

# Baptist and Reflector

December 21, 1994

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STATEWIDE EDITION

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## In special ways at Christmas

# Tennessee Baptist churches share Christ's love

For Baptist and Reflector

The Christmas season always seems to bring out the giving spirit — at least that's the case in numerous Tennessee Baptist Convention churches and associations.

Many churches across the state are ministering in special ways this holiday season, whether it be through cantatas or other musical presentations, drama, live nativity scenes, or simply meeting the needs of people in the community.

In some Baptist associations across Tennessee the churches are cooperating in various ways, ranging from prison ministries to distributing toys through Toy Stores and Baptist Centers. Following is just a sample of what Tennessee Baptist associations are doing this year to share Christ's love.

■ For the ninth year churches in Big Emory Association joined together to prepare Christmas bags for inmates of Morgan County Regional Prison and Brushy Mountain State Penitentiary. Though sponsored by the association's Woman's Missionary Union, it was a church-wide effort in many cases, said Lyda Edwards, association secretary. Churches gave enough personal hygiene items, candy, socks, and other items to prepare 1,450 bags. Edwards said they

have been told that "it's not so much what's in the bags as it is that someone cares."

■ Prison ministries also was the focus of efforts of WMU and churches in Dyer Association. The associational WMU and churches provided camera film, magazines, and Sunday School literature to prisoners in West Tennessee High Security Facility in Henning and Lake County Regional Prison in Tiptonville, according to Vickie Shelton, associational secretary.

■ Churches in Holston Association are doing a wide variety of things this Christmas, according to Beverly Smothers, director of Christian social ministries for the association. Nine churches bought gifts for ladies ministered to at the association's Baptist Center, she said. Three churches — Cherokee, Mountain View (Johnson City), and Southwestern — collected 225 gifts and 34 volunteers from the churches took those presents to children at the Freeda Harris Community Center in Pike County, Ky. The center is located in an isolated, mountainous, coal-mining community in Kentucky. Churches also were involved with a local academy for delinquent boys, Smothers said. "We have so many things we (the churches) can get in on here," she said.



**GAYLE JORDAN, top,** a volunteer from Southeast Church, Murfreesboro, helps a shopper find gifts during Concord Association's Multi-housing Christmas. See related story on page 4.

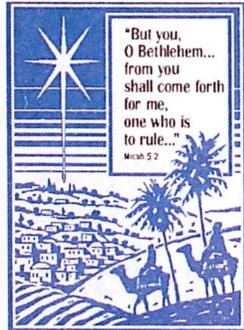
■ Knox County Association Baptists have been involved in the association's two Baptist Centers — Western Heights and Montgomery Village — according to Director of Missions Walter Taylor. At Western Heights, people have been very generous, said Director Tom Everett. The center, which ministers to about 435 different families each month, has a clothing ministry where families can get clothing throughout the year. At Christmas, however, thanks to the generosity of the churches, fami-

lies also receive new toys for their children. Everett noted the churches are creative in support of the ministry. At First Church, Concord, one Sunday School class held a "White Elephant" sale and donated the proceeds to the center — \$278. Another group from Arlington Church held a banquet and the cost of admissions was a new toy for boys for the men and a new toy for girls for the women. West Hills Church hosted its 26th annual Christmas party for children — See Tennessee, page 2

## Greetings; what's in store for our readers during 1995

■ If we were mailing each reader a personal Christmas card, the message would offer greetings and wish for each one a full measure of God's love and precious salvation for 1995. And blessings for the New Year. Turn to page 12 for a message from all the folks here who work for the churches of the Tennessee Baptist Convention.

■ **Next issue:** We will not publish the last week of December, according to standing procedure. The next paper will be the issue of Jan. 4.



■ **Postage increase:** The Baptist and Reflector is mailed through a second class postage permit. Most of the publicity from the USPS dealt with first class increases which affect letters and packages, etc.

Our second class mailing costs increase on Jan. 1 by 21 percent, or \$1,300 per week!

This kind of increase is devastating. The cost of mailing will be substantially higher than costs for printing and addressing the paper. However, subscription costs will not be increased at this time.

We promise our readers that we will keep a close check on the budget flow and give a six months report.

■ **The paper in 1995:** In the meantime, we pledge anew to provide a reliable, attractive, easy to read, newspaper. We pledge to provide news, features, special articles, and photos with a message. Remember, the Baptist and Reflector is the only official, trustworthy newspaper for Tennessee Baptists.

The year 1995 marks the paper's 160th anniversary. Now is a good time to expand or begin subscriptions for the church families and for individuals.

During the holiday season, amid the hustle and bustle, take time to attend church on Christmas Day and give thanks to God for sending his Son to die for our sins. Merry Christmas! ☺

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# Tennessee Baptist churches share Christ's love ...

— Continued from page 1  
from the area. "It's been a pretty hectic Christmas, Everett said, "but the churches have responded well."

Churches in Nashville Association responded overwhelmingly to the association's annual Christmas Toy Store. Approximately 93 churches and 800 volunteers ministered to around 1,200 families and more than 3,000 children, according to Carolyn DeMonbreun of Shelby Avenue Church, who along with Pat Malone of Haywood Hills Church, co-directed the Toy Store. During counseling sessions provided at the Toy Store, 61 people made professions of faith, she said. DeMonbreun noted many youth groups, including Royal Ambassadors, Girls in Action, and Achteens took an active part in assisting the Toy Store ministry. This is extremely important, DeMonbreun noted, because "they are our missionaries of tomorrow." She expressed gratitude for all the churches and volunteers. "If the churches had not responded on "Bring a Toy Sundays," it would not have been what it was.

Everything came together and made a beautiful Toy Store," DeMonbreun said.

Hamilton County Association churches plugged into the Friendship International House, a Sunday School Board-sponsored ministry which ministers to international college students at Christmas. Hamilton County was one of 21 locations across the nation, according to Diane Barnes, coordinator of the program for the association. Host families from the association take international students from all over the country into their homes for a two-week period over the Christmas holidays, Barnes said. Churches from the association get involved by offering transportation and meals during the day, Barnes said. The association also will provide Christmas gifts and stocking stuffers to the 20 students participating in Hamilton County Association's program this year, she added. The ministry gives a tremendous opportunity for witness, Barnes said, noting that many international students never really get to know an American family. "The Lord has brought them

(international students) to our doorstep. This gives us an opportunity to earn the right to share our faith and testimony," Barnes said.

Several Shelby County Association churches plugged into an effort to provide coats and toys for inner city residents in the association's Urban Allies program. The coats and toys were distributed at New Song and Brinkley Heights churches, according to John Draper, director of missions programs for the association.

Watauga Association churches participated in an effort by the association's Hale Community Ministries to help needy families. Different churches in the association adopted "angels," children of needy families in the area, according to Bryan McDonald, a summer student missionary from Augusta, Ga., who returned to help out during his Christmas break. He noted Hale Community Ministries will help out approximately 100 families during the holiday season with food bags and toys. He estimated 10 more churches participated in the effort. □ — Lonnie Wilkey

Wm. Fletcher Allen, editor  
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## Turmoil jeopardizes future of Rwanda mission work

Baptist Press

KIGALI, Rwanda — Continuing strife and the prospect of renewed violence is forcing Southern Baptist missionaries assigned to Rwanda to take on new ministries in other countries — leaving the future of mission work there in grave doubt.

Four years of ethnic bloodshed have killed hundreds of

thousands of Rwandans and caused as many as one million more to flee the African nation.

Continuing turmoil in the country makes missionary work impossible, according to James Westmoreland of the Foreign Mission Board. Travel is extremely dangerous because roads are honeycombed with land mines. In addition, most Rwandan Baptist pastors and more than half of the

church members have fled the country. Many others have been killed. Also, Rwandans in refugee camps in Zaire are not returning to their country in large numbers.

As a result, most Southern Baptist missionaries assigned to the country have decided to transfer to other missions, said Westmoreland, the board's associate area director for eastern and southern Africa.

Among those missionaries are Tennesseans Katrina Knox of Columbia and David and Janet Hooten of Knoxville.

The Hootens are on furlough and are expected to transfer to Tanzania when they return to Africa next August.

Knox also is on furlough and is considering other missions assignments when it is time to return. □

## BSSB changes quarterly release dates

Baptist Press

NASHVILLE — The Baptist Sunday School Board has delayed plans to change the quarterly release dates for its Sunday School, Discipleship Training, and church music dated curriculum.

The board had planned in September 1995 to switch to a seasonal release cycle: fall, September-November; winter, December-February; spring, March-May; and summer, June-August. However, due to several business-related factors, the change has been delayed, at least until the 1996-97 fiscal year.

Gene Mims, vice president of the board's church growth group, said delaying the change "is the right thing to do for our customers and the Sunday School Board." Instituting the change in fiscal year 1995-96, he said, could place a financial strain on the board at a time when the agency is taking steps to improve its financial performance.

The Brotherhood Commission and Woman's Missionary Union will begin releasing their missions education curriculum on a seasonal basis in September 1996. Mims said a final decision about when the BSSB will change its release dates will be made early next year. □

## Howard Kolb dies in Memphis

MEMPHIS — Howard Kolb, pastor of Audubon Park Church, Memphis, for 30 years, died Dec. 12.

He retired from that pastorate but was still involved in convention work.

Kolb, 74, died of an aneurysm Dec. 12 at Baptist Memorial Hospital East, in Memphis. He was stricken on Sunday.

Services were held Dec. 14 at the church. He was a native of Mississippi and a graduate of Union University, Jackson.

