

TENNESSEE'S BAPTIST & **REFLECTOR**

Volume 163 / Number 11

Statewide Edition

March 12, 1997

this week's news

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

30,000 youth attend Youth Reach



YOUTH SING WITH the group, Jeff Slaughter and friends of Nashville, in the Grand Ole Opry auditorium during a session of Youth Reach held at Opryland last Saturday. — Photo by Connie Davis

By Connie Davis
Baptist and Reflector

NASHVILLE — The "take-over" was accomplished once again this year — Vanderbilt Gymnasium was transformed into a rally site for about

30,000 youth and Opryland was converted into a Baptist amusement park complete with Christian background music, Christian entertainment, fun on the park's rides and games, and spiritual training sessions for about 14,000

youth and their leaders.

The event, Youth Reach '97, impacted those in attendance and Nashville this past weekend.

Hundreds made spiritual commitments by moving to the stage area of the Vanderbilt Gym Friday night in both ses-

sions. Sessions were repeated to allow for the crowd which came from Tennessee and several adjoining states.

Dave Edwards, speaker based in Oklahoma City, directed the youth to consider — See 30,000, page 3

Storms wreak havoc in Tennessee, surrounding states

By Lonnie Wilkey
Baptist and Reflector

BRENTWOOD — As the song goes, "The rains came down and the floods came up."

That was all too true in portions of Tennessee, Kentucky, Arkansas, and other flood-prone regions last week.

Areas in West Tennessee especially were hard hit, not only with flooding but from tornadoes which ripped through parts of Dyer and Obion counties March 1 causing extensive damage. The town of McKenzie also received tornado damage.

The tornado took the life of Stephanie Gutzler, a Dyer County teenager who always helped her mother in children's church at Springhill Church in Dyersburg.

Stephanie was hit by a beam that fell when the house collapsed into the basement. Other family members escaped injury but the Gutzlers lost everything they owned, according to an article in the *Dyersburg State Gazette*.

Springhill Pastor James Branscum called Stephanie "a real sweet little girl. It affected the whole congregation." The church's 350 active members are saddened

by their loss, but they are comforted to know that she's a Christian, and she's with the Lord, Branscum told the *Gazette*.

Meanwhile, the Tennessee Baptist Disaster Relief Unit was called out March 5 to Madisonville, Ky., where they began feeding operations at First Church there on March 7. The unit answered a call for help from the American Red Cross through the Kentucky Baptist Convention, according to Tim Bearden, state disaster relief director. Crew changes began March 8 as teams from Sparta and Chattanooga relieved the first team at Madisonville.

"The Madisonville site is designated as the central point for feeding people along the corridor between Indiana and Tennessee for folks who have been affected by flooding," Bearden said. "The number of displaced persons is expected to increase over the next several days because many of the rivers in the area have not yet crested."

According to Bearden the American Red Cross was responding to five Level 5 disas-

ters through the mid-South region.

As of March 7 West Tennessee was listed as a Level 3 disaster but that category level was expected to rise, Bearden said. Late last week water also was continuing to rise in Dyer County and a Red Cross emergency shelter was opened in Cheatham County in Middle Tennessee. "We are waiting on Red Cross damage assessment in Dyer and Obion counties before we respond," Bearden said.

Tennessee construction teams and clean-up crews have been requested this week in Obion County where several homes were devastated by March 1 tornadoes, according to Bearden. Work crews also are needed for Arkansas where storms killed at least 25 and injured as many as 250 people, Bearden said.

Joe Naylor, director of missions for Dyer Association, said March 6 that 25 homes in his area were destroyed and another 125 suffered damage from the March 1 tornado. Flooding also is a problem as two rivers — Forked Deer and Obion — overflowed.

First Churches, Dyersburg, and Newbern set up emergency centers, Naylor — See Storms, page 3



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400-00410-0127 REGUL 370
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- ▶ **Publisher** — Tennessee Baptist Convention Executive Board
- ▶ **Board of directors:** Bill Northcott, chairman; Ambers Wilson, vice chairman; Charles Anderson, Hinton Climer, Eugene Coley, Elmer Crosby, Frank Hawkins, Herbert Higdon, John Holland, Jewell Jennings, Pat Landrum, Paul Medley, Ray Newcomb, Charles Parker, Richard Patton, Michael Smith, Bettye Summers, and Gary Watkins
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- ▶ **Mailing address** — P.O. Box 728, Brentwood, Tenn., 37024
- ▶ **Phone** — (615) 371-2003. **FAX** — (615) 371-2080
- ▶ **Membership** — Southern Baptist Press Association
- ▶ **Address changes** — *Baptist and Reflector*, P.O. Box 728, Brentwood, Tenn., 37024
- ▶ **Postmaster** — Periodical postage paid at Brentwood and at additional mailing office. (USPS 041-780)
- ▶ **Frequency of issue** — The paper is published weekly except for the weeks of Christmas and Fourth of July.



Printed on recycled paper

Failure of church opened door to gambling: Jones

By Mark Wingfield
For Associated Baptist Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — The failure of Christians to be authentic disciples of Jesus Christ opened the door for Mississippi to become the nation's third-largest gambling state, according to the leader of a Baptist moral-concerns agency there.

That Mississippi now is home to 31 casinos is God's "judgment on the churches," said Paul Jones, executive director of the Mississippi Baptist Convention's Christian Action Commission.

Jones spoke during the 50th anniversary seminar of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission March 4. The seminar was held on the campus of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., where the CLC's work was formally organized in 1947.

Jones, who has been active in anti-gambling efforts for many years and is considered one of Southern Baptists' foremost authorities on the subject, told of a 1984 meeting in Jackson, Miss., with an unnamed leader of a major gambling cartel.

At that time, the gambling executive confidently told Jones that Mississippi had been targeted by the gambling industry for three reasons, Jones said:

(1) Because Mississippi was the poorest state in the nation, it would be easy to make a case for gambling as an economic stimulant. Jones said the executive told him gambling promoters knew "the Christian church had purposely disassociated

itself from the poor and hungry of the state."

(2) Because Mississippi was the most racially divided state in the nation. Any attempt by churches to speak out against gambling would be seen as "the haves attempting to keep the have-nots from getting ahead," Jones said.

(3) Because "most of the religious community was committed to cultural Christianity, not a vibrant faith," the executive told Jones. "If you espoused the historic Christian faith, we could not defeat you."

Eight years later, the gambling executive's prediction had come true, Jones said. "Gambling arose when the Christian community refused to act as the body of Christ."

Last year, Mississippi's casinos took in \$29.4 billion in revenue, Jones reported. He compared that figure to the holdings of all Mississippi banks combined: \$27.6 billion.

Jones cited several negative impacts of the growth of gambling in Mississippi. He said gambling has:

(1) Compromised the state's political structure. Since 10 percent of state revenue now comes from gambling, the state has an interest in protecting gambling enterprises, he said. "No decision is made without asking how it will impact gambling."

(2) Destroyed families. He cited tactics of new "family-friendly casinos" that provide care and activities for children that indoctrinate them toward gambling while

their parents engage in gambling.

Jones listed a number of ills that have afflicted the families of gamblers, such as stealing, divorce, and bankruptcy.

