

# Baptist and Reflector

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## Annuity Board switches SBC insurance carrier

**By Lonnie Wilkey and Tom Miller**  
DALLAS — The Southern Baptist Annuity Board has announced all medical, life, and disability insurance plans will be switched from Aetna Life Insurance Company to Prudential Insurance Company of America, effective July 1. No benefit changes will occur.

Despite the carrier change, premiums for the church medical insurance plan will rise at the same time, said Annuity Board President Paul Powell.

Premiums are expected to increase anywhere from five percent to 50 percent, said John L. Dudley, director of the board's insurance services division.

Fortunately, Dudley said, only about six percent of the plan's participants will see rate increases in the 25 to 50 percent range.

In Tennessee the rate increase will average about 20 percent although some participants may have higher or lower rates depending on location, said Vern Powers, director of the Tennessee Baptist Convention's Protection Plans Department.

The July 1 increases will not be uniform "due to the continuing transition to a geographic-area rating system that assures lower rates where costs are lower and higher rates where costs are higher," Dudley said.

Such a system, which the Annuity Board gradually is putting into place, is the insurance standard for rating

health insurance premiums, Dudley said.

"This system bases a participant's premium on actual medical-care costs in the geographic area defined by the participant's ZIP code," he noted, adding the system is "fairer for participants and more efficient for us to manage."

The primary reason for the change in carriers and the rate increase is premiums have not kept pace with claims paid.

Annual premium income for Annuity Board plans exceeds \$100 million for church and group insurance programs. But while life and disability plans have thrived, the medical plans have floundered.

For three-and-a-half years the Church Comprehensive Medical Plan has suffered a drain on reserves as claims consistently exceeded premium dollars available.

Caught in the same national phenomenon of rising medical costs, the Group Comprehensive Medical Plan had comparable experience until this year when it seems to have stabilized. There will be no mid-year rate increase in the group plan, Powell said.

Harold D. Richardson, Annuity Board treasurer, said voluntary reserves in the church plan shrank from more than \$31 million in 1984 to about \$5 million at the end of March 1990.

"That did not mean we were almost

broke. It just meant we were running out of money to 'buy down' premium increases. We have never been in danger of being unable to pay claims."

In the past five years, the amount of increase implemented by the Annuity Board has been much less than that suggested by the carrier (Aetna). For three years, from 1985-87, rates did not increase at all.

The church medical plan, which has more than 23,000 participants and 80,000 insured people, has suffered large claims/premium imbalance since 1987. The plan showed a \$2 million loss in the first three months of 1990 despite an aggregate premium increase of 20

percent on Jan. 1, Richardson said.

In Tennessee, 1460 people are covered under the church medical plan, Powers said, adding that 928 churches, roughly one-third of TBC churches, participate in the plan for their pastors and staff members.

Annuity Board trustees considered several options before announcing plans to change carriers and raise rates. One of the options included dropping the plan entirely.

Knowing that closing the medical insurance plan would leave some 80,000 people in 23,000 families searching for individual insurance and that some of

(See page 5)

## BJCPA laments court ruling

WASHINGTON (BP) — In its biggest church-state decision in 20 years, the U.S. Supreme Court has cut back on the First Amendment protection for the free exercise of religion.

In fact, the recent ruling transforms the free exercise clause of the U.S. Constitution into a "mere redundancy" that serves no practical purpose, asserted Oliver S. Thomas, general counsel for the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, which is seeking a second hearing on the case.

"And that's not overstating it," Thomas insisted. "I'm not given to alarmist statements about cases, but this case essentially writes the free ex-

ercise clause right out of the Constitution."

The ruling opens the door for government regulation of religious practices and for the enforcement of laws even when they violate the religious views of individuals. The only protections left are in unemployment compensation cases, in the instance that a law specifically targets religious practice, or when free exercise of religion is linked with another First Amendment freedom.

As constitutional lawyer William Bentley Bell noted, the decision moves religious liberty "to the back of the constitutional bus — maybe off the bus."

The unexpected ruling came in an Oregon drug case involving two Native Americans dismissed as state drug counselors after they admitted eating the hallucinogen peyote in a religious ceremony. Oregon attorneys argued the state could dismiss the men without benefits because it had a "compelling interest" to enforce its drug laws. The Supreme Court agreed with the state's action, but with more far-reaching reasoning set forth in the majority opinion written by Justice Antonin Scalia.

In essence, Scalia's opinion says the state is free to enforce generally applicable laws, even when they violate a person or group's religious practice.

He differentiates between religious (See page 5)

## Bush declines SBC speaking invitation

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (BP) — President George Bush has declined an invitation to speak to the Southern Baptist Convention next month after some Baptist leaders disapproved that he hosted gay and lesbian leaders at an April White House ceremony.

SBC President Jerry Vines and a handful of Southern Baptist leaders reportedly discussed "disinviting" the president in a conference call May 10. But the SBC Committee on Order of Business, which is responsible for arranging the program for the annual convention, was not involved in the discussion nor immediately informed of Bush's decision.

Conservative leaders have been upset since Bush invited representatives of the Gay and Lesbian Task Force to join other minority activists at a White House ceremony April 24 to witness Bush's signing of new federal legislation requiring records on hate crimes.

Vines, pastor of First Church, Jacksonville, raised the gay issue with the White House and asked that Bush consider those objections in his decision

whether or not to speak at the Southern Baptist Convention June 12-14 in New Orleans, a Bush spokesman said.

"He wanted us to be aware of the fact that some conservatives might raise the (gay) issue," said Doug Wead, Bush's liaison to religious organizations. "He didn't want to see the president embarrassed or the meeting disrupted."

According to Wead, Vines also pointed out "some moderate and liberal Southern Baptists" were opposed to the president speaking at the convention under any circumstances. Wead said the president declined the invitation — which the White House had sought — because of a schedule conflict.

But Wead acknowledged the gay dispute was part of the discussion. He said he sympathized with Southern Baptists upset about the presence of gays at the signing ceremony. "The concern was not just these homosexual leaders being invited to the White House, but some of these are anti-religious bigots," he explained.

Richard Land, executive director of

the SBC Christian Life Commission, complained in a letter to Bush April 30. "The White House should not be giving its sanction and implicit approval to such groups," Land wrote.

Land and a handful of other Baptist leaders reportedly discussed "disinviting" the president in a conference call with Vines May 10. Land would not say who took part in the discussion other than Vines.

But Land, who said he took part in the conference call at the invitation of Vines, said he told the SBC leaders he did not object to the president addressing the SBC. "I made it clear to Jerry that I would not perceive an invitation to the president as in any way undercutting the CLC or our letter objecting to the presence of the Gay and Lesbian Task Force at the bill signing," Land told the Florida Baptist Witness, newsjournal of the Florida Baptist Convention.

Vines, who was in Memphis for a conference hosted by Bellevue Church where former SBC president Adrian Rogers is pastor, did not return telephone calls to inquire about the matter.

Ike Reighard, chairman of the Committee on Order of Business, told the Witness last week he was unaware of the conference call, the gay-rights dispute, or the president's decision to decline.

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### An inside look

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**Editorial**

# Executive Board ably fills four important positions

The Tennessee Baptist Convention does not yet have a full crew aboard, but after the Executive Board's action May 8, the grand ship is better equipped to sail.

Four directors will join the TBC staff before summer ends, one of whom will fill the Convention Ministries Division directorship. D. L. Lowrie undoubtedly will be able to direct more time and energy to his post as executive director/treasurer.

Bill Wilson will direct the work of eight departments under the Convention Ministries Division umbrella. The well-known pastor of Brentwood Church was a unanimous choice of committee and Executive Board.

He has been a neighbor to the TBC for twenty years — just a five-minute walk down Franklin Road. But the geographical closeness is not that important.

His hard-working, thorough, and calm approach to daily regimen and difficult tasks makes him an able right hand for Lowrie, and an astute leader for the division.

The board approved three department director nominees who will be working with Wilson's supervision.

The search for a successor to Carroll Owen

who retired almost two years ago ended when, as one search committee member said, "God led us to Bill Wilson." Anyone who has observed the growth of Brentwood Church from "scratch" twenty years ago, to a thriving, selfless, missions-minded body of believers — will admit his leadership ability is proven.

The other choices: Jere Phillips to succeed Les Baumgartner in Missions, Archer Thorpe to follow Orvind Dangeau in Cooperative Program/Stewardship, and Aubrey Hay to succeed Bill Harbin in Church-Ministers Information, are good choices. All three men who retired in recent months cut a wide path through Tennessee, as did Paul Hall who ably served for many months as interim in missions.

Phillips was chosen for his "missions heart, sharp mind, deep commitment." Responding to the affirmative vote, the new missions leader said, "There are many challenges in Tennessee. The diversity is interesting, but I hope to help advance our involvement in missions and bring people together."

Thorpe's position as Tennessee's leader in recognition and support for the CP and

development of stewardship is a tremendous challenge. In nominating him, Ann Davenport said, "None of our work can proceed unless CP support is strong. This is a terribly important position."

His background allows scrutiny and proves his enthusiastic ability for the post.

Hay has served thirty years as a pastor, and that experience provides solid experience as he relates churches with ministers. This too is a vital position. Hay said to the Board, "I feel God has prepared me for this kind of work. I am committed to help churches and ministers, to be fair, to be open and objective. I will have a good listening ear and heart."

At any given time, there are scores and scores of pastors and staff members without churches — and churches without ministers. Many times it is a touchy situation. The new name proposed for the department fits much better, and the man chosen fits the job.

The four new staff members will not be able to perform miracles nor move mountains, but as Tennessee Baptists add them to the family and to their prayer lists — we will sail forth, on a straight course, in the Lord's work.  
— WFA

## Call to recommitment to share Christ with world

The "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations" and "You shall be My witnesses" of Jesus Christ should be enough to make Christians commit to His cause.

For Tennessee Baptists and others who own Jesus as Master, it is enough. But like the disciples who could not stay awake and watch while He prayed and agonized, we too are slothful.

Christianity demands commitment. Indeed, Christ Himself demands loyalty from the true servant.

Keith Parks, president of the Foreign Mission Board, sent a letter to all state paper editors. He spoke to this group as a brother in Christ, but also as one who cannot fall asleep while the lost world

### For the sake of 3.5 billion people —

For the sake of three and a half billion lost people, I plead with Southern Baptists to rise above our controversy and recommit to sharing Christ with the whole world. God has opened doors and broken down walls. He has entrusted us with enough spiritual, human, technical, and financial resources to have a significant part in reaching all people. The urgency of this "fullness of time" moment demands immediate response.

But many signs indicate we may forfeit our greatest challenge.

We are seeing the most results ever in our work overseas. But at home, our conflict is depriving us of the additional resources that are urgently needed to meet new openness and responsiveness. We were on God's timetable starting in 1976 when, through Bold Mission Thrust, our convention repeatedly

#### Mother's Day Offering

### TBCH gifts over \$100,000

In just one week a total of \$101,748 has been received from Baptist churches across the state for the Mother's Day Offering of the Tennessee Baptist Children's Homes.

On Sunday, May 13, Baptist churches in Tennessee collected a special offering to benefit children receiving care on TBCH campuses.