He also is a graduate of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Kolb served as pastor of churches in Tennessee, Texas, Arkansas, and Oklahoma.

He had been moderator for Shelby County Association, and president of the Memphis Baptist Pastors Conference. He was a three-term member of the TBC Executive Board. He most recently was chairman of the TBC Education Committee, and served on the Union's trustees board. □

## Daily prayer requests for Chile/Tennessee Partnership



December —

22 — The members of the Coniefi Mission in Antofagasta and their pastor, Silas Gomes, have set a goal for the mission to develop into a church in 1995.

23 — May Chilean Baptists look to the Lord for wisdom and leadership during their upcoming national convention of churches to be held in Temuco in January.

24 — Continue to pray for the salvation of Manuel Sanchez in Temuco.

25 — "Thanks be to God for his indescribable Gift" (II Corinthians 9:15)!

26 — As our partnership with Chile concludes, pray the Chilean Baptist leadership will remain steadfast in providing godly vision and direction for the future.

27 — As the Baptist campsites in Chile operate in January and February, may God work through the programming in the lives of the campers and counselors.

28 — Praise God and pray for each person who has made a spiritual decision through the Chile/Tennessee partnership and ask the Lord to strengthen them in their Christian walk.

29 — Jarvis Hearn, TBC partnership director, and Fonda Johnson, secretary, will both retire at the end of December. Praise God for working through them to provide leadership for our partnership and ask his continued blessings upon their lives.

30 — May Dr. John McCall and a team of 12 Tennesseans receive traveling mercies and effectiveness in their ministry as they journey to Temuco for the mission meeting and MK care.

31 — Express gratitude to the Lord for his goodness and mercy in 1994, and remember missionary Lori Spike as she celebrates her birthday.

# FMB approves vision for future, record missionary appointments

By Robert O'Brien  
For Baptist Press

RICHMOND, Va. — The Foreign Mission Board got a head start on celebrating its 150th anniversary by restating its missions vision and surpassing 500 annual missionary additions for the first time in its history.

Trustees of the board, which turns 150 in 1995, adopted vision and mission statements recommended by FMB President Jerry Rankin and appointed 44 missionaries at its Dec. 12-14 meeting in Richmond, Va.

The appointments pushed the total of new missionaries named in 1994 to 534, breaking 1993's record of 498. That includes 255 career and associate missionary appointments — the highest in seven years — and a record 279 two-year International Service Corps workers and journeymen.

The two-year worker total tops the 1993 record of 275 and will increase, since more will be assigned before Dec. 31. The board's record for career and associate appointments was set in 1985 with 304.

The board's overall missionary total now stands at 4,078.

The vision and mission statements — which include input from missionaries, trustees, staff and others — focus on harmonizing board strategies with what God is doing in the world, Rankin said. They will be followed later by a set of basic principles still being developed.

The vision statement declares: "We will lead Southern Baptists to be on mission with God to bring all the peoples of the world to saving faith in Jesus Christ."

The mission statement: "The mission of the Foreign Mission Board, SBC, is to lead Southern Baptists in international missions efforts to evangelize the lost, disciple believers, develop churches, and minister to people in need. Leading Southern Baptists is done by mobilizing prayer support, appointing missionaries, enlisting volunteers, channeling financial support, and communicating how God is working overseas."

In other action, trustees:

- voted to participate with other Southern Baptist agencies in YouthLink 2000, a major turn-of-the-century conference scheduled for December 1999 aimed at reaching youth for Christ and motivating them to serve God through Southern Baptists in the 21st century. Participation requires a cash outlay by the mission board of about \$1.15 million on a cost-recovery basis.

- joined the Home Mission Board in rejecting a motion, referred from the June 1994 Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Orlando, Fla., that the two agencies conduct a three-year pilot project reversing the seasons when they receive their major mission offerings. Historically, the Foreign Mission Board receives the Lottie Moon offering during Christmas; the Home Mission Board receives the Annie Armstrong offering during Easter.

Both mission boards said the request by SBC messenger Pat Garland of West Virginia, in light of the history of the two offerings, "would not be in the best interest of either offering."

- announced 52 FMB trustees responded to a personal challenge to support the Lottie Moon offering by pledging a total of \$53,561 — an average of \$1,030 each.

- relaxed FMB policy on hiring of relatives of staff members to bring the policy in line with equal employment legal guidelines.

- honored 10 retiring staff members with 275 years of combined service.

The revised employment policy will allow employment of relatives of staff members under restricted guidelines.

The guidelines include stipulations that no staff member related to an applicant will be involved in hiring; no one may be in the line of supervision of a relative; relatives of top executives (vice presidents and above) will not be employed; relatives will not work together in the same unit or work group; relatives of staffers will receive no advantage over other job applicants, ensuring the most qualified person will be hired; and all relatives hired must receive proper executive approval. □ — Mary E. Speidel and Bob Stanley contributed to this story.

# Landrum Leavell to retire Dec. 31 from New Orleans

Compiled from news reports

NEW ORLEANS — Landrum P. Leavell II, president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary since January 1975, announced his retirement to the seminary's trustee executive committee Dec. 13.



LEAVELL

He said he will retire Dec. 31, 1994, but subsequently agreed to the committee's request to remain as interim president until a successor is chosen.

"Twenty years ago today I made the most strategic decision of my ministerial calling," Leavell said in his retirement statement to trustees. "I decided on the best evidence I had that it was God's will for me to leave the finest and friendliest Baptist church on earth and the ministry of being pastor of the local church to become president of my alma mater, the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. It was a decision that God has confirmed every day of these 20 years." Describing his seminary tenure, he said, "I have been privileged to work with some of the godliest and most generous Christians on earth."

Now, Leavell said, he will "once again change the focus of my ministry."

Leavell told the seminary's trustee executive committee of his decision during their regular December meeting. "We had no idea it was coming in December," trustee chairman Ed Johnson told Associated Baptist Press.

The seminary's administrators likewise did not know the an-

nouncement was coming until moments before the meeting, and Leavell reportedly told family members only the night before.

"He wanted to be in control of the situation," said Johnson, pastor of First Church, Ocala, Fla. "He wanted to announce it on his terms."

Johnson said Leavell, 68, was upset last March when word leaked out that Leavell and the trustees had agreed he would retire by December 1996, soon after he turns 70. He has been discussing his retirement plans with trustees for some time.

"You have known for three years of my intention to retire before age 70," Leavell said in his statement to the executive committee Dec. 13. "You sent a committee to ask me to stay till age 70, and then go on a year-by-year basis. I was deeply gratified by this encouragement, but I am presently convinced that I am making the right decision today. This retirement will be effective Dec. 31, 1994."

Johnson said he was so surprised he later asked Leavell, "Did you mean to say 1995?"

Leavell agreed to the trustees' request to stay on as interim president until his replacement is found. He told the trustee committee he would be available "to continue as needed until you name a new president and will be pleased to help my successor become indoctrinated, if desired, for a stated period of time in his transition."

He said he and his wife, Jo Ann, plan to move to Wichita Falls, Texas, in retirement "and enter the doors of ministry God opens." □ — Compiled from Baptist Press and Associated Baptist Press reports

# HMB OKs state study report, elects Native American to key post

Baptist Press

ATLANTA — Directors of the Home Mission Board approved a six-month study of its relationships with state conventions and elected Russell Begaye to direct the language church extension.

Meeting Dec. 14, the board also OK'd 26 home missionaries, OK'd a 1995 budget of \$86.7 million, 6 percent less than 1994, and defeated a request to prohibit HMB staff from submitting recommendations for the agency's board of directors.

The report of the board's special state study committee was overwhelmingly approved. The study offers 14 recommendations, including acknowledging "state conventions and fellowships are full partners in home missions work" and a pledge to "build relationships that foster mutual trust." It also "strongly encourages those using alternate channels for funding home missions to renew their support through the Cooperative Program and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering."

The committee was requested in June to study how the board should cooperate with state conventions that send designated funds to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship or other non-SBC entities.

Board Chairman Bob Curtis, a pastor from Ballwin, Mo., said there was a misconception about the intent of the committee. "We want to strengthen relationships and will not be a party to any body or any entity or any individual or philosophy that attempts to tear down the Cooperative Program support system."

Board member Greg Martin, a pastor from Long Beach, Miss., who requested the study, said he was satisfied with the report.

During discussion of the report, Roger Gorby, board member from Virginia, asked whether a recently formed group of conservative Southern Baptists in Virginia "can sign a cooperative agreement with the HMB and thereby have the right as any state convention to receive funds helping us start conservative Baptist churches in Virginia." Lewis said the board works with any church whose messengers are seated by the national convention, but hesitates to initiate a relationship that creates or is perceived to create division. "We will wait until a group is well established. At that time, we would consider missions support."

Native American Russell Begaye was chosen as director of language church ex-

tension, one of the largest HMB programs. A native of Shiprock, N.M., Begaye began his home missions career as a summer missionary in 1973. Since 1980 he has served as a national consultant and assistant director of the language church extension division.

Jean White was elected associate director of church and community ministries. She has been church and community director for Catawba River Association in North Carolina since 1989. Born in Newport News, Va., she has served as a medical missionary in Yemen, a nurse practitioner, and youth director.

In other business, members defeated a request from director Wyndham Cook, Magnolia, Ark., to prohibit the HMB "president and staff from participating in suggestion of specific individuals for service on the HMB board of directors." Cook said such involvement could lead to a division of trustee allegiance between the staff who nominated them and their SBC constituency and thus violate SBC by-law 16(5). That provision states persons nominated as SBC agency trustees "shall represent the constituency of the convention rather than the staff of the entity."

