

■ *this week's news*

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- Missionaries want to return to Angola when war permits. — See page 2
- Missionaries send Christmas greetings from overseas. — See page 5

*national -*

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- Pinewood Church aids Louisiana congregation. — See page 4

## FMB taps Tennesseans for missionary service

FMB News Office

RICHMOND — A Tennessee Baptist pastor and his wife were among 35 people named missionaries by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board Dec. 8 at Chester (Va.) Church. Several others with Tennessee ties also were appointed.



NORTHS

Kim North, pastor of New Middleton Church, Gordonsville, and his wife, Katherine, will serve in the Philippines where he will start and develop churches and together they will be involved in a number of outreach ministries.

Born in Brownsville, North is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Pete North of Bells. He was reared in Bells and considers Cross Roads Church there his home church. North is a graduate of Union University, Jackson, and Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, Memphis.

He has been pastor of First Church, Ridgetop, and has served on the ministerial staffs of Friendship Church, Friendship, and Pinson Church, Pinson.

Mrs. North is the former Katherine Durham of Springfield. She is the daughter of Sandra Durham of Greenbrier and Obie and Becky Durham of Orlinda. She considers

Orlinda Church as her home church. Mrs. North is a graduate of Union University and is a registered nurse.

The Norths have two children, Durham Alan and Mary Katherine. They will go to Rockville, Va., in January for a seven-week orientation before going to the field.

Chattanooga native Donald L. "Skip" Martin and his wife, the former Julie Garner of Houston, Texas, will serve in Guatemala, where he will teach in a Baptist seminary and together they will be involved in a variety of outreach ministries.

Martin is the son of Shirley White of Hixson and the late Donald L. Martin. He is a graduate of Carson-Newman

College, Jefferson City; Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C.; and Baylor University, Waco, Texas.

Since 1990, Martin has been pastor of Market Street Church, Houston.

Others appointed with Tennessee ties are Eddie Pate Jr., Africa; Michael W. Barnett, Japan; and Allen L. Larm, Ivory Coast.

Pate was born and lived in Memphis, but considers Anaheim, Calif., his hometown. Barnett is a graduate of Union University. Larm is a graduate of Mid-America Seminary and served as minister of evangelism and outreach at Agape Church, Memphis. □

## Texas criminal justice ministries brighten Christmas for families

Baptist Press

DALLAS — Two Texas Baptist ministries are brightening Christmas a little this year for some families and individuals touched by the criminal justice system.

Exodus Ministry in Dallas is helping concerned Christians "adopt" families of recently released ex-convicts to make their Christmas wishes come true. And the Hospitality House in Huntsville, is giving toys to the children of prisoners.

The ministries of both institutions are supported by Texas Baptists through their gifts to the Mary Hill Davis Offering for State Missions. Exodus and the Hospitality House are part of the Texas Baptist Men Criminal Justice Ministry program.

Exodus operates a 20-unit, multi-family housing complex in Dallas where up to 17 ex-offenders and their families are provided a temporary home within the context of a Christian community for up to six months.

The ministry was begun in 1988 under the sponsorship of

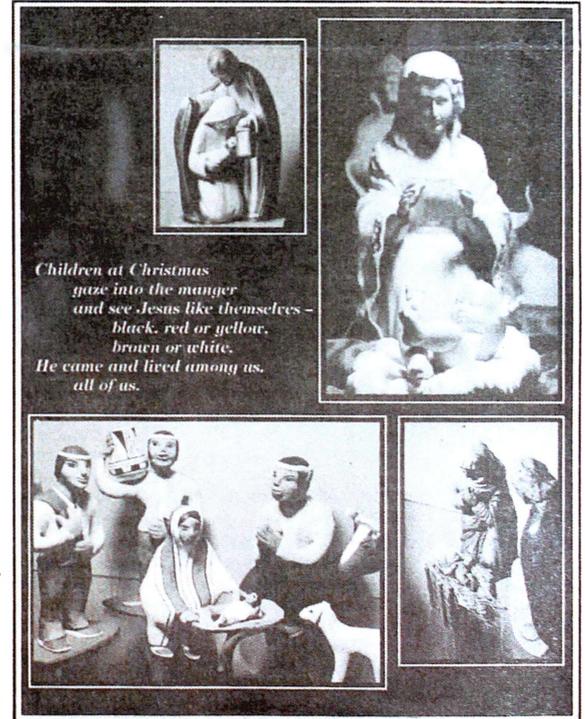
Park Cities Church in Dallas as a pilot project of Dallas Baptist Association, the Baptist General Convention of Texas, and the Home Mission Board. Of the 107 families who have been through the Exodus program of spiritual and social development, only four have had family members return to prison, according to Mike Rouse, executive director of Exodus Ministry.

As part of its Christmas ministry, Exodus collects wishlists from families of ex-offenders. Then families, individuals, or Sunday School classes are asked to accept the responsibility for buying presents on the list.

For the sixth consecutive year, the Hospitality House in Huntsville is collecting and distributing toys to the children of prisoners in Texas Department of Corrections.

Directed by Bob and Nelda Norris, the Hospitality House provides a temporary refuge for visiting families of inmates.

Since opening its doors in the summer of 1986, the ministry has been instrumental in leading more than 300 people to make professions of faith. □



Children at Christmas gaze into the manger and see Jesus like themselves — black, red or yellow, brown or white. He came and lived among us, all of us.

## A Christmas wish for all of you

Put aside the cares of the shopping and bustling about. Take precious moments to greet the season of Christ's coming. Join with others in glad celebration of his birth. Our staff sends this prayer of blessing along to all Tennessee Baptists. Let God's love dwell in you richly. May the joy of new birth spread around the world in the hearts of people.

The next issue will be published Jan. 6. It will be a new year, and opportunity for all of us to join in renewing commitments to our Lord and to each other as Tennessee Baptists, honoring him and giving him glory — *Baptist and Reflector* staff

Photo of nativity portrayals of Christmas around the world in the Upper Room, Nashville, by Jim Veneman.

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# Missionaries want to return 'home' to Angola

By Craig Bird  
For Baptist Press

HARARE, Zimbabwe — Straton Hatfield is too young to understand big words like "evacuation" and "civil war."

The two-year-old keeps things simple and direct, insisting repeatedly on where he wants to be: "Straton home, Straton home."

When his missionary mom assures him "home is wherever Mommy and Daddy and Straton are," he fixes big, almost-teary eyes on her and asks: "Angola?"

But for now home definitely is not Huambo, Angola, for Straton and his parents, Southern Baptist missionaries Mark and Susan Hatfield of Ashland, Ky. Or Luanda, Angola, for fellow missionaries Don and Carol Minshew of Memphis, and Curtis and Betty Dixon of Stroud and

Guymon, Okla. The three couples evacuated Angola in early November as the southwest African country reignited into firefights and bloodshed.

They now wait in Harare, Zimbabwe, trying to organize their futures.

The six missionaries understand those big words. Yet like Straton, they still yearn to "go home" — as early as January, they hope. But adults know wars can last a long time. Angola has been fighting more than 30 years, except for a cease fire that began in May 1991 but recently ended as fighting resumed.

"It was a beautiful time, those 16 months of peace," Dixon pointed out. "It seemed like Angola finally was wide open to the Gospel and the church was going great guns."