The gifts from this special offering provide one-third of the annual support for the Tennessee Baptist Children's Homes, a ministry to abused, neglected, and abandoned children. The goal for the 1990 child care offering is \$950,000.

"This ministry is making a difference in children's lives," says Gerald L. Stow, TBCH executive director.

In addition to main campuses in Memphis, Franklin, and Chattanooga, TBCH has a Boys' Ranch in Millington; satellite cottage homes in Johnson City, Burrville, and Kingsport; and alternative homes for unwed mothers in Greeneville and Franklin.

Gifts to the TBCH Mother's Day Offering may be made through Baptist churches, or directly to the Tennessee Baptist Children's Homes, Central Office, 5001 Maryland Way, Brentwood.

goes to hell. As a fire burning in his bones, he said, he must share the message of renewal and commitment.

We urge Tennessee Baptists to read and heed Dr. Parks' words. One of his most telling statements says, "For the sake of three and a half billion lost people, I plead with Southern Baptists to rise above our controversy and recommit to sharing Christ with the whole world."

If this recommitment comes first in hearts longing to serve the Savior, it will so consume us that we will never again label a brother or sister, shun the paths they walk, ignore their efforts, or seek places of acclaim.

Listen, then, to Dr. Parks' message. — WFA

committed to larger mission budgets, great increases in missionaries and strengthening of missions through every part of denominational life. As we enter what should be a climactic decade in global evangelization, God has opened many nations before us. Regrettably the controversy has not only taken the focus off missions, but has hindered the fulfilling of our Biblical mandate.

The effort to control has excluded many major supporters of cooperative missions. We are losing the wholesome balance that has been our convention's strength. Historically, we have always been a mixture of two major groups. We need full participation of both if we are serious about reaching the world for Christ.

After this decade of controversy, we have not received the increased budgets necessary to fund

Bold Mission Thrust. We have received a larger number of dollars, but this level of giving has hardly matched inflation, much less provided for growth. Buying power per missionary has steadily weakened. More and more churches and individuals are noting the controversy as a reason for withholding support.

At our time of extraordinary need for missionaries, we have seen a decline of appointments for four years. Many missionary candidates are increasingly concerned about the direction of our convention and turmoil on seminary campuses.

We were once known as a people of evangelism and missions. Now, even internationally, we are headlined as a people of controversy. Our witness of love and hope is less effective.

The only solution I see is spiritual. We must humble ourselves, pray, seek God's face and turn from our wicked ways. Hopefully, it is not too late for healing. I would urge all who are concerned about Southern Baptists doing our part in reaching this lost world to commit to a regular day of prayer and fasting until our convention is reconciled.

Let us rise above the controversy. Let us re-emphasize our world mandate as described in Bold Mission Thrust which our convention has reaffirmed many times. We can still impact the world if we are willing to pay the price. May we come to the end of this century known again by the commitment of prayer, life, and resources as a Bible believing, missions practicing people — for the sake of three and a half billion lost persons.

Prayerfully,  
R. Keith Parks

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# Religion ban eased in atheist Albania

By Art Toalston

RICHMOND (BP) — Religious oppression reportedly has been eased in Albania, the only country in the world to ban all faiths.

Already, Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board officials are preparing for new opportunities that may develop in the Eastern European country.

The Albanian Communist Party's official newspaper, Zeri i Popullit, has reported the country's parliament adopted a number of reforms May 8, including one related to religious activity in the nation of 3.2 million people.

Under the new law, engaging in "religious propaganda" reportedly no longer is listed in the penal code as a crime against the state.

However, the newspaper reported that one of the authors of the reforms, Alex Luarasi, emphasized that no plans exist to reopen the mosques and church buildings closed after the communist government launched a sweeping effort to create a pure atheistic state in 1967.

Southern Baptist workers in Europe are monitoring developments in the country, said Keith Parker, who directs the Foreign Mission Board's work in Europe, "in the hopes that we can implement additional strategy."

As soon as opportunity permits, "We would want to give assistance to strengthen the churches in Albania and to minister to the needs of the people,"

added Isam Ballenger, Foreign Mission Board vice president for Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. "We would want to honor their perseverance and to learn from their experiences."

The Foreign Mission Board currently provides \$30,000 a year to help fund Albanian-language broadcasts beamed toward an estimated 525,000 radio sets in Albania via a 1-million-watt Trans World Radio transmitter in France. The speaker is an Albanian Christian convert who formerly was jailed for his faith. His 15-minute broadcasts are aired seven days a week.

Just a few days ago, the broadcast received its first-ever letter from an evangelical believer in Albania, Parker noted.

"There definitely are evangelical Christian believers in Albania who have had a salvation experience," he added. "I have no idea of numbers. I have heard figures as low as 20 and as high as a few hundred."

Parker told of interviews with Albanians shown on German television May 10. One man was asked about belief in God. "Oh, I am a believing Christian," he replied, using a word denoting a true believer, not a token Christian.

"His eyes got soft and he said, 'I really believe in Christ,'" Parker recounted. "Then suddenly you could see him realize that the camera was upon him." The commentator then explained that the man still was fearful of be-

ing persecuted, Parker said.

In 1967, when communist leaders ordered the closing of all places of worship, 2169 mosques, churches and convents were destroyed or converted to secular use. Some 70 percent of Albanians come from Muslim backgrounds. Another 20 percent were affiliated with the Albanian Orthodox Church, and ten percent were Roman Catholics. Protestants were only a tiny minority.

Under the former penal code, religious propaganda was listed as a form of "anti-state agitation" punishable by a jail term of three to ten years.

According to one 1984 estimate, underground believers represent about 26 percent of the population — 21 percent are Muslim; five percent are Christian. The country is rich in religious tradition. It became

predominantly Muslim during a series of mass conversions in the 17th and 18th centuries. Centuries earlier, however, the Apostle Paul had preached in Albania, then known as Illyricum, according to Chapter 15 in the New Testament book of Romans.

The reforms in Albania are a significant departure from Albanian leader Ramiz Alia's declaration last December that the onset of greater freedoms elsewhere in Eastern Europe "do not concern us."

In March, Albania inaugurated international telephone service to more than 20 countries — including the United States, with which it severed diplomatic relations in 1946. Albanians have begun making telephone calls to family members and friends who have taken refuge in America.

## Honeycutt cites issues at rallies

LOUISVILLE (BP) — Defending himself and the institution he represents before largely partisan audiences, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary President Roy L. Honeycutt has decried widely circulated accusations of a 25-year-old seminary trustee.

The president of the Louisville, Ky., seminary spoke May 15 at a moderate rally in Louisville, attended by about 450-500 people. He addressed about 50 alumni the morning of May 16 in Nashville and 525 alumni and sup-

porters May 17 in Atlanta. He is to speak to similar audiences May 22 in Birmingham and Montgomery, Ala.

Honeycutt's appearance before the Louisville rally marked his first public forum dealing with the Southern Baptist Convention controversy since the SBC annual meeting in St. Louis three years ago, he said.

Noting that he had tried to be consistent with the SBC Peace Committee's recommendations adopted by the convention, Honeycutt said he had remained silent. Yet he told about 50 people in Nashville that the Bible says there is a time to speak.

"Recent events at Southern Seminary have created a new context in which it is now wrong to be silent," he said. "This is not time for silence. As president, it is time to speak frankly as an advocate for Southern Baptists' senior seminary."

Honeycutt told the alumni that he intends to go and "tell it on the mountain, over the hills and everywhere" that Southern Seminary and its faculty "are committed to the Lordship of Christ and the authority of the Bible."

He also assured the alumni he intends to spread the word that "Roy Honeycutt functions with integrity as president of Southern Seminary and that he believes the Bible is God's inspired Word."

In prepared remarks Honeycutt dealt exclusively with recent charges by seminary trustee Jerry Johnson, pastor of Central Church, Aurora, Colo. Johnson wrote a document called "The Cover-up at Southern Seminary" that calls into question Scriptural beliefs and practices of the seminary president and several faculty members.

Decrying all of what was written, Honeycutt said Johnson makes his most "unreasonable accusation" in stating, "One would have to be as blind as a mole not to see that Dr. Honeycutt just does not believe the Bible."

Honeycutt replied that since the age of nine, when he made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ, his commitment to the Bible as the Word of God has been "a dynamic and integrating focus of my life."

"Since I learned to read, I cannot recall a time when I didn't read the Bible, treasure its divine truths and seek to live out of its revelation," Honeycutt said.

## Send in advance SBC resolutions, Corts asks

NASHVILLE (BP) — Mark Corts, chairman of the 1990 Southern Baptist Convention Resolutions Committee, has asked messengers to send him advance copies of resolutions they plan to submit during the annual convention meeting June 12-14 in New Orleans.

Corts, pastor of Calvary Church, Winston-Salem, N.C., said the committee will meet June 9, in New Orleans, for a get-acquainted and orientation session and June 10, to review advance copies of resolutions.

"Having copies of resolutions in advance will enable the committee to give them more careful considera-

tion," said Corts, who was appointed by SBC President Jerry Vines to chair the ten-member committee.

Corts said resolutions should be mailed to his attention at Calvary Baptist Church, 5000 Country Club Rd., Winston-Salem, N.C. 27104.

He emphasized that messengers who send advance copies of resolutions to the committee also must submit them on the first day of the convention.

Committee representatives will be at a table near the platform in the Louisiana Superdome to receive resolutions during business sessions on June 14. Titles of proposed resolutions then will

be read into the convention record by a convention officer and forwarded to the committee for consideration.

According to SBC Bylaw 21, the committee has the "duty . . . to prepare and submit to the convention resolutions which the committee deems appropriate for adoption and to report on all matters submitted to it by the convention, with or without recommendation or amendments."

Corts said: "I would rather see a few resolutions given thorough and careful consideration by the committee and the messengers. We're interested in giving proper and complete attention to issues that are the highest priority and, at the same time, to be prophetic."

In addition to Corts, Vines named the 1989 Resolutions Committee chairman, Mark Coppenger, executive director of the State Convention of Baptists in Indiana, to serve on the committee.

According to SBC bylaw, the Resolutions Committee must include three members of the SBC Executive Committee. They are Russell Bush, a retired dentist and pastor from Hattiesburg, Miss.; Paul House, assistant professor of religion at Taylor University in Upland, Ind.; and Miriam Kibelbeck, a homemaker from Port Charlotte, Fla.

Other members are Andy Buckley, Baptist Student Union director at the University of Southwestern Louisiana and member of East Bayou Church, Lafayette; Bill Merrill, pastor of Country Estates Church, Midwest City, Okla.; Charles Page, pastor of First Church, Nashville; Robert Sloan, professor at Baylor University and member of First Church, Lorena, Texas; and Mrs. Bobby Vereen, a homemaker and member of Woodridge Church, Mobile, Ala.

## Tennessee team arrives in Soviet Union

Ten Tennessee college students, led by Rodney Wilson of the Tennessee Baptist Convention's Student Department and Bob Hall, Baptist Student Union director at University of Tennessee, Knoxville, left May 20 for the Soviet Union.

