

Baptist and Reflector

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'You really get to practice what you preach' — Graham

By Wm. Fletcher Allen and
Connie Davis

NASHVILLE — "You really get to practice what you preach," Maurice Graham says about his four-and-a-half month confinement in the American Embassy in Kuwait.

The Shelbyville native, who was released along with 150 other Americans Dec. 9, added, "You learn to pray for your enemies."

His release came just weeks before all supplies would be depleted by the hostages at the embassy, said Graham, a Southern Baptist worker in Kuwait. "Our fate would have been very questionable after that," he speculated.

Graham and his wife, Laurie, and sons, Peter, 13, and Aaron, ten, were part of a small band of refugees who went to the embassy just after Iraqi troops invaded Kuwait Aug. 2. Their home and church building had been broken into and the hourly danger of being taken prisoner led them to make the move for diplomatic shelter. "We had no choice," he said.

Laurie Graham and the sons joined other Americans and Westerners who were released in September. They have been staying in a home provided by Woodmont Church, Nashville.

The situation was uncertain, shaky, at first, Graham said.

In their haste to evacuate the country, many people left everything they owned; and others went into hiding for fear of being captured by Iraqis. "Houses were ransacked, the church building was sacked, plumbing and pipes were ripped out and stolen — along with furniture, clothing, everything," he said.

Graham reported he heard the kind of gunfire that indicated executions were taking place. Munitions were pointed toward the compound and

mustard gas containers were placed near it. He saw troops searching homes again and again to determine who had left — and who remained.

"If you are a resister to the invasion, or if you are caught helping to feed or hide people, you can be shot," Graham said.

The paradox to Graham was that he had worshiped with Iraqis in the National Evangelical Church, where he was associate pastor.

"They're human beings who are also caught in a situation in which they don't have a lot of control and, from my point of view, which they don't really understand."

What's important "is not how much tuna I ate," continued Graham, referring to the tuna and rice which were the main ingredients of their diet. Accounts of people's needs and the healing work of the National Evangelical Church are the important things, he noted.

Church ministers despite siege

The church, which drew worshippers from 28 ethnic groups, was continuing its ministry despite extensive problems, he reported. The Grahams were the first Southern Baptist workers in Kuwait. They had worked at the church less than three months when the invasion occurred.

Members are caring for 43 severely handicapped children at a local hospital and paying the salaries of 19 people who work there.

Church members have fed countless numbers of people in Kuwait, and they have done it sacrificially. Half of the church income is spent for food for the hungry. Additionally the church helps fund 70 mission sites in Africa, India, and the Philippines, he reported.

Even though confined to the embassy, Graham continued his work with the church. The telephone became his link with members. He recorded sermons by phone. He also encouraged members to accept leadership positions. Pastor Jerry Zandstra of the Reformed Church of America is on furlough, explained Graham.

Calls from Graham provide comfort. His telephone ministry also reached others. One of the first phone calls Graham made after arriving in Nashville was to report on a relationship he formed by telephone. Graham learned about a young Kuwaiti man who was visiting family in Kuwait from his home in Louisiana and was trapped during the takeover.

Church members have risked their lives to take food to them, reported Graham. Because of the witness to him, the young man became a Christian during the past few months. Graham contacted the wife, who is



CHRISTMAS FAMILY — Celebrating Christmas in their Nashville home is the Graham family, Laurie, Peter, Aaron, and Maurice. — Photo by Connie Davis

also a Christian, to report on him. Calls to another American hiding from the soldiers with only a dog as comfort were especially meaningful to Graham.

Surviving in embassy

The fact that telephone communication was even available is just one example of how a random group of people cooperated to survive, explained Graham. "God handpicked the people to make it possible for all of us to survive," Graham said, attributing the remark to the United States Ambassador W. Nathaniel "Nat" Howell, concerning the group.

Early on in the invasion, Iraqis had cut off the electricity, cut the phone lines, and shut off access to water.

Besides rigging the phones to make contact with the outside world possible, the group included someone who could repair a generator and someone who cooked delicious desserts from the few provisions available besides tuna and rice. Someone else was able to plant and grow vegetables; and someone dug a well so water was available for washing and bathing — without depleting the clean water supply.

It took a sense of humor and cooperation to survive, explained

(*'You really get . . .'* page 5)

Merry Christmas!

Next issue — Jan. 2

The printing schedule for the Baptist and Reflector omits publication of the Christmas week issue. In this week's paper, readers will find Sunday School lessons for Dec. 23 and 30.

Letters and features about Christmas are included in this issue.

Even as the Christ Child became man, we pray with you, our readers, for spiritual growth in our work together across Tennessee in 1991. Joy to the world, our Lord has come!

Our next issue will be dated Jan. 2, 1991. — Editor

An open letter to Southern Baptists

All my life I have been told that prayer makes the difference, but when I actually experienced an outpouring of prayer from thousands of Christians around the world that were praying specifically for me and my situation, it made the difference in survival.

A day did not go by in the U.S. Embassy in Kuwait that I was not aware that thousands of Baptists were praying specifically for me and my family. There were days I was frightened for my physical well-being and uncertain about how well my wife and children were coping back home without me. What made the difference is knowing that people were holding us up in prayer and I knew that God would respond to their heart-felt petitions.

I am grateful to have the opportunity to serve as one of your missionaries in God's work in His kingdom. Knowing that prayer

makes a difference, I ask you to continue to pray for the hundreds of thousands of Americans in the Middle East who are serving their country — that they will have a positive Christian witness in a country closed to the Gospel.

My other prayer concern is for the five lay leaders who I left in charge of the National Evangelical Church in Kuwait to carry on the ministry of Jesus Christ in a hostile, broken country. Pray that they would have the spiritual resources to meet the challenge that God has placed before them.

Maurice Graham
Nashville

— A native of Shelbyville, Southern Baptist missionary Maurice Graham was a hostage with others in Kuwait from early in August until his release Dec. 9. We share his message gladly with Southern Baptists. — Editor

MOVING? Cut out and mail this address label to the Baptist and Reflector, P.O. Box 728, Brentwood, Tenn. 37024 along with your new address.

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Editorials

Celebration of the Spirit — the perfect Christmas gift

We pass them on — to generations that follow, we pass them on.

The traditions, concepts, celebrations of Christmas, given to us by kinfolk; we use them, and pass them on.

Some are as true and precise as if we had experienced the first Christmas only yesterday. Others miss the mark — and have little to do with Christmas — or Christ.

Somehow we have twisted Christmas into a blend of snowmen and sleigh rides, toys and trinkets, gadgets and games, money and madness. Rushing through the preliminaries, with faint hearts and weary spirits, we manage to make a little time for real Christmas.

Unless we want to continue passing on traditions without foundation — we must see Christmas through the eyes of Jesus Christ. Instead of spending hours and hours — and many dollars as well — trying to find that perfect gift for each name on the list, start with Him, the Christ.

God so loved the world that He gave us His only Son — the Savior. The perfect gift from us to Him — would be to give Him to others. The perfect gift to others — would be to give Him to them.

Christmas does not need to be dressed up in the fancy clothing of imagination. Christmas is glorious enough in itself that we can find in it the Way to all the Bethlehems.

How do we go about finding that perfect gift and giving it?

Maurice Graham, our Tennessee missionary who has been free from Iraqi captivity for only a week, tells this story:

The group of sixteen refugees and the eight persons in the United States Embassy who were hostages for almost five months were a random group.

But soon they discovered that each one of the twenty-four had a unique gift of ministry. God put someone in the compound to solve almost every problem.

Someone repaired a generator so they had some electricity. Someone dug a well so water was added to the faltering supply. Someone discovered a long-forgotten water line that enhanced life. Someone managed to rig the phones so contact could be made with the outside world. Someone was able to cook delicious desserts which made tuna and rice more bearable. Someone planted a garden so fresh vegetables were available at Thanksgiving.

And someone, Maurice Graham, was there to counsel in person and by phone, to pray and lead Bible study, to counsel and witness.

The spiritual gifts we have can be gifts directed toward others. That is one of the perfect gifts we can give at Christmas.

Le Chambon-Sur-Lignon, a small town in France, gave freedom to thousands of Jewish

children during World War II. The population of 5000 doubled before the war was over, because the townspeople adopted the children and gave them all the privileges of their own — even a name.

The Christian community banded together, not by organized vote, but family after family, living righteously. They knew the danger. They defied the Nazi war machine — by trickery, by courage, by faith.

It was as if the pastor spoke for the villagers when he said, "If God almighty summons, I will obey, and endure death in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ." Someone later commented on the bravery of the people.

Another replied, "Well, the people of Le Chambon simply continued doing as was their custom." Albert Camus, famed French novelist, was there when he began writing "The Plague."

"The people," he said, "had to decide whether or not they were living in the midst of the plague — and if so, whether they would resist it."

They resisted. A gift was given. So there are all sorts of gifts, but few that can be called perfect. One perfect gift would be to live life for Him, risking our personal lives to become our brothers' keepers.

Not all Christmas traditions betray the real Christmas. The song of the children reminds us that Christmas isn't Christmas until it happens in your heart. — WFA

Starting Sunday Schools requires team approach, leaders say

By Frank Wm. White

NASHVILLE (BP) — Starting new Sunday Schools cannot be a one-person job but requires a team made up of state convention leaders and people from locations where new Sunday Schools are needed, according to two state convention leaders.

Bob Cavin, consultant for growth and enlargement in the Sunday School division of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, and Shirley Miebs, director of religious education for the Alaska Baptist Convention, discussed their successes in new Sunday School starts while attending annual planning meetings for state Sunday School workers in Nashville Dec. 5-7.

Texas started 213 new Sunday Schools during the year ending Sept. 30, for the highest total among state conventions. Alaska started 12 new Sunday Schools for the best ratio of new starts to existing churches with one new Sunday School for every 4.6 churches.

Both states have been consistent leaders in new Sunday Schools, according to Jerri Herring, consultant for new Sunday School work at the Sunday School Board.

Throughout the Southern Baptist Convention, there were 814 new Sunday Schools started for an increase of 72 from the 742 started in 1988-89, Herring reported.

In other states, Florida had the second highest total with 113 new Sunday Schools while Georgia was third with 40. Other states with significant gains in new Sunday Schools include Illinois, 31; California, 25; Utah/Idaho, 19; Michigan, 18; Arizona, 17; New England, 16; and Maryland, 15.

Cavin said 23 contract workers are involved in starting new Sunday Schools in Texas. Many of the workers are retired ministers of education, pastors, and directors of missions.

Many of the leads for new Sunday Schools come from the state convention church extension division's list of new churches, Cavin said.

New churches represent 130 of the new Sunday School starts for the state. A contract worker contacts each new church or mission to assist them with organizing a Sunday School, Cavin explained.

The workers also contact existing churches which do not have Sunday Schools. This year, Cavin plans to assign each contract worker a list of churches which did not report Sunday School information on Uniform Church Letters.

"We want to make contact with the church and find out what help they need. They may just need help filling out the UCL. If they don't have a Sunday School, we need to help set one up," he said.

But, the contract workers don't sit at home waiting for Cavin to give them assignments. Many of them are finding new locations to start Sunday Schools, Cavin said.

Texas has a goal of starting 300 new Sunday Schools for 1990-91, but the work can't be done from the state office, Cavin said.

The contract workers and churches willing to start new missions and Sunday Schools are crucial in helping spread Baptist work to new areas, he said.

"We have a continuing need for new churches. We need to continue to reach out," he explained.

He said Outreach Bible Study in apartments, on campuses, and other locations have been helpful in getting Bible study into areas that have potential for new Sunday Schools. Outreach Bible Study is an eight-session evangelistic study for non-Christians published by the Sunday School Board and designed to be conducted in a location other than the church.

In Alaska, Miebs does not have an expanded staff to help start new Sunday Schools but is aided by the state missions division's focus on starting new churches and by dedicated pastors in the state.

Mike Proctor, pastor of Glacier

Valley Church, Juneau, has been responsible for many of the state's new starts, Miebs said.

He has targeted fishing villages, logging camps, and native villages that could never support a church as locations for Sunday Schools, she said.

"These camps with 50 to 100 people need someone to start a Bible study and then someone to come in and preach," she said.

Miebs hopes for graduates from the Alaska Native School of Theology, operated by Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, who will return to their villages to start Sunday School work. Outsiders often are not allowed in the villages, she explained.

Miebs, who is quitting her full-time job with the state convention and will work as a volunteer providing training and assistance in Sunday School work, also sees an urgent need for Mission Service Corps workers who can dedicate time to starting new Sunday Schools across the state. Mission Service Corps is a volunteer program coordinated by the Home Mission Board.

Any new Sunday School may receive assistance from the Sunday School Board including up to \$100 worth of Sunday School materials. Also available is a \$50 discount at Small Sunday School Leadership Conferences; a \$25 gift certificate from Baptist Book Stores for Bible study and administrative materials; free materials to guide the church in starting a media library; 25 Baptist hymnals; graded choir literature for three months; a Holman pew Bible; \$75 in Discipleship Training material; a Vacation Bible School Plan Book; and a copy of the current Church Materials Catalog.

Garrard serves in Cookeville

Alton Garrard has been called as pastor of Cane Creek Church, Cookeville. He formerly was pastor of Macedonia Church, Putnam County, and Boiling Springs Church, Baxter, from which he retired.

Garrard, a native of Columbia, was ordained in 1948 at Highland Park Church, Columbia. He and his wife, Grace, have three children and four grandchildren.

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FMB trustees pray for peace; to study relocation

By Robert O'Brien

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)— Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board trustees prayed at their December meeting for ways to influence the crisis in the Persian Gulf, noted an upsurge in missionary appointments, and approved a proposal to study the location and facilities of the Foreign Mission Board.

The trustees, meeting Dec. 10-12, referred the study proposal to their administrative committee for future deliberation. The action followed an earlier motion by trustee Ron Wilson of California to consider criteria for moving the board. That motion was tabled at the October meeting after speculation arose that it was motivated by the Southern Baptist Convention controversy.

Trustees, who prayed in thanksgiving for the pre-Christmas release of hostages from Iraq and Kuwait, also noted that another prayer had been answered for Southern Baptist hostage Maurice Graham. He had prayed he would be released from the besieged U.S. Embassy in Kuwait in time to help promote Southern Baptists' Lottie

Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions.

During the annual week of prayer for foreign missions, Southern Baptists across the United States also prayed, at the urging of FMB President R. Keith Parks, for a resolution of the hostage problem. Trustee chairman Bill Hancock of Kentucky told trustees: "I don't think it's accidental or incidental" the hostages came home when they did.

