

# Baptist and Reflector

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## FMB appoints 38 missionaries at Broadmoor

By Lonnie Wilkey  
*Baptist and Reflector*

MEMPHIS — With the celebration of Christ's birth just two weeks away, Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board trustees commissioned 38 missionaries to proclaim the good news of Jesus' birth, death, and resurrection around the world.

The Dec. 12 missionary appointment service at Broadmoor Baptist Church was held in conjunction with the FMB trustees' Dec. 11-13 meeting in Memphis.

Approximately 1,500 people listened as the new missionaries shared testimonies of God's call to missions. A common thread woven among many of the testimonies was the influence of Southern Baptist missions organizations such as Royal Ambassadors and Girls in Action.

"Tonight, a GA's call to be a missionary is being fulfilled," said Grace Smith Morris of Wickliffe, Ky., who along with her husband Mike, will serve in South Korea.

Robert Nichols, a pastor in Dunbar, W. Va., shared that God called him to be a missionary in 1981 while he was working with RAs at his church. At the same time his wife, Deborah, was working with Acteens. The Nichols will be going to spread the message of Christ in Uruguay.

Several missionaries also cited their involvement in volunteer or summer missions as keys to their decisions to become career missionaries.

For one new appointee, the service was an answer to his parents' prayers.

"Forty-four years ago tonight I was born and my parents dedicated me to spreading the Gospel," said Glenn Ellis,



**MISSIONARIES WITH TENNESSEE** ties were appointed Dec. 12 at Broadmoor Church, Memphis. From left in front are Sherri and Jeni Smith, Cordova; Lisa and Steve Sloas; Cordova; Grace and Mike Morris, Wickliffe, Ky.; Marcia and Glenn Ellis, Jackson; and in the back Dede and Frank Trotter, Enterprise, Miss. — Photo by Sandy King

pastor of Liberty Grove Church, Jackson. "I go with excitement to share the Good News."

Ellis and his wife will serve in Brazil. She expressed the concern of older missionaries who leave grown children behind in the United States. "God freed me of my fears when my children assured me we would spend eternity together," she said.

For missionaries such as Sherri Hewlett Smith of Cordova, the appointment represented a return "home." The daughter of missionaries in Brazil, Smith,

along with her husband Jeni, will return to the country where she was reared. "I thank God for the opportunity to go and serve him," she said.

In his charge to missionaries Avery Willis, senior vice president for overseas operations for the Foreign Mission Board, reminded the appointees they were not going out on a mission for the FMB or Southern Baptists. Instead, "you're going on a mission with God. It is God's mission," Willis stressed.

— See FMB, page 2

**MOVING?** Cut out and mail address label and new address to *Baptist and Reflector*, P.O. Box 728, Brentwood, Tenn., 37024

## Do they know why we celebrate Christmas?



**"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." — (Luke 2:11, KJV)**

A main concern for Christians at Christmastime should be to help others know the meaning of the celebration.

And from the heart, we must ask the question, "Do they know?"

While we are preparing for all the joy and jolly experiences of Christmas, we should be preparing our hearts to receive not only Christmas but the other children of our Lord. *Do they know?*

Oh, it's true that most people know about Christmas. John Betjeman wrote some poignant and pointed lines about Christmas:

*And is it true? And is it true,*

*This most tremendous tale of all,  
Seen in a stained-glass window's hue,  
A Baby in an ox's stall?*

*The Maker of the stars and sea  
Become a Child on earth for me?*

The answer is, yes, he did that — and more. And so we celebrate Christmas.

Vance Havner, great Baptist preacher with sharp wit and pen, said that Christmas

is based on an exchange of gifts: "the gift of God to man — his unspeakable gift of his Son; and the gift of man to God — when we present our bodies as a living sacrifice and, like the Macedonians (II Corinthians 8:5), first give ourselves to God. No one has kept or can keep Christmas until he has had a part in this two-way transaction."

All across Tennessee these days, Baptists and other Christians are looking toward December 25. We must tell others why!

Faith is the light in Christmas and love is the warmth of Christmas. Truth is the belief in the reason for Christmas, and Christ himself is the All of Christmas.

The staff of the *Baptist and Reflector*, through words on pages, through prayers and greetings, wish for all Tennessee Baptists the full measure of Christ's love.

As we observe the anniversary of his birth, let us reach out to others with our lives as expressions of the true Christmas they need to know. — Editor

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# FMB appoints 38 new missionaries ...

— Continued from page 1

Willis pointed out several assurances from Scripture that the "arm, hand, and finger of God" will be with them on their journey.

The providence of God is identified in the hand of God, Willis said. "He will guide you and open doors in ways you never thought of," he told the new missionaries.

The FMB administrator reminded them that the arm of the Lord is revealed in his son, Jesus Christ. "You have a message of joy. Never forget the purpose God sent you for," Willis challenged.

Willis pointed out there will be dangers on the mission field.

He related the story of two missionary families kidnapped recently in Tanzania. The missionaries were found unharmed because they were convinced the "hand of God" protected them, Willis said.

"We go with the power of God and the protection and provision of God," Willis reminded the missionaries.

Willis noted that by "his finger God wants you to reach out and touch people. God will take you, use you, and demonstrate his power.

"The finger of the Lord reaches out through you to accomplish his work and glorify his Son."

During a time of commitment, FMB President Jerry Rankin reminded the audience that "God can use anybody when you respond to his touch, his call."

He noted the new missionaries face "the reality of a lost world," but they have responded with obedience to God's call.

Rankin challenged the audience by reminding them that "it is never too late to respond to God's will.

"God is calling Southern Baptists to reach that last frontier. Who'll tell them if you're not willing to go?" he asked.

The 38 named missionaries in Memphis bring the board's total missionary count to 4,139. That figure includes 3,515 career and associate missionaries and 624 two-year workers.

For the year the FMB appointed 542 missionaries, just shy of the 1994 record



**FOREIGN MISSION BOARD** President Jerry Rankin visits with Tennessee's five trustees who serve on the FMB. From left are Bill Blanchard, pastor, First Church, Soddy-Daisy, vice president of the board; Dick Sisk, pastor, Broadmoor Church, Memphis, which hosted the missionary appointment service; Katherine Fortner, member, Wallace Memorial Church, Knoxville; Bobbie Jackson, member, First Church, Millington; Rankin; and J.C. Parrott, pastor, Sunnyside Church, Kingsport. — Photo by Sandy King

of 545. The 542 figure includes 246 career and associate missionary appointments and a record of 296 two-year workers — including 198 International Service Corps volunteers and 98 journeymen. That 296 two-year total will increase since more will be assigned before Dec. 31, FMB officials said.

Missionaries appointed with Tennessee ties include:

**Jeno and Sherri Smith of Cordova** — Smith is an editor with the SBC Brotherhood Commission. They are members of Immanuel Church, Germantown. They have two children, Andrea and Austin. The Smiths will serve in Brazil where he will work in student ministries and she will work in church and home ministries.

**Steve and Lisa Sloas of Cordova** — Sloas is an attorney and accountant. They are members of Cordova Church. The couple has three children, Lindsay, Whitney, and Stephen. They will serve in Costa Rica where he will work in financial ad-

ministration and she will work in church and home ministries.

**Glenn and Marcia Ellis of Jackson** — Ellis is pastor of Liberty Grove Church. They will serve in Brazil where he will do general evangelism and she will serve in church and home ministries. They have two college-age children.

**Mike and Grace Morris of Wickliffe, Ky.** — Morris, a native of Memphis, is pastor of First Church, Wickliffe. They will serve in South Korea where he will do general evangelism and she will do church and home ministries.

**Frank and Dede Trotter of Enterprise, Miss.** — Dede is the former Dede Sturdivant of Memphis. They will serve in southern Africa where he will start churches and she will serve in church and home ministries.

The Foreign Mission Board's next appointment service will be Feb. 13, 1996 at Wallace Memorial Baptist Church in Knoxville. □

## FMB trustees release \$10 million for overseas needs

By Mark Kelly  
For Baptist Press

MEMPHIS — Trustees of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board addressed urgent missionary needs around the world and accepted another agency's good will offer to assume responsibility for a missionary retirement fund during their regular board meeting Dec. 11-13 here.

The trustee board also addressed a worrisome decline in giving to Southern Baptist hunger and relief projects overseas and appointed 38 missionaries for service in 20 countries around the world.

The rapid growth of Southern Baptists' worldwide missionary force — now at 4,139 in more than 130 countries — has created an urgent need for missionary housing and automobiles, said John W. White III, assistant vice president for overseas operations. The needs are especially critical in Eastern Europe, where the collapse

of communism opened doors closed for 70 years.

Provisionally, up to \$10 million to be freed from Hong Kong for global capital needs could help fill this gap.

The recent sale of older missionary properties in Hong Kong will plow as much as \$30 million back into the board's Global Missionary Capital fund, White said. Trustees voted to release one-third of that, up to \$10 million, for housing and automobiles around the world — as the proceeds are received by the board. The other two-thirds will be invested, as usual into the global capital fund.

Trustees also accepted a proposal to transfer to the Southern Baptist Annuity Board responsibility for the FMB's pension plan for missionaries appointed before 1982.

That plan promised missionaries a fixed monthly benefit based on years of service, said Carl W. Johnson, FMB

vice president for finance. But it required the board to bear the investment risks necessary to guarantee that promised benefit for 3,000 retirees.

In a proposal dated Dec. 1, 1995, the Annuity Board offered to assume the plan's \$24 million liability and an equal amount of investment assets — relieving the FMB of future interest rate funding risks. With the change, missionaries under this plan will be eligible for periodic benefit increases, including a 5 percent increase Jan. 1, 1996.

"This proposal reflects the servant heart of the Annuity Board and the partnership between the agencies," FMB President Jerry A. Rankin told trustees. "The Annuity Board exists to serve Southern Baptists, and this is a profound gesture of good will on their part."

"Our offer to assume responsibility for these benefits is simply a reflection of who we are and what we do," Annuity

Board President Paul W. Powell told Baptist Press. "We are pleased to offer the service."

FMB trustees learned Southern Baptist giving to world hunger and relief has dropped dangerously low, according to Bill Bullington, vice president for overseas operations. Receipts for 1995 are running 15 percent below last year, meaning that only 31 of 45 project requests for 1995 could be funded — and those at only one-half the need.

"You're on solid biblical ground when you care for the hurting and dispossessed and those in need," Bullington said. "The prophet Amos said God judges a nation for not caring for the poor," he added.

In addition, hunger and relief projects provide a platform for ministry in countries closed to traditional missionary activity, Bullington said.

Trustee chairman Leon Hyatt Jr. of Pineville, La., appointed a five-member committee to study the problem. □

- Wm. Fletcher Allen, editor
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# CP in danger by changing attitudes: Lewis

Baptist Press

ALPHARETTA, Ga. — Southern Baptists' cooperative missions funding is threatened more by changing attitudes in local churches and state conventions than by competitive missions causes, said Home Mission Board President Larry Lewis.

Speaking to HMB board of directors during their Dec. 13 meeting, Lewis praised the year's record giving for the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for Home Missions, but said he is concerned about the Cooperative Program.

"Many have lamented the divisive and competitive efforts of groups like the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, and we deeply regret the millions of

dollars that have been diverted from the Cooperative Program to fund such competitive causes," Lewis said. "However, an even greater threat to CP comes from ... state conventions that have been for some time in a pattern of reducing funds that go outside their state to SBC causes in order to fund expanded programs and increased personnel within their states.

"An even greater threat than that are local churches which have lost their vision to be part of a world strategy for sharing the Gospel," Lewis continued. "The typical Southern Baptist church now gives less than 7 percent to CP, and it's getting smaller every year even though the needs of the world are constantly expand-

ing." Lewis challenged board members "to assure your church is a pace-setter in missionary support both in percentage and actual dollar support through CP and the special mission offerings."

In other business the board approved a 1996 budget of \$88.6 million, a \$1.4 million increase over the 1995 budget; restructured three internal divisions; transferred property in Massachusetts to the state convention and in Arizona to a local association; and addressed six motions referred to the HMB by the 1995 Southern Baptist Convention.