The Tennesseans are the first Southern Baptists to conduct short-term missions work in the Soviet Union. Students from Texas, Alabama, Mississippi, and Kentucky will participate later.

The BSU teams will help renovate a Russian Orthodox church building for use by a Baptist church in Leningrad.

Students will do various renovation jobs on the building so it may be used as an inner-city church and a ministry to youth in downtown Leningrad, said Brad Gray, student ministry consultant for world student missions at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

Team members also will have opportunities for singing, giving

testimonies, some preaching, and participating in worship services in Leningrad, Gray added.

Tennessee BSU students participating in the venture include: Matthew Evans, UT-Knoxville, First Church, Knoxville; Steve Johnson, UT-Knoxville, Central Church, Barden; Allan Lovelace, Tennessee Tech University, First Church, Morristown;

Howard Murphy, Carson-Newman College, Anderson, S. C.; Rusty Nix and Jeff Ramsey, East Tennessee State University, Central Church, Johnson City; Mike Turner, UT-Knoxville, West Hills Church, Knoxville;

Jay Victory, Columbia State Community College, First Church, Mt. Pleasant; Jeremy Wilcox, Vanderbilt University, Madisonville, Ky.; and Richard Williams, Memphis State University, Germantown Church, Germantown.

The Tennessee BSU team is scheduled to return from the Soviet Union on June 8.

# Our Readers Write

## Letter writers: Read these guidelines

A policy statement and guidelines for letters to the editor is printed each week on the "Our Readers Write" page of the Baptist and Reflector.

Writers must adhere to the guidelines so that letters can be considered for publication.

In May and June the rhetoric seems to rise to higher levels. We urge each letter writer to study the guidelines before writing.

Letters have the greatest opportunity of being used if they are: short, concise, devoid of personal attack, positive, and germane to Southern Baptists and Tennessee Baptists. Personal attacks are not allowed, nor are attacks on anyone's integrity.

Prior to the SBC, we encourage writers to discuss topics that are germane to the New Orleans meeting if that is their goal. Be concise, positive, and include address and phone number.

We anticipate the mail volume to increase — so keep your letters short and they will not have to be edited for length. — Editor

## Call for prayer

For the past decade, people of the Southern Baptist Convention have been fraught with strife and discontent. The battles that have been fought have caused some to leave the Convention, broken the spirit of others, bred distrust, and diverted us from our goal of reaching the world by the year 2000.

In an effort to focus on the Southern Baptist Convention in June, the Young Adults of Monte Vista Church are calling for all churches to hold prayer services. A twenty-four hour prayer vigil will be held in Maryville at 4 p.m. on Friday, June 8, and conclude June 9. It is the hope of this Young Adult group that prayer for convention unity will set the tone for New Orleans.

Young Adults  
Monte Vista Church  
1735 Old Niles Ferry  
Maryville 37801

## An inerrant spirit

For years we have heard much discussion about inerrancy of the Scripture. It has served as a rallying point and as a vehicle to purge those who do not subscribe to its precepts. Inerrancy is simply defined as "exemption from error" and "infallible." The Baptist Faith and Message, in its statement of our accepted beliefs about Scripture says, "it has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter." If it is inerrancy that concerns us, we have long held to that principle.

Our time could best be spent in seeking an inerrant spirit, one that embodies all the elements of Christlikeness for which a believer should strive. Scripture is changeless, one's spirit can be influenced and changed.

I believe in Scripture, its claims for itself and the "without error" we have claimed for it. I believe our energies could be more productive if used to effect change in spirit — an inerrant spirit like our Savior's — rather than using it to expound a truth which the majority of all Southern Baptist believers have long accepted.

Pray with me for an emphasis and

direction to which all believers can subscribe in harmony and oneness.

Jimmy F. Dunn  
Minister of Education and  
Administration  
First Church  
Nashville 37203

## Growing in love

The annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention will focus on church growth. My prayer is that this will include growing in love, for Jesus' most persistent command is to "love one another, even as I have loved you, that ... all men will know that you are My disciples."

Is there love in "going for the jugular" to control a convention or its agencies? Is there love in keeping files on what people say or do, to use that information against them? Is there love in accusing a brother in Christ of repudiating the truth of Scriptures when he has devoted a lifetime of studying and proclaiming that truth with integrity? Is love demonstrated by applying labels and causing divisions among Christian brothers and sisters?

The most frightening aspect of Jesus' command is that we love each other as He has loved us. His love for us caused Jesus Himself to be crucified on our behalf. But we allow personal vendettas to cause the crucifixion of others. A lost world may never have a credible demonstration of the love of God until people who claim to have been redeemed by God's love learn to love each other as self-sacrificially as Jesus loves us.

It seems our only hope of growing in love, to the extent that God must want and that a lost world must need, is for God Himself to miraculously enlarge the circles of our love so as to enclose all our brothers and sisters in Christ — even those whose circles will exclude us! We must earnestly pray for that kind of miraculous growth, or we will experience no genuine growth at all.

John Burton  
Mountain View Dr., Rt. 1  
New Market 37820

## Modern day Paul

I read an interesting passage today, Galatians 2:11-21.

At first I thought this passage may be speaking to our present circumstances but wondered if I was trying to twist it toward a particular view of my own. It is easy to do. As I pondered, I became convinced that it does have application to our present situation.

I thought of how we have worked closely, for a long time, with the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs (BJCPA). This was a happy relationship until some came with a more perfect way. Other "conservative" Baptists were drawn to their way of thinking until even people who have worked closely with the BJCPA were drawn to this more holy way.

I wondered who might be our Paul and considered perhaps James Dunn himself. We might hear him say as Paul, "We who are Southern Baptist, not just Baptist, know that a man is not justified by a set of doctrines but by faith in Jesus Christ."

"I do not set aside the grace of God, for if the world could be changed by an inerrant word from God, then Christ died for nothing!" (paraphrase of vv. 15, 21).

There is a place in God's kingdom for Jews and Gentiles, Southern Baptists and other Baptists. We best learn to work together now!

Don Miller  
4060 Park Ave.  
Memphis 38111

## Basis for faith

With respect to Bill Leonard, I think he has grossly misinterpreted the facts and has, in effect, rewritten history.

Dr. Leonard says early Southern Baptists admitted anyone who "affirmed certain 'universally prevalent' Baptist beliefs." What he did not say is that certain Southern Baptists have departed from these beliefs — most notably, the inerrancy of the Bible.

Granted, the word "inerrancy" does not appear in the writings of most early Baptists (although that very word does appear in some of A. T. Robertson's writings), but these people, nonetheless, affirmed the same basic idea. Surely they would not have approved of what the "non-inerrantists" are teaching these days.

I would like to see unity in our denomination as much as anyone, but around what shall we unite? Around missions? We have no basis for missions apart from the Bible. Around Jesus? We have no basis for faith in Jesus apart from the Bible.

George W. Truett, in his great address on "Baptists and Religious Liberty," gave the answer: "Christian union ... must be based upon a clear understanding of the Word of God and a complete loyalty to the will of Christ as revealed in His Word."

Kenneth A. Jones  
321 N. Montgomery #4  
Memphis 38104

## Questions about report

I can hardly believe the implications of the Baptist Press release which reports Jerry Vines' silencing part of the Executive Committee's minority report which objects to the recommended budget allocations for the Baptist Joint Committee. Would someone please tell me where in the Southern Baptist Convention's Bylaws the president is given the power to amend the printed report of a committee before it is presented? Would someone tell me where in Robert's Rules of Order a moderator is given the power to rule a report out of order before it is presented in business session?

To justify such a blatant disregard for the Convention's Bylaws and parliamentary procedure on the basis of going "by the rules" is an insult to every thinking Baptist.

What is in that minority report which Jerry Vines does not want in our hands at the Convention? Let democratic principles prevail. Give us all the facts and trust us to make a wise decision.

P. Joel Snider, pastor  
Crieveewood Church  
480 Hogan Rd.  
Nashville 37220

## Not the Bible or Jesus

For Christianity and for Southern Baptists in particular, it is bewildering and sad that current proponents of the inerrancy of Scripture continue to strengthen their role in offices of the convention.

Bewildering, because they have won and continue to win by touting the Baptist way while doing things that historically and traditionally are not Baptist at all. Sad, because their victory is proving to be a Pyrrhic one.

A case in point is the rallying cry for New Orleans. It sounds good to make inerrancy of Scripture the central issue. In reality, Jesus is the central issue. Christians, Baptists in particular, have always rallied to His person. The issue is not the inerrancy of Scripture or Jesus.

It is Jesus and the Bible, in that order. What the Bible is, is extremely important; but it is Jesus who is life and the Giver of life. "Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me." The quote is not to inform but to affirm

that the Scriptures are God given to testify concerning Him who is the life.

We need to go to New Orleans and elect leaders who will demonstrate the Spirit of Christ. Historically, Christians, and Baptists in particular, have relied on the persuasive influence of Christ and the truth of Scripture to win an un-Christian world. Coercive efforts of church and state are not only counterproductive; but by and large have been rejected.

Ted Duffey, pastor  
Holladay Church  
Camden 38320

## Need for accountability

When a trustee of Southern Seminary accused President Roy Honeycutt of not believing the Bible, it was a disgrace. When a trustee of the Christian Life Commission made a racist speech in a general meeting, it was a shame. When trustees at Southeastern Seminary turned things upside down, putting the accreditation and future of the seminary in jeopardy, it was a tragedy. The list could go on, but this is enough to force the question: When are we going to have accountability among our Baptist leaders?

The shame of the individuals engaging in such activity ultimately reflects on the presidents, chairmen of the Committee on Committees, and chairmen of the trustee boards.

Many people in the SBC are tired of seeing unprovoked assaults on our leaders. These leaders accept their accountability and bear it worthily. How do some trustees get such weird ideas about what they are supposed to do? Some function in an adversarial role as enemies of the agencies they are supposed to serve. Such activities reflect unfavorably on the presidents who ultimately are responsible.

Let's have accountability.

D. P. Brooks  
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Nashville 37412

## Alcohol a disease?

The news reports that scientists have determined that alcoholism is a disease. Great, aren't we smart? You can now purchase your disease of diphtheria, cholera, malarial fever, tuberculosis, leukemia, and alcoholism at the corner grocery, the pub, or the office party. By the way, we do this because we need the tax from it and the lobbyists of the liquor industry have attractive gratuities. Please overlook the 25,000 who die on our highways each year and the hundreds more who are injured as a result of drunken drivers.

Don't concern yourself with broken homes and hungry and deprived children who grow up in poverty and crime as a result of alcohol. Be sure and pick up your bottle of disease so we can add its devastating consequences to our government charges, to medical treatment costs, and to lost production in the work force, due to alcohol.

Aren't we smart?

John W. Kurtz, pastor  
Mt. View Church  
12545 Old Hickory Blvd.  
Antioch 37013

## Dunn accepts pastorate

Jimmy Dunn recently joined the staff of Council Church, Charleston, as pastor.

He was most recently pastor of Peakland Church, Decatur.

Dunn was ordained in 1979 at Five Point Church, Decatur. He earned an associate's degree from Cleveland State Community College, Cleveland.

