

■ **this week's news**

global —

■ A Vatican ambassador should be denied, agree leaders of Christian Life Commission and National Association of Evangelicals. — See page 2

national —

■ For every church start, two churches close — Home Mission Board study. — See page 5.

state —

■ Leonard Markham, Tennessee Baptist Convention president, shares hope for new year. — See page 2

■ Jesse James (no relation to outlaw of the same name) mobilizes missions volunteers for Hurricane Andrew victims. — See page 3

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Sullivan, Strack headline evangelism conference

The 1993 State Evangelism Conference will be held Jan. 18-19 at Belmont Heights Church, Nashville.

Theme of the two-day meeting is "Equipping Believers: Share the Gospel."

The meeting begins Monday at 2 p.m. The opening message will be delivered by Leonard Markham, pastor of Bluegrass Church, Hendersonville, and president of the Tennessee Baptist Convention. Other messages will be brought by Keith Walker of the Home Mission Board and Dallas evangelist Jay Strack.

The Monday evening session convenes at 7. Messages will be delivered by Morris Chapman, president of the Southern Baptist Executive Committee, and William Shaw, pastor of White Rock Church, Philadelphia, Pa.

On Tuesday, the conference begins at 9:30 a.m. In addition to another message from Shaw, James Porch, executive



CHAPMAN



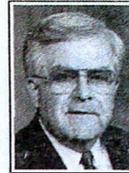
LINGINFELTER



MARKHAM



MICHEL



PORCH



SHAW

director of the TBC, and Henry Linginfelter, president of the Tennessee Fellowship of Vocational Evangelists, will speak.

The Tuesday afternoon session, beginning at 2, features Strack and Perry "Red" Michel, pastor of the host church, Belmont Heights.

Tuesday night's session is designated as "Laymen's Night." A testimony will be given by Lonnie Robinson Jr. of Brownsville. Messages will be given by Strack and Shaw.

John Sullivan, executive director of the Florida Baptist Convention, will give four theme interpretations. Special music will be presented by

Sylvia Lowry of Nashville and the Heightsmen.

A nursery will be provided during the sessions for babies and children up to five years of age. The nursery opens 15 minutes before each session and closes 15 minutes after each session.

Prior to the beginning of the Evangelism Conference on Monday, the Tennessee Fellowship of Vocational Evangelists will meet from 10 a.m. until noon in the main auditorium.



SULLIVAN



STRACK



WALKER

The group will present "old time revival preaching and singing," said Henry Linginfelter of Alcoa, conference president.

Leading the sessions will be J. Harold Smith, Newport; Harold Hunter, Nashville; and Billy Edmonds of Coalfield. □

Southern Baptists explore church growth in the '90s

By Millie Gill
For Baptist Press

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. — Change, survival and growth for churches in the '90s were topics addressed Dec. 14-15 at a South Central Models for Ministry Conference.

Central Church of North Little Rock, a church that has experienced numerical growth for 12 years, hosted the event sponsored by the Home Mission Board. Co-sponsors were North Pulaski Association and the Arkansas Baptist State Convention.

"Change and commitment" were the two needs sounded by speakers and seminar leaders for Southern Baptist churches to survive and grow in the '90s.

"How are you going to change when you have local church traditions?" asked Lyle Schaller, an author and church consultant, who was the conference's opening speaker, as well as a seminar leader.

"Change will come if you don't touch what is status quo," Schaller said. "You can begin a successful change that will lead to growth if you begin with something you are pretty

sure will not create opposition, such as the addition of either a Saturday evening or early Sunday morning worship service. However, don't overwhelm your congregation. Make your changes one at a time, giving them time to adjust.

"Patience will be your key to success," Schaller declared. "There are a lot of people who cannot immediately accept change. They have to experience it.

"You are in the business of influencing them. Even though there is no neutral approach to change, you can help them to reach out to a changing world through new approaches rather than letting them continue to say 'We've never done it that way before.'"

He told participants from Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Texas he had discovered churches, which are challenging people to be more than they thought they could be, that are seeing rapid growth and change.

"You know that the Bible tells us that Jesus got a dozen together and turned the work over to them," Schaller said. "You, as pastors, are in the people transformation busi-

ness. Call your members to a deeper commitment, challenge them to doing the Father's business, and it will bring remarkable results."

He also pointed out churches, if they truly want to reach people, must recognize the need to reach out beyond the church campus with Bible studies or with classes designed to meet a variety of needs.

"In today's world more adults are engaged in the weekly study of the Scriptures than ever before," Schaller

said. "But these classes are not meeting on Sunday."

Harold T. Bryson, professor of preaching and chairman of pastoral ministries at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, led seminars on leadership dynamics needed for today's "Global Village."

Bryson said areas where churches can change include: moving away from structuralism; becoming more people centered; moving away from programs to ministries, and becoming aware of the surrounding culture. □

December gifts boost CP total

One of the best December totals on record will enable the Tennessee Baptist Convention to begin 1993 on a positive Cooperative Program position.

December CP gifts from the churches totaled \$2,313,910, almost \$580,000 more than December 1991.

The good December lifted the budget for the first two months to \$3,604,275. That figure is \$296,665.46 better than last year's budget.

"This tremendous giving

of Tennessee Baptists again shows our disciplined commitment through the Cooperative Program," said James Porch, TBC executive director/treasurer.

"We are very thankful to God we can begin 1993 on such a positive note," he added.

Though the TBC is still 20.37 percent under budget needs, CP giving is 8.97 better than 1991. □

CLC, NAE seek to form coalition on Vatican ties

By Tom Strobe
For Baptist Press

about your newsjournal

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WASHINGTON — The Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission and the National Association of Evangelicals are attempting to re-establish a coalition with the hope of convincing President-elect Bill Clinton to end the United States diplomatic relationship with the Vatican.

Richard Land, the CLC's executive director, and Robert Dugan, director of NAE's office of public affairs, sent a Dec. 23 letter to officials with 11 organizations asking them to join together to call for Clinton to refuse to appoint an ambassador to the Vatican because it is a violation of the separation of church and state.

In the letter, they describe this effort as possibly a "final opportunity to reverse a policy that cannot be reconciled with the spirit or letter of the Constitution. If the same Pro-

testant coalition which opposed President Reagan's appointment of an ambassador to the Vatican in 1984 can be resurrected, we believe that the President-elect can be convinced to rescind the policy."

Land and Dugan say they are optimistic for two reasons. "First, the policy is only eight years old," the letter says.

"Second, as a Southern Baptist, President-elect Clinton has a better understanding of proper church-state separation, at least as it pertains to this policy, than did Presidents Reagan and Bush."