Directors also appointed 11 missionaries, elected three new staff and honored nine retirees. The chaplains commission endorsed 49 chaplains. □

# Henry describes peace of Christmas

Baptist Press

ALPHARETTA, Ga. — The Christmas story in the book of Luke describes the search, source, and satisfaction of peace found in God, Southern Baptist Convention President Jim Henry told the Home Mission Board.

Henry, pastor of First Church, Orlando, Fla., brought the devotional message to HMB staff and directors before the directors' winter meeting Dec. 13.

His text was the second chapter of Luke in which the angels exclaim, "Glory to God in the highest. And on earth, peace to men on whom his favor rests."

"When the angel spoke that word, he was speaking of a great need of man's heart and that is a search for peace," said Henry. He recounted his travels to Israel a year ago for the signing of a peace accord and then a month ago for the funeral of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

"We were driving into Jerusalem to a weeping city," he said. "That elusive search for peace continues to elude us."

The Christmas story points to God as the source of peace, and it also speaks to the satisfaction of peace, Henry added. "The peace with God is also the peace of God," he said. "He is the satisfaction when he brings his peace that nothing or no one else can give or do." □

# FMB trustees uphold firing of missionary couple in Singapore

By Mark Kelley  
For Baptist Press

MEMPHIS — Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board trustees Dec. 12 upheld the termination of a missionary couple for advocating the practice of "falling" or "being slain in the spirit" in a Singapore church.

The couple, Charles and Sharon Carroll, appealed to trustees during their Dec. 11-13 meeting in Memphis, after receiving a termination letter from board staff dated Nov. 24. Carroll is pastor of the 400-member Community of Praise Baptist Church in Singapore.

While the Carrolls said they disagree with the board's position on the practice, they affirmed they received a complete hearing. They also said they are convinced God wants them to continue their Singapore ministry "outside the channels" of the FMB.

A nine-member trustee committee

met with the Carrolls for three hours Dec. 11. After deliberating two additional hours, the committee voted unanimously to uphold the couple's termination effective Jan. 1, 1996, "for failure to perform duties in keeping with the expectations for missionaries of the Foreign Mission Board."

The Carrolls said they will return to their Singapore congregation, which has pledged to pay their salary, as independent Baptist missionaries.

The committee action noted the Carrolls, in advocating "falling," are "operating outside of generally accepted practices for Southern Baptists" and concluded "it is no longer appropriate for you to represent the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention."

The committee's decision to uphold termination was approved by the full board of trustees without debate or opposition in a plenary session on the af-

ternoon of Dec. 12.

In a 12-page written appeal, Carroll argued the practice of "falling" "is not unscriptural" and has been witnessed as a manifestation of God's spirit throughout church history. He asserted that Southern Baptist foreign missionaries should not be expected to impose Western worship styles on Baptist churches in other cultures.

Carroll also disputed charges that he had taught "falling" was normative for all believers, that he had caused dissension among Singapore Baptists, and that he was guilty of insubordination in refusing to resign.

The committee's decision to uphold termination of the Carrolls, however, was based on their testimony before the committee and not on charges about their conduct in Singapore, said FMB President Jerry A. Rankin.

The committee heard Carroll defend spiritual experiences that are "beyond

what Southern Baptists would consider as having any sound biblical basis," said Rankin, who supervised Carroll when he (Rankin) served as director of the board's work in southern Asia prior to election as president in 1993.

"Southern Baptists have a great deal of diversity, flexibility, and latitude in many areas, including spiritual gifts and manifestations of the Spirit," Rankin said. "However, we must come down as Southern Baptists on the basis of practices for which there is strong biblical evidence.

"We would expect our missionaries to teach and practice doctrine and manifestations of their witness in a way that is compatible with the Southern Baptists who sent them out."

As the hearing ended, committee members encircled the Carrolls and prayed for their continued ministry. In turn, Carroll prayed for God's blessing on the work of the FMB. □



## Baptist Center employees recognized

Three Baptist Center employees were recognized by the Tennessee Baptist Convention Executive Board during their December meeting. From left are Grace Darden, Central Administrative Division, 20 years; Larry Lindsey, Central Administrative Division, five years; and Carrol Kelley, Woman's Missionary Union, 10 years. Not present for the recognition was M.C. McCarter, BSU director at Lincoln Memorial University, Harrogate.

# Changes in leadership occur at SBC, state entities

Compiled from Baptist Press

NASHVILLE — A Baptist seminary and a state convention and state Baptist paper have recently announced changes in leadership. A brief report on each follows.

**New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary** has named Provost Billy K. Smith as interim president, following a resignation announcement from Landrum P. Leavell II, the seminary's interim president for the past year.

Smith was elected unanimously Dec. 12 by the trustees' executive committee.

Smith has served at New Orleans Seminary since 1976. A professor of Old Testament and Hebrew and former chairman of the division of biblical studies, he was named vice president for academic affairs

in March 1992. Later the same year he was named provost and academic dean of the graduate faculty.

Before joining the NOBTS staff Smith was a pastor for 20 years in churches in Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas.

The **Arkansas Baptist State Convention** has elected former Arkansas Baptist pastor Emil Turner as the next executive director of the convention.

Turner, 45, begins his ministry Jan. 15, succeeding current executive director Don Moore who will retire at the end of February.

Turner was elected unanimously Dec. 12 during an Arkansas Baptist executive board meeting in Little Rock. Search committee chairman Billy Kite described Turner as "a soul-winner" who has "per-

sonal concern for people who need the Lord." Since 1991 Turner has been pastor of First Church, Lake Charles, La.

William R. "Bill" Webb, editor of the *Illinois Baptist* since 1984, is the new editor of the *Missouri Baptist Convention's Word & Way* news journal.

Webb, 45, was the Word & Way committee's unanimous choice during their Dec. 11-12 meeting. He will assume the position March 1.

An Illinois native, Webb was a staff writer in the news and information services department of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board in Richmond, Va.

Webb is the president-elect of the Southern Baptist Press Association and will assume the presidency in February. □

## Remembering from seasons past

Letters on this page and page 6 are memories and feelings about the Christmas season. The letters are from Tennessee Baptists who responded to the editor's invitation to share Christmas memories with other *Baptist and Reflector* readers.

We are pleased to publish these memories from the lives of some of our readers as they remember Christmas experiences. These may bring to mind similar memories for many other readers.

From us to you, each one of our readers, a blessed Christmas of Christ's own joy and love. — Editor

### He is alive

December 9, 1984, my husband entered the hospital where he had five by-pass heart surgery. The doctor said everything seemed to go well.

I saw him in the heart care unit and was told there would be no response during the first visits but later he would begin to wake up and respond. The next five weeks were spent waiting and praying for a miracle.

My mother and I had spent Christmas day together for 61 years. Not this year. She suffered with Parkinson's disease and was unable to come to the hospital. Our tradition was broken.

This was a Christmas when there was no getting ready for gifts and dinners. Everyone was so good to send cards, call, and visit, always bringing good things to eat.

On Christmas eve it was a surprise to see our 16-year-old grandson walk into the intensive care waiting room with his sleeping bag. As we spread our bags out on the floor, we knew this could possibly be the last Christmas with his granddaddy, who thought the sun rose and set on that boy!

This was a very hard time for all of us. But a Christmas when I knew the true meaning of the presence of Jesus who was with us to sustain us as we helplessly stood by our loved one and asked God to help us accept his will.

On January 12 he went to his new home that had been prepared for him. I came to our home alone. We miss him. But because of Jesus, whose birthday we celebrate at Christmas time — we shall see him again!

Mrs. Hershel Selph  
Dyer 38330

### Holy family

I want to tell you about the best memories of Christmas.

The year was 1943. I had a son one month old and my Sunday School teacher asked me to be in a play at the church at Big Springs.

I was Mary and my husband was Joseph. Our son was baby Jesus. We had the Wise Men, and we all dressed for the play. God was there with

us and everyone enjoyed the play. I am 75 years old now, it was such a good memory.

Dorothy Baker  
Cleveland 37311

### Favorite gift

In 1954, I was seven years old. I was an only child at the time. We lived in an old home filled with holes in the walls, doors, and cracks in the floor.

That Christmas, I received a little record player with records. I was so proud to have such a nice gift with these extra pieces. I took care of it as I played it many times.

Time has passed and I'm still proud of my one gift at Christmas. Christ gave me a Savior. My Savior gives me love, hope, peace, joy, care, respect, gratitude, and responsibility.

Roberta Eskew  
Friendship 38034

### Special star

Two years ago a Christmas blessing was just what we had been praying for.

In late 1993, our children began asking us about plans for Christmas.

Our son Peter, in Brandon, Miss., invited us to spend the day with his family. Our other son, Matthew, invited us to spend the holiday in Westmoreland, Texas, with him and his wife Penni, who was expecting their first child in January.

We didn't respond to either invitation and on Thanksgiving night, I prayed for a "special" Christmas since we couldn't decide what to do.

During December, I was asked the usual questions: "Are you going to have a big Christmas?" "What are you going to do for the holidays?"

"Well, I don't really know," I would reply. "I am praying for God to give us a 'special' Christmas, so I'm just going to wait and see what happens."

As the month of December wore on, the Christmas shopping was done and the house got decorated.

In the rush, I almost forgot about my special prayer until Christmas morning when I received a call from our son Matthew informing us he was at the hospital in Fort Worth

with his wife, and it looked like the baby might be arriving that day.

Soon I called Mississippi to give the news of the impending birth.

Our daughter-in-law said this was the special Christmas I prayed for. Christmas day did turn out to be an exciting and special day as calls flurried back and forth and a new baby boy, Matthew Holden Hudson, was born at 3:30 that afternoon.

Later that night, our daughter called and found out about her new nephew. She asked about his name. I mistakenly said William Holden, then realized what I had said and corrected myself. The baby's name was Matthew Holden. William Holden was a movie star who was popular in the '50s.

Whether or not Matthew Holden becomes a movie star remains to be seen, but I do know that he was the special star God chose to light up our life with on Christmas day 1993.

Dorothy Hudson  
Jackson 38305

### Christmas and Christ

Christmas makes us think of the true meaning of the Christ Child. Sometimes I feel we don't do that. Maybe he hasn't been invited.

The world surely needs peace on earth, joy and the love he came to bring.

Yet do we really want him? Let us not forget God's perfect gift, something that doesn't decay with use.

May we have his love in our hearts everyday and not just Christmas day. Let us not forget who Jesus is and ask his presence.

Nannie Tramel  
Dowelltown 37059

### Birthday of Jesus

I am 61, married 41 years to Peggy Hutson (Gallimore), both born again Christians, members of Puryear Church. I want to share a few of the numerous things in our lives that make us thankful for Jesus birthday: heart attack with emergency by-pass surgery; business burned, destroying everything; malignant lymphoma; our 33-year-old son

drowned; due to illness we sold our business and were taken for 250,000. We have recovered from most of the above.

My wife has degenerative arthritis, gone through five operations of the spine; now in both knees.

By God's grace, love, mercy, and Jesus' death on Calvary, we now have eternal security and the peace that passeth all understanding. Our relationship with the Father, the Lord Jesus, and the Holy Spirit is beyond comprehension. Due to his love we have gone through the difficulties of the past by trust and faith in him. He is real and available to all his children who will believe and trust him.

Billy Gallimore  
Puryear 38251

### Time for thanks

After my husband and I married in 1986 we began a tradition in our home that we enjoy. We go to a Christmas tree farm and spend the day finding the right tree for our home and then we bring it home to decorate. We listen to Christmas music and drink hot chocolate. Another tradition that we began after we married was starting 12 days before Christmas we give each other a gift each day. We limit the gift to \$2 including the wrapping paper. We have received everything from each other from a spatula to coupons worth back-rubs and kisses. Christmas is a time to celebrate Jesus, the best gift any of us could receive. We celebrate this occasion through the advent time in our home. This year we are praising the Lord for moving us to Nashville and my job with TBC. We look forward to a tender Tennessee Christmas.

I thank the Lord for the gift he placed in my life 10 years ago, my husband, Mike. He is loving, kind and has a sweet spirit. He is always steadfast in his love for the Lord and me. Gifts are to be treasured!

Gail P. Parrish  
Missions Department, TBC

### Home at Christmas

Is there any other time of the year when families and friends gather together more than at Christmas?

