

# TENNESSEE'S BAPTIST & REFLECTOR

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HALL HONORED

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## Jan. 20-21 at Wallace Memorial Church, Knoxville

# Evangelism conference returns to winter time slot

For *Baptist and Reflector*

BRENTWOOD — The 1997 State Evangelism Conference returns to its traditional winter time slot, meeting this year Jan. 20-21 at Wallace Memorial Church, Knoxville.

Two out of state speakers headline the program — John Avant, pastor of Coggin Avenue Church, Brownwood, Texas, and Jack Smith of the Southern Baptist Convention Home Mission Board.

Avant will tell how God has moved at Coggin Avenue where a spiritual awakening developed recently and spread throughout the SBC.

The conference theme is "Revive Us Again, Oh God." Instead of one person doing a theme interpretation, different Tennessee pastors will open each session with a message, according to TBC Evangelism specialist Jerry King.

Those pastors are Ron Phillips, Central Church, Hixson; Roger Freeman, First Church, Clarksville; Doug Sager, First Church Concord, Knoxville; and James McCluskey, retired pastor, Wal-



AVANT



McCLUSKEY



PHILLIPS



PORCH



REED



SMITH

lace Memorial Church.

Other messages will be brought by James Porch, TBC executive director; Herbert Higdon, TBC president; Floyd Lammersfeld, president of the Fellowship of Tennessee Baptist Evangelists; and Frank Houston, pastor of Bethel Church, Morristown.

Carolyn Reed of Harsh Chapel Church, Nashville, will bring special music throughout the sessions.

Eight special interest conferences will be offered on Tuesday afternoon. Topics include "Discipling the Believer," "Personal Witness Training Resources," "The Inward Journey and the Outward Reach," "Music in Evangelism," "People Sharing Jesus and Total Church Life Strategies," "Undergirding Evangelism with an

Effective Prayer Ministry," "Using the Sunday School as the Foundation of Personal Witnessing," and "Volunteer Missions and Evangelism."

Participants will be able to attend two of the special interest conferences.

The conference begins at 2 p.m. on Monday, Jan. 20. Speakers during that session are Porch (2:10), Smith (2:45), Higdon (3:25), and Houston (4:00).

After a break for dinner the conference reconvenes at 6:45 p.m. with music by the Tennessee Baptist Chorale. Speakers that evening are Phillips (7:10) and Avant (8:15).

Speakers on Tuesday morning include Freeman (9:45), Lammersfeld (10:20), Houston (10:55), and Avant (11:35).

The Tuesday afternoon session begins at 1:55. Sager's

message begins at 2 p.m., followed by the special interest conferences.

Tuesday evening is Laymen's Night and the conference begins at 6:45 with music by Carolyn Reed. Messages will be given by McCluskey (7:35) and Houston (8:25).

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

Prior to the conference on Monday, the Fellowship of Tennessee Baptist Evangelists will have a special meeting of preaching and singing, beginning at 10 a.m. at Wallace Memorial.

To reach someone attending the conference, call (423) 281-7114 to leave messages. ■

## TBC receipts on the rise after two months

For *Baptist and Reflector*

BRENTWOOD — Cooperative Program receipts from Tennessee Baptist churches for November and December totaled \$4,743,396, an increase of \$235,652 over the same period for the previous fiscal year.

Also, the November-December Cooperative Program gifts are \$44,706 over budget needs for the two-month period.

"The Cooperative Program giving from our churches across Tennessee is once again an expression of our commitment to missions, evangelism, Christian education, and benevolent care," said TBC Executive Director James Porch. "To God be the glory." ■

## Stay in the game; read your program!

For *Baptist and Reflector*

BRENTWOOD — At the top of this page is a story previewing the upcoming State Evangelism Conference.

On other pages you can read about events and people in churches throughout Tennessee. And you will gain information about meetings and programs planned at the request of these churches.

You will be able to see what is happening elsewhere in the world of Baptists. You have the opportunity to read one, two, or three Sunday School lessons — written by Tennessee Baptists.

You will see, also on this page, that the Cooperative Program is doing well as Tennessee Baptist churches are sensitive to ministries at home and abroad.

In this edition of the *Baptist and Reflector*, information is available in editorial comments.

Do you want to read about the evangelism conference after it is held later this month?

Would you like to know who speakers will be at the Southern Baptist Convention in June — and what the top agenda items are?

Does the work of the Executive Board, Tennessee Baptist Convention, and its staff, interest you? Do you have suggestions to make in the form of letters to the editor? Do you like to read about the opinions of other Tennessee Baptists?

Now — we have asked you some important questions, questions which should enable any Tennessee Baptist to judge their involvement and interest in the work of Tennessee Baptist churches — and "down home" stories about very interesting individuals.

And you don't have to be an elite reader to be a member of the newsjournal's family.

Here at the beginning of the

year 1997, there is an air of excitement about Baptist work.

A new year brings a new flavor, a new atmosphere.

To continue to be "in the know" about Tennessee Baptist ministries, reading the *B&R* is a necessity.

This little newspaper is the only authentic, official, newspaper for Tennessee Baptists.

We encourage Tennessee Baptists to stay informed.

Read your *B&R*, the only official paper for Tennesseans.

Of course, the staff believes strongly in the ministry of the *Baptist and Reflector*.

We can't begin to think about not having a state paper. It is just unthinkable. It would be like trying to keep up with a million people from 2,900 churches — and knowing how to support their ministries.

Well — that's what it would be like. Impossible, right?

Read your *B&R*. *B&R*

- ▶ Wm. Fletcher Allen, editor
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# Paris minister of education honored by BSSB

Baptist Press

NASHVILLE — The Baptist Sunday School Board recently honored four Southern Baptists, including a Tennessee Baptist minister of education, for creative contribution to Bible teaching-reaching ministry.

The inaugural Washburn-Piland-Taylor Directors' Awards were presented during the annual planning meetings for state Sunday School directors and associates held in mid-December at the BSSB in Nashville.

The awards are named in honor of the three most recent directors of Bible teaching-reaching work at the BSSB: A.V. Washburn, Harry Piland,

and current director, Bill Taylor. All three men were on hand for the awards presentation.

Awards were given to honor excellent Bible teaching-reaching work in four categories — church, association, state convention, and Southern Baptist Convention. Winners included:

**Church:**

Charles Orr, minister of education/business administrator at First Church, Paris. Orr has served there for 45 years. A new fellowship hall on the church campus was recently named in his honor. Taylor said of Orr:



ORR

"For anyone to serve that long at the same church and have the kind of success that Charles Orr has had is amazing. He is a good example of what commitment to Bible teaching and reaching is all about."