While the organizations may not agree on other religious liberty issues, Land and Dugan say, "we all agree that the practice of appointing an ambassador to the Vatican is a clear violation of the First Amendment and is bad public policy."

The letter was sent to James Dunn, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs,

as well as officials with the American Baptist Churches, Americans United for Separation of Church and State, Church of the Brethren, National Baptist Convention of America, National Baptist Convention, USA, National Council of Churches, Presbyterian Church (USA), Progressive National Baptist Convention, Seventh-day Adventist Church, and Unitarian Universalist Association.

The proposed coalition letter the officials are asked to endorse requests Clinton to take

a stand similar to that of former President John Kennedy, who said during the 1960 campaign appointing an ambassador to the Vatican would be unconstitutional.

In a Dec. 2 letter, the CLC's Land asked Clinton to reverse a "wrong done" by President Reagan. Since then, the NAE's Dugan and Barry Lynn, new executive director of Americans United, also have written Clinton asking him to sever diplomatic ties with the Vatican. □

Nine Southern Seminary students protest actions, activities of trustees

Baptist Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — Nine student leaders have issued an open letter to trustees of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary protesting "excessive expenditures" on, and "the secretive nature" of, trustee meetings "and the continual upheaval caused by such actions."

The president and two vice presidents of the seminary's Student Government Association were among signers of the Dec. 17 letter, which was faxed to news media.

The letter was issued two days after a closed meeting in Atlanta in which seminary trustees rejected a proposal to pay tenured ethics professor Paul Simmons \$362,000 to leave the faculty.

Simmons has come under

fire for his support of abortion rights and his views on homosexuality.

Trustee chairman Wayne Allen, a Cordova, pastor, told Baptist Press he intends to issue a response to the students' letter after the Christmas holidays and after consulting with the seminary's administration.

"It's regrettable that the students would seek to communicate by means of public correspondence," Allen said. "I had journalists contacting me for a response before I ever received the letter."

"The press is not the best means, nor the most Christian means, of communicating. I do plan to respond personally to the students who have expressed concern," the trustees chairman said. □

New SS writers begin units

Three new writers are writing Sunday School lessons for the second quarter, beginning with Jan. 10. All are pastors.



BRADSHAW



EVERETT



WOLFE

Toby M. Everett, Walker Memorial Church, Franklin, is preparing the Life and Work series lessons. He is a Starkville, Miss., native.

Everett is a graduate of Mississippi College and attended Southern Seminary, Louisville, Ky., and Memphis State University. He is married to the former Janet Reeves of Oloh, Miss. They have two sons.

A native of Memphis, Bill Wolfe, of First Church, Counce, is writing the Bible Book series.

He is a graduate of Mid-South Bible College (now Crichton College), Memphis. Wolfe has been a Tennessee Baptist pastor for 18 years and was in Mississippi for seven years.

He previously was pastor of First Church, Obion, and Cottonwood Church, Ridgley. His wife is the former Tanna Strickland of Memphis.

Terry D. Bradshaw, Zion Hill Church, Sevierville, is a graduate of Union University. He attended Mid-America Seminary, Memphis, and Southern Seminary. He is writing the Life and Work lessons.

He has served several other Tennessee Baptist church previously.

Leonard Markham

TBC president sends New Year's message

About this time each year I take an old, worn Christmas card out of my desk drawer to read. It only cost the giver 40 cents and a few pennies for tax. The card reads, "You're more than just a pastor to the people you lead. You're a source of inspiration. You're a help to those in need. And this greeting comes at Christmas with the hope that the good you do will return to you in blessings in the years ahead of you!" Then he went on to conclude, "You do all these things and more."

The young man who gave me the card was a member of the church I pastored and had felt called of God to be a minister. He was planning to attend one of our Baptist colleges to prepare for a church vocation. He was driving to work when the accident occurred and was killed instantly. I have ministered to his parents through the years and I think of him

often, particularly at Christmas time.

He calls to me from the past to remind me of what is important in life — family and friends. The image of his face is a reminder of the shortness and fragileness of living. His personal commitment to our Lord is a summon for me to preach with the urgency of a decision for Christ. Being with his family has called me to a ministry of comfort and hope. I seldom think of the young man that I don't think of the words of Jesus when he said, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die" (John 11:25-26).

My desire for our convention this year is that God will call each of us back to our authentic ministry — a ministry modeled after the ministry of Jesus

Christ; a ministry characterized by compassion, love, forgiveness, healing, humility, and service; a ministry which knows that whoever is president of the Tennessee Baptist Convention or whoever is serving on the Executive Board is small potatoes compared to evangelizing, ministering, encouraging, and giving comfort, hope, and life in Jesus Christ.

If all of us, laity and clergy, recommit ourselves to the one "essential" ministry, "the ministry which the Lord Jesus opened in Galilee after John the Baptist had been put in prison, the ministry he carried on in Galilee and Judea, the ministry which he continues to this day in and through the church," we could revolutionize our state for our Master. Would you join me in such an endeavor? □

Remembering hurricane victims

By Connie Davis
Baptist and Reflector

Jesse James of Watauga Association is no outlaw. And he prefers to travel south rather than west.

James, volunteerism director for the association, led 11 volunteers in December and 27 in October to help victims of Hurricane Andrew in Florida.

He usually travels further south — to Venezuela eight times since 1988 when James first participated in the Tennessee/Venezuela Partnership. Now he uses all of his vacation from his employer, Eastman Kodak Company, for missions trips, reported Bob Polk, Watauga's director of missions.

Just as in Venezuela, he found poverty and spiritual awareness, which in Florida stemmed from the traumas suffered. James noted the Florida Baptist Convention's Brotherhood Department hopes to lead the re-roofing of 350 houses by spring. James hopes to lead another group to Florida before he returns to Venezuela in March.

His ministry style — to get involved in people's lives — is clear. He and his family are currently hosting three guests from Venezuela in their home. He made additional friends in Florida.

One relationship formed by James and the team while in Florida was a natural. During the October trip the team learned a former East Tennesseean needed their help. The granddaughter of a member of Grace Church, Elizabethton, lived in Homestead, which had

suffered the brunt of the storm. Co-coordinator of the trips, Paul Bellamy, was a member of Grace Church.

James reported the woman was trying to live in her home without electricity or potable water. The doors were so insecure a looter had tried to break in and the damaged roof was covered only with plastic, he added.

The team not only made repairs, but James checked on her during the December trip. She visited with the team and thanked them, said James.

Another woman they assisted was the victim not only of the storm, but also of swindlers. Construction workers had offered to repair the home of the elderly woman and didn't

The doors (of the house) were so insecure a looter had tried to break in and the damaged roof was covered only with plastic. — James

return when she advanced them money for materials, noted James. Of course, the team did the repairs without charge, he added.

