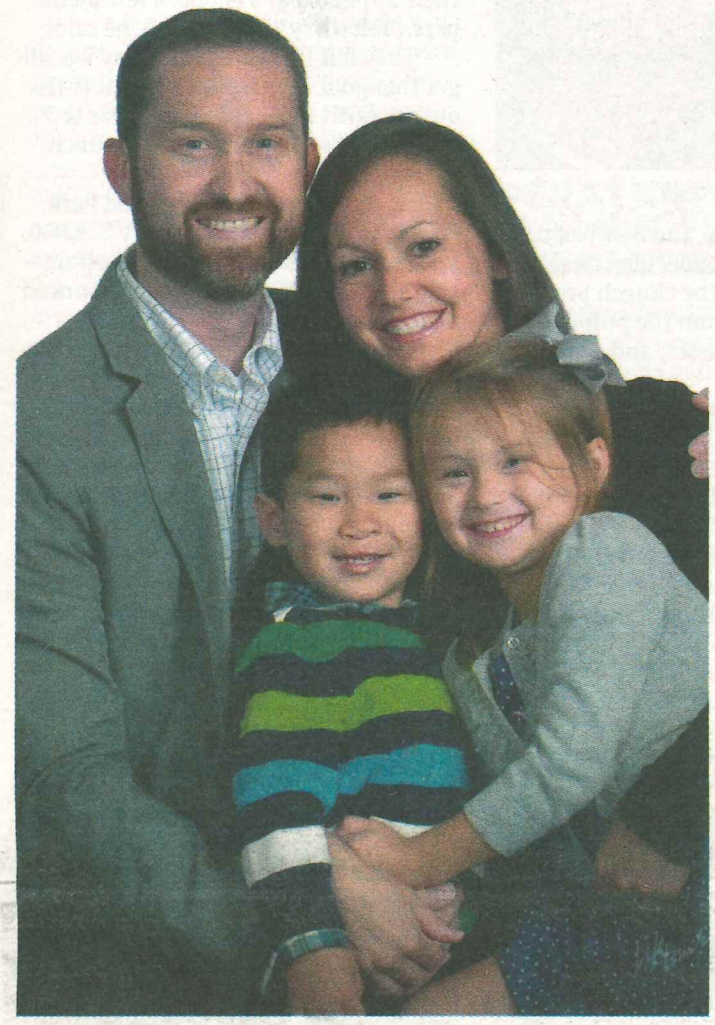
WESTERN
Recorder

January 26, 2016 — *Shine Like Stars* ✳ Philippians 2:15 — Volume 190, Issue 2



Adoption picture of salvation, parents say

By Diana Chandler

Greenbrier, Tenn.—Nathan and Jennifer Washburn rank parenting among their greatest joys, but a desire to have children was not their main motivation in adopting.

Instead, the couple who married in 2004 point to spiritual value as their main motivation for their 2010 adoption from Kazakhstan of Kara Victoria Washburn, now 5, and, in 2014 from China, Owen RenLi Washburn, 3.

"It was primarily a theological motivation to adopt," Nathan Washburn, pastor of First Baptist Church in Greenbrier, Tenn., told Baptist Press. "It's such a great picture of our spiritual adoption in Christ."

Washburn describes adoption as a practical application of honoring the value God has ordained in human life.

"Although there are different circumstance in life and different stages of life, there's not a spectrum to God's image in people," Washburn said. "Every person bears His image and bears it in its fullness."

Christians are called to protect the unborn, the orphan, the physically and mentally challenged, and the widow equally, he said.

"No matter what circumstances are on the surface, no matter what differences there are in life stage, or geography or nationality, or religion or race or anything, there's only one image of God," Washburn said. "And it's full in every human being. You see all over Scripture the image of God in people, regardless of anything really."

First Baptist Church in Greenbrier marked Sanctity of Human Life Sunday with a special offering and sermon, and will continue its work to

❑ *See Adoption ... Page 12*



National WMU Executive Director Wanda S. Lee addresses WMU executive board members, national and state WMU staff, and guests during the group's Board Meeting, Jan. 9-11.

WMU Executive Director Wanda Lee announces retirement

By Julie Walters

Birmingham, Ala.—Wanda Lee announced a search committee will be appointed to seek her successor as executive director/treasurer of national Woman's Missionary Union at the group's board meeting, Jan. 9-11.

During the meeting, WMU also heard mission reports and addressed ways it is assisting International Mission Board personnel who have elected to take a voluntary retirement incentive. The meeting was at Shocco Springs Conference Center in Talladega, Ala.

In her report, Lee said no date has been set for her departure. She pledged to continue to lead WMU until a new executive director is named and help facilitate a smooth transition.

"It is my duty to give sufficient notice and it's my desire to ensure a seamless transition as the committee seeks someone with a fresh vision for our future," Lee shared Jan. 11 at the meeting. "May God bless the new leader of national WMU as He's blessed me on my leadership journey."

Lee was elected executive director of national WMU in January 2000. She is the only woman in the history of WMU who also served as national president, an office she held 1996–2000. Lee served as president of Georgia WMU from 1993–1996. In addition, she and her husband Larry served as missionaries with IMB from 1979–1981.

❑ *See Lee retires ... Page 8*

'Reset' continues: IMB nixes Richmond communications office

By David Roach

Nashville—The International Mission Board has announced the closure of its Richmond Communications Center, effective April 29, and the accompanying layoff of 30 stateside staff according to a Jan. 14 IMB news release.

Ten additional communications staff members are being transitioned to other positions.

The layoffs were the result of "reevaluating systems and structures across the IMB not only because of IMB's financial realities," the release said, "but also to be the best possible stewards of resources that churches have entrusted to IMB to get the gospel to the nations."

The affected communications employees represent about 6.5 percent of the approximately 450 stateside staff members at the IMB prior to the board's "organizational reset," which began in August with the launch of a voluntary retirement incentive for personnel 50 and older with five or more years of service.

No additional teams, groups or departments will be eliminated during the organizational reset, the board said.

News of the communications layoffs came as the IMB announced the beginning of phase two in its reset: a "hand-raising opportunity" (HRO) for missionaries and stateside staff members "to transition outside the IMB if they believe God is leading them to a new place of investment in mission," according to the news release.

Individuals who accept the HRO must finalize their



decisions by Feb. 22 and will receive "a package beyond the scope of a normal resignation."

Though remaining overseas staff may volunteer to leave IMB for new fields of service, no missionaries will be "required" to leave the field as part of the continuing organizational reset, the IMB said.

Despite closure of the communications center, the board will continue to release news and feature stories, photos and videos produced by IMB media workers based in Europe, the Mideast, Africa, Asia and Latin America.

When Baptist state paper editors requested additional details about the communications changes, IMB personnel scheduled a conference call with Baptist journalists on Jan. 20. *(BP)*

Find us on Facebook
and on twitter
as westernrecorder

WESTERN RECORDER
Celebrating 190 years of "shining the Light through what we write"

In wake of missionaries leaving field, churches double, triple former LMCO goals

By Myriah Snyder

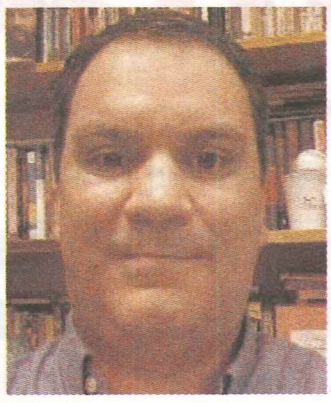
Louisville—Inspired by a need to do more for international missions because of the recent restructuring of the International Mission Board, some Kentucky Baptist churches have doubled or tripled their original Lottie Moon Christmas Offering goals.

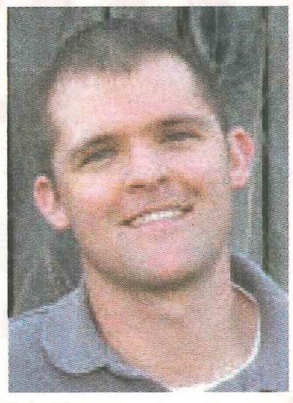
One of those churches is West Broadway Baptist Church in Louisville. In 2014, their goal for the LMCO was $5,000. Challenged by the missionaries leaving the field for financial reasons, West Broadway set their goal for $10,000. At the end of the offering period, the church's giving totaled more than $20,700.

"The biggest driving factor was the reorganization of the IMB, the sense that missionaries were going to have to come off the field because of lack of support. We didn't want to see that happen," Tim Beougher, pastor of West Broadway, said. "I challenged the church and other pastor friends of mine to take whatever our goal was last year and try to double it. If every church did that, we wouldn't have a financial problem."

Beougher made the church's goal visual using seasonal greenery. They had a "Lottie Moon wreath" where a light was lit for each $100 given to the offering. In the end, they had more than 200 bulbs lit.


Tim Beougher


Terry Leap


Kyle Claunch

Williamstown Baptist also used Christmas decorations to motivate giving. They had a "Lottie Moon tree" in the sanctuary with ornaments that had prayer requests for a country and a dollar amount. Individuals were challenged to take an ornament, pray for the country and give. This was instrumental in meeting the $5,000 goal.

In the end, the church surpassed $11,307. In the last seven years or so, the highest amount reached for the LMCO was $3,938. Terry Leap, the new pastor, and the missions team decided to aim for $5,000. Together, the church promoted the offering from the pulpit, in the Sunday School classes, and even involved the youth.

"I think that the key to leading the church to give more is educating the church and having them buy into the importance of the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering," Leap said.

"If people are not educated and they don't have a compelling vision of the importance of this offering, then they won't give," he continued. "If they have understood and are compelled to believe that this offering helps us reach the nations, they give and they take ownership in our missions program as Southern Baptists."

When Kyle Claunch announced to Highland Park First Baptist Church that they were setting a 2015 goal to double their 2014 goal at $14,000, a few members, "felt sorry" for Claunch, he said.

"They felt like there is no way we will get that goal. My response was, it turns out my faith wasn't too big; it was too small. That's often the case," Claunch shared.

The membership of Highland Park First brought in approximately $24,000. The church began increasing their mission strategy before the IMB announced its restructuring.

"I think it just shows that the people of Highland Park are sensitive to the Spirit of God.... With this situation they heard not just the plea of their pastor, but I think they heard the voice of their Shepherd who laid His life down for the sheep that we need to act," he said.

"What holds us back is we just see through men's eyes and we forget this is what God desires, and He's just waiting to take a minimal offering and multiply it like loaves and fishes." *(WR)*

Temporary sanctuary brings church closer

By Myriah Snyder

Princeton—After flood damage last February caused First Baptist Church of Princeton to meet in a temporary sanctuary, the congregation met in its own sanctuary again for the first time Dec. 15.

For the past 10 months, the church has been gathering across the street in their Christian Life Center after damage was caused by melting snow.

The repairs were covered by insurance, and the remodeled sanctuary has a new sound system, pews, flooring and lights.

Additionally, Sunday School space was turned into a welcome center to foster friendships made during their time in the temporary sanctuary.

"When we moved into the Christian Life Center, the very first Sunday there were people who had been going to church for years who said, 'There are people going to church that I didn't even realize were members of this church or attended here'," Russ Davidson, pastor of First Baptist, told WPSD news.

"So it's really brought us a family atmosphere," he continued, explaining that the temporary sanctuary arrangements caused those from the balcony and floor level to sit together.

"We have experienced closeness, and change is difficult for anyone. We had to think outside the box. We had to do church in a way that we've not done it before. We had to sit in places we never sat before," Davidson said.

However, Davidson appreciated the setup of the Christian Life Center so much that he wants to hold two services, one in the regular sanctuary and another in the Christian Life Center.

Phillip Van Hooser, a longtime member, told WPSD, "You can kind of feel the spirit of the people. We overcame, now we're back. What better time than the week before Christmas?"

He was excited to be back and thankful for the community's support.

"Everybody wanted to know, 'How are we doing? How's the church coming?' They are looking forward to getting to this day, and here we are!" *(WR)*

Popular evangelism website debuts Spanish version

By Robin Cornetet

Louisville—Tell Your Story is going bilingual and taking its simple but effective formula for sharing personal stories about Jesus to Spanish-speaking people.

"We've had an overwhelming response to the Tell Your Story website, and now we are building on that," said Andy McDonald, affinity evangelism strategist for Kentucky Baptist Convention.

More than 600 people have used the Tell Your Story website (www.tellyourstory.today) to record their salvation experiences.



Some of the stories are heart-rending; others humorous. All of them document personal encounters with Jesus.

"Our aim is to take the power of these grace-filled stories and reach the sizable Spanish-speaking population in the state and beyond," McDonald said.

Nearly 400 million people worldwide consider Spanish their native tongue. In Kentucky, Hispanics make up more than 3 percent of the population.

KBC Evangelism and Church Planting Team Leader Chuck McAlister described Tell Your Story as "the quintessential evangelistic tool" for individuals, as well as churches.

In the past year, he said, people from 25 states and five foreign countries have recorded their stories on the website. Nearly 20,000 people from all 50 states and 79 foreign countries have listened to those stories; 264 of them have indicated they made salvation decisions after listening.

McAlister said everyone is invited to record salvation stories by calling either 888-564-7773 (English) or 888-470-3140 (Spanish). The recordings go automatically to the corresponding website.

Within 24 hours of the call, participants are texted a unique web address they can share with others on Facebook, Twitter and other social media or print on business cards.

"The personal encounters shared on Tell Your Story are not bound by geography or finances," McDonald said. "The potential to impact a great number of lives for Christ is bound only by a willingness to share."

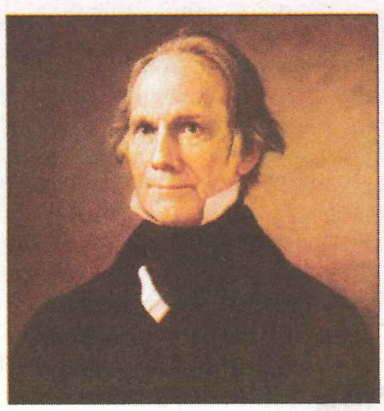
The Kentucky Baptist Convention began the Tell Your Story initiative as a way to allow the unchurched to hear how regular people encountered Jesus and about how He changed their lives for the better.

Tell Your Story works in partnership with the Billy Graham School of Evangelism at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville.

The Spanish version of Tell Your Story can be found at www.cuentenossuhistoria.com. *(KBC)*

Can you guess who this is?

If you were around in 1825-26 when your state Baptist paper was getting started, you likely would have recognized the Secretary of State, Henry Clay from Kentucky.



Western Recorder

Celebrating 190 years of Kentucky Baptist newspapers

Operation Inasmuch: Just add 'people, personality and prayer'

Louisville—Here's a recipe churches can use to impact local communities with the gospel: start with a little prep work, then add in "people, personality and prayer."

For a second year, the Kentucky Baptist Convention is teaming up with Operation Inasmuch, a national nonprofit that helps churches reach out to their communities with one-day compassion ministries. Preparation for the statewide emphasis in September begins next month with the first of four training events.

"They have developed the resources, timelines and tools. All your church has to do is add your people, personality and prayer, and you are ready to engage your community for Christ," said Kevin Clark, senior pastor at First Baptist Church of Clinton.

Clark said 111 First Baptist church members volunteered last year to spend a day serving their community. He credited the KBC and Operation Inaasmuch training for the confidence needed to do a dozen projects in less than 24 hours.

"Our church realized that they could become part of the solution to the problems that the people in our community face," Clark said.