But the Sept. 28 elections intended to stabilize that peace instead provoked more

war. The rebel group UNITA, which had fought the Marxist government so long, refused to accept their ballot defeat.

Hundreds of people died in fighting in Luanda, the capital, and for the past month UNITA has been capturing more and more Angolan territory.

"We miss our Angolan friends and worry about them," Mrs. Minshew said. "We left all our material things behind, but the hard part is leaving the people we love so much."

Mrs. Hatfield admitted she sometimes cries with Straton. "I just miss my neighbors so much," she said. "What has happened to them since Huambo was captured?"

None of them detected any early warning signs they would have to abandon homes and work in Angola. Tensions rose during the election period, but when international observers declared the elections

had been fair it seemed logical the country would continue to progress.

"I went to town and bought our Thanksgiving turkey on Friday, Oct. 30, and on Oct. 31 we were on a boat evacuating," Minshew said. "The week before an ammo dump blew up at 1 a.m. and lit up the whole sky, but on a day-to-day basis everything seemed to be OK. The last week we were there everything seemed to fall together in our ministry. Everybody I talked to was agreeable to what we wanted to do. We were so excited."

The Hatfields, living in the UNITA stronghold of Huambo more than 400 miles from Luanda, reacted to the increased violence but still didn't plan to leave.

Now, the missionaries do not know what will happen. They just want to "go home." □

## Southern trustees reject plan to pay for Simmons' departure

Baptist Press

ATLANTA — Southern Baptist Theological Seminary trustees, meeting behind closed doors in a called meeting in Atlanta Dec. 15, voted against a proposal to offer controversial ethics professor Paul Simmons up to \$362,000 to terminate his relationship with the seminary.

## Baptist chaplains serve in Somalia

Baptist Press

ATLANTA — At least 13 Southern Baptist military chaplains are among those assigned to relief efforts in Somalia, said Lew Burnett, director of military chaplaincy for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

While the chaplains' primary ministry is to soldiers, the focus on humanitarian aid rather than warfare will

change the nature of the chaplains' task, Burnett said.

Instead of the fear of being killed, many military personnel assigned to Somalia are excited about their mission, said Lew Dawson, HMB associate director of military chaplaincy.

Yet seeing people die from starvation may be more traumatic for some soldiers than seeing people die in warfare, Dawson said. □

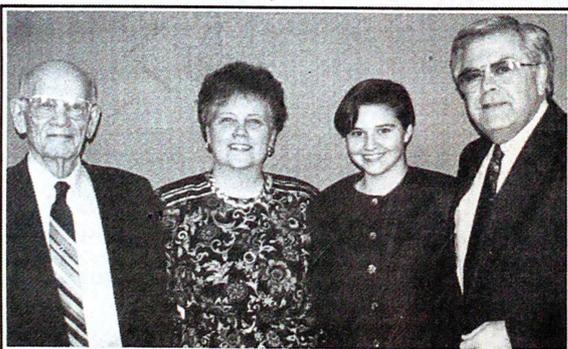
der consideration.

The motion would have empowered seminary President Roy Honeycutt to negotiate "the conclusion" of Simmons' relationship to the seminary "at a cost to the seminary approximating Paul Simmons' compensation through age 62 (not to exceed \$362,000)." Simmons, 56, is professor of Christian ethics at Southern Seminary.

The meeting was the latest attempt by trustees to deal with recurring controversy over Simmons, who has come under fire from "conservative" trustees for his recent support of abortion rights and homosexuality views. He is a tenured professor, which

means he could be fired only for heresy (teachings in violation of the seminary's Abstract of Principles doctrinal statement) or for violating his contract.

According to trustee sources quoted by Associated Baptist Press, trustees earlier had rejected a severance package negotiated by Honeycutt estimated at up to \$650,000. Some trustees reportedly believe formal dismissal hearings would allow the conflict to continue and possibly taint the administration of the next president at the seminary. Honeycutt has announced his retirement effective Dec. 31, 1993. □



TBC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR James Porch, right, was formally installed during the December meeting of the Executive Board. With Porch are family members, from left, James L. Sullivan, father-in-law and retired president of the Baptist Sunday School Board; his wife, Lynn, and his daughter, Terri. Sullivan spoke during the installation service.

## Daily prayer requests for Chile/Tennessee Partnership



### December —

- 24 — Pray for new believers Manfred and Doris Yunge and their two young daughters.
- 25 — Pray the Christ of Christmas will be very real to our missionaries as his birth is celebrated today.
- 26 — Pray for Rayen Quinenao, a special education teacher in Puerto Varas, whose dream is to begin a school to meet special needs of many children in the area.
- 27 — Pray for Fourth Baptist Church and El Medentor Baptist Church in Concepcion as they seek pastors.
- 28 — Pray for Roberto Carrasco and his family in Puerto Montt. In the near future he will be on assignment for the Chilean Air Force in Antarctica.
- 29 — Search your heart today in prayer. Would the Lord have YOU serve in Chile in 1993?
- 30 — Missionary Stephen Burke celebrates his birthday today. He is an evangelist. Ask the Lord to give him the joy of leading a lost one to Jesus today.
- 31 — Home evangelist Lori Spikes is having a birthday today. Pray that the Lord will bless her richly in 1993.

# Religious leaders decry excessive commercialization

Associated Baptist Press

WASHINGTON — Commercialization has robbed Christmas of its meaning and turned shopping malls into "the new shrines of worship" in American culture.

So say 25 religious leaders — including six Baptists — in a statement decrying the excessive commercialization of Christmas.

"We have seen the spirit of Christmas reduced to a carnival of mass marketing, the ecumenical group says. "Consumption has taken on an almost religious quality; malls have become the new shrines of worship."

The religious leaders urge Americans to distinguish between Christmas giving that captures the true meaning of the season and "obsessive spending as a way to fill the spiritual vacuum left by an over-consumptive society."

"In the end," the statement warns, "the delirium of commercial Christmas devours some, leaves others in ruinous debt, and punishes the poor,

for whom the joy of Christmas always seems a dollar away.

"Christmas giving, in all its forms, is enriched when spiritual and ethical values overshadow the almost chronic compulsions to buy," the statement continues. "The advertising lords of Madison Avenue have been successful in developing among many a coerced sense of guilt that drives consumer anxiety (and buying) at Christmas time. At the same time, they have failed to recognize or achieve the ideal of giving."

Personal, altruistic, and reflective giving is part of what makes Christmas real, the statement notes. It urges Americans to give simple gifts based on need, not consumption.

The religious leaders call upon people of faith to speak out against the over-commercialization of Christmas and to begin to reorder priorities.

"Christmas was never intended to be a crass marketing ploy. Let us restore the spiritual and life-affirming potential of the season — and take it

into the new year."

The statement, coordinated by the Washington, D.C.-based Center for the Study of Commercialism, was sent to hundreds of regional and church organizations around the country.

Baptist signers include: Dellanna O'Brien, executive director of Woman's Missionary Union in Birmingham, Ala.; Robert Parham, executive director of the Baptist Center for Ethics in Nashville; and George Reed, director of the council on Christian Life and Public Affairs for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina.

A spokesman for America's retailers objected to the statement, however, noting the country's 19 million retail employees are dependent on holiday sales.