Hancock urged trustees to join with Graham and others in leading Southern Baptists to reach the Lottie Moon offering's \$86 million goal. If reached, the goal will fund 47 percent of the board's \$182.7 million 1991 budget.

Prayer also centered on the Persian Gulf crisis in general and Iraqi President Saddam Hussein in particular. Concern for the gulf situation took an unusual twist when trustee Horace Hamm of North Carolina asked trustees to pray that one of their number could go to Iraq to tell Saddam about "the message of redemption and hope in Jesus Christ."

Hamm singled out a trustee he said he thought of when he was on his knees in prayer. The trustee, who will pray for an opportunity to go to Iraq, has spiritual commitment and the status to attract attention there, Hamm said.

Trustees also appointed 35 new missionaries and reappointed eight former missionaries at the December meeting to bring the 1990 total to 414 — the highest number since 1985's record 429. The total, a 25 percent jump over 1989, includes 236 new career and associate missionaries and 178 International Service Corps workers who serve two years or more.

"I'm encouraged that appointments are up after four years of decline, and I'm particularly encouraged that career and associate appointments are up," said Lloyd Atkinson, the board's director of personnel selection.

"But we need to average 480 new missionaries a year" to make the Bold Mission Thrust goal of 5000 missionaries on the field by the year 2000, he said. "So we're still not where we need to be."

The board counted 3846 missionaries assigned to 121 countries as of mid-December, with the addition of the 43 appointments and reappointments to the mission force, the additions of Denmark and Czechoslovakia to the country count, and the deletion of Western Samoa.

The FMB location study proposal, which would lead to establishing criteria for a possible relocation of the board, was tabled in October at Wilson's request after speculation arose about its motivation.

Wilson, denying the motion had any connection to the SBC controversy, said that it was intended to get the board to develop criteria to determine merits of a move either in or out of Virginia. Major corporations do the same thing, he said, to evaluate best use of resources.

Parks said the location question has been reviewed seriously with stewardship and efficiency in mind ever since the board moved to its 3806 Monument Ave. location in Richmond in 1959. The board has been in Richmond for its entire 145-year history.

Chapman invites SBC committee recommendations

NASHVILLE (BP)— In an "Open Letter to Southern Baptists" released Dec. 12, SBC President Morris Chapman solicited recommendations for the SBC committee appointments from "any person within our Southern Baptist family."

Chapman focused attention on people to serve as members of the 1991 Committee on Committees, Resolutions Committee, Credentials Committee,

and Tellers Committee, all of which are appointed by the president.

In the open letter Chapman said, "I hope to appoint persons whose spirit reflects a deep love for and a fresh walk with our dear Lord Jesus Christ.

"People serving on these committees should have a genuine burden for lost souls."

Chapman reiterated three other personal qualifications which he frequently has identified. The person appointed must:

1. Be a cooperating Southern Baptist;

2. Have a commitment to perpetuating an allegiance to God's perfect word through the institutional life of Southern Baptists; and

3. Be in agreement with the Peace Committee's statement on Scripture.

"While I will stay within these cooperative and theological guidelines in my appointments, I will, as I have pledged, reach beyond perceived political parameters," Chapman said.

Procedurally, Chapman asked that all recommendations be submitted on a form that may be obtained by writing Martha Gaddis, The Ex-

ecutive Committee, 901 Commerce Street, Nashville, Tenn. 37203. Only recommendations submitted on approved forms and containing all of the requested information will be considered.

The open letter concluded with a Christmas greeting to all Southern Baptists from the president and his wife, Jodi, that "every person who submits a recommendation can be assured of my careful and prayerful consideration."

All recommendation forms must be postmarked by Feb. 22, 1991.

Romanian evangelicals hold first assembly

BUCHAREST — Four thousand believers gathered in the hall of the massive Palace here for the first General Assembly of the Romanian Evangelical Alliance, formed last March. At each reference to the new liberties that evangelical Christians now enjoy, the hall reverberated with thunderous applause and cheering.

This was the same hall from which, only eleven months earlier, then dictator Nicolae Ceausescu proclaimed that the tide of reform sweeping over Communist countries would not be permitted in Romania until, in his words, pears grew on poplar trees.

The delegates, representing as many as three million evangelicals nationwide, traveled from across the nation to the fall 1990 sessions in spite of economic hardship in the most depressed country of Europe. Because meals were served to all, the expense to the young alliance was reckoned at about \$10,000, with only half of that amount underwritten by subsidy from abroad.

In elections, the delegates replaced Provisional President Vasile Talos, president of the Baptist Union, with Paul Negrut, pastor of Oradea Second Church — Romania's largest congregation — as president. They retained Provisional Vice President Emil Bulgar in his post. Bulgar, who was for 19 years prohibited from preaching by the Ceausescu regime, was made president of the Pentecostal Church denomination after the revolution.

Chaplain minister to military personnel, trustees told

ATLANTA (BP)— More than 120 Southern Baptist chaplains are ministering to American military personnel in Saudi Arabia, trustees of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board were told.

Lew Burnett, HMB director of military chaplaincy, reported on the ministry of chaplains assigned to Operation Desert Shield during the trustees' December executive committee meeting.

Some chaplains are conducting up to five Bible studies a day and leading multiple worship services on Sunday, Burnett said. One chaplain reported holding baptismal services in the Persian Gulf.

Troops have been overwhelmed with Bibles, as individuals and organizations have sent Scriptures to the desert. Burnett said the Home Mission Board also has sent Bibles with troops, but the need now is for Bible study materials.

Mailing restrictions on religious literature have been lifted. Burnett said, "At the present time, anyone can send any religious materials to any military personnel they desire in Saudi Arabia."

Trustees were asked to refer people to the HMB chaplaincy office for suggestions on how to be a part of the Persian Gulf ministry.

Trustees also heard that year-to-date

Annie Armstrong Easter Offering receipts are 8.1 percent more than 1989 receipts. The total of \$35.4 million is less than the \$41 million goal set by Woman's Missionary Union, but more than the \$32.85 million the HMB budgeted to receive from the annual offering.

In other business, trustees voted to

include in the total missionary count Mission Service Corps volunteers who serve at least two years. Currently 1301 people serve as Mission Service Corps volunteers, with about 500 of them serving for more than two years.

The committee elected four people to the Atlanta staff and approved appointment of 19 missions personnel.



KUWAIT REMINDERS — Looking at photos from Kuwait, Maurice and Laurie Graham, right, and sons Aaron and Peter, recall their months in the Middle East. Maurice Graham was released with other hostages on Dec. 9. Laurie and the boys came home to Tennessee in September.

Our Readers Write

Remember the message

We need to remember the message the Christchild brought to us — peace on earth, good will to men.

The child born that day was truly God's best — His Son. The world still needs a Savior, not so much glitter and wrappings that the world notices.

The Savior gives that everlasting hope to each one who truly believes and lets Him have first place in the heart every day. This should happen every day, and not just once a year. That would truly be joy to the world.

Nannie Tramel
Route 1
Dowelltown 37059

When we forget

People have forgotten the true meaning of Christmas. We do not see the hungry, the homeless, little children who have no parents.

We put Santa Claus, Christmas decorations, getting expensive gifts as the reason for having Christmas. But we may not remember the star that led the shepherds to Jesus.

The star reminds me of Jesus — He is the star! He can give us the greatest gift — eternal life — when we accept Him. When that happens, we will see the ones in need and remember that Christmas is a time for sharing, giving, and loving.

Michael Preslar
Route 1, Box 82
Bethel Springs 38315

Making commitments

Raising children to know the true meaning of Christmas is a joy for us as parents. Eight years ago my husband

and I started a family tradition while we were houseparents at the Tennessee Baptist Children's Home in Franklin.

On Christmas Eve we have a birthday party for Jesus. We tell the Christmas story. We can't tell the story without telling the magnitude of His love for us as expressed in the Easter story. We talk about being Jesus' only hands, feet, and mouth pieces here on earth. Family members separate. In solitude, commitments of the ways through which we give Jesus our hands, feet, and voices throughout the following year are made. Then letters and pictures are written or drawn and included in a wrapped Christmas present under the tree for Jesus' birthday. My husband and I share our commitments when our children go to sleep.

Nancy E. Madden
West Jackson Church
Union University, Box 54
Jackson 38305

That 'pickle-dog'

Imagine getting excited over a large jar of "pickle dog" every Christmas! I do. My father-in-law introduced me to "pickle dog." It was love at first taste. Each time we left, Henry would wrap a large piece in foil for me to eat when I got back to my college dorm room. My roommate would quickly raise a window. But I loved it.

My dad started getting us a large jar of this wonderful stuff every Christmas after we married. He was such a quiet, gentle man who very seldom did anything with spontaneity that the first Christmas I was completely surprised — all the time digging in to that large jar

of heaven. Daddy died in 1982. Every Christmas as we enjoy "pickle dog," I know Daddy is looking down and laughing at me enjoying a tradition that he started by love for one of his daughters.

Melinda Popplewell
First Church
219 Stonewall St.
McKenzie 38201

Greatest gift of all

Every year, about two weeks before Thanksgiving, when Christmas decorations start showing up in stores, I again state my dread for the oncoming season. Right after Thanksgiving, when lights on houses and trees in windows appear, my depressed mood deepens. My attitude, I claim, stems from the "commercialism" that is "forced" on us in all we see and read.

But as the days pass and I give and get gift possibility lists from my family, and our church music begins to include those old favorites, and a cold wind bites my face bringing back youthful memories. You know what happens — my heart is lighter. Soon I find myself whistling along with the seasonal music piped into the grocery store.

By the time the "Day" arrives, and I've read the old story again from my Bible, sang of it myself, given from my

Fixed fund rate increase projected

DALLAS — The anticipated crediting rate for the Fixed Fund of the Annuity Board, Southern Baptist Convention, has been projected to be 8.8 percent for 1991.

Paul W. Powell, president, verified the percentage after the Investment Division completed its analysis of Fixed Fund assets and prospects for new investments in the coming

heart gifts of love to my family; I've been changed and, once again, I'm humbly thankful for this reminder day; a reminder of the greatest gift of all — Jesus.

Charles C. Herring
814 Elliott Dr.
Murfreesboro 37129

Prayer and peace

Christmas and our human desire is for the things of this world but deep down there is a spiritual yearning for "Peace on earth and good will toward all men!" My heart's desire is for peace in the Desert Shield area and peace in our beloved Southern Baptist Convention. Peace is precious on earth and peace is precious in our convention.

Here are some tokens of peace through love, not found in stores but in the hearts of believers who seek, "... not my will but Thine be done!"

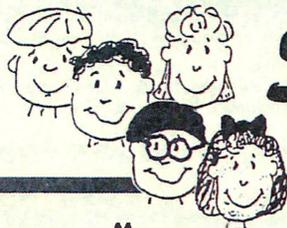
Prayer, not power! Consideration, not condemnation. Understanding, not misunderstanding. A hand out in giving, not in receiving.

May the short walk we take between 1990 and 1991 be one "... in honor preferring one another!"

C. Winfield Rich
304 Edgeview Rd.
Nashville 37211

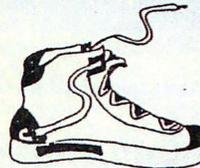
months. In December 1989 the expected rate of earnings for 1990 was pegged at 8.9 percent, and earnings have been posted each month to fulfill that goal.

The Annuity Board announces a rate each December for the coming year to assist retirement plan members in their decisions on allocation of contributions and accumulations.



Shoe Strings

"the kids' fun page"



Created by

Rob Sauls December 1990

Darrell Vandergriff

Lib McCluskey

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1. Mother of Jesus
2. Night Before Christmas
3. Wisemen Followed The
4. One of Wisemen's Gifts
5. One of Wisemen's Gifts
6. Why Jesus' Parents Went To Bethlehem
7. Earthly Father of Jesus
8. Joseph's Job
9. Jesus' Aunt
10. Prophet Foretold of Jesus Birth
11. Town Where Jesus Was Born
12. Prophet Foretold Town Jesus To Be Born
13. Jesus' Unde
14. Who Followed Angels Directions To Find Jesus

Answers: 1. Mary; 2. Eve; 3. Star; 4. Frankincense; 5. Myrrh; 6. Census; 7. Joseph; 8. Carpenter; 9. Elizabeth; 10. Isiah; 11. Bethlehem; 12. Micah; 13. Zachariah; 14. Shepherds

JUMBLE — Scramble Game

Unscramble these four words, one letter to each square, to form four words.

Month of Christmas (ECDEMREB)

Celebrating the birth of (SEJSU)

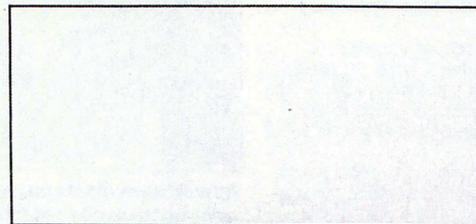
I have good news, announced the (GANEL)

Baby Jesus was visited by (SEPHEDRSH)

Arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer:

Christmas time is a good time to

Now, using the word formed, draw a picture depicting the answer.



The December 1990 issue is for Samantha, Ashley, and Darren.

The Christmas Challenge

Cassie and Boomer squirmed as Rev. Morris finished the announcement time. Cassie whisper to Boomer, "Who cares what time the parking lot committee meets? I'm hungry!" "Me too!" said Boomer a little too loud for Mrs. Wildes, who put a finger to her lips and scolded, "SHHHHH!" Cassie and Boomer just smiled and waved back at Mrs. Wildes.

Rev. Morris continued, "And here's a Christmas challenge from the GAs to the RAs. Who can collect the most canned food for our food bank? Are the boys up to the challenge?"

Cassie whispered, "Are you?" Boomer, forgetting where he was said, "You bet!" Then Mrs. Wildes repeated herself and so did Cassie and Boomer.

Later that week, during RAs and GAs, the boys and girls made their plans. Boomer boasted, "We can beat those girls." And in another part of the church, Cassie and the other GAs made similar plans, "Those boys," said Cassie, "don't stand a chance."

For the next three weeks the RAs and GAs collected canned food. On the Sunday before Christmas, Rev. Morris announced the winner. Rev. Morris first gave the meeting time of the parking lot committee and said, "As most of you know, the GAs and RAs have been collecting canned food for our food bank. The RAs and GAs have collected a total of 278 cans. And the winner is . . . everyone who will now, because of our GAs and RAs, have a merry Christmas.