**Association:** Larry Fillingim, director of church leadership development for the Tarrant County Association in Fort Worth, Texas. Taylor said Fillingim "is leading out in some of the most creative and innovative work in Bible teaching-reaching ministry in the country. He is creating new models of cooperation between local churches and associations."

**State:** Bernie Spooner, director of the Sunday School/dis-

cipleship division at the Baptist General Convention of Texas in Dallas. Taylor said Spooner was deserving of the honor "because of his long history of excellent work in Bible teaching and reaching."

**SBC:** Louis Hanks, director of the Biblical studies department in the Sunday School Board's Bible teaching-reaching division. Taylor said Hanks "has been a driving force behind the literature improvements in all three of the Sunday School curriculum lines published by the Sunday School Board and the newly designed Vacation Bible School materials. Any Southern Baptist who uses our materials will benefit from Dr. Hanks' leadership." ■

## Dyer County, Tennessee Baptists aid burned church

For *Baptist and Reflector*

DYERSBURG — Last May a fire labeled as "suspicious" by state and federal arson investigators destroyed an African American congregation in the Tigrett community of Dyer County.

Since then, volunteers from Tennessee, Ohio, Massachusetts, and Iowa traveled to Dyer County to help rebuild Mt. Pleasant Church, according to Joe Naylor, director of missions for Dyer Association.

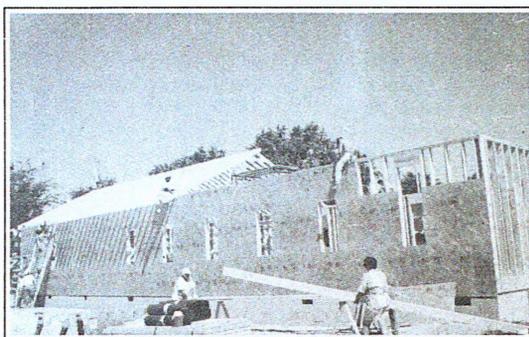
The efforts were spearheaded by James Kinsey, pastor of Sunswept Church, Union City,

and area director for the Mississippi River Ministries.

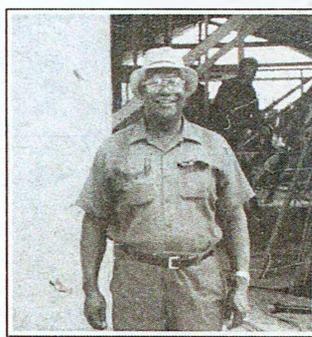
In addition to the labor, funds, including \$5,000 given by Southern Baptists, were donated to purchase building materials.

Many of the construction teams were housed at the Baptist Student Center at Dyersburg. A number of meals were provided for the groups by local churches, Naylor added.

On Dec. 15 the new facility at Mt. Pleasant was dedicated. Many of the volunteers who helped rebuild the church returned for the dedication service, Naylor reported. ■



**VOLUNTEERS FROM Tennessee as well as other states traveled this summer to rebuild Mt. Pleasant Church in Dyer County. The church was dedicated on Dec. 15 in a special afternoon service.**



**PASTOR PAUL LUSBY was there to assist volunteers who helped rebuild Mt. Pleasant Church last summer after a suspected arson fire.**

## Attendance jumps at Germantown after relocation

For *Baptist and Reflector*

GERMANTOWN — Germantown Church here celebrated its first anniversary of the church's relocation to 9450 Poplar Avenue in mid-December.

For more than 150 years the church had met at the same location on Germantown Road.

Construction on a new 330,000-square-foot facility at the new location was completed in December 1995 at a cost of approximately \$18 million.

In the first year at the new location, the church, which has a membership of 6,200, received more than 600 new members and saw its average attendance increase by about 500.

The church offers three Sunday Schools and two Sunday morning worship services each week. ■

## New writers chosen for winter quarter Sunday School lessons

For *Baptist and Reflector*

BRENTWOOD — Three new writers have been chosen to write the commentaries for the winter quarter Sunday School lessons.

Mike Shelton, pastor of Bellevue Church, Nashville, will write the Family Bible lessons.

Shelton is former pastor of Central Church, Hendersonville. He is a graduate of Belmont University, Nashville, and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky.,



KITTER



SHELTON

where he earned both the master of divinity and doctor of ministry degrees.

Shelton and his wife, Kimberly, have two sons, Nathan, 5, and Daniel, 3.

Howard Kitter, pastor of

First Church, Bethel Springs, will write the Explore the Bible lessons.

Kitter also has served as pastor of three other Tennessee churches — Fellowship, Mt. Juliet; Dixie Hills, Bolivar; and Walnut Grove, Dover.

Kitter is a graduate of Mid-Continent Baptist Bible College, Mayfield, Ky. He also is enrolled at Luther Rice Seminary, Lithonia, Ga.

He and his wife, Vicky, have one son, Evan.

Donna Wright will write the Life and Work lessons.

Wright, who was reared in Keyport, N.J., now lives in Newport where she works as a patient relations clerk for a local doctors' office. Wright is an active member of First Church where she serves on various committees and will direct the 1997 Vacation Bible School.

She writes a local newspaper column and has been published in various magazines. She also writes choral readings, responsive readings, and other special productions for her church.

Wright and her husband, David, have a son, Benjamin. ■

# Leaders not impressed with proposed TV ratings system

By Dwayne Hastings  
For Baptist Press

NASHVILLE — A plan to implement a sex-and-violence ratings system for television — covering cartoons to soap operas — was met with skepticism by the head of the Southern Baptist Convention's Christian Life Commission, along with others.

"This is not a significant first step; it is not a hopeful first step," said Richard D. Land, president of the SBC agency that deals with ethical and public policy issues, calling the action a "deliberate subterfuge" to the real problem.

The plan, announced in late December by Jack Valenti of the Motion Picture Association of America, would categorize shows as: TV-Y (for all children), TV-Y7 (inappropriate for children under 7), TV-G (for general audiences not specifically children), TV-PG (parental guidance urged), TV-14 (not for children under 14) and TV-M (adults over 17 only). ABC, NBC, CBS, and FOX will implement the plan in January.

"For the entertainment in-

dustry to come forward at this point and say they understand and promise to regulate themselves is to believe the proverbial fox has become a vegetarian and can be trusted to guard the chicken coop," Land said.