"Cancel Christmas? You would throw the country into depression," Jack Schultz, president of the National Retail Federation in New York, told the *Charlotte Observer*. "I don't want to take on the religious community, but

an awful lot of jobs depend on Christmas. If you think that's sacrilegious, the country's in trouble."

The U.S. Commerce Department is predicting a four percent jump in retail sales in December compared to the same month last year, when Americans spent \$200 billion.

Parham said the religious leaders' statement goes beyond similar ones which focused on the materialistic behavior of individuals and instead identifies commercialism as the driving force which aggravates our inherent materialism and consumerism."

"The commercialism of Christmas plays on the shadow side (of human nature)," Parham said, "attempting to replace the eternal and transcendent values of the Peace Child with the temporary and illusionary values of material consumption."

"The Peace Child's message is that all God's children have value because of who they are and whose they are. Corporate America's message is that human worth is wrapped up in

personal and material consumption."

WMU's O'Brien said the commercialization of Christmas affects even Christians and churches. "We spend so much money on each other that we forget why we have Christmas," she said. "There's nothing wrong with giving gifts to each other, but when a child immediately thinks of Santa Claus instead of Jesus, then I think we have misplaced the meaning of Christmas."

O'Brien said she is concerned that the gift-giving frenzy distracts Southern Baptists from the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, which her agency sponsors to support Southern Baptist foreign missions.

"It's easy to neglect doing what is eternal and just take care of the mundane expressions (of Christmas)," she said. "In our own family, we've gone back to saying we want our money to go to the mission offering." □

## Discipleship needed as ongoing emphasis, leaders told

By Linda Lawson  
For Baptist Press

NASHVILLE — Southern Baptist Discipleship Training leaders were challenged to find ways to help churches and individuals make discipleship an ongoing emphasis in their lives during annual planning meetings Dec. 6-9 at the Baptist Sunday School Board.

Upcoming products on money management, help for parents in working with their children who are new Christians, and guidance for a fresh encounter with God were previewed during sessions with state convention leaders and personnel in the board's discipleship and family development division.

SSB President James T. Draper Jr. said an increased emphasis on short-term training on Sunday nights has caused Discipleship Training

### HCBA appoints Beane as headmaster

James Michael Beane has been named headmaster of Harrison-Chilhowee Baptist Academy, effective Jan. 4.

Beane comes to his new post from Trinity Christian Academy in Addison, Texas, where he served as director of development. During his 16 years at the school, he did a variety of other tasks including teaching and coaching. He

in too many churches to become event-oriented, creating the pressure that each event has to be bigger and better than the last.

"We've got to find ways to give more emphasis to the ongoing program," Draper said.

Todd Nelson, youth specialist in the discipleship and family youth-children-preschool department, said in his earlier years as a youth minister he planned short-term Discipleship Training, moving from one hot topic to the next.

"I began to understand the need for a total discipleship youth program in my church," Nelson said. "My kids did not know who they were as Southern Baptists."

After attending a 1991 DiscipleLife Strategy Conference, Nelson said he realized he had built his ministry around himself. He shifted the focus by introducing Sunday night Di-

scipleLife celebrations that are "youth-led, adult-facilitated."

Avery Willis, director of the discipleship and family adult department, announced the board will introduce in early 1993 a video training series, "Master Your Money." The series was produced by Walk Thru the Bible Ministries of Atlanta and a customized SSB product is being developed.

Division director Roy Edgeman called the series "a money management plan for the family and how the family can support the work of the kingdom. This video advocates tithing. If we teach anything different from tithing, we are not being biblical, in my opinion."

Statistics compiled from the denomination's Uniform Church Letter indicate 11 per-

cent of Southern Baptists give nothing to their churches while 21 percent give \$101 to \$500 per year and only 13 percent give more than \$2000 per year, Willis reported.

Plans were overviewed for upcoming products and emphasis and leaders asked to give input. "We need your thinking and your praying," Draper said. □



**BAPTIST CENTER EMPLOYEES** were honored in December for five or more years of service at the Tennessee Baptist Convention. From left, seated, Ann White, Discipleship Training; Janet Harbin, Student Ministries; Carole Hayner, Executive Office; Doris Clark, Program Services; Evelyn Vaughn, Accounting, 15 years; standing, Helen Clifton, Church Ministers Relations, 15 years; Ann Emery, Evangelism, ten years; Dene Mashburn, WMU; Gayle Ingram, WMU; Fran Terry, Missions; and Wm. Fletcher Allen, Baptist and Reflector, five years. Others honored but not available for photo were Angelia Hulsey, WMU, five years; Madge Larabee, Missions; and Bob Hall, BSU director, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, 15 years; and Jim McDonald, Business Department, 20 years.

# Hickman County church rallies to meet relief needs

By Connie Davis  
Baptist and Reflector

Disasters bring out the best in First Church, Pinewood, a small church located in middle Tennessee's rural Hickman

**Baptist beliefs**  
By Herschel H. Hobbs  
Baptist theologian

## The Birth of Jesus

*"And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger." — Luke 2:7.*

Augustus Caesar neither knew or cared that his decree for all his subjects to be enrolled for taxation fulfilled prophecy. Micah 5:2 said that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. Joseph and Mary lived in Nazareth but were brought to Bethlehem by the enrollment.



HOBBS

When they arrived in Bethlehem the inn was full to overflowing. Traditionally the innkeeper has received a rough time for refusing them lodging. The Bible does not say that, simply saying that "there was no room for them in the inn," (Luke 2:7). Apparently the innkeeper did the best he could, making them as comfortable as possible in the adjoining animal shelter.

There Jesus was born, his birth aided only by the gnarled hands of a carpenter made tender by love. Mary had come prepared. For she wrapped the baby in a swaddling band and placed him in an animal feeding trough for a bed.

Bethlehem was not aware that it was the scene of the greatest event until then in human history. Note that it was Mary's "firstborn son." Later four sons and at least two daughters were born to her and Joseph.

So read the facts. "But, oh, the romance of it! God tabernacled in the womb of a woman! God wrapped in a swathing band and laid in an animal feeding trough! Born not in a palace, a house, or even a khan, but in the place for the animals. Truly, he emptied himself as the king of heaven, the Lord of the universe submitted to the lowliest of birth conditions" (Hobbs, *Exposition of Luke*, p. 51). □

County, and provide reunions for the church's network of Tennessee disaster relief workers.

During the week of the Thanksgiving holiday, 13 of its members gave up vacation time and family observances to do Hurricane Andrew relief work in Louisiana. The team can trace the penchant for relief work following hurricanes to three members.

During the same week in 1989 another team from First Church, Pinewood, worked in South Carolina with the Brotherhood effort following Hurricane Hugo. The team from Pinewood — Larry Leeper, James Lewis Sr., and James Lewis Jr., youth director — had an unexpected experience, reported Leeper, an employee of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Their fellow team members were "total strangers except for being brothers and sisters in Christ," noted Leeper, but at the end of the effort they were lasting friends.

So it was natural for two friends from that team to travel

several hundred miles from their home in Kingsport to join fellow hurricane relief workers, explained Leeper. Bill and Shirley Gothard of Beulah Church, Kingsport, rounded out the Pinewood team which included seven youth from the church. First Church only has 80 resident members.

The 15-member team was assigned by the Louisiana Baptist Convention to help Immanuel Baptist Church in Morgan City.