But another surprising result is the number of people who have embezzled money from their churches to pay gambling debts, he said. "Our churches are discovering that some of their best people are getting into leadership positions in order to get access to church funds."

When that happens, the "easiest money to embezzle in the church" is missions gifts, Jones said. He said he knows of 15 Baptist churches in Mississippi that have faced such problems with embezzlement.

(3) Destroyed legitimate businesses. Pawn shops have sprung up everywhere casinos have been built, he said, and even the nature of what is considered recreation has changed.

In conclusion, Jones listed three questions he said all citizens ought to ask before agreeing to let their states legalize gambling:

First, "Is it ever a legitimate function of government to make losers of its citizens?"

Second, "Is it ever a legitimate function of government to compete with legitimate businesses?" In days past, such a notion was known as socialism, Jones said.

Third, "Is it ever the legitimate function of government to advocate that which is known to deceive people?" ■



Christians need to change to revive U.S., CLC speakers say

Baptist Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — Christians must submit themselves to the authority of the Lord Jesus and the Bible if they are to help revive an America marked by decay and death at the end of the 21st century, speakers said at the 50th anniversary seminar of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission.

Meeting on campus of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, participants heard general session speakers address various issues the commission has dealt with across its history: racism, pornography, gambling, religious liberty, abortion, and other sanctity of human life concerns.

Several speakers expressed a similar theme: American culture continues in the grip of sinful choices, and the only hope for breaking free of such bondage is spiritual. While government can play a role in societal renewal, proper public policy alone is insufficient, some said during the March 3-5 seminar here.

The "hope of a culture and its survival lies not so much in what we do under the dome of a state capitol or a national capitol, but rather under the steeples of the churches that are supposed to be God's voice," said Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee, an ordained Southern Baptist pastor.

CLC President Richard Land said racism "is at its foundation

a spiritual problem and will be vanquished ultimately only by spiritual means. It is a sin problem, a spiritual plague that has been one of the major challenges in the first 50 years of the Christian Life Commission," he said.

Christianologist and youth speaker Josh McDowell warned American culture will be dramatically different in three to four years, primarily because tolerance has become the country's top virtue.

Almost every student in the country is being conditioned with a new definition of tolerance, which grants equal status to every person's beliefs, McDowell said. He also noted that as a result of this new meaning for tol-

erance and its elevation as a virtue, the virtues of justice and Christian love cannot coexist with tolerance.

"Tolerance says I must be indifferent," McDowell said. "Christian love says I must speak and act the truth in love."

Union University President David Dockery said the SBC needs the CLC's help. "The SBC needs you to guide us through the challenging issues that arise within our contemporary, corrupt culture. ... The evangelical world needs your prophetic voice to remain constant and faithful during a time of growing tolerance and laxness among professing Christians and churchgoing people," Dockery said of the CLC. ■

NAMB likely will inherit Brotherhood Commission debt, says Childs

Compiled from Baptist Press

MEMPHIS — Trustees of the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission learned of financial losses for two reporting periods during their Feb. 28-March 1 meeting here. "It looks like the Brotherhood Commission will take an indebtedness of \$200,000 to \$250,000 into NAMB (North American Mission Board)," said Jack Childs, vice president for business services.

Childs explained in a later interview that the commission owes money to both a printing company and local bank.

"With our normal cash flow, we had projected ... that we would just about

take care of all that indebtedness before we went through the fiscal year," he said, "but due to the fact that we've had some early severance, we're having to take that money out of our cash flow and we have some expenses related to the transition," Childs said.

He said another financial obstacle faced by the commission is a "retention bonus" trustees approved in 1995 "to pay the staff that would stay through the end an amount of 25 percent of their annual salary. We're not budgeted for that and, frankly, we don't have the money to take care of that. It has got to come from the sale of this building."

The commission's entire indebtedness, he noted, can be offset by the sale of the commission's 40,000-square-foot physical plant, with an asking price of \$1.4 million. "If we sell this building, we should be able to pay our debts and the retention bonus," Childs said.

Trustees empowered their executive committee to take any needed steps in behalf of the agency prior to its closure, with reports to be forwarded to the full trustee body.

The Brotherhood Commission, along with the Home Mission Board and Radio and Television Commission will form the new mission agency. ■

30,000 youth attend Youth Reach

— Continued from page 1
people who "are clueless" about life, he said.

Many people, even people in church, don't know what God alone can do. Referring to Ezekiel 36, he noted that God can complete people, he can change them, and he can cleanse them. The result is a new spirit, a new heart, and a new mind for the person, explained Edwards.

He told the group that they could be divided into three groups. The first group would be made up of youth who were Christians but "since that time the fire has gone out. You've lost the desire to serve him," described Edwards.

This group would include those teens who could date without praying with that friend or even asking about their faith. The group would include those who "play one game at school and one game at church. They can turn it on and turn it off," said Edwards.

The group also would include teens who had gotten sidetracked pursuing people, materialism, emotions, or drugs, said Edwards. "Let me ask you one question. Is what you're holding onto pulling you through?"

These people haven't lost their faith, he said. "You cannot lose your passion for God; it must be given away."

The second group would be made up of people who have not "given your life to Jesus Christ."

Edwards told the teens that his parents divorced when he was five years old and when he became a teen he began having problems, although he was attending church. "I never made the connection between the cross and what I was going through. I thought the story (of Jesus) was truth but never a person. He gave me a new life, not through earning it or cutting my hair or other efforts on my part."

The third group would be composed of those who needed cleansing or forgiveness, said Edwards. "Some of you need to apologize, make up, and clean up your act."



REBECCA St. James sings during sessions at Vanderbilt Gym.



SPEAKING to youth attending one of two repeated sessions at Vanderbilt Gym is Dave Edwards.

Human beings have a condition and that condition "makes them think things that aren't true about life, feel things that aren't true about life, and say things that aren't true about life. That condition is sin."

"Some of us have been through some things or things have been done to us or we've made some horrible mistakes." God doesn't just give promises or tell people to try harder, he waits for people to come to him, he said.

"For God to do something in you that only he can do, you've got to be willing to come to him with every part, your mind, heart,

and body, every part."

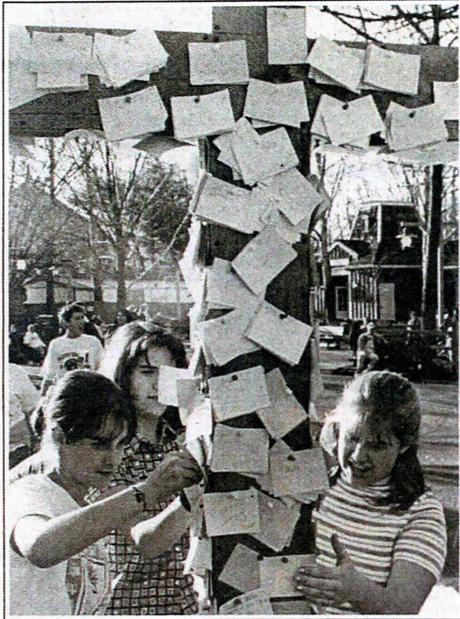
To those moving to the stage area to make spiritual decisions, Edwards told them their prayers would live in eternity a 1,000 years from now.