Lewis acknowledged he submitted

suggestions to the 1994 SBC Committee on Nominations upon request of its chairman, William Bell of Dallas. "I appreciated the opportunity for input and responded with a list of persons supportive of home missions and who I felt would serve the agency well," Lewis said.

None of Lewis' suggestions were included in the committee's nominations, a fact he said shows the process is functioning as intended. Cook told Baptist Press several persons nominated by other agency heads, however, were nominated by the committee and elected by the SBC.

The board voted to send a copy of the "Report of the Presidential Theological Study Committee" to missionary and HMB staff candidates. The document will be "an interpretive guide for a clearer understanding of Article I of the *Baptist Faith and Message*," according to the board's action.

The report was approved by messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting last June and commended to SBC agencies. The HMB is the only SBC agency to date to take action on it.

The board also honored 10 retiring staff members with 223 total years of home mission service. □

# Concord Baptists provide gifts to multi-housing residents

By Lonnie Wilkey  
Baptist and Reflector

MURFREESBORO — Concord Association's first Multi-Housing Christmas proved to be quite a success.

About 70 percent of the association's churches joined together Dec. 2-3 to provide Christmas gifts for residents of several Rutherford County multi-housing units, according to Director of Missions James Powers.



MARY ALICE FREEMAN, right, of Mt. Pleasant Church, Rockvale, gets a helping hand from a shopper at the Multi-Housing Christmas sponsored by Concord Association. Volunteers helped residents choose gifts and provided gift-wrapping services.

The ministry effort targeted residents of multi-housing units already being ministered to by the association through Bible studies for adults and children's programs.

The Christmas store, held in the new educational facility of First Church, Murfreesboro, enabled every child and adult in the housing areas to receive at least one gift, said Ellen Chapman, director of the association's multi-housing ministry.

The association's Woman's Missionary Union played an important role by letting all the churches know of the needs. Many of the churches responded overwhelmingly with gifts, said Juanice Williamson, associational WMU director and member of First Church, Smyrna.

Powers and Chapman estimated more than 3,000 gifts were contributed to the effort which helped 103 families and 230 children.

"The churches have been wonderful," Chapman said. "They've given and given and given."

The ministry also aided some unexpected participants referred by a local crisis pregnancy center, but there were more than enough gifts to go around.

"As long as they get the word and hear the Gospel, it



CONCORD ASSOCIATION Director of Missions Jim Powers, left photo, and Ellen Chapman, right photo, director of the association's multi-housing ministry, welcome and visit with guests to the Multi-Housing Christmas, sponsored recently by the association at First Church, Murfreesboro.



doesn't matter where they're from," Chapman said. "We're just trying to show the love of Christ through giving because that is what he did and he expects us to do the same," she added.

Everyone who entered the Christmas store went through counseling provided by Powers and other ministers in the association.

Powers said the association's first effort at providing gifts to the multi-housing residents "exceeded his expectations."

The Concord Association director of

missions noted there were more to respond than expected as well as more donations and volunteers from the churches than anticipated.

In fact, the association had more donations than they could give to the residents so they found other outlets.

Powers said the association helped two or three children in Nashville and sent a van load of items to Copper Basin Association so they could distribute them to children there.

"We had quite a great response in every aspect," Powers concluded. □

## Carols bring Christmas to life

Go, Tell It on the Mountain

What a joyful Christmas spiritual!

Fisk University professor, John Wesley Work Jr., who taught Latin and history after the turn of the century, heard someone sing this refrain. He shaped the melody, harmonized the tune, and added original stanzas.

The spiritual was included in a small collection compiled by Work and his brother Frederick J. Work. "Folk Songs of the American Negro" was published in Nashville in 1907.

The well-known versions of "New Born Again," "Lord, I Want to Be a Christian," "Somebody's Knocking at Your Door," and "Were You There" were among the songs first published in this small book.

John Wesley Work III recalled Christmas experiences at Fisk when he was a child. Early each Christmas morning, around 5 a.m., the Fisk Jubilee Singers, directed by his father, walked around the campus singing Christmas songs. Then the students and faculty gathered in the dining hall for a brief Christmas service and breakfast.

"Go, Tell It on the Mountain" is an expression of abounding ecstasy from the poor, the downtrodden, the lonely, and the insignificant. It is a declaration again each Christmas that Jesus is in the world—he was born in Bethlehem.

### The First Nowell

The origin of this delightful Christ-

### ■ Hymns Baptists sing

By William J. Reynolds  
distinguished professor  
of church music  
Southwestern Baptist  
Theological Seminary

mas carol has baffled scholars across the years. It is a traditional carol, apparently from England's West Country. The words have been found in an 1823 collection, and the tune appeared a decade later.

The error in the original version of the opening line of stanza two seems to have bothered no one. "They looked up and saw a star" credits the shepherds with having sighted the heavenly body.

Yet Scripture mentions only that the wisemen saw the star (Matthew 2); nothing is said about the shepherds' having seen it (Luke 2).

The word "Nowell" is the Old English form of the Old French "Noel." The Latin form was "Natalis," the Spanish, "Natal," and the Italian, "Natale." It was an expression of joy, originally shouted or sung to commemorate Christ's birth.

Geoffrey Chaucer, the 14th century English poet, mentions the term in his "Franklin's Tale," providing evidence of the early usage of the word. Writing in Middle English, the language then spoken in London, Chaucer wrote: Biforn

him stant braun of the tusked swyn, And "Nowell" cryeth every lusty man.

The "Nowells" should be sung during the Christmas season with great enthusiasm, making the rafters ring!

### Away in a Manger

The story about this familiar Christmas carol is stranger than fiction. Words and music appeared together in a Lutheran collection published in Philadelphia in 1885. The three initials "J. R. M." were credited for the music.

There was the notation "Luther's Cradle Hymn," composed by Martin Luther for his children and still sung by German mothers to their little ones."

In subsequent collections of carols there was the heading "Luther's Cradle Hymn," and no one ever thought to question the validity of the title.

Later someone attributed the music to "Carl Mueller," a completely unknown person.

In the early 1940s, Richard S. Hill became curious about the song's origin and his persistent probing revealed that the words were of American origin and the author unknown.

The music was written by James R. Murray, a native of Massachusetts, who worked for music publishers in Chicago and Cincinnati. He died in 1905, without revealing his claim to this music.

For sheer beauty and childlike simplicity the carol claims special attention. A gentle lullaby, tender and warm, it is especially loved by children. When adults of any age sing it, in their hearts, they become children again. □

### ■ Baptist beliefs

By Herschel H. Hobbs,  
Baptist theologian

## Kind-hearted innkeeper

"There was no room for them in the inn" — Luke 2:7b.

Augustus Caesar did not know, neither did he care, that his decree of enrollment of his subjects for taxation was instrumental in fulfilling the prophecy of Micah 5:2. Mary and Joseph lived in Nazareth, but the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem. The decree took them to Bethlehem at the time of Jesus' birth.



HOBBS

The innkeeper has been pictured as a hard-hearted person who turned Mary and Joseph away in their time of need. But the facts speak otherwise.

People came from far and wide for the enrollment. So that when Joseph and Mary arrived the inn was filled far beyond its capacity. Seeing Mary's condition he did the best he could.

Instead of turning them away, the innkeeper made them as comfortable as possible in the animal shelter attached to his inn. So instead of being a hard-hearted, money-grabbing ogre, he provided the best available shelter for them. Instead of criticizing him, we should be thankful for him. □

# Following the star, finding Christ, Christmas

■ one word more  
By Wm. Fletcher Allen  
editor

Is the Christmas story the same as it has been through the ages? Has it changed? Does it still fulfill the dreams of childhood? Do we even follow the star? Have things been added? Has anything been left out?

The Bible tells it best — and always has. Mankind has added and deleted but the well-told version in God's Word never changes. It is simple, clear, magnificent, and true in every detail.

The Christmas story explains the perfect example of God's great love.

**Galatians 4:4-7** — *But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.*

That, of course, is the Apostle Paul writing about the cause and effect of God's great plan for salvation, just a few years after the event. We are heirs.

Before him, Isaiah had messages that were like lightning bolts to people who were discouraged, lonely, bereft of hope.

**Isaiah 9:6** — *For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the mighty God, the everlast-*

*ing Father, the Prince of Peace.*

God's gift of love was given hundreds of years after Isaiah's prophecy. The gift was Jesus the Christ, the Savior. Perhaps it was hard (and yet is) for skeptics and doubters to believe that an all-powerful God would devise such a plan. It is difficult for many people to understand that because God is omnipotent, he can choose to offer redemption in any way — and he chose to use people as instruments and witnesses.

One of the great Christmas carols says that, "Long lay the world in sin and error pining — til He appeared, and the soul felt its worth; a thrill of hope, the weary world rejoices, for yonder breaks a new and glorious morn — fall on your knees!"

**Isaiah 41:10** — *Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed, for I am thy God. I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.*

When the prophecies of Old Testament prophets were fulfilled in an animal feeding trough in Bethlehem, only angels and shepherds recognized the event for what it was: God's grace translated to the world through the love of the Christ who was born as a baby.

Well, perhaps a few others understood. But down through the centuries, that baby's life enveloped the world. Messiah grew into a man who showed the world perfect, all-giving, uncondi-

tional love. It always has been easy to love a baby — but it becomes more difficult when that baby becomes an adult. We sometimes try to keep that little Jesus there in the manger — or at least in a baby's bed.