They worked on the roofs of three houses. The roof of one house had been temporarily repaired — just covered with tarp paper — since the Aug. 25-26 storm, said Leeper. Two

houses were completely re-roofed, he reported.

Every team member, even a ten-year-old, he noted, helped replace damaged structure, haul supplies to the roofs, remove shingles, and nail on new shingles.

Immanuel Church surprised the team with lunch on Thanksgiving Day.

Their effort will affect people as far away as Russia, they discovered.

The owner of one house which was repaired will be able to do missions work in Russia because of money the team saved the owner, Leeper explained. To recognize the church's investment, the wo-

man will direct the monies for the Foreign Mission Board trip through First Church, Pinewood.

The experience tested physical strength and stamina needed for a 24-hour round trip and the small church's leadership because it is without a pastor. But the effort did not call into question its commitment to missions, stated Leeper. It gives 16 and one-half percent to Southern Baptist missions and one percent to a local missions fund which helped subsidize the trip, reported Leeper.

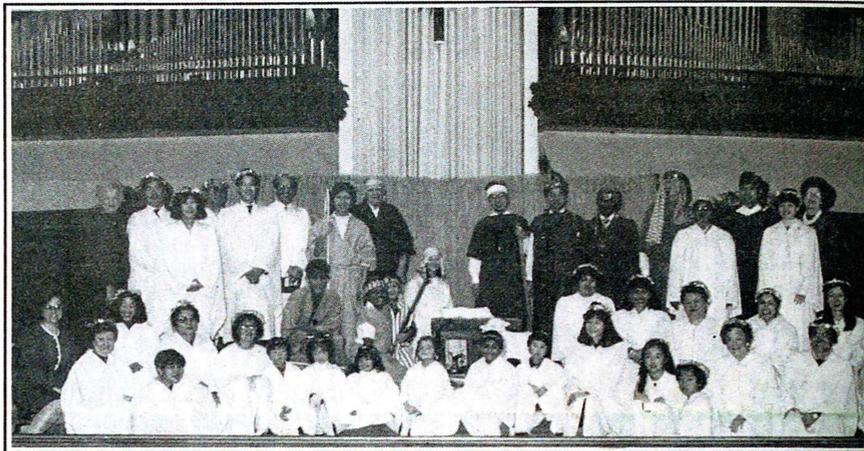
"We're a real missions-minded church," stated Leeper. □

## TBC board member dies

Lucille Hatfield, a member of the TBC Executive Board, died Dec. 15 at Fentress County Hospital, Jamestown, after an extended illness.

Hatfield, a member of First Church, Jamestown, also was WMU director for Riverside Association.

In lieu of flowers, the family has requested that donations be made to the SBC-WMU Second Century Fund. □



A TRULY INTERNATIONAL Christmas took place Dec. 13 at Brook Hollow Church, Nashville. The International Department of the church presented "Joy to the World" with 40 international men, women, and children from seven countries. Featured were a Japanese Mary, Joseph, and innkeeper; an Egyptian angel of the Lord proclaimed his message of the birth of the Christ child in both Arabic and English languages; the three wise men were from India, Taiwan, and Nashville; Heavenly Hosts included men and women from Japan, India, Mexico, and a choir of Koreans from Han Vit Korean Church, a former mission of Brook Hollow. Shepherds were from Mexico, Korea, Nashville, and Japan. Christmas songs were sung in different languages. It was a stirring celebration of the birth of the Prince of Peace as the entire audience joined in singing "Joy to the World."

## Sunday School lessons for Sunday, January 3

Space is limited for this year-ending issue. Since the *Baptist and Reflector* will not be published Dec. 30, a brief summary of the Sunday School lessons for Jan. 3 is included.

### Bible Book

Theme for the Bible Book Series January-March, Unit 1, is "Songs of Praise."

Focal Scripture for Jan. 3 is Psalm 68:7-12, 19-20, 34-35; and Psalm 103:6-12.

The focal verses are Psalm 103:1-2, 12.

Verses 7-12 of Psalm 68 describe how God had blessed Israel. These verses are similar to Deborah's song in Judges 5.

Israel's praise to God for His greatness because of the blessings is told in Psalm 68:19-20. Praise is the theme through these verses.

The Central Bible Truth: The psalmist's praise of God for his historical blessings challenges all persons to praise God and to confess and repent of their sins.

We need to remember how God also has moved in the midst of Christian groups today. The lesson teaches encouragement as well as praise.

### Life and Work

The first lesson for this quarter is called "Following God's Leading" and Genesis 12:1-9 is the focal passage.

Verses 1-2 are keys to the lesson. The Central Bible Truth: We obey God by following His leading. We should resolve now to follow God in 1993.

The lesson focuses on Abram's acceptance of God's leadership to move to a new country. We must all be open to God's prompting in our lives.

God called Abram, and promised to bless him. Abram responded by obeying, and he learned to worship God in his willingness. He called on God's name.

### Convention Series

Acts 2 begins this quarter's emphasis, explaining "The Coming of the Holy Spirit."

Verses 1-7 and 12-17 are a key to the lesson's goal of helping students describe how the Holy Spirit works in the lives of people today.

The first hearers of the good news of Christ's birth were shepherds of Bethlehem, but as time passed, the good news came to contain more than that simple story.

On the Day of Pentecost in this lesson, spiritual phenomena took place before an international audience.

The amazed witnesses also heard Christ preached by an emboldened Peter, verses 22-36. Some leaders had thought the flame of Christianity dead, but now the light burst forth. □

# Choose mountains, not molehills, for message

We often choose molehills instead of mountains from which to proclaim our messages. We Christians, who have the Good News of Jesus the Christ, and who believe it, sometimes choose the hill of lowest profile. We may choose sadness instead of joy.

Did the proclaiming angel and the chorus of heavenly beings make a mistake when they shouted from the sky that long ago night near Bethlehem?

Did they err in the glad announcement? "Do not be afraid; I have good news for you: there is great joy coming to the whole people today," said God's angel. He told about the birth of the Christ child, and "a great company of the heavenly host" began "singing the praises of God." That's the way Luke told about Jesus' coming, in the New Testament.

Was it a mistake to make such a grand statement about a baby in a feeding trough?

Millions of Americans, and Tennesseans don't have an inkling of what Christmas is about. They are bereft of joy and ignorant of praise. Where is the real song of Christmas?

Movies and television parade maudlin stories of how people and/or angels return from visits to heaven, in order to do some good deed so their temporary reservation can be made secure. There's no message of salvation there, and little joy.

Were the angelic hosts wrong? Did they have their story straight?

The countdown to Christmas started in heaven before time began. It concludes with the Savior's redeeming love dwelling with the power to save in every believer's heart.

For mankind today the countdown often begins with shopping lists and parties and adoration of the things money can buy. Part of the Christmas parade entrenches foremost in our hearts those very things that mean the least to the Lord of creation.

We rush toward Christmas as if it were the grand conclusion to every hope and dream, every desire. Was the message of joy and praise too late or too soon?

Christ, of whom the angel spoke and of whom history testifies, did not come to arbitrate. He did not come to settle claims — either among Baptists or any other group, religious or secular. He came, the angel said, as joy and salvation to the hearts of all people.

Christ did not come as a second Solomon or one set apart in the days of the Judges. There was little splendor about his coming other than the grand announcement.

