

WESTERN Recorder

News Agency
 of the
 Kentucky Baptist
 Convention

December 27, 2016

Shine Like Stars * Philippians 2:15

Volume 190, Issue 26



Around 400 students gathered for a magic show and a gospel presentation at the McLean County High School.

Owensboro student event reaps 219 decisions

By Myriah Snyder

Owensboro—A total of 219 students ages 12 to 24 made professions of faith on Dec. 7-8 at the Owensboro Convention Center and McLean County High School. The event was an outreach event called MAZE that featured magician Jim Munroe.

The weekend's events, part of the Twelve24 student evangelism strategy of the Kentucky Baptist Convention, was led by Buck Creek Baptist Church in Calhoun, which partnered with First Baptist Church of Owensboro as well as many other Daviess-McLean County churches. The student outreach was sponsored by Kentucky Affinity Evangelism, the Eliza Broadus Offering, and

the Daviess-McLean Baptist Association. Munroe—author, speaker, and self-proclaimed “skeptic”—performed his magic show for the crowd of over 1,400 students. While capturing the crowd's attention with his magic show, Munroe used the platform to present the gospel.

“I was blown away at the presentation of the gospel,” McClure said. “It was incredibly clear and easy to understand.”

McClure described it as “probably one of the neatest testimonies that I’ve ever heard, and I’ve been in ministry for 20 years.”

“It’s unbelievable what God allowed

□ See MAZE... Page 3

Gatlinburg man grieves for wife and daughters, forgives arson suspects

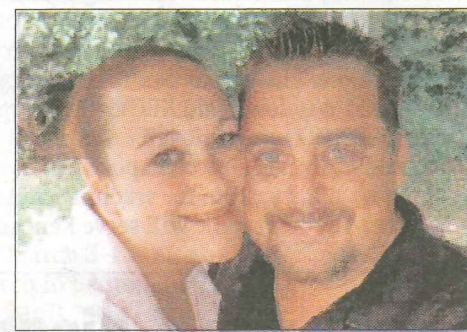
By David Roach

Gatlinburg, Tenn.—A Gatlinburg, Tenn., man who lost his wife and two daughters in the wildfires that swept through the area has extended forgiveness publicly to two juveniles suspected of starting the blaze.

Michael Reed—whose wife Constance, 34, and daughters Chloe, 12, and Lily, 9, died at their home Nov. 28—wrote about the tragedy in a Facebook post reported by various media outlets. “I forgive you,” he wrote. “My son forgives you ... We know you didn’t mean for this to happen. We know you would take it all back if you could.”

“We will pray for you. Every day. We will pray for your parents and your family members,” Reed stated in a Dec. 15 open letter to the suspects. “Every day. We will pray for your peace. We will show you grace. Why? Because that’s what Jesus would do. Faith ... Hope... Love ... The greatest of these is love.”

According to Knoxville’s WBIR television, Reed and his son Nicholas went for a drive Nov. 28 and didn’t realize how close the fire was to their house until Constance Reed called to report flames across the street. The couple expressed their love for one another on the phone, and Michael told Constance to call 911.



Michael Reed, whose wife Constance died Nov. 28 in a wildfire along with two of their children, extended forgiveness to two arson suspects in a Facebook post.

They never spoke again. The three deaths were announced at a press conference Dec. 3.

WBIR reported Dec. 4 that the entire family attended Parkway Church of God in Sevierville, Tenn., and “all accepted Christ into their lives this past month.”

Parkway Pastor Philip Morris declined to be quoted for this story, but he confirmed that all five Reeds joined Parkway Oct. 30. He also noted that a requirement for church membership is a credible profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

Reed told the Knoxville News-Sentinel

□ See Gatlinburg... Page 3

Churches teaming up to reach ‘most secular campus in the South’

By Myriah Snyder

Louisville—The mission of the University of Louisville’s Baptist Campus Ministry is to show Christ’s love on the self-declared “most secular campus in the South,” John Adams, UofL campus missionary, said. In doing that, they are teaming up with area churches to engage the campus.

Adams, who began his work with Louisville’s BCM a year ago this month, said the biggest challenge he faces on Louisville’s campus is helping students to identify themselves as Christians in a culture that is completely secular.

“On the University of Louisville campus,” Adams explained, “if you do not support the minority cause or minority push on a particular issue, then you’re looked at as being a bigot or a hatemonger or someone who is completely out of touch with today’s culture and society. I think for our students, the idea is to help them to learn how to engage that cul-

ture, because that’s where they live.”

Kari Woods, UofL senior and BCM president, echoed Adams’ thoughts about the struggles of being a student and a Christian on campus. However, she not only found a place of encouragement and fellowship in the BCM when she arrived on campus as a freshman, but she also found a place that taught her to be a leader and instilled in her a passion for discipleship.

“The BCM has really shaped me by giving me leadership skills and a desire to make disciples in that Twelve24 window,” Woods said, referring to the Kentucky Baptist Convention’s push for middle, high school and college evangelism and discipleship.

“I see that continuing even after my internship as a campus ministry intern ends,” she said.

“Just being part of a leadership team at the BCM,” she continued, “has

□ See BCM... Page 2



University of Louisville’s BCM students gather for worship. Their worship service has grown from averaging 10 to averaging 60 in 2016.

Richmond pastor named Morehead campus missionary

Louisville—The Kentucky Baptist Convention has named Matthew Mofield as the new campus missionary for the Morehead region.

Mofield will have the dual responsibility of engaging and discipling students on the Morehead State University campus, while also enlisting and equipping Kentucky Baptist churches in the surrounding region to reach students between the ages of 12 and 24 with the gospel.

"The Collegiate Ministry team is an integral part of the Evangelism and Church Planting Team and is focused on helping churches engage one of the darkest, most strategic mission fields in our world: the Twelve24 Window," said KBC Collegiate Evangelism Strategist Brian Combs. Mofield's "diverse church experience along with his passion for reaching the Twelve24 demographic will serve Ken-

tucky Baptists well in this position."

Mofield is pastor at the Richmond campus of Center Point Church, a multi-site church based in Lexington. He joined the Center Point staff in May 2015 after serving more than two years as associate pastor to youth and young adults at Pleasant View Baptist Church in Waynesburg.



Matthew Mofield

"Matthew's experience sets him apart for campus ministry and church partnership," said Pleasant View Pastor Kyle Page, who described Mofield as a Christ-like example and mentor to both students and adults.

Mofield worked for the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service in Somerset, before answering the call to ministry.

He holds master's degrees from Eastern Kentucky University and Liberty University Baptist Theological Seminary in Lynchburg, Va. (KBC)

BCM

Continued from Page 1

instilled in me a desire to make disciples and to build up today's youth to go to their friends and their schools and proclaim the gospel so that every person may have the opportunity to hear what the true gospel is and the truth that will be transforming their lives."

The way that the University of Louisville's BCM is expanding its outreach is through the local church. They have started Bible studies led not by BCM leaders but by churches connecting with students. Campus ministry interns, from Boyce College, Southern Seminary and graduate students at UofL are acting as "intentional bridge builders" from the church. They, alongside their local church, are helping to "disciple, lead, execute ministries and engage students on that campus," Adams said.

"Churches of all sizes are involved," he said. "Oftentimes churches think you have to have a huge college ministry to be involved."

He noted that although they have large churches involved, they have multi-generation churches as well as small

church plants doing their part to reach students.

"They are intentionally engaging to reach the lost but also to challenge the handful of students within their reach to be campus missionaries themselves," Adams said.

With this new outlook on campus ministry, Adams has seen growth, from under 10 students involved to around 50-60 attending weekly worship, and as many being part of a campus Bible study. The BCM now offers ESL classes and other outreach opportunities to the international community as well. Over the last year, through BCM and KBC partnerships, they have seen seven professions of faith.

"The future is to have a gospel presence everywhere. That's going to be a massive task," Adams added. "The only way that's going to happen is if the local church and the Kentucky Baptist Convention is focused on helping churches reach Kentucky and the world for Christ."

That's our plan, to literally reach Kentucky through our campuses," he concluded. "As it is, the student ministry is the biggest mission field within the United States." (WR)

Reformers' disagreement on Christmas celebrations yields lessons

By David Roach

Nashville—When it came to celebrating Christmas, leaders of the 16th-century Protestant Reformation were divided on whether followers of Jesus should say "bah humbug" or "joy to the world."

While Martin Luther loved to celebrate Christmas with feasting and special church services, the so-called Reformed wing of the Reformation, led by Ulrich Zwingli and John Calvin, raised objections to such festivities, arguing believers should worship God only in ways explicitly commanded by Scripture and that a festival in December commemorating Christ's birth was not commanded.

The Reformed wing's Puritan heirs in England and New England were adamant in their rejection of Christmas celebrations. English Puritan William Prynne (1600-1669) argued that "all pious Christians" should "eternally abominate" Christmas festivities, said church historian Michael Haykin. In New England, celebrating Christmas could result in a fine.

Though few modern Christians share such sentiments against Christmas, a North Carolina pastor who holds a Ph.D. in church history told Baptist Press, believers can draw insights from both sides in the debate.

Andy Davis, pastor of First Baptist Church in Durham, N.C., advocates a "mediating position," in which believers acknowledge the food and fun of Christmas as good gifts from the Lord but also recognize that secular Christmas festivities can stray far afield from celebrating

the incarnation.

"Take the Christmas blessings, and look upward to the giver," Davis said. "The happiness that we feel when we look at the lights and we enjoy the holiday—all of it comes from God. And ultimately God has so much more to give you than just that. He has His own Son, and the center of everything is the giving of Christ."

Reformers differ

Among the Reformers, differing views of Christmas stemmed largely from differing views of worship, Haykin, professor of church history and biblical spirituality at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, told BP.

Luther held the "normative principle"—the belief Christians may worship God in any way not forbidden by Scripture—while Zwingli and Calvin held the "regulative principle"—the belief Christians may only worship God in ways commanded by Scripture.

Thus, Luther retained the Roman Catholic traditions of Advent and Christmas and may have been among the first people to decorate a Christmas tree with candles, Haykin said. "It was a festival he delighted to celebrate."