Since our marriage, 47 years ago, my husband and I have lived in several different places. Many times these were far from family. Often the family came to us or we came to be with them. Overseas on two Christmases were celebrated with Christian friends. So we have been alone at Christmas only one time in our life together.

Because of circumstances my husband and I and our sons had no others with whom

to share turkey or sing carols with.

We ate dinner and then drove up to Cades Cove at the foot of the Smoky Mountains. There was snow on the ground and few other cars in the valley. We had brought a hot drink and we parked the car at an overlook and sat there taking in the beauty and stillness of the day.

As we watched, deer began to move around in the fields below us. How graceful were they! Then a long line of deer came racing across the field and one by one they leaped over a fence, not far from where we were watching. There were no hunters or guns to shatter the quiet and we also sat still in silence watching the phenomena of God's creation before our eyes. It brought to mind the Bible verse, "Be still and know that I am God."

As we remember all the wonderful times with others, this one Christmas stands out in our minds as one of the best. We were still but not alone.

Dorothy Blake  
Alcoa 37701

### All's right

The Christmas I remember best was in 1945. My younger brother, Jamie, was home on furlough after being wounded in the fighting of Okinawa. My older brother was home from the European theater, discharged.

For us snow for Christmas was rare. This Christmas it snowed, nice and deep enough to cover the ground without hampering traffic.

On Christmas eve Jamie and I went out to find a tree. When I was a child it always seemed appropriate to get your tree growing wild, in a fence row or a woods. They stood there just asking to be a part of Christmas. We took Daddy's truck and found one in a little woods where no one lived, chopped it down, and took it home through the snow in the twilight.

We all trimmed the tree that evening. All the house smelled of spices and cedar. Later, Jamie drove to town to fetch the turkey. He got the biggest one he could find — 24 pounds.

That Christmas everything fell into place. All of us were together again, after four long years. The boys had been to war and returned home alive and almost well. There was snow on the ground, food on the table, and a fire on the hearth. God was in his heaven; all was right with the world.

Helen Garrigan  
Union City 38261

— See page 6 for more Christmas letters. — Editor

# Cards, carols, legends, and the real Christmas

■ one word more

By Wm. Fletcher Allen  
editor

How does Christmas sound to you? Is there joy? Is there singing? There should be. The heralds of Christmas are still heard today — Oh, come Immanuel!

Zephaniah, perhaps one of the lesser known Old Testament prophets records it this way, "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing" Zephaniah 3:17.

The Lord God speaks to Job (Job 38:7), reminding him that at Creation, the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy.

Stars singing? Angels joyfully shouting? God rejoicing over his children? It must be Christmas!

W.J. Cameron wrote that there has been only one Christmas. "The rest are anniversaries," he said, "and it is not over yet."

Christmas will never be "over." It is an eternal date, a time that is indelibly etched on history's face.

The fullness of Christmas can be expressed in a short sentence. Norma Alloway wrote it. "Christmas is a Son away from home."

Ralph Sockman said, "The hinge of history is on the door of a Bethlehem stable." And Alexander Smith said that, "Christmas is the day that holds all time together."

Christmas also is action. The very word inspires us to images of activity, a baby born, a child growing, a young man finding his way, an intense Shepherd caring for his sheep, a Savior dying on a

crude cross, the Messiah rising from a borrowed grave, Immanuel sealing our salvation.

It is a reminder of glad tidings, as the Scripture reminds us. God's joy over his repenting people, the stars singing and angels shouting at the birth of the universe, angels singing praises as the Creator is born in the first magnificent step of God's great plan of salvation.

It is carols sung with gladness. It is voices of little children, fathers, mothers, older generations, families, praising and expressing a grand excitement. It is hungry voices of waifs on the streets, of slum dwellers, of people in grief. It is the voices of caregivers, of those who befriend strangers. It is anticipation voiced by eager disciples.

It is words of love and peace printed on a greeting card. Christmas also has its myths and legends — perhaps best expressed in the exaggerations that sometimes shape our memories. It is good that Christmas gets better in our minds as years pass.

An appropriate Christmas greeting comes to us from one Bishop Remington out of a book of quotations:

*"I am wishing for you this day a happy Christmas. I would send you those gifts which are beyond price, outlast time, and bridge all space. I wish you all laughter and pure joy, a merry heart and a clear conscience, and love which thinks no evil, is not easily provoked, and seeks not its own; the fragrance of flowers, the sweet associations of holly and mistletoe*

*and fir, the memory of deep woods, of peaceful hills, and of the mantling snow, which guards the sleep of all God's creatures. I wish that the spirit of Christmas-tide may draw you into companionship with him who giveth all. Come, let us adore him."*

Yes, we do have cards and carols, myths and legends. The cards and carols may at times be perfunctory, and some may not be theologically precise.

The message may be garbled and misdirected — after all, the making of cards produces income for the company. The publication of carols benefits the seller.

But those carols, those cards, which have been proven trustworthy, may find for themselves a place among the legends and harmless myths of Christmas.

There is no doubt about the reality and honesty of Christmas. The Savior's birth was promised, the nativity happened, angels verified it, and witnesses testified to it.

Then it became imperative that mankind proclaim it. While for two millennia we have added our own trappings, the event is unchanged. It is still true, and the offer of the Gospel still stands.

Sing the carols with hope and joy, with honesty and comfort. Send the cards, and receive cards, with the same seeds of faith common in the Bible's theme. Tell the old, old story that is true — and your own embellished legends.

Christmas indeed is an anniversary each year. Unique in time, it is still with us. It is Christmas in the heart that puts the spirit of Christmas in the air. □

By Wm. Fletcher Allen, editor

## Sharing Christmas

We are responsible for most of our own memories of Christmas. They may be sweet or they may be bitter.

I am responsible for the building of those Christmases in my personal life, and I am responsible for the way they capture my memory.

I remember one Christmas when, as a teenager, I was given a beautiful coat — it was reversible.

Never mind that it was too hot to wear a coat. I was willing to suffer. I wore it as a winter coat, and then as a raincoat. I liked it and was proud of it. I wore it all day, and never complained.

Years before that I nearly fainted when playing the part of Joseph in a fourth grade drama. This farm boy refused to peel off his long underwear!

Almost every Christmas is unique, memorable. Christmas 1956 was especially notable. Betty and I announced that December 25 to our families that we were expecting our first "blessed event." It was our first Christmas after serving in the Army overseas for two years.

Another unique Christmas came when we lived in Maryland. We met a family in our church who had just moved into the community. They were good people, and they loved the Lord.

In the transition of jobs, of selling and buying houses, they had fallen on hard times financially.

They had Christmas dinner with us that wonderful day. We shared family experiences with them and helped them through some hard times.

And guess what, they brought joy to our home. The wife cooked an orange slice cake and we devoured it.

Their children and ours did not blend well at first. But when the day was over and we parted, we knew some Christmas memories had been born.

After all, isn't that what Christmas is about? The Christ Child's first bed was a manger, and the shepherds became an instant family. Think of the memories they had. The meaning of Christmas is love and the gift of an only Son. □



ALLEN

## Keep Christmas; don't let it get away

■ just for today

By Fred Wood  
pastor emeritus  
Eudora Church, Memphis

■ families matter

By Paul Barkley, counselor and professor

### Start with a smile

Personnel Director to Potential Employee: "This job has two requirements. First, you must understand the computers." P.E. to P.D.: "What's the other one?" P.D. to P.E.: "You must be stupid enough to work for the small amount we pay."

### Take this truth

Many employed persons think their salary is not enough. Ask yourself the same question one marriage counselor asks about any marriage, "Am I better off without or with my spouse?"

### Memorize this Scripture

"I have learned, in whatever state I am, therewith to be content" (Philippians 4:11).

### Pray this prayer

Lord, help me give my best where I am and trust you for advancement at the proper time. Give me patience. □

Sometimes in the midst of holly and hurry, cookies and chaos, fruit and frenzy, we lose part of ourselves and our

family in the scurry to make the Christmas season special.

I suggest four truths to help our families keep from letting the true meaning of Christmas get away. These truths come from the announcement of Jesus' birth to the shepherds and the wise men.

The shepherds and the wise men went to the place where the baby Jesus was. The first truth, therefore, is that we need to go to the place where the family is celebrating Christmas if we want to keep Christmas from getting away from our family.

This is a mobile generation. Planes and good automobiles make it possible for us to travel great distances for the holidays. Some will travel to family. Others may travel from family. If you want to prevent Christmas from getting away from your family, you must go to your family instead of from your family this year.

The angels proclaimed

peace on earth at the birth of Jesus. The second truth to help our families to keep from letting Christmas get away is to get along. It is easy in this season, with all the frayed nerves which accompany the stress, to strike out at our families. We may believe that family has to accept our bad behavior. We tend to treat those we would love worse than we would treat strangers.

If we want to keep Christmas from getting away from our families we must make the effort to get along with them.

At the birth of our Lord, Mary watched all the strange happenings and treasured these things in her heart.

My third truth for keeping Christmas from getting away is to focus on the family. We must make sure we take time to look beneath the surface and beyond the stress and strife to find value in the people we call family. At this time of year tempers flare and feel-

ings are worn thin because of tension which is produced by the hurried pace and hassling pressure of the activities of the season.

There is an urgency in our effort to look past all the garbage to find the real treasure that is there. Like Mary, we may not understand everything that is going on, but we must make the effort to find the true value in our family members.

The wise men began the practice of giving gifts. My fourth truth to prevent the family from letting Christmas get away is to remember to give gifts. Our Christmas tree is loaded with gifts that family members are giving to each other.

Truly it is not the monetary value or worth of the present, but the fact that the other person thought of you and wanted to go to the trouble to get something that they thought you would enjoy.

Christmas is a time of giving and that giving can be a real source of bonding and affirmation for the family. □

## Gift from above

Christmas to me is a gift from above, a gift of salvation, born of God's love. For far beyond what my mind comprehends my eternal future completely depends.

On that first Christmas centuries ago, God sent his Son to the earth below. For if the Christ child had not been born there would be no rejoicing on Easter morning. For only because Christ was born and died and hung on a cross to be crucified can worldly sinners like you and me be fit to live in eternity.

So Christmas is more than getting and giving; it's the "why" and the "wherefore" of infinite living. It is the positive proof for doubting God ever, in his kingdom life is forever. And that is the reason that on Christmas day I can only kneel down and prayerfully say, "Thank you, God, for sending your Son."

When my work on earth is done I can look up at last on your holy face, knowing you saved me alone by your grace.

*Edna Shockley*  
Jefferson City 37766

## 'Little girl's' memories

I grew up in the North Carolina mountains. My mother

and dad were wonderful, as were my five precious sisters. Mother and Dad taught us to love God, love and respect them and each other. I had a lot of love in our home and today the sisters and their children have that love and respect for each other.

Times were hard. Dad was a farmer and we lived out in the country. We did not have electricity, so we had no Christmas lights or decorations like most do today. Mother would start baking a week before Christmas, on an old wood stove. Wonderful smells came from the kitchen!

A few days before Christmas Dad would tell us to dress warmly, then we went with him to pick out the Christmas tree. Many Christmases there would be snow on the ground when we went for the tree. He would cut down the tree and we would take it home. We decorated the tree with popcorn and chains made from red and green art paper. It was the prettiest sight we had ever seen, and we sat on the floor and looked at the tree.

On Christmas Eve, we would look for Santa. After supper Dad would tell us he had to go to the barn to feed the cows. Then he would come to the door dressed as Santa.

When he said, "Ho, ho, ho," we would go under the long kitchen table. We were afraid of the long white beard! We got two gifts each and plenty of nuts, fruit, and candy. Then we sat around the wood stove and Mother would tell us the story of baby Jesus.

Mother and Dad have been gone for many years, and one sister has gone too. At Christmas I have some sad times because I know I can't go back and see Mother cooking on the old stove and see Dad dressed as Santa.

But I grew up and have my own family to love dearly. I have seen a lot of beauty in this old world, but there is nothing more beautiful or precious than my memories of Christmas — when I was growing up. They are in my heart forever.