More than 5,000 volunteers from 118 Kentucky Baptist churches took part in Operation Inasmuch last fall, said KBC Missions Mobilization Team Leader Eric Allen.

"It was common for churches to see 65 to 75 percent of their Sunday morning attendance participate," Allen said.

The kingdom impact may never be known, Allen said, but Kentucky Baptist churches involved in Operation Inasmuch shared the gospel more than 300 times. He said the reach could be greater with Kentucky Woman's Missionary Union taking the emphasis on as part of the 2016 Eliza Broadus Offering.

"It really set our church on fire," said Monica Binge, a member of Calvary Baptist Church in London.

About 70 percent of the Calvary Baptist's average attendance engaged in dozens of service projects and helped 710 people in need.

Similarly, all 20 elderly members at Pleasant Grove Baptist Church in Manchester eagerly ventured outside the church walls to take on three service projects. Their "we-can-do" attitude helped nearly 170 people in need.

Operation Inasmuch Executive Director John Daugherty said Kentucky Baptist churches were the first to embrace the nonprofit's service model on a large, statewide scale.

"Laundry was paid for. Gas was purchased. Landscaping, painting, home repair, wheelchair ramps and roofs were completed and repaired," Daugherty said, "but more importantly, lives and communities were changed."

Allen said he wants to encourage even more Kentucky Baptist churches to get involved in Operation Inasmuch this September by registering now.

"Think of the impact it will make on our communities and churches when we move our members from their seats to the streets to serve the least of these in our communities," Allen said.

Training will be Feb. 17 in Owensboro, March 19 in Hodgenville, April 2 in Williamsburg, and April 16 in Erlanger. More information can be found at www.kybaptist.org/inasmuch. *(KBC)*

International Team Leader training slated for March

Louisville—Leading a team of short-term servants to the international mission field requires more than a valid passport. That is why the Kentucky Baptist Convention is offering free training to anyone leading, or interested in leading, such a trip.

Team Leader Training for International Mission Trips will be March 11-12 and held at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville.

The topics covered range from health and safety precautions to developing leadership skills, building a team and preparing spiritually to serve overseas.

Thanks to gifts through the Cooperative Program the training is free, but registration is required at www.kybaptist.org/tlt.

As an added bonus, those who complete the training and then lead an international short-term missions effort in the future will receive a $500 scholarship toward that trip.

A complementary hotel room will be provided to the first 40 registrants. For additional details, call (502) 489-3420 or 1-866-489-3420 (toll-free in Kentucky), or email partnership@kybaptist.org. *(KBC)*

Spotlight talented kids, submit all-state choir auditions

Louisville—Warm up those vocal cords and cue the spotlight. It's time to audition for the Kentucky Baptist All-State Children's Choir.

"We have some amazing talent in our churches," said Jason Stewart, music ministry consultant for the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

Children's choir leaders have until Feb. 17 to submit auditions for children in grades 4-6.

"As ministers of music, we have a responsibility to nurture these God-given talents and bless a lost world," he said. "Plus, it's just a lot of fun for the kids."

Stewart said past auditions reveal the passion and dedication of children's music leaders in Kentucky. Among that list of devoted leaders are All-State Children's Choir Co-Directors Roxanne Nanney, minister of music at First Baptist Church of Brandenburg, and Lisa Hussung, elementary school music teacher in Bowling Green and wife of Rich Pond Baptist Church Pastor Steve Hussung.

Choir members will have two days of rehearsals beginning April 22 at Cedarmore Camp and Conference Center in Bagdad, before performing concerts at Mount Washington First Baptist Church and First Baptist Church of Bowling Green on April 24.

To submit auditions for the Kentucky Baptist All-State Children's Choir, visit www.kybaptist.org/ascc. The website also contains helpful information for parents, including a permission form and checklist.

Entrants should be active participants in a Kentucky Baptist church music program.

Once selected, students may continue to participate in the choir through sixth grade. *(KBC)*

Religious liberty 'exclusive' challenged in Indiana

By David Roach

Indianapolis—If traditional marriage proponents get their way, 2016 could be the year Indiana's controversial Religious Freedom Restoration Act "fix" is overturned and the state reaffirms, among other freedoms, the right of business owners not to participate in same-sex weddings if doing so violates their religious convictions.

A lawsuit filed by the Indiana Family Institute and the American Family Association of Indiana asks a court to declare unconstitutional an amendment to the Hoosier state's RFRA adopted last spring that extends heightened religious liberty protection to ministers as well as "church or nonprofit religious organization(s)" but not to businesses or "ideologically-conservative" groups like IFI and AFA, according to the suit.

The amendment, known as the "Exclusion and Exceptions," was adopted by Republican legislators a week following passage of the initial Indiana RFRA and signed by GOP Gov. Mike Pence amid criticism of the original legislation from businesses, left-leaning politicians and gay rights groups.

The suit also asks the court to throw out, based on the original Indiana RFRA, nondiscrimination ordinances in Indianapolis and nearby Carmel, Ind., that ban discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

Tim Overton, a church planter in Muncie, Ind., told Baptist Press he is saddened that "many in our society see the free exercise of religion as a threat."

Homosexual rights activists "want to use the power of government to enforce their agenda," Overton said in written comments submitted Jan. 11. "If they succeed, many of the traditional freedoms we enjoy as Americans will vanish. For example, one of our cherished liberties is the freedom of assembly. Many homosexual activists would like to use nondiscrimination laws to force a Christian wedding planner to attend a same-sex wedding. No Christian should be compelled by government to attend a wedding that violates his or her faith.

"Freedom of speech is also endangered," Overton said. "It has been said that a picture is worth a thousand words. If this is true, then paintings and photos communicate much. Images of a same-sex wedding require the event to be framed in a celebratory manner. Proverbs 2:14 warns believers to never 'celebrate perversion.' Services that involve speech should be given special protections in our courts. No one should be compelled by government to have their words, art or another type of creative service communicate something that violates their conscience."

The lawsuit, filed Dec. 10 with an Indiana state court, claims the original Indiana RFRA was a just law, requiring that before government can "substantially burden" a citizen's religious practice, it must demonstrate "a compelling governmental interest" and achieve that interest through "the least restrictive means."

The suit, however, takes issue with the RFRA Exclusion and Exemptions because they withdraw "religious-free-exercise protection" from individuals and groups that "provide services, facilities, use of public accommodations, goods, employment, or housing to members of the general public."

The "highly unusual manner in which the legislature first granted heightened religious-free-exercise protection to all religious 'persons' in RFRA, then withdrew that protection from some persons and activities" raises questions of "equal-rights protections" and requires "special justification by the government," according to the lawsuit.

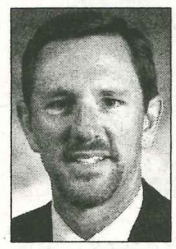
The suit continues, "All who hold religious beliefs and believe that those religious beliefs should be expressed in their actions, private and public, want and need the protections offered by constitutional protections for religious-free-exercise and the high protection offered by RFRA." The RFRA fix "intentionally strip(s)" heightened religious liberty protection "from certain persons, such as plaintiffs, who are not within the Exceptions but hold traditional religious beliefs of the same sort as persons who are within the Exceptions."

Moreover, "persons whose religious-free-exercise is based on the traditional biblical view of marriage and human sexuality ... are stripped of RFRA protection while those of different religious views are unaffected."

Ryan McCann, IFI director of operations and public policy, told BP the case could set a precedent for other states, 21 of which have enacted versions of RFRA. *(BP)*

Reconciling power of the gospel

Together
We are the KBC



Paul Chitwood

The ethnic diversity of the Southern Baptist Convention is rapidly growing. African American churches affiliating with the SBC and culturally diverse church plants account for most of this growth. According to the North American Mission Board, between 1998 and 2013, membership in mostly non-white churches increased by 116 percent. In 2014, more than 58 percent of churches started by Southern Baptists were non-white. Nearly one-fourth of SBC churches now have a membership where the majority race is not Caucasian.

Especially over the past two decades, local churches, associations, state conventions, and the North American Mission Board have been very intentional in evangelism efforts targeting the various ethnic groups in our communities. The Kentucky Baptist Convention is home to Hispanic churches, Korean churches, Cambodian churches, Native African churches, South Asian churches, Vietnamese churches, and a growing number of intentionally multi-ethnic churches.

The growing number of African American churches in the SBC is a unique testimony to the reconciling power of the gospel. As a denomination, Southern Baptists were tragically on the wrong side of history when it came to defending the dignity of Africans brought to America by the international slave trade. Our denomination was launched on the predication that slaveholders should receive endorsement and support as missionaries and many of the leading figures in SBC history were not only sympathetic to slavery, but were slaveholders themselves.

How have Southern Baptists come from such a sinfully tragic past into such a bright future? Many white Southern Baptists have walked the pathway of repentance. The SBC and KBC have both adopted multiple resolutions confessing our sin and seeking reconciliation with those whose forebears were degraded and enslaved by our forebears. Resolutions adopted during the most recent KBC annual meeting expressed: "A biblical worldview requires all Christians to unite together in order to advance the gospel. ... We acknowledge past and present racism in our hearts. ... We renounce and oppose all forms of racism which distort the message of the gospel."

But far more important than votes cast and resolutions adopted is the resolve to love and serve our neighbors of every color and ethnicity. Love is the only real difference-maker in the struggle to overcome racism.

How ironic is it that the only denomination to have been started over the insistence to grant approval

❑ *See Reconciling power ... Page 12*

Unanswered questions and communication woes

After Thought



By Todd Deaton

After the International Mission Board announced it would be closing its Richmond Communications Center, Baptist editors expressed alarm concerning the continued flow of missionary news stories, photos and videos and frustration at a perceived lack of communication with Baptist media.

IMB officials agreed to holding a conference call with Baptist journalists on Jan. 20. But, it quickly became obvious to all how miscommunication and misperceptions can plague efforts, underscoring the value of good communications.

"From the outset, it was apparent the two groups of participants in the call had different goals," the IMB's public relations director, Julie McGowan, remarked. The three IMB participants—McGowan, Terry Sharp and Terri Willis—wanted to gather questions and information for IMB President David Platt in advance of an upcoming meeting with Baptist editors.

The journalists, however, were operating under the impression the call was to be a "press conference," and they wanted to ask questions and receive answers directly from Platt.

The journalists felt Baptists need more information about the board's communications strategy, considering it would soon terminate 30 stateside staff members and reassign 10 to other responsibilities. They question the long-term wisdom of dismissing staff members who include career veterans who have deployed around the globe, including in dangerous restricted areas, to get stories of Southern Baptists' cooperative mission endeavors. McGowan attempted to reassure Baptist media that they "will be working together to determine" a new communications strategy before April 29, when the office closes.

State Baptist newspapers have grown to rely on the IMB's timely news coverage from the mission field and appreciate the accompanying world-class photography. Key questions, though, have yet to be answered: How will the IMB provide Baptist papers with articles and photographs going forward? Why has Platt not discussed communications cuts and strategy changes with Baptist media? Were IMB trustees informed of the closure? How will this affect promotion of the Lottie Moon offering for international missions?

Despite lingering questions, state editors expressed support for the IMB and its leadership in the face of challenging financial circumstances.

To address a series of significant revenue shortfalls—a combined total since 2010 of $210 million more than it has received—the IMB has enacted a plan to slowly reduce the number of missionaries through attrition and limited appointments, while using reserves—including global property sales—to keep as many missionaries on the field as possible. But Platt said the IMB is now close to depleting its reserves and must work to restore them to a responsible level.

The decision to close its communications office is part of a two-phase IMB "reset" and comes in the wake of the mission board's regrettable release of 600 to 800 missionaries who were asked either to take a Voluntary Retirement Incentive or be volunteers in a "Hand-Raising Opportunity," which offers missionaries and staff members the opportunity to transition outside the IMB if they believe God is leading them to a new place of service

"But amidst inevitable heaviness, I want you to know that I have great hope for every member of the IMB family in the days ahead," Platt said. And, with him, let's covenant to pray that God will give the departing IMB staff members and missionaries "new parts to play, including new places of service and new paths for mission, both within and beyond the IMB." *(WR)*

Resolutions to become a better leader in 2016

Fresh Ideas



Diana Davis

You may have made them for your family or for yourself. Be on time. Lose weight. Read the Bible daily. Keep your desk organized.

But if you're a leader in your church's women's ministry or another church ministry, what resolutions might you make to serve God even better in the year ahead? Here are a few fresh ideas:

• I will resolve to learn from criticism. A great leader must be able to receive input with sensitivity and grace. Prayerfully, lovingly listen. If you disagree, don't criticize the critic. Look for some element of truth. A defensive response is rarely merited. Your greatest improvement this year may evolve from a critique.

• I will resolve to say "thank you" to my leadership team at least monthly. Thank those who help you lead, both publicly and privately. Notice their faithfulness, joy and behind-the-scenes efforts. Make a calendared plan. Write it on your teaching stand.

• I will resolve to intentionally keep learning. Spend time with others who serve well in similar ministries. Utilize state convention or associational resources. Attend every class about your specific ministry. Take a seminary class. Leaders are readers; scour books, blogs and online articles on your topic. Keep improving.

• I will resolve to include my family in my ministry. Involve your kids to help with a project. Invite your spouse to a special event. Talk joyfully at the dinner table about how God is working. Ask for their prayers.

• I will resolve to personally take the challenge of the Great Commission. A key element of every ministry is sharing Jesus with those who don't know Him. There's no greater thrill than helping someone find salvation. Set the example. Make a point to personally share God's salvation plan with someone every week this year.

• I will resolve to take time to meet one-on-one with each member of my ministry. Nothing says "leadership" like caring for those you lead. Take time to ask: 1) How can I be praying for you? and 2) What do you enjoy most and least about your involvement in this ministry? Listen well. Pray for them.

• I will resolve to encourage my pastor and his wife. Your support and respect for authority will positively impact those you lead. Speak only positive words about them—and do it often.

• I will resolve to pray. I know, prayer is a given. But is it really? Do you pray daily for those you lead? Stop talking about prayer and start praying. If it helps, post a list of names on your desk or screen-saver or set a daily phone alarm as a reminder.

• I will resolve to challenge my leadership team or group members spiritually. Do they need to learn to pray? Share their faith? Love? Discover what they need spiritually to grow one step further in their relationship with God. Confidently help "equip the saints for the work of ministry."

The best leaders often are those who have a healthy dissatisfaction. They constantly focus on improving. As you impact your world for Christ, resolve to give God your best in 2016.

"Let us run with endurance the race that lies before us, keeping our eyes on Jesus..." (Hebrews 12:2a). *(BP)*

Western Recorder
Shine Like Stars ✳ *Philippians 2:15*
13420 Eastpoint Center Dr.
Louisville, KY 40223
DR. TODD DEATON
Editor
RANDALL JONES
Marketing & Business Manager

Board of Directors:
Dan Summerlin *(chair)*, Paducah ;
Chip Hutcheson *(vice chair)*, Princeton;
Bill Ellis, *(secretary)*, Lexington;
Bill Bartleman, Paducah;
Billy Compton, Mount Washington;
Linda Cooper, Bowling Green;
Bill Edmonds, Louisville;
Floyd Price, Richmond;
Paul Nunn, Prestonsburg;
Rick Robbins, Florence;
Larry Rowell, Campbellsville;
Jim Woolums, Erlanger

Western Recorder is published bi-weekly by Western Recorder Inc., an agency of the Kentucky Baptist Convention, Box 43969, Louisville, KY 40253. Periodicals postage paid at Louisville, Ky.

(USPS 679-380)

For general information or to give news tips, call (502) 489-3535; or email: news@westernrecorder.org.