Rebecca St. James, an Australian transplanted to Nashville to work on her rising music career, talked to the teens "teenager to teenager," about her commitment to stand up for God, especially through sexual abstinence.

Speakers at Opryland sessions were Pat Hood, youth pastor, First Church, Smyrna; Bill Christian, minister to students, Germantown Church, Germantown; and James Jackson, minister of students/activities, First Church, Kingsport.

Hood said God wants students "to radically love your friends and tell them about him. He is the one who can remove any force in their lives that is hurting them."

Bill Christian said religion is different from Christianity. The latter is the result of God reaching out to people. **B&R** — See more on Youth Reach on page 7.



ADDING names of people and things which need prayer to one of the crosses at Opryland are, from left, Tana Wilder, Jessica Smith, and Lauren Faulkner of Shawnee Church, Shawnee.



PRAYING for the prayer requests posted on the cross erected at Opryland is a group from Puryear Church, Puryear. — Photos by Connie Davis

Storms wreak havoc in Tennessee, surrounding states ...

— Continued from page 1
said. They collected food, clothing, and cleaning supplies, he added.

The Dyersburg location also provided hot meals at the church and took meals to workers on site, he said.

"If the water keeps going up, more people will be displaced," Naylor said. He noted "our churches have been involved. ... People are looking after one another."

The town of Rives was hard hit in northeast Obion County, according to Pastor Jimmy Brown of Pleasant Hill Church in Beulah Association.

The church, located two miles from Rives, stopped services on March 2 to allow members who lived there to return home to prepare for evacuation.

He said 152 homes there were evacuated and 52 of those homes suffered extensive flood damage. Pleasant Hill volunteers served three meals a day to

flood victims and workers last week. Although the Red Cross sent in a unit, Pleasant Hill continued to supply meals. "We felt like we needed to minister to the people who were emotionally strung out," Brown said.

Needs vary in both associations.

First Church, Dyersburg, is serving as a collection point for cleaning supplies, Naylor said. Churches and individuals can take items such as disinfectants, brooms, mops, towels, linens, paper products, etc. to FBC, 220 W. Masonic, Dyersburg, TN 38024

In Beulah Association, help is needed primarily to help families without insurance, said Director of Missions Jerry Essary. The association is accepting gifts designated for flood relief. Gifts should be mailed to Beulah Baptist Association, P. O. Box 366, Union City, TN 38261. **B&R** — Marcia Knox contributed to this story.

Ways to assist flood, tornado victims

For Baptist and Reflector

BRENTWOOD — Tennessee Baptists can assist flood and tornado victims in West Tennessee in several ways, according to Tim Bearden, state disaster relief coordinator. Specific needs for Beulah and Dyer County associations are listed in the adjoining story. Other ways to help include:

(1) Work and cleanup crews are needed in Beulah Association. Call the association office for details at (901) 885-2151.

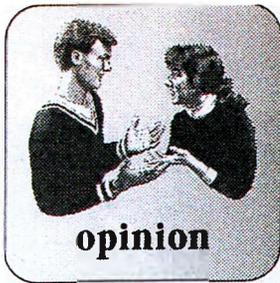
(2) Donations for disaster relief can be sent to Tennessee Baptist Disaster Relief, Executive Board, Tennessee Baptist Convention, P.O. Box 728, Brentwood, TN 37024.

(3) Tulip Grove Church in the Old Hickory-Hermitage area has agreed to be a collection point for donations.

Bearden asked for specific donations as directed by the American Red Cross. "Dry goods are needed. No clothes are to be donated," Bearden said.

On the needed list are non-perishable food items such as staples, canned food, dried beans, etc. Also needed are cleaning products and items such as disinfectants, brooms, mops, rubber gloves, buckets, etc.

According to Jack Lewis, minister of education at Tulip Grove, organizations and churches should call (615) 883-1856 before dropping off items at the church. **B&R**



opinion

about letters to the editor

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

Partnership Prayer Requests March

- 12 — Pray for missionary Roy Cooper, rector of San Jose Theological Seminary in Costa Rica.
- 13 — Pray for Gary Young of the University of Tennessee, Martin, who is conducting business seminars and sharing the Gospel in Poland this month.
- 14 — Pray for Oakland County Association in Michigan. They have a need for a church planter apprentice, a Praxis team, summer missionaries, and volunteer teams this year.
- 15 — Pray for Lloyd and Laurie Bargain, members of First Church of North Battleford, Saskatchewan, Canada. Their infant son, Colson, died Feb. 2 after an extended illness.
- 16 — Pray for Keith and Pam Travis and their children, Marie and Samuel who have been in Gupiles, Costa Rica, since last December involved in Baptist work in the Atlantic zone.
- 17 — Pray that God will call out the necessary 33 Tennessee volunteer teams for the "Here's Hope" revivals in Poland in May.
- 18 — Praise the Lord for the improved participation and attitude in the Michigan's Oakland Association's Pastor's Conference.

Likes reporting

Thank you for the very positive front-page coverage on how Tennessee churches believe in the Lottie Moon Christmas offering and related articles in the Feb. 12 issue.

This was great information and I am grateful for the collecting and sharing with the churches of Tennessee. I think more of this needs to be done, not only to encourage the particular churches that are highlighted, but to encourage all Southern Baptists who participate in reaching a lost world through our prayers and giving.

I am grateful to Tennessee Baptists for the wonderful support they give to the Foreign Mission Board through the Cooperative Program and the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. We are grateful for the partnership and direct involvement with the FMB in many aspects, including several partnerships.

Best wishes to the staff. We appreciate the fine ministry of keeping us informed about Tennessee Baptists.

David M. Coleman, director
Development Office, FMB
Richmond, Va. 23230

Good stewards

I read the name-change article in the Feb. 19 edition with sadness and dismay. In the *Tennessean* it was reported that a consulting firm was hired at a cost of \$85,000-\$90,000.

Is the name-changing task too difficult for existing staff and writers? Do they not earn their living with words? Could an in-house contest have been employed? A denomination-wide survey?

I am sure you are well aware of the worldwide success with the Jesus film. Missionaries and volunteers all over the world are seeing an average of 10 percent of viewers come to

faith in Christ! With a cost of less than \$20 per video, and an estimated viewership of 2,000 people per video, each copy can bring an average of 200 souls into the kingdom! At a cost of 10 cents per soul, we wasted the opportunity to reach many people by spending \$90,000 on a consulting firm.

I implore the trustees to be better stewards of God's financial provision. To those responsible for the trustees' selection, I urge reconsideration. For every Southern Baptist I urge prayer for wisdom within the BSSB, and a reversal of this decision.

Doug Haley
Franklin 37069

Trustees to the BSSB are elected by messengers to the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention each June. Trustees for all SBC institutions are elected in this manner. — Editor

More advice

Mr. Barkley's "rule for all blended families" found in his article "Dealing with the blended family situation" Feb. 19 concerns disciplinary responsibilities within the blended home. He advises that "The biological parent must be the disciplinarian. The non-biological parent cannot even rescue the biological parent from bad decisions..."

Jesus said, "If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand" (Mark 3:25 NIV). What Mr. Barkley proposes could keep the house divided by daily separation between non-biological families living under the same roof.

