use that from time to time. There are things that he taught me that I value, that I treasure."

As Ricketts traveled in Central America earlier this year, he was reminded how far Oldham's influence extends. At an orphanage in rural Honduras, he noticed a Western Kentucky University mug on a table. When he asked about it, the orphanage director's wife said that's where her husband attended college. Ricketts mentioned Oldham and learned the director had been saved and baptized under Oldham's ministry.

"I thought to myself ..., 'Could we ever ministry?'" Ricketts said. "I just marvel at it." (BP)

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Smithwick steps down as president of Sunrise

By Todd Deaton

Louisville—The president of Sunrise Children's Services, Bill Smithwick, has resigned amid disapproval from Kentucky Baptists over his support for allowing homosexual employees at the state convention-affiliated child care agency.

A statement from Sunrise's board of directors said Smithwick, after serving "effectively and sacrificially" for 16 years, "has recognized the need for new leadership."

Smithwick's resignation follows an overwhelming vote of no confidence in his leadership by messengers to the annual meeting of the Kentucky Baptist Convention in November. Smithwick had recommended changing Sunrise's hiring practices to allow homosexual employees.

Sunrise's trustees rejected Smithwick's recommendation Nov. 8 after at least two trustees shared their concerns with state convention leaders, bringing the board's discussions in August of the agency's hiring practices to light.

In addition to a vote of no confidence in Smithwick's leadership, convention messengers voted to replace a slate of six nominees for Sunrise's 24-member board and filled five other



Bill Smithwick

vacancies created by resignations from the board.

"The board of directors has accepted resignation with deep appreciation for his service," the board's statement said.

Smithwick reportedly had been on administrative leave. Meanwhile, Sunrise's chief financial officer, Brandi Felser, also has stepped down.

Paul Chitwood, executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention, told Louisville's WDRB-TV, following Smithwick's resignation Dec. 17, "We appreciate so much his faithful service to the children and to Sunrise over 16 years and wish him all the best as he moves forward."

Smithwick reportedly proposed the change in hiring practices as a preemptive action to sustain Sunrise's government funding.

"Sunrise provides a service. We care for children on behalf of the state. And the state needs us in that role," Chitwood told WDRB.

"For all I can tell, the state is grateful for the job that we're doing. And we hope that partnership can continue."

Trustees appointed Dale Suttles, a regional development director, as Sunrise's interim president. Suttles was introduced to members of the KBC Mission Board Dec. 10.

Suttles told the Mission Board he

believes Sunrise's employees could get where they wanted to go if they went "hand in hand" with Kentucky Baptists.

"We are going to come back bigger and stronger than ever," Suttles said of the agency. "But we can't do it without (Kentucky Baptists), and we won't do it without (the Mission Board)."

In a Dec. 9 letter to pastors, Sunrise board chairman William Hurley sought to reassure Kentucky Baptists.

"We will not knowingly expose any child in Sunrise's care to un-biblical influences," Hurley wrote. "We dare not do anything to lead any of these little ones astray."

"We as a board have asked and are continuing to ask God for His wisdom and discernment in all Sunrise business affairs, to sustain us and to sustain the children in our care," Hurley wrote.

In a statement to the Western Recorder, Chitwood offered his assurance that the Sunrise board "is fully committed to operating according to biblical values for

the sake of the children Sunrise serves and the churches and individual donors that lend their support."

A search committee for the agency's new president is expected to be named by Sunrise's board chairman soon. (WR)

"We appreciate so much his faithful service ... and wish him all the best as he moves forward."

Paul Chitwood

Darwinists perplexed by DNA found in Spain

By Julie Borg

Asheville, N.C.—The discovery of DNA evidence in a cave in Spain is incongruent with current theories of human evolution, according to a report based on interviews with believers in Darwinian evolution in The New York Times.

The Times reported the retrieval of ancient human DNA from a fossil that evolutionists date from 400,000 years ago. The fossil came from a cave where 28 skeletons have been found. Researchers expected the new fossil would be a Neanderthal, however, DNA analysis suggests the fossil is of Denisovan origin, a species previously regarded as limited to East Asia, nearly 4,000 miles away.

Evolutionists have no explanation for the presence of a Denisovan fossil among the Neanderthals of Western Europe and Asia, according to The Times' report.

Georgia Purdom, a molecular geneticist and associate of Answers in Genesis, believes the fossils found in Spain represent human descendants of Noah's family from approximately 4,250 years ago and likely became isolated from other human populations. Purdom holds the "young earth" view that the earth was created in six days 6,000 years ago.

Based on genetic data alone, Purdom said it is unlikely scientists will be able to determine how closely the two groups are related, but both must be descendants of Noah since they were the only humans who survived the flood, she said.

Casey Luskin, research coordinator for the Center for Science and Culture at Discovery Institute, believes the Neanderthals and Denisovans were human. The Discovery Institute is a proponent of Intelligent Design, which holds that no evolutionary process could not have led to life on earth. Luskin said evolutionists are trying to create an evolutionary tree to link modern humans with pre-human groups, but the DNA they are finding does not indicate that modern man evolved from non-human forms.

"Sure, the DNA is a little different, but not enough that it indicates a different species," Luskin said, noting that these ancient creatures are so similar to modern man, that if a Neanderthal was walking down the street today, he would not be noticed.

Fazale Rana, a biochemist and executive vice president of research and apologetics for Reasons to Believe, offers an "old earth" perspective, a creationism viewpoint that accepts the scientific community's assessment of the Earth's age. Rana said he does not believe the Neanderthal and Denisovan creatures were human.

Rana said it is important to note that when evolutionists talk about humans, they mean any primate that walked around on two legs—"something very different from what you and I are talking about when we use the term human." The fossil the researchers in Spain have discovered is a hominid. Rana said these creatures were impressive beings made by God, but they were not human because they lacked the image of God. They existed for a time and then went extinct. Rana said their behavior was remarkable in many respects, but not consistent with human behaviors seen when modern man showed up. (BP)

'Duck Dynasty' suspension 'ridiculous,' says SBC leader

Nashville, Tenn.—The A&E network's suspension of "Duck Dynasty" star Phil Robertson for comments regarding homosexuality constitutes a form of close-minded muzzling, lead Southern Baptist ethicist Russell Moore said.

"This is ridiculous," the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission president stated in a Twitter comment in response to A&E's Dec. 18 announcement that it had suspended Robertson indefinitely for comments he made in an interview with GQ magazine.

While some of Robertson's anatomical language in the GQ article was "ill-advised and crude," Moore wrote in a blog, what seems "most offensive to people are his moral assessments of sex outside of conjugal marriage. ... (S)exuality is expressed rightly only in the marriage of a man and a woman. That's not new."

Moore wrote that real diversity does not "seek to silence one another with intimidation."

In response to a question by GQ's Drew Magary about what is sinful, Robertson said, "Start with homosexual behavior and just morph out from there. Bestiality, sleeping around with this woman and that woman and that woman and those men," Robertson was quoted as saying.

The article says Robertson continued by paraphrasing 1 Corinthians 6: "Don't be deceived. Neither the adulterers, the idolaters, the male prostitutes, the homosexual offenders, the greedy, the drunkards, the slanderers, the swindlers—they won't inherit the kingdom of God. Don't deceive yourself. It's not right."



Phil Robertson (far right), the patriarch of the Duck Dynasty television family, is in the middle of a controversy about "anti-gay" statements he was quoted as saying in GQ magazine. From left are Si, Miss Kay, Jase, Korie, Willie (seated) and Phil Robertson of the A&E reality series. (Photo courtesy Art Streiber/A&E ©2013 A&E Networks)

A&E said in a statement they were "extremely disappointed" in Robertson's comments and that A&E has "always been strong supporters and champions of the LGBT community."

Albert Mohler Jr., president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, said the incident serves as a warning to evangelical Christians.

"The controversy over Duck Dynasty sends a clear signal to anyone who has anything to risk in public life: Say nothing about the sinfulness of homosexual acts or risk sure and certain destruction by the revolutionaries of the new morality. You have been warned," Mohler said.

According to a CNN report Dec. 20, the Robertson family questioned the future of their show.

"We are disappointed that Phil has been placed on hiatus for expressing his faith, which is his constitutionally protected right. We have had a successful working relationship with A&E but, as a

family, we cannot imagine the show going forward without our patriarch at the helm. We are in discussions with A&E to see what that means for the future of Duck Dynasty," it said.

Denny Burk, associate professor at Boyce College, wrote on his blog months ago that it was "only a matter of time before the media sniffed out" the Robertsons' views on the issue. Burk also predicted the questions would not stop until every family member is "branded heretical by the sexual revolutionaries that dominate popular culture."

Mike Kellett, senior pastor of White's Ferry Road Church of Christ in West Monroe, La., where Robertson is an elder, said his church has received hundreds of calls from fans. Members of Churches of Christ general believe God reserves marriage for one man and one woman. "It seems to me people are tolerant of (all) views except Christianity," Kellett said. Compiled from BP, ABP, RNS and other news sources.

Cradle, cross intertwined

Christmas is a sentimental holiday, filled with nostalgia, plenty of commercialism, and more opportunities to enjoy tasty treats than most of us need. More importantly, Christmas is intricately tied to Easter—and together they are the source of eternal hope for sinners in

Together
We are the KBC

Paul Chitwood

need of a Savior. Without Calvary, the cradle has no meaning; without the cradle, the Calvary could never be.