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

To subscribe: Send $17 for a one-year, individual subscription or visit our website and subscribe to our electronic-only edition at $10.60 per year.

Letters to the editor:

The Baptist Forum section of the Western Recorder provides an opportunity for Kentucky Baptists to express their viewpoints. Opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the Western Recorder's editorial staff, its Board of Directors, or the Kentucky Baptist Convention. Letters should be no more than 300 words in length and will be edited for style, clarity and space. Letters must reflect a spirit of Christian charity and civility.

BAPTIST FORUM

Sanctity of Life: Babies' lives matter

Over the past several months, we have seen a movement of protest and concern entitled "Black Lives Matter." There have been a number of events where black men died while in the hands of law enforcement. Reacting to these tragic events, persons shouting this phrase have sought to raise social and spiritual awareness that black lives matter.

Another movement of protest and concern that has gripped the nation over the past few months is in response to a succession of videos that reveal an egregious pattern of persons deliberating the sale of body parts from aborted babies at Planned Parenthood clinics.

First Person



Frank Page

A collision of values

These two occurrences have shaken our nation and hopefully given cause for all of us to review our own value system. Do black lives matter? Certainly. Some think the value of black lives has been devalued by others. All caring people, and certainly all Christians, know that black lives do matter. In fact, as we know, all lives truly matter. No life, regardless of race, culture or creed, should be devalued in any way. This should be at the forefront of the ministry of our churches.

I am also convinced that babies' lives matter! To be in a society where people casually discuss the sale of body parts or organs from aborted babies is certainly beyond belief. There was a time I would not have believed such a horrible example of unethical behavior could occur in our country. However, here we are. We have reached a new low in our society.

We live in a nation of surprising contrast. We are a nation that goes to unbelievable lengths to protect the rights of individuals in every conceivable way. And we are a nation that embraces the wholesale slaughter of the weakest and most vulnerable among us. While society is obsessed with the rights of the individual, denial of fundamental rights to those not yet born is legally and culturally accepted and even encouraged.

The vast majority of the 58 million babies who have been destroyed since Roe v. Wade were killed for convenience. Some try to argue the justification of abortion where the life of the mother is at stake or whether the impregnation was done through rape or incest. But statistics are clear. The top reasons women choose abortion are convenience—they want to postpone childbearing, they want no more children, they can't afford a baby, they think having a child will disrupt their education or job, they think a child would complicate their relationship with their partner, they are too young, or their parents object to the pregnancy.

Some convince themselves that a child is not a human being until after birth. Others believe a woman's right to destroy the life within her is a higher right than the baby's right to life. Still others support abortion laws by saying they are necessary to protect women from unhealthy or unsafe circumstances.

The reality is that a child's heart begins to beat at four weeks and children not yet born feel pain and experience emotion. We must not compound one wrong—an unwanted pregnancy—with a true tragedy—the murder of the unborn child.

A review of Scripture

Scripture affirms God's creation and love of the not-yet-born. Psalm 139:13–14 states, "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made." In Isaiah 44:2, the Lord is spoken of as "He who made you, who formed you in the womb."

When Elizabeth, who was expecting John the Baptist, heard Mary's greeting, the Bible says "the baby leaped in her womb" (Luke 1:41). There was a recognition on the part of the unborn John the Baptist of the presence of Mary in whose womb was the coming Son of God.

The Ten Commandments also speak to this wholesale holocaust of the innocents: "You shall not murder" (Exodus 20:13).

What can Christians do in the face of such pervasive

❑ See Sanctity of Life... Page 9

Asking for what you need

FAMILY FORUM

Valerie Vincent

We all have needs. At times we may become irritated or disappointed with our spouse for not meeting our needs. Most spouses want to meet these needs. Too often we do a very poor job of communicating what we need to our spouse. Here are some ways to begin to make some changes in this area.

Take responsibility for yourself. It is simply not reasonable to expect something from your spouse if you have not asked or clarified what it is you need.

Be self-aware. Examine your needs. What needs do you have that only God is able to meet? What needs do you have that are appropriate for your spouse to meet realizing God has given you to one another to help meet those needs.

Be ready. Be ready with a response when asked. Rather than a shrug of the shoulders or responding with "I'm fine," think about your needs.

Be specific. Do not be vague with your spouse. Do not make this a guessing game because you both will lose. "I need your patience today because I am struggling to focus." "I need some humor right now because this week has been heavy." "I need a black raspberry chip ice cream from Graeter's." Being specific increases the likelihood of receiving what you need.

Give yourself permission. It is easier on your spouse. It can be a relief to know what you need.

Stop guilt. Some of us struggle with feeling guilty about asking for what we need as if it is wrong. Jesus teaches us to come to him and ask. That does not mean we receive what we ask for. Come with a honest heart not a demanding one.

Everyone has needs, but not everyone takes responsibility to consider what they need and ask. How we ask is important. Do not play games, manipulate, or assume roles of victim or martyr. If we choose not to ask, then it is not okay to pout, complain, or regret that you did not get what you needed.

Charitable IRA Rollover–Permanent

The Protecting Americans from Tax Hikes Act enacted in December 2015 (the "Act") includes a permanent extension of the Charitable IRA Rollover provisions first enacted in 2006. Those provisions allow certain Individual Retirement Account ("IRA") owners to use taxable IRA funds to make charitable gifts without negative tax consequences.

Generally, distributions from an IRA, whether to the IRA owner or another person or organization, must be included as part of the IRA owner's taxable income.

FINANCIAL FORUM

Laurie Valentine

The Charitable IRA Rollover provisions permit a person who is 70½ or older to make tax-free gifts in any amount up to a total of $100,000 per year from a traditional or Roth IRA directly to qualified charities ("qualified charitable distributions"). Distributions from 401(k), 403(b) or other types of retirement accounts are not eligible.

The IRA owner is not entitled to a charitable income tax deduction for the qualified charitable distributions, but such distributions are not included in the IRA owner's income.

IRA distributions that are not made directly to the charity don't qualify.

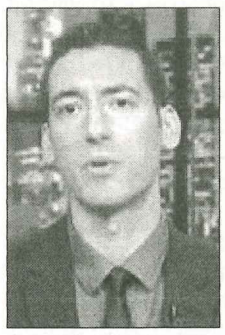
Your church and our KBC and SBC agencies and institutions are "qualified charitable organizations." Private foundations and donor advised funds are not.

While qualified charitable IRA distributions are not included in the giver's income for income tax purposes, they are treated as part of the giver's required minimum distributions. Therefore, those 70½ and older who must take required minimum distributions from an IRA and plan to make contributions to charity should strongly consider taking advantage of the ability to use their IRA as the funding source for making those charitable gifts.

Planned Parenthood lawsuit called 'frivolous'

By Leigh Jones

Asheville, N.C.—Planned Parenthood filed suit Jan. 14 in federal court against the Center for Medical Progress, accusing the group of conducting "a complex criminal enterprise conceived and executed by anti-abortion extremists."



David Daleiden

The abortion giant claims CMP founder David Daleiden and his team broke laws in several states, as well as federal laws, by secretly taping private conversations and trespassing, using fake identities to gain access to Planned Parenthood facilities.

Daleiden conducted a three-year, undercover operation, during which he posed as a fetal-tissue buyer and secretly taped Planned Parenthood executives and abortionists talking about the group's methods of and payments for procuring the bodies of aborted babies for scientific research. CMP began releasing videos from the operation in July.

Until now, Planned Parenthood has left legal action against CMP to others.

"Today, Planned Parenthood is going on the offense," Kathy Kneer, president of Planned Parenthood Affiliates of California said in a call with reporters.

In a statement, Daleiden noted the CMP videos did their job by getting lawmakers and the American public to think about Planned Parenthood's public funding sources, which make up about 50 percent of its budget.

"Now they are filing a frivolous lawsuit in retaliation for CMP's First Amendment investigative journalism that has done nothing more than tell the truth about Planned Parenthood's lawless operations," Daleiden said.

"This last-ditch move of desperation is going to expose all of the sordid dealings of the California Planned Parenthood affiliates to the light of the legal system, and the public will see them for the corrupt abortion and baby body-parts profiteers that they really are."

In its suit, Planned Parenthood claims the videos gave millions of people the false impression of its work by claiming it "violated the law and acted improperly."

But the bigger concern seems to be over a potential loss of funding at the state level. The suit names 10 states that conducted investigations into the abortion giant's practices and ultimately cleared them of wrongdoing.

But efforts to revoke federal funding managed at the state level are ongoing elsewhere and could put a dent in the organization's revenue.

Planned Parenthood is asking for as-yet unspecified compensatory, statutory, and punitive damages. Its lawyers estimate the case could take up to 18 months to litigate. *(BP)*

Owensboro seminary student plants rural church

By Myriah Snyder



Troutman (left) gathers with the missional community for a time of worship and fellowship outside his home in Calhoun.

Owensboro—Drawing from the need for new, growing churches in rural western Kentucky and a passion to reach and make disciples of the people of McLean County, a 23-year-old, bi-vocational farmer/pastor and seminary student has committed to planting a church built on a foundation of discipleship and missional communities.

Will Troutman, a member of Pleasant Valley Community Church in Owensboro, feels that "the Lord just really affirmed my calling for rural Kentucky people."

"He tied my heart up with those people. I can't imagine ministering to a people or loving a people anywhere else like I do these people in this particular part of the globe," he said

Troutman, a student at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, cited statistics from the Kentucky Baptist Convention that point out a need for more churches in the area. "Even if all of the Southern Baptist churches in McLean County were growing and stuffed to capacity, they still wouldn't have enough room to fit all 9,000-something people who live in McLean County," he said.

"We're doing kingdom work. Our main goal is not a successful church plant headed by Will Troutman," he added. "Our main goal is to influence McLean County with the gospel of Jesus Christ by making disciples.

"We need more than our little church to do that. Part of our plan is helping other churches to grow," Troutman continued.

The vision is for the church plant to be a "seed bed" for leaders and resources for other churches within the community.

As a plant of Pleasant Valley Community Church, this new endeavor seeks to use Pleasant Valley's approach to church—missional communities being the foundation.

"Through the generosity of God's people at PVCC and strategic partnerships, we have linked arms with faithful men to help plant over 20 churches!" he said.

"Many of these churches are in major metropolitan areas, but we also believe that every rural community in Kentucky needs a solid, Bible-believing, missions-minded, gospel-preaching church. One of those areas that we have identified is Calhoun," Jeremy Hatfield, executive pastor at Pleasant Valley, said.

"We have prayed and planned for quite some time about planting a church there. Enter Will Troutman," Hatfield continued.

"The pastors of PVCC discerned that Will is a remarkably gifted leader and an excellent preacher, mature far beyond his years," Hatfield said. "Will expressed his passion for Calhoun and desire to plant a church there. We were beyond excited as Will was a direct answer to specific prayers we have prayed for quite some time."

The congregation began meeting at the Lighthouse Restaurant in Calhoun in March 2015. The budding church plant now meets for Bible study two nights a month, a family meal one night a month and a missions/ministry night the last Sunday of each month.

"During family meal, we talk about Jesus, because that's who we love. That's what we're passionate about. But really, family meal is just a good place to make connections with these people," said Niki Troutman, Will's wife, who pointed out the broad spectrum of ages and personalities that comprise their group.

The first week of February, they will split into two groups, meeting independently of one another, but still coming together for a family meal each month.

As the missional communities grow, leaders will be chosen, as well as deacons and elders. The group hopes to continue this multiplication process until they reach about 30 members.

They then plan to meet together for a Sunday morning service, "and if we like the way that feels with a few trial services, we will come together for an official church service and at that point become a church."

While they are hoping that happens this year, the timetable is completely tentative, Troutman noted.

"Will's heart is to start a church that is made up of families of believers that are on mission together in Calhoun. There are lost people in Calhoun. Will's heart is to actively find them and serve them, and he feels uniquely called to Calhoun and to work as a bi-vocational pastor," Matt Woodfall, pastor of missional community life and member care, said.

"Making disciples is our creed," Troutman concluded. "We believe that the mission of the church is to make disciples. If what we do doesn't serve to help us make disciples, then we feel like we shouldn't waste our limited time and resources doing those things."

To connect with Troutman, visit his blog at ruralchristianity.com. *(WR)*

Seminary helps Scarlet's bakery provide hope

By Annie Corser

Louisville—Scarlet Hope, a local ministry that reaches women in the entertainment industry, opened a bakery in Shelby Park Dec. 16 with the help of several Louisville organizations, including Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Scarlet's Bakery, a social enterprise of the ministry, had its grand opening Jan. 16.

Several female students and student wives represent Southern Seminary through their volunteering efforts with Scarlet Hope. The ministry began in 2008 as a nonprofit organization founded by Rachelle Starr with the mission of "sharing the hope and love of Jesus Christ to women in the adult entertainment industry."

According to its website, the bakery is "devoted to teaching transferable job skills that help exploited women overcome adversity and achieve financial freedom through offering delectable, homemade baked goods via our retail location, online store, and catering service."

Southern leaders have also assisted Scarlet's Bakery. Throughout the planning process, the seminary served as a liaison between Scarlet's Bakery and Pioneer Campus Caterers, the company which provides catering services to the seminary. Seminary staff set up several different training sessions with the bakery and a couple of tours to demonstrate how the seminary's kitchen is set up and how the facilities are run.

In the spring of 2015, Kari Payton, Southern's general manager of Legacy Hotel and the director of dining services, and Jeff Dalrymple, Southern's vice president of hospitality services, sat in on a tasting presentation from Scarlet's Bakery that included a PowerPoint presentation, its packaging, and a sample of each of its products.

In April, a team from Southern volunteered their time during the 1937 Project to help transform Scarlet's Bakery. Through renovation of an old building, students removed debris, worked to expose the original brick wall interior, and removed a few interior walls.

Southern Seminary President Albert Mohler Jr. offered a keynote address at a fundraising event for Scarlet's Hope, Oct. 30, through which sponsors helped raise money toward the 2015 year-end total of $200,000.