"This is simply a recognition by the industry that the public is demanding something be done," he continued. "They are attempting to engage in a preemptive strike with a self-regulating system which has proven to be largely meaningless with regard to motion pictures." Valenti also directed the group that crafted the ratings system used currently in the movie industry.

The Center for Media Education, an advocacy group, led the chorus against the industry announcement, calling for a more detailed content-based ratings system of programs' sex and violent scenes in lieu of an age-based system. Such ratings would reveal the degree of sexual or violent con-

tent as well as offensive language.

Kathy Montgomery of the Center for Media Education said the proposed ratings plan was more about protecting profits than providing an effective tool for parents. "The industry has turned a deaf ear to parents," she said.

Valenti said any other ratings system would infringe upon the network's First Amendment rights, promising a more thorough system would bring immediate legal action by the entertainment industry, according to a report in the Dec. 13 edition of *The New York Times*.

"I can tell you right now, we will not use any other television ratings system," Valenti emphasized.

The Telecommunications Act passed by Congress earlier last year called upon the Federal Communications Commission to oversee development of a ratings system if the industry failed to voluntarily devise such a system by February. Valenti's announcement was designed to thwart government action on a ratings system.

A centerpiece of the legislation was the requirement that television sets built after 1997 be equipped with an electronic component, a V-chip, that will allow parents to regulate what shows can be seen on the television based on ratings codes.

"Parents can make up their own minds about what is appropriate for their children as long as they are given basic information" argued Congressman Edward J. Markey, D-Mass., who favors a more content-based ratings system, in the *Times* report. "And we should stop pretending that ratings attached by the producers or distributors of shows will have any credibility at all."

"There is certain significant experience and history to cast serious doubt on this industry's ability to exercise and self impose any meaningful restraint," agreed Land.

The Children's Defense Fund, the National PTA, the American Psychological Association, and the American Academy of Pediatrics joined in rejecting the Valenti-proposed ratings system. The American Civil Liberties Union dis-

missed the need for any public rating system, calling the idea "government-sponsored censorship."

A study of network television during the "family hour," conducted by the University of California at Santa Barbara and released recently, revealed 75 percent of the shows during that hour from 8 to 9 p.m. contained some sexual content. A similar study in 1976 revealed 43 percent had such content.

The study found more children watch television during that hour than on Saturday mornings or weekday afternoons.

"There is no question that for the most part TV has generated into an electronic cesspool," Land said, noting the networks' agreement to rate their shows is a weak first step in getting the airwaves cleaned up and may instead provide additional cover for the entertainment industry to broadcast more adult-themed programming than before.

"This is nothing more than a self-serving, counterproductive attempt to blow smoke by the industry," Land said. ■

## Issues of cooperation, future dominate Baptist news in '96

By Bob Allen & Greg Warner  
For Associated Baptist Press

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — What will be the shape of Baptist life in the future? That question dominated the news among Baptists in 1996.

As the tedious process of downsizing the Southern Baptist Convention continued, Baptists in the various state Baptist conventions — and the fledgling Cooperative Baptist Fellowship — debated how they will relate to the national body and each other.

In Virginia, Baptist conservatives broke away from the moderate-led Baptist General Association of Virginia. That action in September was ranked by Baptist state newspaper editors as the top story in Baptist life during 1996.

The decision by the new group, Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia, to sever ties with the 173-year-old Virginia association was the first formal split in a state convention to result from the long dispute between conservatives and moderates in the SBC.

Other stories of who is in, who is out, and who will lead in Baptist life accounted for five of the top 10 stories of the year, according to the informal survey of Baptist editors conducted by Associated Baptist Press.

Not all the attention was focused inward, however. Southern Baptists also joined the national debate over a controversial abortion procedure, responded to a rash of church arson, protested the growing persecution of Christians overseas, and threatened to boycott Disney for perceived anti-family values.

The proposed boycott of the Walt Disney Co. ranked second on the list of top stories for the year, according to the editors. A resolution passed by the Southern Baptist Convention in June called on Baptists nationwide to consider a boycott of Disney unless the entertainment giant changes policies criticized as departing from its family image.

Also during their June convention, the attention of Southern Baptists was drawn to a spate of fires at predominantly African-American churches across the country, and they pledged \$281,000 to help rebuild the churches. That story ranked third in the editors' poll. Other Baptist groups, as well as the National Council of Churches, raised similar funds.

Denominational downsizing, which was ranked first by the editors last year, was still on the minds of Southern Baptists in 1996, ranking fourth in the

poll. A 10-member task force began implementing a massive reorganization, which will reduce the number of SBC agencies from 19 to 12. Layoffs began before the end of the year at one agency, but most of the shakeup will come in 1997. No firm figures have been given about how many people will lose their jobs.

While the conservatives who dominate the SBC debated what shape to give the convention, moderate Southern Baptists decided not to form their own. The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, an organization of moderates displeased with the SBC's current direction, voted in June not to become a convention — the fifth most important story of 1996. A year-long study showed most CBF members felt alienated from the Southern Baptist Convention but were not ready to sever formal ties.

The other top 10 stories:

(6) Evangelization of Jews. Another resolution at the 1996 SBC meeting that drew widespread attention called on Southern Baptists to "direct our energies and resources" toward evangelization of Jews. Major Jewish organizations decried the resolution, along with the unrelated appointment of a home missionary to Jewish people, as anti-Semitic.

Home Mission Board officials said the resolution merely stated what Baptists believe — that all people must profess Jesus to be saved.

(7) Persecution of Christians overseas. Widespread persecution of Christians remains a problem in many countries, according to a report last fall by a monitoring agency which said more Christians died for their faith in the 20th century than any other century in history.

(8) Partial-birth abortion. Opponents of a controversial late-term abortion procedure succeeded in getting it banned in Congress. President Clinton said he personally opposes the procedure but vetoed the bill after Congress refused to allow exceptions for "serious adverse consequences" to the mother's health. The Southern Baptist Convention was among critics of the veto, passing a strongly worded resolution in June.

(9) Membership guidelines for Florida Baptists. The Florida Baptist Convention became the first Baptist state convention to adopt doctrinal requirements for affiliation.

(10) Home Mission Board president resigns. Larry Lewis, president of the SBC Home Mission Board since 1987, announced in September he would resign at the end of the year. ■

## SBC giving remains steady

Baptist Press

NASHVILLE — Southern Baptist Convention Cooperative Program receipts for the month of December nearly matched the previous year's December total, according to Morris H. Chapman, SBC Executive Committee president.

The amount given thus far is nearly 14 percent over that given at the same time last year.