For those who believe, another Old Testament prophet extols God's power and desire to love and to save.

**Zephaniah 3:17** — *The Lord your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing.*

Most Christian traditions that are wrapped around Christmas may seem to make it a brighter, more sought-after package. But the trappings do not always make the gift any more glorious than it already is.

Some of the things connected with Christmas by the world have made a travesty of God's intentions.

The clamor of crowded stores, the bustle of "busy" work, are classic efforts in the futility of embellishing Christmas with what we want it to be.

Christmas is simple. It is more than mankind can fathom. The best way to celebrate Christmas is to listen as God tells it to us.

It is said best in "the Gospel in a nutshell":

**John 3:16** — *For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*

That is Christmas, God's gift. May we celebrate the joy with joy. □

By Wm. Fletcher Allen, editor

## How far is Bethlehem?

We are not like Joseph, who with many others, was required to go to Bethlehem to pay his taxes.

He took the expectant girl Mary with him — she was his chosen one, his betrothed.

It was a difficult journey, I think. The terrain over which they traveled was not blessed with a smooth blacktop road. There were no convenient rest stops or eateries.

When they arrived at the place where he was registered, every available bed was taken.

Perhaps he had been delayed at the tax office. Perhaps they had had to pause a while for Mary to

rest. We don't even know whether he had paid the taxes.

A few weeks ago I traveled to Bethlehem again. We had walked Jerusalem's old streets earlier, seeing the storied places, asking, listening.

I found it is not necessary to go to Bethlehem to gain that sense of awe about what God did that first Christmas. Oh, it is beautiful and touching to stand near the spot beneath the Church of the Nativity, to see the candles bright with small swords of flames, to hear those wonderful announcing words recorded by Luke, to voice a whispered prayer of praise and thanksgiving, to sing a carol to the King, and to feel the consuming love that finally comes to rest in your heart.

But it is not necessary. Every Christian's heart is an altar, a temple. Every Christian's voice is a symphony. Every Christian's spirit can bow before the King and praise him in a joyful and contrite pledge of allegiance.

What better time than Christmas? No burnt offerings for King Jesus, only the humble and sincere heart.

Bring the stranger with you then, to Bethlehem. Let him adore the newborn King along with you. Let him watch and listen as the ages pass, the plans fulfilled, and the King prepares to return.

I think the skies will be filled with angels over Bethlehem when that happens. And I think he will come again even to Bethlehem, and to the waiting heart. □



ALLEN

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

# The family at Christmas

■ families matter  
By Paul Barkley, counselor and professor

As we come to the week of Christmas itself, I know that many of you have been to numerous pageants, programs, cantatas, and such that have elegantly reminded you of that night in Bethlehem so long ago when God sent his own Son to be our Savior.

We need now to consider this event from the perspective of the importance of the family. God sent Jesus to be born and raised in a family. God must have considered the experience valuable.

God wanted his Son to experience life the way ordinary people do, so he sent him to be born into a real family.

For those of you who have been raised by step-parents or who are raising step-children, it should be of interest to note that Jesus was raised by a step-father.

We do not know very much about Jesus' relationship with Mary and Joseph.

We do know that when they came back to the temple to find him when he was 12, he returned to Nazareth and was obedient to them.

Almost nothing is known about what happened to

Joseph, but we do know that one of the last things Jesus thought about and did, even while he was dying for us on a cross, was to take care to make provision for the care of his mother.

God chose to have us know him as our Heavenly Father.

This emphasizes the importance that he placed on the family relationship. He was careful to explain to Joseph that this child Mary was carrying was his Son.

The Bible indicates that God chose Joseph with particular care, knowing Joseph would nurture his Son.

Mary was also chosen with special care to be the mother of Jesus. She would be the one to nurse God's Son, change his clothes, keep him clean, warm, fed, and loved.

If God had wanted, he could have caused his Son to come to this world full-grown and in a palace.

Instead, he had him come as a helpless baby, to every-

day parents, a carpenter of Nazareth, born of all places, in a stable.

In so doing, I think God was emphasizing the importance of the child-parent relationship. I am often asked, "What is the most important thing that parents can do for their child?"

Is it most important to make sure they have proper food, so they will grow up healthy? Is it important they have a challenging and creative cognitive environment, so they will develop mentally to their highest potential?

Is it most important to give them the best social and cultural surroundings so they will grow up well rounded?

While these are important, studies have shown conclusively that children are able to overcome physical, mental, social, and cultural handicaps when they have had loving, responsive, caring parents.

And certainly every loving parent would want to make sure their child comes to know his Heavenly Father. □



BARKLEY

## Start with a smile

Musician to music critic: "How can you write concert reviews when you can't play any musical instrument?"

Music critic: "I never laid an egg either, but I'm a better judge of an omelet than any chicken on earth."

## Take this truth

How do you react to those who make suggestions concerning how you do things? Two errors are possible. First, do everything they tell you. Second, refuse to even listen to them. Listen to every suggestion, evaluate them, but you must make the decision.

## Memorize this Scripture

"Put all things to the test: keep what is good" (I Thessalonians 5:21 TEV).

## Pray this prayer

"Lord, keep me from being too proud to listen to what others say about me but too wise to do everything they suggest. May I measure all in light of what I feel is your will." □

# ■ Israel, land of the first Christmas

## There were shepherds, angels, and baby

By Wm. Fletcher Allen  
Baptist and Reflector

**Editor's note** — Along with five other Southern Baptist journalists, the editor was a guest of the Israeli government and El Al Airlines recently for a trip in Israel. A report was given in last week's paper on part of the trip. This article provides words and photographs about Israel and its role in the life of Christ — especially relating to Christmas.

JERUSALEM, Israel — "I am not a religious man," Amichai Elbar tells us, "but the first time I prayed was just a few days ago when I saw the photograph of President Bill Clinton with Yassar Arafat, the Palestinian leader, and our Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, when the treaty was signed with the Palestinians. I prayed."

Elbar is the public relations manager for Kibbutz Ein Gedi, a thriving oasis at the northern shore of the Dead Sea.

He continues, "In just two weeks time," he says, referring to the treaty with the Palestinians and the treaty that is signed between Jordan and Israel while we are here, "Israel has cried and laughed. Terrorists struck in Tel Aviv,

and peace treaties are signed. "You are part of these occasions for peace," he ventures, "and you should be proud of it. Because now this entire region can be stronger."

Elbar is honest. Peace is as important to the modern state of Israel as it was when Jesus Christ was born during the burdensome days of Roman occupation.

He also is talking about peace being a key to economic growth and stability in the Middle East. Sad to say, because of man's inhumanity to man, peace has been absent for centuries in the land where the Prince of Peace was born.

A few days later we are visiting with Fuad Sakhnini, pastor of the Baptist Church in Nazareth, and Fuad Haddad, principal of the Rowden Primary School there.

They also talk of peace — and they teach it in the school. Known as one of the best schools in the area, chapel is held every day. Bible is taught, but not required.

The classes at Rowden are taught within the Christian context. Church attendance averages 150, with crowds of 300 on occasion. Worship is on Sunday, and translators are

available for Arabic and English. The church, Sakhnini, is mother to all the Baptist congregations in Galilee.

He tells us, as Haddad nods in agreement, "We are happy that peace treaties have taken place. We hope peace will be lasting. We, like everyone else, are fed up with war."

An hour later we sit in the nearby office of Nazareth's vice mayor. Educated in Arkansas, he greets us "in the name of the people of Nazareth."

Halfway into our discussion with him, he notes that Christ's home town is called the Capital of Arabs in Israel, because it is the largest Arab city.

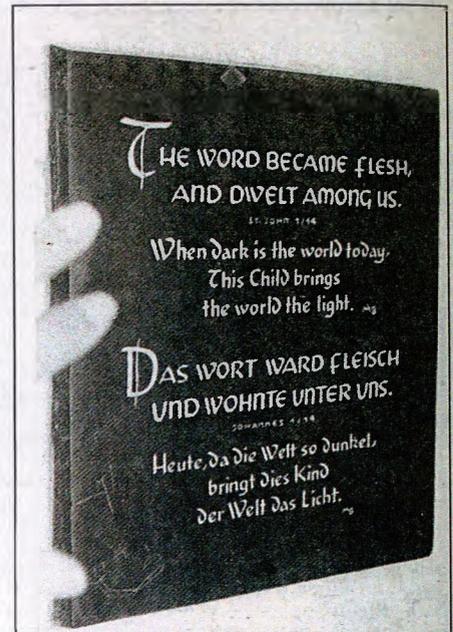
"At this time we are seeking equality," he says. "Peace and equality go hand in hand. Peace treaties are good steps toward real peace."

"Thanks to President Clinton for his efforts." Then he tells us that equality means creation of a Palestinian state. "Otherwise, the situation will swing back and forth. We believe we can be a bridge to real peace."

The leaders of Israel, Jordan, and the Palestinians talked about peace. The Israel Ministry of Tourism has desig-

Bethlehem's  
Church of  
the Nativity

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hope to a  
bruised and  
weary world.



nated 1995 (5755 on the Hebrew calendar) as the Year of Peace Tourism. We listen to these and others as we travel in this land called by God, a land of milk and honey.

Rabbi Yitzhac Rubin talked to us about Judaism and relationships with Christians — and about peace. And we think about the people who want peace. In my heart, I know it is time to pause and pray for peace.