Boomer's first reaction was, "Huh?" Then he smiled at the grinning Cassie and said, "Well, I guess he's right."

"You bet!" said Cassie outloud. Then they both turned, smiled, and waved at Mrs. Wildes.

Missionary Graham:

'I have never seen his face — but I know him well'

Stories from Maurice Graham: "A man I'll call Mike is a Kuwaiti married to a Southern Baptist pastor's daughter. That family has witnessed to him for about 20 years. I shared Christ with him on the phone — after talking with him many times. I think he accepted Christ."

"He's from near Shreveport, La. I called his wife when I first got back Monday night. Mike's family really needed food. Our church people gave them rice, just as they had done for so many people. Mike called me every day. It is a great concern of mine about who will share Christ with the family. I have never seen his face, but I know him well. We need to pray for Mike and his family."

 Then there is another friend, "Tom" — an American. "We talked by phone many times. He was alone except for his dog. He was in constant danger. The soldiers searched his house many times, but he always hid in an air vent. They took his furniture, his refrigerator, his television. They even took his wife's picture. He said he couldn't leave without his dog. Finally, near the last day, some friends made a little box for the dog, and he agreed to leave. But the box was damaged at the airport and the dog got out. He had to leave without his dog. Tom means so much to me."

 Serving on guard duty: "One of my jobs at the embassy was serving as a guard at the back gate. I was on duty from about six to nine every morning. I could hear executions by gunfire not far away — but there have not been any lately. The compound is in the heart of town where everything happened. The reported atrocities are true. There is mustard gas all around, stored in cannisters around the em-

bassy walls.

"It was a weird feeling to put on a gas mask. We were drilled to get two things in case of an attack — that one small suitcase with all our belongings, and the gas mask. We learned how to slip into a plastic bag to retard nerve gas — but that wouldn't be enough protection."

 Relating to Iraqi soldiers: "In a way, we got to know them. We could see them through the gates, and we communicated with them by hand signals."

"We could 'talk' to the same ones at times. One soldier told us he had seven children and his wife back in Iraq. Just like us, the soldiers didn't want to be there. I did find out that some of them were Christians."

 Spirituality for serious times: "We were able to have services at the embassy every Sunday night. About half attended. There were many who began reading the Bible for the very first time — some had never had a Bible. I had six Bibles with me at the beginning, and I gave them all away."

"There was an element of spirituality in our midst. Every day two men met with me for prayer and sharing concerns — Jim Carrol of Georgia and Benny Mitchell of Texas. I was able to counsel with some of the group who came to me."

 God's mercy ever present: "God was merciful. During the four and a half months, except for a few mild flu cases, there was no sickness. Despite the slow deterioration of sanitation, and only one outdoor toilet for 24 people, there was no sickness."

"Every person pulled his share of the load. We did what needed to be done, and God was so merciful to us."

 The work of the church: "The church in Kuwait is alive and well. Church members moved people (who were in danger) from place to place. They delivered food, not only to the hospital, but to people in hiding and others who were in danger."

"It's true that many people were used as human shields. An Australian whom I'll call John kept risking his life helping Americans day by day. Through deeds like his and the church members, the Kuwaiti and American communities became very close."

 A special Thanksgiving Day: "We had fresh vegetables for the first time in months. One of our group had planted them. That green salad was delicious! It was the best I'd ever eaten. We had tuna-lasagna, and used china dishes and crystal."

"I gave each person five kernels of our home-grown corn, reminding them of the first Thanksgiving in our country when the Pilgrims did that for the Indians. I asked them to think of five things they were thankful for, and to share with all of us. We prayed and gave expressions of gratitude. We admitted that if there had not been a crisis, our spiritual strength would not have grown, our Bible reading would have been less frequent. I am thankful I had the opportunity to minister in that way."

 The telephone — a spiritual blessing: "I was able to talk with church members daily — and others who just wanted to talk. I was able to counsel with some people who really needed encouragement. I called church members in the morning after guard duty and just before prayer time. I probably spent three or four hours on the phone every day."

"Many Americans were depressed, and I think I was able to give them some hope."

 A daily routine: "Someone asked if we ever got bored. How could we be bored? We all chipped in with the work that was necessary. I was on gate guard duty from six to nine each morning. I listened to the Voice of America and heard messages from Laurie before guard duty. I called church members, had prayer time from 10 to 11, handled phone messages, had lunch and rested. I walked or ran around the compound about two miles a day. Then I took more phone calls. After supper, we usually watched videos."

"I had about four to five hours sleep each night, regularly waking up at 2 a.m. because we had been warned that any attacks would probably come about that time. I didn't sleep much after that."

 His friend, the Bishop: "I can't say enough about Bishop Francis (leader of the only other church in Kuwait). We had an excellent relationship. 'I think I can get you out,' he told me. I really wasn't ready to leave because of the church people. My papers were ready, so I told him he could share them with the authorities if he went to Baghdad."

"He did. It was through his intervention that my process for evacuation began. I had the exit visa by mid-November, but there was no way to get out of the compound. Bishop Francis did nothing for three or four weeks except helping Pastor Maurice. He certainly helped to keep my spirits up. When it was all settled, he met me at the airport to see me off. I am indebted to him for his personal concern and prayer support."

'You really get to practice what you preach'

(Continued from page 1)
 Graham, adding with a smile there was only one outdoor toilet.

"God was really merciful to us to protect us from any sickness."

The Iraqis must have been amazed, Graham said, that the compound swimming pool remained full — despite the fact the group was using it for cooking, etc., after boiling. "But there was an old, hidden water line that was not discovered."

And Maurice Graham was there to counsel in person and by telephone, to lead prayer and worship services, to be a Christian friend. With only six Bibles available, Graham led worship each Sunday evening and a daily

O. C. Anderson dies

O. C. Anderson, 91, of Elizabethton died Nov. 9. Anderson has been a staff member of churches in Tennessee, Kentucky, Virginia, and Florida. He was a member of Oak Street Church, Elizabethton.

The Nov. 11 funeral was held at Oak Street Church with Bob Polk, director of missions, Watauga Association, and Larry Riddle, pastor, officiating.

Survivors include his wife, Bertha Compton Anderson; son, Naamon Anderson, Schenectady, N.Y.; one sister; two grandchildren; and five great grandchildren.

prayer time.

"If this crisis had not happened, some would never have read the Bible or found strength from a spiritual life," said Graham. He has been asked by the United States State Department to continue a counseling service to former hostages and families.

He described the military response of the U.S. as "American machoism. . . . You give us a problem and we'll show you we can do it."

What does he think about the Iraqi leader, Saddam Hussein, and the Middle East situation — including the occupation of Kuwait and holding of hostages?

"I don't have any answers," Graham said. "But it is similar to someone taking over a candy store and stealing all the candy, then inviting the children of the neighborhood to come on over — and giving them one piece of candy at a time."

Going home

Just a few days before departure, the hostages knew something was going to happen. "The Iraqis asked us if we needed anything. We acted like nonchalant Americans," Graham said, "and didn't ask for necessities. We asked for fruit, soft drinks, vegetables. They realized we had outlasted them."

"I tried to direct a crash course in lay leadership during those four

months," he said. The people were used to speaking in church, he added. They wanted to hear his voice — especially in prayer. They called him the "Praying Pastor."

Graham and the others leaving the embassy were taken to the Kuwait airport by cars, some of which were furnished by church members.

"Iraqi Air took us to Frankfurt. It was snowing, so there was a delay there, but finally a TWA airliner brought us home. I called Laurie in Frankfurt. When we got to the United States, I was determined to make it home on Laurie's birthday — and I did." That was Monday, Dec. 10.

He expressed mixed feelings about

leaving because of the others who could not escape. Some of the church members chose to continue to minister regardless of the dangers, he said.

Graham said he would be "grossly disappointed" if Americans stopped praying because he and other Americans have returned unharmed. He asked for prayer for the National Evangelical Church, the other Christians in Kuwait, including a Catholic bishop who worked for Graham's release, and for the people involved in the crisis.

"I have no doubt at all that God called me to Kuwait and I would return if things settled down enough to allow it," said Graham.

Age: 41
 Educational background:
 Harrison Chilhowee Baptist Academy, Seymour
 bachelor of science — Belmont College, Nashville
 master of divinity — Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Mo.
 master of social work — University of Tenn. Center of Health Sciences' School of Social Work, Memphis
 doctor of ministry — Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, Pa.

Experience:
 pastor in Missouri
 Southern Baptist Home Mission Board
 Christian Social Ministries intern at Tabernacle Church, Kansas City, Mo.
 associate minister of church and community missions, Second Church, Memphis.
 Home Mission Board summer missionary in Tennessee
 director of pastoral care, St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, Memphis
 missionary to Liberia from 1986-89
 worker in Kuwait from May 1990

Gift-giving leads to ministry

Prisoners receive gift of love in Sneedville

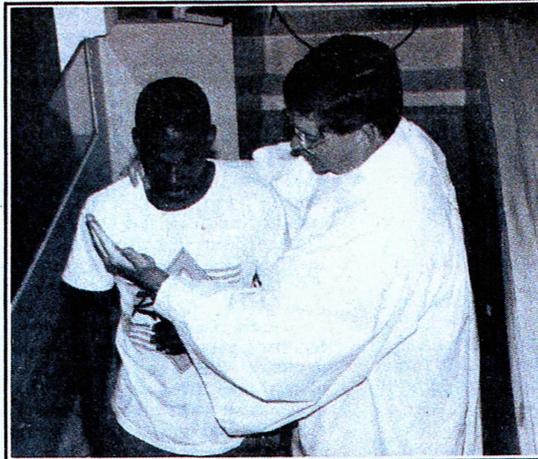
By *Connie Davis, assistant editor*
Everybody doesn't get Christmas presents. But some prisoners in Sneedville will be visited by Santa Claus, alias Nell Greene.

Greene will continue her tradition of giving gifts to about 120 prisoners at the Hancock County Jail in Sneedville. Many times, it is the only gift they receive during the Christmas season, said Greene, a member of First Church, Sneedville.

What began as gift-giving has grown into a ministry for Greene and her church.

She and Pastor Brian Courtney began a weekly Bible study two years ago that has resulted in the baptism of 11 young men and changed attitudes in the small community.

Courtney explained most of the community resisted the development of the jail to house prisoners from Washington D.C. Although it is a source of revenue for the county, most of the prisoners are black in contrast to the



BAPTISM — Rodney Dane, an inmate, is baptized by Pastor Courtney at First Church, Sneedville, where he now holds his membership.

nearly all-white population of the county, he noted.

But the actions of church members,

who accepted the new Christians as members and befriended them, has changed both groups and the communi-

ty.

"It's been a lot more rewarding than I ever thought it would be," said Greene. "They (the prisoners) are a lot like the rest of us. They just got off on the wrong track or in the wrong crowd."

Sometimes they just need a listening ear, like the man who couldn't return for the funeral of his daughter after her sudden death. Others need a friend. She told of receiving a letter from a former trustee at the jail who was doing well, but missed the Christian fellowship he enjoyed in Sneedville.

Each prisoner will receive skin lotion, bookmarks, and cookies and candy prepared with the help of some members of her Sunday School class, said Greene.

Once a month she holds a birthday party for any prisoner who will have a birthday that month. This reaches those who don't attend the Bible study. About 20-25 gather for the study, she explained.

Greene also works at the facility as a nursing assistant to physician Truett Price, a member of First Church. "The more contact you have with them, the better," she said.

'They just got off on the wrong track or in the wrong crowd.'

The experience for Courtney has "been a blast," he said. If he had not become involved in the ministry, he would have missed befriending Muslims at the facility and conducting a marriage ceremony for a trustee, Courtney said. He has learned many people are interested in the Gospel and that criminals are God's children. Two evangelists from the area also meet regularly with prisoners, he added.

One way the new members of First Church are participating in church activities is to support the church's Lottie Moon Christmas Offering project, Courtney said.

Greene became involved in the prison ministry through the influence of her late husband, who dealt with criminals as a justice of the peace, and through Bible study. "I'm so glad the Lord sent me there," said Greene.

'Great cookie crusade' held for prisoners

By *Tim Hodges*

"Three thousand dozen cookies, how many cookies is that?" This is the question I hear most, along with, "What are you going to do with that many cookies?"

People are always correcting my mathematics saying, "you must mean three hundred or three thousand cookies." But, I tell them, no, I really need three thousand dozen cookies and that comes to thirty six thousand cookies.

In October I challenged my congregation, New Home Church in Martin, to provide the cookies. When I explained the need they began the great cookie crusade.

These cookies are going into Christmas packages for all the inmates at the Chillicothe Correctional Institution in Chillicothe, Ohio. We are working through Chaplain Charles Edgington and the Inmate Care Unit. The packages will contain such things as apples and oranges, candy, envelopes, and one dozen cookies for each inmate.

The cookie crusade has crossed both county and state lines and, more importantly, denominational lines. Churches in Beulah Association which covers Weakley, Obion, and Lake coun-

ties have been very supportive.

Many youth groups and mission organizations have worked hard in providing for this Christmas mission.

Individuals in both Tennessee and Kentucky have provided cookies or money for this project. We have received cookies from Presbyterian, Catholic, and Methodist churches or individuals who are members of these churches. It is amazing to see prison walls break down denominational walls.

This cookie crusade also has evangelistic qualities that were unexpected. People have called and said, "I don't belong to a church but I would like to give some cookies." Plans to follow up on these who have no church affiliation are now in the works.

I have been involved off and on in a prison or jail ministry since my first pastorate ten years ago. My amount of involvement depended upon the need of the church.

Three years ago my involvement became more personal and I became more aware of the need for Christians to minister to prisoners. My brother is one of 2500 inmates at Chillicothe. Matthew 25:31-46 became real to me for

or recipients to pay expensive customs charges on aid packages," said Karl-Heinz Walter, general secretary of the European Baptist Federation.

The response of European Baptists has been so great that better and cheaper arrangements now have been made to ship the parcels. They now will be trucked into Romania and Bulgaria, with some packages being shipped on to the Baltic republics and other parts of the Soviet Union.

Southern Baptists and others in North America who have requested opportunities to help also can participate, but not by sending parcels. Baptist World Aid and the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board have made joint arrangements for supporting the aid effort by opening a special fund. Contributions received will be forwarded immediately to the European Baptist Federation in Hamburg, Germany,

the first time.