The first seven sermons in "The Complete Sermons

of Martin Luther" edited by John Nicholas Lenker are designated for the Christmas season. For Zwingli and Calvin, in contrast, "there are questions raised about" Christmas, Haykin said, adding that all Reformers praised God for the incarnation but differed over the official festival on Dec. 25.

Preaching on Christmas Day 1551,



Calvin noted, "I see here today more people than I am accustomed to having at the sermon," according to Calvin's "Sermons on the Book of Micah" translated by Benjamin Wirt Farley. Then Calvin warned, "When you elevate one day alone for the purpose of worshipping God, you have just turned it into an idol. True, you insist that you have done so for the honor of God, but it is more for the honor of the devil."

Still, Calvin's admonition seemed to be a caution rather than a prohibition of Christmas. In a 1551 letter quoted by Presbyterian pastor Phil Larson, Calvin said he "pursued the moderate course in keeping Christ's birthday." Similarly, in a 1555 letter he noted, "A church is not to be despised or condemned because it observes more festival days than the others."

Nearly a century later, the Puritans, who drew theological inspiration from Calvin and other sources, took his view a step further, formally outlawing Christmas in England in 1647, Haykin said.

In America, the Pilgrims of Plymouth Colony permitted nonbelievers among them to celebrate Christmas in the early 1620s, Davis said. But when some nonbelievers were seen playing a game on Christmas, the colony's governor "confiscated their game equipment and said they were free to not work, but they had to stay indoors and would best spend the time by reading the Bible and praying."

Caution about Christmas in British territories prevailed until the 1800s, Davis said, because of a desire not to return to Roman Catholic practices.

'Scraps' from God's table

The Reformers' and Puritans' reticence about Christmas should not be dismissed altogether now, Davis said, noting the holiday often is celebrated with "fantastic busyness" and "materialism" but "no real, vibrant piety."

Even when charity and thankfulness are involved in the celebration, Davis said, meaningful references to Christ can be removed, as in Charles Dickens' famous novella "A Christmas Carol." Yet "you can go too far in the opposite direction" by eschewing traditional Christmas celebrations altogether, Davis said.

"The 'eat, drink and be merry' thing is like scraps that fall from the table of God. It's common grace blessings that people enjoy," he said. "... Why wouldn't you want something like that?"

It's understandable that some Christians reject Christmas activities that are merely cultural with no celebration of Christ, Davis said. But the culture "just doesn't get it" when Christians denounce the holiday altogether. (BP)

A more productive message in 21st-century America is, he said, "These blessings are gifts from God. But He has so much more to give you than that. He came into the world to save sinners." (BP)

EPA pick, Pruitt, called 'magnificent Christian leader'

By David Roach

Washington—Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt, President-elect Donald Trump's choice to lead the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, has drawn praise from Southern Baptists despite charges by secular media outlets, environmentalists and theologically liberal clergy that his leadership could harm the environment.

"Scott Pruitt is one of the finest, a committed follower of Christ and Oklahoma Baptist," Anthony Jordan, executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, told the BGCO's Baptist Messenger newsjournal. "He has been a great (attorney general) and will be terrific at the EPA."

Pruitt, a deacon at First Baptist Church in Broken Arrow, Okla., was announced as Trump's selection for EPA administrator Dec. 7.

That same day, The New York Times published a news article calling Pruitt a "climate change denialist" and noting his participation in a 28-state lawsuit challenging some of the Obama administration's carbon-emission regulations.

Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., vowed to "vigorously oppose this nomination" while numerous media outlets published objections to Pruitt's nomination by environmentalists. The Washington Post editorial board opposed Pruitt's confirmation Dec. 9 because he allegedly has a record of "rejecting or playing down the near-unanimous warnings of experts" on climate change.

The Post took issue in particular with a May op-ed in the conservative publication National Review co-written by Pruitt and Alabama attorney general Luther Strange.

In stating their opposition to a criminal investigation of oil and gas companies that "have disputed the science behind man-made global warming," Pruitt and Strange wrote that

"healthy debate is the lifeblood of American democracy, and global warming has inspired one of the major policy debates of our time."

"That debate is far from settled," they stated. "Scientists continue to disagree about the degree and extent of global warming and its connection to the actions of mankind. That debate should be encouraged—in classrooms, public forums and the halls of Congress. It should not be silenced with threats of prosecution. Dissent is not a crime."

Critics answered

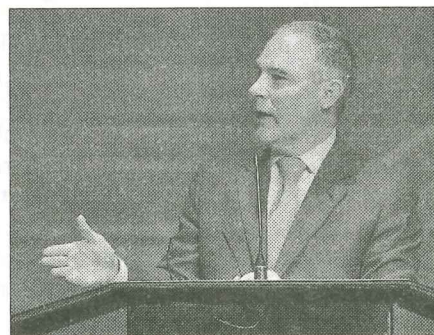
Albert Mohler Jr., president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, where Pruitt is a trustee, said The Washington Post's critique appears to stem from an ideological framework that contradicts the Christian worldview.

The Post's editorial board, Mohler said Dec. 13 in his podcast The Briefing, apparently regards the views of some contemporary scientists as "the ultimate authority not to be questioned." In reality, it is "an ideological framework to which they are committed ... advertised to the public as settled science."

Christians, in contrast, should be "committed to the truth," which is pursued through "the scientific method" among other means, Mohler said. He noted science often revises its conclusions from one generation to the next.

Pruitt "does not deny that there is a human impact on the climate," Mohler said. "He doesn't deny what's called now the reality of global warming or of climate change. He says that the debate is not settled and the degree and the extent of global warming is not yet fully known."

Pruitt's pastor, Nick Garland of First Baptist Broken Arrow, told Baptist Press Pruitt displays "a tremendous amount of Christian character" and



Oklahoma Attorney General Scott Pruitt, a Southern Baptist Theological Seminary trustee, will be nominated to lead the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. (SBTS photo)

has been "faithful in every way to the church."

As a public servant, Pruitt "obviously is a man who is a Christian," Garland said, yet he doesn't "operate with a bias based on his faith, but rather a clear-cut dedication to how this country was founded."

Charges that Pruitt is "going to throw out" all environmental regulations are unfounded, Garland said.

"Scott has always been concerned that we take care of the water and mineral resources that we have here in Oklahoma," Garland said. He has at times opposed specific environmental regulations "because he believes in constitutional law" and rejects "overreach" by the EPA "that would create problems for the local farmer or for the local oil industry."

Russell Moore, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, told BP in a statement, "Scott Pruitt is a dear friend and a magnificent Christian leader. I've known and worked with him since the beginning of his time on the board at Southern Seminary. Since then we've worked together on numerous issues of religious freedom and liberty of conscience. He has always modeled integrity and excellence, and I look forward to seeing his leadership at the EPA." (BP)

Sign up for training to help when disaster strikes

Louisville—From flooding in West Virginia to the wildfires of east Tennessee, Kentucky Baptists mobilized to help as one disaster after another struck in 2016.

Disaster Relief Director Coy Webb said the training offered by the Kentucky Baptist Convention is what turns willing, servant hearts into skilled, disaster relief laborers for Christ.

"Our volunteers have to keep their skills sharp," Webb said. "The work is just too important not to do so, and that's why we offer several training dates across Kentucky."

Beginning in January, new and returning volunteers will have several opportunities to learn and prepare in anticipation of the coming year's deployments.

Training for Phase I, Phase II and chaplaincy will be offered:

- Jan. 13-14 at Severns Valley Baptist Church in Elizabethtown.
- Feb. 3-4 at Big Creek Baptist Church in Hazard.
- March 3-4 at Zion's Cause Baptist Church in Benton.
- April 7-8 at Hickory Grove Baptist Church in Independence.
- Sept. 15-16 at First Baptist Church in Richmond.

Kentucky Baptist Disaster Relief sent crews across the Midwest and around the world helping people in need. They installed water filtration systems for Flint, Mich., residents dealing with contaminated tap water. On several occasions, Kentucky Baptists traveled to sub-Saharan Africa to feed victims of famine, dig wells and teach welding skills.

And when tornadoes struck western Kentucky, disaster relief volunteers were there.

To learn more, or register for disaster relief training, visit www.kybaptist.org/drtraining. And be sure to follow Kentucky Baptist Disaster Relief on Facebook and on Twitter. (KBC)

MAZE

Continued from Page 1

him to go through in order to understand the gospel. It's just wild," McClure added, referencing Munroe's battle with Leukemia that brought him to faith in Christ.

Churches throughout both counties advertised the event through radio, word of mouth, and visiting nearby college campuses.

"We do youth rallies twice a year, but we never do evangelical rallies or community outreach types of events," Justin McClure, associate pastor for students at Buck Creek Baptist, said. He explained that a group of local youth ministers gathered together and formulated the idea behind this event.

"We thought, 'Why don't we put our weight behind something like this because this generation is largely unreached. (An estimated) 95 percent of this generation is not in church on a given Sunday. We really need to reach into this generation.' So we started collaborating together," he said.

"One of the cool ways that God really worked was in bringing churches

together to reach our community," Will Smith, youth pastor at Owensboro First, said. "It was a kingdom-minded effort, not just a First Baptist, Owensboro, effort, a Buck Creek Baptist effort, or anything like that. It was really a kingdom effort with churches in our area to try to reach the Twelve24 age group."

Smith continued, "It was a cool thing to be a part of that, to work together, and to serve together, but it was also cool to see students excited about getting their lost friends to come and to see a magic show for sure but more importantly to get them to a place where they could hear the gospel presented and they could respond."

Buck Creek Baptist as well as the other partnering churches bathed the event in prayer and fasting. "Prayer was a big part of it. Our people praying, our people calling out," he shared.

McClure continued, "The anxiety that I experienced personally was just kind of washed away when I saw the response of the community. God kind of demonstrated His faithfulness through that. I was just blown away, at the response."