I recall a Christmas program when I shared how much the Christmas story needs the Easter story in order to be complete. I also made the point that there are no good people in heaven, only sinners who look to the cradle and the cross for our forgiveness and hope.

A few days later, I received a note from a lady who had attended our program. She was a member of a Catholic church where the gospel had been confusingly wedded to works righteousness. She was aghast by my statement, "There are no good people in heaven," and terribly offended that I had dampened the Christmas celebration with my reference to a bloody cross.

My position hasn't changed. There are no good people in heaven. Scripture declares, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). And the message of Hebrews 9:22 is, "Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins." Therefore, only those creatures of the Fall who have "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Revelation 7:14) can genuinely celebrate the hope secured by the cradle and the cross. The lyrics of Rae Whitney's song are a beautiful expression of this truth.

"Christmas has its cradle, where a Baby cried;

did the lantern's shadow show him crucified?

Did he foresee darkly His life's willing loss? Christmas has its cradle and Easter has its cross.

Christmas has its cradle; shepherds came to see,

Little Son of Mary, Lamb of God to be had His Father warned Him, none would grant Him room,

save in the Christmas cradle and in the Easter tomb?

Christmas has its cradle, wise men came to bring, myrrh and gold and incense, offering for a King;

myrrh alone stayed with Him, death's balm for this Boy,

from the Christmas cradle and to His Easter joy.

Christmas has its cradle, where that Baby cried;

in the Easter garden, Christ lay, crucified; when death's power was conquered, God's life through Him poured;

Christmas has its cradle and Easter has its Lord!

Might the joy of Christmas and the hope of Easter fill our hearts and churches, flow from our mouths and lives as we celebrate our Savior. Merry Christmas!

Paul Chitwood is executive director of the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

The darker side of Christmas

Looking at a nativity scene in a heated sanctuary bathed with candlelight and carols, or gathering with family to exchange gifts around a twinkling tree laden with glittering ornaments, we may not see it. In fact, the very thought of it makes us squirm—like the gaunt kids peering out from beneath the robe of the Ghost of Christmas Present in Charles Dickens' "Scrooge." Christmas, a season of comfort, joy and figgy pudding just isn't supposed to have a darker side. But, it does.

Luke didn't record it. He brings us the joy and wonder of our Savior's birth in Bethlehem. He writes in simple prose, "Then she (Mary) gave birth to her first-born Son, and she wrapped Him snugly in cloth and laid Him in a feeding trough—because there was no room for them at the inn." Luke goes on to tell of a multitude of angels singing glad tidings of peace on earth to shepherds who were staying out in fields, keeping watch over flocks. That's the way we want to remember it. Beautiful. Serene. Joyful. Comforting.

We quickly gloss over any possibility that the arduous journey wasn't exactly "over the river and through the woods," and we miss the crudeness of a "feeding trough" being used for a cradle. The holy couple was on a forced trip to be counted in a census, presumably to pay hefty taxes. Would you have been in a good mood? We tend to picture Mary riding gracefully on a donkey being led gently by Joseph. But there's actually no mention of a donkey, and Mary was likely "great with child," perhaps only days away from delivery. Do you really think she was comfortable? Then, when they arrived, no one had left a light on for them at a motel, nor was there a crib set up with a cuddly blanket awaiting a newborn. They didn't have a room!

After Simeon, a man promised by God that he would not die before the Messiah was born, bestows a strange, prophetic blessing, Luke fast forwards: "When they had completed everything according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. The boy grew up and became strong, filled with wisdom and God's grace was upon him." That's it, until Jesus turns up missing at the temple at age 12.

Matthew, however, gives us a somewhat different picture of Jesus' birth, providing some darker, more earthy

details. He skips the Bethlehem inn altogether, and tells of wise men following a star, bearing gifts from afar. But, this wasn't your typical baby shower. They didn't bring diapers, bottles, blankets, tinker toys or teddy bears. Gold? Frankincense? Myrrh? Rich gifts fit for a king. But what does an infant need with these? (Obviously, men picked out these gifts.) OK, gold is a nice thought and—if there are smelly animals around—a little frankincense wouldn't hurt. But Myrrh? That's a tad morbid. Really, what was this "wise man" thinking? His gift had to give a new mother more than a little pause—not to mention, cause for worry.

After
Thought

By Todd Deaton



The wise men's unexpected arrival in Jerusalem, inquiring about one who would be king, naturally would upset the current one, especially in a place of great social unrest. Herod went berserk. Consequently, the wise men's visit not only would lead to Mary and Joseph, warned in a dream, hastily fleeing for their lives to another country, but it also led to a very troubling episode in Bethlehem. Threatened by the news, Herod ordered the massacre of every child under age 2. Horrifying! Only after Herod's death was the holy family able to safely return to settle in Nazareth.

So, what do we make of the darker side of Christmas? Honestly, I'm still working through it. But here goes: Following God isn't always easy, comfortable or blissful. In fact, in the moment, it may be downright difficult, even dangerous. But the nativity had a greater purpose and meaning: an incarnation that would bring a lasting joy for all eternity. In spite of all the dark events, God was at work—and He still is at work in our world today, even in dark times. The lowly feeding trough and worshipping shepherds help us see the good news of which the angels sang is meant for everyone. The wise men's odd gifts suggest He would be a suffering Savior, from whose death and resurrection springs hope and eternal life. And, even Herod's murderous rage couldn't stop His kingdom without end from starting. Unfortunately, like there was no room in Bethlehem's inn, not every heart will prepare Him room, and in Herod's dastardly deeds we again see how desperately our wicked world needs to hear of a Savior. And, it is no accident Matthew's Gospel closes with Jesus' commission to go tell.

Renewed support

Through much prayer, I believe the Lord has placed it on my heart to write this letter.

Like many of you, I have been following the situation at Sunrise. These past couple of months have been troubling. Every year, our church supports the Sunrise Thanksgiving Offering. This year, we chose to postpone our special offering. We wanted to wait until we could be assured that this institution would stay true to its gospel-centered mission. I write today to share that we are renewing our dedication to support Sunrise.

Recently, I visited Sunrise's office and

spoke to the staff. As they talked about their work, it was so obvious that they are filled with the love of Christ for these children. I received new materials for my church and made plans to host a special "New Year's Sunrise Offering."

I spoke with Dale Suttles, the new interim CEO, over the phone. I am confident that he is the right man to help Sunrise move forward.

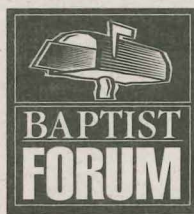
If you are waiting for assurance, wait no more! As a pastor, I am convinced that the Lord is being honored. The KBC and Sunrise are positioned to make a greater impact on the lives of children than ever before. However, they cannot do it without us.

Sunrise has made the choice to honor the Lord and His word. It is now our turn to step-up. Are we going to affirm the renewed direction of Sunrise? Are we going to meet the needs of children

who not only need physical and emotion healing, but also need to be introduced to the eternal Healer: Jesus Christ? If so, pledge your support and get involved.

Most importantly, pray for the leadership, the children, and that the Lord sustains and increases the effectiveness of Sunrise for the glory of God.

**Heath Woolman, pastor
Chaplin Baptist Church**



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Rick Robbins, Florence;
Larry Rowell, Campbellsville;
Dan Summerlin, Paducah.

Shine Like Stars * Philippians 2:15

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Be cautious of Christmas curmudgeons

By Joe McKeever

I love almost everything about Christmas. I love the nativity scenes, the lights, cool weather, festive clothing, the carols, special foods, candies and pastries, the church services, pageants, gift-giving and even the crowded malls.

I love the high-flying decorations cities attach to street lamps and the happy songs about snow-falling and sleigh-riding, even though I live in the South. I even enjoy stories about Santa Claus. I love the Christmas specials on television, including the cartoons about Peanuts and Frosty and Rudolph.

If you feel called to point out all that is wrong about this happiest of all seasons, you will need to turn to someone else, because I love Christmas.

However, scattered among the family of God you will find curmudgeons—well-meaning brothers and sisters who take it as their calling in life to give a “Bah! Humbug!” to this season, pointing out its historical errors, humanistic elements and commercial excesses.

They love to remind us that Jesus was not actually born on the 25th of December, so we shouldn't be celebrating His birthday then. We respond that one time is as good as another!

They assure us we don't even know the year of His birth, since historians say Herod the Great died in 4 B.C. We answer, “What does it matter?”

They question the science behind the star of Bethlehem and the identity of the Magi. We answer, “However God did it, that's good enough for us.”

They love to point out how wrong some of our carols are and how our Christmas cards err in placing the Magi in the stable alongside the shepherds, since Matthew 2:11 says the holy family was in a house by the time they arrived in Bethlehem. We agree, but why nit-pick? No one gets theology from a greeting card.

They enjoy calling our attention to the pagan origins of Christmas. We answer that God made this day, too, and we will rejoice in it and be glad. We surrender no

days to the pagans; they're all God's! Even so, just as the Lord redeemed us from our paganism, He can do the same with Dec. 25.

And Christmas is just too commercialized. Sure it is, but we balance it by showering the less fortunate with love-gifts and making gifts to the missions offering.

FIRST PERSON

“Curmudgeon” means a nitpicker, sore-head, killjoy, fault-finder and quibbler. The list of synonyms seems endless. Whatever definition you choose, curmudgeons occupy pews in every church and the rest of us have to deal with them.