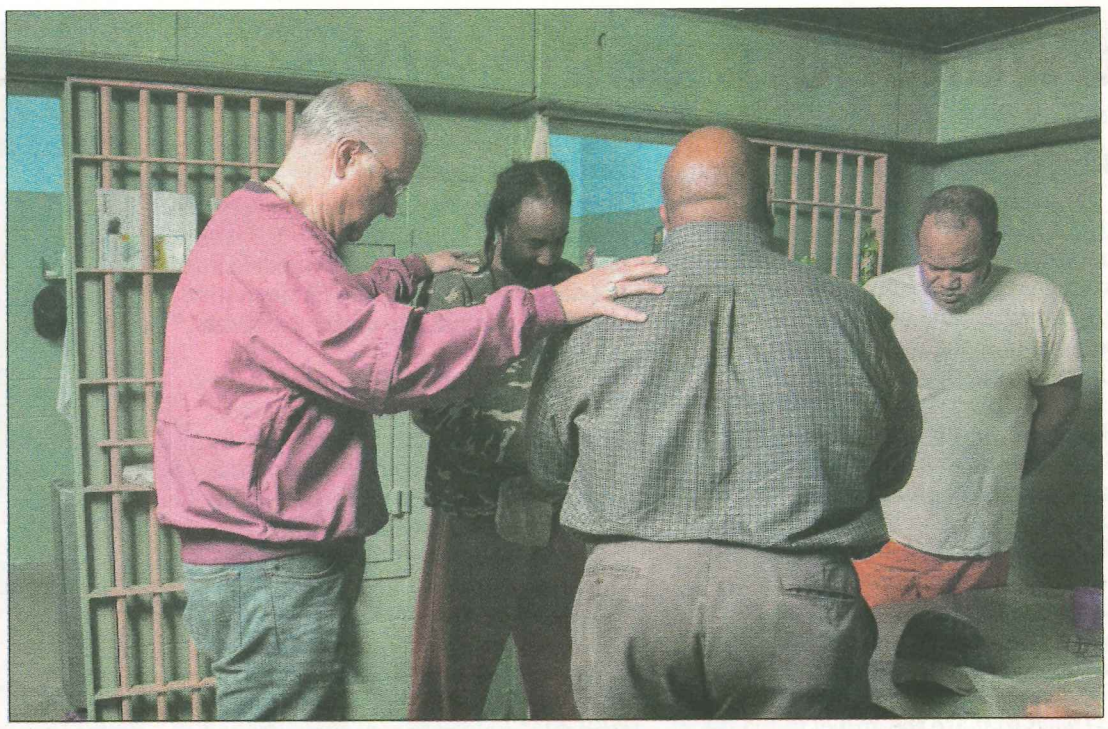
Dalrymple says Southern plans to support Scarlet's Bakery by selling its products at the seminary's Founders' Cafe. After Scarlet's Bakery is up and running, he said Southern hopes to partner with it for additional catering services and special events. *(SBTS)*



Scarlet's Bakery, 741 E Oak St in Louisville's Shelby Park neighborhood. (Photo by Emil Handke)



Judge David Williams greets one of the staff members of one of the jails he visits every Christmas. (Photo by Kristen Lowry)



Judge David Williams prays with inmates at a county jail. (Photo by Kristen Lowry)

Williams finds new calling after career in Senate

By Kristen Lowry

Burkesville—A crowd of men in orange pants and white t-shirts gathered around as David Williams handed bags filled with simple gifts through the metal bars of a southern Kentucky jail.

"All of us have done some things we are not proud of," he told them during a Christmas Day visit to the facility. "And your sin is no worse than mine."

He tightly clasped the hands of the men on the other side and leaned his forehead against the bars as they prayed together.

The bleak jail cell in Clinton County is a far cry from the stately Capitol where, for decades, Williams was a political force to be reckoned with, one of the most powerful men in Kentucky.

Williams, dubbed by opponents as the "Bully from Burkesville," rose to the top of Kentucky's political food chain. He pushed an aggressive conservative agenda as Republican Senate president, and staved off an unrelenting push by pro-gambling forces to legalize casinos in the state.

In 2011, things began to change for the GOP stalwart. Williams won the Republican gubernatorial primary that year, but fell short in his general election bid to unseat then-Gov. Steve Beshear. Battered from a mean-spirited campaign, Williams found himself under siege even from members of his own party.

His wife unexpectedly left him.

His mother, a widow, became seriously ill.

And his friend, Circuit Court Judge Eddie Lovelace, died suddenly.

Beshear offered his political nemesis an appointment to replace Lovelace. Williams accepted. And he hasn't looked back.

"I found myself in this situation, and I just prayed about it," Willliams said. "I decided that it was time for me to come home. I'd had my time."

At 59, Williams had a chance to start over.

That first Christmas back in Burkesville, he found himself alone for the first time in many years. He was in despair. And he asked himself who has it worse than he does?

The answer was in the county jails across his largely rural judicial circuit.

So on Christmas morning, he filled brown paper bags with pudding cups, candy and oatmeal cream pies and headed out to visit the inmates.

> ***"The Bible identifies certain groups of people that we're supposed to pray for. I think prisoners are forgotten."***
>
> Judge David Williams

"These are people that are in despair," he said. "The Bible identifies certain groups of people that we're supposed to pray for. I think prisoners are forgotten."

Shortly before returning to Burkesville, Williams was baptized at Buck Run Baptist Church in Frankfort. The religious rite was symbolic to him of the start of a new season in life.

Since being back home, Williams has been giving much of his time to church. He attends four worship services a week—twice at a Methodist church, and twice at Burkesville Baptist Church.

His faith is stronger than it's ever been, he said.

"I will just say that I did not always have a Christ-centered life; that's just the best way to say it," he said. "It wasn't that I was dishonest. It wasn't that I didn't believe. I just didn't have a Christ-centered life."

Even so, Williams was always a champion for conservative Christians, representing their beliefs on hot-button issues like abortion, traditional marriage and gambling. Those issues kept Williams in the hot seat, with detractors heaping on criticism and condemnation.

"Well, I was better than most of them, but being better isn't good enough," he said. "There's a lot of really good people who split hell wide open. It's not a matter of whether you're a good guy or a bad guy, a popular guy or an unpopular guy. That's not what it's about.

"All of us still have our struggles, but people who know me talk about this calmness that's around me now," he said.

Three years since leaving the Senate, Williams still spends Christmas morning visiting people in jails. Now, he's accompanied by a few pastors and friends.

He said he feels like he has a responsibility to the men and women he has put behind bars.

"I really think I need to know where I'm sending people, what they're experiencing," he said.

While visiting one of the jails, he led the procession of pastors down the whitewashed cavern-like hallways to wait for the jailer to unlock the doors.

He is always the first one in, hugging and shaking hands with the inmates, some of whom he, as judge, ordered locked up.

At another facility he visited that day, Williams met with the two sons of a long-time family friend.

They were on the phone with their mother—a woman who helped to raise Williams. One of the men handed him the phone. He talked for a few minutes, and then hung up.

He called over the brothers, along with the other prisoners. He put his hands on their backs, and began to pray with them.

He left the room, and turned away as he began to weep.

"I couldn't take a chance with them overdosing," he said.

He put both men in jail the week before Christmas on drug charges.

Burkesville is a close-knit community where everyone knows everyone.

Williams grew up with the men he's visiting. He knows the names of their children.

"I tell them, 'I'm not doing this because I'm mad at you; I'm doing this because I care what happens to you,'" he said. "And I don't want to pick the newspaper up or bump into your family at a grocery, and wonder why Judge Williams didn't keep them in jail because now they've overdosed."

He said several people have come up to him at the county fair, or on the streets, and thanked him for saving their children's lives.

Jim Murley and Williams grew up playing football and Little League baseball together. Now they attend Burkesville Baptist Church together.

Murley says Williams has mellowed since leaving the Senate.

"I just know he's very sympathetic to other people's plights now," Murley said. "Maybe more so than he used to be."

Riding through Kentucky fog on his way to a jail, the radio played a Gospel song as Williams reflected on the ups and downs of his tumultuous legislative career.

He dismissed "Bully from Burkesville" as an unwarranted nickname pinned on him by political adversaries.

"If you want to disparage, humiliate or defeat someone, you try to tag them with something that will make people not like them," Williams said.

He said his opponents were "very successful" in demonizing him.

"Not that I've been a perfect person in my life, because surely I've fallen short many times," he said.

Democratic state Sen. Robin Webb said, despite their political differences, she has always had a great respect for Williams. She's delighted that Williams has found satisfaction serving in his current role.

"I think you temper with age, certainly," said Webb, an attorney who occasionally represents defendants in Williams' courtroom. "To be out of the political arena and go into a judicial role where you are nonpartisan, it's just different for him. I think he's well suited for it. I think he's doing a great job. I think he's happy."

In the Clinton County Jail, he greeted a grandmother in an orange jumpsuit.

"How long you in for?" he asked.

"Well, sir, that's up to you," she answered with a nervous laugh. "I haven't been sentenced yet."

Williams paused for a moment.

"You'll be in my prayers," he told her. "Don't lose hope." *(BP)*

Lee retires

Continued from page 1

Sharing Christ 'by all means'

Sharing the gospel "by all means" was the challenge woven throughout national WMU's board meeting. The attendees heard from North American and international missionaries who are seeking to share the love of Christ to those around them.

Whether serving in Indianapolis like Barry and Amy Rager or in Canada like Susan Booth, or across the globe, each missionary who spoke shared how he or she was a product of Royal Ambassadors (RA) or Girls in Action (GA). Many first felt called to missions at a young age through these missions organizations.

By All Means—the WMU emphasis to launching in SBC churches across the country in September—highlights practical ways to share the gospel in today's culture. It is based on the apostle Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 9:22-23: "I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings."

National WMU President Linda Cooper said, "Jesus' message in Matthew 28:19 was clear: 'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.' We must go and share Christ in our everyday lives, by all means.

"The lost are not knocking down our church doors," Cooper said. "They're out there where we do life every day. We must be alert and look for ways to introduce others to Jesus ... by all means ... as we are going."

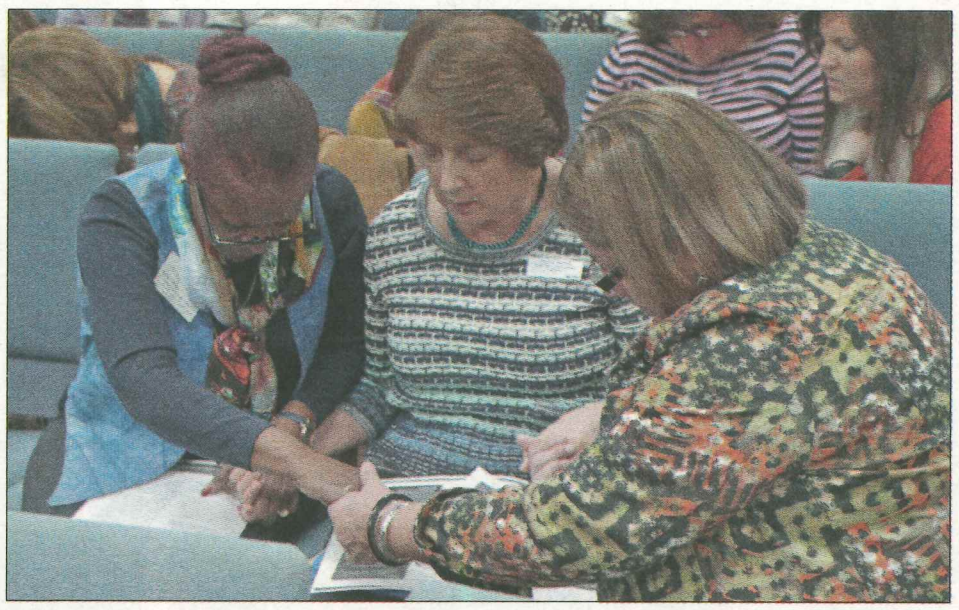
Missionary support

At the three-day meeting, much focus was placed on tangible ways WMU is supporting IMB personnel who have elected to take a voluntary retirement incentive since IMB announced efforts to address budget shortfalls.

"We have grieved these missionaries coming home as a WMU family, with IMB, and with our churches," Lee said. "But the world has come to our nation, and God, in His sovereignty, is bringing home one of our greatest resources—experienced missionaries who know various languages and cultures—and we need to help them during this transition."

National WMU maintains a database of available missionary housing made available by churches, associations and individuals and makes that information available to IMB for their personnel. Many state WMUs are assisting missionaries as they return through retreats, counseling, networking,es and monetary gifts, among other practical assistance.

"I pray this (reduction of field personnel) will wake us up out of our complacency," Lee said, "that we will truly understand the depth of lostness in our world and embrace our responsibility to share Christ. This understanding begins through missions discipleship programs like Mission Friends, GA and RA that cultivate a missions heart. Along with providing these learning opportunities, we pledge our strong commitment to promote and support the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, Annie Armstrong Easter Offering, Cooperative Program and Global Hunger Relief ... those cooperative efforts to sustain and grow support for Southern Baptist missions."



Attendees at national WMU's board meeting, Jan. 9-11, gathered in small groups during a time of prayer for international missionaries. Pictured (left to right) from California WMU: Alma Long, volunteer student consultant; Phyliss Bennett, president; and Eva De La Rosa, executive director.

David Platt, IMB president, expressed appreciation to WMU for their support and partnership during his report.

"Thank you for all that you do to advance the gospel and for the ways you are taking the initiative and coming alongside us to take care of brothers and sisters in ways we couldn't have dreamed of," he said.

Kevin Ezell, president of the North American Mission Board, also shared a report and expressed appreciation for WMU's support and promotion of the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering.

In other business, the Executive Board of national WMU:



National WMU President Linda Cooper, of Bowling Green, challenges, "Share the gospel by all means."

- Awarded nearly $184,000 in endowments, grants and scholarships in partnership with the WMU Foundation.
- Approved $155 million as the 2016 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering goal.
- Approved $70 million as the 2017 Annie Armstrong Easter Offering goal. *(BP)*

Lack of support reason many pastors leave pastorate

By Lisa Cannon Green

Nashville—No sabbatical. No help with counseling. No clear picture of what's expected. In a new study, hundreds of former senior pastors say these were the crucial elements missing from the final churches they led before quitting the pastorate.

The study by LifeWay Research points to ways churches can encourage pastors to stay in the ministry, said Ed Stetzer, executive director of the research organization.

"Almost half of those who left the pastorate said their church wasn't doing any of the kinds of things that would help," Stetzer said. "Having clear documents, offering a sabbatical rest, and having people help with weighty counseling cases are key things experts tell us ought to be in place."

LifeWay Research surveyed 734 former senior pastors who left the pastorate before retirement age. Trouble begins early, the survey indicates, with 48 percent of the former pastors saying the search team didn't accurately describe the church before their arrival.

Their churches were unlikely to have a list of counselors for referrals (27 percent), clear documentation of the church's expectations of its pastor (22 percent), a sabbatical plan for the pastor (12 percent), a lay counseling ministry (9 percent), or a support group for the pastor's family (8 percent). Forty-eight percent say their church had none of these.

Most expected conflict to arise, and it did—56 percent clashed over changes they proposed, and 54 percent say they experienced a significant personal attack. Yet nearly half (48 percent) say their training didn't prepare them to handle the people side of ministry.

"Many seminary programs don't even require courses on the people side—they're focused on theology, biblical languages and preaching, which are important, but almost half of the pastors felt unprepared for dealing with the people they were preparing in seminary to lead and serve," Stetzer said.

Though nearly two-thirds (63 percent) spent more than a decade as a senior pastor, they eventually moved on—most to another ministry role other than senior pastor (52 percent) but 29 percent to non-ministry work. Forty percent say they left because of a change in calling.

They also cite such issues as church conflict (25 percent), burnout (19 percent), personal finances (12 percent) and family issues (12 percent).

"These things are interrelated," Stetzer said. "If you're burning out, chances are when conflict arises you're not going to respond well, and that will make the conflict worse."

Those who leave vs. those who stay

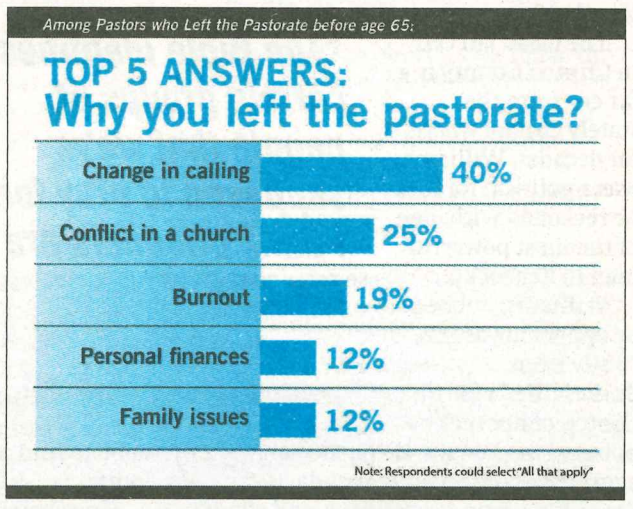
Almost across the board, the former pastors report more negative views than current pastors who answered the same questions several months earlier.