"The response of students was ridiculous. It was awesome," he said. They were so excited about it." (WR)

Gatlinburg

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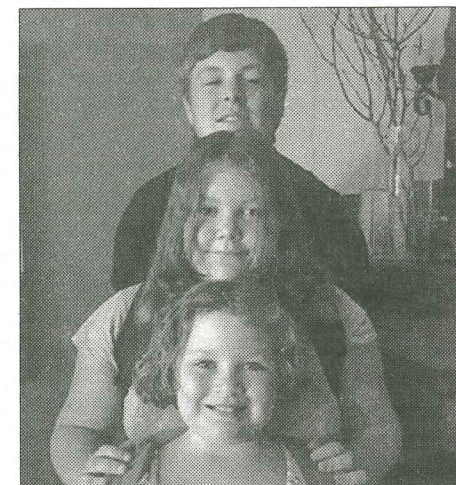
he believes his wife and daughters would want him to forgive the two suspects.

"If you live your whole life holding a grudge against everybody who has ever hurt you, then you will be lonely the rest of your life," Reed said. "The true definition of a Christian is doing the right thing when nobody is looking. I hurt and can be angry with them. This is not how our life was supposed to be. But if Jesus has forgiven me and my neighbors for our sins, I have to follow in His footsteps."

Reed's open letter is posted on the "Gatlinburg Fire Missing or Found" Facebook page.

"As I learned of your arrests last week I sat in silence for a long time," Reed wrote. "You may be too young to understand this, but even through this tragedy I can feel God with me and my son."

"... As humans, it is sometimes hard to show grace. We hold grudges. We stay angry. We point the finger and feel we have to lay the blame somewhere.



Lily (front) and Chloe Reed died Nov. 28 in Gatlinburg, Tenn., wildfires. They are survived by their brother Nicholas.

It's human nature and completely understandable. But I did not raise my children to live with hate. I did not teach my girls or my son to point the finger at others. John 8:7 says 'Let he who has not sinned cast the first stone.'

"Forgiveness isn't for you," Reed stated. "It's for me. It's for my son. It's for Constance, Chloe, and Lily. It is for this community who lost so much in this tragedy." (BP)

Good days for Ky. Baptists

Reflecting on the year that has passed by so quickly, I am grateful not only for what our churches have accomplished but for the long, rich legacy God has given Kentucky Baptists. Our gospel work is a sacred stewardship dating back to 1837. God has used Kentucky Baptists in a unique way to model and inspire cooperative mission work far beyond the borders of our state.

In fact, the idea of the Cooperative

Together We are the KBC



Paul Chitwood

Program originated in Kentucky. On Nov. 16, 1915, the General Association of Baptists in Kentucky (now called the Kentucky Baptist Convention) met in the church where I was raised, baptized, married and ordained, First Baptist Church of Jellico, Tenn. The church is literally a stone's throw from the Kentucky state line.

During that meeting, Kentucky Baptists

adopted a budget plan conceived by First Baptist Church of Murray, Ky., and their pastor, Harvey Boyce Taylor. The unified budget plan provided for the support of all denominational projects throughout the state and the Southern Baptist Convention. That plan would later become the model for the SBC Cooperative Program.

The historic, cumulative giving of Kentucky Baptists through what we know as the Cooperative Program now totals more than \$820 million. What an incredible stewardship!

How many churches have been started and strengthened with these funds? How many orphans have been cared for? How many hungry have been fed? How many gospel ministers have been educated at our colleges and seminaries? How many victims of tornado, flood or hurricane have found a hot shower, a warm meal, and a helping hand? How many missionaries have been supported across the globe? Most importantly, how many souls will be in heaven as a direct result of God using the ministries funded by Kentucky Baptists through the CP?

The cooperative mission work of Kentucky Baptists is a thriving work. I've been serving either as a pastor in Kentucky or as a state missionary for nearly a quarter of a century but have never witnessed a more harmonious, peaceful, and celebratory season. I thank God for the prevailing spirit of unity and cooperation among Kentucky Baptists and am grateful for the way our pastors and staff members seek to foster that unity and cooperation.

Having served in my current role for 5½ years now, I can unequivocally state that I am more optimistic about the future of our cooperative mission work than ever. God has given us great pastors all across the state, a tremendous state mission board staff team, and, most importantly, His gracious hand of favor upon our work, which we know to be His work. These are good days to be a Kentucky Baptist.

Human trafficking on state legislators' docket

As the new year dawns, Kentucky lawmakers are gearing up to act on an issue of grave concern to Kentucky Baptists—one that state convention-goers addressed as recently as this November.

The House Task Force on Child Abuse recently drafted a bill that would place people with human trafficking convictions on the sex offender registry, post the Human Trafficking Hotline number in schools and rest areas, and give the attorney general's office concurrent jurisdiction to prosecute reported cases.

Additionally, the bill calls for age-appropriate education on human trafficking and sexual abuse, bans sex offenders from public playgrounds, allows parents access to child abuse registries, and requires more thorough background checks for school employees and youth camp employees.

It also encourages screening suspected runaways, but rather than sending young victims of human trafficking to juvenile detention facilities, it emphasizes the need to provide compassionate services.

"When you look at it being the fastest growing criminal enterprise in the world, and that it victimizes people to the degree it does, it's a critical need we are trying to address," said Attorney General Andy Beshear.

Kentucky Baptists voiced their concern for the victims of human trafficking in a resolution adopted during their annual meeting in Florence in November. The resolution, in part, called on law-enforcement agencies and prosecutors to do all in their power to end the atrocity.

Kentucky Baptists were urged to educate themselves and others about human trafficking, how to prevent it and how to minister to those who have been ensnared by the perils of this form of modern slavery.

Kentucky Baptist Convention Executive Director Paul Chitwood spoke to the issue at this year's convention. "This is a horrendous crime that must be addressed," he urged.



After Thought

By Todd Deaton

"Human beings should not be treated as property and used in forced prostitution or involuntary labor."

More than 20 million are enslaved by the \$32 billion a year industry—an estimated 26 percent of which are children. But lest we think it is just a third-world scourge, consider that more than 14,000 new victims are brought into the United States each year.

In Kentucky alone, 160 victims of human trafficking were identified in 2014, with 94 of those being children, according to news sources.

The unsettling reality is that human trafficking has silently made its way into our city streets and communities, almost without us noticing.

Yet, as the KBC resolution points out, "The Bible describes individuals as being created in the image of God, affirms the sanctity and dignity of all human life, and calls upon

believers to speak up for those who cannot defend themselves."

As believers, this human trafficking bill should be welcomed news, since we have been called to care for "the least of these" in the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats in Matthew 25.

Kentucky Baptists must pray for justice for the perpetrators and the deliverance of human trafficking victims, learn how to identify and respond compassionately to those who are being exploited, and support area ministries that help rescue and rehabilitate these victims.

Our Kentucky Baptist churches also can prominently post the number to the National Human Trafficking hotline, 1-888-373-7888, and we can organize events to educate ourselves on the issue and help spread the word to friends, family, coworkers and fellow church members.

A good place to start is the anti-human trafficking rally that has been scheduled at the Capitol Rotunda on Jan. 11 at 10 a.m. to show state legislators your support for the human trafficking bill.

Keep the Christmas spirit all year long

It feels so wonderful how the spirit of Christmas adds oomph to life. We live in anticipation and we're even nice to strangers. We become quite intentional about giving to others.

But as we turn the calendar page to December 26, does that Christmas spirit fade?

As you pack up those Christmas decorations, consider these five simple reminders to help keep that spirit of joy and generosity at the forefront throughout the year:

Live expectantly.

Anticipation is at a high during Christmas, but a sense of expectancy is a good thing all year long. It keeps us on our toes, helps us use time wisely and reminds us to lean on God. So live with enthusiasm every day of the year. "Don't burn out; keep yourselves fueled and aflame," Scripture tells us. "Be alert servants of the Master, cheerfully expectant" (Romans 12:11-12a MSG).

Be extra nice to strangers.

Are you kinder to total strangers at Christmas? Your job as a Christian is to be God's ambassador, representing Him with your every word and deed. A man yelled rudely at me as I crossed the street the other day, then drove away, sporting a Christian symbol on his car. Take your ambassador job seriously all year long. Be nice to strangers.

Keep giving.

Wasn't it awesome to stuff backpacks for Appalachian children or gifts in shoeboxes for Operation Christmas Child? Don't stop. Each month this year, gift a carefully prepared backpack or box to a local child in extraordinary need. Include a "God loves you" note.

Make a plan.

Use Christmas ministry projects as a springboard to yearlong generosity.

Example: Instead of a give-and-run delivery of gifts or dinner for a local needy family, make a plan to show

God's love to them all year. Get to know them. Listen to their story. Invite them to church and welcome them. Pray with them. Introduce them to Jesus.

Smile freely.

Christmas season lends itself to joy. Joy isn't seasonal for a Christian. It radiates from inside, and it's there on happy days and desperate days, on New Year's Day and Groundhog Day and every other day of the year. Radiate the joy of Jesus in non-December months.

The "spirit of Christmas" is just not a once-a-year event. It's a Christian's lifestyle and mission. It's our everyday marching orders from Christ.

Exude the true Christmas spirit—God's Spirit—as you live with joy, expectancy, love and generosity. Have a merry January. And a merry February (BP)

Fresh Ideas



Diana Davis

WESTERN Recorder

Shine Like Stars * Philippians 2:15

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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.



'Is Christmas done?'—simple, yet profound

Although the Christmas holidays are getting smaller and smaller in our rearview mirror, a question my young son asked continues to linger in my head.

We had gathered with friends for one of the holiday's first Christmas parties on the first Friday in December last year. We enjoyed the tasty food, great conversation, special music of the season and a twist on our Christmas ornament gift exchange that left us all cracking up.

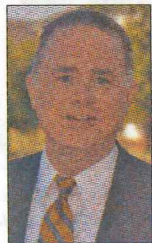
Then, as our family began gathering our things and heading out the door after the party, 3-year-old Miller grabbed my pants leg and asked, "Is Christmas done?"

Music was playing, dishes were clinking in the kitchen, parents were rounding up their kids and holiday chatter was all around, but everything was temporarily drowned out by honest questioning that can come only from a child. I immediately replied, "No son, there's a lot more Christmas to go. Now let's go home so we can take our baths and get ready for tomorrow."