A family of eight who was living in a small camper was

helped. Their home was unlivable and the company holding the insurance on it had closed. They didn't have the funds for repair, said James.

The Tennesseans repaired the roof of the house. And when they found out the family's 12-year-old boy missed a backyard in which to play more than anything else lost, the team cleared it, reported James.

God not only led the team, but worked blessings out of tragedy, described James. Glendale Church, located in south Miami, was planning to pay for the removal of one of its buildings before it was destroyed by the storm. James added the demolition would have been expensive.

The efforts, coordinated through the Tennessee and Florida Baptist conventions, allowed the October team to work directly with other Tennessee Brotherhood Department volunteers coordinated that week by volunteer Curtis Fowler of Knoxville. Tennessee Brotherhood members maintained a base of operation in south Florida through October.

The source of funding for the Watauga teams was churches and the association, which budgets \$3000 annually for such work, reported Polk.

Sources of motivation are personal. For James, one aspect of his motivation is selfish. The relationships formed on missions trips, the unity experienced, and the miracles viewed add up to spiritual help for him, described James. "It's a little bit of what heaven's going to be like."

Volunteers from the following churches in Watauga participated — Grace, Elizabethton; Union, Hampton; Zion, Elizabethton; Nelson Chapel, Mountain City; First, Mountain City; Siam, Elizabethton; East Side, Elizabethton; Oak Street, Elizabethton; and Shady Valley, Shady Valley.

From Holston Valley Association were members from Hulon Avenue, Erwin. □

First pastor leads revival — 42 years later

For Baptist and Reflector

In 1950 members of Laager Mission in Grundy County called a young college student, Tommy Hight, to be their pastor. Hight set up a brush arbor on the current church property and invited Allen Buehler,

mission he was astonished. Webster knew Hight as a professor at Mid-America Seminary, Memphis, where he recently graduated. He never knew about Hight's connection with the Laager mission.

The church decided to celebrate a Founder's Day in the fall to be followed by a week of revival. Hight was asked to preach the revival and Buehler was asked to preach during the Founder's Day celebration. The church had 153 people in attendance that day, and the revival which followed saw ten people saved and two people join by letter.

"There were many other decisions made for Christ that week," Webster said, noting, "It is wonderful to see how God can work to bring things full circle after 42 years."

Webster pointed out a church does not have to be 100 years old to have a rich heritage. "Sadly, churches which are about 40 or 50 years old watch many of their original members pass away before looking back at their history. I did not want that to happen at First Church, Gruetli-Laager," Webster said.

Webster, who is the grandson of Vernon Webster, retired director of missions of Sequatchie Valley Association, is grateful for the church's roots.

"If it were not for men like Dr. Hight who believed in planting new churches, a convention which put down money to start the process, faithful people who saw the need for a church and were willing to sponsor it, and the Holy Spirit leading and guiding, there would not have been a First Baptist Church in Gruetli-Laager.

"We are grateful to be a part of Tennessee's Southern Baptist churches, all with equally exciting beginnings and histories," Webster said. □



FORTY-TWO YEARS LATER, Kenneth Webster, pastor of First Church, Gruetli-Laager, had Tommy Hight, who was pastor of the church when it was organized as Laager Mission, return to lead revival at the mission he began.

now of Lebanon, to be guest evangelist.

Revival came to many people on top of the Cumberland Mountain Range as people were saved and many joined the new mission, which has been given a grant from the Tennessee Baptist Convention. The mission was sponsored by Shell's Ford Church, McMinnville. It was the first church in the area.

Hight left the mission about a year later to attend seminary. The mission joined Sequatchie Valley Association in 1955 and lost all contact with Hight — until this year.

When Kenneth Webster, pastor of the former Laager Mission, now First Church, Gruetli-Laager, learned Hight was the first pastor of the mis-

Maryville RA recovering after fall doing missions

Chris Robinson, a Royal Ambassador at Memorial Church, Maryville, is recovering following a serious injury sustained while helping load toys for needy children in Kentucky in December.

Since summer, Robinson, along with his brother, Jason, father, Howard, and other church members had repaired bicycles and other toys and collected coats and other items as an RA mission project.

The toys were for the Freida Harris Baptist Center in Lookout, Ky., a remote area about one hour's drive from Pikeville in eastern Kentucky.

Robinson fell coming down a slick ramp after loading a bicycle and hit his head. The fall resulted in a blood clot on the outside of his brain.

He is at home recovering after emergency surgery was performed to remove the clot.

This was the second year Robinson had assisted in helping needy children in Kentucky, a family member reported.

Despite the accident, 54 bicycles, numerous scooters and tricycles, coats, and other gifts were delivered to Kentucky by church members. □

Training offered on New Age Movement

The teachings of the Church Universal and Triumphant, the Harmonic Convergence, Unity School of Christianity, and personalities like Shirley MacLaine — all promoting the New Age Movement — will be covered in training offered by the Tennessee Baptist Convention, reported Terry Sharp, Missions Department.

The training, Jan. 28-29, will be held at Englewood Church, Jackson, and is open to anyone.

Participants completing all sessions will be certified as a Home Mission Board Interfaith Witness Associate or trainer in the area of the New Age Movement.

The sessions begin at 2 p.m. on Thursday and conclude at

3:30 p.m. on Friday. Sponsors, including the Home Mission Board and the TBC, provide materials and two meals. A \$10 registration fee is the only cost. Make reservations before Jan. 13 by writing or calling the TBC Missions Department, P.O. Box 728, Brentwood, Tenn. 37024, (615) 371-2032. □

■ about letters to the editor

- Make it concise, no more than 250 words. Letters may be edited for length.
- Name may be withheld for sufficient reason. Include address and phone number.
- Avoid personal attacks on the character or integrity of anyone.
- Send original copy. Form letters and "open" letters will not be published.
- Only one letter in a three-months period per writer will be published.
- If letter does not conform, it will be returned.
- Opinions and ideas expressed in letters are not necessarily shared by the *Baptist and Reflector* and its staff. □

Preachers needed

I am a Southern Baptist missionary with the Foreign Mission Board, serving in Honduras, Central America. I believe evangelism is the heart of missions and have a desire to win souls and to start missions and churches. If you are a pas-

tor, preacher, or evangelist of like mind, I need your help!

The need is for preachers from the United States to come to Honduras for preaching crusades and to live in a community with an interpreter and "bond" with the people as you teach, witness, and preach for an entire week.

If you are interested in participating in such a crusade, please write to me. We have a crusade scheduled for Dec. 6-12, 1993, and others in the making. It is urgent that I learn of your interest as soon as possible as there is a good deal of planning involved.