LifeWay Research surveyed 1,500 senior pastors at evangelical and historically black churches in March 2015 and found about 1 percent leave the pastorate each year for reasons other than death or retirement.

Stetzer noted the two studies are not directly comparable. The initial study involved all evangelical and black Protestant churches, but only four denominations provided lists of former pastors for the follow-up survey.

"Though the populations aren't identical, we do notice the responses from people who have left the pastorate are worse," Stetzer said. "Either current pastors are painting a rosy picture that doesn't fully describe reality, or those leaving the pastorate are in a less healthy position. Probably there's truth to both of those."

Current and former pastors agree the job is demanding: 84 percent of current pastors and 83 percent of former pastors say they feel on call 24 hours a day, while 48 percent of each group say the demands of ministry often feel like more than they can handle.



On other measures, however, the differences can be stark:

- 21 percent of current pastors vs. 49 percent of former pastors believe their church has unrealistic expectations.
- 35 percent of current pastors vs. 62 percent of former pastors report feeling isolated.
- 89 percent of current pastors vs. 68 percent of former pastors feel free to say no to unrealistic expectations.
- 92 percent of current pastors vs. 61 percent of former pastors believe their congregation provides genuine encouragement to their family.
- 94 percent of current pastors vs. 74 percent of former pastors say they consistently protect family time.

Former pastors are also more likely to worry about their family's financial security and to frequently get irritated with people at church.

"It's going to take a combination of the seminaries, academia, denominational folks and even outside ministries putting their heads together and seeking God on how best to support pastors," Stetzer said. *(BP)*

MLK's advice to pastors called key to revival

By David Roach

Montgomery, Ala.—Sixty years ago, the Montgomery Bus Boycott famously catapulted Martin Luther King Jr. to national leadership of the civil rights movement and led to the end of segregated public transportation in Alabama. Less commonly known is that the boycott occasioned advice to pastors by King that some Southern Baptists say they still take to heart.

King, in this 1958 book "Stride Toward Freedom," recounted the struggle in Montgomery, then asked, "Where do we go from here?" Pastors, he concluded, were an important part of the answer.

"The important thing is for every minister to dedicate himself to the Christian ideal of brotherhood, and be sure he is doing something positive to implement it," wrote King, then pastor of Montgomery's Dexter Avenue Baptist Church. "He must never allow the theory that it is better to remain quiet and help the cause to become a rationalization for doing nothing. Many ministers can do much more than they are doing and still hold their congregations."

Jay Wolf, pastor of First Baptist Church in Montgomery, told Baptist Press "biblically-oriented pastors" took such advice to heart, noting that his predecessor, longtime First Baptist Montgomery pastor J.R. White, spoke "powerfully against the sin of racism." White "pushed against the dark currents of his day with Christ-centered truth that eventually prevailed," Wolf said.

Wolf said King's call for pastors to be "moral and spiritual guardians within a community" remains "a compelling standard for a pastor's ministry."

The Montgomery Bus Boycott began Dec. 1, 1955, when African American seamstress Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat to a white man on a crowded bus and subsequently was arrested for failing to obey the driver's seat assignments. The arrest sparked a year-long boycott of city buses by blacks that ended Dec. 20, 1956, when a U.S. Supreme Court order took effect declaring segregated buses unconstitutional.

Reflecting on next steps following the boycott, King said some pastors are called to preach so boldly against racism that they may face persecution. He lamented that during the boycott, "the white ministers, from whom I had naively expected so much, gave so little" despite the fact that "racial segregation is a blatant denial of the unity which we have in Christ."

Terry Turner, pastor of the predominately African American Mesquite Friendship Baptist Church in Mesquite, Texas, told BP, "Today we are 52 years after the abolition of the Jim Crow laws and our churches continue to experience segregation weekly," Turner, a former president of the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention, said in written comments. White pastors must preach "to convert any prejudiced hearts that possibly exist within their congregations while black pastors have to preach against racism to comfort their congregations from the evils of racism they experience weekly."

Although the United States no longer makes blacks second-class citizens by law, Turner said, "America has ... perpetuated the shame of racism by not teaching every person to love every people group as their own and has kept the races divided. The process of integrating the church must be intentional."



The bus on which Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat in 1955. (Courtesy of the collections of the Henry Ford Museum)

'The present segregated conditions'

During the 1955-56 boycott, few Southern Baptists were proactive in seeking to integrate their churches.

Leon Macon, then editor of The Alabama Baptist newsjournal, wrote on May 3, 1956, "As for our churches, the present segregated conditions were brought about by the expressed desire and wish of our colored brethren." Any move to integrate the South's social institutions should occur gradually and not "through sudden decisions and acts," which "would cause violent repercussions."

A 1956 report from Alabama's Christian Life Commission noting the ongoing bus boycott criticized both the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and pro-segregation White Citizens Councils as "extreme groups."

The report, adopted by the state convention, said outlawing segregation was not the answer to racial strife and advised "the more independent negro ministers to meet with their neighboring white minister to discuss ways and means of eliminating the untoward tension." Heated rhetoric on both sides without a moderate middle ground, the report said, was pushing white Christians to align themselves with extreme viewpoints.

W.A. Criswell, then pastor of First Baptist Church in Dallas, is an apparent case in point.

During the Montgomery Bus Boycott's third month, Criswell told the South Carolina Baptist Convention's evangelism conference he was astonished at ministers "whose forebears and predecessors were martyrs and were burned at the stake" but who themselves refused to speak about "this thing of integration," a message he later called "a colossal blunder and mistake on my part."

In his address, Criswell said mandatory desegregation was "a denial of all we believe in." Those in favor of government-mandated integration were "a bunch of infidels dying from the neck up."

> ***"The important thing is for every minister to dedicate himself to the Christian ideal of brotherhood, and be sure he is doing something positive to implement it."***
>
> Martin Luther King, Jr.

In a 1973 interview, Criswell said the heated segregationist rhetoric he used at the time "did not represent my heart." Criswell said he became caught up in the moment because he "just seethed on the inside when those people up there (the North) tell us how to solve racial problems."

The heated rhetoric eventually gave way to a change of tone. In 1968, Criswell preached a sermon embracing racial integration at First Baptist Dallas, a message he said was symptomatic of an "an about face" in his manner of speaking, though his "soul and attitude" remained constant.

Criswell, who was elected Southern Baptist Convention president in 1968, told the SBC Executive Committee that year, "I've never had a battle in my heart ... as I have these last several years. Nobody on earth knew that was going on in my soul. And I came to the firm conclusion that I had to change."

'Christ-centered truth' prevails

Apparently other Southern Baptists were experiencing transformations.

Rick Lance, current executive director of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions, was only five when the Montgomery Bus Boycott took place. In a 2013 interview with SBC LIFE, he recalled an African American church bombing in his hometown of Birmingham seven years later. Four African American students about his then age of 12 were murdered while at church. "What happened in 1963 made an indelible impression on me," he said.

"Early on in my ministry, I tried to lead my churches to open their doors to all people," he said. "Some resistance remained to such efforts, but in the main, my church families began to see people as individuals of worth created in the image of God. They became more receptive to people from all backgrounds and all walks of life. This was no small victory for Southern Baptist churches in the Deep South."

Wolf told BP that First Baptist Montgomery eventually integrated despite some disagreements among the congregation over admitting African Americans, and Wolf has participated in prayer gatherings involving black and white ministers in Montgomery.

A church that does not speak against racism loses its moral and spiritual authority within its community, Wolf said, and likely will not be effective in evangelism.

"A great detractor from evangelism is racism," Wolf said in written comments. "If people within the body of Christ cannot connect to each other in unity, then we prevent God's electrifying Spirit from moving through us to generate our desperately needed spiritual awakening.

"In the same way electricity cannot travel over a broken wire, God's Spirit cannot move through the sin of division, racism or classism," Wolf said. "Therefore, we must clearly call people we influence to adopt the attitude of inclusion and acceptance prescribed by Christ: 'Accept one another, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God' (Romans 15:7)."

Turner urged pastors to continue following the civil rights leader's admonitions to speak out against racism.

"We must work to make our churches look like heaven," Turner said. "Christian men, women and children must reach across the aisle and befriend and love people of other races. We are all praying for revival. However, Christians must work to abolish the problem of racism in America before God will send revival." *(BP)*

Homosexual activists target SBC universities

By Will Hall

Alexandria, La.—The homosexual activist group Human Rights Campaign has targeted 23 institutions of higher learning with Southern Baptist ties, including the University of Cumberlands in Williamsburg, Ky., in a report that also names 35 other colleges and universities with distinct Christian identities.

Released just before at the end of 2015, the report, "Hidden Discrimination: Title IX Religious Exemptions Putting LGBT Students at Risk," asks Obama administration education officials to increase reporting requirements for these 58 schools because each was granted "exemptions of interest" relating to either "gender identity," "sexual orientation" or both.

Unlike President Obama's 2014 executive order on LGBT rights, Title IX does not apply to an educational institution "controlled by a religious organization" that has "contrary religious tenets." However, individual schools must apply for specific exemptions and confirm they are a divinity school or department, or, an educational institution that requires faculty, students and employees to be members of a specific religion, or, an institution that essentially is an extension of a religious organization. Christian schools have been forced to request such exemptions because Title IX provisions—which were drafted in 1972 to shield women from sexual harassment and give them equal access to education and athletic programs—have been expanded under President Obama beyond providing protections on the basis of biological sex to include homosexual behavior and the self-concept of gender identity.

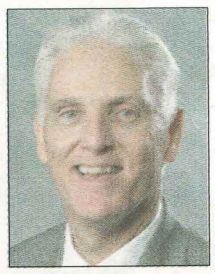
Now, any school receiving federal money must comply with these expanded rights, or in the case of faith-based organizations, request specific waivers for admissions, housing, facilities, athletics, codes of conduct, employment, etc.

The Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee lists 49 colleges and universities affiliated with the SBC, not including seminaries, but only 23 have requested Title IX exemptions, according to the HRC report. (BP)

Ala. pastor with ties to Kentucky elected as S.C. executive director

By Butch Blume

Greenville, S.C.—Gary Hollingsworth, long-serving pastor and denominational leader with a record of church planting and international missions support, has been elected executive director-treasurer of the South Carolina Baptist Convention.


Gary Arrington

He received unanimous support of more than 330 SCBC messengers who convened Jan. 14 for a special called meeting of the state convention.

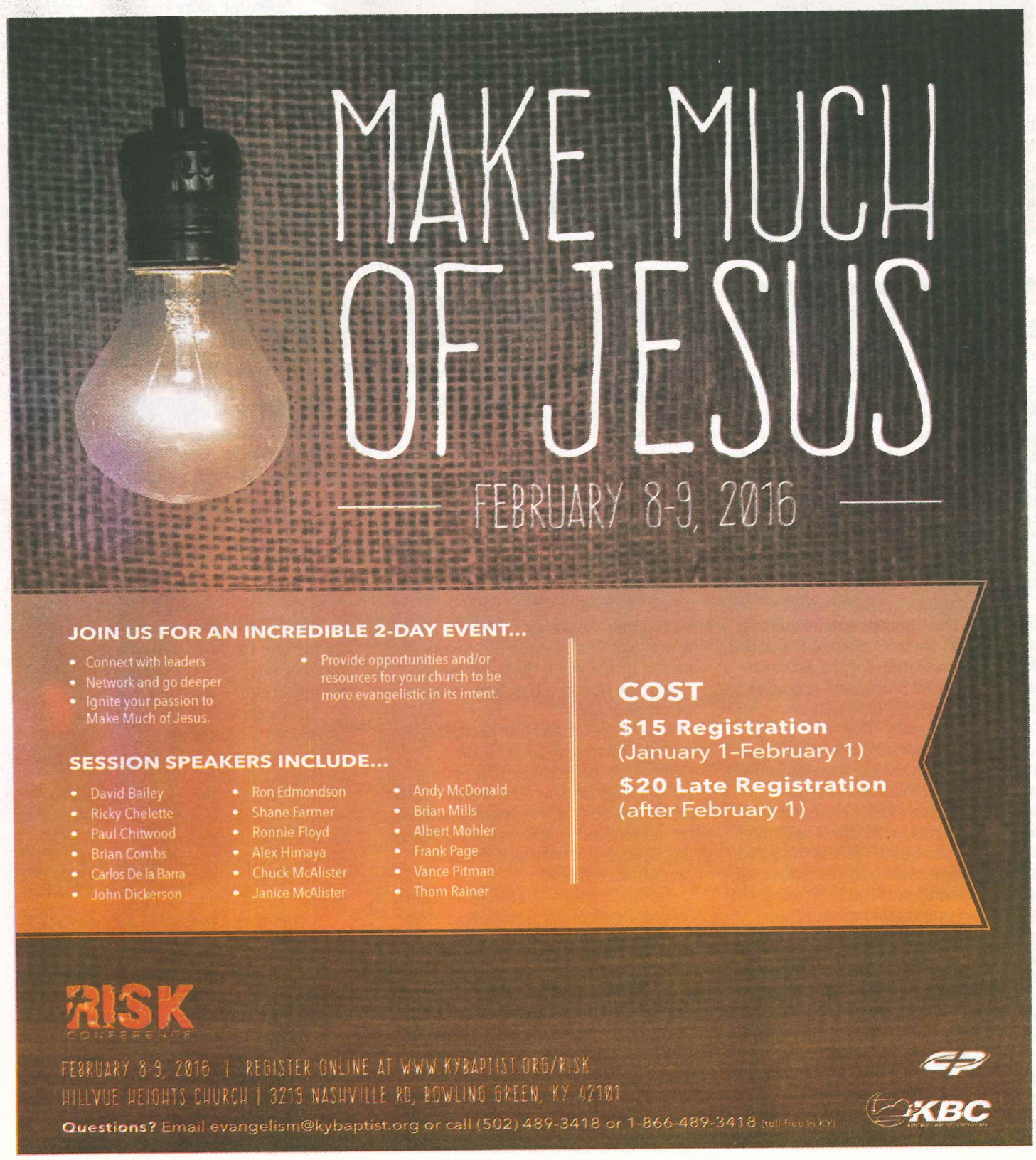
The 58-year-old Alabama native has served as senior pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church in Little Rock, Ark., since 2007. He previously served as senior director of cultural evangelism at the North American Mission Board from 2005-2007.

"I think this convention has selected a man of God to lead them into the next chapter of evangelism, ministry and missions for the coming years," said Richard Harris, a retired vice president with NAMB who led the state convention for 14 months after director-treasurer Jim Austin retired in October 2014.

Marshall Blalock, pastor of First Baptist Church of Charleston, chaired the SCBC Executive Board search committee that settled on Hollingsworth after a yearlong process. Blalock noted Hollingsworth "emerged as the clear and first choice of the committee."

Hollingsworth was elected president of the Arkansas Baptist Convention in 2015 and has led Immanuel Baptist Church in sustained growth since 2007, increasing average attendance from 1,150 to 1,400 and baptizing 350 new believers. The church is consistently in the top 100 Southern Baptist churches in giving to Lottie Moon and Annie Armstrong offerings.

Hollingsworth graduated from the University of Alabama in 1979 with a B.S. degree in recreation administration. He earned a master of divinity degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1984 and a doctor of ministry degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1996. His previous pastorates include Shively Baptist Church in Louisville, Ky., 1989-1991; First Baptist Church in Alexandria, Va., 1991-1995; First Baptist Church in Trussville, Ala., 1995-2005; and Immanuel Baptist Church in Little Rock since 2007. *(BP)*



MK scholarships receive boost from WMU

By Candice Lee

Birmingham, Ala.—The Woman's Missionary Union Foundation will grant more college scholarships to missionary kids (MKs) this year, thanks to two estate gifts totaling $65,000.