That was how this grown-up dad answered a little child's simple but profound question. As Miller sat buckled in his seat on the ride home and as I thought more about it in the weeks that followed, there was a lot more to his question than I first realized.

Not only did he ask at the party if Christmas was done, he repeated it over and over throughout the holidays. Every morning during December, he'd wake up and ask first thing, "Is Christmas done?" When we'd leave another Christmas party or Christmas concert, he'd ask again, "Is Christmas done?" Part of me wanted Christmas Day to hurry up and arrive so I could finally say, "Yes, Christmas is done!"

First Person



Todd Brady

"The celebration of Christmas comes around once a year but the cause of the celebration is the One who has come to give us hope and peace all year long."

Americans like for things to be done. We like micro-waves in our kitchen. We want our TV sitcoms to wrap up and be over with nicely and quickly. We live our life in a "get 'er done" kind of way—enjoying the comple-

tion of tasks and regularly checking things off our proverbial to-do lists.

It seems to me that Christmas was never meant to be "done." Sure, the celebration of Christmas comes around once a year but the cause of the celebration is the One who has come to give us hope and peace all year long.

Isaiah said long ago that the virgin would conceive

and bear a son, and that He would be called Immanuel. Matthew quoted Isaiah and tells us that Immanuel means "God with us" (Matthew 1:23). Before He ascended to the Father after the resurrection, Jesus promised, "I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

Is Christmas done? Well, if you count the 2016 celebration, yes. We've taken the tree down at our house. The stockings aren't hung by the chimney anymore. All the Christmas goodies on the kitchen counter are gone. The Christmas decorations have been boxed up and hauled back into the attic.

Linus, in "A Charlie Brown Christmas," has reminded us of "what Christmas is all about" for the last 50 years. Knowing what it is all about causes me to realize that the answer to my son's question is "No, Miller, Jesus is always with us. Christmas is never done." (BP)

Todd Brady is vice president for university ministries and assistant professor of ministry at Union University in Jackson, Tenn.

New law signed to aid global religious liberty

Washington—The United States government has new means to help protect Christians and other religious minorities around the world from persecution.

President Obama signed into law Dec. 16 the Frank R. Wolf International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA). The president's enactment of the legislation came only three days after Congress completed its approval of the bill without any opposition in either the Senate or House of Representatives.

The new law, supported by a diverse coalition of non-government organizations, amends the original IRFA passed in 1998 by updating some of the measure's provisions in an effort to make the federal government's promotion of global religious freedom more effective.

Southern Baptists were among those who applauded enactment of the legislation.

"The bipartisan nature of this passage shows us that religious freedom does not have to be a partisan issue but is rooted in our deepest commitments as Americans, and I hope that persecuted religious minorities around the globe will see that they have not been forgotten," said Russell Moore, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, in a written statement.

"While the passage of this act by no means solves the religious freedom crisis around the world, it is a step in the right direction," Moore said.

Sen. James Lankford, R-Okla., a member of a Southern Baptist church in Oklahoma City, expressed his appreciation for the president's action.

"Religious freedom is more than an American right; it is a human right," Lankford said in a written release. "As a world leader for freedom and the protection of basic human rights, the United States should take every opportunity to advocate for people to think, believe, and act according to their religious belief, whether they belong to a minority or majority religion."

The new version of IRFA includes the following provisions intended to strengthen the U.S. promotion of freedom for all religious adherents:

- It requires the ambassador-at-large for international religious freedom to be able to report directly to the Secretary of State.
- It institutes an "entities of particular concern" category—a companion to the "countries of particular concern" classification used for nearly 20 years by the State Department—for non-government actors, such as the Islamic State (ISIS) and the Nigerian terrorist organization Boko Haram.
- It establishes a "designated persons list" for individuals who violate religious freedom and authorizes the president to issue sanctions against those who participate in persecution.

The new law—signed by Obama without comment with nearly 50 other bills the same day—also creates a list of overseas religious prisoners, mandates religious liberty training for all Foreign Service officers and calls for a minimum number of full-time staff members in the State Department's international religious freedom office.

The original IRFA established a religious freedom office in the State Department to be headed by an ambassador-at-large. It also created an independent watchdog panel, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. Wolf, the since-retired congressman from Virginia who long championed global religious liberty, sponsored IRFA 18 years ago.

The Southern Baptist Convention has adopted numerous resolutions calling for religious freedom overseas, and the ERLC has backed IRFA throughout the legislation's history.

The SBC approved its latest resolution on international religious freedom in 2015, saying it encourages U.S. government officials "to elevate religious liberty concerns to the highest priority in foreign policy, invoking sanctions against those nations which advocate or tolerate persecution of those with differing religious beliefs." (BP)

To 2017 and beyond!

As almost every child (and most adults!) know, in the first Toy Story movie, Buzz Lightyear stands on the top of a bedpost and cries out, "To infinity and beyond!" before diving into his adventure. The phrase has become part of our everyday vocabulary. As we stand poised at the beginning of a new year, here are some words that might inspire parents for what lies ahead, and shape the adventures of your family in 2017.

Live expectantly!

My friend and mentor, Dan Yearly signed all of

his pastoral columns "Expectantly!" I like that! Wake up each day expecting to encounter God as you go about your work and activity. Ask God to reveal Himself to you and your family, and to use you each day to make it easier for those around you to believe in, trust and follow Jesus.

Be intentional about spiritual growth for yourself and your

children.

2 Peter 3:18 tells us to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Look for specific ways to do that in 2017. Be faithful in Bible study and worship. Consider participation in a special spiritual growth opportunity like Children's Bible Drill, a retreat or even a home study experience (for example, Henry Blackaby's Experiencing God at Home).

Look for the teachable moment.

Beyond planned, formal instruction, children learn best when life circumstances present opportunities. Ask God to help you see and seize these moments that the rhythms of life provide—even ask God to bring them to you! Jesus constantly used everyday experiences, casual encounters and conversations to teach. Ask God to help you do the same.



David Garrard

Small but healthy, not plateaued or declining

It was my pleasure to worship with a small, open-country church in West Texas on a recent Sunday—not a traffic light in sight for miles.

Farmers and ranchers, teachers and homemakers, retirees and preschoolers gathered for worship and fellowship. They sang from the hymnal, preached from the Bible and shared life together like a large family.

Denominational demographers call a church like this "plateaued" or "declining." It is neither stagnant nor dying; it's just small—and very healthy.

The church had 60 worship attenders, 15 were middle school or younger. During the service, the pastor reminded everyone about a community outreach taking place that afternoon. He also promoted the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for international missions, reminding the church of their upcoming mission banquet.

The lay youth director announced a "boys versus girls" contest related to an upcoming Christmas mission project for their community. The choir—what most people would call an octet—announced final rehearsals for their Christmas musical coming in a few weeks.

Thank God for healthy smaller churches! They reach people—like my extended family of farmers and ranchers—and do meaningful ministry in their community and around the world. They do the same things larger churches do—only to their scale.

Without them, millions of Americans wouldn't know the joy of Christian fellowship and service.

During this Christmas season, thank God for your church—no matter the size—and ask God to enhance its ministry by making you a better member. Thank God for churches who have changed our lives. (BP)

Jeff Iorg is president of Gateway Seminary of the Southern Baptist Convention in California.

First Person



Jeff Iorg

Ashland church gives to community with one-day VBS with Santa

By Mark Maynard

Ashland—Rose Hill Baptist Church provided a unique gift to the Ashland community on Dec. 10.

A one-day Vacation Bible School with Santa gave parents a day to shop without the kids, who were treated to a three-hour VBS with all the Christmas trimmings, including a photograph with Santa Claus.

It was free, a way to reach out into the community and provide for those who need it. Rose Hill Pastor Matt Shamblin said the VBS With Santa piggybacked off what the church did this summer.

"We did a lot of the one-day Bible schools so it was something everybody was familiar with doing," he said.

The church put together teams and went serving in the community where they live. Rose Hill also did the traditional one-week summer VBS but saw a need for a series of one-day VBS.

"We recognize some places in the community didn't have access to travel on a daily basis," he said.

So they took the VBS to the community.

The VBS With Santa is an idea that has been in the planning stages for a year, said Angie Vanover, the director of children's ministry at the church.

"We have the best volunteer workers," she said. "They adapted the one-day Bible clubs to what we did here. They (the volunteers) and the Lord make me look really good."

Santa Claus made an early appearance so photographs could be taken and put in a frame for the children to take home.

The VBS was for kindergarten through fifth grade, although the 30 that came were mostly under fourth grade. "Some of them probably were too old for Santa Claus," she said.

The gospel message of Jesus' birth, the real meaning of Christmas, was taught to the children after Santa's visit so he wasn't the star of the day. That was reserved for the baby Jesus,



Kim Bush works with third graders at the VBS with Santa on the campus of Rose Hill Baptist Church in Ashland. (Photo by Mark Maynard)

Shamblin said.

"Santa is part of the way our culture celebrates Christmas," he said. "If that gives us a means by how we can preach Jesus then that's how we're going to use it."

He then added, "The original St. Nicholas was a gospel preacher."

The VBS also had a "Star Wars" theme, taking advantage of the latest movie in the blockbuster series that came out this week. There were light saber races, asteroid hunts and even an appearance from "Holy One Kanobe."

"I'm not sure we went into this with any expectations (of attendance)," Vanover said. "We had about 30 kids come so that's a good start. It gives us a measuring stick for when we do it next year."

Shamblin said the church continues to look at ways they can be involved in the Ashland area through ministry projects. He has asked his congregation to look beyond the walls of the church.

"Some of the families in our community struggle with meeting physical needs," he said. "A lot of the kids don't get a meal unless they're in school. We were also able to provide each child with a lunch at the VBS."

The VBS fed the children's spiritual and physical needs while giving the parents a free morning to shop for the big day later in the month. (KBC/KT)



Sam and Stephanie Patterson, of Louisville, celebrated the second anniversary of the day they adopted four siblings from foster care on Dec. 18. The couple are pictured with their children: Carrie, 13, Carissa, 9, Austin, 6 and Kali, 4. (Photo by Robin Cornet)

A family stitched together at Christmas

By Robin Cornet

Louisville—As Christians worldwide celebrated the birth of Jesus, one Kentucky couple reflected on the day they say God stitched together their Christmas gift of a new family.