Approximately 80 percent of inmates at Chillicothe, and I believe across the nation, have no contact with the free-world. For most, families, friends, and ministers have forgotten them. The old adage "out of sight, out of mind," comes true when an individual is incarcerated.

For most of the men at Chillicothe, their only contact with the free-world this year will be the Christmas package they receive. It is unacceptable Christian behavior and direct disobedience to Jesus' teachings for prisoners not to be ministered to. Jesus also died for these men.

Through my personal learning experiences at Chillicothe and through the leadership of the Holy Spirit I also serve as a volunteer chaplain at the Lake County regional correctional facilities in Tiptonville. The words of Jesus ring true behind the prison walls and barbed wire fences. "... In as much as ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

As of Dec. 12, about 15,000 cookies had been collected. The cookies will be delivered to the prison Dec. 21.

and used to pay for food packages.

Paul Montacute, director of Baptist World Aid, the relief division of the Baptist World Alliance, estimated each package will cost \$25 to put together and ship. "If the same package was shipped from the United States it would cost nearly \$50 to airmail and \$25 to send by surface mail, and then it would not arrive until winter had ended," said Montacute. "This system will feed more people."

Funds for the project sent to the Foreign Mission Board should be marked "Manna - Food Parcels for Eastern Europe." Funds sent to Baptist World Aid should be designated "Baptist Response-Europe."

"The beauty of this plan is that it allows Southern Baptist churches of any size or even individual families to help," said Keith Parker, FMB area director for Europe. "Winter is going

to be awful in these countries. Indications are that many people will face hunger and that shortages in medicines will cause untold suffering to families. Already many items are being rationed. Here's a chance for us to make a difference."

Churches are being asked not to send large loads of food and clothing because of problems with both storing and distributing bulky shipments. The small packages shipped by European Baptists will be distributed to the most needy through networks established by local churches in Romania and Bulgaria.

"We already have heard reports that the packages are getting through," Parker said. "It is essential that the packages be sent through this system, though, since we've heard of others winding up for sale on the black market."

Mission board opens special fund to assist Eastern Europeans

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)— Southern Baptist churches can help Romanians, Bulgarians, and Soviets survive the harsh conditions expected this winter.

Many people in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union are facing not only a cold winter but economic chaos and hunger as their nations struggle to adjust to profound social change.

For several months, Western European Baptists have been sending food and basic medicine packages to Romania and Bulgaria. Each parcel contains items such as margarine, oil, flour, rice, cheese, powdered milk, coffee, soap, washing powder, aspirin, soups, sausages, and canned meats.

In a carefully coordinated operation, the packages of essentials have been mailed directly from Baptist churches in Western Europe to churches in the East. "If guidelines are followed, the governments will not require senders

Christmas in Tennessee

Copper Basin, Concord associations share God's love to community

By Lonnie Wilkey, associate editor
MURFREESBORO — Copper Basin and Concord associations are on opposite ends of the spectrum, yet the two are tied together by a commitment to show God's love to a community in need.

As a result of their efforts, about 75 families in the Copper Basin region of Tennessee will have Christmas gifts this year, whereas for them that prospect looked dim just weeks ago.

Copper Basin Association, located in the extreme southeastern part of the state bordering North Carolina and Georgia, is a community beset with unemployment and poverty, said Al Patterson, director of missions for the association.

The area's economic woes began in 1985 when Tennessee Chemical Company announced it was closing its mining operations, eliminating about 900 jobs, Patterson related.

Now, many of the residents who have jobs commute long distances — some as much as 200 miles or more roundtrip daily to Atlanta, Ga. Others work for less wages in the community, he noted.

The association is comprised of 12 churches with a resident membership of 1435.

On the other hand, Concord Association, located in Middle Tennessee, is in a "prosperous" area, observed Director of Missions James Powers.

Concord Association is more than ten times larger than Copper Basin in terms of membership with 13,572 resident members in 42 churches. In fact, First Church, Murfreesboro, the largest church in Concord Association, has only three fewer resident members than the entire resident membership of Copper Basin Association.

But despite the differences, a bond is forming between the two groups of churches.

Concord Association voted recently to establish a "sister" relationship with Copper Basin Association. In November, Concord churches supplied about 2000 pairs of shoes to Copper Basin Association's crisis center, which was established in 1988 to meet the increasing needs in the community.

The crisis center, open four days a



HELPING HANDS — Unloading gifts to be sent to Copper Basin Association recently were the following representatives from Concord Association. From left, Ross Maroney, Stones River Church; Ila Smartt, Woodbury Road Church; Marion Arbuckle, Westwood Church; Randy Sledge, Riverdale Church; Cathey Neel, Third Church, Murfreesboro; and Director of Missions James Powers.

week, now ministers to more than 300 families monthly, Patterson said.

After learning of the need in Copper Basin and coordinating the shoe drive on an associational level with the churches' missions organizations, Concord pastors felt on ongoing relationship should be established, Powers said.

"There is a need in Copper Basin Association and I feel we can help meet that need," he said.

For Christmas, Concord Association churches collected toys, clothing, and shoes for the crisis center. Woodbury

Road Church, Murfreesboro, let the association use its facilities for storage. Items were taken to the crisis center Dec. 17.

Patterson said the crisis center would distribute the gifts according to need, but noted that about 30 families would have received little, if anything, without assistance.

He shared the story of a nine-year-old girl who came with her mother to the crisis center. Patterson's wife, Margaret, asked the girl what she wanted for Christmas. The girl replied, "Socks, I guess," Patterson said, add-

Remember homeless after Christmas, leaders say

By Sarah Zimmerman

ATLANTA (BP) — With food baskets and prison packets, Southern Baptists make Christmas more cheerful for the nation's hungry and homeless.

Home missionaries working with the needy say without the help of church groups, Christmas is a headache rather than a holiday.

"No one comes knocking on our door at Christmas or any other time of year volunteering to help," said Larry

Miguez, director of the Rachel Sims Baptist Mission in New Orleans. "Christmas becomes a real struggle for us."

The mission provides weekday ministries to every age group, from preschoolers to senior adults. Miguez said he tries to have Christmas parties for each group. Churches are asked to provide refreshments for the party, a \$5 gift for each participant and a Bible story during the party.

He said last year one church sponsored all the parties. This year more churches are involved, but only one church is a Louisiana congregation.

In Gainesville, Ga., area churches donate food and their time to feed 2000 people on Thanksgiving and Christmas Day. Jack Little, director of church and community ministries for Chattanooga Association, said they also participate in a "Secret Santa" program to provide toys, clothing, and food to needy families.

Little said his support is "fairly constant." He added, "I'm thankful to have such a great outpouring during the holidays, but the need is really there all year long."

Marilyn Prickett, director of the Johnening Mission Center in Washington, said churches provide Christmas gifts for the children and senior adults involved in the center's programs. Churches also provide baskets of food to distribute at Thanksgiving and Christmas.

In South Carolina, churches work through the state missions department

ing that it was as if the little girl expected nothing.

Randy Sledge, pastor of Riverdale Church, Murfreesboro, and missions coordinator for the association, observed churches have responded well to the need.

"This has given smaller churches, who could not go out of state for a missions project, an opportunity to be involved with hands-on mission work," Sledge noted.

Ross Maroney, pastor of Stones River Church, Smyrna, said his congregation "has been burdened" for the need in Copper Basin Association.

Stones River members donated three truck loads of items for the project. "We have tried to meet the needs any way we could," Maroney noted.

Patterson said he was excited about Concord Association's involvement in Copper Basin. "We need to be more involved with each other," he said.

And, the relationship will continue, Sledge and Powers confirmed. Sledge noted the churches plan to do special projects as needed and do some summer projects such as Vacation Bible Schools and backyard Bible clubs.

In the meantime, Copper Basin Association plans to continue meeting physical needs of the community and, when the occasion arises, spiritual needs as well.

Patterson observed you cannot begin meeting the spiritual needs overnight. "You have to build a level of trust and meet the physical needs before you have opportunity to minister to spiritual needs," he said.

After two years of operation, the association's crisis center is beginning to do both.

to provide prisoners with toiletry items and stationery at Christmas. The program began in 1976, and this year plans are to prepare 20,000 packets for distribution by prison chaplains.

Given the chance to make a Christmas wish list for their centers, home missionaries unanimously requested volunteers. They also asked that Baptist churches keep the less fortunate on their gift list all year.

In addition to spiritual growth for program participants, some of their most common year-round requests include:

- Preschool programs and job counseling. Prickett said the center in the nation's capital had operated a preschool day care, but closed it when it became an economic burden. She would like to see it reopen. She would also like to have an employment counselor on staff to help match people with prospective jobs.

- Repair work. Miguez said the New Orleans center, built in 1949, needs plumbing repairs and reinforcement in the preschool area which is plagued with termites.

- Transportation. Prickett said her center has two vans which constantly need work. Miguez said the New Orleans center uses a station wagon that needs to be replaced.

- Help with the homeless. In the county of 95,000 people where Little works, 140 families have been identified as homeless. A proposed transitional living center would provide housing for families up to 90 days.

TeamTalk

By D. L. Lowrie

Christmas is a reminder that God does answer prayer. I wonder how many Old Testament saints had prayed for the coming of the Messiah. It was the regular prayer of God's people, particularly in times of national difficulty. The prayers were based on the sure word of promise that God had given. Then the Messiah came — the prayer was answered.



LOWRIE

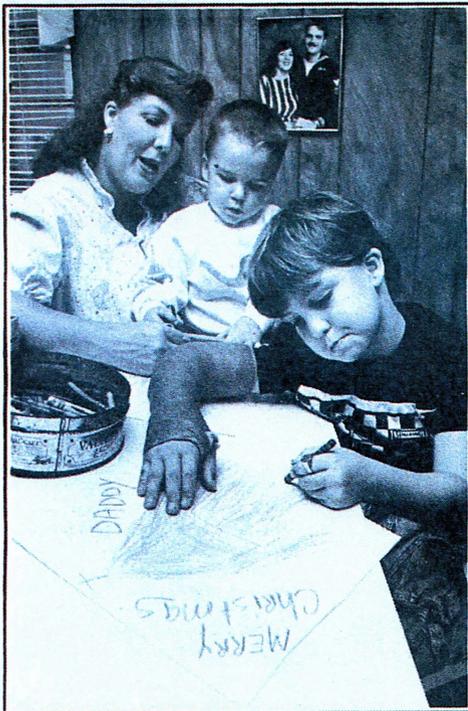
We can learn something from this. A genuine prayer of faith is never wasted. The answer may not come in your lifetime, but God hasn't forgotten. We should persevere in our prayers. We need to remember that the

answer may not fit into our expectations. Those praying for the Messiah never expected a baby boy born to a young virgin mother in a cow stall. In fact, the answer was so different that some refused to accept Him as an answer to their prayers.

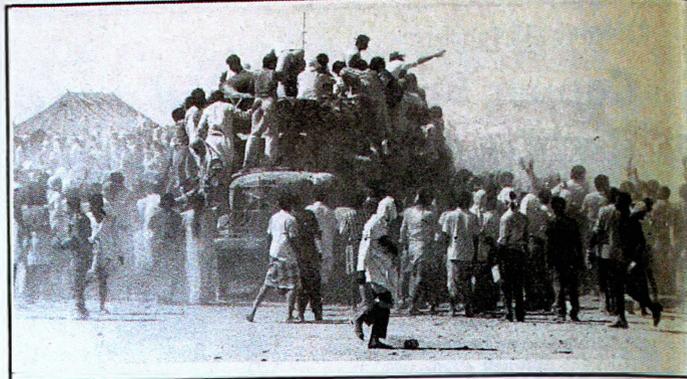
If we are to be effective in prayer, we need to leave the manner and time of the answer up to God.

The Old Testament saints prayed for the appearance of the Messiah, and we should be praying for the second appearance of our Messiah. The Apostle John prayed, "Even so, come Lord Jesus." He must leave the time and the manner of the answer up to Him, but it must bless our Messiah to know that His people desire His return.

We need to include some prayer time in our busy Christmas schedule.



CYNDI DAWSON, Oak Harbor Church, Atlantic Beach, Fla., and sons Tommy and Charlie, with Christmas greeting for husband and father, Randy, who serves aboard the USS Spruance in the Mediterranean.

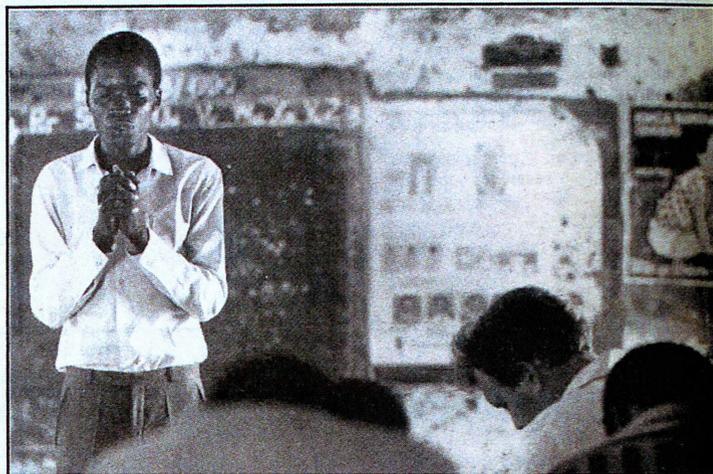


KUWAITI refugees seek water.

'For unto you is born this day a Savior, who is Christ the Lord . . .'

'You shall be witnesses unto Me . . . unto the uttermost part of the earth . . .'

PRAYER time at Miritini Church, Kenya.



ROMANIAN orphans.

Sing glory to God — run to Bethlehem!

The angels heralded the birth of the long-awaited Christ, and we, the faithful, having discovered the truth of that message, are to go, tell it on the mountain, everywhere.

As has happened many years since that first Christmas, the earth is battered and torn. Christmas, it is, 1990. The people of the world, like you and me, long for what seems impossible. We long for the experience of the promises "joy to the world" and "peace on earth."

One Christmas hymn says it this way:

"Long lay the world in sin and error pining,

Til he appeared, and the soul felt its worth.

A thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices,

For yonder breaks a new and glorious morn!

Fall on your knees!"

Impossible? W. H. Auden in his Christmas oratorio "For the Time Being," says, "Nothing can save us that is possible."

But later as he writes of the celebration of the birth of Jesus to proclaim that the impossible can become a possibility, he reaches this crescendo:

"Sing Glory to God and good will to men; all, all, all of them, run to Bethlehem."