David Shofner
Apartado 373
San Pedro Sula
Honduras

Point missed

In regard to Mary Jane Allen's letter "Wider Representation," I think she missed the point of the appointing of the special committee to study ways of how more ministers or laypersons can be included in our state work.

The church in which Ms. Allen is a member has four members on the state board or committees. There are hundreds of churches who have no one serving anywhere.

I hope the committee will prayerfully and intentionally consider a recommendation that will make our boards and committees more representative of more churches in the Tennessee Baptist Convention.

It is easy to say more people should be included. So, not by words but by practice. We should include more churches and their representatives in the Tennessee Baptist Convention, whether minister, lay members, male, or female. Hundreds of churches have never been asked to send one member to serve. Isn't it time to include all?

Don Long, pastor
Chamberlain Memorial Church
Chattanooga 37406

A new year

We have just come through the blessed season when we celebrate the Word of God becoming flesh to us, the incarnation (John 1:14). Perhaps as we begin the new year of 1993, it will be good to consider letting our words become flesh, our words to God and about God.

Our words of worship, words to God, need to become flesh. The comprehensive word for describing our response to God is "faith." When we want to know what persons believe, a biblical synonym for having faith, we usually pay attention to what they say. Jesus said, "Not everyone who says unto me 'Lord, Lord' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but those who do the will of the Father" (Matthew 7:21).

Isaiah saw true fasting to be feeding the hungry, hosting the stranger, clothing the naked (Isaiah 58:6-7). May not the same principle of incarnation be applied to other acts of worship? The ultimate act of spiritual worship is presenting our bodies as living sacrifices (Romans 12:1). That's incarnation!

Our words of witness, words about God, must become flesh. The ultimate act of witness is love. If God could not adequately express his word to us in spoken language but only in the costly language of human flesh, what makes us think we can?

W. Clyde Tilley, pastor
Eagle Creek Church
Holladay 38341

Feelings bared

Many special interest

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groups combined to defeat President George Bush's bid for re-election.

Perhaps, of equal importance to the SBC is what the CBF is doing to every agency and mission of the convention. Since losing the long sustained control — some 13 years ago — to the more conservative (inerrancy) leadership a highly political, activist, dispirited, disgruntled, disruptive, dissident, minority group has spared no available means to discredit and embarrass the majority SBC membership.

On the local level we've seen persuasion, deception, and over emphasized tactics to switch many from the Cooperative to the "so-called" CBF equivalent funding.

I have not cast my vote concerning Dr. Parks. I do heartily concur with the viewpoints of Drs. Ron Phillips and Morris Chapman — and I further believe it's past due time for the CBF to separate or divorce itself from the SBC Convention. They can do their thing their way.

We can ill afford to return to liberalism of the seventies.

W. T. Barner
Memphis 38111

Local pastors praised

I am troubled by letters condemning people critical of Southern Baptist Convention leadership.

I have been a Southern Baptist for 46 years and most of that time I have been blessed with a godly pastor, who graduated from one of our "liberal" seminaries before the "cleansing purges." These pastors faithfully preached the Word and ministered to their congregations as good shepherds. They saw homosexuality and abortion as sin and they knew most of their flock did also. They did not spend undue time preaching on these subjects, but dealt with more important issues. No use singing to the choir.

Not once have I seen one of these men turn off anyone's microphone at a business meeting, hold secret meetings, fire staff members that disagreed with them, and replace them with people of doubtful qualifications at exorbitant salaries. These local church pastors are the real soldiers of the cross, not the leaders of the Southern Baptist Convention.

I am elated about what I read about the new TBC president. However, I believe we are blessed with a local church pastor who is willing to give time to a larger group of Baptists, but will keep his local church pastor's heart. I agree with him, we should make a circle wide enough to include those who would exclude us.

A. C. Lock Jr.
Memphis 38127

Pratts selected for HMB service

ATLANTA — Knoxville native Julie Pratt was appointed to mission service by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board in December.

Pratt attended Carson-Newman College in Jefferson City. She will leave a position in accounting at a Fort Worth, Texas, business to work in family and church service in Warner Robbins, Ga.

Pratt will serve with her husband, Jeff, who will be a church planter strategist.

The Pratts have two children. □



PRATTS

Daily prayer requests for Chile/Tennessee Partnership

January -

- 6 — Pray for unity throughout the meetings of the National Baptist Convention of Chile, and WMU during these days. WMU Recording secretary Faye Cox of Knoxville is representing Tennessee Baptists at the convention in Concepcion. Also, for those who are working with MKs during the convention: Angela Watson, Franklin; Marsha Crosswhite, Carson-Newman; Lisa McCarter, Knoxville; and Rachel Ownby, S. Pittsburg.
- 7 — Pray for missionary Karen Wright whose plans to leave the field have changed and for her parents' health.
- 8 — Praise the Lord for missionaries Mary and Steve Burke and Carol and Hawk Hawkins who are expecting babies.
- 9 — Pray for Berta Lagos who recently made a profession of faith.
- 10 — Pray for these who have just arrived in Temuco to lead VBS with MKs during the mission meeting: Ron Mouser, Ed Jenkins, Carla Hawkins, Leigh Ayn Kennard, Roger Underwood, Doris Triplett, and Walter and Linda Taylor, all from Knoxville. Also pray for the 93 missionaries attending the semi-annual mission meeting.
- 11 — Pray for Knoxvillians Doris June Large and Alberta McCroskey as they serve at the girl's home in Temuco.
- 12 — Pray birthday blessings for missionary Lucinda Lyons as she and her family leave Chile.
- 13 — Missionary Lee Walker Jr., an educator, is celebrating a birthday today.



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Tough, clean, committed: challenge for 1993

What do we expect for this new page in the great book of life, this 1993?

How do we plan to use the year, or better still, what does God plan for it?

Perhaps we should look to some Baptist brothers and sisters as we toe the mark on a 365-day marathon.

Last October, the Scottish Baptist Union met in Edinburgh. From news accounts the messengers were apprehensive about several items, some which they could not control.

The Union's leader, Peter Barber, came through with a challenge which is fitting for all Baptists, indeed all Christians.

"The question has to be asked," he said, "whether as Christians we are developing a Christianity that is tough enough, clean enough, and committed enough to withstand the onslaught."

Sin, of course, is responsible for much of the "onslaught" of which Barber referred. Its results face all Christians in all lands. He mentioned some of the "various problems of contemporary life" which are familiar to us.

Tennessee Baptists evidently have much in common with Scottish Baptists. We face the worldly allure of sin, and its increasingly swift encroachment on wholesome and pure values.