On Dec. 18, Sam and Stephanie Patterson marked the second anniversary of the day they adopted four siblings from foster care.

"That's our 'forever family' day," said Stephanie, a music ministry associate at Little Flock Baptist Church in Shepherdsville, just south of Louisville.

More than 8,000 children are in the care of the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services this holiday season. Another 400,000 foster care kids are waiting for permanent homes across the U.S.

Sam recalled when he was handed a photograph of his children while they were still in the state's care and the range of emotions that followed. He cautioned others not to get caught up in a cloud of empathy that could lead to a child being abandoned twice.

"I think you need to be led," Sam said. "You don't need to do it just because you know Christians are supposed to take care of orphans. God really needs to place it on your heart."

The couple struggled with infertility for 10 years before recognizing God was leading them toward adopting older children.

"We never intended to get small ones," Sam said. "Carrie and Carissa are more the age we were looking for, but when they showed us a picture of all four, there was no way we were going to say no."

Carrie, now 13, Carissa, 9, Austin, 6, and Kali, 4, have since settled into safe and predictable patterns at home, school and church.

Eighth grader Carrie is contemplating a career in veterinary medicine while ignoring the occasional admiring glance from a boy or two at Little Flock Christian Academy.

Her once bashful sister, Carissa, has joined the cheerleading squad at the same Baptist private school and views any open space as an invitation to perfect her back handspring.

Austin finally got his wish to go to school like his older sisters. Mom and Dad said the kindergartener is becoming a pro at spelling words by sounding them out.

And Kali recently discovered the furry, four-legged members of the family. On several occasions, she has been



Carissa Patterson, 9, wears her adoption necklace engraved with the date she and her four siblings officially became part of the Patterson family. Carissa later added a heart locket with a photograph of her new family. (Photo by Robin Cornet)

caught bear-hugging or straddling the cats.

"I can't remember what life was like before kids," Stephanie said, a smile lighting up her face.

In a situation that began as anything but typical, the couple agreed that becoming parents of four foster children overnight has settled into something that probably looks like any other family of six with lessons in selflessness, gratitude and personal responsibility taught over and over—and over.

Sam said patience has been the greatest challenge for everyone.

"We preach love and kindness all the time. Does it always happen?" Stephanie asked. "No, but I think that's normal."

As one of more than 15 foster or adoptive families at Little Flock Baptist, the Pattersons are quickly becoming less of an exception.

"God calls us to care for the widows and orphans. How we care for them is going to be different for every person," Stephanie said. "For Sam and I, that was to adopt children, bring them into our home and be a forever family."

But for others who may not have the means or clear calling from God, the couple suggested putting together backpacks full of supplies for children who are new to foster care. Children's belongings are often stuffed hurriedly into trash bags when taken from their homes.

Other ways to help include providing respite for foster parents, mentoring or sponsoring a foster child, or volunteering at a hospital to comfort babies born with addictions.

"It can be different for everyone," Stephanie said. "It doesn't necessarily mean everyone must adopt, but in some way, we should all be doing something to care for widows and orphans." (BP)

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Comic book evangelism: 'The Silence' by Southern student

By Craig Sanders

Louisville—Though he didn't have a personal faith in God, Chad Nuss was incredulous as his father stood firm in atheism before dying from lung complications in 1996.

Nuss experienced an existential crisis, sensing that family and friends were wrong when they said that his father was "in a better place." Not having grown up in church, Nuss said his knowledge of God extended only to what he perceived in creation, alluding to Romans 1 in the New Testament.

"Look at the stars. How can you say that there's not a God?" Nuss had asked his father.

Now, 20 years later, the artistically-inclined Nuss is the creator of a planned 12-volume worldview comic book series, "The Silence," and a doctor of philosophy candidate in Southern Baptist Theological Seminary's Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Ministry. He's also a fulltime culinary manager and father of four.

Determined to help others navigate life's most pressing questions and inspired by the works of the late apologist Francis Schaeffer, Nuss combines art and evangelism in the popular storytelling medium to explore the silence of naturalistic worldviews and the centrality of God's revelation in Jesus Christ.

"I came to the conclusion that all the other religions and philosophies were teaching me how to get to God, but Christianity teaches that God comes down to us," Nuss said of his profession

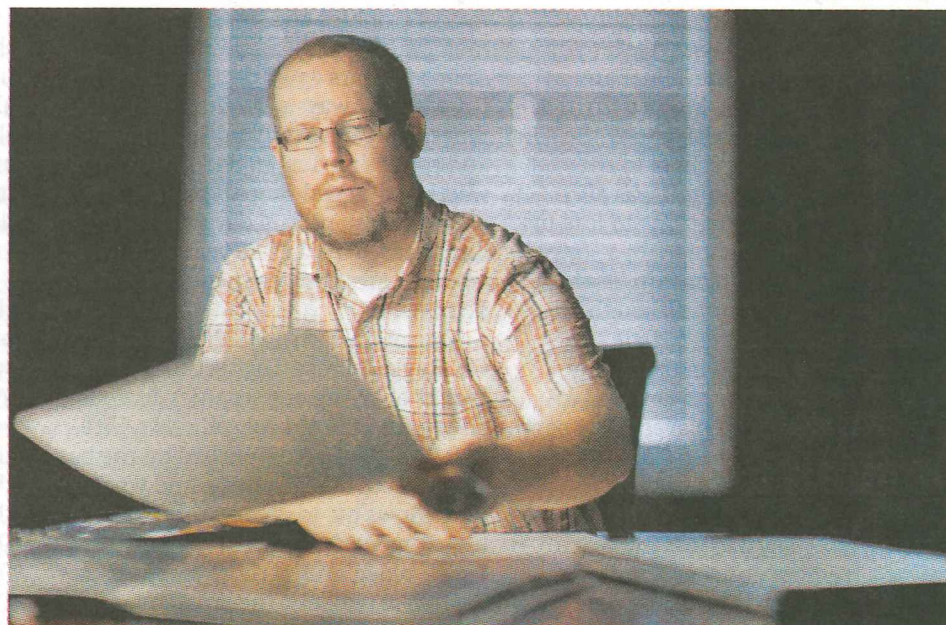
of faith in 2000 in an interview with Southern Seminary Magazine. "All the other religions were telling me to make myself a better person, but I realized that I'm the problem and I can't fix myself, that Christ came down and died for me."

Nuss met Kentucky pastor Tony Rose while playing street hockey. Rose, senior pastor of LaGrange Baptist Church since 1993, said Nuss was a high school senior determined to find honest answers to his deep questions about God.

"God had put in Chad's heart a seriousness about life that could not be satisfied with silly, ungrounded, fairy-tale answers," Rose said of his early encounters with Nuss. "I think his questions were so intense and serious that Christian kids were frightened away from him. No wonder Chad has had such an interest in apologetics, missions and reaching people with the real gospel in their real culture."

When Nuss moved back to his native Canada for art school, he and Rose exchanged letters to continue their gospel conversations. Rose knew of Nuss' artistic abilities and sent him a copy of Francis Schaeffer's "How Should We Then Live?" in which the apologist examines the effects of humanistic worldviews on art and society throughout Western history. Nuss had already begun exploring various philosophies and world religions in his search for truth and found Rose's correspondence to be crucial in leading him to an understanding and belief in the Christian faith.

Rose, who would later earn a doctor of



Chad Nuss, a doctoral candidate at Southern Seminary, writes and illustrates his comic book "The Silence," inspired by the late Francis Schaeffer. (SBTS Photo by Emil Handke)

ministry degree from Southern Seminary, baptized Nuss when he returned from art school in 2000.

"I had no clue what Southern Seminary was, but I knew when I met the Lord I was called into some form of ministry," Nuss said. He first enrolled as a master of divinity student in 2002, but because he was still new to the faith and had no background in the church, Nuss took a decidedly slower pace in his studies and soon began to work at Romano's Macaroni Grill, where he met his wife Elizabeth.

At one point, Nuss noticed himself becoming legalistic and overly

confrontational with unbelievers in his workplace, and credits his relationship with Elizabeth—whom he married in 2004—and studies at Southern with teaching him about grace and evangelism.

"Learning about worldview really helped me articulate the gospel in a way that's compelling and confrontational with tact, being gracious and truthful at the same time," Nuss said. "I've got to show them the holes in their worldview and how Christ is the better answer."

As he explored vocational ministry,

□ See *The Silence*... Page 9

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The Kentucky Baptist Convention recognizes and appreciates the life-giving ministry of faith-based pregnancy care centers in KY. We encourage your support of the following pro-life pregnancy care centers with which KBC churches and associations partner. Call or visit your local pregnancy resource center to discover ways your church can provide support and help save a life.

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Laying down trophies and clinging to the cross

On a recent visit to a church in Green County, I shared that one of the things I knew about Green County was that they beat my OBI basketball team 64-59 in the Class A State Tournament at Rupp Arena in 1992. It was a thrill to play in Rupp Arena, and we took the

This is Oneida



Larry Gritton

entire school to the game, but it was also disappointing to lose in our shot to win a state championship. That memory, although bittersweet, led me to think a bit about my days as an Oneida basketball player. A big part of my own Oneida student experience involved basketball, and my dad was my coach. He was a tremendous coach and now continues to coach folks through the game of life as he serves as a pastor in Florida.

With my father's help I had a solid

playing career, and when my playing days were over I had a nice, little collection of trophies and hardware commemorating some accomplishments. About 10 years ago, I decided it was time to part ways with those old trophies. They were only taking up space and collecting dust in our garage anyway, so I dragged those boxes to the curb on trash pickup day and they soon disappeared. As a 15-18 year old, those trophies meant more to me than they do now.