*Louise Holcombe*  
Clarksville 37042

## Some questions

Where are you going for Christmas? Will you be home for Christmas? These are but two of the many questions we hear during this Christmas season. In fact I was asked a question just the other day. My answer is one that did not come quickly nor did it come

easy. My 29 years in the military, and most of them as an Army chaplain, taught me that we all could not be home for Christmas. Being assigned to those far away places like Korea, Japan, Germany, and Vietnam forced me to sing "I'll be home for Christmas if only in my dreams." My prayers are with those young men and women so far away that it will be impossible for them to be home for Christmas. Please remember them in your prayers also.

Oh yes, my answer to that question about where I will be for Christmas. Retirement has made it possible for me to be home with my family, church, and friends.

May God bless and keep you wherever you celebrate this blessed Christmas season.

*Dallas Roscoe*  
Hixson 37343

## On Christmas day

I'll soon be 69. I have pastored Baptist churches since I was 22, several in around Nashville.

I have been in North Carolina for the past 21 years and am pastor of Yeopim Baptist Church.

I keep my subscription to the *Baptist and Reflector* up to

date, so I can keep up with my home state.

The most memorable Christmas experience came when I was about five.

My first memory of life was at St. Mary's Orphanage, which use to be on White Bridge Road in Nashville.

As the season came, there seemed to be mysteries surrounding it. I remember the religious symbols all over the place. The cross, the statue of Mary holding her child, Jesus; the crucifixion, etc. Around Christmas time I remember the special scenery. I especially remember the glassed-in small manger scene.

The real surprise came on Christmas morning.

Our sleeping arrangement was a long row of single beds on each side of a dormitory.

When we awoke on Christmas morning each child had a sack of candy and fruit and each child had a special toy that he or she could call their own.

Mine was a tricycle. I can still remember the excitement of that day. I believe I stayed on the tricycle all day.

I think that was in December 1931, but it's as real as if it happened yesterday.

*Joseph Scalf Jr.*  
Edenton, N.C. 27932

# Seminary professor gives history of popular Christmas carols

By William J. Reynolds  
For Baptist and Reflector

## Angels We Have Heard on High

— Many of our Christmas carols have come from England and carols from other countries have greatly enriched our Christmastime singing.

Finland gave us "Unto Us a Boy is Born;" Germany, "Silent Night, Holy Night;" Poland, "Infant Holy, Infant Lowly;" Czechoslovakia, "Little Jesus, Sweetly Sleep;" and other countries, many more.

One of the best-known French carols is "Angels We Have Heard on High." While some believe it dates from the 18th century, the earliest documented appearance is found in an 1855 French collection.

The tune is characteristic of many French carol melodies. With two exceptions in the refrain, the melody stays within the range of six tones of the scale.

The melodic phrases of the stanzas are almost monotonous, but this is more than offset by the childlike mirth and unsophisticated grace of the refrain.

The sequential "glorias," an expression of sheer joy and delight, stretch over four measures twice in the refrain. The sonority of the "o" vowel in the first syllable of the word heightens the beauty of the sound. The part-singing in the refrain is great fun!

**O Little Town of Bethlehem** — Phillip Brooks, a young minister from Philadelphia, was in Jerusalem during Christmas 1865. On horseback, he rode

to Bethlehem, through the streets of the village, and on to the nearby fields, the traditional site where the shepherds heard the heavenly hosts announce the birth of Jesus.

Brooks was enjoying a year's travel away from his pulpit of Philadelphia's Holy Trinity Church. After he returned from his trip abroad, still long before he became nationally famous, Brooks wrote the stanzas of this hymn for the children of his Sunday School to sing at a Christmas program.

Later Brooks moved to Boston's Trinity Church and became recognized as one of America's outstanding preachers. His published sermons are found today in theological libraries, but his Christmas hymn appears in hymnals everywhere, in English and in many other languages.

The music we sing to Brook's hymn was composed by Lewis Redner, organist at his church. In addition to his musical responsibilities, Redner served for 19 years as superintendent of the Sunday School.

First published in 1874, the Christmas hymn became widely sung. Now 120 years later, the collaboration of an Episcopal minister and his church's organist is standard fare in our Christmas singing.

**Silent Night, Holy Night** — In the village of Oberndorf in Upper Austria,

the story of this familiar carol began on Christmas Eve in 1818, when the organ at St. Nicholas Church would not play.

Since the music of the Christmas service depended so much on this instrument, Father Joseph Mohr faced a major crisis. He decided to write a new song in place of the music previously planned.



The new text began "Stille nacht, heilige nacht," and he asked his organist friend, Franz Gruber, to write the music. At the Christmas Eve service the carol was heard for the first time as the two men sang it with guitar accompaniment.

Sometime later Karl Mauracher came to Oberndorf to repair the organ; he heard about the new song and was given a copy. As he traveled about repairing organs, he shared the carol.

The carol came to the attention of the Strasser family in Zillertal. They were glovemakers who exhibited their gloves at fairs in various cities. To attract customers to their booth the Strassers sang folk songs with great enthusiasm.

At the Leipzig fair in 1831, they sang "Stille nacht, heilige nacht" for the first time. From Leipzig the carol spread rapidly. German-speaking immigrants brought the song to America and it was published in English in an 1849 Methodist collection.

By far the most popular translation in America is that made by John Freeman Young, an Episcopal minister.

**What Child is This** — William Chatterton Dix wrote these words to fit a delightful English folk melody called "Greensleeves." Dating from 1580, the melody of unknown origin was used for both secular and sacred texts.

In *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (1601), William Shakespeare refers to the ballad as "a new northern dittie of the Lady Green Sleeves."

Dix, a devout layman in the Church of England, possessed unusual talent for poetic expression and sought seriously to use his gifts for writing hymns and carols.

In addition to hymns and carols, his writings include many translations, two devotional works, and a book of instruction for children. He wrote "What Child is This" in 1865.

The first stanza describes the nativity scene in the manger with Mary holding the Child. In the second stanza Dix speaks of Christ's forthcoming crucifixion:

*Nails, spear shall pierce him through;*

*The cross be borned for me, for you:*

*Then he returns to the Child sleeping in Mary's lap:*

*Hail, hail the Word made flesh. The Babe, the Son of Mary.*

The writer looks at the Child in the manger, yet sees the cross at Calvary. □ — Reynolds is distinguished professor of church music at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

# ■ Christmas in Tennessee

## Helps NBA's Toy Store at Christmas

# Summer project becomes year-round ministry for RA group

By Tim Bearden  
For Baptist and Reflector

**OLD HICKORY** — What began as a summer activity to help keep Royal Ambassadors busy has turned into a ministry.

During the summer of 1994, while most RA programs had shut down for the summer, Steve Burnett, Todd Cole and other RA counselors of Tulip Grove Church, Old Hickory, began searching for an activity to keep boys in grades one through six "busy."

The solution was to dismantle two old bicycles and using the parts from both, reassemble one bike.

Although no one realized it at the time that was the beginning of a continuing mission project for the men and boys. Since that summer, 82 bikes have been rebuilt and given to children who otherwise would not have had a bike.

One might think that rebuilt bikes look "rebuilt." After all, it is the boys doing the rebuilding. And besides, how

much rebuilding can be done to an old worn out bike?

Not so, however. Last year when bikes were taken to the Nashville Baptist Association Toy Store at Shelby Avenue Church before Christmas, no one could tell the difference between the seven rebuilt bikes and the one new bike that was donated. The Toy Store is a ministry that provides new toys and gifts to low income families in Nashville.

According to Steve York, Tulip Grove Brotherhood director, RAs is one of the strongest ministries among the men and boys of the church. Support to the 30 to 40 boys and 15 men who make up the RA program comes from the Baptist men through words of support and a constant awareness of the bike ministry.

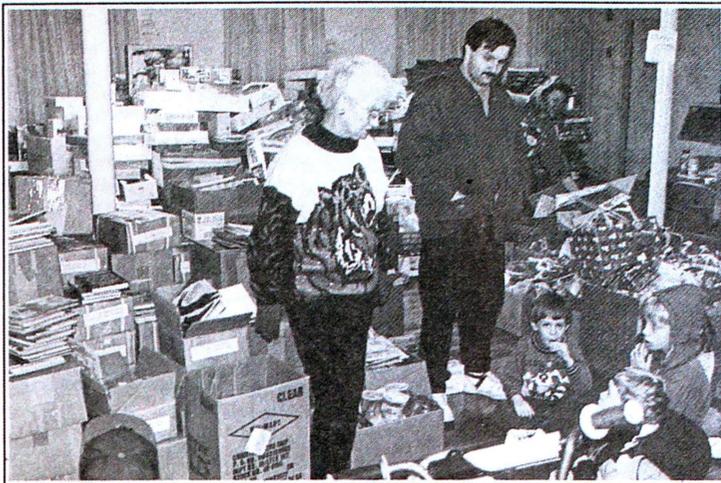
"Other (ministries) happen but this is hands-on missions for our boys," York says. Men visit "the Barn" often out of curiosity to see how the work is going. Men on visitation have told about the bike project as a way to get other boys involved in church, he adds.

The process of rebuilding the bikes has become an assembly line. Different groups of boys work in "the Barn" each week so that all have an opportunity during the month to participate. Old bikes come from many different sources including church members, people in the community, a local landfill where the sanitation workers save them for pickup, and a sister church.

On a Wednesday night four bikes can be torn down, serial numbers written down, and each bike's parts boxed separately.

Burnett, one of the two primary leaders in the project, says that it is a learning experience for all the boys. The Lads, in grades one through three, need close guidance as they work to dismantle the bikes, but by the time the boys are in Crusaders, grades four through six, they need little direction.

After dismantling and inventory, the



**CAROLYN DEMONBREUN** of the Nashville Baptist Association's Toy Store tells about the ministry sponsored by the association each year to help needy families in the area. Counselor Tony Langton of Tulip Grove and boys listen intently as she talks about the way the Lord has used the Toy Store to touch lives.

bike frames are sent to a local metal strip company which donates its time to strip all the old paint and sand any rough spots. Cole, the other primary worker, skillfully guides the repainting process. Bikes are reassembled usually with new rims, tires, pedals, even decals. Finding the new parts is sometimes a tricky process, but Burnett says, "There has not been a time when we needed anything. The Lord has provided."

Aluminum cans are collected and recycled to help cover the costs for the painting and new parts. They also have one corporate sponsor, a church member. Burnett and Cole scan the want ads and flea markets for parts. While contact with bike manufacturers in Tennessee has not been successful, other sources for parts come through miraculously at the right time.

After each bike is assembled, it is test "driven" around the church parking lot by a professional rider (one of the RAs). Even the test ride becomes an outreach as boys of the community become curious.

With the final inspection bikes are ready for distribution. That's the easy part, according to Burnett.

Eight bikes were taken to the Toy Store last year. That number rose to 22 this year. Numerous others were given out throughout the year as needs were discovered.

As funds are available a few new bikes are pur-

chased to fill special requests. Even school teachers have called asking for bikes for their students whose families cannot afford them. The teachers found out about the bikes through RAs who were talking about the ministry in their classes. The only requirement for a bike is that there is a real need.

Fifteen RAs helped deliver the bikes to the Nashville Toy Store this year, an event meaningful to both men and boys.

According to York, "anyone who gets involved is changed. These boys are no exception."

"Children have to see more than a picture in a book" to understand missions, York says, adding that the bikes provide ownership in ministry. The boys begin to understand the good they can do.

The program has enabled boys to do hands-on missions. In the words of one leader, "It sure beats video games." □



**STEVE YORK**, in his moving van, loads bikes to take to the Toy Store with the assistance of RAs Colin Burnett, in truck, John York, on ground, and counselor Butch Crotty.



**TULIP GROVE RAs** and their counselors recently took 22 bikes to the NBA Toy Store. Among the RAs who participated, from left, are Ben Smith, Colin Burnett, Ryan Crotty, Brandon Pirtle, Trenton Langton, Clayton Ross, Mitch Holland, Daniel Mitchell, and Daniel Wilkey. Counselors, from left, included Butch Crotty, Carl Rose, Mike Seaborn, Tony Langton, and Randy McIntosh.



**BIKE MINISTRY COORDINATORS** Steve Burnett, left, and Todd Cole watch as RAs, from left, Colin Burnett, Samuel Reyes, and Josh Garrett begin to 'tear down' a bike. Since 1994 when Burnett and Cole began the project to keep the boys 'busy' in the summer, they have reassembled 82 bikes.