December CP receipts totaled \$11,205,531, only \$87,314 or .77 percent off the amount given in December 1995.

For the first quarter of the SBC fiscal year, CP gifts totaled \$37,454,705, compared to \$32,874,184, an increase of \$4,480,520 or 13.59 percent over the first quarter of the last fiscal year.

The quarterly total was \$1.2 million or 3.29 percent over the required total for the SBC Program Allocation Budget of \$36.2 million.

Designated giving for the first quarter of the year was down 17.31 percent compared to the same time a year ago. ■



LAND

## Retirement comes after 37 years on the job

# Johnnie Hall: likes orange, but heart's gold

By Wm. Fletcher Allen  
Baptist and Reflector

**BRENTWOOD** — In a "farewell" to friends and co-workers last month, Johnnie Hall said he had a special prayer for his retirement.

"I have asked God to allow me to do something that has never been done before," he said. "I don't know what it is, but that's my prayer."

Those friends and co-workers present at the retirement luncheon at Judson Church, Nashville, were not surprised.

His prayer request is sincere, and he intends to do whatever that unique task requires.

He is one of the best known Tennessee Baptists, and he seems to know all of this Baptist family.

And it is no wonder many Tennessee Baptists think Johnnie Hall has spent his life working for the TBC. It's true that he has been around for more than half his life!

When Hall retired Dec. 31 after more than 37 years on the job, friends questioned whether his last paycheck would be written on orange-colored paper.

It is a known fact that Johnnie Hall's allegiance to the University of Tennessee's athletic teams is almost as strong as his ties to Discipleship Training.

Despite those ties with the UT Vols and leading the TBC's discipleship training work for many years, Hall is also known for his caring attitude for people — especially retired TBC employees and Baptists around the state.

He visited the sick and shut-ins, the elderly and retirees, faithfully year after year. He almost always had a

firsthand, up-to-date report on those who needed prayer support and some special care.

That's not to say he stopped caring when he retired. Hall is quick to squelch that idea. "I'll be just as interested in the people as ever," he asserts, "I'll have more time to visit."

Not only was Hall honored by friends and family at the luncheon in December, several associations remembered him at various meetings.

The Hall family is close. He met Phyllis Hesseay at a revival at Carson-Newman, and they married in 1953, when he "came home" from Navy duty.

Their children, Gregg and John, and Cindy Hardin and Tina Torbert, the four spouses and children, meet regularly for lunch with Johnnie and Phyllis. All are members of Judson Church.



A YOUNGER JOHNNIE HALL

Thousands of Tennessee Baptists perhaps will remember Hall best for the many years he developed and supported Bible Drills and Better Speakers' Tournaments.

It was one area of his leadership that will pay lifelong spiritual dividends. "I like to think," Hall says, "that we



**NUMBER ONE** Vol jersey was awarded to Johnnie Hall, center, by his home association, Holston Valley. From left Johnny Carr; John Parrott, DOM; Hall, Bobbie Tucker, and Eddie Click. The jersey was signed by UT football coach Phillip Fullmer and his assistants.

have provided children and youth with the opportunity to develop a strong love and devotion to God's Word," he says.

Hall came to the TBC's Training Union Department June 1, 1959, and served 15 years as an associate. He was responsible for adult work and served as a consultant in Church Administration and Family Ministry.

In 1973 he became director of the Church Training Department. His work has involved three name changes (now known as Discipleship Training), his love and dedication to the task never changed.

"I have always considered discipleship training as the greatest challenge and responsibility I could have," he says.

"One of the greatest blessings I have had is the privilege of working with the discipleship leadership in Tennessee Baptist churches.

"And now that I am stepping down, I wish for them the best as they continue to challenge the people where they minister. I pray for deeper, more meaningful discipling programs.

"Some of my best friends through the years have been pastors and directors of missions. I say to them and to the people of the churches that I believe the future is the brightest now than ever before, for carrying out the Great Commission of our Lord."

Hall was quick to add that he feels "the Great Commission is still the top priority for churches, taking

the Gospel to the people."

If he could turn back the clock, Hall said, "I would place the strongest emphasis on New Testament discipleship rather than 'program.'"

"I believe it is easier to be loyal to a program than to discipleship itself.

"Discipleship is coming to faith in C h r i s t and then walking with him d a i l y , making him lord of your life. It is loving him with all my heart, m i n d , s o u l , strength, and obeying his commands."

H a l l said it is "easy to talk, but more difficult to walk" as Christians. "We may never have Discipleship Training in all of our 2,900 Tennessee Baptist churches, but my heart's desire is that all the people may know Christ as Lord."

"In the ministry of discipleship," Hall says, "our summer camps were very vital for children and youth.

"During those long, hot days, we had the privilege of touching young lives, and seeing many of them accept Christ as Lord and answering his call to minister.

"I wish I had known earlier that relationships like that are one of God's great blessings.

"I have been challenged by those camp pastors and conference leaders — in the camp

settings, in churches, and in career or deacon leadership conferences."

The Rogersville native will always believe Bible Drills and Speakers' Tournaments should have high priority in discipling children and youth.

Hall says it is awesome "to see these youngsters memorizing at least 75 Bible verses each year, and to stand before adults and find verses within a few seconds.

"It astounds me," he says, "to realize that God allows his Word to live in their hearts, to see them graduate to youth drills, more verses, and represent Tennessee Baptists at Ridgecrest."

In addition to continuing to be a "best friend" to TBC retirees and countless shut-ins



PHYLLIS AND JOHNNIE HALL, together in ministry.

and sick people, Hall is serious about his prayer for a task that has never been done before. He says he can't explain how he came to pray that prayer, but "I believe God will grant my prayer, and I am excited about it."

What will it be? Johnnie Hall says he doesn't know, but he intends to keep serving God and Tennessee Baptists.

As we noted earlier, Johnnie Hall's love for the University of Tennessee Vols does make his blood flow "orange."

He is a great fan of UT athletics. However, his deeply-felt loyalty in his heart for Belmont, Carson-Newman, and Southern Seminary, his "real schools," where he prepared for ministry. **B&R**



WHEN JOHNNIE HALL was honored at Judson Church last month, Don Mauldin, right, longtime associate, was one of the many friends who rim-inised with Hall, in moments of laughter.



Tennessee  
features

# Don't overlook sincere mediocrity

**J**ust being ordinary is not the worst role a person can have in life. The world is made up of many millions of us ordinary people.