We really ought to delight in simplicity. A Christmas musical for children clearly makes the point. God came as a baby, born in a simple manger to simple parents. He came with a very simple message: God

loves us and wants everyone to know the Savior.

When we are so caught up with the feeling that we are always right and the other group, the other person is always wrong, we ought to remember that Christ said we should become like little children.

Nicodemus, talking with Christ about the new birth, remarked that a man could not enter his mother's body a second time. Christ was talking about spiritual birth, and so, we must be like the spiritually innocent child. We then neither need nor want an arbitrator.

In our search for the meaning of Christmas, the truth of the Bethlehem angel's astounding message, we need to seize upon the real song of Christmas.

The world has had enough of predatory attitudes. Reeling with callous words, hate, and brother-against-brother killing, all the peoples need that song.

Truly it is something that must be heard in the personal heart. Enough of the folksy holiday foisted on us. There is comfort in that even once a year we get together for Christmas.

Think with me about that simple message proclaimed from Bethlehem's skies, of a simple birth that would offer to all a new birth, joy, laughter, for all the world. That is the real Song of Christmas, good news! □

By Wm. Fletcher Allen, editor

one word more

By Wm. Fletcher Allen editor

## Looking for Jesus

It was late in the afternoon when we stopped at the appointed place.

The saffron December sun had long since turned to a rich and dusty red on its slow descent to a resting place beyond Bethlehem's hills.

The two brothers were waiting for us.

We had begun the day with a review of yesterday and a hasty look at the day's itinerary. We chose to leave early and hasten along to Bethlehem.

We had shed the snug safety and warmth of Jerusalem's hospitality, hoping to recoup some of the luster of holy places. Without a backward glance we braved the blustery wind at the advice of one who had been there, Emil the guide.

Tugging at the pages of our Bibles, we listened to some pungent words about the star, angels, and the message. The hills beckoned as silent, stalwart witnesses to what had happened 2000 years ago in this place of stark beauty.

There was Hebron with its tombs of Abraham, Sarah. We bartered later with craftsmen who knew little of the true meaning of nativity scenes.

During our daylong trek, we saw it all. The Church of the Nativity — we sang Christmas hymns there before the tiny grotto. We saw the shepherds' field, at least one of them.

The wind grew quiet and we thought we heard the angels sing, the bleating of sleepy sheep, and the glad cries of a few mystified shepherds.

Now we reach the appointed place, where two brothers welcome weary travelers to their souvenir shop, and ask us in for thick, sweet coffee and tea.

And what did you see, they say. We talk busily, sharing full hearts from a full day.

And what did you see, they ask again. Bewildered, we pause to look at two smiling faces. "Did you see Jesus?"

Well, we answer, we didn't see him, but we saw stony fields and the grotto where the manger could have rested. They smile again and ask, "Did you look with your hearts?" □



ALLEN

just for today  
By Fred Wood  
pastor emeritus  
Eudora Church, Memphis

## Christmas greetings from 'over there'

We have more letters from missionaries at Christmas. — Editor

David and Suzanne Adams, Julie and Emily; Bonn, Germany:

We have been busy the past few months, and continuing to learn the German language is our primary task at present.

Even in language study we are finding opportunities to share Christ. David has been preaching some in German, and some in English. We have had several opportunities to use our music.

We are inspired to talk and work with Christians who faithfully served Christ even during difficult years under Communist rule.

Julie and Emily are doing well in the German school system.

We've recently learned we will work for the next few years in starting a church in Viersen, a town of 80,000 near the border with Holland.

Thanks for your ministry to us. We are overwhelmed by your love and appreciation, and your prayers sustain us. We encourage your support of foreign missions through prayer and through the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. Let's celebrate together the greatest gift of all this Christmas — our Lord's coming on earth.

Steve and Mary Jo Cooke, Santiago, Chile:

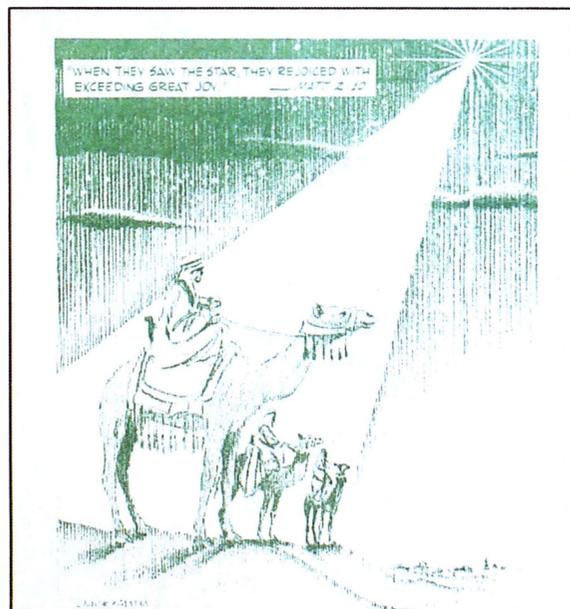
We enjoyed our furlough in the United States, but we are glad to be back in Santiago.

We are working with two Chilean Baptist families to begin a church in our neighborhood. On Sundays we rent the second floor of a nice bakery for the Sunday School. Christmas is a wonderful opportunity to share our faith, so we are having a Christmas crafts school. We have helped

several Chile-Tennessee Partnership teams, medical, and evangelistic.

In Temuco some 4000 patients were seen in a week by 32 medical volunteers and 20 missionary translators. In one church clinic 35 people professed faith in Christ. Thanks, Tennessee Baptists!

Please pray about your contribution to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. We know God called us here and count on your generous support. □



### Start with a smile —

A man said, "I wish I had enough money to buy an elephant." His friend asked, "What would you do with an elephant?" He replied, "I don't want an elephant. I just want enough money to buy one."

### Take this truth with you —

The "poor" man may have more money than the "rich" one. The question is not "how much do you have" but "how eager and filled with anxiety to get more?" If you had more money than you have now, there is little chance you would be generous — unless you are now.

### Memorize this Scripture —

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33).

### Pray this prayer —

Lord, help me own my money and not let my money own me. Keep me from the sin of mixing up the price tags on life's products and priorities. □

# Christmas pageant lights up Mississippi cotton patch

By Robert J. Hastings  
For Baptist Press

HICKORY FLAT, Miss. — Recent years have seen a surge in the number and size of Christmas pageants and

**An Occasional word**  
By Lonnie Wilkey  
associate editor

## Everyone counts

When I go walking or running it's not uncommon to see six to eight aluminum cans that have been discarded.

If I'm near the end of my walk I may pick them up to recycle later. Usually, however, I pass them by.

Picking up just a few cans doesn't appear to be worth the trouble. But, if you collect a lot of them, it can be profitable as the Royal Ambassadors at Tulip Grove Church in Old Hickory have discovered.

As a missions project we decided to recycle aluminum cans between now and Jan. 31 and give all the proceeds to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions. The boys and their counselors have collected cans and other church members have brought them to church. In two weeks, we collected 106 pounds which translates into \$37.10 for missions. That amount should more than double before the project is over. That means those "worthless" cans are not worthless. Money earned from those cans will be put to good use by our foreign missionaries. Plus, we are helping the environment.

Though one can seem insignificant, it can make a difference when put with others. The same thing can be said for Christians.