# Espy makes thousands of stars for visitors to Christmas event

By Steve Butler  
For Baptist and Reflector

MURFREESBORO — As each visiting family exits the annual Bethlehem Marketplace at Southeast Church, Murfreesboro, it is given a small hand-crocheted white star.

The star is meant to remind visitors of the Star of Bethlehem at Christ's birth; to commemorate the marketplace visit; and to find its way onto the family Christmas tree as an ornament.

Although sometimes overshadowed by the total experience visitors have had, the small stars nonetheless are an integral part of the walk-through drama.

And since marketplace has averaged over 7,300 people in

recent years, someone has had to make a lot of them.

Southeast member Mary Espy is far more aware of this than most. She has hand-crocheted 9,044 of them since 1990, totaling 3,024 in 1994 alone. Her overall total is much higher, as she has crocheted stars for each of the 14 annual marketplaces. But she kept no records prior to 1990.

After years of practice, it now takes her about 10 minutes to produce one. At that pace, her effort translates to a time investment of over 1,500 hours, or the equivalent of nearly 63 days — just since 1990. Her time contribution actually is far greater after allowing for the years when she did not keep count as well as for having gotten faster over the years.

"Some people try to get me to quit," she says. "They say, let someone else do it. You've done enough. But why would I quit? I can't do anything else, but I can do that much to try and help the marketplace and serve the Lord."

The event is held the second weekend of December of each year, and the very next week finds Espy back at it. "I stay busy doing other things, but whenever I can I try to work in a few, the left-hander says as she completes yet another star.

A distant second to Espy is Hazel Sims Turrentine, whom Espy taught the pattern about two years ago. Turrentine estimates she has crocheted about 2,800, "but it takes me longer than it does Mary."

Like Espy, she's already planning to get started again, "as soon as Evelyn Smith gets me some thread." (Smith has been marketplace star coordinator for all

14 years the event has been staged.)

Also like Espy, Turrentine sees crocheting the stars as a way of doing what she can since she is not able to do other things.

Several times a year, at meetings called by Smith, a group of ladies starch the stars made by Espy, Turrentine, and others so that they will make better tree ornaments for visitors and for the large tree at the end of marketplace.

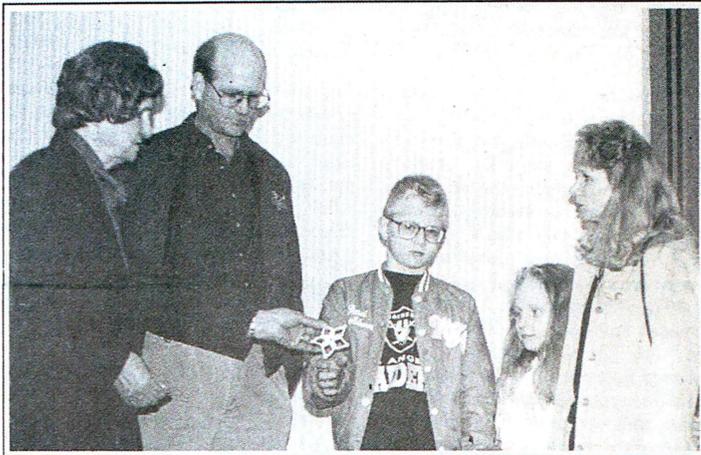
The impact of the stars has been discovered in unusual ways, as was the case several years ago when a package containing 1,000 of them showed up in the church mail.

A lady, not a Southeast member, who actually lived a good distance

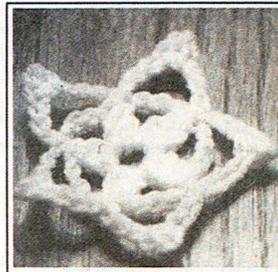
away, had decided to make and mail them as her contribution. No one at Southeast had any idea she was doing it until the stars arrived, said pastor Don Edwards.

Following custom, for the 15th time, marketplace will transform Southeast's gym into the streets of long ago Bethlehem on Dec. 14-15, 1996. This year the event involved about 300 members of the church.

Between now and then there'll be a whole lot of crocheting going on. □ — Butler is a member of Southeast Church and a former writer for the *Jackson Sun* newspaper in Jackson.



PRESENTING A STAR personally to the Ashworth family of Smyrna after their visit to the marketplace is, from left, Espy to Mike, Jared, Gracie, and Pam.



STARS like this one made by Espy are hung on a tree at the end of the marketplace and presented to each visitor to the event.



CROCHETING ANOTHER STAR is a common task of Mary Espy.

## Tennessee Sampler ■ views, insights

### Amazing incarnation

By Brenton Cox, pastor  
First Church, Manchester

Christmas is a time for meditation on the amazing truth of the incarnation. Incarnation means that the one true God actually became a human being and was born of a woman. I hope you will take time from your hectic schedule during the holidays to sit down and contemplate the wonder of Jesus' birth.

I share the following poem as "food for thought." It was written by Augustine, saint of the Catholic Church, some 15 centuries ago as he tried to capture the mystery of the incarnation.

*Maker of the sun,  
He is made under the sun.  
In the Father he remains,  
From his mother he goes forth.  
Creator of heaven and earth,  
He was born on earth under heaven.  
Unspeakingly wise,*

*He is wisely speechless.  
Filling the world,  
He lies in a manger.  
Ruler of the stars,  
He nurses at his mother's bosom.  
He is both great in the nature of God,  
and small in the form of a servant.*

May a sense of wonder be reborn in our hearts this season. □

### Funding foreign missions

By Jay McCluskey, pastor  
North Cleveland Church, Cleveland

Someone has said, you will never win the world for Christ with your spare change. How true! Yet too many folks provide support for foreign mission efforts that amount to little more than their spare change. Even reaching our church goal requires only a dime a day commitment for approximately 450 people.

Our special guests, Don and Joyce Heiss, retired missionaries to Japan, told

about writing an annual wish list of things they hoped to do with the gifts that came through the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. When the Lottie Moon funds arrived, they usually considered themselves lucky if they were able to acquire even the first thing on that list.

Our missionaries have ambition, commitment, and desire, it is up to us to help supply the financial support they need to continue and expand their ministries. □

### Ten Commandments for a great Christmas

By Ray Fowler, pastor  
Highland Heights Church, Memphis

Have you thought about it? The birthday of Christ our Lord has been celebrated longer and more than anyone's birthday! For over 2,000 years people around the world have sung in joyous celebration of his birth. Doubt-

less more gifts are given, though not to him, on his birthday than on any other occasion. How would you feel if it was your birthday and everybody brought gifts for each other and none for you?

The Christ child's birth is one of glory, joy, and wonder. It is earth's greatest miracle! The virgin-born Christ came to do what we cannot do, and what no one else can do for us — redeem us! He can give you pardon, peace, purity, power, and someday take us to heaven. In the living Christ we have eternal life and hope, and the answer to all our needs for spirit, soul, and body.

One more thing you can do. Bring him a worthy gift, given unselfishly and with love. One vehicle through which you can give is the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions. Think of the many lives your offering may touch for Jesus' sake. Remember, you can never out give God. He gave his only Son! □

## Bledsoe Association spreads gifts with Toy Store

By Connie Davis  
Baptist and Reflector

GALLATIN — Bledsoe Association held its first Christmas Toy Store this year. Members of the association's churches provided toys for 216 children in 80 families. Eight people made professions of faith during their visit to the store, which was held at Academy Heights Church, Gallatin.

The accomplishment is great because the association has been without leadership. The one-day event drew so much support from Baptists it will be expanded next year, reported Mike Pennington, director of missions for just seven weeks prior to the Dec. 7 event.

Terry Rogers of First Church, Hendersonville, co-chairman of the committee which planned the event, said the members had decided to postpone the effort because the association was without a director, but changed their minds based on the response of church members.

She was especially amazed that the gifts needed were given. No gifts were bought to fill gaps for different ages or gender of children. Rogers quickly added the toys aren't the main focus of the effort. Toy Store volunteers offered spiritual counseling to each recipient, said Rogers.

"We can give them a toy, but we can't change their circumstances, but we know who can."



**WRAPPING GIFTS** for anyone who wished their toys to be wrapped are, from left, Mary Ellen Glover, Academy Heights Church; Debbie Stacey, Bledsoe Creek Church, Bethpage; Tammy O'Saile, Academy Heights Church; and Irene Dellinger, First Church, Hendersonville.

Marguerite Babb of First Church, Hendersonville, and a former president of Tennessee Woman's Missionary Union, served as a counselor and met recipients like a woman in her 20s who had to drop out of college to support her sisters and brothers. Her parents had left them, she said. Babb's husband, Roy, counseled a man who was disabled and was trying to support his two children after his wife left him.

Another counselor, J.C. Bigbee of Antioch Church, Portland, felt led by God to speak to a man waiting in his car. Bigbee said the man was glad to talk about his faith, explaining he was a Christian, but not active in church.

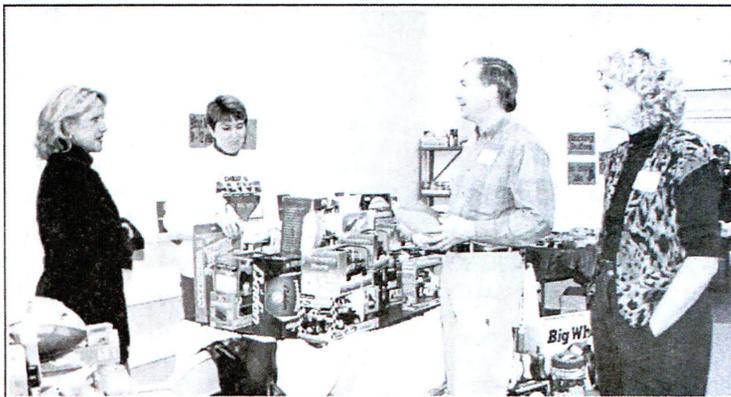
Judy Ross, associational program associate, coordinated the

screening process, working with social service agencies and

churches in the area. Most of the responses of referents were like that of the father of quadruplets and five other children, said Ross. He was so thankful because the children were to get only one small gift, all the family could afford, he said. Ross added, "Everyone has been so appreciative." □



**VOLUNTEER** Joyce Williams, right, of Academy Heights Church, Gallatin, helps Sheila Daniels pick out books for her children.



**PAUSING DURING A BREAK** to visit are volunteers, from left, J.B. Phillips of First Church, Hendersonville; Penny Gregory of Antioch Church, Portland; Mike Pennington, director of missions, Bledsoe Association; and Lia Sandgren of Academy Heights Church, Gallatin.



**MAKING NEW FRIENDS** while waiting for their parents are Kayla Franklin, left, of Gallatin and Summer Laneaux of Westmoreland with workers, from left, Terry Rogers of First Church, Hendersonville; Shirley Shelton of First Church, Westmoreland; and Barbara Oakley of First Church, Hendersonville.



**COLLECTING TOYS** for her family is Yolanda Bailey, left, of Gallatin with the help of Nita Allen of First Church, Hendersonville.

# Analysis: An evangelical primer on peace in Israel

By Marty Croll  
For Baptist Press

**JERUSALEM** — In Israel, issues of peace and conflict are complex and difficult to discern. How can an evangelical Christian untangle the web of conflict to understand the challenge of peace in Israel?

**High Stakes in the Peace Process:** The fight between Israel and her Arab neighbors is about who owns the land now occupied by the nation of Israel. In 1947, the United Nations suggested dividing the region, one part for Arabs and another for the growing population of Jews coming back in droves, many to escape persecution in Europe.

The UN partition was short-lived. In 1948 Jews declared Israel a sovereign state, and the war of independence against the Arab states began. Arabs fled into Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt. While key world powers recognized Israel, its Arab neighbors did not. In later wars with Arab states, Israel occupied even more land in areas of Palestinian settlements such as the Golan Heights in southwestern Syria, the West Bank including East Jerusalem in western Jordan, and the Gaza Strip and Sinai in northeastern Egypt.

Israel returned the Sinai in 1979 and made peace with Egypt, but Israeli settlers continued moving into the other

areas. Until 1993, nearly all Arab nations and the Palestine Liberation Organization, which has represented the interests of Palestinians, refused to recognize Israel. And as Muslim extremists have influenced Arab politics in recent years, Israel's neighbors have had to fight off attempts to make them take an even more hard-line stance. The reason? Many Islamic holy sites are situated on Israeli-occupied land. Jerusalem especially is a contested spot.