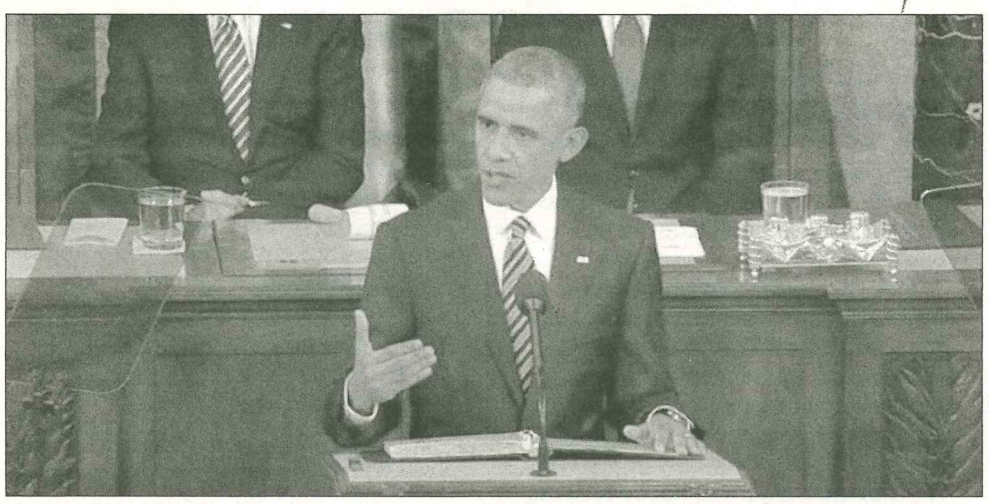
The WMU Foundation currently offers scholarships for International Mission Board and North American Mission Board MKs.

"We know college tuition can be a real challenge for missionary families," said David George, WMU Foundation president. "WMU ... will do everything in our power to provide as much scholarship support to as many qualified applicants as possible."

During the past 20 years, the WMU Foundation has granted scholarships to more than 400 MKs. The number of applicants has increased in recent years, and many MKs who apply are turned down because funding is not available.

"If people knew our MKs were in need, they would step up to the plate and give. I just don't think they're aware," said Kerri Johnson, NAMB missionary and WMU Foundation board member.

In an October meeting, WMU Foundation board members committed to raise additional funding for scholarships. The board also decided to accept scholarship applications from MKs whose parents accepted IMB's voluntary retirement incentive (VRI). While the estate gifts provide a needed boost, additional funding is needed. *(BP)*



President's State of the Union addresses gay marriage, Islam

By David Roach

Washington—In his final State of the Union address, President Obama praised nationwide legalization of same-sex marriage, warned against overemphasizing the threat posed by the terrorist group ISIS and touted American exceptionalism.

The address made no reference to abortion-related issues, including the attempt by conservatives to withdraw government funding from Planned Parenthood, America's largest abortion provider. Obama proposed few legislative agenda items to the Republican-controlled House and Senate, opting instead to review some of his administration's accomplishments. At times, he criticized 2016 Republican presidential candidates without naming them specifically.

On three occasions during the speech, Obama referenced homosexuality. The President said employing America's "unique strengths as a nation" was "how we secured the freedom in every state to marry the person we love"—a reference to last year's Supreme Court decision legalizing same-sex marriage. Following a second, passing reference to homosexuality, Obama praised a hypothetical "son who finds the courage to come out as who he is and the father whose love for that son overrides everything he's been taught" as examples of what Martin Luther King Jr. called "unarmed truth and unconditional love."

Regarding ISIS, Obama said the terrorist group "can do a lot of damage" but does not "threaten our national existence." The way to defeat ISIS is through "a patient and disciplined strategy that uses every element of our national power," not through "calls to carpet bomb civilians"—an apparent reference to GOP presidential candidate Ted Cruz's statement that America should "carpet bomb" ISIS. Cruz clarified in a Dec. 9 interview with NPR that he believes "no responsible military action targets civilians" though war may involve "inadvertent collateral casualties."

Obama told Congress, "As we focus on destroying ISIL (ISIS), over-the-top claims that this is World War III just play into their hands. Masses of fighters on the back of pickup trucks, twisted souls plotting in apartments or garages—they pose an enormous danger to civilians. They have to be stopped. But they do not threaten our national existence. That is the story ISIL wants to tell. That's the kind of propaganda they use to recruit."

The President added, "We sure don't need to push away vital allies in this fight by echoing the lie that ISIL is somehow representative of one of the world's largest religions."

Later, Obama referenced Islam by name. "When politicians insult Muslims," he said, "whether abroad or fellow citizens, when a mosque is vandalized, or a kid is called names, that doesn't make us safer. ... It diminishes us in the eyes of the world." The world respects America "for our diversity and our openness and the way we respect every faith."

Obama took issue with "all the rhetoric you hear about our enemies getting stronger and America getting weaker," another presumed reference to GOP presidential candidates. "America," the President said, "is the most powerful nation on earth, period." He continued, "No nation attacks us directly or our allies, because they know that's the path to ruin. Surveys show our standing around the world is higher than when I was elected to this office. And when it comes to every important international issue, people of the world do not look to Beijing or Moscow to lead. They call us."

Additionally, the U.S. "has the strongest, most durable economy in the world," he said.

Among Obama's other emphases:

• Climate change is both an environmental concern and an economic opportunity, he said, noting the growth of wind and solar energy technologies.

"Even if the planet wasn't at stake," Obama said, "... why would we want to pass up the chance for American businesses to produce and sell the energy of the future?"

• The Iran nuclear deal represents "principled diplomacy," he said. Iran "has rolled back its nuclear program, shipped out its uranium, and the world has avoided another war."

Obama did not mention 10 U.S. Navy sailors who were captured by the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Jan. 12 after their boats drifted into Iranian waters in the Persian Gulf, CNN reported. The sailors were released Jan. 13.

• Obama expressed hope he and Congress can work together in 2016 on criminal justice reform, drug abuse treatment programs and anti-poverty initiatives.

The President concluded, "I believe in change because I believe in you, the American people. And that's why I stand here confident as I have ever been that the state of our union is strong." *(BP)*

Southern Baptist entities to Supreme Court: Mandate violates religious liberty

By Tom Strode

Washington—The Obama administration's abortion/contraception mandate forces Christians to violate either their religious beliefs or the government's rules, Southern Baptist entities have told the U.S. Supreme Court.

In a friend-of-the-court brief filed Jan. 11, the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, the International Mission Board and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary—as well as Southern's president, Albert Mohler Jr.—urged the high court to rule the controversial, federal regulation infringes religious freedom.

The abortion/contraception mandate—issued in support of the 2010 health-care reform law—requires employers to provide for their workers not only contraceptives but drugs and devices that can potentially cause abortions.

Debilitating fines face those who refuse to abide by the requirement.

The Supreme Court has consolidated seven cases involving a variety of religious, nonprofit organizations that have challenged the requirement but lost at the appeals court level.

Among the challengers are several Southern Baptist institutions, including GuideStone Financial Resources.

The justices have yet to schedule oral arguments in the combined case, which is consolidated under the title Zubik v. Burwell, but they likely will hear them in March or possibly April.

The court is expected to issue its opinion before its term ends, which normally is in June.

The case, ERLC President Russell Moore said, will be "pivotal in maintaining soul freedom for all people."

"The Obama administration has repeatedly, and without ceasing, overstepped the bounds of the state in binding consciences, forcing people to do what they believe to be sin," Moore said in a written release.

In written comments for Baptist Press, Mohler said "both religious liberty and the sanctity of human life are on the line" in the case.

Southern Seminary and he are glad to join in the brief "as a way of stating our own convictions and standing with Christian brothers and sisters" before the Supreme Court, Mohler said.

"Our great hope is that the Supreme Court will honor religious liberty and uphold the right of Christians and Christian institutions to be consistently pro-life."

The cases before the high court are among 56 involving religious, nonprofit organizations that object to the rule issued in 2011 by the Department of Health and Human Services.

HHS provided an exemption to the rule for churches and their auxiliaries but did not extend it to non-church-related, nonprofit organizations that object.

It issued an accommodation for religious nonprofits, but many of those ministries or institutions have found it unacceptable.

They contend it still makes them complicit in covering contraceptives and potentially abortion-causing drugs.

In their brief, the SBC entities and Mohler say Christian and Southern Baptist doctrine teach it is a sin to support directly or indirectly the killing of an unborn child through abortion.

"(A) statute or regulation requiring a Southern Baptist individual or ministry to be complicit in conduct the Christian faith teaches is morally wrong forces that person or ministry into an impossible choice—to either violate conscience or violate the law—and imposes a substantial burden on the exercise of religion," the brief says.

The brief tells the Supreme Court, "In light of the broad scope of the Christian faith and the Southern Baptist theological opposition to abortion, (the organizations in the cases) cannot, as a matter of doctrine and conscience, distribute abortion-inducing drugs and devices directly or indirectly by authorizing, obligating, or incentivizing their own insurers or third-party administrators to use Petitioners' health plans to provide such drugs and devices to others. Scripture and Southern Baptist belief prohibit not only direct and personal wrongdoing, but also complicity in doing what the Christian believes to be sin."

Southern Baptists "have a firm and well-known theological opposition to abortion, and the Southern Baptist Convention has repeatedly expressed its opposition to abortion in the strongest terms," according to the brief.

The abortion/contraception mandate violates the U.S. Constitution's First Amendment and the 1993 Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA), according to the brief.

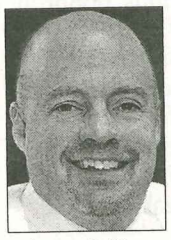
RFRA requires the government to have a compelling interest and to use the least restrictive means to burden a person's religious exercise.

The Supreme Court has agreed to rule on whether the mandate violates RFRA. *(BP)*

> ***"Our great hope is that the Supreme Court will honor religious liberty and uphold the right of Christians and Christian institutions to be consistently pro-life."***
>
> Al Mohler, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary president

29 years of service

This is Oneida



Larry Gritton

We currently employ 125 staff members. We also have 12 full-time volunteers. Much like our student body, this large staff of 137 comes from all over Kentucky and the United States.

A staff this size may appear too large for a school with 325 students, but we have many working parts that most schools do not have. Houseparents are needed around the clock in the dorm. About 20 cooks are needed in our cafeteria. We have a working farm, and many other things that most schools simply do not have.

Our staff gives of themselves sacrificially and pours into the lives of our young people. We have staff members in their first year of service, and we have staff members who have been here more than 30 years. Serving in our ministry is definitely a calling.

Several weeks ago, I received a phone call from one of our longtime staff members. Blake Godbold, who has worked tirelessly on our farm for 29 years, told me that he and his wife, Joy, who has been a faithful teacher for 29 years, would be retiring at the end of this school year. While I was personally saddened by this news, I also was happy for the Godbolds.

Blake and Joy came to us in 1986. They raised their four boys in this off-the-path place called Oneida. To my knowledge, these four sons are all living productive lives of service. Many of our staff come to serve here in the years they are raising their children.

When I was extended the offer to serve as Oneida's 12th president, I naturally wrestled with the effect the change might have on my own three children. My mother recognized that struggle in me at that critical time of decision and said to me, "Son, the very best place for your children to be is wherever God's will is for your life."

I will admit it is difficult to do all that is required to lead this ministry and at the same time be father to three young children, but the Lord gives Angie and me what we need daily to do so. The Godbolds and their four sons have sacrificed during their time here, but I am sure the Lord has blessed them and will continue to bless them for it.

The Godbolds have labored in love for nearly three decades and I'm sure are ready for a different challenge. They will be moving to South Carolina to help care for Blake's mother. I know them well enough to know that while they may be retiring from Oneida, they will not be retiring from serving the Lord. I don't know about you, but I can't find any reference in my Bible about retiring from God's calling on our lives.

I and Oneida will miss the Godbolds. Please pray for Blake and Joy Godbold as they wrap up their Oneida service and also pray for all of our faculty and staff.

Larry Gritton Jr. is president of Oneida Baptist Institute. Website: oneidaschool.org. Phone: (606) 847-4111. Follow OBI on Facebook at www.facebook.com/OBI.KY and Twitter, @Oneida_Baptist and @lgritton.

Student serves as NAMB summer missionary

Clear Creek Chronicle



Donnie Fox

Student Joseph Gragg was a recent member of a NAMB summer missionary team who served in Georgia over this past summer. We are thankful for areas of service like this that are available for our students.

"Most of our time throughout the summer was spent helping churches with their Vacation Bible Schools," said Gragg. "I had opportunities in all the churches where we worked to teach lessons, help with the recreation, and lead the music. I also got to spend some time in nursing homes talking to the residents and leading them in some singing. We had a great time fellowshipping with them and spreading the love of Christ.

"Our team also had an opportunity to serve as chaperones for a large youth conference," said Gragg. "There were about 1,800 people at the conference. We were given a private screening of the movie 'War Room,' which had not been released in theaters yet. There were two girls in our group who recommitted their lives to the Lord.

"I also had an opportunity to serve at a CentriKid during the summer," said Gragg. "I served as a team leader for the week. We helped with recreation in the morning and Bible study in the afternoon. I also got to preach at a local church the Sunday after the camp.

"Before we knew it, the summer was coming to an end," said Gragg. "We ended the summer with a D-Now Youth Event. I was a small group leader that had a group of four boys for whom I led a devotion. The weekend's theme was PAUSE. We need to hit pause on things of this world and take more time for God. Time with Him is not wasted time.

"The speaker for the weekend was Nick Hampton, and the worship band was Crossing 47 from Moultrie, Ga.," said Gragg. "We had a really awesome weekend. The kids loved the slip-in-slide kickball that we played Saturday when it was very hot outside. There were a few youth who came to know Christ as their Savior and some recommitted their life to the Lord.

"This was a great experience for me," said Gragg. "Lord willing, I will be going back next year."

Donnie Fox is president of Clear Creek Baptist Bible College, in Pineville, Ky.; (866) 340-3196; dfox@ccbbc.edu.

The heart of the story

EBO at Work



Joy Bolton

The Eliza Broadus Offering includes allocations for associations and special ministries. This year $130,000 has been designated to provide grants of $500 each to our 70 Baptist associations ($35,000) and a variety of grants (totaling $95,000) to ministries across Kentucky which apply to Kentucky WMU for funding.

Please pray for the Kentucky WMU Finance Committee, which will meet to discuss the applications and prayerfully help as many ministries as possible. One hundred applications have been received, totaling $235,053 in requests. Pray for wisdom in this process.

Each ministry that receives EBO funding is required to complete an accountability form explaining how the funds were used. No ministry can apply for a subsequent grant without completing a form for the previous grant. We are grateful for your generous giving and consider this to be an important part of being accountable to the Lord and to you.

I always enjoy reading the applications as well as the accountability forms. I am challenged by many of the applications and the vision for ministry that each one represents. I wish we had more funding available. The only way this will happen is to see a significant increase in our state missions giving.

The offering goal has stood at $1,250,000 for several years. Will you increase EBO giving this year? Let me share a few of this year's stories.

A woman was saved on a camping trip through the work of Land Between the Lakes Area Ministry. When she went camping again, she made a point to share with the chaplain how she had been baptized, was now attending church, and how happy she was.