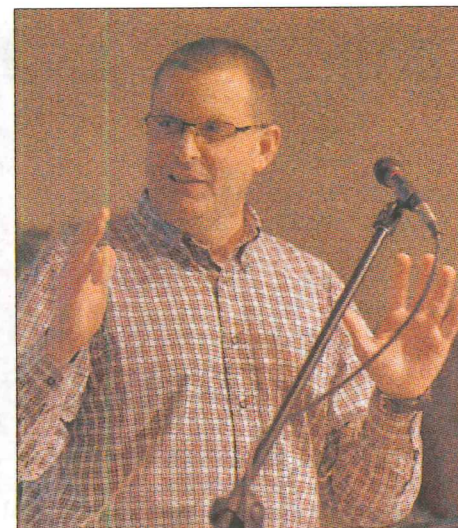
One of my favorite old hymns is The Old Rugged Cross. That great, old hymn speaks of laying our trophies down and clinging to the old rugged cross. Ultimately, what I accomplished on the basketball court means little, and what God allows me to accomplish in His kingdom work is eternal. Thankfully, as I grow older, and as those trophies mean less and less, the cross means more and more.

From time to time, one of our students will see my picture and career

basketball stats displayed in our chapel and will ask me about my playing days. I must confess that I do mostly enjoy sharing some about a fun time in my life. More importantly, that question always affords me the opportunity to share how those old trophies I acquired and eventually parted ways with don't mean much of anything and that what does matter is what we do with the cross.

Now that Christmas has passed, we should be reminded that the manger birth ultimately led to the cross and the subsequent victory over sin and death. We do our best at Oneida to teach our young people to cling to the cross. All that we do must point our students to the cross and the power contained therein. Your love and support of Oneida helps us to accomplish this and fulfill our calling of "Education for Time and Eternity." May we all cling to the cross in 2017!

Larry Gritton Jr. is president of Oneida Baptist Institute. Website: oneidaschool.org.



Rob Patterson addresses the KBC Mission Board shortly after being approved as the new regional consultant for the KBC's north central region. (Photo by Robin Cornet)

Corbin minister named KBC regional consultant

Louisville—Pastor and former International Mission Board consultant Rob Patterson will join the staff of the Kentucky Baptist Convention as north central regional consultant in February.

The KBC Mission Board approved his hiring during a business meeting on Dec. 13 in Louisville.

Patterson, pastor of discipleship and missions at Immanuel Baptist Church in Corbin, was described as the clear choice based on his academic training and service to Southern Baptists through the International Mission Board and local churches.

"I have known Rob for well over 20 years," said Bowling Green Pastor Tom James in a letter of recommendation. "He is a godly man who demonstrates a call on his life to serve the Father by serving the local church."

James, a former KBC president, said he and Patterson served together in east Tennessee before James recruited him to Eastwood Baptist Church, where he served from 2005-10.

In 2010, Patterson accepted the position as IMB team strategy leader, where he mobilized churches to engage unreached people groups in Brazil. He joined the staff of Immanuel Baptist Church in 2015.

Paducah pastor Dan Summerlin, of Lone Oak First Baptist Church, said he "enthusiastically" recommended Patterson on behalf of the administration committee.

"He's going to be a great asset to the KBC," Summerlin said.

As north central regional consultant, Patterson will work with directors of missions in 11 Kentucky Baptist associations and help churches within those associations develop strategies for growth and evangelism outreach.

"I love to encourage, equip and empower other leaders for fruitful ministry," Patterson said. "I can think of no greater privilege at this stage in my life and ministry than being an encourager and servant to the Kentucky Baptist leaders of the north central region."

Patterson is a graduate of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and Carson-Newman University in Jefferson City, Tenn. (KBC)

Making a difference in Kentucky

The Eliza Broadus Offering is more than just another offering to me. It is our state missions offering and has been making a difference in Kentucky for over 100 years.

Over the past month, EBO grant applications have been coming into the Kentucky WMU office. Each application

EBO at Work



Joy Bolton

tells about the ministry and how the funds will be used if approved. If the ministry received funds in the prior year, the application also includes an accountability form telling how the money was used. Here are just a few stories.

"I remember when one of our clients came for the first time. She was absolutely broken and could barely lift her head when I spoke to her. She had just found out she was pregnant and scared to

death. She felt all alone and didn't think she could do this. We met for a few times and I saw her start to change. She would come in with her head up and would smile some. The longer it went, she got even better and looked like a different person. As of today she is the proud mother of a toddler and that lost and broken girl is gone. She is back in church and doing great!"

"One of the sites for the Toy Project last year was a new church plant by the name of Commonwealth City Church, located in a low-income neighborhood, that shares its space with a Congolese church plant. I watched as these two churches worked together to provide for families in their congregations. One special memory was seeing the pastor of the Commonwealth City church meet the mother of a few of the children he had grown to know as part of the church youth ministry. The Toy Project provided an opportunity for the

pastor to meet families that wouldn't typically come inside the church. I saw the mother's face light up as the pastor helped her shop for her children, one of which was to take home a bicycle."

"A young mother with a baby on her hip came to our annual Back to School Bash, bringing her other children in order to receive free school supplies. One of our pastors led her to Christ and she was gloriously saved! After she had finished praying, she looked at the pastor with tears in her eyes and asked, 'How did you know?' Of course, we knew. The Lord had drawn her to us and we had prayed for someone to get saved that day. How exciting to see prayers answered!"

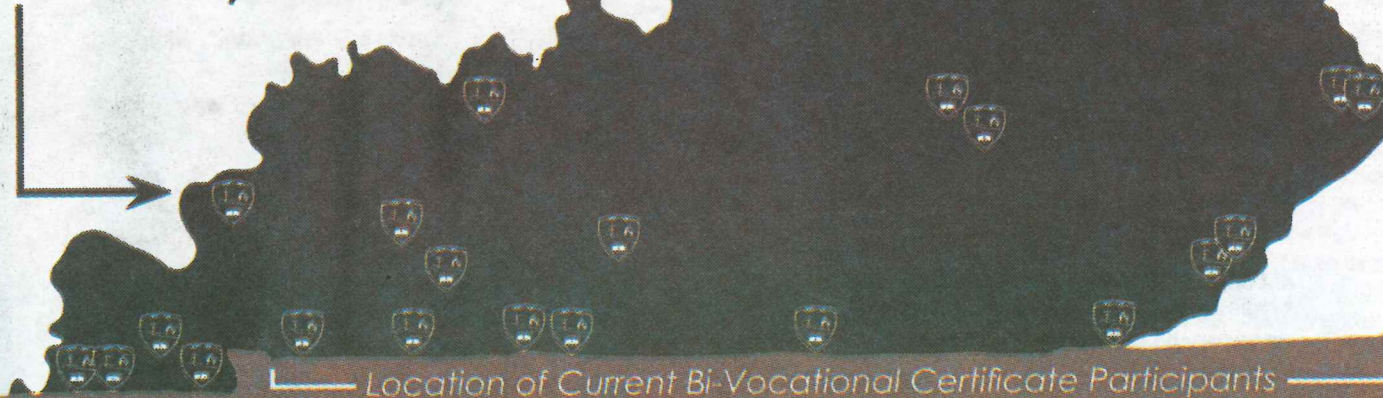
Your gifts and prayers make these stories possible. If you would like to make a year-end gift for state missions, go to www.kywmu.org/givenow.

Joy Bolton is executive director-treasurer of Kentucky Woman's Missionary Union; kywmu.org

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Robertson begins duties as Long Run's DOM

Louisville—Todd Robertson, former pastor of Antioch Church in Louisville, started his new position Dec. 1 as director of missions for the state's largest Baptist Association, Long Run, encompassing Jefferson County.

Robertson, a former NAMB missionary, is a graduate of Liberty University, Mid-America Baptist Seminary, and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has spent 19 years serving Long Run Association as a former moderator, missions strategist, chairman of the church planting team, and as a member of the executive board for the association.



Robertson

"This marks an exciting and very challenging transition," Robertson shared in a Facebook post. "I leave my role as the planter/staff pastor of Antioch Church, Louisville, after visioning and serving for the last almost eight years with our incredible gospel family. Praise God, our family will continue to be in and serve with the Antioch family."

"By God's grace, I now have the privilege of serving the 166 churches that make up the LRBA," he said, describing his role as being "a resource and catalyst" to churches in living out their call to fulfill the Great Commission.

"I love this city," he continued, "and am excited to see how God will allow our partnerships for the sake of the gospel to see city transformation and result in many becoming multiplying followers of Christ."

Eric Allen, the Kentucky Baptist Convention's missions mobilization team leader, noted that Robertson brings a wealth of experience as a missional strategist and church planter to his new role as Long Run's director of missions.

"Almost 87 percent of Jefferson County is unchurched," Allen said, "and I'm confident that Todd will provide the strategic leadership needed to address church planting and revitalization." (WR)

Moore clarifies criticism of Trump

By David Roach

Nashville—Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission President Russell Moore has clarified that he never intended to criticize all evangelical supporters of President-elect Donald Trump, noting many were motivated by "biblical convictions" and "voted their conscience."

In a Dec. 19 blog post, Moore acknowledged "pointed conversations in my denominational family about the election" over the past month, "some of them ... directed at me."

"I remember one situation where I witnessed a handful of Christian political operatives excusing immorality and confusing the definition of the gospel," Moore wrote. "I was pointed in my criticisms, and felt like I ought to have been. But there were also pastors and friends who told me when they read my comments they thought I was criticizing anyone who voted for Donald Trump."

"I told them ... if that's what you heard me say, that was not at all my intention, and I apologize. There's a massive difference between someone who enthusiastically excused immorality and someone who felt conflicted, weighed the options based on biblical convictions, and voted their conscience," Moore wrote.

Moore's blog post was published the same day as a Wall Street Journal article about him with the headline "Baptist figure faces backlash over his criticism of Donald Trump." Moore has voiced criticism of Trump's candidacy since at least September 2015.

The Journal included critiques of Moore by former SBC President Jack Graham and former SBC Executive Committee chairman William Harrell. Southern Baptist Theological Seminary President Albert Mohler Jr. and evangelical voter Ruth Malhotra, a Republican who opposed Trump, expressed support for Moore to The Journal.