*In the land which birthed the Savior of the world, peace is sought and longed for. Peace is an objective of war, with the victor's version of peace as the prize. The voices we hear in Israel also speak of peace, real peace.*

*Isaiah the prophet talked of a coming Prince of Peace.*

*The angel who spoke to the Shepherds when Christ was born, led a heavenly host in praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."*

*In his ministry Jesus blessed peacemakers and talked to his followers about the peace that he offers, a peace beyond mankind's comprehension.*

*He also said that he came to bring peace, not swords.*

In many of the places we walk, there are many reminders of Bible time. Signs and brochures tell us. Tomer, our guide, tells us — and points to the hundreds and hundreds of antiquities surrounding us.

We are grateful for this hands-on experience. Accompanied by the best of assistance, we have become a class of mobile school children.

We would like to be called

graduate students, but our views, no matter how sincere and learned, are perhaps elementary.

Now there is an urgent reason to segregate those new bits of knowledge and reaffirmations — from those places and events which are best remembered because of Jesus Christ.

The reason?

It is Christmas time. There are a hundred reminders.

When we read the "Christmas story" in the Bible, the descriptions of those times and places are etched on the mind.

Perhaps some photographs and well-chosen words from learned scholars can enhance the views.

This is essential, because most of the sacred sites have been changed by the years and "progress."

Very few of the holy sites relating to the life of Christ are intact.

However, many have strong tradition reaching back for 1,700 or more years. In other words, they are accurate.

So when you visit Bethlehem and look for the site of Jesus' birth, you are directed to the Church of the Nativity. This ancient building covers a grotto (or caves) where many believe he came to be born. It could be.

There is no special place marked as the field where the shepherds watched their sheep in those days. Most of the fields around Bethlehem are overgrown with shops and houses, olive trees and piles of stones.

But you can choose any field where shepherds watch their small flock — and say for sure, "it was like this." □

## Baptists find mission challenge

### Hocutt, Sibley represent Southern Baptists

JERUSALEM — Tom Hocutt and Jim Sibley, Southern Baptist representatives in Israel met with six state Baptist convention journalists here Oct. 27

We got acquainted and talked over a delightful meal at the Kohinoor Indian restaurant.

Hocutt, a native of Alabama, is administrator of Baptists in Israel, and lives with his family in Ra'aman near Tel Aviv, as does Sibley, a Southwestern Seminary graduate.

We have had another full day, but the evening with the two Baptist representatives is worth the hours spent in conversation.

They tell us there are eight Arabic speaking congregations and two that speak English, about 50 families where they minister. The Arab Baptists meet Sundays, others meet on Saturday.

"We have meetings for age groups," they say. There are meetings also at the Baptist Center in Jerusalem — and a few other groups.

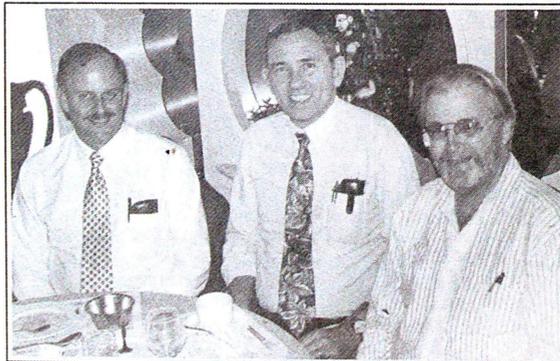
Hocutt says there are about 40 Hebrew speaking congregations. "They want to maintain their Jewish identity," he adds. They relate to Baptist groups, but there is no official tie.

Hocutt is chairman of the United Christian Council, evangelicals in a voluntary association in Israel and the

West Bank. There are 23 organizations involved.

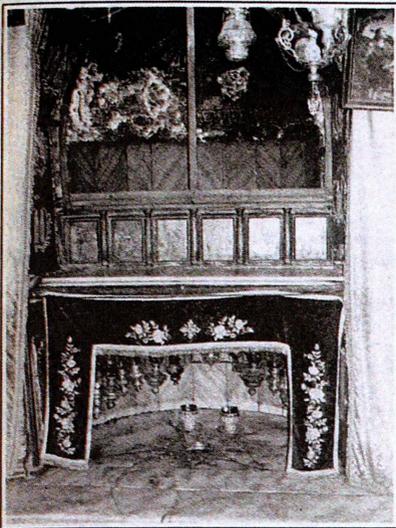
It is the day after President Bill Clinton came to witness the official signing of the Israeli peace treaty with Jordan. Hocutt and Sibley are elated that SBC President Jim Henry and John Anthony, Southern Baptist representative in Israel, attended at Clinton's invitation.

Sibley and Hocutt urge that all Baptist groups traveling to Israel contact them prior to traveling. "We would like to get together and visit," they say. They shared a need for short term volunteers to help in repair work at Baptist Village, Petah Tiqva. □



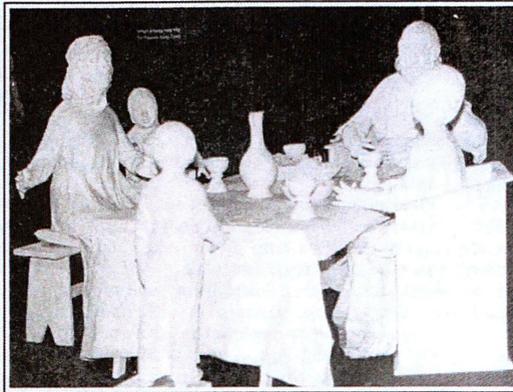
SOUTHERN BAPTIST representatives to Israel met with Southern Baptist journalists recently in Jerusalem. From left, Jim Sibley, Tom Hocutt, and Baptist and Reflector editor Wm. Fletcher Allen. There are several other representatives in Israel.

# ■ Israel, land of the first Christmas

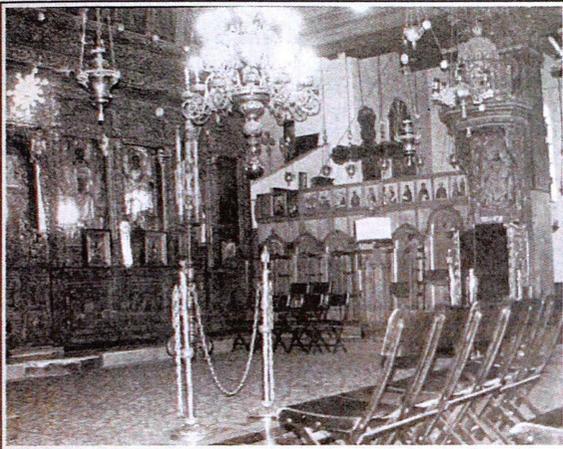
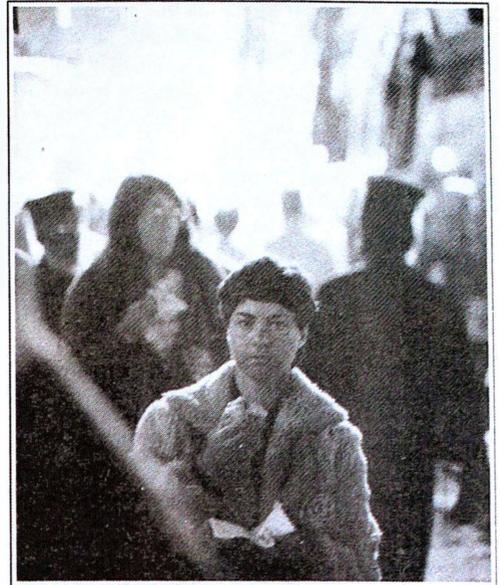


**ALCOVE IN** grotto beneath Church of the Nativity, where tradition says Jesus was born.

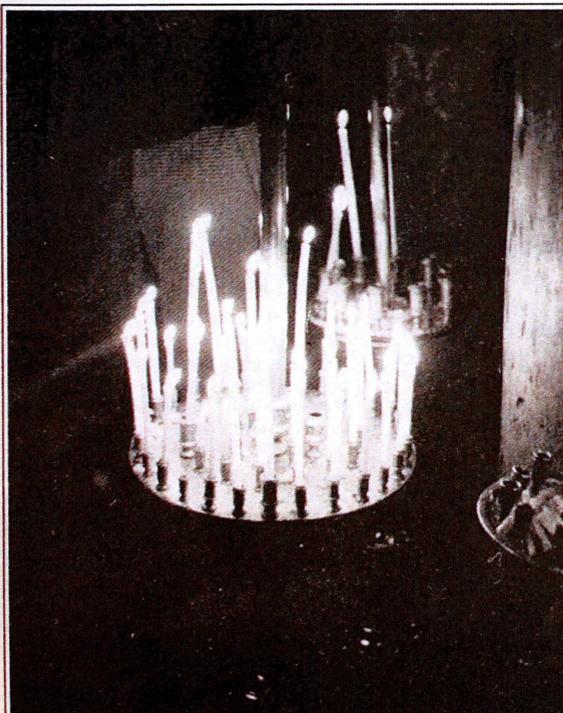
## A special feature: Bethlehem of Judea



**SCENE FROM** Museum of Diaspora, Tel Aviv, shows Jewish family at evening meal. **PHOTO AT RIGHT**, in the Old City of Jerusalem, except for apparel, much is the same as it was in the time of Christ — busy people everywhere.



**ABOVE**, the altar area of the Church of the Nativity built over a grotto which could be the manger site. **BELOW**, Christmas candles celebrating Christ's birth.