Judas was the curmudgeon in Jesus' day. Watch him in this scene from a day in the life of our Lord:

“Mary took ... an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But one of the disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray Him, objected. ‘Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages.’ He did not say this because he cared for the poor but because he was a thief...” (John 12:1-8).

Imagine criticizing someone for loving Jesus too much! Come to think of it, that negativity still exists toward showing too much enthusiasm in church, raising our hands or shouting.

Curmudgeons serve to keep the rest of us anchored to reality, lest we overdose on joy and be raptured by our praise. But Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, do not put these people in leadership positions, lest the young and impressionable be influenced by their Scrooge-ness.

Christmas is a time of great joy, of celebrating and of remembering with gratitude the greatest event in the history: the arrival of the Son of God.

There are no words rich enough to describe the significance of this event, no songs good enough to be worthy of Him and no praise high enough to satisfy the grateful heart that is forever in love with Jesus.

Joe McKeever is a Baptist Press cartoonist and columnist, a former longtime pastor and former director of missions for the New Orleans Baptist Association.

Countering culture's message

By Valerie Vincent

American culture is hard on marriage. Mottos like WIFM (What's in it for me?) and YOLO (You only live once) advocate a selfish approach. Our culture advocates, “Look out for yourself,” “Get what you can,” and “You deserve it.” Sadly, this mindset has infiltrated the marriage relationship. Scripture provides a very different message for how to live one's life and be in a covenant relationship.



■ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others.

—Philippians 2:3-4.

How can a husband look to his wife's interests rather than his own?

■ Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God—Romans 12:1.

How can a wife present her life to God in such a way that the marriage is holy and acceptable?

■ For in him we live and move and have our being—Acts 17:28.

Our lives are intended to be in Christ. That is where we live and have being. How will a husband put his entire being in Christ, not in his own wants, in his own thoughts, or in his own desires?

■ But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness—Matthew 6:33.

If a husband strives for promotions at work, status among his family, success in his career, he misses the mark. How might he put God's kingdom first?

■ You shall have no other gods before me—Exodus 20:3.

What would a wife's marriage look like if she did not allow anything to occupy the place of honor and worship that only God deserves?

Valerie Vincent is a Christian counselor with Hardy Day & Associates in Louisville.

Providing perpetual support

By Laurie Valentine

Wealth is not a prerequisite to provide life-changing financial resources in the Lord's name. Providing perpetual support for your church, missions, ministries, disaster relief and other causes can be accomplished by creating a new endowment fund or by making gifts to an existing endowment fund.

An endowment fund is a permanent, perpetual fund managed either by the cause or another entity such as the Kentucky Baptist Foundation. Only the earnings from the fund are distributed for use by the cause(s) you have designated. The original value of what you give is never spent.

A large gift is not required to establish an endowment fund with the KBF. It can be started with any amount and added to over a lifetime. This permits even those of modest means to do much more than they ever dreamed possible. As the endowment fund grows, more lives will be touched and blessed through the support provided.

Endowment fund giving does not have to be an all or nothing proposition. You may want to use a life income gift to fund an endowment fund. Life income gifts allow you to make a gift now that will provide an income stream to you and/or others for life with the endowment fund funded by the remainder of your life income gift at your death.

Establishing an endowment fund may provide income tax savings—if you itemize deductions—and capital gains tax savings—if you use appreciated assets to fund your gift.

An endowment fund, whether through a single large gift or a lifetime of modest gifts, permits you to show your gratitude for God's blessings and your desire to be involved in touching lives in His name. Laurie Valentine is trust counsel for the Kentucky Baptist Foundation.

Preparing a 'guest room' for the Messiah

By Erich Bridges

I was way late getting ready for Christmas this year. Guys typically don't start shopping for gifts until the last minute, anyhow, but I didn't even make a list. I couldn't seem to get motivated.

Maybe it's because our kids are more or less grown up—and, therefore, too cool to act excited about the big day. Or, maybe it was the spectacle of predatory bargain hunters pummeling each other to claim the latest gizmos before Thanksgiving Day even ended—a symbol of the pagan orgy of consumption the “holiday season” has become.

Maybe I've just become my father. After I reached the approximate age my kids are now, he used to grumble, “Can we just cancel Christmas this year?” At the time, I chided him for being such a Scrooge. Now I understand his weariness with the whole giving-getting business, if all it means is a boost for retail sales.

Or, maybe I have yet to prepare a place in the “guest room” of my life for Jesus, the promised Messiah.

Ben Witherington III noted in Christianity Today several years ago, the Greek word for “inn” that Luke used in his account of Jesus' birth, *kataluma*, also can be translated “guest room.”

Bethlehem was a “one-stoplight town,” Witherington wrote, and might not have had a separate inn for travelers—even during the time of Caesar Augustus' great census. “Archeology shows that houses in Bethlehem and its vicinity often had caves at the back of the house where they kept their prized ox or beast of burden, lest it be stolen,” he reported. “The guest room was in the front of the house, the animal shelter in the back, and Joseph and Mary had come too late to get the guest room, so they did the best they could by putting them in the back of the house.”

Is that the best we can do today? Giving a quick nod toward the “true meaning of Christmas” while gorging ourselves on holiday diversions doesn't even rise to the

level of putting Jesus in the back room with the livestock, spiritually speaking.

Nothing brings me back to the truth of the first Christmas like reading the gospel accounts of that silent, holy night, when the Lord entered space and time via the portal of a “one-stoplight town.” And nothing reminds me of the living truth of Christmas like accounts from missionaries and followers of Christ about ways Jesus is revealing Himself around the world today.

One missionary in Africa writes: “The truth is ... life on the field isn't as glamorous as one might imagine when first stepping off the plane. We aren't camped under a mango tree every day, bringing the gospel to masses who've never heard it before or distributing food to starving people on a daily basis. There are plenty of mountaintop experiences like that when we just look at each other in awe because we get to do this for a living.

“But the truth is ... life happens, and ministry sometimes takes a back seat when it does. Sometimes we find ourselves broken down on the side of the road in the middle of nowhere.

“On our way to the capital to collect a volunteer team one month, the engine of our SUV exploded. Lottie Moon Christmas Offering dollars rebuilt our engine and provided a loaner car in the meantime. Sometimes we find ourselves scooping rainwater off the kitchen floor. Our recently renovated roof cracked in two during a rainstorm one night, flooding our house. Lottie Moon dollars paid for our rent and for the necessary repairs.

“The truth is ... we need you and ask you to pray that people will give sacrificially to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering this year so we can stay on the field, doing what we came to do—glamorous or not.”

What better Christmas gift can there be than one that helps deliver the good news of Christ to every “one-stoplight town” on the planet that has yet to hear of Him? (BP)

Erich Bridges is IMB global correspondent.

Survey: In-person preaching preferred

By Bob Smietana

Nashville, Tenn.—Most Americans still prefer a real-live preacher to a video sermon, according to a survey by LifeWay Research.

About a third (35 percent) say they will only visit churches with a live sermon, according to research released Dec. 17.

Three in 10 say a video sermon won't keep them from a church, but they still prefer live preaching. The same number say live or video sermons are fine.

Less than 1 percent prefer to watch a video sermon.

"I don't think anyone gets up on a Sunday morning saying, 'Boy, I'd really like to watch a video sermon,'" said Scott McConnell, vice president of LifeWay Research and author of "Multi-Site Churches: Guidance for the Movement's Next Generation."

"But the fact that many churches utilize video sermons means other factors such as relationships, preaching approach, music, relevance and location can be more important," McConnell said.

The sermon question was part of a telephone survey of 1,001 Americans conducted Sept. 6-10 by LifeWay Research, a division of LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Video sermons are mostly used by multi-site churches, which hold services

in more than one location, often called campuses. The campuses frequently have live music, prayers and a local pastor who does everything but preach.

About half of the estimated 5,000 multi-site churches in the U.S.

use video teaching, said Jim Tomberlin of the consulting firm Multi-Site Solutions.

"Small churches have a bias against video," Tomberlin said. "As a church grows bigger, video gives them more options. It becomes a non-issue."

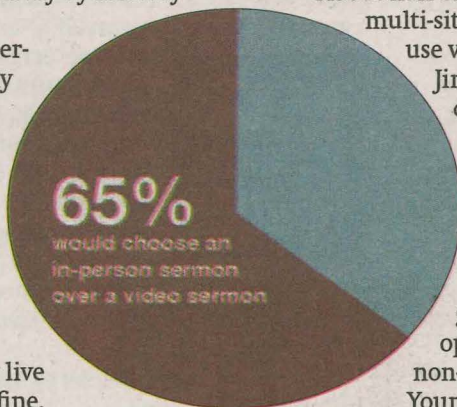
Younger Americans are more likely to accept a video sermon. More than a third (37 percent) of those age 18 to 29 say it doesn't matter if the preaching is live or by video.

By contrast, only about a fourth of those 45 to 54 (24 percent) or those over 65 (26 percent) say they are fine with both options.

Researchers also found that those in the Northeast are most open to a video sermon, with 40 percent saying they are fine with either an in-person or video sermon.

Nearly half of those who don't go to church (47 percent) say it doesn't matter if the sermon is live or on video.

Those with a college degree are more likely to prefer an in-person sermon (41 percent) as are self-identified born-again, evangelical or fundamentalist Christians (37 percent). (LifeWay/BP)



NEWS BRIEFS

2nd praying pastors event

A group of Southern Baptist pastors is inviting pastors, other ministers and ministry students to participate in a two-day prayer meeting in Atlanta Jan. 13-14.