ERLC trustee chairman Ken Barbic told Baptist Press, "I am particularly grateful for (Moore's) courageous and convictional leadership, under which I've observed within our convention and beyond, significant newfound energy and excitement about the work of the ERLC the last several years. (BP)

End the year well

By Try Brunson

The week between Christmas and New Year's is an amazing gift from God for reflection. You are coming off the excitement of Christmas as you prepare for what lies ahead in 2017. As you wrap up 2016, I want to encourage you to think through a few things.

First, give some stuff away. Maybe Christmas brought you new clothes, new books, and maybe if you're lucky something from Apple. If that's the case, give some of your old stuff away. Let's not let Christmas be solely about consuming, give what you can away.

Find a way not to just get rid of things but to bless someone. You have no clue how needed your coats and blankets are this time of year at your local homeless shelter. Giving really is a blessing.

Second, reflect on the past year. Sit down and write out all the ways God has blessed you in 2016. What did you do? Who did you meet? How did you grow? Take some time to thank God for His goodness in your life. Francis Schaeffer said, "The beginning of men's rebellion against God was, and is, the lack of a thankful heart." Thank the Lord for 2016.

Lastly, make a plan for 2017. We will have more on this in January, but God has graciously built rhythms into the calendar for you to grow in discipline. Every week, month and year, you have a chance to start over with resolve and focus. Maybe you need to run or join a gym. Get a Bible reading plan for 2017 and carve out time with God. Pick some books to tackle in 2017. In the words of John Piper, don't waste 2017!

So, as you soak in the aftermath of Christmas and plan your celebrations for New Year's Eve, take some time to give, reflect, and prepare. Use this week to glorify God for the gift of 2016 and prepare to make much of Him in 2017.



The Silence

Continued from Page 7

Nuss served as an assistant to SBTS alumnus Lisle Drury at LaGrange Baptist Church before leading a church plant in his home for several years. He and his family are now members at Sojourn Community Church in Jeffersontown, where Drury is the pastor.

Although Nuss had abandoned his artistic pursuits for more than a decade, he said it was difficult to resist the urge to create. In 2013, friends from church encouraged Nuss to recognize his giftedness as an artist and steward it toward his calling as an evangelist. Reflecting on the importance of that redirection, Nuss said creating "art that deals with beauty, excellence, joy, thoughtfulness and transcendence" helps him build bridges in gospel conversations with unbelievers.

"I want artwork that makes people think about God and who He is, which naturally then I can use to point to the gospel," Nuss said.

Countercultural storytelling

Late at night in his kitchen—or whenever the father of four can spare a moment between fulltime employment and doctoral studies—Nuss is sketching, weaving his epic worldview adventure *The Silence*. He launched the first issue in June 2016 after a successful Kickstarter campaign to raise funds for publishing and distribution.

Set in the fictional Prolegomenon System—consisting of 12 planets that each manifest specific worldviews like existentialism, nihilism and dualism—*The Silence* follows two characters, Naomi and Lazarus, as they explore the universe. Beset with physical weaknesses, Naomi is angry at God for her blindness and Lazarus is angry at mankind for his lung condition, which Nuss said comprises the fundamental aspects of worldview—knowledge of God and of man. Creating flawed heroes, Nuss said, yields a complex, redemptive narrative

featuring "relatable people who are wrestling with questions that everyone asks."

"These characters are trying to find answers about God and about life and they keep looking into creation but they can't find it," Nuss said. "What I'm trying to do in the book is show why these worldviews don't work, like what Francis Schaeffer did—drawing them out to their logical conclusions."

For those who are skeptical of comic book storytelling, Nuss points to the pervasive and growing influence of the industry in mainstream culture. In the past five years, the comic book industry has seen a dramatic resurgence, with its print and digital market value last estimated at \$1.03 billion in 2015, and yet with virtually no Christian influence. And now that popular titles have inspired billions more dollars in movie and television properties, most notably the Marvel Cinematic Universe, Nuss said skepticism of Christian engagement with comic books hinders gospel witness.

The Christian story is countercultural, so you have this huge opportunity to use that popular medium for influence," said Nuss, noting how classic titles from the 1980s like "Watchmen" and "V for Vendetta" popularized a once-countercultural postmodern nihilism that is a mainstream philosophy today.

Similar to John Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" or C.S. Lewis' "The Chronicles of Narnia," Nuss said he wants to tell a profound and sophisticated story by taking his story to a different world with issues parallel to our own, hoping readers return challenged in their worldview assumptions and influenced to think about the gospel.

In the November issue of the seminary's newsmagazine *Towers*, Nuss wrote in a feature essay on comic books and the gospel that the longing for escape provided in superhero stories represents "securing justice, offering redemption, defending truth, ushering in a better world—the very things Christians hope for in the person and work of Jesus Christ."

Timothy Beougher, Billy Graham Professor of



Evangelism and Church Growth and Nuss' doctoral adviser, said his student has "hit on a groove" by reaching a segment of society ripe for this type of worldview engagement. Beougher said Nuss' careful approach to his storytelling resembles his tone in personal evangelism, describing Nuss as a "very good listener" who "can relate to anybody."

While Nuss supports his wife and four children, two of whom have special needs, through his fulltime employment as culinary manager at Macaroni Grill, he also recently launched a regular column on comic books and culture for the digital magazine *Scenes*. And as he tours comic conventions and shares the gospel through conversations about his work with fans and other creators, Nuss has recognized the value of placing his gift in service to his calling as an evangelist.

"Theology should always drive you to love God more, and the arts help you to do that because it brings together the aesthetics with deep philosophical ideas," Nuss said. "Beauty is a very important part of theology."

For more information on Nuss' work, visit thesilencecomics.com. (BP)



January

- 3 Power Lunch, Baptist Building, Louisville
- 13-14 Disaster Relief Chaplaincy Training, Severns Valley Church, Elizabethtown
- 17-18 New Director of Missions Orientation, Baptist Building, Louisville
- 26-28 Shepherding 2017, Griffin Gate Marriott Resort, Lexington

MOUNTAINS TO THE MISSISSIPPI

COMPILED BY STAFF

ELIZABETHTOWN—Severns Valley Association will hold its next pastor's conference on Jan. 11 from 10:30 a.m. to noon. Gerald Murphy is the director of missions.

LOUISVILLE—Morningside Church will hold an ordination ceremony for its pastor, David McBath, on Sunday, Jan. 8, at 6 p.m. McBath, who was called as pastor on July 3, went to Morningside from Highview Church, Louisville, where he was pastoral intern. He is a student at Boyce College at Southern Seminary. Council meeting starts at 4:30 p.m.

PRINCETON—Northside Church has called Israel Brooks as pastor. He begins his duties Jan. 1.

SHELBYVILLE—Shelby Association's director of missions, Tony Hough, has announced his retirement, effective Jan. 1.

GREENSBURG—Russell Creek Association will hold a WMU Rally on Jan. 19 at 6 p.m. (CST). Wilburn Bonta is director of missions.

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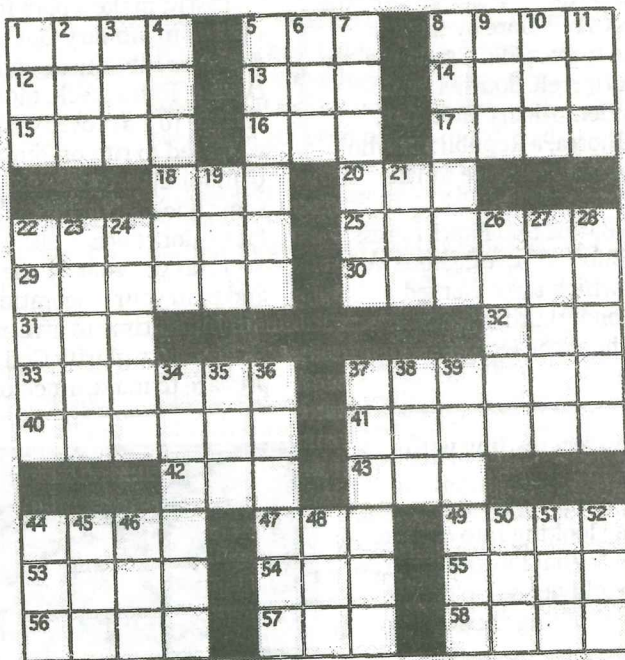
For more information, call (866) 489-3535.



Bible Crosswords

Across

1. Father of Naum (Luke 3:25)
5. Female animal parent
8. "Hath God ____ away his people?" (Romans 11:1)
12. "he armed him with a ____ of mail" (1 Samuel 17:38)
13. Historic period
14. Author of Proverbs 30
15. Hair groomer
16. Home (abbr.)
17. Son of Melchi (Luke 3:27)
18. Father of Hophni and Phineas (1 Samuel 2)
20. What Peter's friend Simon would do (Acts 10)
22. "For the words are ____ up till the end of time" (Daniel 12:9)
25. Book of the Pentateuch
29. "But I will ____ far off from the northern army" (Joel 2:20)
30. Eye membrane
31. Popular contraction
32. Muscle spasm
33. Scat!
37. "I have not hastened from being a ____ to follow you" (Jeremiah 17:16)
40. "I cry in the daytime,...and in the night ____" (Psalm 22:2)
41. A son of Rizpah and Saul (2 Samuel 21, var.)
42. Salaried player (abbr.)
43. Roman 901
44. "the promise is to...all that are ____ off" (Acts 2:39)
47. "the Lord hath called by name Bezeleel the son of ____" (Exodus 35:30)
49. Pronoun
53. "I gave Egypt for thy



#10

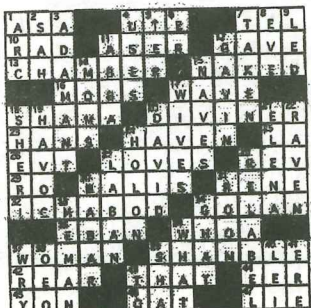
ranson, Ethiopia and ____" (Isaiah 43:3)

54. Arabic letter
55. "Lord, ____ mercy on my son" (Matthew 17:15)
56. "ye shall carry up my bones ____ with you" (Exodus 13:19)
57. Casual greeting
58. Hied

Down

1. O.T. book subtitled "The Preacher" (KJV)
2. Late actor Jack
3. O.T. book
4. "If ____ why am I thus?" (Genesis 25:22)
5. "they shall ____ every strong hold" (Habakkuk 1:10)
6. Linking verb
7. "If I be a ____, where is my fear?" (Malachi 1:6)
8. "the heaven of heavens ____ contain thee" (1 Kings 8:27)
9. Era
10. Big ____
11. ____ glyceride
19. Bk. of the Pentateuch
21. Tool not heard at the site
- of Solomon's temple (1 Kings 6)
22. Mangers
23. Quay
24. "I am Alpha and ____" (Revelation 1:8)
26. Duplicate
27. Lincoln's lads
28. Holy (Fr.)
34. Fowl not to be eaten (Leviticus 11)
35. Conjunction
36. Sufficient
37. "The wrath of a king is as...death: but a wise man will ____ it" (Proverbs 16:14)
38. "And to whom is the ____ of the Lord revealed?" (Isaiah 53:1)
39. "And he carried away all Jerusalem...all the... ____" (2 Kings 24:14)
44. Third king of Judah
45. Handful
46. Judicial junta (abbr.)
48. Woman's name
50. "her ____ was to light on a...field belonging to Boaz" (Ruth 2:3)
51. Blvd.
52. "Nightline" nickname

#09



'I haven't forgotten pastoring them'

By John Ambra

"I've worked all summer—mowing yards, trying to save enough money to fix my wife's teeth. I plan to work next summer to finish paying for her teeth."