Biblical teachings about marriage apply to all marriages, not just first time union. The "oneness" the Bible teaches, is to bring unity and harmony to the home. Children not raised in this type of home will not learn the biblical meaning of marriage.

Appropriate discipline tech-

niques should be agreed on. Discipline is teaching a child the right way to live. Agreed methods of punishment should be implemented by the biological parent initially, yet, a slow conscious effort should be made to transfer authority to the step-parent.

The "family meeting" provides an open atmosphere where the step-family members discuss issues which are painful to them. It is designed to be respectful, resolve issues, create awareness of other's feelings and bring reconciliation.

Children of divorce are placed in turmoil with the divorce, single-parent living, and blended family. They need help. Loving methods of correction and teaching are appropriate by all responsible significant other persons affecting their lives.

Dean Denton,
director of special ministries
Broadway Church
Maryville 37804

Great conference

The Feb. 28-March 1 meeting at Belmont Heights Church was my first deacon's conference as a new pastor in a mission church. It was informative and applicable. The speakers and music were outstanding.

Fletcher Allen reminded us that some of our greatest opportunities for ministries are within our own doors and that preventative maintenance to hold down conflict can result from true renewal or changed hearts ourselves.

Joe Stacker said that conflict paralyzes the church and becomes our hold button that keeps us from functioning as a church should, and that conflict dishonors God.

James Draper told us that our basic problem revolves around not understanding our roles that have been assigned to each of us.

Bob Sheffield said we should never try to change dif-

ferent people, but change ourselves. He also gave us conditions to watch for, along with some causes and signs of a dysfunctional church.

Norris Smith gave us the different stages or levels of conflict and told us about the ways a conflict has an objective or purpose and how that people talk about it in different ways.

Finally, Aubrey Hay brought us into each session with words of encouragement. The music of Ron Alley was inspired and took us right into the throne room with God in praise and worship. There was much more than what I have mentioned.

I encourage everyone to make plans to attend next year's deacon conference in Jackson. You will be blessed.

Jerry Jenkins, pastor
Faith Mission
Vanleer 37181

BSU anniversary

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the Baptist Student Union ministry in Southern Baptist life. I am nearing completion of my research into the history of BSU work in Tennessee and will soon begin writing.

If any readers are alumni of Tennessee's BSUs and are willing to share written testimonies, copies of articles, or photographs, please contact me at the address below. I am especially, but not exclusively, interested in material from 1922-70. Some readers might want to question their parents, grandparents, and senior adult members of their churches who attended college to see if they were involved in BSU.

For those who were involved in a BSU in a different state, they might wish to contact the BSU office in that state and offer them any relevant material. I'm sure they would gladly receive it.

Charles L. Nored
619 N. Tennessee Blvd.
Murfreesboro 37130

Popular hymns reflect promises of God to his people

"Leaning on the Everlasting Arms"

Anthony J. Showalter was a young preacher and singing school teacher who was active in several Southern states in the last decades of the 19th century.

In 1888, during a revival meeting in Hartselle, Ala., he received letters from two friends telling him the tragic news of the deaths of the wives of both men. As he pondered what he should say, he recalled the biblical promise, "The eternal God is thy refuge and underneath are the ever-

lasting arms (Deuteronomy 33:27).

Slowly he began to piece together a song. The lines of the refrain and the melody took shape first. He wrote the melody for the stanzas, but, hard as he tried, he was unable to complete the stanzas. He then wrote to Elisha A. Hoffman, a well-known writer of hymn texts, asking if he could supply the needed stanzas. Several weeks later, while leading a revival in Bartow County, Ga., Hoffman's letter with the stanzas arrived

Hymns we sing

— by Wm. J. Reynolds, Southwestern Seminary

and Showalter sang the song for the first time.

"Because He Lives"

Since childhood, both Bill and Gloria Gaither had a special interest in music. They participated in their local church and often were invited to sing together. Out of this musical activity new songs began to appear. Bill wrote "He Touched Me" in 1963 which was immediately received.

In 1971 the Gaither home

was blessed with the arrival of a baby boy, named Benjy. As the parents were filled with joy and gratitude for this gift from God, they were aware he was brought into a world filled with injustice, bigotry, greed, and immorality.

In spite of this they felt the strong assurance of Jesus Christ, and holding the baby in their arms, they wrote what is now the second stanza of "Because He Lives" — "How sweet to hold a newborn baby." The music was written, then the first and third stanzas completed the song. ■

Time for vacation? Go partnership

Poland, one of four countries now in partnership missions with Tennessee Baptists, is the only European nation we have worked with.

As such, the mostly Catholic country has been something of an enigma. The European culture is a pleasant experience, but the unwanted heritage of Soviet domination has haunted the Polish people.

Tennessee Baptists, through the rest of 1997, are blessed with choices. The convention has partnerships with Poland, Canada, Michigan, and Costa Rica.

Though the three nations and the state of Michigan may unknowingly vie for various missions projects, at times the needs can be more urgent in one place.

Tennessee Baptists previously had partnerships with Burkina Faso (Upper Volta), Venezuela, the Philippines, and Chile. We are known to be a people who believe in volunteer missions. Thousands have been led to do missions under the leadership of Carroll Owen, Clarence Stewart, Jarvis Hearn, and Terry Sharp, who currently directs the partnership work.

When this year ends, the official ties with Canada and Poland will be completed. Costa Rica will have two more years, and Michigan, of course, is ongoing.

There will be a need for at least one other missions partner, perhaps two, to partner with Tennessee Baptists through the Foreign Mission Board.

Terry Sharp is a former missionary. A Tennessean, he served in Brazil for several years. Since he became

the Partnership Missions leader for the TBC Executive Board staff, he has ably led the work.

Innovations have helped increase the already healthy missions awareness in Baptist churches.

Sharp would admit that there are never enough volunteers — though his office staff are constantly working with prospects. Many Tennessee Baptists have made several partnership trips, and form a solid cadre of willing workers. Their influence in local churches and associations is profound.

By Wm. Fletcher Allen, Editor

The Partnership Missions team works continuously in trying to enroll and assist new volunteers. At any time, the need for a special project may surface — the time is "now."

So we have opportunity to serve with Polish Baptists whose nation boasts a long history of the fine arts and a distinct culture. We serve with Canadian Baptists who have much in common with citizens of the United States. We are committed for two more years with Baptists in Costa Rica, where everyone seems willing to listen to the Gospel message. And we are longtime friends with Michigan Baptists.

As we begin planning to work with yet another Baptist group, pray for those who make the initial contact. Pray for Terry Sharp and his team of dedicated workers. Pray for the partnerships of the present, past, and future — that they will flourish and bring the message of the living Christ to the people.

And, make your own plans to "go partnership" this very year — and let Terry Sharp know now.

Having journeyed with at least six fact-finding teams for Baptist conventions, the editor knows the

importance of such teams and prayer for developing partnerships. Reaching out to others always blesses. Be a partner. *B&R*



The quality of mercy

Shakespeare, in *The Merchant of Venice*, wrote, "The quality of mercy is not strained ..." He wrote that this great quality of God blesses the giver and the one who receives mercy.

He also said mercy is an attribute of God himself, and that as we pray for mercy, we are taught to render mercy.