In 1993 Israel promised to allow Palestinian self-rule. Roughly half of Israel believes peace will bring stability, security, and economic advance. Others see it as compromise with a dangerous enemy.

**Southern Baptists in Israel:** Personnel assigned by the Foreign Mission Board to work in Israel and surrounding countries are called Baptist representatives and operate from a non-political stance. They work with people on all sides of the conflict, with Arabs in Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, and Egypt and with Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, in areas formerly occupied by Israel.

In Israel Baptist representatives work with Arabs and Jews. With Arabs, representatives assist primarily Arab churches of the Association of Baptist Churches in Israel. With Jews, they work alongside Messianic Jews, who be-

lieve in Jesus as Messiah.

Southern Baptist volunteers help in programs at Baptist Village at Petah Tiqva, a valuable focus for Baptist life in Israel. Here, believers from all sectors of society come to meet and worship.

**How We Got Here From There:** During the Roman occupation (63 B.C. to 640 A.D.) the land became known as Palestine. Rome pillaged the Jewish temple in Jerusalem in 70 A.D., plowed under the city, rebuilt it, renamed the country to blot out the Jewish heritage, and banned Jews from their holy city in 135 A.D. The focus of Jewish culture shifted to Babylon, present-day Iraq. As Christianity spread, and later Muslim rule came out of Arabia, Jews were persecuted. Jews were without their homeland for 18 centuries.

Faithful Jews who stayed in Palestine developed a theology growing out of the Pharisees, whom Jesus encountered during his ministry. They lived in clusters, scattered throughout a region generally dominated by descendants from the Jews' biblical Arab enemies, descendants of Ishmael, son of Abraham. The Arabs there came to be known as Palestinians.

Palestinians were mostly Muslims. They never had self-rule in their homeland, because successive powers ruled Palestine until the Jews established the nation of Israel in 1948 after returning to the

land in the late 1800s.

**What Part Religious:** Deep religious traditions are at stake in the war for the land. Although up to 85 percent of Jews in Israel are not motivated by religion, their entire culture is linked to religious laws and traditions. Many Palestinians are the same way with respect to Islam.

The Zionist nationalism that gave birth to Israel was largely humanistic and even socialistic. In fact, the "kibbutz" settlements that Jews started during their return to their historic homeland were models of socialism. Still, Israel gives credence to the voice of its religious heritage.

**Religious factions:** Many Israelis today complain that religion plays too big a part in the system. The assassination of Rabin — and the controversy over why some Jews accept it as valid under Jewish religious law — has been cited as an example.

Extreme Orthodox Jews, a tiny percentage of the population, considered Rabin a traitor and his government illegitimate because of its overtures toward Arabs. More moderate Orthodox, about 15 percent of the population, say the land Rabin was trading back to the Arabs was given to them by God and it is a sin to give it back. Other more moderate religious Jews practice rites and keep holy days but are less willing to allow religious law to

control their lives. Many of these also consider it wrong to give land back to the Arabs.

**Attitudes Toward Peace:** Among those unmotivated by religion, many take a progressive attitude toward peace, having tired of ceaseless Arab terrorism and Jewish retaliation. They believe peaceful co-existence is the answer. Others take the attitude that peace is dangerous because Arabs, driven by extremist Muslim ideology, want to drive Jews out completely.

**Evangelical Eyesight:** Evangelical Christians should note the difference between faith as they know it and the Jewish faith today. Orthodox rabbis teach a religion based not as much on belief as on living out the law. It is Greek in thought and Hebrew in action. Before the birth of Jesus, Greek humanism — and belief that man without God will overcome evil — had already taken hold among Jewish Pharisees. The Pharisees believed Jews — as God's chosen people and Abraham's descendants — possessed the power to attain perfection by keeping the law.

Orthodox Jews are looking for a Messiah, or a messianic era, whose lofty moral standards and enlightenment would unite all the world in utopia. A world leader with such ability might fit many evangelicals' picture of the Antichrist. □

**Daily Partnership Prayer Requests**

**December**

20 — Pray for the Yingers, Canadian Baptist missionaries, serving in Chile.

21 — Pray for details of the restructuring of Midwest Baptist Association (Alberta) into three regions.

22 — Pray that Canadian churches will reap the harvest present at Christmas services when more will attend.

23 — Pray for leadership development in the Language Boyce Centers in Michigan.

24 — Pray for Lucius Mitchum, an African American church starter, as he begins new work in inner-city Detroit.

25 — Pray for the new African American Boyce Center in Michigan.

26 — Pray for God to lead his chosen church planters to start new works in these Michigan areas — Canton, West Bloomfield, Sturgis, and Greenville.

27 — Pray for a pastor for First Church, Riverview, Mich.

28 — Pray for the Baptist Student Ministries Conference taking place in Cochrane, Alberta, Canada, today through Sunday, and for the Tennessee volunteers leading the conference.

29 — Pray for the "Start Something New" motivational rallies taking place in Michigan in January.

## Cuban Baptists need prayers, Allens agree

By Wally Poor  
For Baptist Press

**HAVANA** — Cuban Baptists' greatest need is for the prayers of their Baptist brethren in the United States.

That's the impression brought back by retired Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board missionaries Charles and Jean Allen of Wilmington, N.C., who spent 15 days in the island nation invited by the Western Baptist Convention Seminary in Havana.

Every church the Allens attended was full. "There is a real spiritual renewal in Cuba," Charles Allen said.

About 12,000 members worship in the 136 churches of the Western convention, related to century-old Southern Baptist mission work. During the last three years the convention has expanded by 21 churches.

But rapid growth has left a shortage of pastors — 51 shy of the number of churches. "I

think the biggest need they have is prayer," Allen said. "They need prayer for pastors."

Also, he added, "So many have family members divided between Cuba and Florida."

The Allens' invitation to work in Cuba came through Mark and June Smith, FMB missionaries the Allens knew while they were on the field.

The Smiths, now Caribbean itinerant missionaries, work out of a base in southern Florida. On a trip to Cuba, June Smith, a librarian, had taken one look at the seminary library in Havana and told her husband: "I need Dr. Jean." Jean Allen has her doctorate in library science from the University of North Carolina.

During the Allens' Cuba trip, she worked with Elizabeth Diaz, the seminary's librarian, and spent some time with three university students interested in starting a library in a church. Her husband taught 27 hours of classes,

and spoke four times in the seminary's chapel service.

The Allens were impressed with the discipline and dedication of the 32 seminary students, who meet for four sessions in the morning and three after lunch. The students are expected to spend at least four hours a day in the library — and eight if they're working on a thesis.

Most professors are local pastors paid nothing to teach. Volunteers from churches also help out.

This is a tough time for Cuba, which has suffered during recent years after the fall of communism among Eastern Europe nations that were formerly allies. "The period they have been through has decidedly deepened their faith," Charles Allen said.

"There is a commitment to Christ that's very strong. You see it in the young people and the pastors." □

## ■ the people

■ Hillhurst Church, Nashville, ordained **Jeff Pennington** as a deacon Dec. 10.

■ **Prue Hankins**, secretary, Duck River Association, has resigned after serving 12 years.

## ■ the leaders

■ **James E. Redding** has retired from the ministry after 44 years. He has worked for four years as an associational director of missions, 15 years as a foreign missionary to Peru, and seven as a Tennessee home and state missionary serving as director of language missions and interfaith witness. Redding has been a pastor in Columbia, Memphis, and Clarksville, as well as Texas and Mississippi. He is a graduate of Belmont University, Nashville, and New Orleans (La.) Baptist Theological Seminary. Redding is available for supply and interim work, and leading missions and interfaith witness conferences. He may be contacted at (615) 358-9966.

■ **Raleigh Church**, Memphis, has called **John Finley** as pastor.

■ **Mike Dugan** has been called as minister of Christian life at First Church, Murfreesboro.

■ **Jere Adams** has been called as minister of music of Mount Hermon Church, Murfreesboro.

■ **Marshall Knob Church**, Murfreesboro, has called **Larry Elrod** as pastor.

■ **First Church**, Jackson, has called **Dan Bruce** as minister of education/outreach.

■ **Cathy Dodd** has been called as music director of Grace Church, Murfreesboro.

■ **Ted Hooper**, minister of education/youth, Georgian



**THE NEW STEEPLE** of Rosedale Church, Nashville, was dedicated Nov. 19. Gifts to the steeple exceeded the debt and will be used for renovation of the sanctuary. A list of gifts in memory and honor of people and the donors was placed in the steeple.

Hills Church, Memphis, for four years, has been called as associate pastor for education and youth at Hillcrest Church, Jackson, Miss., effective Dec. 29.

■ **David Wade** has been called as pastor of Lynn Valley Church, Elizabethton. Wade is a native of Knoxville and a graduate of New Orleans (La.) Baptist Theological Seminary.

■ **Bob McConnell**, minister of music, Cherry Road Church, Memphis, will retire April 30. He has served 10 years at the church.

## ■ the churches

■ **Northside Church**, Columbia, held revival Nov. 26 - Dec. 1 which resulted in 12 people making professions of faith and many other decisions. The speaker was Floyd Lammersfeld, evangelist from Gleason.

■ **Calvary Church**, Knoxville, will provide Christmas gifts for children and biblical literature through a prison ministry. The Royal Ambassadors and Girls in Action of the church are holding a carnival to benefit the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions.

■ **Mission Friends of Central Church**, Fountain City,

Knoxville, held an art auction to benefit the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions. The art was prepared by members of Mission Friends.

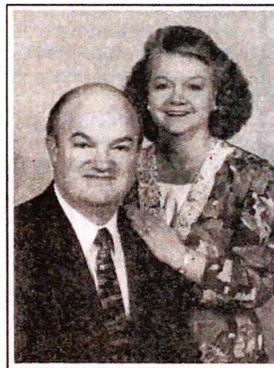
■ **Baptist Women of Highland Park Church**, Columbia, are collecting socks for homeless men. An on-going project is for the Baptist Medical Center in Ghana, for which they are collecting camera film canisters, offering envelopes, and cotton strips.

■ **First Church**, Nashville, is hosting an adopt-a-student program for college students, which allows the students to relate to a Christian family while in Nashville.

■ **Zion Church**, Benton, has 175 Broadman Hymnals which they will donate.

■ The children's Sunday School classes of **Lovelace Church**, Fall Branch, are providing postal service to members. Donations will be given to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions.

■ **Senior adults of Central**



**ROGER HOBBS**, pastor, Waterville Church, Cleveland, and his wife, **Jane**, were honored for 20 years of service Nov. 4-5. A reception was held and they were honored during the morning worship service. Hobbs, a graduate of Belmont University, Nashville, has served as pastor of Scottsboro Church, Nashville, and Calvary Church, Chattanooga.



**GETTING READY TO DELIVER FIREWOOD** to people who need it are, **Charles Palk**, left, and **Dorris Davis**, members of Liberty Church, McEwen. Church members did several missions activities including this during the fall as part of 'Make a Difference Day.'

**Church**, Fountain City, Knoxville, performed "Christmas in Tinyburg," a musical premiere at Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center in December during a chautauqua for senior adults. The musical was based on characters in stories by Bob Hastings of Springfield, Ill, a former editor of the *Illinois Baptist* who was worship leader for the week. The Tinyburg Tales are aired weekly on 55 stations of the Bible Broadcasting Network in Charlotte, N.C.

■ **First Church**, Jackson, is providing Christmas gifts for foster children, of which there are about 350 in the county.

■ **First Church**, Martin, held a bazaar for the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions. Crafts and food were sold and breakfast was available.

■ **Poplar Heights Church**, Jackson, hosted a drive-through "Meet Him at the Manger" Dec. 1-3, which was viewed by 6,236 passengers in 1,559 cars.

## ■ death

■ **James V. Cartwright**, 63, of Nashville, died Dec. 1. Cartwright was retired from the Baptist Sunday School Board, Nashville, where he served 24 years as an editor in the church administration and training departments. He was a member of First Church, Nashville. Cartwright served as a staff member of several churches, including Glebe Church, Arlington, Va., as pastor from 1961-67, and Highview Church, Louisville, as pastor. He was a graduate of Samford University, Birmingham, Ala., and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky.