Hard work was nothing new for L.C. Jones. After decades of laboring in sewing factories, he was accustomed to sweating it out for the sake of his family. The blazing Texas heat wasn't going to hold him back from earning enough so that Jerry could get her teeth.

Even at age 86.

L.C. and his wife, Jerry, were married in March 1947. Four years later, they would come to faith in Christ and then answer a call to ministry in 1952. Prairie Grove was their first church, and it had only 30 members. Greenwood, with an average attendance of 75, was probably the largest in their 43 years of service.

"Most of my pastorates were bivocational," L.C. recalled. "Some churches could hardly pay a small amount and none of them could contribute to a retirement plan. Moving from one place to another, I had to take whatever work I could find to support my family. Most of the time, I worked in sewing factories as a maintenance man. In those days, no matter what town you went to, there was a sewing factory."

But it was now 2012 and there were no more pastorates for the Joneses. No more sewing factories. And no extra money for dental work—except for what L.C. earned mowing yards. That's what

prompted him to share his story.

Mission:Dignity responded with an emergency grant that helped provide for her dental work and other medical bills. It was in addition to the regular monthly assistance they had received since 1999.

The extra resources still make a difference for L.C. since Jerry's death two years ago.

"I get a \$913 Social Security check, and it's hard to live on that. Sometimes, you have different occasions come up when you'd like to go out and eat or something, but you can't do that on \$913 a month."

Mission:Dignity assists more than 1,800 retired Southern Baptist ministers, workers or their widows in need. Individuals who meet guidelines for income, assets and years of paid Southern Baptist service are eligible for \$225 per month; couples receive \$300.

For some, Mission:Dignity means being able to get much-needed medical care they might not otherwise obtain. For others, it covers the cost of groceries, utilities or other necessities. But for every one of them, it's an expression of the care and compassion of their Southern Baptist family.

"I'm more thankful for the opportunity to pastor than I am for the help I receive," L.C. said. "It was a privilege to be the pastor for these people. I may not remember all of them, but I haven't forgotten pastoring them."

Visit MissionDignity.org to share a gift or learn more about the program. (BP)

CLASSIFIED ADS

SEEKING: First Baptist Church, London, Ky., is accepting resumes for a full-time senior pastor. Deadline is Dec. 31. Send resumes to firstbaptistlondon@yahoo.com.

SEEKING: Irvington Church in Irvington, Ky., is seeking a part-time music minister. Proficiency on piano is preferred. Send resumes to Irvington Baptist Church, P.O. Box 371, Irvington, KY 40146; or to ibc.ky.pastor@gmail.com by Dec. 31.

SEEKING: Small country church (no parsonage) searching for a pastor. Call (859) 824-5036.

SEEKING: Stanford Baptist is seeking a part-time children's director. Send resumes to Stanford Baptist Church, 204 Church St., Stanford, KY 40484.

SEEKING: Part-time church secretarial position available. Must be proficient in

programs such as Church Windows, MS Office, Photoshop, Sony Video, Easy Worship as well as general office equipment and other programs. Must have excellent communication and interpersonal skills, as well as a positive attitude. Send resumes to: Secretary Search Committee, 2110 New Holt Rd., Paducah, KY 42001.

SEEKING: Part-time office assistant for Kentucky WMU Office. This support staff member is primarily responsible for mailings, work with volunteers, printing/copying, and other clerical needs. Computer experience required. Knowledge and experience in WMU work a plus. Send resume to: Denise.Gardner@kybaptist.org.

FOR RENT: Destin, FL beach house. 6 Bed/4 Bath. 1/2 block to beach. Perfect for family vacations. VRBO.com/454133. (502) 727-7426.



"Using social media to recruit for the Christmas Pageant isn't working... So far, I've been 'unfriended' by 2 shepherds, 1 magi, and the entire Heavenly Host."



Left: Members of a Southeast Asian people group, immigrants living elsewhere in Asia, sometimes risk their lives to share the gospel with their fellow displaced countrymen after hearing the gospel. Above: These members and others of a Southeast Asian people group are able to learn scripture under the tutelage and ministry of International Mission Board missionary Layla Murphy. (IMB photos)

Missionary reaps harvest as 'refugee' in foreign land

By Elaine Gaston

Southeast Asia—After years laboring in a restricted-access country, International Mission Board missionary Layla Murphy began reaping a harvest as people became open to the gospel and former Buddhists were baptized.

"Things were starting to progress," says Murphy, who serves in Southeast Asia. "We were starting to get chances to do evangelism in some new places we'd never gotten to go before. It was really getting exciting—and then, the bottom sort of fell out of everything. That's when I got kicked out of the country."

It had been a long journey to that point. Murphy was working in a country that had been isolated from the outside world for decades. Military rule and an ongoing conflict made it even more challenging. But she managed to live there, working as an IMB journeyman in public health and then—after earning a seminary degree back in the U.S.—as an English teacher sharing the love of Jesus.

"Ever since I was in college, God has given me a great love for the people of that country; it has that feeling of being home," Murphy said. "If I've got to learn a new skill, I'll learn a new skill. ... If I need to learn how to do farming ... so that I can help others hear the gospel more clearly ... I'm all for it."

Rough road

During her years there, she suffered setbacks. Immigration officers shut down her English classes and forced her to leave the city for months at a time. When allowed to return, Murphy had to live in a hotel where staff watched her comings and goings. Still Murphy found ways to share the gospel and deepen her relationships with a small band of believers and new converts. They worked together tutoring students, fearlessly shared gospel truths and began prayerwalking every street in that city.

"We knew that prayerwalking is ... pre-evangelism," Murphy said. "We wanted to get the ground ready for doing more work in the city."

Then, at the end of one of Murphy's long, dusty days of outreach, government officials swarmed into the lobby of her hotel and told her to leave the country and never return. In that one knee-shaking moment, so much of what she had worked for seemed to unravel. "I was completely shell-shocked, realizing that I just got kicked out. I had to leave this country that I have loved very, very much."

American refugee

Murphy landed in a nearby Asian urban center and

prayed about what was next.

"God's plans don't always make sense," Murphy said. "It didn't make sense to get kicked out of my old country. It didn't make sense to stay in the new country. None of that makes sense. But that's exactly (what) God wanted."

One day Murphy was walking through the vegetable market and heard a familiar sound—words spoken in the language of her beloved country. Soon she learned that hundreds of thousands of undocumented migrant workers and refugees from "her" country lived in this city. There was even an established church for the people group.

While Murphy was seeking where she needed to move in order to share the gospel, a pastor asked her to consider staying right there. She'd be able to teach and train new believers from the country that she calls "home."

On the first day of class for the new Bible school she began, she hoped for 15 students to attend. Fifty showed up.

"God had put this hunger to learn His word deep in the hearts of my people. And this was the first time that they'd ever had the chance to learn (the Bible)."

And though, just like many of those she teaches,

Murphy would rather be back in the country of her heart, "this has taught (her) to have that deepened trust in God." Her students tease her that she too is a refugee—the American refugee. "That sort of binds our hearts together," Murphy said.

Pray

- Pray that God will continue to bring students to Murphy who want to grow in their knowledge and love of Christ, and that they will also be willing to share their faith with their countrymen.

- Pray for immigrant factory workers who come to the city to earn money for their families in their homeland. Pray that while they're strangers in a strange land, they would experience spiritual freedom by becoming followers of Jesus.

- Pray for church leaders in the immigrants' home country, that they would hunger to grow in knowledge and faith, and would be strengthened spiritually. (BP)

Editor's Note: Week of Prayer for International Missions in the Southern Baptist Convention this December focused on the theme of "The Gospel Resounds." Gifts to the Lottie Moon offering are received through local Southern Baptist churches or online at IMB.org. This year's goal is \$155 million.

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- 6** Because I enjoy reading insightful editorials on Baptist issues and thought-provoking First Person pieces on cultural issues shaping our Christian lives.
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- 4** Because I am encouraged in my daily Christian walk by reading about fellow Kentucky Baptists who are "shining like stars" for Christ in their homes, workplaces, schools and on athletic fields.
- 3** Because I want to know more about how our national and international missionaries are sharing the gospel in some very challenging and dark places, and how my gifts to the Cooperative Program and other missions offerings support them.
- 2** Because I feel better connected to all of our Kentucky Baptist agencies, children's ministries, summer camps, schools, Woman's Missionary Union auxiliary, and the state convention by sharing stories celebrating their Kingdom work.
- 1** Because I want to keep informed about how fellow Kentucky Baptist churches, collegiate missionaries, chaplains, Disaster Relief volunteers, Kentucky Changers and others are engaged in ministries that impact our state and beyond to advance the gospel.

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