Christmas, 1990. Can we run to Bethlehem? We may wonder about words of peace when there is no peace — joy when there is gloom and weariness. But who will give up the hope, the dream that peace and goodwill, which seem impossible, can be possible?

Truth is, there is no more cause for despair about the plight of the world now that there was on that first Christmas. Almost 20 years ago Cynthia Wedel said, "We need to remember that Bethlehem of 2000 years ago was in a conquered land, ruled by a mighty, war-like power. There was oppression, cruelty and injustice, and the constant threat of revolution.

"But it was into such a world that God chose to come in human form — incognito, unrecognized, with a power that changed the course of history. The first Christmas proclaimed that, no matter what mankind may do, God cares! And every Christmas is a reminder of the fact that the mighty creator and ruler of heaven and earth is alive and well and ever present."

Much of the world is depressed, discouraged, doubtful about the future. The hopefulness of the last few centuries, one newsman wrote, has melted in the face of nuclear threats, pollution, famines, ruptured relationships, sinking economical structures.

But part of the purpose of Christmas is to puncture that pessimism and permeate it with the love of Christ Jesus. Pessimism is not new among us.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow experienced it. Hopeless at times, he wrote,

"And in despair I bowed my head:
There is no peace on earth I said,
For hate is strong, and mocks the song

Of peace on earth goodwill to men."

But then he wrote a final verse to that song, saying that God is not dead, nor does he sleep. The wrong shall fail, the right prevail, with peace on earth, good will to men.

All this good news that we know from Christmas, sends old and young running to Bethlehem. Auden said in the voices of the shepherds, "Let us run to learn how to love and run; let us run to Love."

Is it possible in a world of space

flights and laser beams that heal and kill, refugees from wars and floods and famine, unparalleled greed, and the breaking down of all kinds of walls — is it possible to call forth that ancient dream of peace on earth, goodwill for all mankind? Is not that dream birthed on belief in a caring God and loving Savior?

Again, Auden writes, "Music and sudden light have interrupted our routine tonight, And swept the filth of habit from our hearts.

O here and now our endless journey starts."

The shepherds were not out in the fields for pleasure. They were working people. In Luke's account of Christ's birth, they heard, "Glory to God in highest heaven, and on earth His peace for men on whom His favor rests."

Isn't Christmas the assurance of God's love promised and given freely to us if we will but accept it?

All across the world we send Southern Baptist missionaries to share the greatest Gift — Christ Himself, and we go too in prayer. Do it now — in the neighborhood, from place to place, from here to there — to all mankind. It's Christmas!

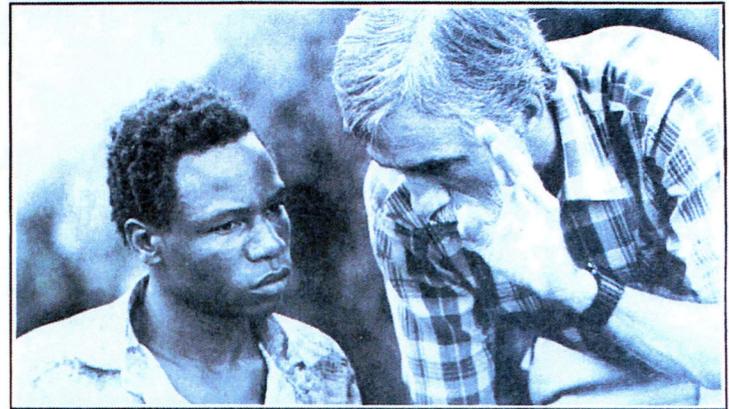
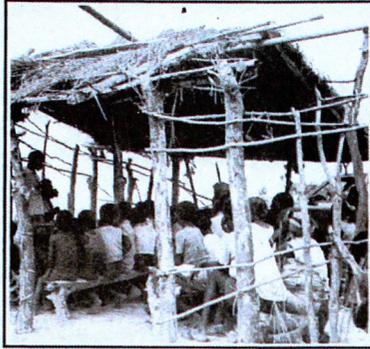


PHILIPPINES missionary Rick Mitchell of Chattanooga with students, Davao City.

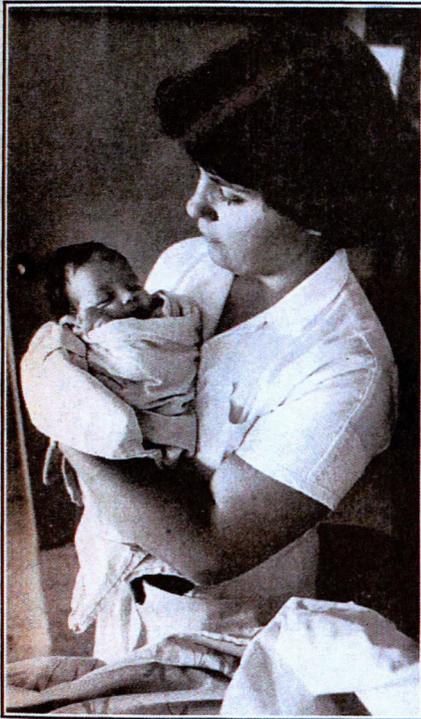


ARAB children, Nazareth.

BAPTIST MISSION point, Quengala, Angola.



EMMANUEL and missionary David Sorley, Kenya.



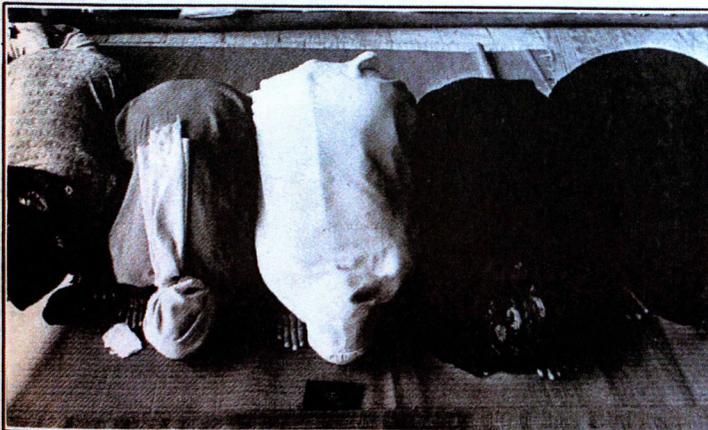
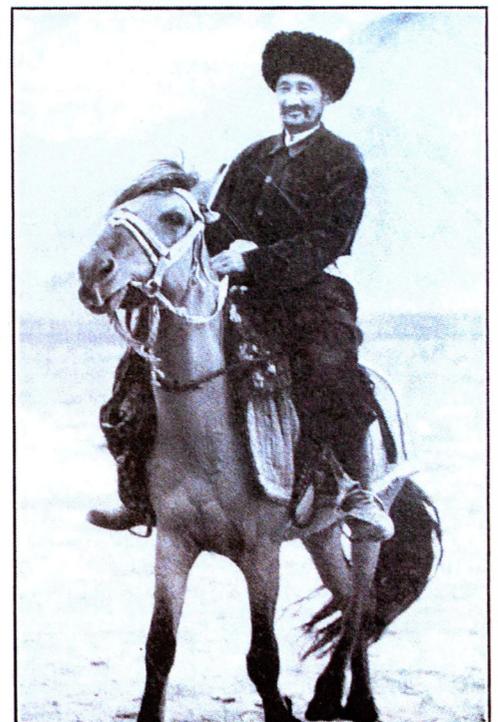
BABY and Nurse, Ajloun, Jordan.



ARAB drinking water from ibreek.

'For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son . . . '

KIRGHIZ horseman, Soviet Union, South Central Asia.



MUSLIM women praying, Egypt.

Sunday School growth tied to evangelism, Piland observes

By Frank Wm. White

NASHVILLE (BP) — Throughout the more than 200 years of Sunday School work in America, numerical growth has been tied directly to a focus on evangelism, and Southern Baptists must regain that focus to experience growth in the denomination, Harry Piland, the director of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's Sunday School division told state convention leaders.

Piland recounted the history of the Sunday School movement in America, saying it was successful only when it became an evangelistic, volunteer effort in the mid 1800s.

As Southern Baptists face their second century of Sunday School work, a continued commitment to the priority of evangelism must be at the base of the work, he told the state convention Sunday School leaders meeting in an-

nual planning sessions Dec. 5-7 in Nashville.

"If we are going to experience breakthrough for the 90s, it has got to be with an emphasis on evangelism," he said.

Breakthrough is the Sunday School theme for 1990-95 and includes annual goals in enrollment and other key areas.

When Southern Baptists launched a denominational Sunday School program with the establishment of the Sunday School Board in 1891, evangelism was at the heart of the work, Piland said.

Most Protestant denominations shifted from Sunday School with an evangelistic flavor to training only for children, and enrollment began to decline, he pointed out.

Southern Baptists used Sunday School as a tool for outreach and

enrollment totals doubled or tripled every twenty years until 1960 when, Piland said, the board pulled back from a focus on evangelism.

Piland said between 1980 and 1990, Southern Baptists returned to a priority on evangelism, and Sunday School enrollment has increased by half a million from 7.4 million to 7.9 million people.

Enrollment for Sunday Schools of all denominations has dropped from 41 million to 28 million in the past 12 years, he said.

Continuing to reach people through Bible study is going to require innovations in the face of a radically changing world, Piland cautioned.

But, as changes in techniques and literature develop, the Bible must remain the textbook of Sunday School, he said. "Southern Baptists almost stand alone in saying that in our Sunday

School, the Bible is our textbook.

"Never let the Bible be taken out of our Sunday School. It has got to be the heart of Bible study," he said.

Innovation will require churches to build on the base of traditional Sunday morning Bible study and get outside the church to reach those who will not come in, Piland said.

"Legitimate Bible study ought to be going on seven days a week at different locations," he said.

Piland encouraged state Sunday School leaders to work with churches in understanding and using Southern Baptist literature produced by the board. He also pledged Sunday School Board efforts to respond more quickly to meet the needs of churches in reaching people.

In addition to literature improvements to be introduced in October 1991, Piland said the board will continue to use developing technology to help produce material to help churches.

He said the Sunday School division is working with other programs and agencies to find ways to better serve churches.

Clinton Association meets

Several Clinton Association workers were honored for tenure during the fall meeting. Evelyn Green was recognized for 30 years of service as associational secretary. J. Carl Keith was honored for serving as treasurer for ten years and Glen Petree, Church and Community Ministries Director, was recognized for six years of work.

Messengers elected the following as officers: Tom Byrge, pastor, Clinch River Church, Lake City, moderator; Charles Parker, pastor, First Church, Oliver Springs, assistant moderator; J. Paul Sanderson, member, South Clinton Church, Clinton, treasurer; and Mrs. Pat Long, member, Mount Pleasant Church, Andersonville, clerk.

Warning signs given for plateauing churches

Editor's Note: This is the second in a series on plateaued and declining churches.

By Mark Wingfield

ATLANTA (BP) — Asking some basic questions could be the first step in determining whether a church is plateaued or declining.

Church growth specialist Lyle Schaller offers a seven-point test to indicate whether Southern Baptist churches are headed for plateau or decline.

Although not a definitive list, these items are common indicators of churches that are not growing, says Schaller, a popular church growth author and parish consultant with the Yokefellow Institute in Richmond, Ind.

1. How long has the church been meeting in this particular space? "If more than 15 years, you're probably headed for decline," Schaller says. The

reason: growth causes churches to adapt their space to meet new needs.

2. When was the last adult Bible class started? "If more than two or three years, get nervous," he warns. "In larger churches, three months is too long to go without starting a new class."

3. Is the church accumulating capital or consuming capital? "If you are in a capital accumulation stage, you're probably headed up. If you're living off accumulated capital, you will tend to go down," Schaller says. The reason: growing churches will add to their capital assets each year as a result of their vision for the future, while dying churches will survive off the fruits of the past.

4. Do baptisms exceed deaths? "In a growing church baptisms should exceed deaths by at least two to one, ideally three to one," Schaller says.

Net results when there are more people coming into the church than leaving the church either by death or transfer.

5. Is the adjusted value of member giving going up? Growing churches will show an increase in giving every year, he explains.

6. Do transfers in from other denominations exceed transfers in from other Southern Baptist churches? Growing churches tend to attract more people from outside their denomination, which reveals the attractiveness of the church in the local marketplace, he says.

7. What is the most exciting landmark in the life of the congregation? "By this I mean the one event that everyone in the church recalls and says, 'Ever since then, we've never been the same.' If that was more than 15 years ago, get nervous."

Executive Board approves hiring of black church consultant

The Tennessee Baptist Convention's Executive Board, at its Dec. 7 meeting in Brentwood, approved the establishment of a full-time position of regional church starter strategist to work primarily with churches, missions, and church starts in predominantly black areas of the state.

Fifty percent of all Tennessee blacks live in Shelby County while another 30 percent live in the "crescent" from lower West Tennessee through the Nashville area.

The need for a black church consul-

Madison church calls Jim Growden as pastor

Madison Heights Church, Madison, recently called Jim Growden as pastor.

Growden was formerly pastor of Edgemont Church, Shelbyville, for two years. He has also served First Church, Hartsville; Stones River Church, Smyrna; Hillcrest Church, Nashville; and churches in Mississippi.

He was ordained in 1968 at Grace Church, Tullahoma.

Growden earned a bachelor's degree from Belmont College, Nashville; a diploma in pastoral ministries from New Orleans (La.) Baptist Theological Seminary; and masters and doctoral degrees from Trinity Seminary, Evansville, Ind.

tant arose out of Shelby County's Mega Focus study last year, said Jere Phillips, director of the TBC Missions Department. He noted the association requested a black church consultant.

After discussions with leadership from Shelby County Association and the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board in Atlanta, it was decided a regional consultant would be the best approach to take, Phillips noted.

The TBC Missions director said the HMB will provide the bulk of the funding for the position through 1992. In 1993, it is anticipated the position would be brought into the TBC's joint work budget, he added.

Phillips said the individual hired for the post would be housed in Shelby County Association. He emphasized the consultant would be available throughout the state when requested by associations.

Phillips stressed the person would not work unilaterally in any association but would work with the cooperation of the association and its leadership.

Primary duties for the consultant will be working with churches and associations to begin Southern Baptist churches in predominantly black communities and to serve as a general growth consultant for existing black Southern Baptist churches, Phillips said.