Labeled "A Call to Pray for Revival and Awakening," the event is being led Ronnie Floyd, senior pastor of Cross Church in northwest Arkansas.

Information can be found on the Internet at praying-pastors.com.

Nearly 200 senior pastors from 27 states attended the first gathering of praying pastors Sept. 30-Oct. 1 in the Dallas-Fort Worth suburb of Southlake.

There is no cost to attend the prayer gathering, but all attendees must register through the website.

The meeting will involve ministers who "are desperate for a move of God in our churches and in our nation," Floyd said. "They realize to penetrate their towns, cities and our nation, God will have to empower a mighty movement of revival in the church so we can see spiritual awakening in our nation."

George religious liberty award

Robert George, professor of jurisprudence at Princeton University and chairman of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, received the 2013 John Leland Religious Liberty Award from the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission Dec. 13.

During the award ceremony, George called on President Obama "to withdraw the mandates that threaten religious freedom in the implementation of the Affordable Care Act—and to do so before being compelled to withdraw those mandates by the U.S. Supreme Court in the lawsuits now pending."

Nearly 90 lawsuits have been filed against the abortion/contraception mandate, and the Supreme Court has agreed to review appeals court decisions in two of those cases.

Brewton-Parker elects Caner

Ergun Caner was elected Dec. 2 as the 16th president of Brewton-Parker College in Mount Vernon, Ga., a four-year coeducational college affiliated with the Georgia Baptist Convention.

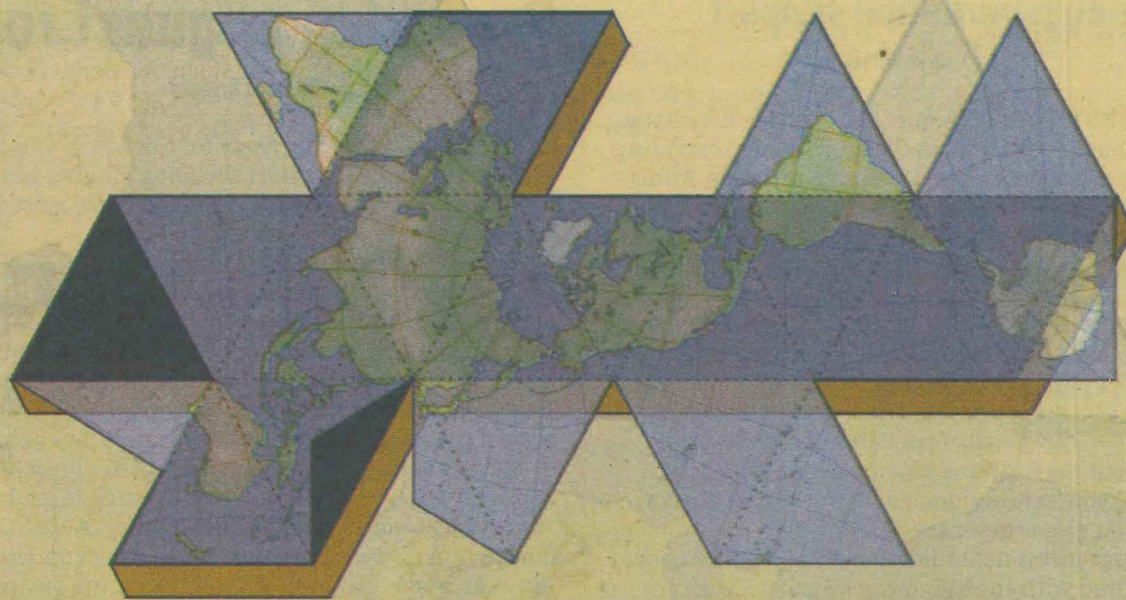
The college acknowledged a 2010 controversy in which bloggers accused Caner of embellishing his background as a former Muslim who converted to Christianity. In quoting an unnamed trustee, the press release stated: "We didn't consider Dr. Caner in spite of the attacks; we elected him because of them. He has endured relentless and pagan attacks like a warrior. We need a warrior as our next president."

Caner goes to the position from Arlington Baptist College in Arlington, Texas, where he has been provost and academic dean since 2011. Previously, he was dean and a professor at Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary in Lynchburg, Va.

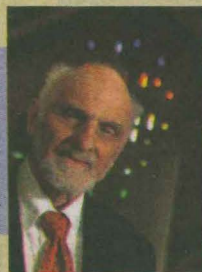
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GEORGETOWN

COLLEGE

Live. Learn. Believe.

Nativity sets

Continued from page 1

First visit

Cole, setting down her tea, recounts the excitement of discovering nativity sets in one of the local markets 10 years ago.

"I was amazed that in a staunchly Buddhist country, there was this little nativity set and I wanted to find out more. So I went and found what village they come from," Cole said.

During a subsequent trip to a nearby town, Cole ventured to the village to find the Lin family, who invited her in for a visit. She learned that the potter had started making the nativity figures on the recommendation of a French resort owner's wife who had taken note of how many tourists stopped to look at the nativity her husband had received from a priest in France.

"I realized they did not know much about the figures they were making," Cole said, "so I made a plan to come back."

Cole's return to Lin's village required a one-hour plane ride, one-hour taxi ride and two-hour boat ride. She brought a children's Bible so the family could look at the pictures as she shared the Christmas story. Though they listened carefully, Lin and his family did not fully understand the heart of the message, having never heard the gospel before.

"This is something that they'll probably have to hear many times to begin to catch the significance of it and understand why I would be so interested in these nativity sets," Cole said.



After her four boys have gone to bed, missions worker Summer Cole (name changed) organizes the nativity pieces she purchased from a village craftsman. (Kelvin Joseph/IMB)



Than Lin* finishes one of the figures for the nativity sets he makes. Missions worker Summer Cole* has been able to share the gospel with the Buddhist family. *Names changed.

Crafting and learning

Ten years later in the village, Cole and Kham ask Lin how his family is doing. Before responding, he picks up a wise man and coats the hardened clay with a hand-mixed deep maroon. Lightly brushing details into the crown of the wise man, Lin finally tells them everyone is healthy, his eyes never leaving the terra cotta figure.

"After I heard the story, I want to bring honor to it. It gives me great honor to be a part of telling this story," Lin said.

He gingerly sets the piece on a tray and goes outside to prepare a new ball of

clay for the next set of figures.

Finishing the new ball, he walks back into the house and retrieves several molds he carved by hand. Cole and Kham ask if he remembers what each piece signifies and he nods.

"I believe this story is true," Lin said.

He quickly selects a portion of clay and presses the mold together, creating a replica of Mary. While doing so, Kham leans forward, talking once more about the significance of Mary in the Christmas story. While believing the story is true, Lin and his family have yet to accept Christ.

Molding complete, Lin slowly carries the tray of pieces to a corner of the living room, leaving them to dry. Once dry, the pieces are fired in a kiln and painted to match the other figures.

Cole said this is the first time she has seen the process from start to finish. Observing Lin as he places the pieces into firing pots, Cole notes how involved he is in every step. Looking upward she notes how God is involved in every step of bringing this village to Himself.

"I see God's hand at work. I can only point to God's divine planning," she said.

Cole visits the family two to three times a year, sharing Bible stories when she comes, confident God is working His redemptive plan in this village.

"The story is not finished, the vision not achieved, but there is definitely a door opening wider," she said.

Kham, in her second visit to the village, feels God calling her to minister more intently with Lin. Gazing over the village, she said, "I felt something the first time I came here. This time, I have asked God to give me this village. I feel God has a plan here." (IMB) *Names changed.

Lottie Moon

Continued from page 1

God's servants.' It's a 20-minute interesting take on the life of Mary."

Moon 'chose' China

Miller depicted Moon's first few years in Dengzhou, China, as "a kind of training period."

Moon mastered the language and some of the dialects native to north China thanks in part to the help of a language student. Moon also faced some harsh treatment from the people in Dengzhou, which she later tied to the American style of dress she maintained while there.

Moon spent her first days in China serving alongside her sister, Edmonia. Unfortunately, illness forced Edmonia to return to the United States a short time later, with Moon accompanying her. Moon said family and friends urged her to remain in the States.

"But you see my friends, it was God that called me to China, and a calling is not a little thing. A calling is not to be shelved because others don't agree with your calling, or they're afraid for your safety, or they want you to come and be their (spouse), or whatever," Miller said in her role as Lottie Moon. "So I chose to return to China at my own expense, knowing that I was completely dependent on my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for my sustenance and my direction."

During those early years, Moon and other female missionaries became convinced that only women could reach

"Lottie Moon was the epitome of Christian sacrifice."

Laurita Miller



Chinese women with the gospel. A gradual shift from school teaching to direct evangelism and church planting ensued. It was during this time that Moon began her letter-writing campaign as she encouraged Baptist women in the United States to organize for the sake of international missions.

Around 1885, Moon moved to P'ingtu, China, to begin more aggressive evangelistic work. There, she exchanged her American dress for indigenous clothes and experienced an immediate impact.

"For the very first time, I put on Chinese clothing. Do you know ... the adults began bowing to me and would speak to me by my name. And the children—Oh!—the children began following me home," Miller said in her portrayal.

Moon also saw a huge breakthrough in support from the States during her years in P'ingtu. In 1887, eight new missionaries joined her. And in 1888, Southern Baptist women formed the Woman's Missionary Union and soon organized the first Baptist Christmas offering for foreign missions. The \$3,200 collected paid the passage of three women to relieve Moon in north China.