A woman who had been raped went to the Life House Pregnancy Center for information on abortion. After a lot of prayer and several visits, she decided to carry the child and place it for adoption.

An inmate wrote to HR Ministries to thank them for the Rubies for Life material and for her mentor, Becky. She said, "I got saved while attending her parenting class and had the opportunity for her to mentor me.... If I could be like any one woman after my incarceration, it would definitely be her."

Please pray for these ministries as they share The Heart of the Story.

Joy Bolton is executive director-treasurer of Kentucky Woman's Missionary Union in Louisville.

Reconciling power

Continued from page 4

to the institution of slavery would be planting and welcoming into fellowship such a large number of African American and ethnically diverse congregations? More than unlikely, it would seem impossible–unless you know the ways of the God of the Bible.

Consider the irony of Israel, one of the weakest and most despised people groups on the planet, becoming God's elect. Consider the irony of Rahab, the prostitute, being included in the book of Hebrews' list of those who modeled faith.

Consider the irony of David, the youngest of Jesse's sons, being chosen by God to be the king of Israel. Consider Paul, the foremost persecutor of the church, becoming an apostle, a prolific church planter, and giving his life for the gospel.

Indeed, as Paul contends in 1 Corinthians 1, God turns the wisdom of the world on its head and chooses to use what is despised so that our boasting may only be in Him. As despicable as it is that Christ followers would make biblical arguments in order to dehumanize and enslave fellow image bearers, God has mysteriously chosen these very people,

Southern Baptists, to model the reconciling power of the gospel as black and white Southern Baptist churches work side by side to take the gospel to the nations near and far.

For that Southern Baptists can take no credit. To God alone be praise!

Adoption

Continued from page 1

protect life through the Open Door pregnancy center in Springfield, Tenn., and educational and motivational programs.

The Washburns encourage couples undertaking adoption to rely on God to smooth the transition.

"It's one thing to listen to a sermon or a story about the sanctity of human life, and it's quite another to open up your home and step up and be willing to apply that," Washburn said.

Southern Baptists are active in many ministries aimed at protecting human life. Services include foster care, adoption, residential housing for expectant mothers and single-parent families, Christian counseling, mobile pregnancy centers, emergency care and others.

Working to protect children are 21 Baptist child care agencies with 255 sites in 19 states, according to the 2014 Historian's Report of the Baptist Coalition for Children and Families.

The centers housed 8,959 fatherless children in 2014 and provided help to 589,323 others.

Adoptions can be costly, with each of the Washburns' adoptions costing $35,000 or more in payments spread over a year.

They said God was faithful in meeting their needs.

"When God calls you to adopt, it always looks like a huge mountain that is just insurmountable," Jennifer Washburn said.

"Finances (do) seem to be a hindrance for a lot of people in adoption, and that's where our hesitation was as well. ... We saw God provide for us in ways we never dreamed."(BP)

Sanctity of Life

Continued from page 5

evil? What can we do when some who claim the name of Christ support the issue of choice so firmly that they would justify the killing of millions of precious babies?

Evangelist Ravi Zacharias points out the only place where the entire suffering of this world can be handled is in the heart of God. To each of us, God grants the ability and calling to act where we can and how we can. I pray that God would lead each of us to do what we can do regarding this crucial issue.

A call for response

We must speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). We need to spread the Word to all who are around us. We must let them know that this evil must be stopped. While I believe that those aborted babies are in heaven, for which we are grateful, they have been denied the ability to grow in the Lord and to give their lives in honest confession to the Lord. We must stop this horrible tragedy.

We must become involved in the political process. As people blessed to live in a democracy, we have a voice, and we need to share that voice. When we do, people will lambaste us for being extremists, fanatics and reactionaries. So be it! Others will claim that we are against the rights of women. Say you what you want, we are standing up for the rights of millions of unborn women and unborn men!

We must continue to provide loving care for those who are in situations where they feel the necessity of an abortion. We must support wonderful organizations that minister through the body of Christ to young women who are caught in these very difficult circumstances. We will continue to love them, care for them and their babies, and help them in every way possible.

My wife Dayle and I have formed a friendship with Jeannie Scott Smith and her husband Carter. Her book "Shattered into Beautiful" recounts an emotionally-wrenching journey from shame and lonely aches of grief, guilt and loss to spiritual forgiveness and restoration through Jesus Christ.

The womb was not designed to be a tomb! Help turn the tide from wholesale slaughter of innocent, precious children. Our churches must continue to reach out in love, care and ministry to anyone who has sinned, including the sin of abortion. The church must be the place where women and men find forgiveness, grace, love and new life in Christ. And it must be the place where we urge others to join us in shouting that babies' lives truly matter to God! *(BP)*

GuideStone tax guide being released in 2 phases

Dallas—GuideStone Financial Resources' tax guide for churches and ministers is being released in two phases for 2016.

The Federal Reporting Requirements for Churches section is available now at www.GuideStone.org/Tax Guide. This section details filing requirements for Forms W-2 and 1099 as well as a brief section on filing requirements many churches will face as part of the Affordable Care Act.

The remainder of the annual 2016 Tax Return Preparation and Federal Reporting Guide, Ministers' Tax Guide for 2015 Returns, with its step-by-step filing instructions of personal ministers' taxes, will be available by the end of January.

GuideStone participants can receive the free guide by visiting GuideStone.org/Tax Guide or can request a free printed copy by calling 1-888-98-GUIDE.

The guide was written by Richard Hammar, a noted CPA, attorney who specializes in legal and tax issues for ministers.

The material is edited by GuideStone's staff to ensure that it addresses, in detail, tax issues directly affecting Southern Baptist pastors. *(BP)*

Abedini released from prison

By Seth Brown

Iran—American pastor Saeed Abedini and three other prisoners have been released from prison in Iran, according to news reports. Abedini was detained in 2012 for organizing house churches and later sentenced to eight years in prison.



Saeed Abedini

The release reportedly comes as part of a prisoner swap coinciding with the Jan. 16 implementation of a nuclear deal between Iran and six world powers brokered in July 2015. The U.S. has released seven Iranian-Americans charged with violating sanctions, according to an Iranian news agency.

Abedini's wife Naghmeh rejoiced on her Facebook page shortly after news reports came in: "It is confirmed: Saeed is released!"

"This has been an answer to prayer," she said in a report released by the American Center for Law and Justice. "This is a critical time for me and my family. We look forward to Saeed's return and want to thank the millions of people who have stood with us in prayer during this most difficult time."

Ronnie Floyd, president of the Southern Baptist Convention, said in a statement released to Baptist Press, "We are rejoicing and praising God over the release of Saeed Abedini. We have seen God answer the prayers of His people."

"We need to continue to pray for other Christians who are being persecuted around the world," noted Floyd, pastor of Cross Church in northwest Arkansas. "Simultaneously, we must continue to pray for the advancement of the gospel across Iran, the Middle East, and all across the world."

Frank Page, president of the SBC Executive Committee, said, "I am delighted to hear of the release of pastor Saeed Abedini and other American prisoners from the country of Iran. We have been praying for this for a long time and give thanks to the Lord."

"We must also be grateful for all those who had a part in negotiating and pressing for this day," Page said in a written statement to BP. "Countless prayers have been lifted up. Countless letters have been written. Government officials and others have also been involved and we give thanks to the Lord for all of this." *(BP)*

Pastor retires after 23 years at Garner

By Myriah Snyder

Rush—Garner Baptist Church's pastor of more than 23 years preached his last sermon at Garner on Dec. 28.

Gary Arrington, 66, is the only pastor that Garner Church in Rush, a mission of Rose Hill Baptist Church, has ever had.



Gary Arrington

"I want to spend the next few months doing nothing," Arrington said, although his "doing nothing" includes a two-week trip to Israel. "But in that time I want to get closer to the Lord, and then we'll see what He wants me to do. I'm open to anything He wants me to do."

Arrington, a menswear salesman for 29 years, and his wife Deanna, who passed away almost two years ago, were involved in the youth ministry at Pollard when they felt the Lord calling them to Garner.

It was through Paul Badgett, the Kentucky Baptist Convention's East Region consultant, who at the time was head of mission at Rose Hill, that Arrington first heard of Garner.

"I'd preached some at Pollard, had just finished a youth revival and had gone to other churches to fill in," he told Daily Independent. "I felt God's calling me to preach, and I told Deanna, 'I don't understand it.' Her words to me were, 'We'll do it together,' and she really lived up to that."

During his time at Garner, the church that averages around 250 on a Sunday morning received the Spurgeon Award from the Billy Graham School of Evangelism at Southern Seminary for being the top evangelistic church in mid America.

Additionally, the church has an active jail ministry and a ministry to a local girl's home.

"The church has grown beautifully over the last 23 years. They are still in the growth mode," Badgett said.

"Gary has been very successful, he's very orthodox in his preaching and teaching, and has been very involved in Kentucky Baptist life and his association," he added.

"Gary's gift is in evangelism and shepherding the flock. He has a real love for the community," Stacy Keelin, a member at Garner, told Daily Independent.

"The call is still on his life," she said. "He's not retiring from the calling." *(WR)*

Finding gratitude in all circumstances

By Christi Moffett

Upon reflection of this holiday season the word "gratitude" overwhelms me. My gratitude begins so easily with all the good things, my Savior and His sacrifice, my husband and kids, family, the meaningful work God has called me to do, our home, health—well, you get the idea. But do I sincerely have gratitude for the all things?

Christ tells us, "Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus" (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18). Really? In ALL circumstances? Who really gives thanks for broken water pipes, a challenging teen, a terrifying medical diagnosis or loss of job? God really wanted me to meditate on this scripture and then challenged me to live it.

When I hear the terrifying situations that have brought kids into our care, how can I give thanks? How can they? They can and they do, much quicker than I! They are so thankful to sleep where they are clean and safe.

One young lady recently told me her mom's abuse taught her to be patient. She is very thankful that she is patient. She considers it one of her finest qualities.

Another one of the guys said he would never have prayed for help if he hadn't been hurting. His gratitude is that someone heard him and for his Savior. Even in their affliction, they are able to show gratitude.

Often when I talk to God it's all about me, what I want, what my troubles are. I would be so much better off if I were to spend more time praising God, thanking him for his goodness and love. Giving thanks in hard times can be so hard to do, but I've found that when I do it has the effect of changing my heart and my outlook. By giving thanks God gives us hope and a new light of hope.

SUNRISE Children's Services

In expressing gratitude for the good and the bad, God gives me hope. So now I have had an adjustment to my attitude of gratitude. It is an expansion of my attitude to include ALL circumstances so that I may grow in Him and have hope. My gratitude includes hurting children who have hope.

Christi Moffett is senior director of marketing at Sunrise Children's Services in Mt. Washington.

KBC Calendar of Events

February

1-6	São Paulo Vision Tour, São Paulo, Brazil.
2	Power Lunch, Ky. Baptist Building, Louisville
2-3	New Directors of Missions Orientation, Ky. Baptist Building, Louisville
8-9	RISK Conference, Hillvue Heights Church, Bowling Green
11-18	São Paulo Vision Tour, São Paulo, Brazil.12-13 Ky. Baptist Disaster Relief Chaplaincy Training, Porter Memorial Church, Lexington
13	Ky. Baptist Disaster Relief Training Phases 1 & 2, Porter Memorial Church, Lexington
18	Men's Chorale Concert, Central Church, Paris
27	WMU Leadership Network Meeting, Ky. Baptist Building, Louisville
27	Operation: Inasmuch Kentucky Training, Crosspointe Church, Owensboro

Mountains to the Mississippi

Compiled by Staff

HARRODSBURG – Harrodsburg Church will hold a hymn sing on Feb. 7 at 6 p.m. **Nick Sandefur** will be the featured speaker, and the Made New Family Singers will perform. **Wayne Spivey** is pastor.

LOUISVILLE—Cloverleaf Church celebrated the 26th Anniversary in service of Pastor **Geoff Lacefield**.

Fern Creek Church has sent a mission team to Nicaragua Jan. 23-29. They will serve at the Emmanuel Home of Protection, a ministry of BMDMI. **Linda Barnes Popham** is pastor.

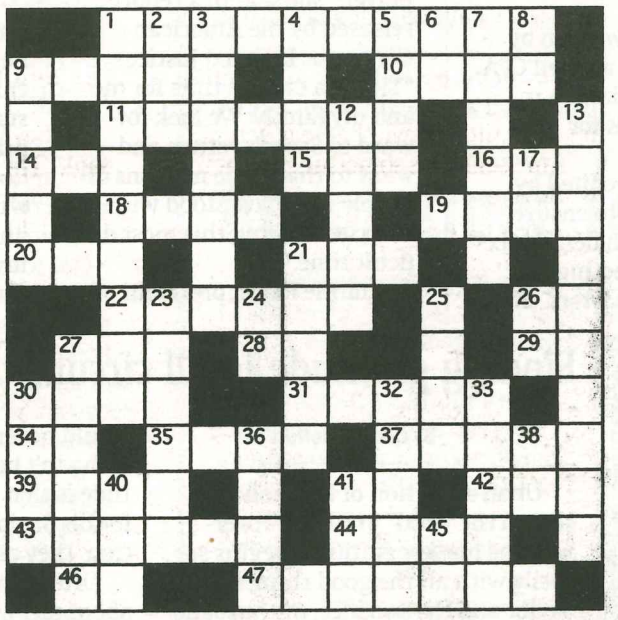
St Matthews Church will host the Long Run Baptist Association WMU Ladies Tea on Feb. 20 from 1-3 p.m. National Woman's Missionary Union President **Linda Cooper** will be the keynote speaker. Contact **Linda Rodgers**,(502) 599-0194, for more information and registration. **Greg Barr** is pastor.

RICHMOND—Ben Pierce has been called as pastor of Kirksville Church.

SCOTTSVILLE—Scottsville Church is celebrating 175 years of ministry throughout 2016. **Dale Darley** is pastor.

Bible Crosswords

By Kenda Turner



#055

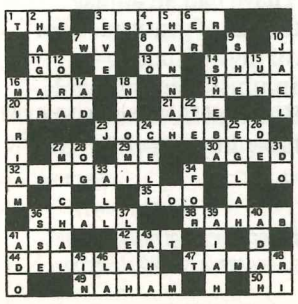
Across

1 "Being justified freely by his grace through the ____ that is in Christ Jesus" Romans 3:24)
9 "I will sift the house of Israel ... like as corn is sifted in a ____" (Amos 9:9)
10 Annoy
11 "Jesus said ... 'If thou canst ____, all things are possible to him that believeth' " (Mark 9:23)
14 "I ____ no pleasant bread" (Daniel 10:3)
15 "____ the knot" (get married)
16 7, Romans num.
18 "Man shall not ____ by bread alone" (Matthew 4:4)
19 Fervor
20 Delegate, abbr.
21 A swine
22 Jacob
26 Fifth letter of Hebrew alphabet
27 Fruit of the Spirit
28 Undergraduate degree
29 Southern state, abbr.
30 James and John, to Zebedee
31 One of two faithful spies sent to search Canaan
34 A preposition, meaning to the same degree
35 Biblical weed
37 Weird
39 What Boaz plucked off to signify redeeming Ruth
41 Southern continent, abbr.
42 Possessive pronoun
43 One of four seasons
44 Roman poet
46 Support group for alcoholics, abbr.
47 Sect of Jews during time of Christ

Down

1 "For ____ is as the sin of witchcraft" (1 Samuel 15:23)
2 The first woman
3 "Lead us not into temptation; but ____ us from evil" (Luke 11:4)
4 Come together
5 "____ of knowledge of good and evil" (Genesis 2:9)
6 2, Romans num.
7 Mount of ____
8 Compass point
9 "____ in awe, and sin not" (Psalm 4:4)
12 Active of watching
13 "He said, 'I am the voice of one crying in the ____' " (John 1:23)
17 Its capital is Des Moines, abbr.
21 "And the ____ of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:7)
23 An orderly way of getting things done
24 Stomach muscle, for short
25 "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you ____" (John 8:32)
26 Exclamation of amusement
27 One of two faithful spies sent to search Canaan
30 What disrespectful children do
32 "Therefore shall a man ____ his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife" (Genesis 2:24)
33 "And the Spirit and the ____ say, 'Come' " (Revelation 22:17)
36 Unusual
38 Pronoun
40 Suffix for a growth
41 International signal of distress
45 Opposite of out

#054



Classified Ads

SEEKING: Bi-vocational pastor for small congregation located in DeMossville, Ky. In charge of the welfare and responsible care of the church. Preside at all meetings of the church. Preach at appointed hours of worship on Sunday, lead regular midweek meetings, and administer ordinances as taught in Scriptures. Have general care of the spiritual welfare of the membership of the church. Submit your resumé by mail to DeMossville Baptist Church, P.O. Box 27, DeMossville, KY 41033, or e-mail to dbc@zoomtown.com.