The Decatur native and his wife, Faye, have two daughters.

# Baptist Joint Committee laments court . . .

(Continued from page 1)  
belief and practice and says cases regarding the accommodation of religion are better left to the political process, even though that will place minority religious practices at a disadvantage. Scalia called that an "unavoidable consequence of democratic government."

The court did not have to take that direction, Thomas noted. Its decision could have been based on the "compelling interest" argument. Justice Sandra Day O'Connor makes that point in her written opinion. O'Connor sides with the 6-3 majority action but disagrees with the rationale.

In fact, she says the ruling "is incompatible with our nation's fundamental commitment to individual religious liberty."

*The First Amendment mandates "preserving religious liberty to the fullest extent possible in a pluralistic society," she writes. "For the court to*

*deem this command a 'luxury' is to denigrate the very purpose of the Bill of Rights."*

O'Connor notes general laws can burden religious practice as well as those targeting religion and decried the idea of moving the issue to the political arena, where minority practices could suffer.

Thomas agreed with O'Connor. The court "wrecked the law" to reach a shocking decision that changes the protection of religious practice in the nation, he said.

Since the 1960s, the Supreme Court has protected the exercise of religion through a "compelling interest" test. That means that before a state can burden a person's First Amendment rights, it must show it has a "compelling interest of the highest order," Thomas said. "And even then the state has had to show it has exhausted all other possible remedies before it can choose a remedy that burdens your

free exercise of religion.

"What this case has done is take away those protections for religion except in the unlikely instance that a law targets a religion for some kind of discriminatory treatment. And the fact of the matter is that does not happen."

The court has replaced the "compelling interest" test with a low standard of scrutiny, Thomas said. Now a state need only show its law is reasonable or rational, he said. "With a stroke of his pen, Justice Scalia has transformed the nation's first liberty into a constitutional stepchild."

In effect, the ruling makes the free exercise clause of "no practical use whatsoever," Thomas said. In fact, protection against laws targeting religion already exists in the equal protection clauses of the Constitution, he explained.

*Thomas also decried the court's separation of religious belief and practice. "If all free exercise gives us is the right to believe what we want, we could have done that in the Soviet Union or any other country. You can believe what you want behind bars. But as the Supreme Court pointed out in the 1940s, the freedom to believe without the freedom to act on that belief is not worth a plug nickel. It's just a hollow freedom."*

In addition, Thomas questioned the court's contention that free exercise of religion will be protected when linked with another First Amendment right. "What this has done in effect is place free exercise in an inferior position," he said.

And moving the battle to the political process means churches and religious groups may have to lobby more to get exemptions from general laws, Thomas added: "The court is saying if you can convince the legislature that your constitutional rights should be protected, that's fine. We're not going to protect them for you here in the federal court."

The idea that a majority will control constitutional rights should trouble Baptists, who have been in the minority and still are in many states, Thomas said.

Baptists also should be troubled by the impact the ruling will have on a host of areas, such as income taxes, property taxes, hiring of church personnel and regulation of church schools and day care centers. Thomas predicted an immediate impact on anti-discrimination laws for churches.

Currently, churches are free to discriminate on religious grounds in hiring, but the recent ruling could remove that protection.

## Annuity Board switches SBC . . .

(Continued from page 1)  
those would be uninsurable, trustees opted to "save the plan."

Powell said Southern Baptists must realize that the Annuity Board "has no money for insurance claims except the premiums that are paid. Not one cent of retirement contributions or earnings can ever be used for medical claims. Each program stands squarely on its own feet."

Powers affirmed the rate increase is an absolute necessity because the medical insurance program "has to operate in the black" to stay alive. He expressed confidence that the Annuity Board is doing everything possible to "provide the best possible product at the best possible price."

Powers discouraged Tennessee Baptists currently in the plan from dropping their coverage and seeking other insurance alternatives.

He shared that in the early 1970s there was another insurance "crisis" although not as serious as it is today. "We had people leave us in good numbers, then some of those tried to come back later for the same reasons they left," he recalled.

"Any rate relief from the board's plan now would be temporary," Powers predicted, noting that over a period of time "we will be in line with other rates."

Powers cited several advantages offered by participation in the church medical plan. The primary one, he mentioned, is an individual cannot be cancelled because of large claims. That is not always the case with private carriers, he said.

Tennessee Baptists can be assured the Annuity Board "is seeking the best interests of our people," Powers concluded.

## One Word More By Wm. Fletcher Allen, editor

Call it inertia, or unconcern. Call it laziness, call it sad music.

Choose your title — then tack it up as a sign for our times. It is that kind of day.

I heard a pastor, on a special occasion honoring older church members, challenge the others to do as well. "When I see these senior citizens pounding the sidewalks, going from door to door, visiting people in the name of the Lord, I have to wonder about those of us, who are young in years — just sitting on the sidelines," he said.

"Sometimes we will applaud them, and even exhort them to bring in more members," he said, "and sometimes we complain that they aren't doing enough."

That rang a bell for me. I remember the bell that hung in the rafters of my childhood church. It sounded the call to worship each Sunday. We heard it, and others did as it sounded that reminder.

For sure we need someone to pull the rope — right now. Spiritual inertia, unconcern, laziness — a sad song. It seems we are gripped by a phobia for working — except in church. What happened to the days of commitment?

Oh, you say, it's not that way everywhere. I know that. But this is the way in too many places, too many hearts. Just as many of us sit back and watch others working on and on, the world watches and waits and wonders.

Hearken to some events described in 2 Chronicles. At the beginning of the rule of King Hezekiah, Judah was in for some changes. "Following the example of his ancestor King David, he did what was pleasing to the Lord."

The Temple was purified and rededicated. "The king followed the instructions that the Lord had given to

King David . . . and so worship in the Temple was begun again. King Hezekiah and the people were happy, because God had helped them to do all this so quickly . . ."

Then we are told of the preparation for the celebration of the Passover. The king and the people were pleased. "Messengers were sent out at the command of the king and his officials through all Judah and Israel with the following invitation:

"People of Israel, you have survived the Assyrian conquest of the land. Now return to the Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and He will return to you . . ."

It tells also of the many messengers that went out, and says that "God was also at work in Judah."

We need people to ring the bell, to ring it in urgency, to ring it in a call to joyful duty, throughout the land.

They are busy out there on Sundays . . . busy putting the boat trailer to the family vehicle, busy pruning and mowing, busy washing cars and clothes, busy shopping, busy playing games, busy, busy, busy.

Our senior friend: have shown us the way. They are like Caleb, Joshua's cohort, the other one of the twelve spies who believed, knew, that God's people could take the promised land. At 85, he said to Joshua, "Give me the mountains, we will take them."

It's fair to ask whether we will continue to applaud and complain on the sidelines. Is that all there is in "modern Christianity?" Perhaps, but I believe in Tennessee Baptists to be at work in the vineyard.



ALLEN

### In Michigan

## Tennessee pastor has 'eyes opened'

Cecil Gilliland had an "eye-opening experience" while leading a "Here's Hope" revival in Michigan to support the Tennessee/Michigan Partnership.

The pastor of First Church, Waynesboro, put it this way: "We fuss and fume and scream if we don't have 200 in church down here. Those folks have from eight to 70 and they're tickled to death."

Although his first missions trip in the United States, he predicts he and his fellow Indian Creek Association members will visit again. Last year director of missions Lyle Seltmann of Michigan's Northland Association participated in a World Mission Conference in the association.

Because of that contact, Gilliland, Jay White, associate minister, Philadelphia Church, Waynesboro; and director of missions David Miller spent April 19-26 leading the revivals in Northland.

The church Gilliland visited in Boyne City, a resort town, meets in a storefront building. High attendance for New Beginning Church during the four-day revival was 19,

but Gilliland was not discouraged.

Gilliland grew to appreciate missionary and bivocational pastor Kim Banks and home missions. He was surprised to discover the church needed help to buy literature. Since he has returned First Church, Waynesboro, has begun providing help.

Of the about 150 people Gilliland and Banks contacted, only two refused to speak to them, Gilliland reported. The barrier is unfamiliarity with Southern Baptists, he added.



Miller and Gilliland believe a supportive relationship is developing between the two associations. Harold King, pastor, Philadelphia Church, responded to the World Mission Conference by traveling last year to Northland to do missions work.

"We will reach out as an association. . . . We've got a mission that reaches beyond Wayne County," said Miller. — *Connie Davis*

# Tennessee churches report 'Here's Hope' results

The "Here's Hope - Jesus Cares for You" simultaneous revival emphasis officially concluded during April with many Tennessee churches reporting successful meetings. Some Tennessee churches had revivals scheduled in May.

First Church, Waynesboro, recorded four persons making professions of faith during revival April 1-4. In addition, four others came for baptism and six rededicated their lives. Bob Mowrey, pastor of Park Avenue Church, Nashville, was evangelist, and George James, interim music director at the Waynesboro church, led music.

Bailey Smith, Atlanta, Ga., led revival services April 1-4 at Ridgeway Church, Memphis, with 54 people joining the church by baptism. Three others joined by letter, and 19 made other professions or rededications. The Mike Speck Family of Owasso, Ok., led music.

First Church, Lewisburg, held revival April 1-5 with evangelist Hoyt Wilson, First Church, Lexington. David Brown, music director of the church, led music. There was one addition to the church by baptism, one by letter, and one person made another decision.

First Church, Decatur, held revival April 1-6 led by Billy Bush. Gary Irons led music. Eleven people joined the church by baptism and four joined by letter.

Ten people joined Cedar Hill Church, Baxter, by baptism during revival held April 7-14. Six others made professions of faith, and there were several rededications. Carl Scarlett, Laverne, led the services, and Roger Phillips, Baxter, led music.

Jarvis Hearn, Tennessee Baptist Convention, led revival services for 72 deaf people and other workers April 1 at First Church, Linden. The church held another revival April 8-12, led by Tom Madden, during which five people made professions of faith.

Springhill Church, Goodlettsville, held revival April 22-29 with evangelist Bob Pearce, Nashville, and music director David Robertson, Goodlettsville. There were four additions to the church through baptism and one other profession.

## Lavinia Church, Lavinia, held revival Blind to organize at New Orleans SBC

NEW ORLEANS (BP) - An organization for blind Southern Baptists will be formed in conjunction with the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting this summer in New Orleans, planners have announced.

In addition, Braille programs for the annual meeting will be available for the second year, they said.

Blind SBC messengers, their sighted guides and other interested people will meet Sunday, June 10, at 10 a.m. in the Louisiana Superdome to organize the Southern Baptist Conference of the Blind, said one of the organizers, Charles Couey, consultant for blind ministries for Tennessee Baptists.

For more specific information about the exact time and location of the meeting, and to notify Couey about the need for Braille programs, contact Couey at 103 Brenda Ln., Antioch, Tenn. 37013. He can receive mailed messages in Braille, print or on tape. His home telephone number is (615) 331-6098, and he may be reached between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Central time, at (615) 741-4991.

April 8-13 with evangelist Pete Dominguez, Charleston, Mo. Four people joined the church by baptism and three others made professions of faith. Bill Williams, Cedar Grove, led music.