The easier choice would be to cloak ourselves in pious pretense and enjoy life inside the walls of our churches. We could ignore the message of God, keeping our

noses in the Bible without living that message. In Robert Louis Stevenson's book about pirates and treasure, he has Long John Silver to proclaim, "Sometimes them what quotes the Bible has less of it in their hearts than them what don't."

Quite so.

What, then, are we to do about problems of 1993? Look with me again at Peter Barber's challenge. Tennessee Baptists must (that's an imperative) develop Christian strategy that is tough enough, clean enough, and committed enough for today.

That kind of strategy is not new, though it might not classify as well-used. It doesn't need to be improved. It is simple, though tough to live by.

It is authentic, and you might call it a faith of the championship variety. It is a faith that requires each of us to spend time with the Maker of time, to latch on to his message by studying his word and living it out in commonplace and extraordinary ministries.

That kind of strategy developed the ministry of Christ, his first disciples, Paul, and all who followed the "rules" It works. It is successful when applied to any problem, to any need, to any decision, to any difficulty. But is successful only as long as it is kept tough, clean, and expresses the commitment evidenced in the life and death of Christ Jesus.

There is no second best. All else is pitiful, worthless, weak, anemic, fit for no good work.

In this new year, pastors and laity alike are challenged by our Lord. A news story tells us that Americans now have the lowest level of confidence in the clergy than ever before. Moral pollution is rising on all sides. Honesty in the marketplace and in politics is ebbing.

But the challenge of Christian strategy is not to exclude the outsiders, the outcast, but to minister with toughness, pure motive, and commitment that surpasses that which is modeled by the world.

We will face a stern challenge in the political arena for gambling and a lottery. Get ready for it, be committed.

The Home Mission Board says one church plant fails for each two that we start. Get ready to change that, be committed. Like a vaccination against disease, church starts must have the strategy that breaks tradition.

We have a new national government. Help our leadership by praying for them, and by being tough, clean, committed. We cannot assume the best (or worst) will happen. We are the government; be strong in the Lord.

We must have better communication among us. We must pray and seek spiritual renewal. We must take the Gospel to all people. Our leaders must lead by including all of us. We must worship and not entertain.

Finally, brothers and sisters, be strong, have courage, live the faith that's in you. □

■ one word more

By Wm. Fletcher Allen editor

Strike a spark

What do you think of when you realize that another year is slipping below the horizon of time, and a new year is at hand?

If you've waited until now to ponder that answer, you've already wasted some hours and missed some blessings.

Why are calendars a hot item as Christmas gifts? Is it because we like the photos or the message?

Of course photos or messages enhance the calendar, but we like calendars, most likely, because we can see the days of the months, and the layout of all the Mondays, Sundays, Wednesdays.

By looking at the calendar we see at a glance when the first and last days are, when birthdays arrive, and other significant days.

We know when holidays are scheduled and when it's payday.



ALLEN

To make it more convenient, we can look at our watches and learn all the information carried by the calendar.

Starting the new year with a new page is traditional, but not realistic. We cannot just wipe the slate clean. Days of our lives and the order of business are not to be swept aside by flipping a page on the calendar. Think about it.

We should clear up all the points left hanging as we recover from Christmas. The list might be long and some of the work must necessarily be transferred from yesterday until today, even if we get into a new month and a new year.

Claim a motto, make a covenant, establish better relationships, sing and whistle more, touch others, strike a spark of compassion, tell someone you love them, finish the job that you began in December.

So what if you didn't complete the work last month. You've a new page now; don't let the name bewilder you.

Start your new year with good prayer and study habits. Pray with a purpose. Study the Bible as you pray. The new year is here. Seize it! □

SBC loses one church for every two starts

By David Winfrey
For Baptist Press

ATLANTA —For every two churches started in the Southern Baptist Convention, another disbands, reverts to mission status or for some other reason ceases to be a church, according to a study by the Home Mission Board.

"We have to start 2.2 churches to achieve a net gain of one," said Richie Stanley, author of the study and HMB associate director of planning and services research.

The finding is significant to Southern Baptists' Bold Mission Thrust goal of 50,000 churches and church-type missions by the year 2000, said Larry Lewis, HMB president.

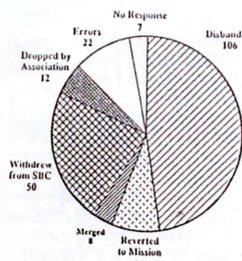
"If we could close that back door, we could take a giant step toward reaching our goal," he said.

The study found Southern Baptists averaged 430 church starts annually during the last 19 years. At the same time, an average 233 churches were removed from association rolls each year for a net annual gain of 197.

"We have to take two steps forward because we're taking one step back," Stanley said.

For insight into what happens to these churches, Stanley studied the 223 churches removed in 1989 from the SBC list of churches, as kept by the Baptist Sunday School Board.

Associational directors of 223 SBC Churches Dropped From Association Rolls in 1988-89



missions reported 132 ceased to exist as churches. Another 62 still existed, but as non-Southern Baptist churches. Twenty-two were misreported, directors of missions claimed. No responses were received in seven cases.

Of those that ceased being a

church, 106 disbanded, 18 reverted to mission status and eight merged with other congregations.

Dwindling membership was cited by directors of missions as the greatest cause for churches that disbanded, reverted or merged, the report states.

Problems with the pastor, lack of lay leadership, and financial difficulties were each cited by directors of missions in at least 30 percent of the cases.

While some rural areas may no longer have the population to support several churches, Lewis said he fears many of the disbanded churches were in urban areas "where the community has changed but the congregation has not changed to effectively minister to and reach the community."

Churches willing to integrate their congregation or support multiple congregations in one building could continue to be viable, he said. Of the 62 congregations that remained churches but withdrew from the convention, the church initiated the withdrawal in 50 cases and the association initiated action in 12 cases. □

■ just for today

By Fred Wood pastor emeritus

Start with a smile -

A publisher once sent one of his authors a gold watch for Christmas. The recipient wrote, "Thanks, — for the watch, but it doesn't go." The donor replied, "I guess it takes after your last book. It's not going either."

Take this truth with you -

Do you have some days trouble getting started? When you wake up, get up! That's the first secret. It's mind over mattress! Force yourself to do something you have been putting off — the more unpleasant, the better! Now go to it or as we say often, "Get going." God will be with you.

Memorize this Scripture -

"Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward." (Exodus 14:15).

Pray this prayer -

Lord, help me to do today that unpleasant task I have been putting off for a long time. Give me the strength to grit my teeth, clench my fists and do it! □

CLC counsel resigns ABA over its pro-abortion stance

Baptist Press

WASHINGTON — The general counsel of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission recently resigned as a member of the American Bar Association in protest of an abortion rights resolution adopted by the ABA in August.