Years ago Jenkin Lloyd Jones, famed Oklahoma newspaper editor, wrote about an event in his life that compelled him to appreciate the dedication that can come — even with mediocrity.

He wrote about a particular high school race in which he was a participant. The results demonstrated to him that the mediocrity among us are worthy of praise.

Mediocrity? A quick check of the handy dictionary gives as one meaning, perhaps the original one, "halfway up a mountain." A good rendering puts it this way: "moderate ability or value."

In other words, mediocrity is not the worst or the best, it is somewhere in between. And if the mediocre result comes from a sincere and dedicated effort, then let's pass the praise around.

Jenkin's point is that the human race is not always first or last — there is a sizable number in the middle, halfway up a mountain.

He reminisced about a long ago four-mile race in which he was one of 300 high school cross country runners. He describes his coach as being able to "instill in the unmotivated and untalented certain dreams of glory."

Jones says he remembered "the gasping agony of the last ten minutes." Crossing the finish line, he collapsed on the grass and counted 130 runners who finished after him. He found in his heart a place on

which to stand, a security in sincere and dedicated mediocrity. And he almost as quickly remembered the 169 runners who finished ahead of him.

Jones writes about the choices made in values in American culture. Where will the emphasis be placed: family values, athletics, academics, some of all three, or somewhere else?

Look at secondary school athletics, for instance. To participate in ten or eleven football games plus play-offs to determine which team is really No. 1, the season begins before school opens. There are grinding practices — which can easily encroach on recreation and study time. Attention is riveted on perhaps 30-35 students.

Of course there should be many more students in the stands than on the field. But ponder the huge number of youth who never try, are ignored by coaches, and who rarely stretch a muscle or brain.

Because they never tried, they were never challenged, robbed of the character-molding ability to deal with defeat and pride in occasional victory.

A former Indiana school executive, John R. Mars, said it this way: "We are not here to produce gladiators. Perhaps we yell less of manslaughter at our pep rallies. Perhaps we lose a few more games. The euphoria and self-confidence of a brisk workout may be worth more than all the rest. The trial of one's strength and will must remain a trial that every student and athlete can pass."

It is so today. Whether it's reading or running, throwing, kicking, or catching, doing your best is the ultimate challenge. But it seems that a smaller, more

elite group gains the "success" spotlight, and there is a burgeoning majority of sitters, cheerers, worshippers, and boozers.

Though Lombardi was a great coach, his views on success were extremely narrow. Winning is not the only thing that matters. There is room for sincere and dedicated mediocrity.

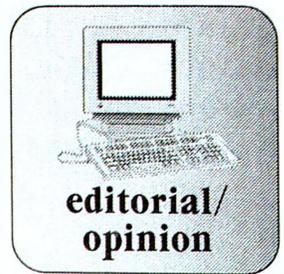
Jenkin Jones said one more thing about his youth. He followed his coach's prodding, and as the season neared the end, Jones was promised a varsity letter if he finished at least seventh in the last race.

As the best runners neared the finish line Jones said, "My legs were lead. The stitch in my side was like a lance. My vision swam. A couple of feet from the finish, I staggered past No. 7, lurched forward, fell on my face, and promptly threw up."

This is not intended to be an indictment on athletics, nor on efforts to excel in any field of endeavor. But everyone cannot finish "at the top." Let's save some applause for those who do their best and still don't win the prize. For all those who get "halfway up a hill," there can be a hearty word of appreciation.

We have to find ways in our churches, our schools, and most of all, in our homes, to bring out the best in our children and youth — without maiming them with a misguided view that being first is all that counts. Parents, grandparents, friends, pay attention.

This is a pitch for sincere and dedicated mediocrity. **B&R**



**By Wm. Fletcher Allen, Editor**

## Just for today

By Fred Wood  
pastor emeritus  
Eudora Church, Memphis

### Start with a smile

Psychiatrist's secretary: "There is a man in the waiting room who claims to be invisible."

Psychiatrist to secretary: "Fine. Tell him we can't see him today."

### Take this truth

According to Cicero, "The sense of sight is the keenest of all our senses."

And John Ruskin said, "The greatest thing a human soul ever does in this world is to see something. Hundreds of people can talk for each one who can think."

"Thousands can think for one who can see. To see clearly is poetry, prophecy, and religion all in one."

### Memorize this Scripture

If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch (Matthew 15:14).

### Pray this prayer

Lord, please help me to realize that none are so blind as those people who *will* not see. ■



WOOD

## It's amazing about the maze we're in, simply amazing

Do you know where you are? I mean, right now, do you know where you are?

The earth (and the universe) has undergone quite a redecorating since humans were given the assignment of caretaking.

Though the Bible explains how God created the universe (and the void from which it came), and how he named certain elements of creation, mankind has been given the blessing of naming much of creation.

We have named continents, oceans, seas, rivers, mountains, plains.

We have named trees and flowers, animals of every description, physical elements, insects, clouds, stars and planets, machines, instruments.

We have given names to our babies, the ethnic races, senses, sciences, nations, states, regions, measurements, foods, types of clothing, games and recreation, religions and faiths.

We have divided the earth into time

### one word more

— by Wm. Fletcher Allen, editor

zones, into latitudes and longitudes, postal zones, atmospheric ranges, physical laws, languages.

And we can even bless each other with titles — desired or disdained.

So, again, do you know where you are, or do you even know *who* you are?

It is astonishing that a person in Tennessee can write or call someone in Australia or Poland or Antarctica. And the postal or telephone system usually can locate that person for us — by using the names and words on the address or spoken phone numbers.

We can even calculate accurately the distance to the sun, the most distant star, or to the place we are calling or writing.

We don't have to search, like the needle

in the haystack, to find the people if we know their address and/or phone number.

We are living in an amazing period of time on God's own calendar. But in the midst of all this knowledge and accuracy of location, some people still are lost. They don't have a clue as to who they really are or where they are in the great scheme of life.

And sometimes we act as though those people don't exist. But they do exist, at least for *now*.

Most of them have some sort of address, and many even have a phone number.

With all the technology produced by human intelligence, you'd think we would bring them in from the cold.

Really, we all know lost people. We know where they are. We know how to reach their location.

Instead of living in an amazing world, we sometimes are lost in a maze. ■



ALLEN

## Family financial stress can be avoided

### families matter

— by Ivy Scarborough, attorney, mediator

**Question:** *Our family's financial strain seems almost unbearable. Is bankruptcy the only hope?*

Debt and serious financial strain affect most Americans at some point. Sometimes financial stress is caused by circumstances beyond our control such as illness or the loss of a job. Most often it is the result of bad choices. The quest to acquire more possessions is a dynamic which drives economies, but it is also an underlying cause of much misery.