The individual hired for the post would be the first black employed by the TBC on a state-wide basis. Blacks have been employed by the state convention as Baptist Student Union directors.

Phillips said funding for the new position will be available in March. In-

dividuals interested in the post should have pastoral experience and preferably church planting experience, he said.

Resumes may be sent to Jere Phillips, TBC Missions Department, P. O. Box 728, Brentwood, Tenn. 37024. — Lonnie Wilkey



TBC TENURE — Employees in the Baptist Center in Brentwood were recognized at a reception recently for tenure of five years or more. From left, front row, Martha Grove, Accounting Department, 40 years; Doris Carter, Jearl Ann Johnson, and Fonda Johnson, ten years; Wallace Anderson, Program Services Department, 30 years; and Louise Fox, 15 years. Back row, Connie Davis, Marcia Knox, Susie Edwards, Rodney Wilson, Carrol Kelly, Martha Couch, Garnette Hogan, Nancy Tate, and Katharine Bryan, five years.

TenneScene

... North to south, from Cedar Hill to Spring Hill, on to Minor Hill ...

Revivals ...

First Church, White Bluff, recently held revival with evangelist Floyd Lammersfeld leading the services. Eleven professions of faith were reported, and one person surrendered to the ministry.

Ordinations ...

Tom Bailey and Ben Beasley were ordained as deacons recently at Memorial Church, Hixson.

Greg Dew and Rollin Grossholz were recently ordained at Parkway Church, Goodlettsville.

Liberty Grove Church, Jackson, ordained Roger Callis, Joe Casey, Johnny Grantham, and Bill Hollamon as deacons.

Richie accepts pastorate

Agape Church, Memphis, recently called Charles Richie as pastor. Richie served the church as minister of music until he was called as pastor. He was formerly pastor of State Street Church, Hammond, La. He and his wife, Jackie, have two daughters.

Randy King was ordained to the Gospel ministry Nov. 25 at Georgian Hills Church, Memphis.

Calvary Church, Parsons, ordained Danny Roberts to the Gospel ministry Dec. 9. The church also recently ordained Collins Pratt and Patrick Carlington as deacons.

Cliff Workman was recently ordained to the deacon ministry at East View Church, Etowah.

Clearwater Church, Athens, ordained Greg Hutsell and Don Knox as deacons.

Clear Creek Church, Dyer, ordained Charles Ramsey to the Gospel ministry Nov. 18. He has been called to serve Guston Church, Guston, Ky.

Cummins Mill Church, Cookeville, recently ordained Dave Camper to the deacon ministry.

Churches ...

Members of Leoma Church, Leoma, recently held a note-burning service to commemorate payment of the debt on their auditorium and fellowship hall

building. The note was paid four years in advance. The church is now debt free.

The congregation of Henderson's Chapel Church, Pigeon Forge, held a note-burning and dedication service Nov. 18 for their fellowship building, which was paid for in one year.

Colleges ...

Two master's level seminary courses will be offered on Monday nights at Carson-Newman College, Jefferson City, beginning Jan. 14. Allison Trites of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., will teach "Introduction to the Old Testament, Part Two: Backgrounds of the Life of Jesus 22200" from 2-5 p.m. Carolyn Blevins, assistant professor of religion at Carson-Newman, will teach "History of Baptists 26100" from 5:30-8:30 p.m. Registration will be the first day of class. For more information, call Robert M. Shurden at (615) 475-9061.

Union University, Jackson, is now accepting applications for the new \$1000 per semester West Tennessee Freshman Scholarship for students commuting from West Tennessee. For more information regarding the scholarship, call the admissions office at (901) 668-1818.

Owen accepts pastorate

Thomas B. Owen recently became bivocational pastor of Statem Gap Church, Morristown. Owen was formerly pastor of Head of Richland Church, Rutledge, for four years, and Valley View Church, Mooresburg, for two years. He was ordained in 1979 at Fernwood Church, Morristown. He and his wife, Betty Sue, have two children.



RETIREE — Norma Harper, center, will retire Dec. 31 after 22 years of service with the Tennessee Baptist Convention. She works in the Program Services Department. Nancy Tate, Woman's Missionary Union, congratulates Harper during a recent reception while Harper's husband, Young, looks on.

Leadership ...

Thurman Harper has been called as pastor to Fountain Head Church, Portland.

First Church, Loretto, called Gregg Pettus of Greenhill, Ala., to serve as youth director.

Bristol church calls Chambers as pastor

Robert L. Chambers recently became pastor of Calvary Church, Bristol. Chambers was most recently associate pastor of college/evangelism at Calvary Church, Knoxville. He has also served churches in Florida and Oklahoma. He was ordained in 1981 at Park Avenue, Titusville, Fla. The Florida native and his wife, Joy, have five sons.



30 YEARS OF SERVICE — Clinton Association recently honored Evelyn Green, center, who completed 30 years of service as secretary in September. She was also clerk for the association from 1960 to 1989. Mack Smith, left, pastor of Black Oak Church, Clinton, and John Keith, pastor of Glenwood Church, Oak Ridge, presented Green with 30 roses, a watch, and a silver tray. — Photo by Lola Byrd

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The status quo: An analysis

By Herschel H. Hobbs

On the basis of my service on this subcommittee, my honest conviction is that, with the exception of committee appointments, the things that have kept our convention in a stir are based upon rumors which have no basis of fact. I use two examples.

Rumor said that if the "conservatives" got control of the Foreign Mission Board they would fire Keith Parks and all missionaries who did not adhere to their beliefs, and change our whole concept of foreign missions. Fact: In October 1989 the board appointed a committee to draw up a statement. At the board's December meeting it was adopted unanimously — endorsing without reservation Parks, all missionaries, and our entire foreign mission program.

Another rumor: If this group gets control of the seminaries' trustee boards, they will change them into Bible schools. Fact: Look at Mid-America Seminary. It is their school; they founded and finance it. It is exactly what they want. It is accredited by the same AATS which accredits our six seminaries. And AATS does not accredit Bible schools!

The Peace Committee has been criticized for its timing in presenting its report to the convention. Of course, it is to be regretted. When we first began meeting we set our target date as April 1 so that it could be in the Book of Reports. We were on schedule. The committee to write the report had been appointed. We said something must happen to give them something on which to base the report. In fact, we had a long prayer session to that end.

It happened at the Glorieta Prayer Retreat when the seminary presidents brought the "Glorieta Statement." In turn, President Adrian Rogers issued his statement. Ironically when these were printed in the state papers, some "moderates" said the presidents were pressured into making their statement. One strong "conservative" said that Rogers had "sold out to the moderates." Neither was true! But the committee was ready to begin writing its report.

Our next meeting was early in November. In the meantime a story appeared in the state papers quoting one seminary president as if he was drawing back from the Glorieta statement. The subcommittee to write the report met a day early to begin writing the report. But it agreed this matter must be resolved before they could write it. When the full Peace Committee met there was agreement to that effect. Investigation revealed that this president had been quoted out of context. Not deliberately, but it delayed us two months — the exact time we were late according to our original schedule.

Some criticized its being presented at 9 p.m. on Tuesday. That time was set by the committee on order of business, not by the Peace Committee. In any case, it was adopted by an estimated vote of 96 percent.

The first unanimous decision made by the Peace Committee was that if anyone proposed that we serve beyond the allotted two years, all of us would shoot him. But as we neared the end of that period it became evident that some committee should be responsible

for reporting to the convention as to the response given to the convention's action. For the sake of continuity it was agreed that two members of that committee should be from our committee. Finally, it was agreed that the Peace Committee knew more about the situation than any other group. Hence the recommendation that for that purpose we be continued for one more year. The morning after our report was adopted a press interview quoted a "moderate" as calling us a "police committee." Nothing could have been further from the truth!

In our one authorized meeting the third year we spent a day and a half hearing reports from agency heads and the chairmen of their boards. Without exception all reports were positive; all agencies were abiding by the convention's action. In the one agency where there had been problems, the president spoke of the future rather than the past. So much so that one leading "conservative" said, "Mr. chairman, we can say that our theological problems are behind us. Our problem now is politics."

After the convention's adoption of our report in St. Louis I happened to run into all seminary presidents except Russell Dilday. To each I put the question as to what they thought of our report. Each said, "There is nothing in it with which we cannot live." The agencies are doing just that. But insofar as the contending parties are concerned, in all my years of involvement in convention life (since 1938) I have never known of a convention action which has been so ignored and violated as the Peace Committee report!

I was asked if I thought this convention action would bring peace. I replied, "It will bring peace if they want peace. If the contending parties do not want peace, God Himself cannot present a report that will bring peace." Indeed, God has given us His report in the New Testament, but even it is ignored. The contending parties say that they are champions of truth. But I fear that they do not speak the "truth in love."

I heard one "moderate" who said that the Peace Committee gave the "conservatives" everything they wanted. But he did not know what the "conservatives" wanted — or the "moderates" for that matter. Since this charge involved the "conservatives" let me give one example to the contrary.

In the next to last meeting before the Peace Committee report, a "conservative" proposed that we place in "Findings" the statement that most Southern Baptists believed the Bible has "truth without any mixture of error for its matter" — including the

four examples. Frankly, I preferred not to use the examples. But in media-tion you give to get. So I voted to include that statement. After all, that is what we found. And it included Southern Baptists as a whole.

In the final all-night meeting, 30 minutes before we voted unanimously to adopt our report, it was suggested by a "conservative" that this be moved from "Findings" to "Recommendations." I said, "No sir! I voted to put it in findings. If you put it in recommendations, I want to be recorded as voting against both motions."

Herschel Hobbs, retired pastor of First Church, Oklahoma City, Okla., former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, and well-known Bible scholar, wrote this definitive article for Baptist state papers. The first part of the article was printed in the Dec. 12 issue. Hobbs writes a feature on Bible truths which appears regularly in the Baptist and Reflector. We gladly share this article with our readers. — Editor

One "conservative" said, "If it is true where it is, we should have the guts to put it in recommendations." I replied, "It is not a matter of 'guts' but of 'brains.' Where it is it is a finding. If we move it to recommendations, it becomes creedal." The matter was dropped.

In light of all I have said thus far, I rush in where angels fear to tread. I dare to make some suggestions:

1. I commend President Morris Chapman for calling on all Southern Baptists to make a careful study of the Peace Committee report. Determine for yourself what it says, not what someone else says that it says. I would add that you read the preamble of The Baptist Faith and Message.

2. On both sides of the controversy, we must immediately stop the politics and use of inflammatory language.

3. Keep the controversy out of local churches. The local churches are still the seat of authority as they operate through democratic processes under the lordship of Jesus Christ. Pray that His will, not ours, be done. According to my observation the controversy has gotten into local churches through the pastor.

4. Exercise Christian love (agape) toward one another. We do not need to agree with another's life-style to love in this sense (Romans 5:8). Jesus said that it is by our love for each other that people will recognize us as His disciples. Remember that "unity in diversity" has always marked our relationship as Southern Baptists.

5. Broaden the base of committee and trustee appointments. For 12 years

the election of presidents has been too close to constitute a "conservative" mandate. The rule, "To the victor belongs the spoils," should not apply in Christian relationships.

6. Recognize that the terms "conservative" and "moderate" are political rather than theological designations. Like myself, many strongly conservative people do not identify with either faction.

Of late I read reports of group meetings to talk about possible solutions to our present status quo. But those invited are all on one side of the issue. Decisions reached in such one-sided meetings will not solve our problem. Such talks should involve people representing all shades of thought.

7. "Findings" in the Peace Committee report should not be applied as "recommendations." To be sure, all parts of the report are equally important in their place. But one segment should not be applied other than as its title indicates.

8. Do not hold the Cooperative Program hostage in the controversy. I truly believe that it was revealed to us by God. To tamper with it is to invite disaster for everything Southern Baptists are trying to do. God has blessed it beyond measure. Despite our differences there are other roads toward their solution. There are no quick fixes to our problems. It took a generation to get into them. It will take a generation to solve them. In the meantime we must find ways to stay together and work together.

9. According to the Constitution of the Southern Baptist Convention, its purpose is not to regulate doctrine but to harness the power in our churches for missions and evangelism.

10. If we continue on our present path, God may well turn to another people. He has never changed His purpose. But He has repeatedly changed His people in accomplishing His purpose. To quote George W. Truett, if that happens to us over our door will be written, "Ichabod!" — "The glory has departed." God forbid!

Rutledge church calls pastor

Fred Chandler is serving New Corinth Church, Rutledge, as pastor. The Blaine native has also led Beech Grove Church, Knoxville, and Shady Church, Strawberry Plains. Chandler, a full-time welder, was ordained at Byerleys Chapel Church, Mascot. He and his wife, Connie, have four children.

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TBAH targets senior, developmentally disabled adults

By *Connie J. Umstead, news assistant*

Fostering care for senior and developmentally disabled of Tennessee Baptist Adult Homes, Inc. (TBAH), a mission which promises to increase in scope as the "baby boom" generation matures and a larger percentage of the population is considered elderly.

The ministry of TBAH is vital to aging people when one considers their longevity and the changing face of families in American society.

J. L. Ford, TBAH executive director/treasurer, said life expectancy is currently at its greatest level ever. Smaller and geographically dispersed families cannot care for elderly relatives. According to the Winter 1990 edition of *The Adult Homes Update*, 12.4 percent of Tennessee's population is at least 65 years old.

"The need for a ministry to senior adults is growing because that population is growing," Ford said. "Families can no longer take care of their own. Because of the change in the makeup of the family, there is an increasing need for care by the Christian family."

TBAH carries out God's command to love others.

"We believe that by the very nature of the love of God that God loved us and He teaches us to love others," Ford said. "We are a ministry of Tennessee Baptists expressing the love of God for people in need of residential care."



HELEN BROWN and JUDY GARNER

The ministry broadened Dec. 4 when the TBAH board approved a sponsorship affiliation agreement with Willow Brook retirement communities, owned by the Hardaway Group, to supervise social and religious activities at the two facilities in Madison and south Nashville.

Ford said TBAH will plan non-sectarian and non-denominational activities using ministers from the communities around the facilities until



MARK ANDERSON and J. L. FORD

a full-time chaplain is hired to work at both locations.

In addition, two people representing TBAH will be on an advisory board to recommend policies and procedures pertaining to the operation and promotion of the facility.

The oldest TBAH senior adult ministry is the Tennessee Baptist Convention's Deer Lake Retirement Village in suburban Nashville.