Sometimes we think we cannot make a difference because our attitude is, "What can one person do?"

That's why we have churches and denominations. Put us all together in a spirit of cooperation and we can accomplish great things for our Lord.

Celebrate Christmas this year by remembering our missionaries through your prayers and your Lottie Moon offering. What we do as individuals adds up too. □



WILKEY

musicals in Southern Baptist churches.

Some congregations spend thousands and thousands of dollars on stage settings, professional lighting, choirs, and sound. The larger pageants often run several nights, drawing huge crowds. A few churches even sell tickets. Others issue free tickets so visitors will be assured of seating.

One of the most unusual programs in America is staged in an open, 20-acre cotton field, nine miles from the nearest town. It dates back to the early 1950s and is produced and financed by two families, one Baptist, the other Methodist.

Called "Christmas in the Cotton Patch," it has attracted viewers from all 50 states. Yet there is no paid advertising, no tickets, no expensive settings.

It began with a single, five-foot star made out of scrap lumber, decorated with colored lights, and put together by country storekeeper Fred McGaughy, a Methodist layman.

About 1958, on a shopping trip to nearby Memphis, McGaughy's daughter was mesmerized by the lights in the big stores. She asked her dad if they could have more than one star.

He returned home and built a simple nativity scene that he added to later.

In 1959 he asked his neighbor Ewart Autry, a Southern Baptist pastor, and his wife, Lola, to write and narrate a program to go with the scene.

They agreed and wrote a 30-minute program, complete with background music. And, so it has continued each year since.

Three generations of the McGaughy and Autry families, including children, grandchild-

dren, and their spouses, dominate their time to stage the pageant.

Although Autry is deceased his widow, Lola, and her extended family continue to write and narrate the drama. And, McGaughy continues to

add new sets.

"Christmas in the Cotton Patch" is on state road 5, about nine miles north of Hickory Flat. It begins at 8 p.m. nightly and will be shown through Dec. 27. □

## Love In Action

## If Not For The Children's Home I Would Probably Be On The Streets Right Now...

-Lisa Oudamrath...

Children's Home Resident for the last four years

"Before I came to the Children's Home, my grades were average or below average. But the whole time I knew I could do better. Now I've learned how to apply myself. I've made the honor roll and really like all of my classes.

Living at the Children's Home is like being at home, but with some differences. Here we have a set time for homework that makes it easy to study. And here I always have people to do things with - even if it's just watching a movie or talking and singing together.

In fact, I'd like to have a career as a Christian singer after college. There I plan to major in music but get a teaching degree, too.

Before I came to the Children's Home, I was a Christian. And even though I believed that Jesus died on the cross for us, I didn't live it out.

I do live it out here.

The Children's Home has changed my life. I know that if I wasn't here I would probably be out on the streets, without a home at all.



Tennessee Baptist Children's Homes

TBCH Central Office  
5001 Maryland Way • Brentwood, TN 37027  
615-371-2000

Dr. Gerald L. Stow, President/Treasurer  
1-800-624-8591

### Word Search Answers

The following 12 words were in the word search in last week's issue of the paper: inn, shepherds, Mary, angel, baby, tax, Simeon, Bethlehem, manger, star, Nazareth, Joseph

### Classified

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Residential Care

# ■ Sunday School lesson commentary

## □ Guidance for Christian relationships—Bible Book Series for December 27

By Mike Kemper, pastor, Green River Church, Waynesboro

This lesson deals with the Christian life and right actions. The faithful Christian must make correct choices about things or actions which may be "questionable."

Paul knew that in every local congregation there were mature believers as well as immature believers, and he also knew these two would naturally disagree on practices in the daily life of a Christian. The Christians with Jewish backgrounds would want to cling to special holy days and certain dietary laws from olden days. Conversely Christians from Gentile perspective might want to use their new liberty as license to ignore so called "holy days" and/or dietary laws. This could obviously cause problems in any church.

Today we also have differences of opinion about certain practices. There are differences about movie going and dancing, to mention only a couple. You know as well as I do about our differences of opinion! What is the answer? Paul did not give us a set of rules; rather, he gave basic principles all Christians can and should follow.

Chapter 14 records Paul's warning about judging those who differ from us. He challenged us to be careful by judging our own influence on others. Christians should not act from mere emotion, but from settled inward convictions that come to us from prayer and study of God's Word. More settled, stronger Christians should not look down on weaker brothers.

The fact is, God has received us both and we should also receive one another.

Have you ever heard someone make the statement, "I'm living my own life." A Christian should never make such a statement. I say this because we are not our own. Christians belong to the Lord. If we are doing whatever it is that we are doing to please ourselves, that is bad.

Too many of us practice our lives without regard to the Lord. I believe that is why we end up doing "questionable things" and why we are often at odds with our brother. Someday we will all give an account before the Lord. We have no right to judge our weaker, or stronger, brother because someday we will all be

judged. Our goal should be to live our lives in such a way that will stand the fiery test before Christ on that day.

But there is one thing we should judge ... ourselves! Are we taking the blessings of God and using those blessings in such a way as to cause others to stumble? Priesthood of the

**Basic Passage:  
Romans 14:1 — 16:27**

believer is an important principle believers hold dear, but I believe that license expires when we use this privilege in such a way as to cause others to stumble. It is a serious thing to cause others to stumble. A Christian who holds on to a questionable opinion or practice

at the cost of causing others to stumble makes a serious mistake. The faithful Christian will put the needs of others ahead of his own.

Examine the principles given by Paul in these final chapters. Certainly every church and every believer has the right to set whatever standards he or she feels best. But no brother should condemn another brother. Instead, we should each examine ourselves and seek to build up ourselves and our brothers, which will result in strong believers and strong churches to the glory of God! In the church, some people "polish the fellowship," while others "tarnish the fellowship." Which kind are you? □

## □ Jesus filled with the Spirit — Convention Uniform Series for December 27

By Wes Ellis, retired pastor, Forest Hill Church, Germanstown

Thirty years passed between the birth of Jesus and the beginning of His ministry, which we will study in this lesson. Two weeks ago, we studied God's blessings to an aged couple and the world in the gift of a child, John the Baptist, who would be the forerunner of the Messiah. Last week our attention was on hope for Jews and Gentiles that was provided in the birth of the child in Bethlehem. Now John the Baptist and Jesus are brought together, one soon to complete his assignment and the other to embark upon His.

### **Baptizer and baptized (vv. 1-17)**

John the Baptizer's ministry was carried on in the wilderness rather than temple or synagogue. He created such a stir that the people sought him out to hear his message of repentance as preparation, "for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," (v. 2). This meant that after 400

years of delay, God was acting decisively and powerfully to accomplish His intentions and display His sovereignty through the soon-coming Messiah. People who were responsive must turn from their sin and prepare their hearts. Baptism was a rite normally for converts to Judaism, but John insisted the Israelites needed to seek God in repentance and obedience.

Jesus asked to be baptized. It was not because of any sin on His part. John was surprised and objected (v. 14). Jesus' answer (v. 15) meant it was the "right thing to do," because He wanted to affirm the ministry of John as being from God. He wanted to identify with the sinners whom He came to save, and He positioned Himself in rejection of the sin-way and commitment to the God-way.