Economic forces produce powerful and potentially damaging effects in families. Debt's destructive force can wreck marriages and emotional health. Avoiding or escaping debt's trap can save a marriage and preserve emotional and physical health.

Though bankruptcy no longer carries the social stigma it once did, creditors and employers are wary of those who have filed for bankruptcy. It stays in a person's credit file for up to 10 years. Bankruptcy may seem an easy way out, but the related problems to employment or future credit are costly.

I do not believe a Christian should rule out bankruptcy as an option. Long-term struggles with debt can destroy health and lives. Health, family, and dedication of personal time and energy to the service of God are more important. Filing for bankruptcy does not mean you can never pay back your

creditors; you may choose to do so, but under favorable terms.

You may get into serious financial straits by using patterns of poor judgment. You can change those patterns, if you see and understand your mistakes. Be firmly honest and realistic with yourself, get financial advice from an expert (CPA, financial consultant, or someone else with sound financial judgment), and with that help, analyze what has gone wrong and what you can do to change the situation. Then, act immediately.

Read Luke 16:13. When we reach the end of our lives on earth, it will matter profoundly how we spent our time, loved our families, cared for others, and served God. It is important to learn that lesson now. ■

## Partnership

### Prayer Requests January

- 8 — Pray for the sister and niece of Gienna Heidt of the Canadian Baptist Convention. They were in an auto accident recently.
- 9 — Pray for Costa Rica missionaries Clive and Nancy Buttemere, who are in their last term of service before retiring.
- 10 — Pray for Novi Mission and its pastor, Scott Hansen, in Michigan's Oakland County Association.
- 11 — Pray for John Webster, a member of Evansburg Church in Alberta, Canada, who has cancer.
- 12 — Pray for the "Here's Hope — Christ" steering committee as they plan and promote participation in Poland's evangelistic crusades to be held in May.
- 13 — Pray for North Farmington Hills Church in Michigan's Oakland County Association — that the mission will be able to get people to respond and be involved.
- 14 — Thank God for the recent World Missions Conference in Capilano Association in British Columbia, Canada.

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# TBC Brotherhood announces equestrian ministry

For Baptist and Reflector

BRENTWOOD — Tennessee Baptist Men's Ministries Team Leader Tim Bearden has announced the formation of a new equestrian ministry fellowship partnered with the Jerry Reynolds Evangelistic Ministry.

The idea was initiated by Reynolds, an evangelist and former director of missions in Judson Association, Bearden said. Reynolds also is a rodeo chaplain in Tennessee.

"As Baptist Men's ministries specialist, it is my job to look at a variety of ministry options," Bearden said. "The Lord has key people with strong hearts to lead ministries across the state and by partnering together we can show people ministry opportunities."

Reynolds also will represent Tennessee Baptist Men's Ministries in Equestrian Ministries International, Inc., now located in seven states.

"I am convinced that the cutting edge of God's work is in non-traditional settings," Reynolds said. "It is a matter of

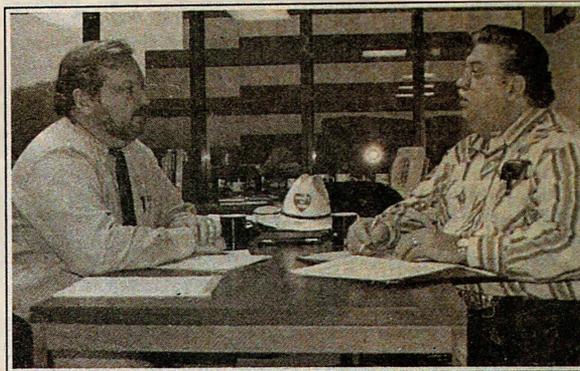
going where the people are and sharing their interests while sharing the Gospel message."

As a rodeo chaplain, Reynolds has led people to Christ as well as married a couple in the rodeo ring.

Reynolds said he is delighted to partner with Baptist Men's Ministries in developing a state equestrian fellowship. He said his vision for the fellowship is to expand the ministry to include rodeos, horse shows, wagon trains, trail rides, and other equine forms of family entertainment.

He noted the fellowship's first purpose would be to have worship services on site that would expose the Gospel to those who do not participate in a formal church setting.

Bearden said the new fellowship is just one of several that will be associated with the state Baptist Men's Ministries office. For more information, call (615) 371-2025. ■



TIM BEARDEN, left, TBC Men's Ministries Team Leader, discusses a new ministry fellowship with Jerry Reynolds.

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# Lord of the Spirit World

By Donna Wright

## Focal Passage — Matthew 8:28-34; 12:22-29

This week's lesson discusses the wonderful power of Jesus over the "Spirit world." I say "wonderful" because when I am approached by different views of spiritualism, I rest assured no matter how the conversation ends, that I can lean on promises made by God, himself.

The Scripture verses relate stories of true demons coming face to face with the Lord. As representatives of our Lord, we sometimes face Satan, too, don't we? Satan throws out many different beliefs to a world that is so spiritually hungry, it grasps this "rotten meat" like a T-bone steak.

I have found that the oldest sin comes to us under the guise of being the "New Age." What is so new about making oneself God? Isn't that what Satan tried to do in the very beginning?

Today's problem is not defining the sin, but facing it and, in concern for others, leading these deceived people to Jesus.

A perfect example of "New Age" thinking is the belief in reincarnation. A good friend of mine has been told that she and her husband were married in different lives.

When I approached her about death and the judgment that the Bible speaks of, she asked why Jesus just didn't tell us that we had a second chance.

I witnessed to her, but am not sure that she listened. You see, if you believe that there is a Supreme God that knows all that we do, and that God presents to us absolutes, we also have to believe that we are sinners. Most people like believing that they are as good as anyone else. And, they are. The only difference between myself, and many people I know, is that I'm forgiven through the blood of Christ.

There are so many demons out there, now wearing many different faces. Jesus faced down those demons. He looked them straight in the eye, and with no apology, cast them out.

We are challenged, and yes, even commanded to do the same thing. Jesus knew the Scriptures. He studied them out of his love for the Father, not just to win an argument. He didn't ridicule those who were demon possessed; he had compassion for them.

How can we apply this truth to our everyday lives?

Peter tells us that Satan is like a lion, looking for a victim (I Peter 5:8). We can't let our curiosity "get the best of us," as the saying goes. We stay away from those advertised psychic hot lines, ouija boards, and horoscopes. We don't put ourselves in a position to sin.