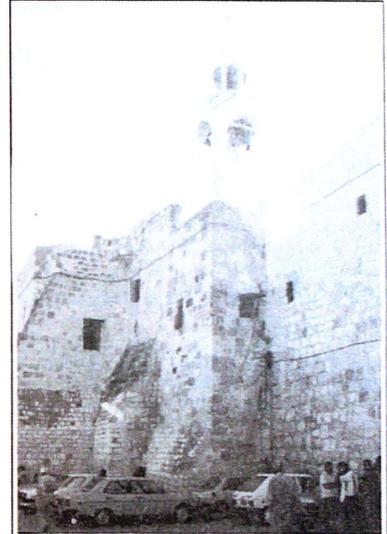
## The birth of Jesus

Luke, Chapter 2, tells of the decree on taxes, which caused Joseph and Mary to be in Bethlehem when the time was right for the Messiah's birth. There was no place for them to stay, so the baby was born in a stable, with a manger for his bed.

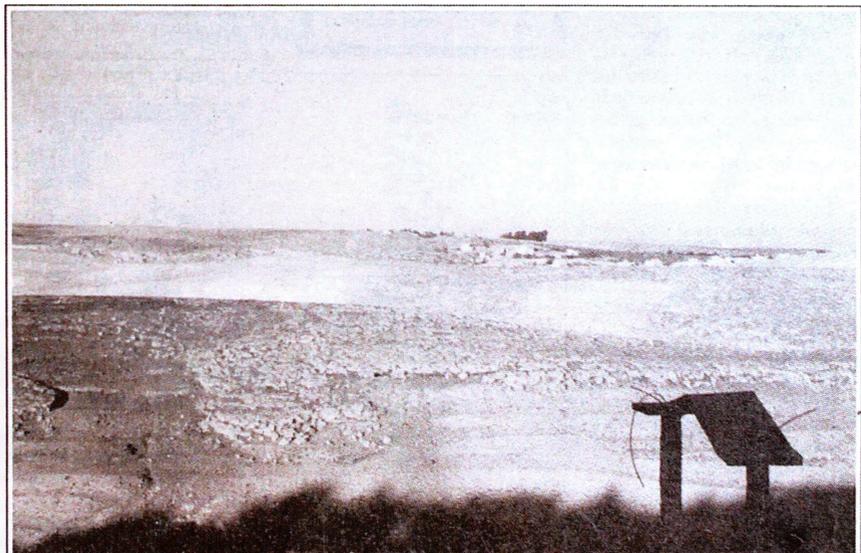
Luke tells how local shepherds heard the angel's announcement of the Savior's birth, and listened to the angelic chorus singing the praises of God. Then, says Luke, the angels left and the shepherds rushed to find the baby in Bethlehem of ancient Israel, "which the Lord has made known to us."

The rest of the story, Luke 2:16-17: "So they went with all speed and found their way to Mary and Joseph; and the baby was lying in the manger. When they saw him, they recounted what they had been told about this child; and all who heard were astonished at what the shepherds said."

Even today people are astonished when they hear the Good News of the Savior's offer of free salvation and pardon from sin. But their wonder becomes joy when the offer is accepted. That is Christmas! ☺



**CONSTANTINE** built basilica over some caves in 325. Justinian expanded it about 200 years later. Other additions followed.



**COUNTRYSIDE NEAR BETHLEHEM** has fields like this one, over which the angels sang and the shepherds heard the news of the birth of a child who would be the Savior. Photos and articles by Wm. Fletcher Allen.

## Movie reviewer analyzes holiday films

By Phil Boatwright  
For Baptist Press

HOLLYWOOD, Calif. — Even during the Christmas holidays, it's wise to become informed of even the most seemingly innocent fare from Hollywood.

A writer's warning in the *Los Angeles Times* in September is good year-round caution: "Experts who fault the Motion Picture Association of America's film rating system for being of little use say that in order for parents to better judge which movies might be harmful, they need much more information than PG, PG-13, and R."

In this column, by giving the synopsis and content of each release, the movie reporter is attempting to aid both moviegoers and those

who wish to combat Hollywood's influence over our society.

**THE SANTA CLAUSE.** Tim Allen. Fantasy. PG (Santa falls off a roof). When Santa is incapacitated, a divorced man trying to win back his estranged son takes over and soon finds himself the new Santa.

It's both funny and imaginative, and I found nothing objectionable as long as you don't have a problem with movie struggling to convince the young ones of the existence of the big fat man in the long white beard.

**THE MIRACLE ON 34TH STREET.** Richard Attenborough, Mara Wilson. Fantasy. PG (1 expletive, Santa is provoked into violence by the film's villain, but he later re-

ports). The manager of a New York department store hires Kris Kringle to be the store Santa.

Soon the old fellow has to convince the woman and her precocious daughter that he truly is Father Christmas. A true delight and a rarity as one of the few worthwhile re-makes.

Full of laughter, poignancy, and charm, it is noteworthy for containing both visual and verbal Christian metaphors, pointing out that Santa is a symbol and acknowledging God as the Supreme Being. There's even a Thanksgiving prayer — when's the last time you saw that in a Hollywood production?

The scene where a little deaf girl sits on Santa's knee

is worth the price of admission. Perhaps the most gratifying movie of the season.

**THE SWAN PRINCESS.** Animated Musical Fairy Tale with the voices of John Cleese, Jack Palance, Sandy Duncan, Steven Wright. G (Sorcery, the death of a parent, a couple of scary scenes — but tame compared to several recent films aimed at kids).

The movie stands on its own as a classic good vs. evil tale with love and honor rising triumphant. No surprise here, but it enchants us with music, humor, excitement, a good story, and romance.

**RITCHIE RICH.** Macauley Culkin plays the comic book rich kid who demolishes bad guy John Larroquette. Sounds like *Home Alone!* □

An Occasional Word  
By Lonnie Wilkey  
associate editor

### Gift of love

They do not realize it yet, but Joanna and Daniel Wilkey are learning an important truth about gifts this Christmas.

Sometime in the future, they'll look back on the Christmas of 1994 as the year they first realized there's something more important than simply receiving presents — that it's the giver, not the gift that matters.



WILKEY

On Nov. 7 of this year, my mother and their grandmother, who lived in South Carolina, went home to be with the Lord.

But having only two grandchildren, whom she loved dearly and spoiled rotten whenever she could, she had already purchased or made arrangements to purchase most of their Christmas gifts this year.

Years from now, those presents will be long gone. I'm sure, however, Joanna and Daniel will not forget the love their "Grandma Ruth" had for them.

It's sometimes hard for children to understand it's not the gift that counts, but rather it's the giver and the motive behind the giving. In fact, some adults probably have not learned that lesson yet.

Our family would gladly give back all the gifts if "Grandma Ruth" could be here this Christmas, but that's not to be. We are fortunate, however, that memories of her and her love will never die.

As you give gifts this year, don't do it because it's expected, or because you think someone will give you something. Instead, do it out of love. The gift may not last but love lives on.

And, above all, remember what Christmas is really about. God gave us the greatest gift of all — his son Jesus Christ — and he did it out of his love for us. □

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Southwest Baptist University seeks vice president for admissions and student life. Candidates must be Southern Baptist and must have experience in higher education admissions. Salary and benefits commensurate with experience. Submit resumes and at least three references by Jan. 31, 1995, to Search Committee, c/o President's Office, SBU, 1600 University Ave., Bolivar, Mo. 65613.



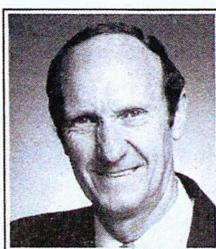
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## ■ the missionaries

■ **John and Janie Harmon Basham**, missionaries, are on the field and can be reached at P.O. Box 39973, Nairobi, Kenya. He grew up in Bristol and considers Chattanooga his hometown. She is from Chattanooga.

■ **Judy Carpenter**, missionary to Suriname, is in the states and can be reached at 3810 Marion, Memphis, 38111.

Carpenter is a native of Memphis.

■ **Michael and Carol Ewing**, missionaries to Tanzania, have arrived in Kenya for language study and can be reached at P.O. Box 52, Limuru, Kenya. A native of Tennessee, he was born in Memphis and grew up in Ellendale. Carol considers Memphis her hometown.

■ **David and Jennifer Hogle**, missionaries to Belgium, are on the field and can

be reached at 202 Avenue Winston Churchill, 1180 Uccle, Belgium. He considers Maryville his hometown.

■ **Larry and Shari Brand Ray**, missionaries to Belgium, have arrived on the field to begin their first term of service and can be reached at Fruithoflaan 105, bus 30, 2600 Berchem, Belgium. Both are natives of Memphis.

■ **Shaun and Amal Shorosh**, Baptist representatives to Egypt, have arrived on the field to begin their first term of service and can be reached at P.O. Box 258, Saraya 21411, Alexandria, Egypt. He was born in Jordan and she is a native of Syria. Both consider Cleveland their hometown.

■ **Mary Witt**, missionary to Brazil, is in the states and can be reached at 4700 Schubert Rd., Apt. 504, Knoxville, 37912. She is a native of Knoxville.

## ■ the hospitals

■ The board of trustees of **Baptist Memorial Health Care System** elected the fol-



**MEMBERS OF OPPOSING FOOTBALL TEAMS** which played at Marion County High School are hosted at a Fifth Quarter fellowship by First Church, Jasper. Held twice during the season in the Marion County High School Field House, the event drew about 150 youth, including students and band members.