Repentance and baptism signify condemnation and rejection of sin as a way of life and a turn-

ing to God. (See Romans 6:2-3; 8:3). The people of God live lives characterized by repentance. At this point, Jesus was affirmed by the Father as the dove, symbolizing the Holy Spirit, descended upon Him and the Father spoke from the heavens (vv. 16-17).

### **Holy Spirit, Holy servant, Holy mission (ch. 4:1-11)**

The Father's words reflected the "suffering servant songs" of Isaiah, especially Isaiah 42:1, and raised the issue of the type of ministry that Jesus would follow. It would be that of Messiah, certainly. But it would be suffering servant Messiah. No one to this time had put those two concepts together.

This provided the impetus for the retreat into the wilderness for the struggles of understanding and commitment. The fasting was no ceremony, but came from an intense desire to deal with these issues. And Jesus

did! No souls were saved during those 40 days. There were no healings and no churches built. But these days and the settling of these issues were vital. Do not overlook the 40 days!

The account of the temptations gives insight into the nature of the struggle in which Jesus was involved, not only at the start of His ministry, but all through it. He was led by the Holy Spirit in all of this.

The temptation to satisfy His own hunger by miraculous power (vv. 3-4) was a temptation to "look out for number one" to get God's provision. But Jesus was called to suffer and die. He decided the way God directed would be His satisfaction. The temptation to insist on His right (vv. 5-7) to get God's protection was also rejected as Jesus decided God's will was paramount and He would trust and not presume upon the Father. The temptation to avoid the cross by

compromise with Satan (vv. 8-10) was rejected as Jesus determined to give His allegiance and worship to God, alone. No matter what it might cost, Jesus committed to the course the Father outlined at His baptism.

We too have positioned ourselves in rejection of sin and faith in God through our own repentance, faith, and baptism. This is our course, even though it may mean suffering and

**Basic Passage:  
Matthew 3:1 — 4:11**

death. And, with Him, we shall be glorified (Romans 6:4-11).

Jesus was victorious in these temptations, and "the devil left Him" (v. 11). Luke said the devil came back (Luke 4:13). The struggle was not finished. Neither is it for us. But Jesus kept moving towards His goal and became our Savior. □

## □ Praising the Savior — Life and Work Series for December 27

By James Hutson, pastor, First Church, Rockwood

The book of Revelation is, according to G. E. Ladd, a "tract for hard times." It was a book written to encourage Christians who were experiencing persecution. John, the author of Revelation, had been exiled to the island of Patmos. This was a small, rocky island in the Aegean Sea.

There is no historical evidence indicating wide-spread persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire. There is no question Christians were persecuted in the first 300 years after Christ. But the persecution was in one area and then another (like a brush fire) in this period of history. John and other believers had experienced first-hand this persecution.

Revelation is a strong reminder of the subtle and sometimes open hostility between the world and the church. But the theme of the book of Revelation is the

promised victory despite persecution of those who believe in Jesus Christ. Our Lord Himself said, "In this world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world," (John 16:33).

### **The sealed book (vv. 1-4)**

The sealed book would be a scroll made up of pieces of papyrus pasted together. Papyrus was a tall, aquatic reed plant used for writing material. The word papyrus gives us our word paper. There was writing on both sides of the papyrus, which was not a common practice. The writing on both sides indicates the completeness of the divine revelation. The seven seals binding the scroll means it was completely sealed.

John lamented there was no one who could open the scroll. Verse 5 tells us the Lion of Judah will come to open the scroll. This is a reminder that only Jesus

Christ gives meaning to history. Not only does Jesus give meaning to history, but this scroll of divine revelation is held in the right hand of God. These verses give a message of encouragement to all believers of all ages that only in God and His Son, Jesus, do we find meaning and purpose for life.

### **Someone who can open the sealed book (vv. 5-7)**

John's lament is eased by the announcement that "the lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David," can open the scroll. These two terms are a reminder of the victory of Jesus as a conquering Messiah. The word "hath prevailed" (KJV) is translated "overcome" in the NASV. At the cross Jesus overcame Satan, sin, and death.

But when John looked for the lion, he saw a lamb, (v. 6). The conquering Messiah had suffered

as a lamb. This is a common word in the New Testament to describe Jesus. This Lamb had been slain, yet it was very much alive. This lion/lamb had seven horns — complete power; seven eyes — complete vision; seven spirits of God — sent forth into all the world. Let us remember the number seven is a number that symbolizes fullness or completeness. The work of the Holy Spirit, the ministry of Jesus, and the divine plan

**Basic Passage:  
Revelation 5**

of the Heavenly Father are as one. The relationship between them is inseparable, and in their purpose there is absolute unity.

### **The response to the Lamb who can open the scroll (vv. 8-14)**

All of heaven breaks out in a hymn of praise — the four "living

creatures" (NASV), the 24 elders, and myriads of myriads (NASV) of angels. The word myriad means beyond number. To this large chorus is added the voice of creation (v. 13).

This heavenly chorus sings a new song (vv. 9, 13.) This is a marvelous message of encouragement to Christians during a time of persecution. It is a reminder that God is sovereign, Jesus is the Savior, and all who believe in Him will share in His ultimate, final victory.

Let's lift our voices in praise and adoration. The lion/lamb purchased our salvation and promised to come again and gather together all those who believe in Jesus. Let us join this heavenly chorus and lift our voices in hymns of praise. But let us also praise Him in the way we live. □

## ■ the associations

■ **The Hamilton County Association** Friendship International House completed a decade of ministry to international college students this month. The ministry was begun in Chattanooga by First Church, Hixson, member Wanda Hilmer, and University of Tennessee, Chattanooga, Baptist Student Union Director Jim Moore. During the past ten years, the ministry has touched 164 students from 37 countries representing 130 colleges and universities.

## ■ the leaders

■ **Oaklands Church**, Murfreesboro, formerly Maney Avenue Church, called **Terry Frederick** as pastor.

■ **Paul Woodford** will retire from the pastorate of First Church, Lewisburg, Jan. 9. He will be honored at a reception Jan. 3.

■ **Terry Bright** is the new pastor of Salem Springs Church, Murfreesboro.

■ Members of Hickory Grove Church, Trenton, welcomed **Dale True** as their new pastor Dec. 13.

■ **Wyndal Walker** is serving as interim pastor of Oakwood Church, Milan.

■ Mouth of Richland Church, Blaine, called **James Baumgardner** as pastor.

■ **Rock Springs Church**, Greenbrier, called **James Nash** as music director. He recently retired from the Baptist Sunday School Board where he was employed for 26 years.

## ■ Baptist Student

■ **Rick Baggett** is the new volunteer BSU director at **Motlow State Community College**, Fayetteville. **Tracie Widner** is BSU president.

## ■ the churches

■ The international department at **Nashville's Brook Hollow Church**, consisting of people from ten countries, presented the Christmas program "Joy to the World" Dec. 13.

■ The **John Cring Evangelistic Team** will lead revival Jan. 8-10 at **New Hope Church**, Crossville.

■ Members of **Inglewood Church**, Nashville, presented "A Christmas Celebration" Dec.

13. The program, directed by **Michael Thornton**, included poetry and music.

## ■ the work

■ The congregation of **First Church, St. Joseph**, hosted the first Love Feast on Nov. 25. The Thanksgiving Love Feast is offered free of charge to the homeless, economically disadvantaged, or unemployed.