We know the Scriptures — pray without ceasing, fellowship with others who share our faith. And, when we encounter someone who has been deceived, we must, above all else, treat them with love and compassion. For if we speak with the tongues of angels and have not love, we are only a noise (I Corinthians 13). ■ — Wright is a member of First Church, Newport.

# Mary and Martha

By Mike Shelton

## Focal Passage — Luke 10:38-42; John 12:1-8

When we study the many characters of the Bible, we sometimes see people we would like to resemble more in our own lives. We also see some who already resemble us in more ways than we would like. In this week's lesson, we see two sisters who were important to our Lord Jesus in his earthly ministry. Their names were Mary and Martha. The descriptions of them given in the Bible show that they had traits that many people have today. When we pay attention to how Jesus dealt with Mary and Martha, we discover how Jesus deals with people who resemble them today.

## Family Bible Lesson

### Jesus in the home of Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42)

Over the holidays many of us probably enjoyed sumptuous feasts for loved ones who came to visit. Martha also felt the need to prepare a feast for Jesus when she discovered that he was coming to her home to teach. Jesus' reaction shows that a less elaborate meal would have been fine with him. To Jesus the most important thing going on in that home at that moment was not a meal, but his presence and his teaching. Martha was doing a good thing, but not the most important thing. She was not listening to the Lord. Mary, on the other hand, displayed true wisdom by sitting at Jesus' feet to hear him.

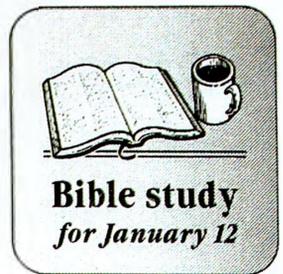
A lot of people today look like Martha. They are so busy trying to go overboard with good things that they completely miss the best thing. Jesus wants to deal with modern-day Marthas the same way he dealt with

the biblical Martha. He wants to show us that we need to cut out or cut back on other less important things and make him our life's priority.

### Mary anointing Jesus (John 12:1-8)

The other sister, Mary, is spotlighted in this passage. Jesus is on his way to Jerusalem to die for our sins. He is back in Bethany having another meal with Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, whom he had just raised from the dead. During the meal Mary anoints the feet of Jesus with a large amount of very costly perfume called spikenard. It was the kind of thing done by Jews at that time to prepare bodies for burial. This gesture was a foreshadowing of the death and burial of Jesus. In the light of the tremendous sacrifice her Lord was about to make in giving his life for her, she gave her best to him in a very humble and sacrificial way. Jesus dealt with her with praise.

It is said that Francis Ridley Havergal, the writer of the wonderful hymn entitled, "I Gave My Life for Thee," was inspired to write the words of the hymn after gazing upon a copy of a great painting called "The Crucifixion." It depicts Jesus on the cross. Above the picture were these words, "All this I did for thee: what hast thou done for me?" When Mary was presented with the same kind of question, she gave her best. The Lord wants all of us to resemble her more and more in this way. Those who do have the joy of knowing that the Lord is touched and approves of the gift and the giver. Let us ask the Lord to help us look more like the kind of Christian who has made Jesus the top priority in life and who gives to him in a humble and sacrificial way. ■ — Shelton is pastor of Bellevue Church, Bellevue.



# Kingdom ideals

By Howard I. Kitter

## Focal Passage — Matthew 19:1-30

I remember some years ago when I entered the United States Air Force. One of the first things that our drill instructor bellowed at us was that we were now living under the United Code of Military Justice which was "a new set of laws or rules."

I see a similar setting in a new-found love relationship with Jesus except that he doesn't bark out orders. He teaches kingdom truth for kingdom citizens. This truth is always delivered with deep love toward the recipient.

In these verses, we have a wonderful narrative of the king stating some kingdom truth to those around him — new rules, if you will. How much more should we simply accept them and live accordingly?

**Matthew 19:1-12** — The first issue at hand was the divisive issue of divorce. The Pharisees were trying to trap Jesus into the very tiring argument of when divorce is allowed and how many times one may indulge this much abused thing.

In answering this question, Jesus cut right to the chase. He simply took them back to God's original intent for marriage. Jesus brings God's activity in marriage to the center of conversation. It seems as though that this was brazenly absent from

## Explore the Bible Lesson

their study. I can almost hear their thoughts now, "You mean God has something to do with marriage?" or perhaps, "There he goes again bringing God into it."

Here in this brief statement Jesus all but closes the door on his approval of divorce. The reasoning he uses goes back to the love relationship. The kingdom is established on a love relationship by God, and so is marriage. When divorce rears its ugly head and destroys a marriage (especially with kingdom citizens), it says far more about their personal love relationship with the Father than with one another. The devastation of a marriage through divorce is really nothing less than the outgrowth of an already hurting love relationship between one or both individuals and with God.

Divorce is never the result of a man and a woman walking first individually, and then together, in a real and personal love relationship with the heavenly Father. In fact, Jesus strengthens the seriousness of marriage when he agrees with the disciples that not all men can accept the truth that singleness is better for some. It needs to be noted here that divorce is not the unforgivable sin, but it is certainly avoidable as

far as the kingdom is concerned.

**Matthew 19:16-22** — Next we see a sudden shift in topic,

but not in teaching. A young man asks what he can do to be saved. Again Jesus accentuates the love relationship. Except here he takes it a step further. He teaches that nothing is more valuable than a total abandonment of the world and absolute commitment to God.

Here the young man chooses a love relationship with money over a love relationship with the Father. Many people have been smacked with this truth. They are willing to do much for God as long as it doesn't interfere with what they love the most. Kingdom living requires our all.

**Matthew 19:23-30** — Jesus makes an astounding statement about the camel and the needle here. I believe that he is talking about a literal needle and a literal camel. Jesus wants to show the impossibility of entering the kingdom any way except the kingdom way. With man it is impossible, but with God all things are possible. Note the power is based on God's ability, not ours.

Finally, Jesus promises great things to those who are willing and obedient in surrendering their lives and loves to the King. Only the father can provide these things anyway. ■ — Kitter is pastor of First Church, Bethel Springs



## Tennescene

### leaders

■ **Chris Jackson**, director of Baptist student ministries at four institutions in Nashville, earned the doctor of ministry degree from United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio, in December. His ministry project focused on developing a positive Christian ethic for dating and sexuality among African American students. Jackson holds degrees from University of Tennessee - Knoxville, and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky. He directs ministries at Tennessee State University, Meharry Medical College, Fisk University, and American Baptist College.