"And of course, I couldn't leave. Someone had to train those women. Someone

had to take care of those women" was Moon's response as voiced by Miller.

Except for a brief furlough in 1890, Moon remained in the field despite war, famine and extreme poverty. Her faithfulness paid off. During her service in China, there were thousands of converts.

By 1909, "we had a trained indigenous Chinese ministry in north China," Miller, as Moon, said.

But by 1912, Moon herself experienced the mental and physical fatigue that haunted so many other missionaries in that time who journeyed to China. Late in the year, the decision was made to send Moon back to Virginia because of her failing health.

"They took my little bag of bones—there was 50 pounds left of me I am told—and took me to the ship and tucked me in a warm berth," she said. "When the ship docked in Kobe, Japan, on Christmas Eve of 1912, Jesus came to meet the ship, and He took me home with Him."

Average cost to support one missionary

- \$52,000 a year (average)
- \$4,250 a month
- \$981 a week
- \$140 a day

Support includes housing, salary, children's education, medical expenses, retirement and more.

The Lottie Moon Christmas Offering represents 54 percent of the IMB's total income.

Moon symbolizes sacrifice

Miller said she has known the story of Lottie Moon from a very early age.

"In GAs growing up, we studied about missions and I learned about Lottie Moon," Miller said. "She's always been something of an icon in our family because of her great mission work."

Miller, of Birmingham, Ala., attended Samford University, where she majored in theater and psychology. Eventually, she began writing and presenting "biblical monologues" and later portraying missionaries.

While serving in Macau, Miller's parents traveled to north China in search of Moon's church and home, which they found. To her knowledge, they were the first modern missionaries to visit Moon's place of ministry.

"It was quite a feat in that day and age for my parents to make that journey, really without a visa," Miller said.

Miller portrays Lottie Moon for WMU and, four times a year, for the International Mission Board for every new group of missionaries commissioned to serve overseas. She also travels to churches, mostly in the South and Midwest, to give her Lottie Moon monologues.

Miller said the message and story of Moon's conviction, obedience and sacrifice is just as relevant today as it was 100 years ago.

"Lottie Moon was the epitome of Christian sacrifice," Miller said. "We have a world to win to Christ. He's the only answer. I think it's important we do everything we can to inspire one another to make the necessary sacrifices to spread the gospel." (NOBTS/BP)

Thankful, obedient, blessed

The unbroken circle of being in God's will

We recently had the privilege of hosting Robby Speer, executive director of Sports Reach. He runs a great ministry and shared a few of his stories with students at chapel. The following is an article written by Speer.

"Christmas is getting here much earlier than it used to, is what I have been hearing more than ever before. Folks have started protest groups about stores opening up earlier each year on Thanksgiving night, while others are making Black Friday a family tradition.

"It does seem we have lost some of the emphasis of Thanksgiving—that of being thankful. But the question is: why is that important?

"I don't believe in accidents. I believe that God puts things together for a purpose. So I would like to share a few thoughts on how I believe some things work together.

"Thanksgiving is a time of thankfulness. Psalm 100:4 says, 'Enter into His courts with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise! Give thanks to Him, bless His name.'

"Everyone has something to be thankful for, but a believer in Christ has even more. Not only can we be thankful for all that God has given, but we should be even more thankful for who He really is.

"During this time of year, we are made more aware of the needs of others. It's truly a shame to think that we only mark one time of year to stop and take others into consideration. We have many that are in need, and it seems

that during Christmas many are willing to try to help others.

"As followers of Christ, we need to be the ones leading this. The world will try to drag us into the celebration of the

Christmas season, but neglect the purpose for our celebration.

"We celebrate the birth of our Savior because we are thankful for what it really means. Therefore, because we are thankful, we are more willing to be obedient and reach out to others. Thankfulness leads to obedience.

"There is one more step that occurs—blessings. When we are obedient to God, we are blessed.

Deuteronomy 28:2 says, 'All these blessings will come on you and accompany you if you obey the Lord your God.' Matthew 6:33 says, 'But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you.'

"Let me say that all blessings may not come immediately. There are times when adversity occurs, but we decide to obey. Many may not like our obedience, but God does. God is faithful and does bless our obedience.

"So what comes next? Thankfulness for our blessing! Do you see the pattern? When we are thankful, we want to be obedient. When we are obedient, we are blessed, and when we are obedient we are once again thankful!

"Be thankful, be obedient, be blessed. Merry Christmas!"

Larry Gritton Jr. is president of Oneida Baptist Institute, a Christian boarding and day school. Website: oneidaschool.org. Phone: (606) 847-4111

This is Oneida



Larry Gritton

Toughest are favorites

Student explains his appeal for philosophy & Greek courses

If we allowed incoming students to design their own curriculum from the ground up, two classes that would probably not get many takers would be philosophy and Greek—in that order. But Jonathan Cater named those two classes as his favorites—again, in that order.

The reason students grumble about taking Malcolm Hester's philosophy class is that they think it will be contrary to the subject matter they came to glean. Some admit they are intimidated because the course description sounds so lofty and academic.

Carter, however, said philosophy was his favorite class at Clear Creek.

"It opened my heart and mind to see the other side of the argument," said Carter, and understand "why people don't believe in the Lord. Why they don't believe in scripture."

Carter was also equipped in that class to see why those people are wrong, how they contradict themselves, and how he could follow that with the truth and steer them towards the cross.

For his second favorite class, Carter

picked "probably the hardest class I have ever taken in my life."

Studying Greek, Carter noted, afforded him the perspective of seeing the power of the language and through that he could more clearly see the power of the word of God.

It is always amazing how many graduating students never pick the easiest classes as their favorites. Instead they chose the ones that will grow them and prepare them for ministry.

Carter went straight to pastoral ministry from Clear Creek and is serving at Mt. Zion Baptist Church in Monticello. "Nothing prepares you for being a pastor other than just getting your feet wet and doing it," he said, "but knowledge-wise, I was greatly prepared by what I got at the Creek."

Kentucky Baptists made ministry training possible for Jonathan Carter and every student who passes through Clear Creek. We are blessed to send back into Kentucky churches ministers who are prepared for service—even if that involves philosophy and Greek.

Donnie Fox is president of Clear Creek Baptist Bible College, 300 Clear Creek Road, Pineville, KY 40977; toll-free: (866) 340-3196; ccbcb.edu; email: dfox@ccbcb.edu.

Clear Creek Chronicle



Donnie Fox

'Daniel Plan' focuses on health & faith

By Jeff Brumley

Ministers who specialize in health and spiritual formation are hopeful Rick Warren's new food-and-faith program may boost ongoing efforts to link body and soul in the minds of Baptists and other Christians. "The Daniel Plan: 40 Days to a Healthier Life," the Saddleback Church pastor said in a release, "is far more than a diet; it is about living a healthier life based on biblical principles."

Warren said he was inspired after baptizing 800 people in 2009 and realizing many of them were overweight—just as he was. Two years later, 15,000 members of his church lost a combined 260,000 pounds using Warren's approach.

But reaction to the plan has been varied from enthusiastic praise to cautious reminders that weight-loss plans—even those based on spiritual principles—can still miss the spiritual mark designers like Warren are seeking.

And one way that can happen is when participants become too focused on weight loss, said Gary Gunderson, vice president for faith and health at Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center in Winston-Salem, N.C.

Forget the Body Mass Index and focus on how health can serve Christ, he said.

"We don't know what Jesus' BMI was," Gunderson said. "He wasn't crucified because he was fat, and he isn't worshiped because he was skinny."

Gunderson said that's not a critique of Warren's plan but of the tendency many Americans have to put body image issues ahead of biblical teachings about food.

Spirit good, body evil

Others have said that The Daniel Plan's call for a mixture of natural foods and physical activity used on the congregations and small-groups may actually lead some participants to more holistic attitudes about the body's role in Christian salvation.

Warren said his plan was inspired by an Old Testament passage in which Daniel refuses to eat a king's rich foods and instead challenges the monarch to 10 days of healthier eating. The plan calls for eating whole foods, viewing physical activity as fun instead of as exercise and urges users to participate in groups for encouragement and accountability.

Warren's idea could be helpful in countering old Christian attitudes pitting body against spirit, said Michael Sciretti Jr., minister of spiritual formation at Freemason Street Baptist Church in Norfolk, Va.

"From the very beginning of Christianity there was a tendency to denigrate the body," Sciretti said. "Early on, in the gnostic sects, the spirit was good and the body was evil."

It's an attitude that has survived, perhaps in softer forms, particularly among many Baptists, he said.

'The value of our body'

Sciretti said he knows that from experience. He was raised a Southern Baptist

in Louisiana, a context in which little thought was given to the spiritual potential of simply eating, let alone fasting.

But there are those developing mindful and healthy eating practices from the

Apostle Paul's call to view the body as the temple of the Holy Spirit, Sciretti said.

"There is a spiritual practice of honoring the body and caring for the body," he said.

Warren's plan may give a boost to that movement, Sciretti added.

Still a Baptist 'disconnect'

Warren's foray into physical health comes at a time of rising interest in finding spiritual solutions to ailments such as hyper-

tension, depression, heart disease and obesity, said Randy Ashcraft, pastor in residence at the Virginia Baptist Mission Board.

Ashcraft, who regularly preaches and teaches on the topic, said Christians are finally paying attention to the intersection of mind, body and spirit. "Especially among younger people ... there's an awareness of what I put in my body," he said.