Managed by Dwayne and Sunny Zimmer, the 135 unit, 19 acre campus is home to 170 senior adults. The TBAH staff runs the business side of the ministry. Ford is president of the Deer Lake Retirement Association.

The first phase of another retirement community was completed two years ago in Johnson City. The Baptist Village presently has eight units which are rented at a lower than market value, depending on the income of the resident.

Southwestern Church, located near Baptist Village, provides special ministries for residents. Holston Association helps with maintenance and screens prospective tenants.

The third ministry for senior adults is the Baptist Health Care Center in Lenoir City.

Until recently, the center was a 104-bed intermediate care facility. A 20,000 square foot wing has been completed to house the new 16-bed assisted care section and facilities to care for 50 children.

The assisted care center is for ambulatory people who do not need nursing home care, but need the room, food services, and housekeeping. Six people moved into assisted care in mid-December.

Cindy Wilmoth, a second generation nursing home administrator, has guided the home and supervised the staff of 100 people for two years.

Another facet of TBAH is the ministry to developmentally disabled adults, directed by Mark Anderson who joined the TBAH staff in 1989.

In 1988, the TBC adopted a report to recommend that Tennessee Baptists develop a residential care program for the developmentally disabled. The project was assigned to TBAH.

Anderson works with three Tennessee incorporated organizations in this ministry, Baptist Homes for Retarded Adults (BHRA), Christian Homes for Retarded Adults (CHRA), and Baptist Homes for Exceptional

Persons (BHEP).

In East Tennessee, BHRA has Rainbow Acres in Jacksboro, which houses 15 people. TBAH assists Rainbow Acres financially, and Anderson acts as a consultant with BHRA.

Stoneway Acres, located on more than six acres in Lebanon, is the newest home. It is operated by BHEP.

When the home was suggested, TBAH helped BHEP find suitable property and eventually helped equip and furnish the 4300-square-foot home for eight men. Wilson County Association organized work crews to get the home ready for occupancy.

Anderson consults with the houseparents, Clarence and Natalie Chestnut, and the Stoneway Acres board.

Eventually, a second home will be built on the property to house eight women.

Ford said he hopes Stoneway Acres will become a model in homes for developmentally disabled adults, and in its relationship with the TBAH.

In West Tennessee, plans are underway by CHRA to develop a home on 47 acres in Fayette County, although a timetable has not yet been determined.

Ford said the TBAH staff is available to work with local churches, associations, and incorporated groups across the state to begin ministries for developmentally disabled adults.

"If they will work with us, and the need is there and the property provided, we will operate the ministry," Ford said.

TBAH touches a wide spectrum of adults, from developmentally disabled young adults, to senior adults suffering from illness, to healthy senior adults enjoying their retirement years.

"We are here to help Baptists provide a residential care ministry to adults. That ministry will take different forms depending on need," Ford said. "Our work is exciting because we deal with people and we provide one of the most basic needs. I love older people. They are so responsive."

Ford has been assisted by Helen Brown for 23 years. She was church secretary for 18 years when Ford was pastor at Eastland Church, Nashville, and has been his secretary at TBAH for the last five years. Brown will retire Dec. 31 and Judy Garner will assume her duties. — *This is the fifth in a series on TBC departments and institutions.*

One Woman's View

By *June McEwen*

Christmas season starts for retailers the day after Thanksgiving. On the Christian calendar, Christmas or Advent season begins the first Sunday in December. The observance in the business community is dramatically different from that in the Christian church, or at least it should be.

Both areas of our lives, commercial and church, are alike in being busy with dinners and meetings. It takes planning and careful use of time to avoid being over-scheduled at this time of year.

There is one area of church life where I observe each year that can be made better and allow a more suitable emphasis for Christians. This area involves Christmas parties by Sunday School classes and attendance by members of church staff.

Think about this. You are on the church staff. There may be ten, 20, 30, or more adult classes/departments plus graded departments. Nearly all schedule a Christmas get-together — a dinner, party, visit to the children's home, carolling at the mall, or having a service for prisoners at the jail.

Each committee planning the event for her/his group will courteously invite the ministers and others on the church staff.

How do you decide which events to attend? There is no way to go to every one. Even if you could, there is your family to think about. You will need to shop, address cards, cook, visit relatives, buy a tree, and all the other traditional things that everyone does for the holidays. How many evenings out are all right for your children? Can you afford babysitters? How can you get proper rest and keep your own job performance up to standard? After all,

there is a great deal going on at church during Advent that requires extra staff effort.

Here are some observations based on my 40 years in church-related work. Don't try to be everything to everybody. Divide up attendance among staff members. Everyone does not need to be at every function. Keep notes on which events you attend and rotate next year. Make a reasonable schedule which takes into account how many nights both parents are away from children and the expense of sitters. Explain the situation, how the staff is trying to meet needs, and the plan you have adopted to the church.

Finally, be grateful for the invitations. Be firm and unapologetic when you must say "no" with regrets. Church members will understand once you make clear your concern for fulfilling your obligations to the organizations and your responsibilities toward your own spiritual life and the well-being of your spouse and children.

Christmas should focus on the celebration of God's coming into our lives. To make this season a time of stress and overscheduling for the church staff members is contrary to the ideals of the Christian life. Paul admonished the church to let all things be done decently and in order. Decency and order will go a long way toward making December a truly good month for all members of the church family, staff included.



McEWEN

The birth of Jesus

By Dennis P. Lunsford, pastor; Antioch Church, Humboldt

Do you ever get tired of hearing bad news, such as murder in large cities, recession, price of gas, inflation, job layoffs, and intense pressures from Iraq? Do you ever long to hear good news? If so, put yourself in the setting of our lesson.

Remember from the lesson of Oct. 7, it has been 400 years since a prophetic voice had been heard. Some good news was desperately needed!

Remember also God is not aloof. He is aware of the needs of His people. God was now ready to put His plans into motion. Everything was now ready for the arrival of The Good News.

Consider those involved
The angel Gabriel was commissioned



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by God to share His plan with Mary. Her response to what she heard was mixed. It involved fear, humility, and honesty. She did not expect to see an angel and receive special favors from heaven. There was nothing unique about her that such things should happen. Her response was surrender to the will of God. Mary's fear was dispersed by the message of God from the angel, and it was simply, "Fear not!"

Jesus was to be the "deliverer," the Savior. According to Gabriel, He was to be called the "Son of the Highest" and God was to give Him the "throne of His father David." The emphasis was upon the greatness of the Son (Luke 1:15), not the greatness of the mother.

Mary's believing response was to surrender herself to God as His willing servant. She experienced the grace of God (Luke 1:30), and believed the Word of God; therefore she was used by the Spirit of God to accomplish the

"Will of God." She declared herself to be a "handmaid" of the Lord, the lowest kind of female servant.

The angel then visited the shepherds announcing the birth of the Savior. Why shepherds? Why did the angel not come to the scribes or the priests? By visiting the shepherds, the angel revealed the grace of God toward mankind. Shepherds were outcasts in Israel. Their work kept them away from temple worship. Thus, they were ceremonially unclean. God does not call the rich and mighty, but the poor and lowly like these shepherds (Luke 1:51-53).

BIBLE BOOK
December 23 Lesson
Basic Passage: Luke 1:26-2:20

Their response to the arrival of the angel was fear (Luke 2:10). The message was "the Messiah was born." The One who would serve as a shepherd (John 10) and the sacrificial Lamb of God (John 1:29) had arrived. It was fitting that the Good News about God's Shepherd and Lamb be

given first to humble shepherds. "Fear not!" This is one of the great themes of the Christmas story. Literally, the angel said, "I announce to you, good news, a great joy which shall be to all people."

Conclusion
What was the Good News which caused Mary and these shepherds to be relieved from fear? It was not that God sent a soldier, a judge, or a reformer, but that He sent a Savior to meet man's greatest need. For the first time in centuries, the glory of God returned to the earth. If brave shepherds, men accustomed to danger, were afraid by what they saw and heard, then you can believe it was real!

At this time of year, at this point in your life, is He real to you? Have you experienced the "shalom" (peace) only He can bring to a life cluttered by sin? The lowly manger became a "holy of holies" because Jesus was there! You too can become holy if you will allow Him to be your Savior and Lord. Then you will have received and experienced the "Good News."

The Good Shepherd

By Carlos R. Peterson, pastor; First Church, Athens

When royal births are expected, it seems that the whole world eagerly awaits the news. Several years ago when the son of Prince Charles and Princess Diana was born, the announcement was flashed around the world. Through the miracle of modern communication, his picture appeared in newspapers and magazines around the globe. Word of his arrival led to a national celebration and received worldwide attention. In addition, Prince William was given all the comforts befitting royalty.

This stands in such stark contrast to a royal child born long ago in a Bethlehem stable. The parents of Jesus had no plush accommodations to offer their newborn son. No crowds of reporters



PETERSON

competed to be the first to break the news that the Son of God had become incarnate. No television camera focused on His first public appearance and Israel had prepared no national festivities in His honor when God's Son appeared on the stage of history. Born in a remote village, cradled in a lowly manger, His birth was attended by shepherds who were tending their flocks nearby. Yet this scene focuses dramatically upon the purpose of Christ's coming to this world, to be the "Good Shepherd."

Good news for the shepherds
(Luke 2:8-12)
The shepherds were stationed somewhere outside the city of Bethlehem tending their flocks when the announcement came of the birth of God's Son, the long awaited Messiah. It is interesting to note the declaration of this magnificent event to these particular persons. Shepherds were considered the outcasts of society. Their honesty

and integrity were so questionable that they were not even allowed to testify in a court of law. Their duties as shepherds prevented them from worship events and purity rituals. They were the outcasts of proper society who were rejected as an entire class of people without hope of acceptance. To these people, God sent the angelic hosts to announce the birth of His only Son.

CONVENTION UNIFORM
December 23 Lesson
Basic Passage: Luke 2:1-20, John 10:1-18

The proclamation of the angels indicated that the newborn child was the long expected Savior, the royal Lamb of God.

The Shepherd of Good News
(John 10:11-18)
During the latter part of our Lord's ministry, He referred often to the theme of shepherd and sheep. He identified Himself as "the Shepherd" of those who follow Him as their sovereign. Here was the royal Son of God lifting the role of those who were the

outcasts of society to a lofty position of caregiver, protector, and compassionate Savior. Those religious leaders who exalted themselves were now referred to as thieves, charlatans, and heartless hypocrites. In contrast, Jesus as the good Shepherd was willing to sacrifice His life for His sheep. This was a voluntary forfeiture of life, not an accidental death. His sheep need never worry or fret, for their Shepherd is forever vigilant to care for His own. They are safe with Him.

Conclusion
Phillip Keller, once a shepherd himself, in his book, *A Shepherd Looks at Psalms 23*, relates that the strange thing about sheep is that because of their makeup, it is almost impossible to get them to lie down unless four requirements are met: (1) free from fear, (2) free from friction with other sheep, (3) free from parasites or flies, and (4) free from hunger. Only the shepherd can provide release from these anxieties. As our Good Shepherd, Jesus meets all these needs for us that we too can "lie down in green pastures" and be restored by His love.

Worshiping the King

By Marvin P. Nail, pastor; Whitsitt Chapel Church, Nashville

Children often waste much of their time wanting something to do. This affliction is really serious in the summer months when they are not in school.

When they are bored, it is almost always true they only want to do things for their own benefit. Parents can prove the accuracy of this the next time their children ask by giving them some chores to do around the house.

Adults are much the same way. Many people want to do something great so people will know their names and honor them. Few are as anxious to perform some menial task for the sake of someone else.

Our lesson last week dealt with the habit many have of wanting God to do something spectacular for them. This week we deal with a similar habit of



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seeking to serve self only.

The wise men sought the King
Wise men in every age are able to recognize the need for a change. The wise men of those days could see the way the world was heading. They longed for something to happen which would change the course of the world and put it back on the right track.

Believing that the heavens controlled the events on earth, they searched the skies each night to see if some sign had appeared which would signal an event which would bring a new day for mankind.

When they saw a bright new body in the heavens they believed it signaled the birth of a king.

Because of their hope, they made the long journey from their homeland in the East to Jerusalem.

Herod also sought this King
If you have read much of the history of this period you understand some of the interest shown by Herod about the birth of a new king.

Herod was so insanely jealous of his throne he had members of his family killed so they would not take his throne from him. Yes, Herod wanted to find this infant king to insure he never grew up to take over the kingdom.

LIFE AND WORK
December 23 Lesson
Basic Passage: Matthew 2:1-12

Herod asked his advisors for more information about this child who had been born. They discovered the Jewish Scriptures foretold this ruler would be born in the city of David, Bethlehem. Herod asked the wise men to help find this child.

Isn't it a mark of Herod's Godlessness to hear the word of God had just been fulfilled and then think he could sidestep the plan of God?

The joy of following God
It is not incidental that the Bible speaks of the joy experienced by the wise men as they followed the star.

Have you ever been involved in a mission project or participated in some evangelistic outreach for your church? Haven't you known the joy of working

alongside Christian brothers and sisters?

The obedient life is always a life filled with joy. The miserable Christian is the one who is not being obedient. The obedient Christian is the one whose life is joyful, though His circumstances may be difficult. You know these people. They are the ones who have always blessed your life.

The seekers find the King
The journey of the wise men was finally rewarded. They had sacrificed much to find this King. And yet when they finally found Him, they sacrificed even more by bringing Him gifts.

To find the King of kings, no price is too high, and no burden is too great to bear. All the miles and all the tears are forgotten in the instant we behold Him in His glory.

Poor old Herod never did find Jesus the king. He tried to find Him, but only to kill Him. The Lord tells us in the Scriptures that when we seek Him with our whole heart, "I will be found of thee." Herod's heart wasn't in the search. However, if you are seeking after God with all your heart, you too will find Him.

Warning about wrong priorities

By Dennis P. Lunsford, pastor; Antioch Church, Humboldt

Jesus was aware of His purpose in ministry. His purpose, according to Luke 19:10, was, "To seek and to save that which was lost." This lesson re-emphasizes the importance of priorities and seeks to warn of the dangers of misdirected/misguided priorities.

Jesus, a master teacher, used illustrations common for His day, yet applicable for ours. May we heed His warnings and call to repentance. Like those with whom He came into contact, we must be sure our priorities as individuals and churches are truly "His priorities." A world that is lost and dying is too horrendous for Christians and churches to focus on our own private agendas and not His agenda!