The Christian Life Commission "cannot in good conscience pay dues to the ABA to help fund its advocacy in public policy against values which

we hold most dear," Michael Whitehead said in a letter informing the ABA of his resignation. "We will let Southern Baptists know of our decision, and we expect that many lawyers in SBC churches and other churches will decide to follow the same course."

Just short of 3500 members had left the ABA because of the resolution as of Dec. 1, a spokesperson for the largest lawyer organization in the country said. The ABA had

more than 368,500 members at the end of September, the spokesperson said.

The ABA's assembly and house of delegates voted in August to support abortion rights. Incoming ABA president Michael McWilliams also said he would lobby for pas-

sage of the Freedom of Choice Act, an abortion rights bill in Congress.

While he has appreciated the organization's services in other areas, the ABA's action "forced my resignation," Whitehead said in his letter. He cited the Southern Baptist

Convention's adoption of anti-abortion resolutions at its annual meetings.

The CLC had "previously communicated to the ABA that the general counsel would remain a member of ABA so long as ABA maintained a neutral position," he said. □

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Babbie Mason

Dynamic five-time Dove nominee and noted Christian songwriter Babbie Mason will share her faith and love of God with conference attendees Feb. 26-27. Babbie will share selections from her latest album, *A World of Difference*.



Guest Speakers

Gigi Graham Tchividjian

Billy Graham's eldest daughter, Gigi looks at today's Christian families.

Marolyn Ford

Prolific speaker and inspiring author.

Jenny Tanner Nolen

Mixing testimonies of God's blessings with down-home humor.

Dorie Van Stone

Noted author and speaker who will share her story of triumph.

Darlene Waynick

An inspirational singer whose music has touched many.

Betty Baggott

Sharing a wide variety of topics of interest to today's Christian women and homemakers.

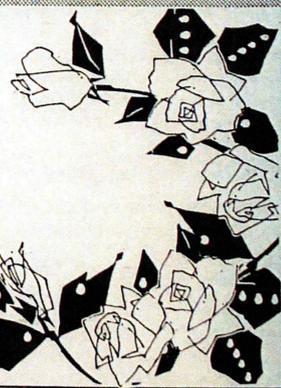


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■ Sunday School lesson commentary

□ Praise to the Lord of creation — Bible Book Series for January 10

By Bill Wolfe, pastor, First Church, Counce

The book of Psalms is a collection of sacred hymns, poems, and prayers from Israel's history. The Psalms, being inspired prayers and hymns for general worship, can be used by those who pass through experiences to those expressed by the writer.

This week's lesson deals with praise for the Lord of creation. Praise is adoration of God which should come naturally from the child of God.

In each of the focal passages, the writers express amazement at God's creation. They also take notice of the different aspects of his creation. If we approach creation with the attitude of praise, we too will be able to see God in it.

Psalm 8:1-9

This psalm is a solemn meditation on the glory and great-

ness of God. Notice this opening verse and the last verse (v. 9) acknowledge the same greatness and excellency of God's name. The psalmist gives evidence of this greatness.

The first thing he notes is **relationship** (v. 1). He speaks of "our Lord." When we serve Him as Lord we acknowledge it in every aspect of our life. His name is recognized above all others. It is excellent.

He then sees our **usefulness** (v. 2). We are the weakest of His creatures, yet He chose us to proclaim His name. The Scriptures teach us that it is through "the foolishness of preaching" that men are saved. We are the preachers.

Then he speaks of our **dominion** (vv. 3-9). The psalmist talks of the glory due

the Lord. Everything He made declares His glory. He chose man, weak, miserable, sinful, to have dominion. It was man He visited and to whom He became a friend. He took those made a little lower than the angels and crowned us with glory and honor.

Psalm 19:1-4

The psalmist begins this psalm with the same affirmation as in Psalm 8. He affirms that creation declares the glory of God! The key words in verse one are "declare" and "show". Simply put, the heavens are always showing the glory of God. The writer gives evidence of how the heavens do this.

First, it is regular or constant (vv. 2-3). By day the sky is characterized by sunlight and by night its darkness is penetrated by the light of the

moon and stars. Both serve as a reminder of His glory. These things declare His glory because both are the work of His hands.

Second, the message is for all (v. 3). As mankind reflects upon the vastness and beauties of heaven, it opens his mind to an awareness of God. It becomes a message heard "by being seen" for all (v. 4).

Basic Passage: Psalms 8; 19; 29; 139

Psalm 29:1-11

Psalm 29 is a hymn with three parts. First is the call to praise (vv. 1-2). Praise here is directed toward the Lord's name. It was a source of strength and victory to Israel. The assembly is told to worship the Lord.

Next is the praise of the Lord's voice (vv. 3-9). Seven times the Lord's voice is the central focus. The Lord is described not merely as a deity whose thunderous voice is heard, but as the One who is victorious over the chaotic scheme of things. The conclusion (vv. 10-11) reminds us that He is the One worthy of praise.

Psalm 139:13-16

In the continuation of praise to the Lord of creation, we see how wonderfully man is really made. David is sure that God perfectly knows him and all his ways. God made us and therefore knows us. We are His work. People still understand the uniqueness of human birth. David praises God for this. Have you? □

□ A call to holy living — Convention Uniform Series for January 10

By Terry Bradshaw, pastor, Zion Hill Church, Sevierville

Truth, what is it? For those who have been saved, we understand it to be Jesus Christ our Savior. We have been liberated from our sin and set upon a higher road. For those who have never personally experienced this truth, they look at us as strange when we speak of having an experience with Jesus.

They look for more than just words. They look at our lives! This is where our lesson picks up today. It is a call to holy living.

It is imperative, in this present age, that we not only possess the truth, but that we live the truth always and under all circumstances. Peter was well aware that Christianity did not exempt us from the hardships of everyday life.

There will be triumph and tragedy. But no matter what we may face, the grace of God is always there to help us if we are prepared to receive it and apply it to our circumstances.

God's grace, our hope

Peter shares with us in the background material (1 Peter 1:3-12) how God's grace and our acceptance of that grace has given to us a "lively hope" (v. 3). The word lively can be translated "living" and speaks to the quality of the hope possessed. A believer no longer has a dead hope, but rather one that lives, made alive by Jesus Christ.

It is only through accepting Christ as Savior can hope come alive. This hope helps us to see that we have a bright future.