## ■ the associations

■ **Hardeman County Association** will hold its second



**ELECTED TO LEAD ALPHA Association** during its fall meeting were, from left, **Jerry Milam**, pastor, Wrigley Church, Lyles, vice moderator; **Mark Walton**, pastor, Fairfield Church, Centerville, moderator; **Charles Gilmer**, member, Fairfield Church, Centerville, treasurer; and **Faye King**, member, First Church, Lobelville, clerk.



**DEDICATING ITS NEW ADDITION** and property are members of Hillcrest Church, Lebanon, by joining hands during the Nov. 19 morning worship service. The church had built new facilities for education and bought property.

# Foundation trustees express concern over agency's fate

Baptist Press

NASHVILLE — The Southern Baptist Foundation, facing a clouded future under the proposed restructuring of the Southern Baptist Convention, has experienced a "dramatic halt in growth of assets," the agency's president, Hollis E. Johnson III, told trustees at their Dec. 6 meeting.

Trustees voted unanimously to authorize their executive committee to "develop and share its concerns about the assimilation of the Southern Baptist Foundation into the Covenant for a New Century plan" — the restructuring approved by messengers to the 1995 SBC annual meeting in Atlanta, which includes a provision assigning the foundation's work to the SBC Execu-

tive Committee.

Key among concerns voiced by trustees during the meeting: "ascending liability," legal terminology describing how the foundation, as a separate legal entity, would face any potential litigation involving trusts or annuities given for Southern Baptist causes, to prevent such litigation against the Southern Baptist Convention and its assets.

Another concern to trustees: donor faith in the foundation's autonomy and expertise in managing funds, now totaling more than \$183 million.

Several trustees voiced reservations about placing responsibility for managing donor funds with the SBC Executive Committee. "We are not going to leave the funds in a new organization to see how

they do," said William L. Hamm of Louisiana, speaking of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary where he also is a trustee. He said the seminary has confidence in the current foundation but would not let somebody "experiment" with their funds.

Johnson and trustee chairman Leonard M. Brannan of Chattanooga met with representatives of the Implementation Task Force and attorneys for both groups on Dec. 6.

In a Dec. 7 interview Johnson said the meeting was a question-and-answer informa-

tional session.

"We have confidence in the system to produce the right governance for the foundation and would urge all clients to adopt a wait-and-see attitude before making any decisions related to this implementation," Johnson said. □



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## Modern celebration of Christmas combines several traditions

By Bob Allen  
For Associated Baptist Press

**JACKSONVILLE, Fla.** — The modern celebration of Christmas combines a number of traditions so ancient that their origins have become lost to most people.

Following is all you ever wanted to know (or perhaps not) about the celebration of Christmas.

Followers of Jesus celebrated his death and resurrection early in church history, but Jesus' nativity was not celebrated until 300 years later. While Dec. 25 eventually came to be associated as Jesus' birthday, no evidence remains about the exact date of Christ's birth.

Luke's Gospel tells of angels announcing Jesus' birth to shepherds in the fields, keeping watch over their flocks by night.

Winter in Judea was wet and chilly. It is unlikely that shepherds would spend the night in their fields in December. More likely, scholars say, Jesus was born in the spring lambing season, when nights were balmy and shepherds would need to be awake to tend their ewes.

Early Christians were more likely to celebrate the day of a person's death than the birth. Very early in the history of the church, Christians held an annual festival commemorating the death of Jesus, as well as honoring many of the martyrs on the day of their death.

Before the fourth century, churches in Egypt, Asia Minor, and Antioch observed Epiphany, the manifestation of God to the world, celebrating Christ's baptism, birth, and the visit by the Magi described in the Gospel of Matthew.

Early in the fourth century, Christians in Rome began to celebrate the birth of Christ. At the time, the church was embroiled in a controversy over the nature of Christ — whether he was truly God or a created being. It is likely an emphasis on the doctrine of the incarnation, the idea that "the Word was made flesh," in John 1:14, was a factor in the spread of the celebration of Christmas.

The term Christmas, a contraction of "Christ's mass," did not come into use until the Middle Ages. Another term used to describe the event, Nativity, is from the Latin word for "birth."

Christmas appeared at first to have been observed at different times during the year. There is some evidence that the earliest Christmas festival was held in May.

In the fourth century, Pope Julius I designated Dec. 25 as Christmas, probably to coincide with pagan celebrations of the winter solstice, which many ancient religions observed as signaling the return or rebirth of the sun. The Roman Feast of the Invincible Sun was celebrated across the Roman Empire. Rather than

trying to eradicate pagan holidays, church leaders sought to replace them with Christian observances.

Another tradition says Jesus died the same date as he was conceived, March 25, placing his birth nine months later on Dec. 25. When the Julian calendar, established by Julius Caesar in 46 B.C., was replaced by the Gregorian calendar, ordered by Pope Gregory XIII in 1582, 11 days were dropped. Some Christian sects refused to accept the redating and continued to celebrate Christmas on the old Dec. 25, which is Jan. 7 on the new calendar. Protestants were also slow to accept the Gregorian calendar, which became official in 1752.

The Christian calendar purports to date history from the year of Jesus' birth, but it is based on a miscalculation. The census by Quirinius cited in Luke 2:2 was dated by the Jewish historian Josephus in 6-7 B.C.

Herod the Great, mentioned in Matthew's Gospel as the jealous king that tried to murder the Christ child, died in 4 B.C., according to Roman histories. Scholars pinpoint the year of Jesus' birth as sometime between 4 B.C. and 1 B.C.

Christmas became a public holiday by order of the Roman emperor Justinian in the sixth century. St. Francis of Assisi introduced devotion to the Christmas crib, or manger, in the 13th century.

Martin Luther, the Protestant reformer, expressed devotion to Christmas in sermons. English Puritans, however, tried to do away with the holiday in the 17th century. It was revived with the restoration of the English monarchy in 1660, but as a more secular holiday than it had been before.

Some pre-Christian traditions became associated with Christmas and continue today. For example, in the first millennium in what is now Scotland, Druids celebrated the winter solstice by a festival honoring their sun god. Called, "Yule," the celebration included dragging a huge log into an opening and starting a bonfire. The Druids would dance around the yule log in a noisy celebration designed to wake the sleeping sun.

The Druids also hung mistletoe in hopes it would bring peace and good fortune. Use of plants like holly comes from an ancient belief that such plants blossomed at Christmas.

The Christmas tree is a fairly recent addition, developing in the early 17th century in Strasbourg, France, and spreading through Germany and into northern Europe. The evergreen tree trimmed with lights and other decorations was derived from the so-called paradise tree, symbolizing Eden, in German mystery plays.

The use of candles on Christmas trees developed from the belief that candles appeared miraculously on the trees at Christmas.

The Christmas tree was introduced in England in 1841 by Prince Albert, consort of Queen Victoria. From there it accompanied immigrants to the United States.

The figure of Santa Claus, which arguably overshadows Jesus in secular celebrations of Christmas, stems from a historical character from the fourth century, Saint Nicholas.

The patron saint of Russia, Saint Nicholas lived in Asia Minor, now Turkey. He also came to be viewed as the patron saint of his children, scholars, virgins, sailors, and merchants. In the Middle Ages, thieves also viewed him as their patron saint as well.

The Saint Nicholas legend tells of surreptitious gifts to three daughters of a poor man, who, unable to give them dowries, was about to abandon them to a life of sin. From that story grew the custom of secret giving on the eve of St. Nicholas Day, Dec. 6. Because of the proximity of dates, Christmas and St. Nicholas Day became merged in many countries.

Colonial settlers on Manhattan Island introduced the name Santa Claus, a corruption of the Dutch "Sinterklaas," a modification of "Sint Nikolaas."

The Twelve Days of Christmas, popularized in the carol, refers to the 12 days between Christmas and Epiphany, Jan. 6. Epiphany celebrated the manifestation of Jesus as the Son of God, represented in the adoration of the Magi, the baptism of Jesus and the miracle of turning water to wine at Cana.

Use of the abbreviation "Xmas," often criticized as an attempt to secularize or remove Christ from Christmas, actually has Christmas roots. "X" is a Greek letter transliterated into English as "ch." It is the first letter in the biblical word "Christos," which is translated as "Christ." □

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## The Savior with us

By Charles Parker

Years ago an urban missionary in London went into a stable to talk to a jockey about salvation. "This is no place to talk religion," exclaimed the jockey, "so that is the end of it." "Oh, no," retorted the missionary, "that is not the end of it; it is only the beginning. Christianity began in a stable, and you can be born again in one."

As Christians all across the world gather again in our imaginations today around the manger in the stable to worship Christ the King, let us remember that we do so because he has brought to us eternal salvation.

While we will not be able to understand this precious gift, we can affirm and celebrate that unto us "is born in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11). For all of us in whose heart he dwells, he is the Savior with us.

Verses 4-7 describe the circumstances in which the Savior was born into the world. The focus is on the human dimension of Jesus' life.

A hopeful couple, caught up in the political maelstrom of Rome's domination of the Jewish people, were placed in the plan and foreknowledge in Bethlehem, the ancestral city of David (I Samuel 16:1-13, Micah 5:2). While they were there, Mary had her baby boy. He was born in the humblest of circumstances.

Verses 8-12 contain the first announcement of the birth of Jesus after he was born. The divine dimension of Jesus' life begins to come into focus.

God has many chosen instruments. Here he chose to use an angelic messenger. The good news was announced to no doubt incredulous shepherds, men (or women and children, as some contemporary scholars think) in as humble a condition as were Mary, Joseph, and the new baby.

The angel bypassed the palaces of Caesar and Herod and the pious Pharisees in order to let ordinary people know that salvation is for "all people" (v. 10). The most choice of God's instruments is and always will be "a Savior ... Christ the Lord ... the babe" whom we know as Jesus.

Not long after Jesus' birth, probably on the 40th day, God's salvation was celebrated in a special way by Simeon, an elderly and righteous Jew who was "waiting for the consolation of Israel" (v. 25). Simeon sang a song, one of the first "Christmas carols," as it were, about God's salvation and its applicability for all people. Such a salvation is worth celebrating.

Arthur Stainback, prominent Baptist preacher of a generation ago, told of the young medical missionary in China who was baffled by a horrible disease he could not diagnose or treat.

He allowed himself to contract the disease, then went to America to the Johns Hopkins Hospital where both cause and cure were found. Upon his return to China, the people loved him because they had seen him take their sickness into his own body that they might be saved from it.

In such a way God visited the earth in the person of his son to save us from our fatal disease of sin. □ — Charles Parker is pastor of First Church, Jacksboro.

## A time of righteousness and peace

By Kim Allen

The two chosen passages are related to this season because of their celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. Isaiah deals with the Messiah and Luke deals with the birth of Jesus.

### A prophecy of the Messiah — vv. 1-9

(1) Branch of Jesse (v. 1) - A green sprout is a sign that the roots have life that will show again in time. God had promised David an everlasting kingdom, however, after the exile, Judah had no ruling king of David's line. The birth of Jesus fulfilled that promise.

(2) The spirit of the Lord (v. 2) - Isaiah predicted the spirit of the Lord would be on the Messiah in a special way. The Spirit would be seen in three special ways: special wisdom, good counsel, and magnify the knowledge and fear of the Lord.

(3) Righteous judge (vv. 3-5) - The Old Testament instructed Judges to be impartial but the prophets had to condemn the judges for taking bribes to favor the rich. The poor and meek were often falsely condemned. This prophecy was good news to the poor and oppressed.

(4) Reign of peace (vv. 6-9) - The righteous reign of the Messiah would result in an age of peace. As last weeks lesson indicated, the implements of war would become implements of peace and the predatory beast would abide in peace with former prey.

### The birth of a Savior — Luke 2:1-20

(1) The birth of Jesus (vv. 1-7) - This account of the

## The Savior's birth

By Phil Lovelace

### The fulfilled purpose of God — ch. 1:20-23

Espousal (or engagement) among the Jews was as binding as marriage. When Joseph discovered Mary's condition, he naturally assumed she had been unfaithful to him. Note his prudence: "While he thought on these things ..." How important it is to be "slow to wrath" and to consider matters thoughtfully! (see Proverbs 21:5).