SEEKING: Oakland Baptist Church is prayerfully accepting resumés for lead pastor. Send resumé to Pastor Search Committee, Oakland Baptist Church, P.O. Box 154, Oakland, KY 42159. We will be accepting resumés until Feb. 12, 2016.

SEEKING: Unity Baptist Church in Ashland, Ky., is seeking a full-time minister of music to lead and coordinate an active ministry in a multi-generational church, utilizing a blended style of worship. Average attendance is 250-300. Send resumé to unitymusicsearch@gmail.com. Resumés accepted until Feb. 15.

SEEKING: Minister to children and family. Part-time position (15-20 hours a week) at Pinckard Baptist Church in Versailles. Send resumé to pinckardchurch@aol or 3401 Pinckard Pike, Versailles, KY 40383.

SEEKING: Small/medium church looking to grow youth ministry requires full-time youth pastor. Send resumé to Darlene@BBCLife.org.

SEEKING: Small church prayerfully and reverently seeks part-time shepherd meant for our flock. Send resumé, cover letter and references to Corn Creek Baptist Church, 2056 Milton-Bedford Pike, Milton, KY, 40045.

SEEKING: Pastor with 30-plus yrs. experience currently available for interim and/or pulpit supply in Oldham and surrounding counties. (502) 321-1557

SEEKING: Dripping Spring Baptist Church is prayerfully seeking a full-time student minister. Send resumés to: Dripping Spring Baptist Church, 4145 Watermelon Rd., Olmstead, KY 42265, or email to jeffnoff72@gmail.com.

SEEKING: Munfordville Baptist Church is seeking its next full-time pastor. Criteria include being a Southern Baptist Convention preacher who adheres to the Baptist Faith and Message and will be supportive of the Cooperative Program for missions. Resumés and sermon DVDs should be sent to the attention of Pulpit Committee Chairperson at P.O. Box 445, Munfordville, KY 42765.

SEEKING: Harrodsburg Baptist Church is seeking a full-time student minister with a passion for reaching Jr. and Sr. high youth with the gospel and maturing them in their faith. HBC has an extremely strong youth group, wonderful facilities, large youth budget, and a strong reputation in the community.

Applicants may apply by sending resumé to HBC Personnel Committee 312 South Main Street Harrodsburg, Ky. 40330 or email to wayne@harrodsburgbaptist.org. Accepting applications until Feb. 29.

SEEKING: Conservative Southern Baptist Church is seeking a part-time music minister/worship leader. Submit inquiries and/or resumés to: PBCMusicMinister@gmail.com, Music Minister Search Committee, Providence Baptist Church 6265 Georgetown Rd., Frankfort, KY 40601.

SEEKING: Children's minister for Elkton Baptist Church, Elkton, Ky. This is a full-time position, and we are looking for someone who is a team player, energetic, self-motivated, well organized and can relate to children, parents and the rest of the church. A bachelor's degree and experience is a plus. Send or email resumés to: elktonchurch@bellsouth.net or Elkton Baptist Church, P.O. Box 547, Elkton, KY 42220.

SEEKING: Experienced church pianist wanted. Sunday AM & PM worship, choir practice, special occasions. Send resumés to Boones Creek BC Personnel, 185 N Cleveland Rd., Lexington, KY 40509, boonescreekchurch@gmail.com, (859)263-5466.

SEEKING: Big Creek Baptist Church in Clay County, Ky., is prayerfully seeking a pastor for our church. If interested, please submit your resumé by email to woods123654@twc.com.

SEEKING: Trinity Baptist Church in Lexington, Ky., is accepting resumés for full-time senior pastor. Applicants may email resumés to Trinitypsc9@gmail.com. Applications accepted through February 2016.

SEEKING: Edgewood Baptist Church, Nicholasville, Ky., is prayerfully seeking a full-time pastor. Send resumé to edgewood@edgewoodbaptistchurch.com. Resumé deadline is Feb. 6, 2016.

SEEKING: Immanuel Baptist Church in Elizabethtown, Ky., is seeking a full-time minister of students. This person will lead and organize all student and youth activities that relate to IBC ministries, lead outreach activities, minister to student's needs, assist in worship services and handle other duties. The new student minister at IBC will also follow the teachings of the Bible. He or she must be of the highest integrity and moral character. The successful candidate will be energetic and demonstrate strong leadership, communication and organizational skills.

The new student minister at IBC will also follow the teachings of the Bible and believe in the Bible as God's Holy Word. This person will receive a salary commensurate with experience and will receive benefits, vacation days and paid holidays.

To apply, please submit a cover letter, resumé and three-to-five references to IBC Student Minister Search Committee, 800 Rhodes Dr., Elizabethtown, KY 42701, or via email to john.wright@hardin.kyschools.us. Please reply by Feb. 1.

SEEKING: Evergreen Baptist Church, 2698 Evergreen Rd,, Frankfort, KY 40601, is seeking a part-time children's minister and a part-time youth minister. (502) 223-8364 office@evergreenbaptistchurch.us.

SEEKING: Anyone interested in being a part of lay-lead revival ministries call Jerry at (502) 531-0396.

SEEKING: Ferguson Baptist Church is seeking a bi-vocational minister of music to lead blended worship. We are located in Pulaski County and have an average worship attendance of 130. Please send resumés to fbcmusicsearch@twc.com, or to the Minister of Music Search Committee, P.O. Box 247, Ferguson, KY 42533.

FOR SALE: Baby-Grand Piano for sale. Our church has a beautiful mahogany brown Yamaha GH1 for sale. It was built in Japan and assembled in Georgia. Has a new humidifier system to help keep tuned. Approximate appraisal of $10k, asking $8k. Questions or pics, email www.johnny.baker56@yahoo.com.

SERVICE: JCA Media, LLC, well known in KBC. 20+ years' experience installing quality equipment at reasonable pricing. Let us help you enhance your worship experience. For information/references, visit www.jcamediaky.com or contact us at (270) 312-7492.

TRAVEL: Send Your Pastor Packing! Special rates for Pastor Tours that will forever enhance his preaching and passion for the Lord. www.pilgrimtours.com. (800) 322-0788.

Bali: 'Real spiritual darkness here'

By Elain Gaston

Indonesia—A light breeze carries the scent of cloves in through the open windows. To live on an island that smells this good could seem like a dream. Add to that Bali's startling beauty and color: lush rice fields rimmed with coconut palms, waterfalls plunging down mountainsides and volcanic lakes with deep, clear waters. It sounds like paradise but obscures a deeper darkness.

"It is a blessing to live in a beautiful place," International Mission Board worker Amy Kreisky* said.

"We've lived in places that weren't," she said. "But the reality of it is once you get away from the tourist areas, there's a real spiritual darkness here—a real spiritual heaviness that's more part of our reality."

Amy and her husband Clay,* have caught glimpses of the darkness during the years they've worked in Bali. Before they were married, Amy served in a remote village in an unstable African country.

"Sometimes we compare (this to) Amy's time in Africa," Clay said. "It was a difficult place to live, in a mud hut, with a war going on, and not too far from the sounds of gunshots. It was a difficult place to live, but (there was) a lot of spiritual fruit."

Amy noted, "People there were hungry spiritually. Here, life is good. Life is easy for the people of Bali. They may say they're poor, but compared to Africa, they're not poor. And they're not spiritually hungry."

It isn't a sense of complacency, however, that the couple feel is a serious barrier to Balinese understanding and accepting salvation through Christ. It is a spirit world that has to be reckoned with.

"I think we've been awakened more to that spiritual reality, that there's something keeping them in darkness, something keeping them blind, something keeping them from hearing the truth," Amy said. "We're more aware that there is a spiritual reality that we don't see, but it is very real to these people and very real to this island."

Things not seen

Dukuns, or shamans, are spirit mediums in Indonesia. In Bali, they are called "balians" and are often sought for healing if Western medicine has not solved an ailment. Because they are believed to be in touch with the spirit world and able to communicate with spirits, balians also are consulted for a variety of life issues, from infertility and physical ailments to matters of business or the heart. Some are also practitioners of dark magic.

Additionally, Balinese say there are people who can see the spirit realm. Clay and Amy have met such individuals, including one who became a Christian last year.

"This one girl who became a believer says she can still see into the spirit realm," Clay said. "She says she has seen (spirits of) dead people—hopeless, wandering, meandering back and forth trying to find offerings. They haven't found peace. So the Balinese say, 'I've got to help my ancestor.' To them, it's very real."

Amy said, "The more and more stories we hear from Balinese themselves, there's got to be something behind it. We've got to accept the fact of spirits, demons, whatever, that are blinding and bothering them and keeping people afraid."

She said in Bali, there is a keen awareness that there are good spirits and bad spirits.

"(Balinese) spend their lives and their energy trying to appease both," she said. "They make offerings to the gods so that the gods will be happy ... and they make offerings to the demonic spirits so that the demonic spirits will leave them alone."

Underlying fear

Amy and Clay have been told stories of Balinese who have left Hinduism for Christianity only to have catastrophe strike them. "Something happens to them in the family—a wreck, a baby dies—and people think, 'The gods are angry. I've upset the natural balance of things.' They revert back to Hinduism because the gods are angry," Clay said.

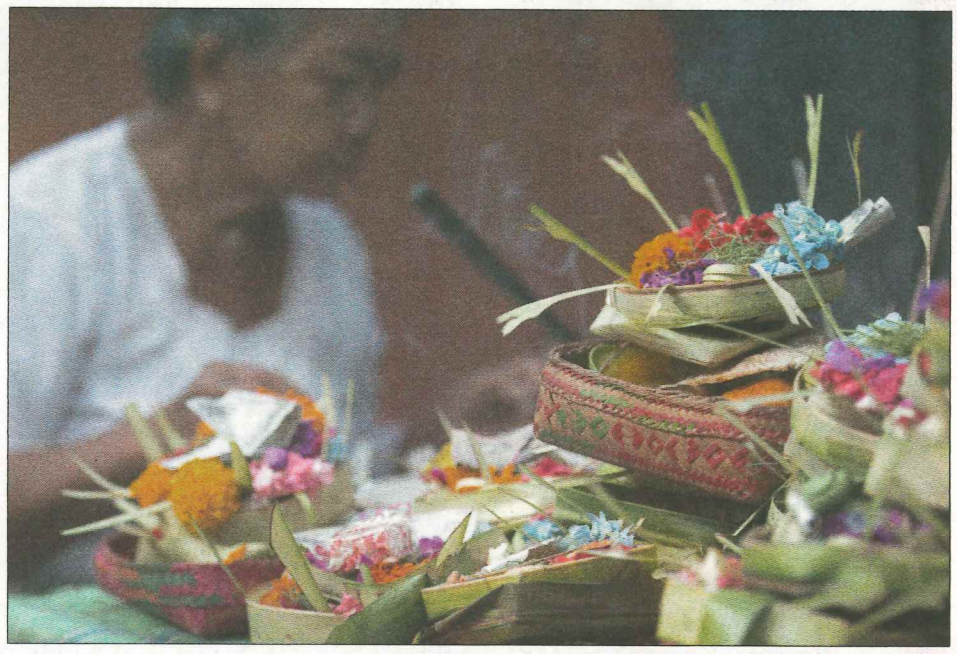
"They're afraid of the ancestral spirits that (they believe) still live on this earth," he said. "They're afraid of being made sick by or bothered by the ancestral spirits. Even if somebody becomes a believer, it's difficult to leave that fear behind."

Amy said, "It's something in their worldview that has to be addressed when you share the truth with them. You can't just jump to Jesus. They need to know that God has power over these spirits. They need to know that these lower spirits are in submission to the one true God."

On a recent visit to a village, Clay had the opportunity to talk with a Balinese man and explain how God created the spirits to worship Him. He explained how Lucifer became prideful and God cast him and a third of his spirits out of heaven.

"They've never heard that story," Clay said. "The man in the village said, 'So, it is enough just to worship the Most High God? I don't have to worship the evil spirits?'" *(BP)*

*Name changed.



Family and guests bring special offerings of flowers and food to the gods when they visit a temple to attend a coming of age ceremony for young Balinese women. The offerings and ceremonies are meant to retain a harmonious balance between invoking good and averting evil spiritual influences.





Left: *Built in 1663, this temple is used for offering ceremonies to the Balinese water, lake and river goddess Dewi Danu.* **Right:** *A tooth-filing ceremony is a coming of age ritual performed in Bali before a young woman marries. The filing is done to rid the young woman of the six evils: anger, greed, lust, drunkenness, envy and confusion. It is a joyous occasion with extended family and the community taking part. In the past, young women had their canine teeth filed down. Now, with better understanding of dental care, the filing is more symbolic.*

WESTERN Recorder
Shine like stars in the world.
Start your subscription plan today
Call us at (502) 489-3535

Individual & Gift Subscriptions: $17 each
Save more! Church Group Subscriptions: $11 each (5 or more)

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____
State: _____ Zip: _____
Phone (Day): _____
Email: _____

- ❑ Subscribing for myself
- ❑ Payment for gift subscription
- ❑ Gift subscription from:
- ❑ Yes! Sign me up for Western Recorder's FREE e-newsletter
- ❑ Tell me how to save my church money by printing its newsletter on back



Use share icon on your phone or tablet to add WesternRecorder.org *to your home screen!*

It's quick, easy and helpful to all Kentucky Baptists

Annual Church Profile

What is ACP?

The Annual Church Profile is a lot like taking a pulse of Kentucky Baptist churches. It's a quick health assessment of where we are in reaching Kentucky and the world for Christ.

Statistics about giving, membership and baptisms help the Kentucky Baptist Convention develop programing where it's needed most. The ACP also points to areas for celebration, like the most recent reports of 14,228 baptisms by Kentucky Baptist churches.

How do churches benefit?

- Data from several years can help you plan a ministry strategy.
- Your church will always have a backup of your records, should your facility be impacted by flood, fire or other disaster.
- Makes sure you are sending the maximum number of messengers to the KBC Annual Meeting each year.

Questions about ACP?

Contact Rick Pryor, training and development specialist, at rick.pryor@kybaptist.org or by phone at (502) 489-3327 or 1-866-489-3327 (toll-free in Kentucky).

Information is the heartbeat of ministry.
Without *you* we skip a beat.

Find out more at www.kybaptist.org/acp