Frank Houston, pastor of Bethel Church, Morristown, led revival April 16-20 at McPheeters Bend Church, Church Hill. Seven people joined the



## Here's Hope.

Jesus cares for you.

church by baptism, one joined by letter, and five made professions of faith.

Grace Church, Knoxville, recently held revival with evangelist Bill Sturm, Lawton, Okla. During the two-week revival, 62 people made professions of faith and five joined the church by letter.

Harpeth Valley Church, Franklin, held revival April 18-22 with Tim Arango leading services and M. Parnick Coe leading music. Four people joined the church by letter and one joined by baptism.

Leslie Bruce, First Church, White House, led revival April 22-26 at Piney Grove Church, Harriman. The minister of music at the church, Chuck Gibbs, led music. Three people joined the church by letter and one joined by baptism.

Rocky Branch Church, Walland, held revival April 22-29 with Horrace Genoe, Maryville, leading services, and Wade Martin, Walland, leading music. One person joined the church by baptism, one by letter, and three

people made other professions of faith.

Lascassas Church, Lascassas, recently held revival with evangelist Jim Powers, Concord Association director of missions, and music director Bill McBroom, Lascassas Church.

Wade Clemons, Powell, recently led revival at Mountain View Church, Knoxville. Evelyn Ellis led music. Six

people joined the church by baptism, and 30 made other professions.

Henry Linginfelter, Alcoa, led revival April 22-25 at First Church, Andersonville. Steve Skinner, New Orleans, La., led music. There were eight additions to the church by baptism and three by letter. Twenty-four people made other professions.

First Church, Norris, held revival April 22-26 with evangelist John Cook, Salt Lake City, Utah, and music director Mike Harbin, First Church. Two people joined the church by baptism.

Former pastor James Adkins, now of Augusta, Ga., led revival April 22-29 at First Church, Livingston. Minister of Music Grover Carter led music. There were three additions to the church by baptism and two by letter.

First Church, Caryville, recently held revival with evangelist Charles E. Hyder. There were seven additions to the church by baptism and four by letter.

First Church, Strawberry Plains, held revival April 22-25 with evangelist

Don Mitchell, Carson-Newman College, Jefferson City. As a result of Lay Evangelism School and the revival, twelve people were baptized.

Fred Lawrence, pastor of Friendship Church, Smithland, Ky., led revival April 22-25 at Piedmont Church, Dandridge. Eight people made professions of faith and one joined the church through baptism.

Hillcrest Church, Lebanon, recently held revival with evangelist Rickey Thacker, Lexington, Ala., and music director Fred VanHook. Four people made professions of faith and one joined the church by letter.

Phillip Ellen, Gadsden, Ala., led revival April 22-27 at New Middleton Church, Gordonsville. Roy Vanatta, Lebanon, led music. Seven people joined the church through baptism, and two made other professions. There were 51 rededications.

Rosedale Church, Nashville, recently held revival led by evangelist Carl Duck, Nashville Association director of missions, and music director Dan Johnson, Rosedale Church minister of music. Seventeen people made professions of faith and will be baptized. In addition, there were numerous rededications.

Salem Church, Dayton, recently held revival during which one person made a profession of faith and two made rededications.

Island Home Church, Knoxville, held revival April 26-29. Clyde Tilley, Jackson, was evangelist, and Luther Sentell, Knoxville, was music director. There were seven additions to the church by letter and three by baptism.



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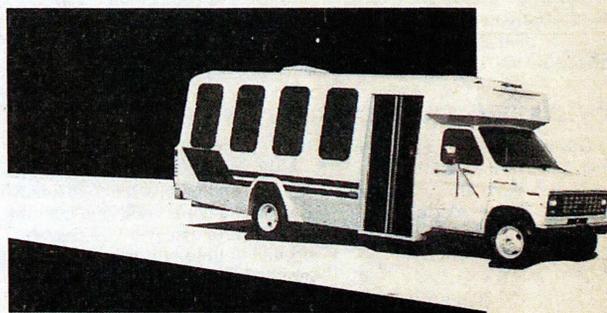
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## 'Hope' identifies nature of church's Cambodian, Chinese missions

The two language missions of Belmont Heights Church, Nashville, reported outstanding results following "Here's Hope" revivals.

The Chinese Mission, which averages about 40 in worship, had 105 at its revival service, which resulted in five professions of faith and 13 rededications.

And the Cambodian Mission increased its attendance, even during its weeknight revival, from 45 to 60, and reported 21 salvation and one rededication decision.

David Tsai, pastor of the Chinese Mission, credits "teamwork" and its ongoing outreach activities for the results of the Easter Sunday revival. The members worked hard to invite people and prepare special activities.

The congregation's youth choir prepared special music and a member,

Samuel Fung, who is a professor of psychology at Austin Peay University, Clarksville, spoke.

After the service, the crowd enjoyed lunch, an egg hunt for the children and egg roll for adults.

Tsai reported his surprise at the decisions made during the revival because most Chinese make spiritual decisions privately. "They always come to the pastor after the service."

To follow up, Tsai is inviting visitors to the revival and their families to his home for a meal.

Tsai has served the mission for six years since it was a Sunday School class of about ten people. Along with his work as a private music teacher and other pastoral duties, Tsai leads a weekly Chinese School and evening recreation gathering for the congrega-



**JESUS LOVES ME** — Children sing "Jesus Loves Me" in Cambodian during the revival at Cambodian Mission, Nashville.

— Photo by Connie Davis

tion.  
"I was so impressed by these people — the dedication of their life to work

for the Christ and for the mission. I really was surprised."

The Cambodian Mission responded to the revival despite obstacles, explained Pastor Sereivuth Chan.

Chan travels about 200 miles each weekend from Memphis to lead a congregation of mostly children. The mission has about five adults and a few youth who attend Sunday morning services but about 40 children.

Chan, who has led the mission for a year, explained adults stopped coming to the mission during the ministry of the previous pastor. Some have been baptized without understanding their decision.

Because he lives in Memphis, Chan has not been available to meet the many needs of the people, most of whom are refugees. And often the people are unavailable to attend church because of their jobs, Chan explained.

But he and the evangelist, Sok Doeung, catalytic missionary for the Baptist General Convention of Texas, worked hard during the two-night revival. Doeung, whose trip was funded by the Tennessee Baptist Convention Missions Department, also led revivals in Memphis and Chattanooga.

During visitation, Doeung and Chan met families who were unaware of the mission and led several adults to make professions of faith who could not attend the services.



Chan and members of Belmont Heights Church, Janet Ball and Ann Thompson, planned special revival activities for the children including skating and viewing a video from Cambodia.

Chan has persevered in leading the mission. He trains the children to teach and even admonish their parents though Cambodian custom demands that children respect and obey their parents.

On Saturday nights he holds home English/Bible studies. Many adults aren't literate in the Cambodian language, he explained.

The parents are beginning to respond, said Chan. "When they see their children learn a lot they are very pleased for that." And during visits with the families of those children who made professions of faith, most of the parents wanted their children to know "the Christ way" instead of "the society way," said Chan.

"Some think it's hard for me to be with the children. But I feel good after I found out they were interested in what I taught them," explained Chan.

— Connie Davis

## Grainger Association churches unite for Hugo relief

By Connie J. Umstead, news assistant

Ties with foreign missionaries on furlough in South Carolina during Hurricane Hugo led one Grainger Association church to rally other churches in the association to unite in helping storm victims.

Although Grainger Association was unofficially involved, at least 25 of the 35 churches in the association gave a total of \$22,505.58, and provided manpower or supplies for hurricane relief efforts. Mouth of Richland Church, Blaine, led the way.

Barney Evans, pastor of Mouth of Richland Church and Grainger Association moderator, headed the hurricane relief committee. He said his church became concerned about the plight of people in South Carolina when a church deacon and his wife, David and Judy Mitchell, received reports about the devastation from their relatives, Gail and Baker Hill, missionaries to Burki-

na Faso on furlough in South Carolina.

The Mitchells related their news to the church during a missions meeting one Wednesday night. Evans called an emergency meeting for the following Saturday, which about ten pastors attended, and relief efforts were underway.

"When a call goes out for a mission need, our people respond with money and manpower," Evans said. "Our church is so missions-minded, it's unbelievable. We have a very strong mission tradition and mission emphasis. We always have," he added.

On most Sundays, Mouth of Richland has 80-100 people in morning worship.

Evans immediately began writing letters to pastors, churches, and individuals within Grainger Association, asking for supplies, funds, and manpower. An account was established at a Rutledge bank so donors could contribute directly.

## TeamTalk

By D. L. Lowrie

The apostle Paul raises a practical question in 1 Corinthians 9:7. A modern version translates it "Did you ever hear of a man serving in the army at his own expense?" This is the thrust of the apostle's argument. It is his strong contention that the person who serves in the ministry has the right to expect that he will be compensated for his work.



LOWRIE

We seem to have some confusion at this point. Some of us believe that if a man is in the ministry he should not have any concern about material things. While it is true money cannot be the motivation of the man in the ministry, money is necessary to sustain him in the ministry. The logical conclusion is that if a church cannot afford to sustain its minister financially it cannot afford to have a minister.

There are some practical applications for this in our day. It is my conviction that a part of sustaining a man in the ministry includes providing for his retirement. Some churches have never given attention to this matter and men come down to retirement

without adequate retirement income. In many cases our retired ministers or their widows actually become welfare cases.

This compensation in our day should also include taking care of his health insurance. This is becoming a challenge to many of our churches as the cost escalates. Let me encourage each of our Tennessee Baptist churches to see this as a part of your basic responsibility. A major health problem without health insurance can be financially devastating. It could cripple a man with reference to his ministry for years to come.

I had a letter from one of our pastors this week who is facing just such a crisis. His wife is facing major surgery without any health insurance. There is a possibility that this man will have to forsake his ministry to find a better paying job just to pay for these medical bills. We must do all that we can to make sure that this does not happen.

The soldier who is fighting in the Lord's army ought to be able to concentrate all of his energies on the battle. He should not have to worry about the things that will sustain him and his family financially. Let's give attention to this matter.

# SBC historian examines church covenant concept

**Editor's note: This is the second of a two-part series on church covenants.**

**By Charles W. Deweese**

Whereas diversity characterized the contents of covenants used by Baptists in America prior to the 1830s, the single most important covenantal trend from the 1830s to the 1990s has been the increased standardization of covenants used by Baptists.

Many churches throughout this period continued to write their own covenants. But the proliferating publication of model covenants in a broad range of Baptist materials, such as church manuals, ministers' manuals, hymnals, hymnal inserts, church minute books, encyclopedias, study guides, curriculum pieces, pocket cards, wall charts, and baptismal certificates, led to widespread covenantal uniformity.

And among the model covenants published, the most amazing development of all is that the 1853 covenant of J. Newton Brown became and remains the most widely used covenant by Baptists in the United States and in some other countries.

Basing his covenant on the 1833 covenant of the New Hampshire Baptist Convention, Brown's revised covenant read as follows:

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior; and, on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, we do now, in the presence of God, angels, and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one body in Christ.

We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church, in knowledge, holiness, and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the Gospel through all nations.