In verse 4, Peter speaks of

an inheritance. He describes that inheritance as incorruptible (undecaying), undefiled (unsoiled), that fades not away, reserved in heaven for you. Reserved means to guard. Peter was saying, in essence, that God is standing guard over our future inheritance. Peter not only wanted them to understand they had a glorious future, but he wanted them to know that no matter their circumstance, they are "kept by the power of God."

God's grace, our strength

In leading up to the focal passage (1:13-25), Peter spoke of our wonderful inheritance for the future, and brings us back down to reality. At the time of Peter's writing, the Christian community was undergoing manifold (various,

v. 6) temptations and trials.

Grief and suffering had become very much a part of the Christian experience.

So, considering this fact, he offers some practical advice on how to prepare for such tribulations. We call it "holy living."

To access the full resources of God's grace for difficult circumstances, one must be willing to surrender all. This includes the trials and tribulations he/she may face. Peter, in verse 13, offers some advice: "gird up the loins of your mind." The picture painted here is one of the ancient orientals who would gather up their robes when in a hurry to go on a long journey. They would fasten these robes with a belt for unimpeded moving.

Peter was saying, prepare

your mind for holy living. He brings to light the truth found in Proverbs 23:7, "For as he thinks in his heart, so is he." Peter encourages them to "be sober and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ," (v. 13).

Basic Passage: 1 Peter 1:3-25

The sober mind is the controlled mind, refusing to be dominated by worry and fear. We are to place absolute confidence in the One who will come again. Victory comes with absolute trust in Christ in all the affairs of our lives. □

□ Trusting God's ways — Life and Work Series for January 10

By Toby Everett, pastor, Walker Memorial Church, Franklin

"God's ways are mysterious ways." How many times have you thought that or even expressed it in your own way?

This truth came to be real to me in the summer of 1969. It was during that summer I surrendered my life to the Gospel ministry. I had no doubt that God was calling me into the preaching ministry and began to prepare myself for that task. I had no idea that it would be 11 years and three staff positions before that calling would be realized in my own life.

There were many times that like Abram, I was not so sure that God had really spoken at all. We must learn to travel God's ways as Abram to fully understand how to discover them.

Exploring a trying time in Abram's life helps us see what happens when we trust God's way. The focal passage reveals four outcomes of trusting God's way.

Trusting God develops reassurance (ch. 15:1-5)

We saw in Genesis 14 that Abram had just come through a difficult war in which he did battle with Chedorlaomer. Possibly thinking about reprisal from the Valley Kings and confusion over the delay of birth of an heir, Abram sought God's reassurance. A word from God was needed. All he could see was a lot of questions with no apparent answers. In a vision, God spoke to Abram to calm his fears so he would know his confidence was not

misplaced. I remember leaving a teaching position to take on my first pastorate. God's reassuring voice came through my wife when she said, "Toby, I am absolutely sure this is what God would have in our lives." **Trusting God denotes righteousness (ch. 15:6)**

Though Abram was wrestling within himself about the dilemma that faced him, he "believed in the Lord." How hard it is in the middle of unanswered questions and unseen solutions to believe in the Lord.

Almost two years ago, my mother was confined to a nursing home. Because of the Parkinson's disease that has invaded her body, she soon will be totally dependent upon

someone else. Even when she can't see hope she says God will give us understanding some day. "And He reckoned it to (her) as righteousness!"

Basic Passage: Genesis 15-17

Trusting God denies revisions (ch. 16:1-2)

God doesn't always move as quickly as we like. Therefore, we seek to make revisions in His plans. For Sarai and Abram, it was to have a child by another means.

In chapter 15, Abram expressed distress that a servant would be his heir. God made a covenant with Abram to help his confidence level. Sarai thought she would just offer a

slight alteration in that plan.

How many times do we do the same thing? The end would be the same, just the name changed a little. God accepts no revised versions of His will.

Trusting God demands resolve (ch. 17:18-19)

Abraham's "alteration" was 13 years old now. He was a strong, vital young man. "See Lord, my change in your plan is not so bad, how about moving on from here," must have been his thought. God demands we be resolved to His plan. There were many times in waiting for that first pastorate that I offered God some plan of revision. Yet, now I look back and can say, "Trusting God's ways are definitely best." □

TenneScene ■ the people, their work

■ the leaders

■ **Raymond Davis** recently resigned as pastor of Ewtonville Church, Dunlap, to accept the pastorate of Mount Healthy Church, Cincinnati, Ohio.

■ **Billy Hines**, associate evangelism director of the Tennessee Baptist Convention, has been called to serve as interim pastor of First Church, Goodlettsville.

■ **Mike Smith** has resigned as visitation pastor of Central Church, Chattanooga. He will become the new minister of evangelism at Second Church, Hot Springs, Ark.

■ Members of Brainerd Church, Chattanooga, recently welcomed **Jeffrey Clark** as minister of music and youth. He is a graduate of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

■ **Michael O. Duff** is serving as pastor of North Springfield Church, Springfield.

■ **Brian Day** is the new music and youth director at Bethany Church, Loudon.

■ Calvary Church, Union City, called **David White** as minister of music and youth. He began in December.

■ **Shane O'Guin** has been

called as minister of music and youth at First Church, Troy.

■ the associations

■ Church leaders and single adults will gather Feb. 6 for a single adult dinner/concert sponsored by Nashville Association. The contemporary Gospel singing group *By Design* will present a concert. Cost is \$8 a person, advanced reservations required.

■ the people

■ **Juell McAlister Young**, 63, wife of Johnnie T. Young, pastor of Calvary Church, Fayetteville, died Dec. 3 after a long illness. Jackie Kay, pastor of Bartlett Church, Bartlett, and Jake Stricklin, pastor of Pleasant Ridge Church, Huntland, led the funeral service. She is survived by her husband, one son, four sisters, two brothers, and several nieces and nephews.

■ Kenwood Church, Clarksville, ordained **Charles Schlechtweg**, **Jack Litchfield**, **Arlon Heflin**, and **Rodney Hartman** to the deacon ministry.

■ **Bob Conrad** and **James McAnally** were recently ordained as deacons at Parkway

Village Church, Memphis.

■ **Ben Lincoln** and **Jackie Hester** were ordained as deacons at North Springfield Church, Springfield.

■ **Wade Carver**, a Southern Baptist minister for 63 years and a member of Lucy Church, Millington, died in November. He had been ordained at North Jackson Church, Jackson.

■ Northwest Church, Knoxville, ordained **John Rogers** as deacon Dec. 13.

■ the churches

■ A Christmas celebration was held recently for all Nashville area immigrants from Romania. Approximately 50 people gathered at **Lincoya Hills Church, Nashville**, for a worship service and traditional Romanian Christmas dinner following the service. **Lica Vadan**, a native of Cluj-Napoca, Romania, and a senior at Belmont, led the services.