Whether we are helping others through the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering, partnership missions, assisting in disaster relief, or a non-denominational program such as Room in the Inn, or helping neighbors, "the quality of mercy is not strained."

Perhaps this attribute of God is closer to our hearts, or should be, when we have one-to-one opportunities with someone. What do we say about people with whom we disagree or dislike?

Are we merciful when we differ with others? Are we merciful when we pray? Do we see Christ when we are forming opinions, or making decisions that affect other people?

Mercy is never out of style — unless Christ is. *B&R*

Just for today

By Fred Wood
pastor emeritus
Eudora Church, Memphis

Start with a smile

Joe, to salesmen: "What's the secret of selling?"

Salesman #1: "First, know your product."

"Second, make lots of calls."

"Third, never take 'no' for an answer."

Salesman #2: "I can add one more. Learn how to miss a three foot putt by four inches."

Take this truth

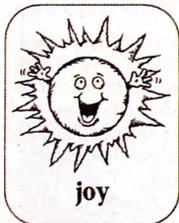
Theory is great. Formal training is excellent. Dedication is essential. However, unless these are accompanied by a knowledge of human nature, you may never achieve your life's goal.

Memorize this Scripture

For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of light — Luke 16:8.

Pray this prayer

Lord, please help me realize that consecrated common sense often can be the greatest asset a person can have. ■



Good question: How much longer do we have to wait?

one word more

— by Wm. Fletcher Allen, editor

When an extraordinarily talented athlete comes to crunch time for making decisions about life and livelihood, people are interested.

Peyton Manning, gifted football player for the University of Tennessee kept family, friends, and fans on hold for several months recently.

He was processing a decision that could make him an instant multi-millionaire, or give him one more year with the university's football team. It was tough.

Well, probably several hundred thousand Tennesseans, perhaps a million, were interested in his decision. It was a conversation piece probably since last September.

His decision-making probably was the most talked-about item for thousands of Tennesseans — given more time than the proposed lottery for Tennessee, or the need for political election reform.

Peyton and his decision process were discussed more, probably than how

churches can reach the unchurched, or how to solve Tennessee's problems with homeless people, and more than sermons or Sunday School lessons, or how to solve the AIDS problems.

Manning, a fine young man with gifts in several areas, did not cause the furor, though he was the subject. He probably would have wanted the fuss to just go away.

But I was thinking, who cares if a pastor is deciding on whether to stay or go with another church. Who would be concerned if a Baptist leader were undecided whether he or she were needed?

How many would care if a Sunday School teacher had difficulty in deciding whether to teach that class for another year? Would there be concern if a youth

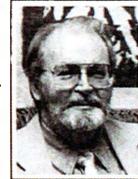
coach were in a dilemma of whether the effort was worth the problems with parents?

Would anyone care if a school teacher decided to "hang it up" if the students got out of control every day?

Would there be an outcry if any Baptist leader said, "That's enough, I think I've had too much heartache," or "do it my way or no way"?

I think it is time for Tennessee Baptists to be bold about what we believe in, who we serve, and how we go about it.

No one has a patent or the last word on any program, any plan, any procedure, any organization. When we arrive at the point where anyone thinks their plan is unchangeable — we are already shoulder deep in flood water. We need to have concern, to touch lives, to turn from authoritarian ways and as Tennessee Baptists to stand tall.



ALLEN

Child adoption from a previous marriage

families matter

— by Ivy Scarborough, attorney, mediator

Question: My present husband wants to adopt my son from my previous marriage. Is this possible or even advisable?

With so many marriages ending in divorce, it is common for step-parents to adopt children brought through remarriage.

This is neither feasible nor desirable if the biological and legal parent is interested in and involved with the child.

However, in a disturbing number of cases, a divorced parent may show little or no interest in his/her own child.

But to effect a step-parent in that situation, the non-custodial parent must either agree to surrender the parental rights, or an action to terminate

parental rights is necessary.

This should not be a deterrent. Consult an attorney who is very experienced in this field before bringing up this subject with the non-custodial parent.

Termination of parental rights is most advisable when a parent is addicted to alcohol or drugs, or is emotionally or morally very unstable.

The focus should be on what is best for the child rather than the "rights" of an indifferent and irresponsible parent. Be aware that a surrender or termination of parental rights cuts off all



SCARBOROUGH

rights to child support or inheritance from that parent.

I believe step-parent adoptions also are strongly recommended when the natural parent is deceased.

A step-parent adoption can be a loving and generous act which enhances a child's self-worth throughout life.

The Bible is filled with urgings to love and care for children. Perhaps the most powerful declaration of God's will in this respect is found in Jesus' own words:

"He [Jesus] took a little child and had him stand among them. Taking him in his arms, he said to them, 'Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name, welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me'" (Mark 9:36-37). ■

Ruble shares truths learned from 40-year ministry

By Lonnie Wilkey
Baptist and Reflector

BRENTWOOD — F. Greer Ruble has learned quite a bit about churches and people after 40 years of ministry, including the last 13 as a member of the Tennessee Baptist Convention Executive Board staff.

One of his favorite bits of wisdom comes from William Arthur Ward: "Judge each day not by the harvest you reap, but by the seeds you plant." He has followed that advice, having planted many seeds since he ventured into the ministry.

Friends and colleagues gathered Feb. 22 at the Baptist Center here to pay tribute to Ruble for his accomplishments upon his retirement. Ten of his 13 years with the TBC were spent as director of the Sunday School Department. His last year with the convention was spent as an executive assistant.

The Newport native is most grateful for the relationships he has developed with people from all across Tennessee.

Noting he has met literally hundreds of people over the years, Ruble said the relationships he has formed "has provided for me prayer support, fellowship times, and opportunities to encourage others."

As a minister of education at several churches, including two in Tennessee — First Church, Kingsport, and Bell Avenue Church, Knoxville — Ruble had a great appreciation for the role and importance of Sunday School long before he joined the TBC Sunday School department in 1984 as pro-

gram associate.

"One of the keys to growing a larger Sunday School and church is to increase Sunday School enrollment," Ruble said. "It has been proven over and over that as enrollment increases, attendance increases, resulting in many more people studying God's Word and participating in various church activities."

During his 10 years as director of the TBC Sunday School department, the staff had specific goals to help churches in the areas of Sunday School growth, better Bible teaching, and better organization, Ruble noted.

The department sponsored various training events, including regional conferences each September, for churches. The regional conferences in particular increased in attendance for eight consecutive years, Ruble noted.

"The events were well attended because there was a hunger from Sunday School leadership to do a more effective job," he said.

Ruble shared some things he has learned during his 40-year ministry.

(1) The Bible has the same message today that it had 40 years ago. "God is still God and sin is still sin. Men and women still need redemption in Jesus Christ and the Great Commission still stands," Ruble said.

(2) Prayer is a necessary part of a Christian's growth.

(3) Attitude is not only important in life; attitude is everything. "Attitude is more important than failures or even successes," he maintained. "We have a choice every day about our attitude."



JIM ROBINSON, right, mayor of Newport and a member of First Church there, was one of several who shared special memories of Greer Ruble during his retirement banquet Feb. 22.

(4) Love people and people will love you.

(5) Encourage others and you will be encouraged. "You will be surprised how quickly encouragement returns to you."