We also engage to maintain family and secret devotion; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment; to avoid all tattling, backbiting, and excessive anger; to abstain from the sale and use of intoxicating drinks as a beverage, and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Savior.

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember each other in prayer; to aid each other in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation, and mindful of the rules of our Savior, to secure it without delay.

We moreover engage, that when we

remove from this place, we will as soon as possible unite with some other church, where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant, and the principles of God's word. — Source: J. Newton Brown, *The Baptist Church Manual* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1853), pp. 23-24.

At least nine major factors accounted for the extreme popularity of this covenant (printed sometimes in slightly revised forms): American Baptist Publication Society's support for it; its inclusion in numerous church and ministers' manuals; Landmark Baptist approval and sponsorship; its printing by various Baptist publishers in record and minute books used by churches; its printing by the Fundamental Baptist Bible Union of America in 1923; the January, 1927, encouragement by the Southern Baptist Convention's Commission on Co-Operative Program for churches that year to observe March as Church Covenant Month (state papers in early 1927 promoted Brown's covenant heavily); Southern Baptist Sunday School Board circulation of the covenant in millions of copies of various publications; extensive support for the covenant by the two largest black Baptist bodies in America; and wide use of the covenant by Swedish and German Baptists in America.

Brown's covenant became fairly widespread in America.

Brown's covenant even became fairly widespread in Canada, as evidenced by its appearance in a slightly modified form in *A Manual for Worship and Service* (1976), published for Canadian Baptist churches by the Baptist Federation of Canada.

And the covenant has become popular in many other countries. Good evidence shows that the Baptist Spanish Publishing House in El Paso, Texas, has aided the spread of the covenant into some South American countries. And Baptist missionaries have taken the covenant into certain countries, such as Haiti.

General decline in using covenants

Use of covenants has declined in Baptist churches in America in the 1900s. At least seven key factors have contributed to this decline:

(1) Churches have often perfunctorily adopted pre-printed uniform covenants which had not met their unique needs, instead of creatively thinking through, struggling with, and writing individualized covenants.

(2) Baptists have resisted a legalistic application of covenants.

(3) A general secularizing process began to affect American religion in the late 1800s, and has continued with full force up to the present. Covenants, like church discipline, have fallen victim to this development.

(4) Alleged weaknesses of the prevalent J. Newton Brown covenant have led many to question its continuing value. Some have attacked its outdated language, its limited view of moral problems deserving attention, and its failure to speak to modern Baptist life.

(5) Because Baptist publications have broadly sponsored Brown's covenant, it has virtually achieved an "official" status in Baptist views of church polity. Such authority is unwarranted, but has caused many churches to continue using the covenant even though it has lost much of its value for them.

(6) Many Baptists have not taken seriously the covenantal nature of the church as expressed in their major confessions of faith.

(7) At times, Baptists have focused increased amounts of programing upon numerical growth in church life, often at the expense of an essential stress on cultivating a truly regenerated church.

**Possibilities of covenantal renewal**  
Many Baptist churches today may want to consider writing their own covenants after the pattern of early Baptists in England and America. Several important values can result. A personally written covenant can more adequately reflect the unique needs and expectations of the church design-

ing it. This approach allows a church to think through and express Biblical disciplines and Christian commitments relating to conduct and relationships. Preparing an individualized covenant can help a church place new priority on a regenerate church membership, can contribute to congregational renewal, and can lead a church to develop stronger covenantal practices.

A church may find the following guidelines helpful as it attempts to prepare its own covenant: (1) Create interest in writing a covenant by demonstrating its potential values. (2) Appoint a church covenant committee. (3) Carefully examine available covenants. (4) Adopt principles by which the content of the covenant will be determined. (5) Define and write the contents of the covenant. (6) Secure congregational input and approval. (7) Print and circulate the covenant, and revise it as needed.

Consider using the newly adopted covenant in such settings as baptism, the Lord's Supper, special covenant meetings, and in daily relationships with God and fellow church members.

A church covenant is not a panacea for solving all the problems surrounding the meaning and practice of responsible church membership in Baptist life today. But when placed in context with believer's baptism and redemptive church discipline, an innovative and Biblically based statement of church member obligations can help a congregation learn more fully what it means to be a regenerated people of God.



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# TenneScene

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## Leadership . . .

Rickey Kelley has been called as minister of music/youth to Mary's Chapel Church, Ripley.

Carson-Newman College President Cordell Maddox and his wife, Brona, will be part of a seven-member team representing Cooperative Services International Education Consortium (CSIEC) traveling to China. The group will meet with representatives of Peking and Yantai Universities to discuss a master's program and other exchange programs, as well as meet with the commissioner of education of Shanghai Province to discuss summer oral English workshops. The group will be led by Ronald Midkiff, director of Carson-Newman's Chinese Cross-Cultural Institute and a CSIEC representative.

Jim Wilson, campus minister at Carson-Newman College, Jefferson City, was presented the Algernon Sydney Sullivan Award at the Carson-Newman College Honors Convocation April 10. The award is given annually to a male and female student, and a non-student, who exemplify a concern or other people. Wilson oversees the activities of the Baptist Student Union, student missions projects, Appalachian Outreach, and Samaritan House, a temporary shelter for poverty relief in Jefferson County.

Chuck Smith joined the staff of Cherry Road Church, Memphis, as minister of youth.

James Gordon Williams has been called as pastor of Whorton Springs Church, Smithville.

Two Rivers Church, Nashville, called Bob Landham as minister of married adults.

Gracey Avenue Church, Clarksville, called Arthur Burcham as interim pastor.

James D. McLemore has been called as interim pastor of New Providence Church, Clarksville.

Frawley Church, Chattanooga, called Gurney Beard as pastor.

East Side Church, Elizabethton, called John Morrell as part-time minister of evangelism.

Tennessee Avenue Church, Bristol, recently called Dewey Kerr as associate pastor, and Becky Morrison as assistant music director.

Don Layman joined the staff of Harvest Church, Dyersburg, as pastor.

Bryan and Lori Powers have been called as ministers of youth to Oakwood Church, Milan.

First Church, Rutherford, called J. McIntosh as minister of youth.

George Williams was recognized May 6 by members of Marble City Church, Knoxville, for serving 50 years in the ministry.

Clark Perkins recently joined the staff of White Hall Church, Trenton, as minister of music/youth.

Michael McKee has been called as pastor of Beacon Church, Parsons. He was ordained April 1 at Twin Oaks Church, Cedar Grove.

Avondale Church, Rutledge, called Tim Nicely as youth director.

Tumbling Creek Church, Gleason, called Joe Joiner as music director.

Central Church, Hixson, recently honored Donald C. McCary for serving 15 years as minister of music and youth. During a special celebration, church members reminisced about McCary and his service to the church. He has been minister of music at other churches in Alabama, Florida, and Kentucky.



McCARY

Germantown Church, Germantown, called Beverly Larson as director of childhood education.

Members of Stones River Church, Smyrna, recently honored their pastor, G. Ross Maroney Sr., for his birthday. Since Maroney came to the church 19 months ago, the church has grown from 75 people in Sunday School to 222.

Brownsville Church, Brownsville, called Manuel Valadez as minister to Hispanics.

Mt. Carmel Church, Cross Plains, called Joe Hester as associate pastor in education and youth, effective May 6.

First Church, Big Sandy, called Larry Higgins as minister of music.

## Ordinations . . .

Doug Jewett, minister of music, First Church, Clinton, was ordained to the ministry May 6.

Immanuel Church, Nashville, ordained John Blackman Jr., Vic Hatridge, Paul White, and Juanita Wilkinson as deacons on May 20.

Hoover Shelton was ordained as deacon April 14 at Victory Church, LaFollette.

Moore's Chapel Church, Greenfield, ordained Willie Joe Grooms and Randy Potts, as deacons April 29.

First Church, Kenton, ordained Larry Moore, Randy Davis, and Mike Perryman as deacons May 20.

Watts Stewart and Randy Wilson were ordained as deacons April 29 at Parkview Church, Jackson.

Alvin Watts was recently ordained at Riverview Church, Newport.

Antioch Church, Sevierville, ordained Phillip Meek, Harold Price, and Mike Williams as deacons April 29.

## Baptist Student Unions . . .

Mark Herrod and Andy Murry were elected president and vice president of the 1990-91 State BSU Council during the spring conference held at Southeast Church, Murfreesboro, April 6-8. Herrod is a junior at Carson-Newman College, Jefferson City; and Murry is a junior at Memphis State University.

Donald Hayes and Candace Kearney, both students at Memphis State University, were chosen Mr. and Miss BSU at the national BSU retreat held in Atlanta, Ga. David Harvin and Rayford Johnson, both from East Tennessee State University, were chosen to be part of a ten-member mission team that will work as counselors/teachers in a youth day camp sponsored by First Church, El Dorado, Ark. More than 170 BSU students represented Tennessee campuses at the retreat.

Tim Wheat has been named director of the BSU at Union University, Jackson. He is a graduate of New Orleans (La.) Baptist Theological Seminary, and Union University.

## Lowe accepts pastorate

Jack Lowe recently joined the staff of Midway Church, South Pittsburgh, as pastor.

Lowe was formerly pastor of Grace Church, Whitwell; Little Hopewell Church, Dunlap; and Antioch Church, South Pittsburgh.

The Jasper native was ordained in 1969 at Baptist Hill Church, Jasper. He and his wife, Martha, have four children and seven grandchildren.

## Korean Church finds prayer works

Churches suffer hardships, but prayer and patience are proven anecdotes to Pastor James Sok of Korean Church, Nashville.

He's experienced the results — finally.

The church became the first ethnic Baptist church in middle Tennessee in January when it became independent of its sponsoring church and moved into its first building.

But Sok was ready to leave it a year ago after a financial setback and one third of its members left the mission to form another congregation.

During prayertimes, often with other members of the congregation which gathers each morning at the church to pray, Sok said he was reminded of Paul's direction to the early church. He felt God wanted him to remain at the church just as God instructed the early church to remain in Jerusalem though its members faced persecution.

In just one year's time the church has grown from 60 members to 90 members. And regardless of the disappointment caused by the financial setback, it raised \$55,000 for a building in six months.

Other financial support came from the Tennessee Baptist Convention which gave \$25,000 toward the facility and Nashville Association which will give \$15,000 over the next three years.

The climax of the congregation's turnaround came April 29 when more than 300 people came for the dedication and overflowed a tent

erected on the property for refreshments.

The \$195,000 facility includes a sanctuary, fellowship hall, and classrooms totaling 4000 square feet on 3.3 acres. The church plans to add additional classrooms this year, reported Sok.

Sok, who has served the congregation for four years, tried to explain what he described as his "secret" experience with God during these hardships, but couldn't.

"A church does not grow if the pastor does not grow. It grows together," said Sok. — *Connie Davis, assistant editor*



**DEDICATING CHURCH** — Pastor James Sok, left, introduces Director of Missions Carl Duck, Nashville Association, during the service.