■ the work

■ **Doris June Large** and **Faye L. Cox** will speak at the WMU Convention, which began Jan. 3 in Concepcion, Chile. Large and Cox are members of

Central Church, Fountain City, Knoxville.

■ **Leonard Markham**, pastor of Bluegrass Church, Hendersonville, will be devotional speaker for a mission meeting in Temuco, Chile, Jan. 8-15.

■ **Ron Mouser**, minister of education at Central Church, Fountain City, Knoxville, will lead a team of volunteer missionaries to Temuco, Chile, during January to work for missionary children and camps. Team members will be **David P. Akers**, **Jeffrey D. Melton**, **William Rosenbalm Jr.**, **Roger L. Underwood**, **Leigh A. Kennard**, **John E. Jenkins**, and **Carla M. Hawkins**, all from Central Church, Fountain City; **Doris L. Triplett**, **Immanuel Church, Knoxville**; **James W. Taylor** and **Linda Taylor**, **Central Church, Bearden, Knoxville**; and **Florence K. McCroskey**, **Beaumont Avenue Church, Knoxville**.

■ **Ray Conner**, a member of First Church, Nashville, will provide special music at a mission meeting in Temuco, Chile, Jan. 11-17.

■ education

■ Soprano **Sherry Kelly**, and guest bass **David Kelly**, with



TENNESSEE NATIVE David Wheeler of Hermitage has been named director of evangelism for the State Convention of Baptists in Indiana, effective in January. Wheeler, who recently completed classroom work for the doctor of philosophy degree at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, is pastor of First Church, Princeton, Texas. He is married to the former Debbie Poston of Hermitage. They were members of Lakeview Church, Old Hickory.

accompanist **Linda Ford** will present a recital of sacred music Jan. 12 as part of the Belmont University, Nashville, 1992-1993 faculty concert series. Musical selections will include the works of Handel, Bach, Mendelssohn, and spirituals.

Tennessee Sampler ■ views, insights

More from music

Steve Brown, minister of music, Central Church, Fountain City, Knoxville

One privilege of being a minister of music is having the opportunity to sing with the Tennessee Chorale. The chorale has just completed an across-the-state tour beginning in Memphis and concluding with the Tennessee Baptist Convention session. It is great to have fellowship with music ministers and to sharpen my own vocal skills as a part of the chorale.

Are we guilty of calling the event that happens each Sunday at 8:30 and 10:45 "the preaching service?" We even pray during the service for the Lord to prepare our hearts for worship as if worship doesn't occur until the preacher preaches. Isaiah 6:8 points out that one portion of the worship event is the audible proclamation of the Lord.

Is this voice of the Lord only heard when the preacher stands to expound on the Word of God? What about the words of our hymns and anthems — words that express deep theological truth, personal testimony, and expressions of praise?

What about the prayers that draw us into the presence of God, that intercede for others and help us examine our own personal walk with the Lord? The spoken word is crucial. God has gifted and called out special servants to teach us the truths found in his

Word. These truths help mold and shape our lives.

The proclamation of God's truth through a sermon adds clarity and application to the living out of what is heard. Preaching is a vital part of God's way of communicating to us.

And yet, worship is more than just hearing. Listen for the voice of God to speak to you audibly during every opportunity!

"Be still and know that I am God." □

Missions must succeed

Bob Polk, director of missions, Watauga Association

A few days ago, Haven Lowe and I were talking about how close you get to folks in mission work. Brother Lowe spent several years on the Cherokee Indian Reservation. He expressed how that even today he still has a special love for the Indians.

I understood what he meant because any mention of Colombia brings a stir to the hearts of Ruth and me. A word from our Colombian friends rekindles the love and appreciation that we have for them.

The five years we spent there continue to be very special years of our lives. We also have felt this love developing for Watauga Baptists.

When God chose to commission his church with the responsibility of spreading the Gospel around the world, he opened the door to

the exciting world of missions. When he led our forefathers to come together as associations, he gave us a way to be on mission together.

One of the ways we carry this out is by participating in a week of prayer for foreign missions in December and then receiving the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for the support of our nearly 4000 missionaries scattered around the world. I hope participation in this will serve to rekindle our love for missions. We are committed to reach every person on this earth with the Gospel. We must not fail for their sake and our own. □

Flower of faith

Bob Money, minister of family life, First Church, Knoxville

Growing up as a young boy I was always surprised each spring when the yellow jonquils peeped their small heads out from underneath the brown leaves that lay undisturbed in a grassy area near our house.

Later they would stand tall and erect like a soloist, singing out their harmonious notes of beauty and joy. What was the secret of their stately, predictable appearance? My dad, when asked by a curious young boy, said "Son, they are planted in good rich soil."

So it is with the "flower of our faith." Rebecca Payne, a beautiful, curious child, stepped out of the rich soil of her family's faith and professed her personal faith in

Jesus Christ as Lord. Some observers might ask, "Why did she come?" To which the present participator would calmly and confidently answer, "She was planted in good, rich soil."

Althea Gibson, an accomplished athlete, once said, "No matter what accomplishments one makes, someone helps you." Rebecca, helped by her mother, her teachers in GAs, Sunday School, choir, expectedly appeared and sang her own song of faith and salvation. □

Do you belong?

Randy Moser, minister of youth/education, Grace Church, Nashville

Belonging to some group is important to most of us. We have seen college students wearing their fraternity or sorority T-shirts with pride.

If you ask what organizations some people belong to that you come in contact with every day, you will find they belong to many different organizations. You'll probably find service, educational and/or religious organizations represented.

For many of us, belonging to our church is an important statement. Church membership says to the world you are concerned about spiritual matters.

Bill Clinton, president-elect, a member of Immanuel Baptist Church in Little Rock, Ark., has said he isn't so sure he would

care as much about the work he does if he didn't have his faith.

How does our faith manifest itself outside the walls of our church building? Do you wear your membership with pride? Sociologists have said one reason young people join street gangs is to have a place to belong and be accepted. They say all members do not like the violence associated with gangs, but since gangs give people an identity, they accept the agenda gang leaders have established.

Does this sound somewhat like our churches? We find acceptance and a sense of belonging there. We relate to a higher power, not always wanting to do what he asks, but knowing we should.

However, membership in a church has a positive influence on our lives. We learn to do good. We learn about love. We learn to be peacemakers.

Members have disputes in many churches. You will find occasional disagreement in any group where thinking people gather, but the church's ultimate goal is good for all. If you know someone who is not a member of a church or does not attend Bible study anywhere — why not make it your goal this week to invite them to come with you and introduce them to your group. □