(6) God calls people according to his own timetable. Ruble related how he felt called to serve as minister of education at First Church, Kingsport, several years before he was actually called to that position. Instead of fretting when it did not happen on his schedule, Ruble waited until God was ready. The result? — 18 effective years of ministry at First Church, Kingsport.

(7) Communicate well with church staff. Ruble related a humorous story which happened while he was minister of education at a church in Alabama. A church custodian rushed into his office one Monday morning and wanted to know what to do with the body in the sanctuary. The church at that time let people hold

wakes, but of course there was no body in the sanctuary, only the remnants of the Lord's Supper held that Sunday evening. "I learned then how important communication was, especially with the church custodian," he laughed.

(8) Marry someone who shares your goals and love for ministry. Ruble and his first wife, Ruth Grove Ruble, were married for more than 40 years when she died unexpectedly in 1995. He noted they moved numerous times during their marriage, but she was always willing and soon became involved in the various aspects of church life wherever they settled. "This attitude of support gave me strength to do a better job, and I greatly appreciated it, Ruble noted. He and Ruth had two children, Sarah Mai Hawk and Forrest G. Ruble. He also has two grandchildren, John Forrest Greer Ruble and Stacie Hawk. All have been supportive of his min-



BILL RANDALL, traveled from Hot Springs, Ark., to share in Greer Ruble's sendoff from the TBC. Randall has been a close friend of Ruble's for almost 50 years and was the best man in his marriage to Ruth Grove.

istry, he said proudly.

Last August Ruble married Jane Harrison of Kingsport who also has been a supporter and advocate of his ministry. "I'm grateful to God for bringing Jane and me together in marriage," he said. Included among his new family are two adult children, Todd and Nancy, from her marriage to Stanley Harrison, who died in 1994.

(9) A person never really retires when he serves God. Ruble plans to keep busy. Negotiations are underway with some East Tennessee associations that would enable him to serve as a church growth consultant. It will be just another way Ruble can continue "planting seeds." ■

TBC's Roy Miller retires; will continue ministry as church consultant

For Baptist and Reflector

BRENTWOOD — Roy L. Miller retired Feb. 28 after 10 years of service on the Tennessee Baptist Convention

Executive Board staff. At the time of his retirement he was a ministry specialist with the Christian Growth Development Group. He formerly was program associate for adult Sunday

School work.

"I have sought to lead churches to find ways to grow through the Bible teaching ministry by using the basic growth principles of the Sunday School growth spiral," he said.

Miller served for 21 years as pastor of churches in Indiana and Tennessee. Tennessee pastorates included Bethel Church, Clinton; Fort Sanders Church, Knoxville; and Mt. Carmel Church, Knoxville. He was director of missions for Sevier County Association for four years prior to joining the TBC staff. He also served as minister of education for two Knoxville churches — City View and Broadway.

Miller is a graduate of Carson-Newman College, Jefferson City, and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky.

He served two terms on the TBC

Executive Board and was chairman of the Administrative Committee of the board. "It was a personal joy to serve on a special committee which established the beginning of partnership missions with Michigan and Upper Volta (Burkina Fasso)," Miller noted.

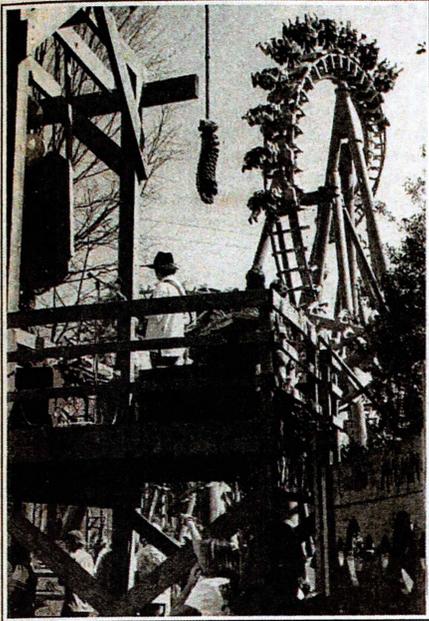
Miller also has been used by other state Sunday School departments and the Baptist Sunday School Board to lead conferences.

Upon retirement, he hopes to be able to continue to assist churches in the areas of Bible teaching ministry, space utilization, leader enlistment and training, church growth weekends, and Sunday School revivals through Roy L. Miller Ministries.

"My greatest desire is to continue to assist the local church to be effective in doing the Great Commission of our Lord," he said. ■

ROY MILLER, left, accepts a plaque during a recent retirement luncheon. Looking on is his brother, Richard Miller. Miller retired Feb. 28 after 10 years on the staff of the Tennessee Baptist Convention Executive Board.





ENTERTAINING youth in line for The Hangman ride is Crossfire, a music group of South Fulton Church, South Fulton. The wait was three hours at times for the popular ride.



ACTING OUT a song at an Opryland session are members of Pleasant View Church, Clinton, from left, Josh Roach, Justin Crass, Chrissy Evans, Kelli Anderson, and Celese Dunn. — Photos by Connie Davis

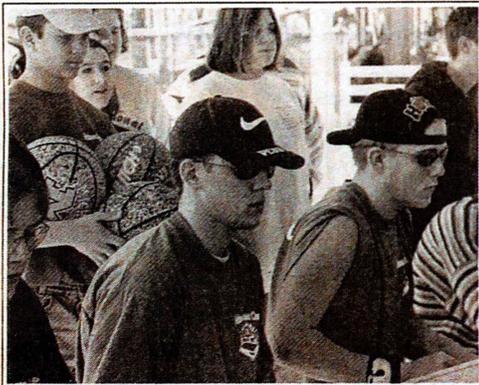


MEMBERS of Big Emory Church, Harriman, which sport the same T-shirts are, from left, first row, Erica James and Debra Coffey, back row, Kelly Lively, Jessica Brock, Lisa Thornton, Courtney Inman, Beverly Foshee, Amy Smith, Erica Smith, and Teia Taylor.

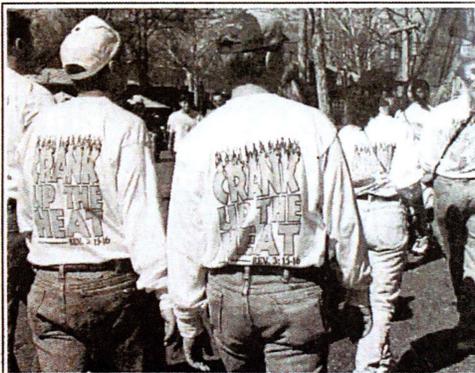


SHOWING his billfold to represent his greed is a clown played by Justin Redfern after he knocked over the blocks of another clown played by Ann Finley. The blocks represented love, patience, and goodness. The clowns are members of a troupe from Cedar Hill Church, Cedar Hill.

crank up the HEAT



PLAYING a game are, from left, Kevin Adams and Jason Robinette, while Curtis Hale watches. They are from Belmont Church, Mt. Carmel.



T-SHIRTS bearing the theme of the conference are worn by members of Hilldale Church, Clarksville.



PRAYING during at session at Opryland are, from left, Trisha Swain, Brad Martin, and Chris Martin of Pleasant View Church, Clinton.