**TENNESSEE VOLUNTEERS** — Tennessee Baptist volunteers in St. Croix included, from left, Ron Stone, First Church, Adamsville; Charles Sampell, Trenton Street Church, Harriman; Eddie Simpson and Richard Howard, First Church, Selmer; Cathryne and M. B. Howard, Oak Grove Church, Covington; and Brotherhood Commission President James H. Smith, Memphis.

# Facing trials and obeying the Word

By W. Elzie Danley, pastor; Malesus Church, Jackson

**Proper attitude toward trials (1:1-4)**  
James who has traditionally been identified as the half-brother of Jesus, followed Peter as the leader of the church of Jerusalem (Acts 12:17). It appears James was addressing (v. 1) his remarks to those Christian Jews who were scattered throughout the world due in part to the persecutions in Jerusalem.



DANLEY

James' message of ethical and moral behavior is, however, a message for all Christians for all times.

The church was enduring real trials (temptations).

James encouraged them by pointing out they would come out stronger if they endured the trials faithfully. The phrase "count it all joy" may seem a little strong, but James wanted to remind them their endurance or patience would make them "perfect and entire, wanting nothing." They would develop maturity or completeness in their Christian lives.

**Necessity of faith in prayer (1:5-8)**

Wisdom is needed to know how to endure trials such as James' readers were facing. Such wisdom is a God-

given virtue that comes through prayers of faith. Understanding and good judgment (wisdom) is given generously to those who ask.

Prayer is essential to the acquisition of Godly-wisdom. Yet, no response can be expected if the prayer is not one of whole-hearted desire and sincere purpose. To be otherwise, a person is double-minded (v. 8) and described as unstable as a wave on the sea (v. 6). Prayers made under these conditions will not be answered.

**Proper attitude toward self (1:9-11)**

James wanted his readers to be sensitive to their self-worth and to value its source. The poor brother was encouraged to focus on his exaltation which was due to the richness of spirit brought about by his faith in Jesus. The wealthy were reminded their wealth was not the source of a "rich life." In the end all people are equal in this world's riches. Like the flowers that wither under the sun, we lose all our earthly beauty and wealth in death (vv. 10-11).

**Proper attitude toward temptations (1:12-18)**

Apparently some in James' day said God opposed them to sin. Earlier James used a form of the Greek word (Peirasmos) to mean trials. He then used a second meaning, temptation. In

doing so, James made it clear that God does not tempt people to sin. He has no need for sinners. Sinning comes about by our excessive desires (lust). When we lust we have sown the seed that grows and leads to sin. We must fault ourselves when we sin. James charges us to not be mistaken. Good and perfect gifts, and only good and perfect gifts, come from God. He is the Father of the lights of creation. Yet, unlike these lights of His creation, He and His gifts are dependable. There are no variations; there are no changes.

## BIBLE BOOK SERIES

May 27 Lesson

Basic Passage: James 1:1-27

Focal Passages: James 1:1-7, 13-17, 21-22, 26-27

**Call to obey the Word (1:19-27)**

James wrote to Christians who needed to let the Word grow in their lives. To do so, they could not let immorality or evil be a part of their lifestyles. They were to be self-controlled (meek) so their souls could be saved from the sins that prevent them from growing into mature Christians.

The analogy of a man looking in a mirror and seeing a face that needs

cleansing or shaving is used to describe the Christian who knows he needs to follow the teachings of Christ. The analogy is continued to indicate that the Christian who does not put what he knows into practice is like the man who forgets what he saw in the mirror and thus does not wash or shave.

Many people to whom James wrote had a legalistic view of religion. Regardless of what they did to appear religious, their religion was contradictory or useless if they gossiped, maligned, criticized, or hurt others by their speech. James wanted to make it clear that the faith leading to salvation should lead to a religion where living according to the principles taught by Christ is primary. He indicated that two criteria are part of that religion - caring for the helpless and the needy, and living an ethical and moral life.

## Summary

In this practical section we are taught we can grow as Christians during difficult times. Prayers will assist us in finding understanding or wisdom for life's tough spots. We are admonished to avoid sin that results when we let excessive desires dominate our lives. Finally we are admonished to not think highly of ourselves. Rather we are to let the Word grow in our hearts and to put it into practice in our daily living.

# Loyalty and discipleship

By Liz Thompson, layperson; First Church, Blountville

Loyalty and discipleship - a thing of the past? American Christians are strongly influenced by an independent spirit, exaggerated sense of personal rights, and a preoccupation with creature comforts. Discipleship sets one apart from the average in any field. To follow Jesus Christ will go against all natural impulses. Can there be discipleship without loyalty? I need to be reminded often that my loyalty must be in Christ rather than the things of Christ. It is easy for us to unconsciously substitute loyalty to Christ for denominational and local causes, traditions, and philosophies of ministry. We tend to become disciples of famous preachers and teachers, never searching the Scriptures or knowing the thrill of receiving direction and revelation from the Father. We can attach our loyalty to the pursuit of Bible knowledge, thinking that having the answers will insure victory.



THOMPSON

We talk about discipling a new convert, by which we mean teaching one until in-depth understanding is gained. If that is the only part of discipleship we know, we are little better than the Pharisees who were well learned in the practice of Judaism. All authentic disciples recognize the Spirit as their teacher. The Spirit takes what is shared in the classroom and applies it to everyday experiences. He moves it from our heads, as accepted truth, to our hearts and daily walk.

Our loyalty to Christ will lead us to be involved in the great commission and in a commitment of love for all

who are of the household of God. This has always presented a problem for us because of our differences in personality, culture, experiences, etc. We all interpret Scripture out of our own frame of reference as we are moving out of spiritual darkness to His light. This pilgrimage takes time. The common denominator that binds us together is our love for the Lord and His love for us. We must relate as family and bow to God's sovereign right to correct behavior and theology (Romans 14:1-13). It seems that Doitrephe was in error at this point, and perhaps was not even a believer (3 John 9-11).

How can we discern who is a heretic to be avoided, from a disciple of Christ who is to be embraced? There are many groups who presently seek acceptance and support in their deceptive mission. To purchase their literature and flowers or to be supportive in any way would be to share in their evil, according to 2 John 7-9. John gives us a key to discernment. Instead

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Basic Passage: 2 and 3 John

Focal Passage: 2 John 1-6; 3 John 1-8

of getting involved in their line of presentation, we might ask "who exactly is Jesus the Christ? Is He Almighty God come in the flesh?" None of the cults believe Jesus is the incarnation of God (2 John 6-10).

Two principles that govern Christian mission enterprise today come out of 3 John 5-9. Spreading the Gospel should be supported by the voluntary giving of fellow Christians, for we are all ministers who function as a whole body with Christ as our head. Those who support career missionaries and evangelists share in the harvest. When

we pray; write letters of encouragement; and give money, time, or possessions, we share the fruits of their labor (1 Corinthians 3:5-8). "We do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of Christ" (3 John 6). We must work in the unity of the Spirit, being careful not to wound or hinder each other as we carry out God's individual call.

The greatest dynamic of discipleship is prayer, and it is the one practice that seems most neglected. How can there be discipleship without obedience and how can we obey without intimate and persistent communion with Christ? Jesus knew His calling, but He said, "I can do nothing out of My own initiative. I do only what I see My Father do and I say only what I hear the Father say" (John 5:19). He ordered His life by every word which proceeded from the Father as He carried out His daily mission. He met opposition the same way. Communion was His priority and so it must be ours.

Discipleship flourishes in a fellowship of believers where love and acceptance predominates and where there is an expectancy that God will

sovereignly transform lives and make appropriate changes among believers who differ. It is in the setting of commitment and loyalty to members of small groups (such as marriage and church) that God makes us accountable, resulting in discipleship. It is here He puts us in the crucible where we develop patience and endurance and practice self denial. Gaius appears to be a mature saint, for John says of him, "Beloved, you are doing faithfully whatsoever you do to the brethren and to strangers" (3 John 5).

What difference would it make if we depended more on prayer and fasting (Acts 13:1-4) and less on human wisdom and traditional methods? We need to return again to Christ, our first love (Revelation 2:1-5), and look to Him, Who is our problem solver and the energizer of all our work.

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# Forsaking the Lord

By Kenny Cooper, pastor; Bellevue Church, Nashville

With this lesson we change our focus from Jeremiah as the messenger of judgment and hope to the message itself. The first oracle of Jeremiah is found in chapter 2 and is a message against Israel for her apostasy. God is presented as the wounded lover who has been jilted by an ungrateful and disloyal people.

The question of forsaking the Lord (vv. 5-8)

The introduction to the oracle (vv. 1-3) points to a former day when Israel was young and behaved with a faithfulness and devotion characteristic of a new bride. It was faithfulness that followed God into the wilderness, much like the line from Ruth used in weddings, "whither thou goest I will go." But something went wrong along the way and we hear the bridegroom asking what has happened.

The question God raised to Israel was, what wrong the forefathers found in Him that would cause them to want

to leave the love of their youth. There is an interesting play on words in verse 5. The Hebrew word *hebel* is translated "worthless" in the RSV and "vanity" in the KJV (the same word is often repeated in Ecclesiastes). The word means empty and sounds in Hebrew very much like Baal (*habba'al*), the fertility god. The charge, therefore, was that the people went after an empty god and themselves became empty. They left the Lord God who provided for their needs to follow gods full of nothing, a feat not unlike that of many contemporary folk.

The second question was one which the people should have asked and did not: "Where is the Lord?" The ancestors did not ask it after being delivered from Egypt and brought to a prosperous land. The Exodus was the most powerful experience of the Israelites past, yet their appreciation of it was never what it should have been. Many times Moses had to intercede on behalf of the people who had angered God with their desire to return to Egypt every time they ran into some difficulty. Instead of rejoicing in their inheritance and making the

most of it, the people "defiled my land, and made my heritage an abomination" (v. 7, RSV). This they did by attributing power, and therefore allegiance, to the Canaanite fertility gods instead of relying completely on the God of the exodus who gave them the land.

Not only did the people fail to inquire of the Lord's presence, the complaint goes on to mention four groups of leaders who failed to know God. The first of these was the priests. Those charged with interceding on behalf of the people could not themselves inquire of the Lord. The second group represented a classification of the

Result of forsaking the Lord (vv. 11-13)

God's complaint against His people takes the form of a suit in a court of law. He contended with this faithless people who spurned His love and grace (v. 9). God invited anyone to go anywhere from west (Cyprus) to east (Kedar) to see if they could find a people who had acted as Israel had toward God. Verse 11 asks if there is any nation that had changed its gods — a ridiculous notion! Yet, that is exactly what God's chosen people did. They rejected the Lord of glory for vaporous, worthless deities, deities which were actually no gods at all.

Heaven is called on as the jury (v. 12) to give a verdict regarding this indictment. There is no other response possible except utter horror and shock. The people are guilty as charged. The unheard of is now heard of — a nation has changed its god. Two evils are mentioned which are kith and kin. On the one hand, the people have forsaken the Lord God who has been for them a fountain of living water, an ever flowing stream in a desert land. On the other hand, they have made for themselves other gods which are like dug out cisterns that leak. When they are in need, they will go to their cistern gods and find them "empty."

One might forsake the Lord God, but what other god can bring the water of life? All others are vain and worthless, like cracked cisterns.