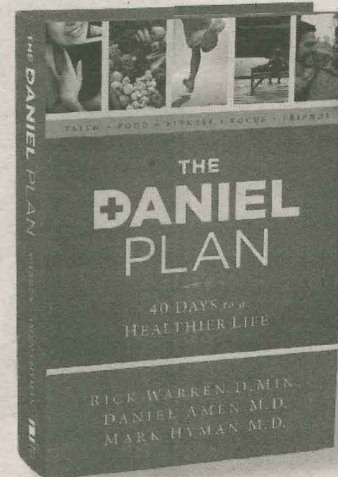
But there is also plenty of resistance, especially among some Baptists. Many remain more focused on opposing smoking, alcohol and dancing than promoting physical health.

"The disconnect for Baptists is still there," Ashcraft said.

For that transformation to occur, Gunderson said, Christians must come to see their food and bodies as having a larger purpose. And that purpose is spelled out in Scripture, he said, where food is a gift from God for nourishing the full life of the individual, he said.

Gunderson said that can get lost in diet and weight-loss plans named after biblical passages, such as the Ezekiel Diet. "Ezekiel is not in the Bible because of his diet, but because he was a prophet who preached repentance and justice to the poor."

The purpose of food and good physical health is to enable Christ's followers to do the same, Gunderson said. "If you focus on the dietary only instead of the full context, you are going to gain your BMI and lose your soul." (ABP)



Rick Warren baptizes a new believer. (Photo courtesy of Larry Ross Communications)

Bible drill app geared toward 'digital natives'

By Eddy Oliver

Duluth, Ga.—The digital age has come to Bible Drill.

A new Bible Drill app has been developed by the Georgia Baptist Convention which will help students and their leaders study God's word on their tablets or smartphones.

Developed as a general discipleship tool for children, students, adults and families, the app allows drillers to review books of the Bible and current verses through different activity and study options, according to Maria Brannen, state missionary in Discipleship/Spiritual Renewal.

"Kids are digital natives and this is a great way for them to have an opportunity for study at home during the week," Brannen said.

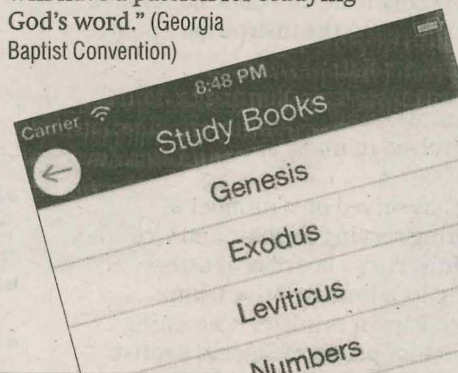
The app provides a tool for children, youth and high school drillers to study in a variety of styles the Scriptures they are memorizing. It includes options such as a bubble game, electronic flash cards, and "type out a verse." Additional activities help them learn and review books of

the Bible.

The app is pre-loaded with three translations used by Bible Drillers—King James Version, Holman Christian Standard Version, and English Standard Version. Students and adults also have the option to share a verse they are learning via social media.

Because it is not specific to Georgia's Bible Drillers, anyone can download the app for 99 cents in the iTunes store.

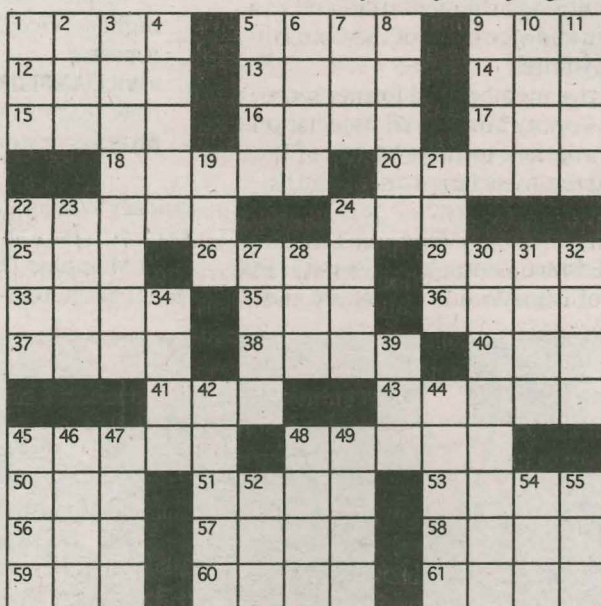
"It's a great home study tool where students can learn even if no one else is around," Brannen said. "We hope to have a whole new generation of children who will have a passion for studying God's word." (Georgia Baptist Convention)



Bible Crosswords

Across

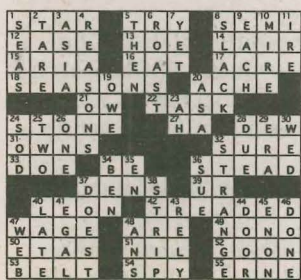
- 1 "Call me not Naomi, call me _____" (Ruth 1:20)
- 5 Bunch of bubbles
- 9 Paramedic's report (abbr.)
- 12 "The slaughter of Midian at the rock of _____" (Isaiah 10:26)
- 13 "Every _____ word that men shall speak, they shall give account" (Matthew 12:36)
- 14 There's the _____
- 15 "She ... began to _____ his feet with tears" (Luke 7:38)
- 16 Burden
- 17 Compass dir.
- 18 "Let us build us a city and _____, whose top may reach unto heaven" (Genesis 11:4)
- 20 Lets off fumes
- 22 Ship to _____
- 24 Team _____, Olympics competitor
- 25 Attitude
- 26 Has _____
- 29 "It shall be even given thee to the _____ of the kingdom" (Esther 5:3)
- 33 Creative concept
- 35 "I will send a _____, saying, Go, find the arrows" (1 Samuel 20:21)
- 36 Golden calf, for one
- 37 More is _____
- 38 Telegram word
- 40 United
- 41 Ram's mate
- 43 Captured, in a way
- 45 Lion's portion
- 48 "What is the chaff to the _____?" (Jeremiah 23:28)
- 50 Require effort
- 51 "He himself stayed in _____



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- for a season" (Acts 19:22)
- 53 Become bored
- 56 Linking verb
- 57 _____ stop
- 58 "Whoever shall be given you in that _____, that speak ye" (Mark 13:11)
- 59 Affirmative
- 60 Overeat, almost
- 61 Dagger
- Down**
- 1 Weekend job, for many
- 2 Son of Jether (1 Chronicles 7:38)
- 3 Gives new life, as the Lord
- 4 "Him shall the people curse, nations shall _____ him" (Proverbs 24:24)
- 5 Rank's partner
- 6 Scent
- 7 In the manner of
- 8 "Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the _____ and the Persians" (Daniel 5:28)
- 9 Three (Ger.)
- 10 Fire
- 11 Fortas and others
- 19 Where one surfs
- 21 Mother, hello (abbr.)
- 22 "Strengthen their mast, they could not spread the _____"
- (Isaiah 33:23)
- 23 "_____ us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne" (Revelation 6:16)
- 24 Cancel; annul
- 27 In addition
- 28 Partake
- 30 "Ye have received the Spirit of _____, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Romans 8:15)
- 31 Single
- 32 "Then all the disciples forsook him, and _____" (Matthew 26:56)
- 34 Tribe of Israel (var.)
- 39 _____ millennialism
- 42 Becomes useless, with "out"
- 44 Vows
- 45 "None can _____ his hand" (Daniel 4:35)
- 46 Unclean animal (Leviticus 11:6)
- 47 Cutting tools
- 48 Knew; learned (arch.)
- 49 "_____ the evil" (Amos 5:15)
- 52 Aegean, for one
- 54 Regret
- 55 Poetic contraction

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Right here in Ky.

Eliza Broadus Offering making a difference in people's lives

"More Than Ever, Make a Difference" is the Eliza Broadus Offering theme for the year. More than ever, our gifts are needed to support ministries across Kentucky in sharing Christ. At this time of year when Southern Baptists focus on international missions, let me share some of the international impact of EBO right here in Kentucky through three Friendship International sites in Lexington, Louisville and Paducah.

Friendship International of Elkhorn Baptist Association reaches out to international women in Lexington. Through a ministry of cross-cultural friendships where 80 percent of the participants are not Christians, women are sharing Christ one-on-one. The ministry provides food and fellowship, English classes, crafts, exercise and cooking. The ministry has also been able to distribute left over bread from a local restaurant to Chinese and Muslim families. One Muslim lady said, "My husband was without a pay check for three months this summer, but we have always had wonderful, delicious bread. It was a gift from God and we are so grateful."

The Lexington ministry usually meets only during the school year, but held a Bible study this summer taught in Mandarin. About 50 men, women and children attended each week. Several of the seekers became Christians. Others are closer to the kingdom. One visitor explained that since he is a government official in China, he is not a

Christian but said, "I have experienced a special love in this place."

Friendship International of Long Run Association meets at Walnut Street Baptist Church in Louisville. Through this ministry, internationals have learned English, Bible, citizenship, and participated in creative activities such as scrapbooking, crafts, quilting, crocheting, knitting and sewing.

EBO at Work



Joy Bolton

Mary Lou Crutcher, of Hurstbourne Baptist Church, is the director and said that "through 'Friendship' our Baptist volunteers reach out in love to all who participate, building relationships which allow us to share our Christian faith. Each session begins with Scripture and prayer." The EBO grant was used to provide child care, English as a Second Language materials, and supplies.