WATCHING youth from their church, Unity Church, Murfreesboro, on a ride are, from left, Doyle Hays, pastor, Peggy Hays, Stephanie McConnell, and Danny McConnell, youth leader.



MAKING some friends are clowns, from left, Spud, alias Tony Moore; Gizmo, or Melvin Pittman; and Elmo, or Mike Privett. The trio also made balloon gifts for youth and shared their faith. They are from Fruitland Church, Humboldt.

Kingsport churches watch 300 youth pledge to abstinence

Baptist Press

KINGSPORT — A True Love Waits Rally which was coordinated by five churches in Kingsport drew about 400 youth, of which 300 made pledges to remain abstinent until marriage.



The rally was the first of its kind in the area. Churches here had held True Love Waits programs, but nothing had been held on a larger scale.

The True Love Waits program, which encourages youth and students to remain sexually pure until marriage, was developed several years by a church in Old Hickory near Nashville. The Baptist Sunday School Board in Nashville provides materials to support it and coordinates national events to promote it.

The Kingsport rally was Feb. 12-13 at the teen center of the Mafair Methodist Church,

one of the rally's sponsors. Junior high students gathered one night and high school students met the other, reported

Mike Wilson, minister of youth, Sunnyside Church, Kingsport, another of the sponsors. Other Kingsport churches involved were Litz Manor Church, Colonial Heights Church, Calvary Church, First Church, and Oakwood Forest Church.

On both evenings, a capacity crowd of about 200 attended the rallies, said Wilson. The youth heard Pete Tackett, copastor, First Church, Bluff City, and Jamie Slocum of Nashville. Slocum was recently nominated for a Dove award of the Christian music industry.

During the rallies, a total of about 300 of the youth made commitments to remain abstinent, reported Wilson.

"We were blown away," he explained, commenting on the high percentage of youth who made the commitment.

The Kingsport youth then joined youth across the nation who made True Love Waits commitments by posting their pledge cards around the flag poles of their schools on Feb. 14, Valentine's Day.

To coordinate the school phase of the event, Wilson and other youth workers worked with Sullivan County schools. All of the schools were receptive except one. The youth workers

compromised with the school officials to allow the activity by removing the words God and biblical from the cards.

"It (the change in the cards) didn't matter. They (the youth) knew what they were committing to and that's what was important," said Wilson.

The True Love Waits events in Kingsport drew a lot of media coverage, said Wilson. Two TV stations and a newspaper covered it. WCQR, a Christian

radio station in Gray, broadcast it. And several youth ministers were interviewed and participated in shows on secular radio stations.

Another benefit of the coordinated event was that the cost was kept at a minimum, reported Wilson. *B&R* — Connie Davis

Classified

NEEDED: Part-time bivocational youth minister with heart for young people; responsible for planning, coordinating, promoting, and evaluating church's youth ministry. Write or call FBC, 603 North Main St., Ashland City, TN 37015; (615) 792-4724.

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Saturday: Conferences, 8:45, 1:30, 2:30; General Session, 7:15,

Sunday: 10:00, Annual Session of TN Woman's Missionary Union featuring: election of officers, consideration of bylaws

changes, message by Wanda Lee, national WMU president;

Sunday: General Session, 8:30

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Longs Peak Association of Southern Baptist Churches is accepting resumes for the position of director of missions/church starter strategist through March 31. For information, call (970) 330-2130 or (970) 352-7001 (Frank). Fax resumes to: (970) 330-2762 or (970) 352-7006.

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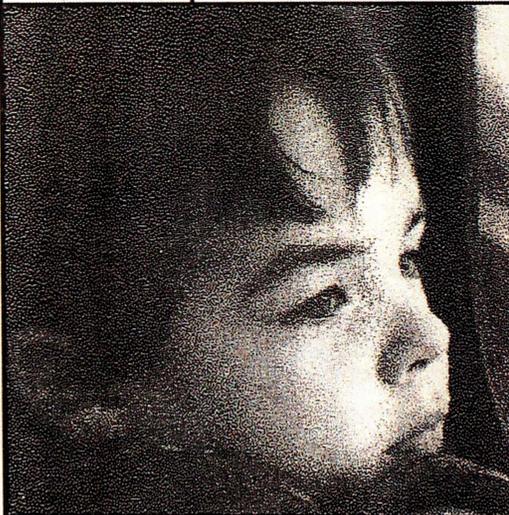
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University Ministries Staff Position

Southwest Baptist University invites applications for director of university ministries. Candidates must possess a master's degree from a Christian university and have prior experience working with campus, church, or denominational ministries. The director will coordinate and preside over chapel programs, oversee the University's faith missions program, supervise various drama, music, and revival ministry teams, supervise small group ministry activities, minister to students, and promote Missouri Baptist Convention involvement. Salary commensurate with experience. Send application letter and three letters of recommendation by March 28, 1997, to Dr. William Brown, Southwest Baptist University, 1600 University Ave., Bolivar, MO 65613. EOE.

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churches

■ Cumberland Drive Church, Clarksville, will hold its fourth annual "Jerusalem Marketplace," a biblical walk-through experience April 26-27 from 1-5 p.m. For more information, call (615) 647-5088.

■ During March Greenvale Church, Church Hill, is holding a series of revival services on Monday evenings. On March 17 Mike Stout will speak; March 24, Bobby Russell; and March 31, William Boyd Bingham III will lead the service.

■ The Single Adult Ministry of Calvary Church, Knoxville, is holding a six-week Divorce Recovery Workshop which began March 9. Sessions are from 4:30-6:30 p.m. John Riddle of Christian Counseling, Knoxville, is leading the workshop. For more information, contact Tony Connors, single adult pastor of the church, at (423) 523-9419.

■ A series of Holy Week

services is planned by Trinity Church, Cordova, beginning on Palm Sunday, March 23. For information on related services, call the church office at (901) 759-5955.

■ The public is invited to attend the "Majesty and Miracles" crusade March 23-26 at Central Church, Hixson, each night at 7 p.m. Featured speaker is Rick Amato, a humanitarian who is author of A Pocket Full of Pennies.

leaders

■ Whitten Memorial Church, Memphis has called Rob Ray, of First Church, East Flat Rock, N.C., as pastor, effective April 13.

■ Imogene Wilson, administrative secretary, Haywood Hills Church, Nashville, for 30 years, will retire March 31. To honor her, a luncheon will be held March 23 following the morning worship service.

■ Kirk Casey, pastor, First Church, Oakdale, has been called as pastor of Calvary Church, Idaho Falls, Idaho.

■ Dewayne Roberson of Ringgold, Ga., has been called as minister of music and youth, Memorial Church, Hixson. He recently served on the staff of Central Church -



ORAL CHURCH, Lenoir City, held a True Love Waits ceremony Feb. 9. Twelve teenagers committed to remain sexually pure until marriage. They were given a token of commitment by their parents and the ceremony concluded with commitments to support the young people in prayer. Making the commitment were Tracey Braschler, Steven Coley, Laura Hosea, Ashley Lindsey, Aaron Littleton, Kasey Smith, Heather Tapp, Wesley Waller, Jenny Webb, Mariah Witt, Rachel Witt, and Steve Wolfe.

Woodmore, Chattanooga, and Second Church, Lafayette, Ga.