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priests who had special responsibility for keeping and perpetuating the law. Most likely these were the forerunners of the scribes. Copying and studying the law still did not help them know the Lord. Then there were the rulers, literally shepherds, who failed the people by sinning against God. And, finally, the prophets were those who spoke on Baal's authority rather than out of communion with Jehovah God. Leadership and people alike had forsaken the Lord.

Result of forsaking the Lord (vv. 11-13)

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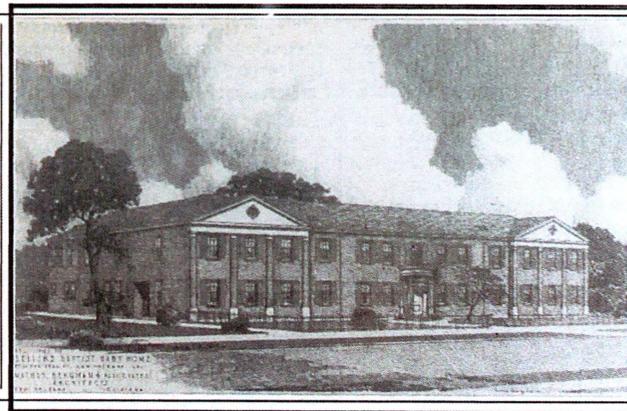
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**Kentucky paper taps Tennessee Baptist as editor**

MIDDLETOWN, Ky. — Marv Knox has been elected by the Kentucky Baptist Convention executive board as editor of the *Western Recorder*, newsjournal of the KBC. Knox, 33, will assume the editorship June 1. He has been feature editor at Baptist Press, news service of the Southern Baptist Convention, based in Nashville, since 1986.

Knox was elected unanimously May 7 at Cedarmore Baptist Assembly, near Bagdad, Ky., upon unanimous recommendation of the 12-member board of directors of the *Western Recorder*. A native of Fort Worth, Texas, and the son of a Southern Baptist minister, Knox is a graduate of Hardin-Simmons University in Dallas, Texas, where he is married to the former Joanna Jarchow of Fort Worth and the couple has two daughters, Lindsay, 6, and Molly, 3. They are members of Bellevue Church, Nashville.

Knox has been a general-assignment reporter for the Abilene, Texas, *Reporter-News*, assistant news editor at the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board in Atlanta, director of news and information services at Southern Seminary, and associate editor of the *Baptist Message*, weekly publication of the Louisiana Baptist Convention in Alexandria.

Knox will succeed Jack D. Sanford as editor. Sanford became editor July 1, 1984, following the retirement of C. R. Daley, who served 27 years. Sanford died May 24, 1989.

**Here's Hope revivals conclude; HMB begins assessing results**

ATLANTA — Early reports indicate Southern Baptists could record at least 175,000 professions of faith in Christ as a result of "Here's Hope" revivals held nationwide this spring, said Richard Harris, director of mass evangelism for the denomination's Home Mission Board. The Southern Baptist Convention officially concluded a six-week period of revivals April 29, although some churches still had revivals scheduled for May. The simultaneous revival effort was sponsored by the Home Mission Board with the theme "Here's Hope. Jesus cares for you."

"I think we're likely to hit or exceed the goal of 175,000 professions of faith," Harris said during a Here's Hope evaluation session with the board's mass evangelism staff. Here's Hope reports coming to the board already are "much stronger" than early reports during the denomination's "Good News America" simultaneous revivals in 1986, Harris said. The 1986 revivals resulted in 145,000 professions of faith.

A more accurate assessment of nationwide revival results will be available after the board conducts a nationwide survey of churches in June, he said. Even before the numerical results are tabulated, Harris and his staff said they feel good about the changed lives they have witnessed and have heard about through reports from churches, associations, and state conventions.

**SBC presidential candidates will address Hispanic rally**

ATLANTA — Morris Chapman and Daniel Vestal will both address the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Hispanic Ministers Conference in New Orleans two days before one of them will likely be elected president of the Southern Baptist Convention. Chapman, pastor of First Church, Wichita Falls, Texas, and Vestal, pastor of Dunwoody Church, in suburban Atlanta, have both said they are willing to be nominated for the SBC presidency. Messengers to the denomination's 1990 annual meeting will elect a new president June 12 when they meet at the Louisiana Superdome in New Orleans.

The appearance of opposing presidential candidates on the same program is a new phenomenon in 11 years of denominational controversy. This is thought to be the first time two opposing candidates have appeared on the same program during an SBC-related meeting. Individuals nominated for president are not given time on the convention program to make election speeches.

The Southern Baptist Hispanic Ministers Conference is a fellowship group for leaders in Hispanic Baptist churches nationwide. The group traditionally hosts a conference prior to the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention. Chapman and Vestal will address the group June 10 at the invitation of conference president Daniel Sotelo and coordinator Bob Sena. Sotelo is pastor of Templo Bautista in Fresno, Calif. Sena is pastor of First Spanish Church in Atlanta.

Sena said both men were invited in order to give a balanced perspective on the choice to be made by messengers to this year's convention. "We want to motivate Hispanic Southern Baptists to be involved," he said. "To do this, they need to get both perspectives. We don't want anyone to be able to say our conference was a platform for promoting one candidate."

About 1500 Hispanic Baptist leaders will attend the inspirational rally June 10 at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, Sena said. The program will begin at 7:30 p.m. in the Roland Q. Leavell Auditorium. Both candidates will have 15 minutes to speak, with a brief time of dialogue, Sena said. The two will appear in different segments of the program and will not be scheduled back-to-back.

**Walker calls faculty to personal witnessing**

HATTIESBURG, Miss. — Personal witnessing on the campuses of Southern Baptist schools and colleges is not just the prerogative of a special "priest group," the executive director of the Southern Baptist Education Commission told pastors, educators, and business leaders meeting at William Carey College.

"Recognition of the Baptist concerns for priesthood of believers and the importance of religious liberty require the acceptance of individual responsibility before God," Arthur L. Walker Jr. said. As a part of this responsibility, "all faculty members must bear the responsibility for witnessing to their faith. Per-

sonal witnessing should not be restricted to a special 'priest group' such as religion department faculty nor to an 'authoritative hierarchy' such as the college administration," he said.

Walker was interpreting to the group a national faith and discipline emphasis sponsored by the Southern Baptist Education Commission. The commission's program is designed to call all faculty members at the 71 Southern Baptist supported educational institutions to become examples of their faith and to provide them with resources for the integrity their faith and particular educational discipline.

"Witnessing to personal faith is the task of each believer who accepts the opportunity to influence 'other learners' who sit in their classes," he said.

"Faculty members must be willing to permit their students to see examples of their faith in their own experience and as a part of their consideration of their professional discipline.

**'Do evangelist's work' to be conference theme**

NEW ORLEANS — "Do the Work of an Evangelist" will be the theme of the 32nd annual Conference of Southern Baptist Evangelists June 13 at 1:15 p.m. in the Louisiana Superdome in New Orleans.

"We are living in a time unparalleled in the history of the human race," said Jay Strack, conference president and an evangelist from Dallas. "It is a time of world revolution and change. In such a time as this, God has given us a window of opportunity to reach our world for Christ."

Conference speakers include Zig Ziglar, motivational speaker from Dallas; Steve Hale, evangelist from Evansville, Ind.; Homer Lindsay Jr., pastor of First Church, Jacksonville, Fla.; Joel Gregory, pastor of Travis Avenue Church, Fort Worth, Texas; and Darrell Gilyard, pastor of Victory Church, Plano, Texas.

In addition to the June 13 meeting, the conference will host two "Afterglow" music sessions at the New Orleans Hyatt Regency Ballroom, from 10 p.m. to 11:30 p.m. Tuesday, June 12, and Wednesday, June 13, Strack said.

**Humorist to address missions directors**

NEW ORLEANS — Humorist Jerry Clower of Yazoo City, Miss., will be the keynote speaker during the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Conference of Directors of Missions, scheduled June 10-11. The Conference of Directors of Missions is one of the meetings held prior to the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention, scheduled June 12-14 in the Louisiana Superdome in New Orleans.

The directors of missions will meet from 1 p.m. Sunday, June 10, until noon Monday, June 11, in the Landmark Hotel, I-10 and Causeway Boulevard, Metairie, a suburb of New Orleans. Theme of the annual meeting is "Walking Worthily" from Ephesians 4:1-3.

**Religious educators to focus on progress**

NEW ORLEANS — Religious educators from across the Southern Baptist Convention will focus on progress when they convene for their annual meeting in New Orleans June 10-11. "The '90s ... A Decade of Progress" will be the theme for the 35th meeting of the Southern Baptist Religious Education Association, announced President Bob Edd Shotwell, minister of education and administration at Hyde Park Church, Austin, Texas. The meeting will be held in the Sheraton Hotel the two days prior to the SBC annual meeting, also in New Orleans.

The progress theme will be illustrated through the topics of four conference sessions, Shotwell said. The religious educators will examine progress in their professions, staff relationships, ministerial calling, and family life.

The meeting's keynote address, "Religious Education in the '90s," will be presented by Bill Taylor, associate pastor of Prestonwood Church, Dallas. A panel discussion on building and maintaining staff relationships will feature Shotwell and two Hyde Park Church colleagues, Pastor Ralph Smith and Minister of Music Joe Carrell.

**Jerry Clower to speak at SBC Brotherhood breakfast**

MEMPHIS — Comedian Jerry Clower will be the featured speaker at the Southern Baptist Convention Brotherhood Breakfast at 7 a.m., Wednesday, June 13, at the Hyatt Regency in New Orleans.

Clower, an award-winning Christian entertainer, will present the National Jerry Clower Award to Howard Ammons of Mooresville, N.C. Ammons is the winner of the 1990 National High School Baptist Young Men's Missions Speak Out competition and will present his speech at the breakfast. The award was named for Clower, a former Royal Ambassador counselor, in 1984. Royal Ambassadors is the Southern Baptist missions organization for boys.

A first at the breakfast will be the presentation of the International Legion of Royal Ambassador Leaders' Award of Merit. The Award of Merit is the highest RA leadership award given by the Brotherhood Commission. Twelve people were named to receive this award.

Tickets for the breakfast are available by mail until June by writing to SBC Brotherhood Breakfast Tickets, Brotherhood Commission, 1548 Poplar Ave., Memphis, Tenn. 38104, or until noon June 12 from the Missions Day Camp registration area or the Brotherhood Commission booth during the convention. Cost of the breakfast is \$12.50.

**Romanian evangelicals exploring evangelism via higher education**

RICHMOND, Va. — Romanian evangelicals hope to start a Christian university to stir young people and future generations toward faith in Christ. "This is a crucial time for our country," said Nicolae Gheorghita, a founder of the new Romanian Evangelical Alliance and pastor of Second Church, Oradea, Romania's largest Baptist congregation.

"Either we (evangelicals) will influence the younger generation, or secularism will, or Western culture will with sex and rock music," he said. Young Romanians also are vulnerable to appeals from Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, and even Satanists, Gheorghita said during a visit to the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board in Richmond, Va. "Whoever gets a solid foundation will influence much of the young generation," he stressed.