Consider this:

Jesus was teaching in a crowd of people when He was invited to settle a dispute. Rabbis were often sought to settle legal matters. Jesus did not offer an answer to the dispute. The problem

as presented was not an inheritance squabble, but greed and covetousness. The greatest need of these two brothers was not the problem at hand, but a change of heart.

This squabble allowed Jesus an opportunity to continue His teaching. He tackled the problem of "worry." The rich young farmer was the teaching example.

BIBLE BOOK
December 30 Lesson
Basic Passage: Luke 12:1-13:21

Jesus intimated three aspects concerning "worry." ❖ is destructive. "Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow," said Corrie Ten Boom; "it empties today of its strength."

Worry is deceptive. It gives us a false view of life, of God, of itself. We get so concerned about "the means" we totally forget about "the end,"

which is to glorify God (Matthew 6:33).

Worry is deformative. Worry keeps us from growing and makes us live like the unsaved in the world (Luke 12:30). In short, worry is unChristian, sin.

Jesus then taught about faith. He encouraged trust in Him and cooperation with Him in using the abilities and opportunities He gave (2 Thessalonians 3:6-15). God knows our needs, so we can trust Him to meet them. This is not to say that we are to sit around and let God feed and care for us. God's pleasures and our treasures must go together!

The main question must be, "Where is your heart?" If our hearts are fixed on the transient things of life, then we will always worry. If our hearts are fixed on the eternal, then God's peace will guard our minds and hearts (Philippians 4:6-9).

The call expressed (Luke 13:1-9) Jesus avoided dealing with politics

and the sins of Pilate. He chose to deal with the sins of those who questioned Him. The fig tree just happened to be a good illustration.

According to Leviticus 19:23-25, the fruit of a new fig tree was not to be eaten for the first three years. The fourth year's crop belonged to the Lord. Five years the farmer waited for his first harvest. This man had waited seven years for his first harvest. No wonder he wanted to cut down the tree!

The tree reminds us that God is gracious and long-suffering to people (2 Peter 3:9) and does more than enough to encourage us to repent and bear fruit (Matthew 3:7-10). He has every right to cut us down, but in His mercy, He spares us.

This illustration is "open-ended." The listener/reader is encouraged to supply the conclusion to the story of the tree. Did the tree bear fruit?

God is seeking fruit. Substitutes will not be accepted. The time to repent is now. The nation of Israel was marching toward judgment; we are as well.

Laborers in the vineyard

By Carlos R. Peterson, pastor; First Church, Athens

A student at a Bible school in the Philippines became disturbed over the condition of the men's restrooms, since they always seemed to be neglected in the cleaning routine. When nothing was done to eliminate the filth, he took matters into his own hands and complained to the principal of the school. A little while later, the student noticed that the problem was being corrected, but he was amazed with how that work was being fulfilled. The man with the mop and pail in hand was the principal himself.

Later the student commented, "I thought that he would call a janitor, but he cleaned the toilets himself. It was a major lesson to me on being a servant, but it did more than that. It raised a question in my own mind as to why I hadn't taken care of the problem myself."

The call to service in God's Kingdom is to be yielded to without regard to the form that work requires or to God-given rewards. In our lesson this week, our Lord tells the parable of the laborers in the vineyard. He wanted His disciples to understand the terms on which God calls His children to service and the method of His compensation for their labors.

The background (19:27-30)

The rich, young ruler who confronted Jesus with his desire to follow Him had walked away in sorrow when he learned the great price he was expected to pay for that commitment. In response, Peter wanted to know what he and the other disciples would receive as reward for their self-denials in order to follow Jesus. The parable Jesus told was a drastic challenge to follow Him in service without thought

of reward.

The conditions of employment/serving (20:1-10)

The landowner needed workers for his vineyard and sought them at a place they regularly congregated. He selected a certain number and contracted to pay them a penny for a full 12 hours of work. As the day progressed, the work proved to be more than these laborers could handle and others were hired to help. They were hired with the promise they would be treated fairly at the end of the day's work.

CONVENTION UNIFORM
December 30 Lesson
Basic Passage: Matthew 19:27-20:16

At the end of the day, the landowner compensated the workers. Those who were hired late in the day were surprised to learn that they were paid the same as those who had labored from early in the morning.

The complaints of the laborers

Those who had labored for the full 12 hours complained that they had been treated unfairly and demanded more pay. But the employer reminded them that they had received what they had agreed on when hired. He had treated them fairly and had been generous to those who were hired later.

Remember, Jesus was telling the story to draw the disciples' attention to their service in the kingdom, not to espouse laws of economics and labor. Those who had served Him faithfully from the beginning would be rewarded according to their labors as would those believers who came later. In essence, he said, "Keep your eyes on the Lord as you serve Him, not on your expectation of reward for your labor."

Conclusion

Paul reminds us, "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance for ye serve the Lord Christ," (Colossians 3:23-24).

Who then is Jesus?

By Marvin P. Nail, pastor; Whitsitt Chapel Church, Nashville

I responded to God's call to the ministry while I was in the military overseas. Upon returning home to preach my first sermon in my home church, I was surprised that everyone else was surprised at my being a preacher. They never would have dreamed such a thing.

In the life of Jesus it could have been expected that people who did not know Him or had not met Him would have had trouble accepting Him as the Messiah. The surprise is that even people who knew Him well were constantly amazed at the things He did and said.

The teaching is from God Compared to the other Gospels, much of Jesus' early ministry was omitted in John. This passage shows the hatred toward Him had already built up to the point of wanting to kill Him.

We often have difficulty as we read John's Gospel with the way John spoke about Jews. I have learned that when John used the term "Jews" he almost always spoke of Jewish religious

leadership. These were the ones who always opposed Jesus, and at whom Jesus directed His harshest criticisms.

When Jesus did go on to attend the festival He found Himself in the midst of controversy about who He was and how He learned all the things He taught.

The Jewish leaders claimed He was leading the people astray. Everyone else was talking about what a good man He was. Since their leaders said He was wicked, they merely kept quiet.

LIFE AND WORK
December 30 Lesson
Basic Passage: John 7

Jesus said that He was only passing along the teaching which He had received from God. He also told them if they were being obedient to God they would know the source of His teaching.

What was true in Jesus' day is still true today. Those who are willing to tell the truth about God and man are often in danger from the world — even

the religious world. It seems that the religious leaders are afraid that folks will learn to deal with God directly without help from them.

They were seeking to kill Jesus for making a man whole on the Sabbath, even though they regularly circumcised on the Sabbath. If it is right to do religious things on the Sabbath, shouldn't it be right to meet the needs of a human being on the Sabbath as well?

The teacher is from God

Jesus declared that anyone who really watched His actions and listened to His words would know He had come from God.

No poor, uneducated boy from Galilee could do and say the things He had done and said if God were not with Him. They knew His earthly background and they had seen His earthly life. What other explanation could there be?

The ignorant multitude could see it clearly. They saw all the mighty works of Jesus and knew that no future "Christ" could show more of the power of God than He.

The theologians divorced from real life could debate the matter for years

to come. But the lowly of heart had an eye for the truth. Jesus stepped into their world as they had, perhaps, always wished God or someone in power would do.

Some remain unconvinced

"But he's not doing it the way we've always thought it should be done," was the complaint of most of the religious leaders. They were so busy protecting the past they were unable to see something new was being done by God through Jesus in the most powerful demonstration since the days of the Exodus.

So it was throughout the life of Jesus. So many of those who should have been the first to recognize Him and proclaim Him Lord were the ones who refused to heed Him.

The real problem Jesus faced in His ministry then and now is in reaching the "religious" folk. There have always been those who were so wrapped up in their religion they cannot hear the voice of God.

These people set their own agendas and will not be deterred from their goals. No wonder Jesus is the same "yesterday, today, and forever," because so are we.

Holy Spirit, Ralph Bethea keep rapid pace in Mombasa

By Craig Bird

MOMBASA, Kenya — Ralph Bethea grins slowly, and often. Everything else he does at full speed — and even more often.

He even has to sleep in a hurry because most nights there are only a handful of hours between the last prayer meeting, witnessing opportunity, or planning session and the first phone call or knock on the door. Mombasa, Kenya, is a busy place spiritually.

"I'd pay Southern Baptists to be a missionary in here right now," says Bethea, just beginning his second term as a church developer. "What the Holy Spirit is doing here is so exciting I couldn't stand to be anywhere else."

Bethea is referring to an openness to the Gospel that apparently has turned this 1000-year-old coastal city into the most responsive Muslim stronghold in the world. Statistics, always nebulous in Africa, are even harder to pin down in Mombasa, where churches seem to spring up overnight in the low-income areas that sprawl across the city.

Before last summer's four-week coastal crusade, Bethea talked of 10,000 baptisms and more than 100 new churches (most of them preaching points or house churches and many others not yet affiliated with the Mombasa Baptist Association) in the past five years in a city of 500,000. During the crusades, 35,515 more people signed spiritual commitment cards in Mombasa.

Such figures are sometimes challenged by those familiar with Mombasa's religious history, a skepticism Bethea understands. "What is happening is beyond our experience or our expectations, he admits. "We don't know why God has chosen this time to put His hand on this city. All we can do is get into the harvest full speed while it is still daylight spiritually."

But Bethea doesn't think the revival is an example of spontaneous generation. "Christians have been working and praying to win Mombasa to Jesus for decades," he points out. "Two of

the men in James Hampton's first discipleship class 30 years ago are pastors along the coast today (Hampton and his wife, Gena, helped open Southern Baptist mission work in Mombasa).

"Look at the folks who have been faithful so many years and who are

plains. "I'll be in a hurry to see what I can do to solve the problem, and they'll say, 'Sit down. God hasn't shown us what to do. When He does, we'll do it.'" Other times, in confrontations with Muslims, the Kenyans don't hesitate to announce publicly that the God they serve is stronger than any opposition — be it political obstruction or physical illness.

let the fact that someone is Muslim hinder them from sharing their faith."

Bethea feels a key to the whole Mombasa story is the lead role played by nationals at all levels. The evangelization and church starts are almost totally indigenous. "I think it is significant that the Baptist Mission of Kenya doesn't pay anyone's salary in these churches," he explains.

Another important factor is the religious freedom enjoyed in Kenya. There may not be another major Muslim city in the world where Christians are as unhampered. Not only is religious freedom guaranteed by law, but often Muslim domination of local government councils is balanced by appointed officials from other parts of Kenya (Muslims are concentrated along the coast).

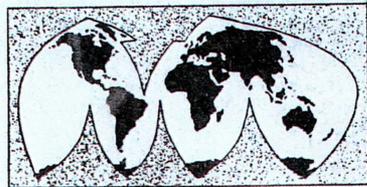
Because of that freedom, Mombasa Christians are able to saturate neighborhoods with door-to-door visitation and have become masters of an unusual form of sharing the Gospel — ferry evangelism.

Mombasa is built on an island, connected to the north mainland by a bridge and the southern coast by ferry. For the five- to ten-minute trip, car and truck drivers and passengers and hundreds of pedestrians — are pretty much a captive audience. Since a one-time charge of less than ten cents lets people ride as long as they wish if they don't disembark, Christians spend few hours escorting loads across the bay, passing out tracts, and witnessing.

Sometimes entire choirs give floating concerts (and pass out tracts between songs). Ushindi Church is located on the southern end of the ferry landing, and members of Ushindi, many of whom ride the ferry to their jobs anyway, are the core of the ferry evangelists.

While Bethea, whose parents had a 30-year span as Southern Baptist missionaries in Indonesia, India, Tanzania, and Kenya, talks like he is simply an enthusiastic observer, a look at his day shows otherwise. A friend once sympathized with Linda Bethea on the running her husband was doing keeping watch over 14 teams of nationals and volunteers, "plus all his unscheduled trips." Replied Linda: "Life with Ralph Bethea is unscheduled."

Sent . . . to Serve All Nations



Lottie Moon
Christmas Offering
National Goal: \$86,000,000
Tennessee Goal: \$6,500,000

still on the field like Jim and Jenny Musen, Clay and Pat Coursey, Louis and Jo Scales, Ed and Mary Horton, Charles and Laverne Tope, Jimmy and Peggy Hooten, and more.

"They cried over Mombasa while they struggled to show people in this city how much Jesus loves them. And God is honoring their planting and watering, their prayers and their tears, now."

By any count, the number of professions of faith, baptisms, and church starts push the statistics into the unbelievable range. Last Easter just ten churches in Mombasa baptized more than 1000 new believers in the Indian Ocean. One, Ushindi Baptist Church, which meets under a temporary roof on public land, baptized 276 converts — and a layman apologized to visitors because there were so few. "Christmas (1989) we had over 600," he explained.

Such results keep a constant stream of American volunteers flowing to Mombasa to share in the work and excitement. But if any of them arrive thinking they are bringing God with them they soon learn He is alive and well in Mombasa and letting them take part in what He is doing through national believers.

"These Kenyan Christians are something else," Bethea agrees. "They have a zeal for lost souls and a confidence in the power of God that scares me sometimes." Obstacles that appear to be permanent — Muslim politicians with power over granting plots for church buildings; hostile neighborhoods populated by people vowing to burn down any church built in their area; containers used for temporary churches stolen to be repainted and resold — all meet with the same response.

"They say, 'Let's pray until we get God's answer on this,'" Bethea ex-

"They get saved and read the book of Acts and figure it applies to them right now," Bethea said.

Baptists in Mombasa are not specifically targeting Muslims. In fact, the majority of the new Christians are from African traditional religions or nominal Christian backgrounds. But still, Bethea thinks as many as 20 percent of the converts come out of Islam — which computes into incredible response.

"We don't have Muslim Baptist churches," Bethea says. "Any Muslim convert joins existing churches. We have no desire to offend Muslims by being overly aggressive. Our approach is to offer them a blessing from God, to tell how God has blessed our lives through Jesus Christ and how He wants to bless them in the same way. These Christians want everybody in Mombasa to be saved, and they don't



Adney Cross
Is Sent . . .
To Serve Namibia

"To me, serving the people of Namibia means sharing educational and spiritual opportunities we take for granted here. I'm a small part of Christians reaching all around the world to change lives."

Southern Baptists
are sent to serve
all nations.



Sent . . . to Serve All Nations

Yet millions live in nations with little Christian witness.

Who? More than 3.2 million people living in Albania

Fact: Before a Marxist government declared Albania the world's first atheist state in 1967, the nation was Europe's only Muslim state.

Fact: Early in 1990, an Albanian-language Christian broadcast partially funded by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board received its first-ever letter from an evangelical believer in Albania.