JACKSON

■ Washington Pike Church, from President Bill Clinton, Tennessee Governor Don Sundquist, Knoxville mayor Victor Ashe, Knox County executive Tommy Schumpert and Walter Taylor, director of missions, Knox County Association.

Knoxville, recently ordained **Keith Stapleton**, interim pastor/teacher at the church, to the ministry. It is his first staff position.

■ **Ron Galyon**, pastor, First Church, Pulaski, for six years, has been called as pastor of Lee Road Church, Taylors, S.C. He has resigned effective Jan. 19.

■ **Jimmy Burroughs** has been called as pastor of Pine Grove Church, Lexington. He is a bivocational pastor.

■ Trinity Church, Lebanon, has called **Jimmy Furr** of the Home Mission Board as interim pastor. Furr, who is based in Mount Juliet, does interfaith witness work for the board.

■ **Kenneth Richey**, pastor, First Church, White Pine, for 27 years, has retired recently. He is available to lead revivals, Bible studies, and supply for church staff members.

### missionaries

■ **Ronald and Cynthia Gunter**, missionaries to Romania, are on the field and can be reached at B'dul Decebal #17, Et. 4, Apt. 54, Sector 3, 7700 Bucuresti, Romania. He

considers Clarksville his hometown.

■ **Donald and Julie Martin**, missionaries to Guatemala, are in the states and can be reached at 323 Bradford Place Dr., Hixson, 37343. He is a native of Chattanooga.

■ **Robert and Beverly Thomas**, Baptist representatives to Yemen, are on the field and can be reached at P.O. Box 70080, Ibb, Yemen. A native of Tennessee, he was born in Etowah and lived in Memphis. The former Beverly Buford, she was born in Memphis.

### deaths

■ **Frances Trybone**, wife of Joe Trybone, pastor, New Mitchell Grove Church, Ripley, died suddenly Dec. 13 of heart failure. Joe Trybone was a member of the Tennessee Baptist Convention Executive Board for six years. Mrs. Trybone also was survived by a daughter.

### churches

■ **Indian Hills Church, Gallatin**, observed its 25th anniversary Jan. 5. The congre-



PAUSING DURING the presentation of a gift of land to Bible Union Church, Martin, are members of the Lamb family, left, and Terry Griffin, right, pastor. The family gave four and a half acres to the church recently. The Lambs were represented by members, from left, Helen Jackson, Edward Jackson, Paul Jackson, and Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Lamb. An ancestor, Calvin Lamb, gave land that is now part of the church's cemetery, of which Raymond Lamb directs through a church committee.

gation is a mission of First Church, Gallatin. Additionally, the church had a revival recently which resulted in 13 people making professions of faith, 12 people being baptized, and three joining the church by letter. Terry Wilkerson of Lebanon led the revival.

■ The estate of Dilla Sharpe Godsey has paid off the new all purpose building of First Church, Bluff City.

■ **Washington Pike Church, Knoxville**, celebrated its 75th anniversary Dec. 29. Recognition was received

### associations

■ The Woman's Missionary Union of McMinn-Meigs Association will hold a Ministry Fair Jan. 9 at 7 p.m.



## Tennessee samplers

### Considering one life without God

By Roger Freeman, pastor First Church, Clarksville

Start 1997 right! Be in Sunday School and worship this Lord's Day. Crown Jesus as Lord.

J.C. Penny said, "If a man's business requires so much of his time that he cannot attend the Sunday morning and evening services and Wednesday prayer meeting, then that man has more business than God intended him to have."

Theodore Kaczynski, the accused unabomber, was raised by parents who never took him to church. They used their Sundays in family pursuits of cultural excellence in museums and art galleries, not in the house of God. Neighbors say Mrs. Kaczynski often said, "The Bible and the Christian story are a myth" (according to a magazine article). Kaczynski learned to live

with no thought of God.

Going to church to hear the Word of God would have, no doubt, changed the course of history for Kaczynski and many others. ■

### On pilgrimage

By William Vincent Johnson, pastor First Church, Jefferson City

This is the season we think of time. In the past few years I have learned a great deal about time by paying attention to the Christian calendar. The Christian calendar does not tell time the same way as our Roman-based January - December calendar. The Christian calendar, based on the life and ministry of Christ, carries the sense that all time is holy time.

For example, for most of us Christmas is over. The packages are open. Wrappings and bows are thrown away or confiscated by some for ironing and safe keeping until next year. Christmas soon becomes a pleasant but distant memory lost in the crunch and bustle of sales and football bowl games.

According to the Christian calendar, Christmas is not over at all. In fact, Christmas day marks the beginning of something new and wonderful; something we have longed for and anticipated since the beginning of Advent.

Christmas day signifies the beginning of the celebration of Christ's life, not the end. The 12 days of Christmas

do not come before Christmas day (though often co-opted this way for pre-Christmas sales promotions), but begin with Christmas day and last until the celebration of Epiphany (Epiphany marks the appearance of Christ to the world).

Our celebration of the new year the week after Christmas is a kind coincidence. The continuing Christmas celebration means that we are indeed celebrating "all things made new" in Christ.

It matters not whether you follow the Christian calendar, but it matters a great deal whether you see all of your time as holy time. I am grateful for the Christian calendar as a tool that reminds me week by week of that wonderful reality.

Continue having a merry Christmas. Hope for a wonderful Epiphany. ■

### A witness

By David Allen, pastor First Church, Crossville

Joseph Jackson Allen entered this world recently. It was indeed a blessed event as God has given to us the privilege and responsibility to raise another child. I covet your prayers as Debbie and I seek to be the parents that God desires us to be.

Since Debbie spent a few more days in the hospital than we originally intended, the second night after the baby

was born, I made a trip to a local grocery store to stock up on some snacks. While standing in the check out line I began to talk with an older gentleman and told him that my wife had just given birth to a baby boy.

As he began to talk to me, he very graciously encouraged me to get that boy in Sunday School and raise him in church. He didn't know who I was, which made it even more special to me.

I later introduced myself and found out that he was a member at a sister Southern Baptist church in the county. As I left that store I thought what a blessing it would be if all of us who claim to be saved would show as much concern about the spiritual lives of everyone we meet as that man did for me.

As we start a new year, I hope that we will be faithful to all that God has called us to do and to be in this world. Let us live this new year with a hopeful heart that this may be the year that Jesus returns to this earth. Maranatha, even so Lord Jesus, come! ■

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