■ **Missionaries to Brazil Scott and Joyce Pittman** have completed language study and arrived on the field to begin their first term of service. The Memphis natives may be addressed at **Rua Fortunato Abreer Gagno**, 150 Jardin Camburi, 29.090-200 Victoria, ES, Brazil. She is the former **Joyce Herrington**.

■ **Robert and Cindy Woodham**, missionaries to the Philippines, are in the states at 2103 Hampton Avenue, Nashville, Tenn., 37215. He is a native of South Carolina and she is from Missouri.

■ **Tennessee natives Samuel and Connie Stallings**, also missionaries to the Philippines, are on the field. Write to them at P. O. Box 8000, Koronadal, Marbel, S. Cotabato 9506, Philippines. He is from

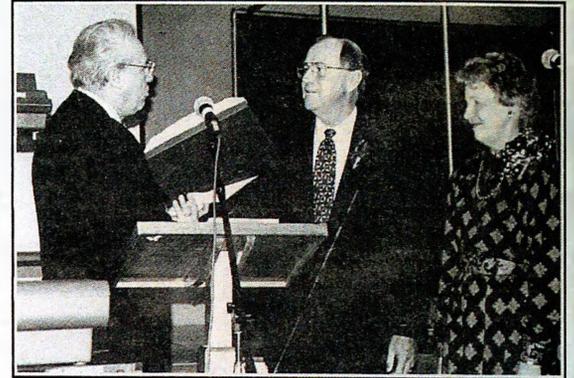
Bolivar and she is the former **Connie Davis** of Covington. They were appointed by the Foreign Mission Board in 1981.

## ■ the people

■ **Campbell Cload and Larry Compton** were ordained to the deacon ministry of **New Lebanon Church**, Greeneville, Dec. 13. **Holston Association Director of Missions Tal Thompson** delivered the ordination message.

■ **Red Bank Church**, Chattanooga, recently ordained several people to the deacon ministry. Those ordained were **Bob Bass, Brent Johnson, Bob Rock, Barry Steelman, M. J. Griffin, Marty Lasley, Michael Pare, Clarence Shattuck, Bill Youngblood, and Vernon Boies**.

■ **Jake Glaze and Jack Erwin** were recently ordained as deacons at **Union McMinn Church**, Niota.



**AWARD RECIPIENT** — **Bill Young**, retired manager of the preschool children's section in the Sunday School Board's discipleship and family development division and member of First Church, Nashville, received the 1992 Friend of Discipleship Training Award from **Roy Edgemon**, division director. Pictured with Young is his wife, **Mary Todd Young**. — Photo by **Linda Lawson**

# Tennessee Sampler ■ views, insights

## Christmas Spirit

**Bill Smith**, director of missions  
Western District Association

I was in a store a few days ago and overheard a person remark, "Oh, I will be glad when Christmas is over, I am exhausted." The Christmas season, for all the extra work and strenuous effort it involves, should be for every one the happiest and most joyful of all holiday periods. Exhausting as it is, the Christmas season is endowed with spiritual values that come at no other time in the year. Christmas creates a fraternal inspiration that makes kindness the dominating note in all human expressions.

When I think about human expressions, I am reminded of the meditation written by **E. C. Baird** entitled, "The Christmas Spirit!"

I am the Christmas Spirit!

I enter the home of poverty, causing pale-faced children to open their eyes wide in pleased wonder.

I cause the miser's clutched hand to relax, and thus paint a bright spot on his soul.

I cause the aged to renew their youth and to laugh in the old, glad way.

I keep romance alive in the heart of childhood, and brighten sleep with dreams woven of magic.

I cause eager feet to climb dark stairways with filled bas-

kets, leaving behind hearts amazed at the goodness of the world.

I cause the prodigal to pause a moment on his wild, wasteful way, and send to anxious love some little token that releases glad tears — tears which wash away the hard lines of sorrow.

I enter dark prison cells, reminding scarred manhood of what might have been, and pointing forward to good days yet to come.

I come softly into the still white home of pain, and lips that are too weak to speak just tremble in silent, eloquent gratitude.

In a thousand ways I cause the weary world to look up into the face of God, and for a little moment forget the things that are small and wretched.

I am the Christmas Spirit! □

## The Christmas season

**Jim Freedman**, executive director  
Nashville Association

The Christmas season is my favorite time of the year! I enjoy everything that is a part of the celebration of the birth of the Christ child. I love to decorate our home for the holidays. Some of our Christmas decorations we have had for the 27 Christmases we have spent as husband and wife. Others we have purchased down through the years. One of our customs is to buy an ornament from each place that we

visit on vacation.

Again this year, as we decorate our tree, we will lovingly unpack the ornaments and remember where we were and what we were enjoying in a special part of the world when we found that particular ornament! Then, we have the usual collection of handmade ornaments that were created by our children during childhood days! We'll get out the collections of nativity sets, Santa Clauses, nutcrackers, and toy drums and find just the right place for each one as we celebrate our first Christmas in Middle Tennessee!

I love the music of the season! I listen to it in the car, at the office, and at home, and sing along with the familiar tunes. I look forward to worship services during December when we join our voices together to worship Christ the newborn king!

I love the food of the season! No doubt we'll all be a few pounds heavier when January rolls around, but isn't it delightful to bake those goodies and share them with friends!

I love the weather of the season! I look forward to building a roaring fire and sitting in front of it with a cup of hot chocolate in my hand. I am even hoping we have a White Christmas!

I even love the shopping mall at Christmas! I know it sounds crazy, but I love to shop for gifts for friends and loved ones and be a part of the jam of crowds in

the stores and in the malls! For me, that is a big part of the season!

Let us together worship and adore Christ the newborn King ... let's not miss a moment of the greatest celebration of all — the birth of a Savior! □

## The extra effort

**Steven Sherlin**, pastor  
Goodsprings Church, Etowah

It's hard to believe that Christmas is almost here, but with the arrival of December comes all the joy and anticipation of the holiday season. Christmas is a time of joy and rejoicing. It is that special time of year when we celebrate the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ; and it is during these exceptional days that we all become more keenly aware of the love of God for us. What a wonderful God we are privileged to serve! His love and grace is completely sufficient, and so abundant that it is available to all who will freely come to Him.

Having experienced such wonderful love and grace we are compelled to make an extra effort to share it with as many as will listen. Christmas affords us many unusual opportunities to do just that. During this time of year men become much more sensitive to one another and to the Word of God. There are many who have extreme need who will gladly give ear to

someone who is willing to show a little compassion toward them. Let me encourage you to be responsive to the needs of those you come in contact with. Perhaps just a kind word will open the door to a witness, which could lead to that person's salvation. □

## Anxious for nothing

**James Smith**, pastor  
Speedway Terrace Church, Memphis

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God," **Philippians 4:6**. Christians have more to be thankful for than anyone in the world. We should be thankful for physical life and all earthly benefits, and we should be just as thankful for eternal life and all heavenly benefits.

Paul said to be anxious for nothing. Literally, stop worrying about anything. Instead, we should pray about everything and be thankful in everything. We are not objects of luck nor victims of circumstances. We are people of purpose. God is working all things for our good and his glory (**Romans 8:28**).

Remember in prayer the needs of the church body and community. Pray for some lost person to be saved this week. Pray about the **Lottie Moon Foreign Missions Offering**. □