Friendship International of West Union Association provides a witness to internationals in Paducah, offering English classes and providing students with free textbooks, Bibles, videos, child care and transportation, if needed. The Paducah Friendship International has classes using the Bible as the textbook. At break time they provide refreshments and a devotional from the Bible, sing and pray. Students represent Peru, Nigeria, Columbia, Thailand, Russia, South Korea, Honduras, Lithuania, Spain and Mexico.

More than ever, EBO is making a difference to people around the world—right here in Kentucky!

Joy Bolton is executive director-treasurer of Kentucky Woman's Missionary Union, P.O. Box 436569, Louisville, KY 40253; (502) 489-3534; kywmu.org

All about 'The Child'

Ky. Baptists show love of Christ by showing love to Sunrise kids

December can be one of the most hectic months of the year, even for those who intentionally try to keep the focus of the season on the right place.

Church services, Christmas pageants, charity work, gift-buying, family get-togethers and meals have a way of taxing our time, energy and resources. We must constantly remind ourselves that ultimately, Christmas is all about The Child.

Jesus, born in a manger and sent to earth to bridge the gap between our sin and God's holiness, remains the greatest gift mankind has ever received. For those of us who have unwrapped, accepted and received that gift into our lives, Christmas is a perfect time to share it with others around us.

We do that with carols, nativity scenes, plays and greeting cards. Most importantly though, we share that gift through our actions that demonstrate the same kind of love God showed toward us. This Christmas, the 600 children across Kentucky served by Sunrise Children's Services were blessed by the sharing of that love demonstrated by numerous churches across Kentucky

who donated toys, clothes, gift cards, money and even volunteered their time and energy to make sure the abused and neglected children we minister to had a Merry Christmas.

Many children we serve have never had the joyous Christmas morning that

our children and grandchildren experience. For some of them, Christmas morning meant just another day to live in fear, in hunger or in shame. This year, however, Christmas morning meant waking up knowing that someone cared enough to make sure they were not forgotten.

Sunrise Children's Services is proud of our 144-year-legacy of serving the children of Kentucky, and we're proud that Kentucky Baptists have partnered with us every step of the way. Your continued support of Sunrise will ensure that we provide the physical, emotional and spiritual help to children in crisis.

Thank you for helping us give them a Merry Christmas, and may this season be one of continued joy and blessings for you and your families.

For more information on Sunrise, visit us at sunrise.org.

Sunrise Children's Services may be contacted at (502) 538-1000 or Sunrise.org





December

24 Christmas holiday, KBC building closed through Dec. 31.

January

10 Disaster Relief Chaplaincy Training, Edgewood Baptist Church, Hopkinsville.

11 Disaster Relief Training, Edgewood Baptist Church, Hopkinsville.

23 Shepherding the Shepherd, Hilton, Lexington.

30 Administrative Committee, KBC Building, Louisville.

31 Imagine Preschool and Children's Ministry Conference, Parkway Baptist Church, Bardstown

February

7 Disaster Relief Chaplaincy Training, Westport Road Baptist Church, Louisville.

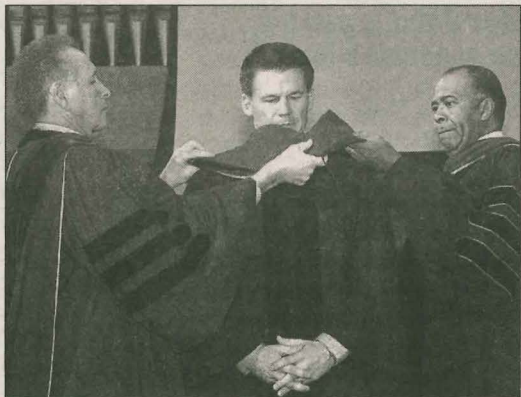
8 Disaster Relief Training, Westport Road Baptist Church, Louisville.

10 SEND>>St. Louis Vision Trip 2014, unnamed venue.

What's happening?

Send church and association events to: **Mountains to the Mississippi** in care of: sitha.salyers@westernrecorder.org.

Campbellsville gives honorary degrees to Carwile, Chowning



Joel Carwile (center), pastor of Valley View Church in Louisville, receives an honorary doctorate of divinity from Campbellsville University. Carwile is presented his hood by Frank Cheatham (left), senior vice president for academic affairs, and Joseph Owens, chair of the CU Board of Trustees. (CU/Joan McKinney)

By Joan McKinney

Campbellsville—Campbellsville University bestowed honorary doctorates on a Louisville pastor and one of its vice presidents at the university's December commencement ceremony.

Joel Carwile, senior pastor of Valley View Church, one of Kentucky's largest Southern Baptist congregations with nearly 5,000 members, received an honorary doctorate of divinity.

John Chowning, Campbellsville vice president for church and external relations and executive assistant to the president, received an honorary doctorate of public service degree.

Carwile 'finest' pulpiteer

"Bro. Joel (Carwile) is known as one of the finest pulpiteers in Kentucky Baptist and Southern Baptist Conventions," said Campbellsville University President Michael Carter. "We are very honored to present him with this honorary doctorate of divinity."

In receiving the doctorate, Carwile responded, "It's all about Jesus. I love CU and want to share the glorious, good news of Jesus Christ."

Since Carwile became pastor of Valley View in the summer 2007, the congregation has grown by approximately 2,029 members. The church is continuing to grow with two Sunday morning worship services, mid-week

service, Life Group classes, and multiple ministries, outreach points and missions in the community and beyond.

Carter said Carwile is "passionate about Jesus in all areas of life" including his dedicated service as a member of Campbellsville University Board of Trustees, the CU Church Relations Council and the Kentucky Baptist Convention Mission Board.

Chowning's long history with CU

Chowning has been associated with the university for 25 years, previously serving as chair and member of its board of trustees.

He is the founding director of CU's Kentucky Heartland Institute on Public Policy and has taught part time in the institution's political science program.

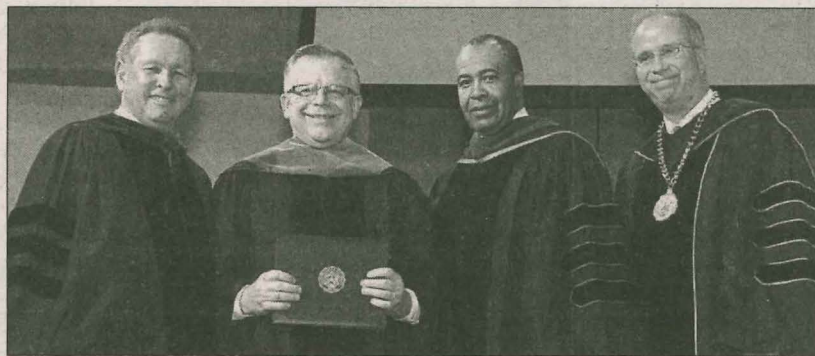
He also helped establish CU's Heartland Center for Bivocational and Small Church Ministry and is involved in many areas of university life.

Chowning has served on a number of boards, including serving as chair and vice chair of the University's Board of Trustees prior to joining its administrative team.

An ordained Baptist minister, Chowning has served as senior pastor of Salom Baptist Church since 1994. He is active in the Kentucky Baptist Convention, serving for several years as convention parliamentarian and as a member, chair and vice chair of the Committee on Public Affairs.

He is an active member and former secretary of Taylor County Ministerial Association and a member of the executive boards of Taylor County Baptist Association and Zion District Association of Baptists.

He holds a master's of public administration degree from Eastern Kentucky University, and is a graduate of Transylvania University and



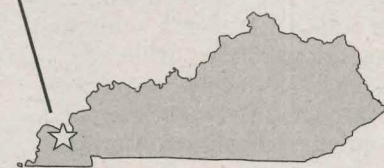
John Chowning (second from left) receives an honorary doctorate of public service from Campbellsville University. Making the presentation were: Frank Cheatham (left), Joseph Owens and Michael Carter (right), president. (CU/Drew Tucker)

MOUNTAINS TO THE MISSISSIPPI

COMPILED BY STAFF

Spotlight on ...

Paducah



Oaklawn Church will host **Tim Lovelace** and **The Perry's** in concert Dec. 31, 7 p.m. For more information, call (270) 442-1513. **Royce Dukes** is pastor.

■ **BARLOW**—Ohio Valley Church recently ordained Brandon Bramlett to gospel ministry. **John Baker** is pastor.

■ **HUSTONVILLE**—South Fork Church recently called **Andrew McGinnis** as pastor.

■ **LOUISVILLE**—Fern Creek Church will hold a New Year's Eve youth lock-in Dec. 31, 8 p.m. **Linda Popham** is pastor.

Maple Grove Church will hold a Watch-night service Dec. 31, 9 p.m. **Raymond Hayes** is pastor.

■ **WILLIAMSBURG**—First Church will hold a New Year's Eve lock-in Dec. 31, 8 p.m. **Ande Myers** is pastor.

Lindsey Wilson College. He has completed several courses in the program of alternate studies at Memphis Theological Seminary and additional graduate hours in education at ECU. (WR)

CLASSIFIED ADS

SEEKING: Bethlehem Baptist Church, located in a small, rural area outside Springfield in Washington County, is seeking a full-time pastor. Send resumés to bobbyjoe.mattingly@washingt.kyschools.us or mail to Bobby Joe Mattingly at 1615 Jimtown Road, Springfield, KY 40069. Include a DVD/CD if available.