## Evangelist Steve Taylor now in Tennessee

**BRENTWOOD** — When Steve and Gloria Taylor moved here from Greenville, S.C., this fall, they were moving very close to four children and nine grandchildren.

They admit that readily, but they also know that Steve, a singing Southern Baptist evangelist, isn't ready to retire.

He has participated in more than 1,300 revivals in his 47 years of ministry. And he has conducted some 1,100 sacred and Gospel concerts.

The California native has

appeared as guest musician and led music for several Southern Baptist Conventions. He also has been involved closely on the state and associational level.

Steve Taylor entered full-time evangelism in 1948 while he was still in college.

The Taylors lived in Greenville, S.C., for almost 40 years where they were deeply involved in the local church, the association, and the state Baptist convention.

They now live at 501 Sunberry Ct., Brentwood. □

lowing members as officers Dec. 13 at its annual meeting — J. Ralph McIntyre of Nashville, first vice chairman;

James R. Wallace of Arkansas, second vice chairman; and Henry G. West of Covington, secretary. It also elected David L. Drumel vice president for pastoral care. He was previously director of pastoral care.



**DRUMEL**

Drumel has served churches in Memphis, Knoxville, and Kentucky. The health care system is affiliated with the Tennessee, Arkansas, and Mississippi Baptist conventions. The system currently consists of 30 corporations and 16 hospitals.

## ■ the leaders

■ **Everett Hills Church**, Maryville, has called **Bob Peek** of Knoxville as interim pastor.

# Tennessee Sampler ■ views, insights

## Keeping true Christmas spirit

By Rufus Harris, pastor  
Calvary Church, Jackson

Christmas will soon be here! People are singing it, bells are ringing it, lights are stringing it, presents are bringing it, and parties are swinging it. Yes, the signs of another Christmas season are all around us. Christmas should be and is meant to be a most blessed time, a time of thankfulness, a time of love, a time of peace, and a time of joy. And yet for many it has become a time of stress, sadness, and loneliness. Some of you may identify with these negative experiences. How can we keep the true spirit of Christmas?

**First, keep Christ central in your celebration.** It is wonderful to teach your children about St. Nicholas who was a generous pastor in Asia Minor during the fourth century. His reputation for giving gifts to children gave birth to the tradition of exchanging gifts during the season.

However, it is more important to teach your children that the greatest gift ever given was the gift of the son of God. For many Christian families, Santa gets more attention than Jesus.

Will you make a deliberate effort to keep your focus on Christ this Christmas season?

**Second, schedule time with your family.** It has been said that true love is spelled t-i-m-e. Spend time together as a family. Let me suggest that you schedule some family activities. How blessed it is for a family to gather

around to listen to the Christmas story as it is being read.

**Third, do something nice for someone else.** Be sensitive to those who live alone, who are less fortunate than you and even those who do not like you. Expressions of kindness to these will cause the spirit of Christmas to fill your hearts. Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine you did it for me," Matt. 25:40.

**Fourth, change your pattern of giving.** Instead of spending so much money on expensive Christmas gifts, put aside a little more than the usual amount for the Lottie Moon Foreign Mission Christmas Offering. This offering goes directly to the foreign mission field to aid missionaries in sharing the love of our Lord. □

## If you hadn't heard about Christmas?

By William Owens, pastor  
Ridgedale Church, Chattanooga

As long as there have been people on earth, the philosophers have argued whether or not a falling tree would produce a noise if there was no one present to hear. Perhaps the theological question would be: Would there be a Christmas if no one had ever told others about the child born in a manger? "Of course there would be," you argue. But I raise the question again. As far as you are concerned, if you had never heard, would there be a Christmas? (Christ-

mas means the worship of Christ.) It's not enough that God sent his son, someone had to tell others what had happened.

The church's primary role in the Christmas celebration is to tell others that God sent his son. My prayer is that we may reach our goal for the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions this Sunday. \$22,000 to tell others what God has done. □

## The birth if viewed by female

By Charles Brown, pastor  
First Church, Maryville

Once a month area ministers from many denominations meet at an area church for programs and fellowship. Recently, the host pastor presented an interesting program in preparation for Advent in which she interpreted the biblical metaphors surrounding childbirth from a feminine perspective.

It fired my imagination, to say the least. Granted, Jesus' conception was through the power of the Holy Spirit. But who delivered Jesus? Usually, a mid-wife was present. If so, who was she? How long was Mary in labor? Was it a difficult or easy delivery? Was she given medication? Was Jesus spanked at birth? Did Jesus get his days and nights reversed? Did Mary nurse Jesus or feed him a popular Palestinian formula? Did Jesus cry often? Did Mary sing tender Jewish lullabies to the infant? Did Jesus burp like most babies?

I contend that such an intimate per-

spective is missing because the biblical writers were male and lacked a mother's insight into the birth process. Even Luke, recognized as a physician, fails to give us the detailed information we desire. In the angel's announcement to the shepherds, he reports: "... you will find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger" Luke 2:12. That's it! Only a concise, journalistic account of the event, devoid of detail.

Would the birth account have read differently if a woman had penned it? Perhaps. For no one understands the mystery of life quite like a mother. Out of Mary's womb the gift of life emerged. She was there. She felt the pain. She knew exactly what took place. She could have penned a beautiful story.

While we yearn for more intimate information, we may never find it in the pages of Scripture. But simply speak to a mother and behold her animated eyes as she glowingly describes the event as it might have been. □

Articles included in "Tennessee Sampler — views, insights" are written by Tennessee Baptist church and associational leaders. The articles are chosen for publication from newsletters of churches and associations. The *Baptist and Reflector* does not necessarily concur with the views expressed.

# Condensed Sunday School lessons for Jan. 1

The Jan. 1 Sunday School lessons are written in condensed form by the *Baptist and Reflector* staff. Regular lessons resume in the Jan. 4 issue. Because of holidays, there was a short work week. — Editor

## Convention Uniform:

**Deliverance and forgiveness**  
*Matthew 8:28-9:8*

The study aim for this lesson is to show the concern of God the Father and God the Son in spiritual and physical well-being of people.

Peter, in speaking of Jesus to the Roman centurion (Acts 10:38), says that Jesus went about doing good.

In the world, Jesus in word and deed bore witness to the love of God. He showed concern for the whole person, body, soul, and spirit.

An outline is helpful: A varied ministry (ch. 8:1-27); In Gentile territory (vv. 23-24); and Sickness and sin (ch. 9:1-8).

In chapters 8-9, Matthew records 10 miracles — and emphasizes Christ's authority over nature, disease, and death.

Jesus did what no one else could do — except God. He showed his compassion by the way he cared for people, healing a leper and a paralytic — and Peter's mother-in-law.

Jesus then crossed the lake (Galilee) into Gentile territory. He showed his authority over nature, and his willingness to help "outsiders."

As he entered his public ministry, Jesus made Capernaum his "home." Peter, Andrew, and possibly John and James lived in this fishing center on the Galilee.

Jesus responded to faith as he healed people. He also was ready to forgive sins.

Sin and Satan are still active, just as in Bible times. We need to apply the truths of this lesson in our own lives.

Probably the sweetest word in the Bible is "forgiven." We have the opportunity to hear that word. God provides and forgives. □

## Life and Work:

**Jesus Is God's Son**  
*Mark 1:1-11*

We begin this study at the

beginning of Mark's Gospel. In the early verses, we can find the centrality of Christian faith. In Christ, we have a personal friend, a Savior who is God's Son.

Mark's style is simplicity. He gives concise account of the ministry of this friend.

This is our central truth — Jesus Christ is the unique, divine Son of God.

The persecuted Christians to whom Mark wrote needed to know of the availability of this personal friendship.

They suffered terribly at the hands of Nero. Mark eased their pain by showing them that in Christ, God had become flesh.

Mark's Gospel is very personal to every believer, every reader.

The study outline helps: The beginning (v. 1); The forerunner (vv. 2-3); The message (vv. 4-8); The anointing (vv. 9-11).

Mark says that the Gospel of Jesus began with John who baptized people in the desert near the Jordan River.

That was his trademark. To emphasize the contrast be-

tween himself and the Messiah, John said Jesus would baptize with the Holy Spirit. In other words, when a person accepts God's love through faith in Jesus, the sign of salvation that occurs is the residence of the Holy Spirit within the believer.

Our lives must be lived in obedience to Christ who pleased his Father. □

## Bible Book Lesson:

**God's answers to questions about his justice**

*Habakkuk 1:2-6, 13-15a; 2:2-5a; 3:17-18*

Habakkuk, Lamentations, and Jeremiah are lessons about God's tough love. They are about times when world events raised questions about God's faithfulness, actions, and love.

However, they also reflect prayer that really is a conversation with God.

They loved their nation and could not give up, and they loved God too much to ignore his purposes.

An outline will be valuable as we study: Habakkuk's ques-

tion about injustice (ch. 1:1-4); God's answer to the question (vv. 5-11); Habakkuk's question about God's instrument of judgment (vv. 12-17); God's sure justice (ch. 2:1-5); Woes on the wicked (vv. 6-20); and Habakkuk's prayer of trust (ch. 3:1-19).

Habakkuk is a minor prophet who lived during the end of the seventh century B.C., as the Assyrian empire crumbled. The book begins with a dialogue between the prophet and God.

The prophet grieved over the people's injustice. He prayed about this deep problem, asking God questions and then listening to God's answers.

He expected action because he was praying, not just talking about what the people were doing.