According to Deuteronomy 22:23-24, Mary could have been stoned.

It took great faith for Joseph to believe God's message in the dream! His love for God and Mary made him willing "to bear reproach" for Christ. Imagine how the neighbors must have talked!

The name Jesus means "Savior." It is a Greek version of the Hebrew name "Joshua."

Christ's birth fulfills the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14. Please read Isaiah 7 carefully. Note: The Hebrew word in Isaiah 7:14, and the Greek word in Matthew 1:23, can only mean virgin. Translations of the Bible that question the virgin birth of Christ are untrustworthy.

Note: It was important that Jesus be born of the virgin that he might have a sinless human nature, conceived by the Holy Spirit (see Luke 1). Since Christ existed before the creation of man, how could he ever be born of a

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Focal Passages:  
Isaiah 11:1-9; Luke 2:1-20**

birth of Jesus is the most familiar to Christmas. Verses 1-5 tell why they were in Bethlehem and verses 6-7 explain how Jesus came to be born in a manger.

(2) The announcement to the shepherds (vv. 8-14) - Shepherds were the lower end of the social-economic end of society and God chose them to announce the birth of his Son not in the homes of the rich and famous.

In verse 10 the words "good tidings" is translated "good news" or sometimes "Gospel." The Lord chose this simple word to announce the best news of all time.

Verses 11-12 contain three names: "Savior" meaning he came to save his people; "Christ" the Greek version of the Hebrew Messiah; and "Lord" a common title used by the Gentiles of their gods or their rulers.

In verses 13-14 the first heavenly messenger was alone; but after the announcement the angel was joined by a heavenly choir. Their praise was focused on two aspects of the event: glory and peace.

(3) The shepherd's response (vv. 15-20) - The shepherds by obeying God to go find the baby were shown worthy of the honor of being first to hear the good news. Not only were they first to hear, they were first to tell the good news to others.

Let us, like the shepherds, praise God for what we have seen and heard. Merry Christmas! □ — Kim Allen is pastor of Little West Fork Church, Clarksville.

**Bible Book Series for December 24  
Focal Passages: Matthew 1:20-23;  
2:1-2, 10-11, 13-15**

human father and mother!

### The homage shown to the king — ch. 2:1-2, 10-11

These wise men were "Magi," oriental astrologers who studied the stars and sought to understand the times. They were Gentiles who had been especially called of God to come and pay homage to the new-born King. There may be a reference to the miraculous star in Balaam's prophecy in Numbers 24:17. We do not know how many magi there were, where they came from, or what their names were.

The visit of the magi is an indication that the Gentiles will someday worship the King when the kingdom is set up on earth, (see Isaiah 60:6).

The experience of the magi is a wonderful lesson in finding the will of God: (1) They followed the light God gave them; (2) they confirmed their steps by the Word of God; (3) they obeyed God without question and he led them each step. Note that they went home "another way" (v. 12). Anyone who comes to Christ will go home another way!

### The hatred against the king — vv. 13-15

Just as Satan had tried to keep Christ from being born, now he

tries to destroy him after he is born (see Revelation 12:1-4). The flesh always wars against the Spirit, and Herod (an Edomite) wars against Christ. We cannot help but admire Joseph for his faithfulness in obeying God and caring for Mary and Jesus. Matthew quotes Hosea 11:1 to show that Christ was to come out of Egypt. (Herod slew more than 20 babies). Matthew sees this as fulfillment of Jeremiah 31:15.

Thoughts about the virgin birth: In the Bible, only four ways are noted to get a body:

- (1) without a man or a woman — as Adam, made from the dust of the earth;
- (2) with a man, but no woman — as Eve did, made from Adam's side;
- (3) with a man and a woman — as all men are born;
- (4) with a woman, but no man — as Jesus was born, having an earthly mother but no earthly father.

Conclusion: The Savior's birth — it was important that Jesus be born of the virgin that he might have a sinless nature, conceived by the Holy Spirit (again see Luke 1). Merry Christmas. □ — Phil Lovelace is pastor of First Church, Somerville.

**Life and Work Series  
for December 31**  
**Focal Passages:**  
**John 18:33, 36-37;**  
**19:1-3, 17-22;**  
**Revelation 11:15**

## The King with us

By Charles Parker

One of the most expressive ways to communicate the rule of Jesus Christ in our lives and in his world is the image of kingship. The Bible contains other such images, such as lordship. It has been truly said, "If Christ is not Lord of all, He is not Lord at all." However this truth is expressed, "Emmanuel," God with us in Jesus Christ, means that Jesus came to rule. He was, and is, still king. His is a spiritual kingdom, not a physical kingdom. Through his death and resurrection, Jesus brings us into a new, eternal kingdom.



PARKER

In John 18:33, 36-37 Jesus clarifies his kingship. He agrees with Pilate that he is the King of the Jews, but points out that his kingdom is not a worldly kingdom which needs soldiers or procurators. Jesus disarms this Roman governor as a personal threat by trying to call him to listen to ultimate, spiritual truth. Jesus tries to help Pilate see that he is indeed no political threat to the Roman state. Until his kingdom is fully revealed, he appears as witness, not king.

John 19:1-3 shows the world's mocking view of Jesus, the king of the Jews. If Jesus was really a revolutionary, which is the only way the Sanhedrin's claim to turn him over to Pilate would have had any validity, the soldier's flogging and mockery of Jesus showed that he was an ineffective general. If, on the other hand, Jesus is the King of truth and righteousness and peace, then his lack of response is further proof that he is in control. Only divine restraint and mercy could have prevented wiping out Pilate for his spineless lack of courage and the soldiers for their cruelty. As William Willimon asked, "Is this any way for a King to behave?" Only a divine king, as unexpected in his dying as in his birth, would behave so.

Verses 17-22 show human rejection of the King. Herschel H. Hobbs pointed out that by using three languages — Hebrew for religion, Greek for culture, and Latin for government — all of the institutions of society were shown to be rejecting Jesus. As he is king of all, all areas of life rejected him at the cross.

We move from the shame and humiliation of the cross to a glorious heavenly scene in Revelation 11:15. Someday, when Jesus returns, it will be recognized that the King has assumed complete and total lordship. The tense of the verb in this verse, somewhat obscure in the King James Version, is a past tense; what is not yet spoken of as if it had already happened. The plural "kingdoms" in the King James should be singular. Thus Jesus' kingdom will not be several kingdoms, but one kingdom under one great king. Furthermore, it will be an eternal kingdom that nothing in heaven or on earth can destroy. All human kingdoms and nations will one day pass away, but his kingdom will never pass away.

If Jesus rules, does he rule in our lives? According to Ripley's "Believe It or Not," the smallest royal palace is Queen Charlotte's cottage in Kew Gardens, London, England, built in 1772 for Britain's royal family with only two rooms. But according to the Bible, the smallest royal palace was the stable of Bethlehem where Jesus was born. The wise men asked, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews?" (Matthew 2:2). Today's Scriptures make it clear that he is abiding with the humble, he is rejected by the proud, he is vindicated by his triumph, and he is coming again in glory to rule. □ — Charles Parker is pastor of First Church, Jacksboro.

## A time for sharing good news

By Kim Allen

The emphasis of Isaiah 60-61 is on telling the Good News. Zion was told to arise and shine with reflected light of God's glory.



ALLEN

Let your light shine —  
ch. 60:1-22

(1) Reflecting the light of God's glory (vv. 1-2) — The prophets picture of darkness over the whole world being pierced by God's light on the future is like a rising sun, but the light is the glory of the Lord.

The word glory in the Old Testament referred to the majesty of the presence and power of God.

(2) Results of the coming of light (vv. 3-4) — The arising light of God's glory would bring the Gentile world to the light. The restoration of Israel is expected in the messianic age as described in verse 4. Verse 5 begins the joy of Zion as people return even by ship with wealth from afar.

(3) The everlasting light (vv. 15-22) — Even forsaken and hated, Zion would be made a joy forever. Zion would know the Lord is Redeemer and Savior (v. 16). Peace and righteousness would describe Zion (v. 17). All

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**Isaiah 60:1-4; 61:1-4**

of this is similar to Revelation 21:23-26, showing the New Jerusalem.

Messenger and message of good news —  
ch. 61:1-11

(1) Messenger and message (vv. 1-3) — We should recognize this passage as the one read by Jesus in the synagogue at Nazareth. He identified himself and the ministry he had come to perform as the ultimate fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy.

The task of the anointed one was to proclaim the good news to the meek or poor. He himself is the good news.

Verse 3 is not in Luke's account of what Jesus read, however, only parts of familiar passages were quoted when the whole passage was in mind.

(2) Everlasting covenant (vv. 4-11) — We return to the language of exile and of restoration of the land with verse 4. The ruins of the past would be rebuilt and a new order of people would attend the flocks. God's people would do their God ordained roles and their shameful past would be replaced with joy. God would make right their past wrongs and enter into an everlasting covenant as they became a blessed people. Isaiah broke out in joyful thanksgiving with God's assurance of salvation. □ — Kim Allen is pastor of Little West Fork Church, Clarksville.

## Deliverance

By Phil Lovelace

Once Haman is out of the way, a peace reigns in the palace. Mordecai was given the authority once held by Haman, and now everyone knew that Esther was a Jewess. This change of power is a beautiful illustration of Christian victory; once the flesh is crucified (Romans 6-7) then the peace and power of God can control our lives (Romans 8).

However, one problem remained: the king could not cancel his decree and the Jews would be robbed and slain in nine months (compare 8:9 with 3:13). We certainly see the providence of God in the casting of the lots (ch. 3:7), for it left time for the king to get the word of the new decree throughout the empire. Esther once again begged the king to act for the salvation of the people. The king turned to Mordecai and gave him authority to act for him. The new decree permitted the Jews to protect themselves and to destroy any other in the kingdom who were like Haman, enemies of the Jews. The king did not cancel the old law; he merely gave a new law that superseded it. This is true in the Christian life; the law of sin and death (Romans 8:1-12) have been overcome by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ.

Verses 10-14 are a beautiful illustration of getting out the Gospel! This was a matter of life and death! The scribes hurried and wrote the messages, and the official ambassadors hastened to get the message to the corners of the kingdom. If Christians today would be half as anxious to get out the message of the Gospel, more souls would be rescued from eternal death, (see Proverbs 24:11-12). Note that many different people were employed in

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spreading the good news, just as God uses many workers today. Of course, when the Jews heard and believed the message, it brought them joy and deliverance. They knew that the Persians would not dare to fight them and incur the wrath of the king. In fact, many of the Persians "called themselves Jews" to escape punishment!

Chapter 9:20-23, 26a

When the 12th month arrived, the Jews were ready for victory, for they had the edict of the king on their side! Hundreds of the Jews' enemies were slain including the 10 sons of Haman (vv. 6-10). Note that the Jews did not take any spoil (v. 10) although the decree in chapter 8:11 permitted this. Certainly their enemies would have taken the Jews wealth as the king commanded (ch. 3:13), but God's people have to prove themselves better than their enemies. Verse 16 states that some 75,000 of their enemies were slain. On the 14th day of the month the Jews rested and rejoiced at God's deliverance.

Mordecai felt led to make the 14th and 15th days of the 12th month, holidays for the Jews to commemorate the great deliverance; and to this day the Jews celebrate the Feast of Purim. Verse 26 explains the meaning of "Purim." It is the plural of pur, which means "lots" (see ch. 3:7). While we have no divine authorization in the Old Testament for this feast, it has been celebrated for centuries and is a testimony to the power of God and the grace of God toward his people.

Conclusion: The book closes reporting the promotion and prosperity of Mordecai, the man of faith who believed God's promises and



dared to act. Of course, we dare not forget Esther who gave her all that her people might be saved. The entire book of Esther is the marvelous testimony of the overruling power and providence of God. Romans 8:28 is verified by the book. John 3:16 is pictured by Esther's life, for Christ gave his life that God's people might be saved — delivered from sin — set free. "Praise the name of Jesus" for our deliverance. □ — Phil Lovelace is pastor of First Church, Somerville.



...and his name shall be called  
**Emmanuel**  
(which means, God is with us!)  
—Matthew 1:23