SEEKING: Worship/family pastor for a solid and growing church plant in the Black Hills of South Dakota. Bivocational, part-time position, or full-time if able to raise some additional support. If you have ever felt called to serve an active ministry in South Dakota, and have a desire to see what God is doing, contact us. All resumés and references should be sent to church planter Justin Dancer at justin@hillsofgrace.com.

SEEKING: Part-time student minister (6th-12th). South Jefferson Baptist (Louisville) is seeking God's person to lead the student ministry to our church and community. Education required. Musicianship a plus. Send resumé or info requests to Jerry, southjeff@mjsjbc.org.

SEEKING: First Baptist Church, Owensboro, is seeking a full-time minister of

music. The qualified candidate will be responsible for the overall music ministry of the church including adult and children's choir, orchestra, hand bells, etc. Experience leading congregation and choir, strong communication and leadership skills are desired. Resumés may be sent to jwest@fbcowb.org.

SEEKING: Full-time children's pastor. Campbellsville Baptist Church is prayerfully seeking God's person to lead in a ministry to preschool and school-age children, and their families in our church and our community. Send resumé and requests for information to bradl@cvillebaptist.com.

SEEKING: First Baptist Church of Paris is seeking a full-time minister of music and education, experience and education preferred. Send resumé to First Baptist Church, P.O. Box 327, Paris, KY 40362, ATTN: Gary Ellcessor, or email to fbcbrogary@att.net.

SEEKING: First Baptist Church of Paris is seeking a full-time minister to students and families. This person will be working with all ages, from preschool to senior adults. Send resumé to First

Baptist Church, P.O. Box 327, Paris, KY 40362, ATTN: Gary Ellcessor, or email to fbcbrogary@att.net.

SEEKING: Tunnel Hill Baptist Church in Elizabethtown is seeking a part-time youth director. Approx. 20 hours per week. Submit resumé to tunnelhillbaptistchurch@gmail.com no later than Feb. 1.

SEEKING: Part-time youth pastor. Campbellsville Baptist Church is prayerfully seeking God's person to lead in a ministry to the youth (7th-12th grades) and their families in our church and our community. Send resumé and requests for information to bradl@cvillebaptist.com.

SEEKING: Gamaliel Baptist Church is in search of the man that God has chosen to be our new pastor. If you are that man, or you know him, forward a resumé to: Pastor Search Committee, Gamaliel Baptist Church, P.O. Box 148, Gamaliel, KY 42140, or email to gamalielbaptist2013@gmail.com. Deadline Jan. 31.

SEEKING: Little Bethel Baptist Association in Hopkins County is now accepting

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resumés for the position of director of missions. Send resumés to: DOM Search Committee, Little Bethel Baptist Association, 445 Thompson Ave., Madisonville, KY 42431-1293.

TRAVEL: Hundreds of Bible land departures catering to Southern Baptists—Israel, Greece, Turkey, Italy, Germany, Switzerland, Britain, Jordan, Egypt, etc. pilgrimtours.com (800) 322-0788.

Life lessons from

MAYBERRY



AT LEFT: Actors Andy Griffith and Ron Howard of *The Andy Griffith Show* are shown in a 1961 publicity photograph. **RIGHT:** In one episode, Andy returns from a trip to find that Barney has managed to put all of Mayberry's citizens behind bars in the town jail. (CBS)



By Rick Houston

Ridgecrest, N.C.—They came by car and church vans, by themselves and in groups, and they were headed to a place where all the world's problems could be solved in 25 minutes.

One man drove the 700 miles or so from Pascagoula, Miss., alone. A mother and daughter, both recently widowed, were there.

Another woman was just a month removed from the death of her husband. In the past, an attendee has celebrated the end of her chemo treatments by heading to the conference.

All these years later, a fictional North Carolina town and its beloved inhabitants still have that kind of allure.

'Live a better life'

More than 500 people from 18 different states attended the sold-out "Life Lessons from Mayberry: It's All There in Black & White" conference at LifeWay Christian Resources' Ridgecrest Conference Center. The event showcases Bible studies that are structured around episodes of the classic 1960s sitcom "The Andy Griffith Show." Attendance has doubled in the three years it has been held at Ridgecrest.

"God has provided this means for us because the show has such practical lessons," said Debbie Whisenant, the event's creator and producer. "It's not a lot of deep theology, but it's how to treat your fellow man. It's how to treat people right. I think what most people need is just inspiration to live a better life based on biblical principles."

This year's conference featured Karen Knotts, daughter of Don Knotts who played Barney, the show's bumbling but well-meaning deputy and perhaps its most beloved character; LeRoy McNees, who appeared on two first-season episodes; and tribute artist Allen Newsome.

Breakout sessions covered some of the most popular episodes in the show's eight-year run, including "Man in a Hurry," "A Feud is a Feud," "Rafe Hollister Sings," "Barney Fife, Realtor," "The Haunted House," "Bailey's Bad Boy," "Opie's Newspaper," "Aunt Bee's Medicine Man" and "A Date for Gomer."

None of the episodes have an overtly Christian message, but each has themes that are directly connected to Scripture—restlessness, pride, gossip, strife, deception, arrogance and vanity.

"I do know that Andy Griffith was quoted as saying that he insisted on there being a moral in every episode, something that we could learn from it," Whisenant said. "I just really feel like God must have had His hands on some of those writers and their scripts, even though some or maybe all of them weren't Christians."

Fann a trend starter

The show-flavored Bible studies didn't start with Life Lessons from

Mayberry. Joey Fann, author of "The Way Back to Mayberry: Lessons From a Simpler Time" (B&H Books 2001), is widely credited with starting the trend in Huntsville, Ala., in the late 1990s.

Since then, hundreds of churches have dug into the Bible, looking to Andy, Barney, Opie, Aunt Bee and the rest of the Mayberry gang for inspiration.

That's actually how Life Lessons from Mayberry got its start. Whisenant, who works as an advertising writer and project manager for LifeWay, has taught semester-long studies at her Nashville-area church for more than a decade. She mentioned the idea to one of her managers.

One thing led to another, and the Life

Lessons from Mayberry conference was born. In the fall of 2011, 240 people attended. Last year, 260 showed up. This time around, the Sept. 24-26 conference exploded in popularity through a few ads here and there, word of mouth and Whisenant's efforts on social media.

"I don't attribute it to anything other than God just saying, 'Go for it,'" Whisenant said.

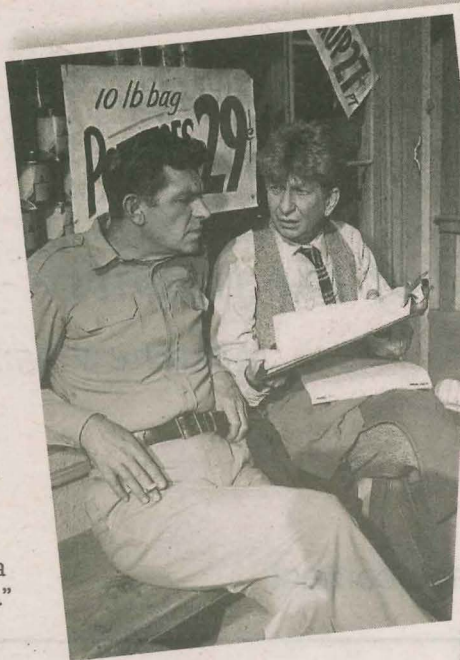
The show has definitely become a part of Whisenant's life. She has a picture of herself taken at around age 13 with George Lindsey, the actor who portrayed the lovable Goober Pyle on both *The Andy Griffith Show* and its spinoff "Mayberry RFD." A Mayberry trivia contest was a part of her bridal shower. She and husband John also have an adult son named Andy.

Filmed and originally aired during the turbulence of the 1960s, the wholesome simplicity of the show resonates with viewers in reruns and on DVD more than 50 years after its debut.

"It just takes you away from the culture that we live in now for a few minutes," Whisenant concluded.

"The characters are so lovable. They have their own foibles. They're not perfect. Barney and Gomer are so childlike. It's like the comfort food of television for me. It's just such a comforting place to go."

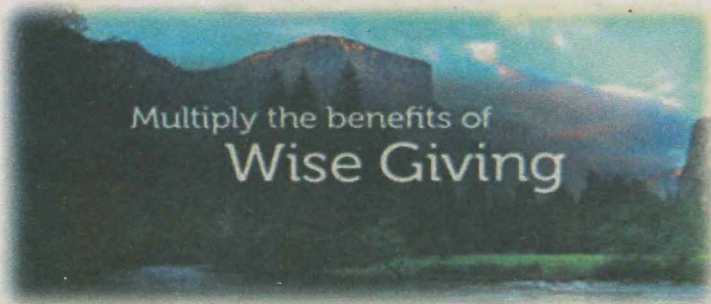
Dates for next year's event are Sept. 21-24. Register at lifeway.com/mayberry. (BP)



ABOVE: Actors Andy Griffith, as Sheriff Andy Taylor, and Sterling Holloway (right), making a guest appearance as Burt Miller, are seen in the 1962 episode "The Merchant of Mayberry" on *The Andy Griffith Show*. Holloway played a new Mayberry merchant who has trouble getting his business off the ground. **AT RIGHT:** Don Knotts, as Barney Fife, and Jim Nabors, as Gomer Pyle, are seen in this 1964 publicity photo. (CBS).



Church Investments



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