He revealed his concern. He was different from us, because he and his people lived between God's announcement of the victory of righteousness and the coming of that victory. Habakkuk's prayer is a sound model of persistency, and trust in God. □

## Our Christmas Prayer for You

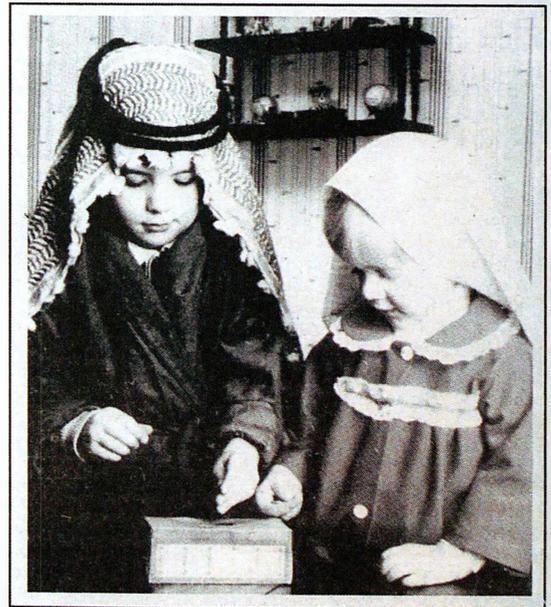
*The staff and children of  
Tennessee Baptist Children's Homes  
wish you a joyous Christmas.*

*May God richly bless you and your family in the  
new year and draw you closer to our Saviour.*



*Gerald L. Stow*

Dr. Gerald L. Stow; President/Treasurer



*"And a little child shall lead them."*

Isaiah 11:6

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# ■ Sunday School lesson commentary

## The Savior is born

By Ray Fullilove

Christmas comes to us again — Christmas, the most desired season. Desired because it warms the heart and takes away the weariness of spirit.

It speaks of the compassion of God and not of the corruption of man. It brings to everyone a song, not a sigh; eternal hope, not enslaving sorrow; eternal life, not eternal condemnation; and God who came to be like us that we might be like him.

It is a time that God breaks through the darkness and reveals the Way; when he breaks disillusionment and reveals the Truth; and when he breaks despair and reveals Life everlasting.

Christmas is Emmanuel, "God with us," and says to us, "For unto you is born this day — a Savior, which is Christ the Lord."

Christmas is when a Savior was born for every heart, in every land, and for every situation.

Christmas is Christ in our hearts. "Christmas without Christ is shorn of its sublime significance, robbed of its rhyme and reason, bleached of its best colors."

Christmas is God's power becoming personal. The Almighty God becoming accessible. The Prince of Peace presenting himself. The Everlasting Father becoming a part of you and me.

Christmas is God coming to us that we may come to him through

### Bible Book Series for Dec. 25 Focal Passage Luke 2:1-16

a Savior in a strange, but significant manner.

#### In a strange decree — Luke vv. 1-31

God is revealed to us in strange ways. Indeed, "His ways are past finding out." They may seem strange; but, if we wait long enough to consider them, they will be spiritually significant.

It was only a decree (vv. 1-3), but it marked the open door for heaven to enter into a closed exit for the hurting. Indeed, "God moves in mysterious ways, his wonders to perform."

In the middle of all of the commotion, the crowds, the curious, and the commercial setting, God moves in to attract our attention — and perhaps get to out hearts.

In the atmosphere of confusion, commercialism, and corruption, perhaps we should agree, "It is not to say look what the world is coming to; but to say, look what has come to the world."

It was only a decree made by Caesar Augustus, but it became an open door for Christ and a Savior to be born.

#### In a spectacular demonstration — vv. 4-7

When God came and a Savior

was born, God introduced himself with a spectacular demonstration. There was the awareness of God (vv. 8-9), the assurance of God (vv. 10-12), and the angelic praise from God (vv. 13-14).

Christmas should cause us to be conscious of the glory of God, the good news of God, and the glowing songs of God. Our Savior came in spectacular demonstration.

#### In a satisfying decision — vv. 15-20

When we experience a decree which activates God, a design which authenticates God, a demonstration which accentuates God, we can only come to the place of acceptance.

For Christmas to become genuine in your heart and mine, there must be a decision. We must say, as the shepherds, "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste ..." (vv. 15-16a).

Christmas is Christ in you and me. This is our glad tidings at Christmas. It tells us of a love which saves to the uttermost, a language which speaks of the uppermost, a light which shines to the utmost, and a life which lives, forever, in the innermost.

No wonder we cannot help but sing, "Joy to the world, the Lord is come!" □ — Ray Fullilove is pastor of Poplar Avenue Church, Memphis.

Life and Work Series  
for Dec. 25  
Focal Passage:  
John 7:42-43;  
Matthew 2:1-10

## God fulfills his promises

By Elizabeth Howard

Micah had prophesied a glorious future, a shepherd king who would bring peace and security. But it was more than 700 years before Jesus was born to a poor working class family in a cattle stall. Many of the Israelites expected to find the Messiah in a palace, the rightful place for a descendant of David; some gave up on the prophecy altogether after such a long time. Only a few, such as Simeon and Anna (Luke 2), recognized him when they saw him.

#### Doubting the fulfillment — John 7:42-43

During the Feast of the Tabernacles, a number of people heard Jesus teach in the temple. Many believed in him (v. 31), but the Pharisees sought to have him arrested. A division occurred among the crowd, some thinking he was a prophet, others that he was the Christ. Others, not knowing he was born in Bethlehem, raised the question of his birthplace.

#### Seeking the fulfillment — Matthew 2:1-2

At Jesus' birth, or soon after, the Magi, having seen the star, set out on a journey to discover the identity of the child and to worship him. The Magi were Gentile scholars, having knowledge about astronomy, astrology, the occult, mathematics, and history. They went first to Jerusalem to Herod's palace, for Herod was the king. His palace seemed the logical place to find one born "king of the Jews."

#### Resisting the fulfillment — vv. 3-8

Herod, appointed king by the Roman government, was so fearful of losing his position that he had several people, including his wife and two sons, killed. Now, the Magi had come, seeking another king. Herod was greatly disturbed, and so were the people, for they knew of Herod's brutality.

Herod called the chief priests and scribes together to learn of Christ's birthplace. They quoted Micah, who had prophesied of the birth in Bethlehem. Then in secret, Herod asked the Magi when the star had appeared, for he wanted to know how old the child might be. He asked them to report back to him, so he could go and worship, too, but we know from his future actions what he intended to do. Neither the prophecies, nor the child's identity, nor the act of worship had any significance to Herod.

#### Celebrating the fulfillment — vv. 9-10

Once the Magi started on their way to Bethlehem, the star reappeared and guided them to the place where he was. They were overjoyed when they saw the star, for they knew it was no ordinary star. When they found Jesus, they worshiped him and gave him the gifts they had carried for many miles.

The giving of gifts has become a big part of Christmas, even to many who want to leave Christ out of the holiday altogether. As Christians, the giving of gifts should be an important part of the season, too, for the precedent was set for us almost 2,000 years ago. What better opportunity than the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions? We can give a gift that will help fulfill the Great Commission to go and tell, a gift that will "keep on giving" forever. □ — Elizabeth Howard is a member of Cumberland Homesteads Church, Crossville.

## The wise men worship Jesus

By Samuel Dean

When I was a child, I could expect to find a toy under the Christmas tree. Usually it was one toy, for our family had to struggle financially. During my teen years, there came an abrupt change in Christmas gifts: I began to receive clothes. Slowly it dawned on me that a mature response to Christmas dealt with my needs and not my wants.

The wisemen from the East (magi) had a need to find the new King of the Jews. These foreigners were attracted by a star that they were studying and following. Possessing an openness for truth, these men have symbolized the universal quest of mankind to find the gift of God's presence in life.

We want God to present himself, "O that I knew where I might find him," Job cried. We, too, would like to be blessed with the presence of God. His presence would be the greatest present. Augustine said, "Thou hast made us to incline to thee, and our hearts are restless and tormented until in thee they find their peace."

#### Threatened by a gift

Never think that God's coming brought peace and joy everywhere. Instead his coming caused upheaval. King Herod, a paranoid ruler, was troubled and "all Jerusalem with him." Vested, powerful interests protected its domain. The political giants stood on slippery terrain. The birth of a baby born to inherit a throne was "nothing to sneeze at." Mighty men had fallen because of less.

Herod did not seek the child for the same reason as the wisemen. Confirming prophecy related to Jesus, Herod sent the wisemen to Jerusalem to find the child. The gift of God was to be sought out for

### Convention Uniform Series for Dec. 25 Focal Passage Matthew 2:1-12

extermination. Not everyone wanted God's gift. The gift was threatening to a way of life.

#### Worshipping with gifts

These outsiders (wisemen) found the child and presented gifts worthy of royalty: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. The costly gifts were representative of their lives — myrrh and frankincense (spices) could have been elements in some of their magic potions. Through the gifts, they extended themselves in worship of the Christ child.

Christmas is a time for giving our gifts to one another. God gave us his best — himself in Christ. We, like the wisemen, can give ourselves to him and be eternally blessed.

A few days ago a Sunday School class in our church took fruit baskets to several people in a nursing home. A note that stated, "We love you," was attached to the baskets. When one of the ladies got her basket she exclaimed, "I didn't know anyone loved me." Later she took her fruit basket down the hallway and told others, "See, somebody loves me!"

Yes, my dear, all of us have a need to be loved by somebody. At this Christmas time let us "behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us ..." (1 John 3:1). □ — Samuel Dean is pastor of First Church, Clinton.