■ Liberty Grove Church, Jackson, has called Scott Isley as youth pastor, effective Feb. 23. Isley is a student at Union University. With the calling of Isley, the church's minister of music and youth, Matt Plunk, was given the new assignment of minister of music and education.

■ Grace Church, Nashville, has called Andre K. Dugger, pastor, First Church, Alba, Texas, as pastor, effective Feb. 23. Dugger also served as minister of youth, Southeast

Church, Murfreesboro, from 1984-85 and as pastor of another church in Texas for three years. He is a graduate of Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas.

■ Charles W. Kelly, pastor of Clymersville Church, Rockwood, lost two family members in one week. His mother, Eula S. Kelly, died Feb. 9, 10 days prior to her 98th birthday, and his daughter, Lynn Kelly Huskins, died two days after her grandmother's funeral.



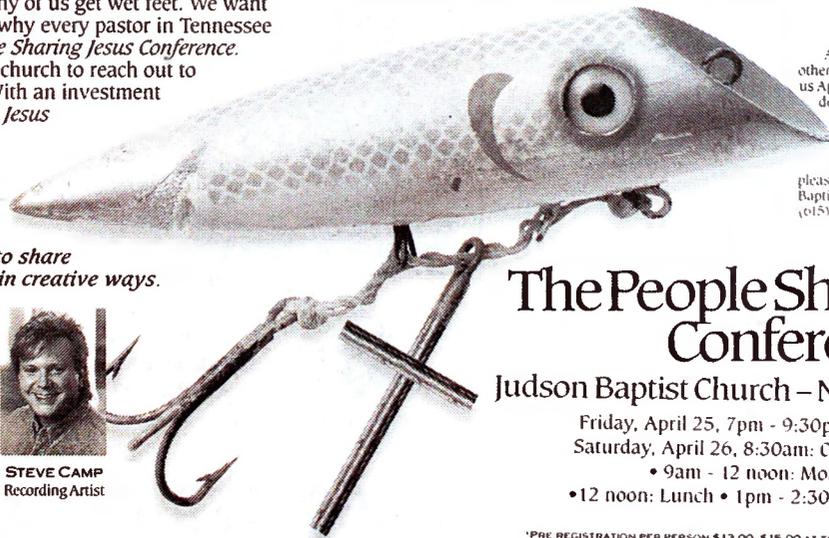
TONY LANGTON, left, was licensed into the ministry Feb. 23 by Tulip Grove Church, Old Hickory. Langton is serving as volunteer minister of outreach at Woodcock Church in inner city Nashville. He is presented his licenses by Tulip Grove Pastor Ken Clayton.

Fishing is easier if you have the right tools.

When it comes to sharing our faith, many of us get wet feet. We want to share Jesus, but don't know how. That's why every pastor in Tennessee should bring 10 church leaders to the People Sharing Jesus Conference.

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Saturday, April 26, 8:30am: Continental Breakfast

• 9am - 12 noon: Morning Session

• 12 noon: Lunch • 1pm - 2:30pm: Afternoon Session

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DARRELL ROBINSON Vice President for Evangelism, Home Mission Board



STEVE CAMP Recording Artist

IRS audits of ministers normal at about 1 percent
Baptist Press

SPRINGFIELD, Mo. — Contrary to rampant rumors, churches and ministers are not being targeted for special scrutiny by the Internal Revenue Service, said Richard R. Hammar, an attorney and tax specialist for religious workers and organizations. He said "ministers are not being targeted by the IRS any more than other taxpayers."

The IRS typically audits 5,000 ministers per year, Hammar said. "Since there are 500,000 ministers in this country, that's only about a 1 percent audit rate. They're right in the mainstream, because 1 percent is the normal audit risk for any taxpayer."

He noted "it is outrageous for anyone to spread deep fear in the minds of pastors and church workers regarding the threat of IRS audits or criminal prosecutions. ■

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Southwest Baptist University

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AIDS/HIV is reality in church recreation

Baptist Press

GLORIETA, N.M. — An athletic young man has joined your church and expresses an interest in the softball team. He tells you he is HIV-positive. What can you do?

A young mother, also HIV-positive, brings a covered dish to the fellowship meal, but no one wants to eat her food. Could an uncomfortable situation have been avoided?

A child who acquired HIV through a blood transfusion wants to participate in day camp, but the parents of other children are nervous. How can the recreation minister help?

A written plan, a set of policies, and faithfully followed health precautions can help churches deal safely and compassionately with situations related to people with HIV/AIDS, a Southern Baptist minister told his peers at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center during Rec Lab '97, Feb. 21-26.

"Education works wonders

for calming folks and making them more comfortable with each other," said Ronney Joe Webb, minister of activities at First Church, Laurel, Miss.

Webb said a range of resources is available to help churches develop materials to use in making decisions related to who may participate in church activities and how medical assistance is provided during a church-related event. Athletic and medical organizations frequently offer health guidelines, Christian bookstores offer resources that deal with moral and health issues and other churches often are willing to share their guidelines and experiences.

The U.S. Olympic Committee released a report on HIV and Hepatitis B in 1992, Webb said, emphasizing no cases of HIV transmission through sports had been documented.

Other areas of concern for

churches, he said, include nursery sanitation, counseling issues, food preparation, and confidentiality. Many churches already use precautions related to health issues for children in church and sanitary food preparation. Some of those same procedures apply in dealing with health needs related to people with HIV/AIDS, he said.

Guidelines for sports activities for teams at his church have had additions in recent years, Webb said, noting: Activities or games will stop if bleeding occurs. The injured person cannot re-enter the game until bleeding has stopped and no sign of blood can be seen on clothing or a bandage. Open wounds must be covered.

Equally important is the way ministers and church members relate to people with

HIV/AIDS, he said. The stigma may be compared to the way people felt toward lepers in the days when Jesus ministered to people labeled as "unclean," Webb said.

"Jesus modeled common sense and compassion. He knew the people had a problem relating to lepers, so he had them tell the priest they had been healed, and the priest assured the public the lepers had been cleansed. We also must realize people are afraid, and we have to take precautions. The people with HIV/AIDS must be educated about the concerns of others to understand their responses.

"We also must relate in compassion. If HIV/AIDS was contracted because of lifestyle, we can still love the person. Try to treat them as you would want to be treated," Webb suggested. ■



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Vacillation

By Donna Wright

Focal Passage — Matthew 26:31-35, 50b-51, 56b-58, 69-75

Vacillation, hesitation, indecision, wavering, those words ever describe your walk with Christ?

This week the disciple Simon Peter is going to help us to look at loyalty. First, I have to tell you that Simon Peter is my favorite of all the apostles. He's a lot like me. Read the New Testament. The Gospels and the Acts tell time after time about him opening his mouth, only to change feet.

I believe with all my heart that Peter always meant well. In Matthew 26:31-35 we are looking in on the Last Supper. Jesus is trying, with much difficulty, to make those closest to him understand what is going to happen in the next few days. Peter spoke up, telling the Lord how he would never forsake him, even though all others would.

Jesus, however, told Peter, "You will deny me three times, before the cock crows."

All of the disciples, including Peter, declared they would stay with Christ no matter what. We all know that did not happen.

Peter followed him, and ended up in the high priest's palace. Three times Peter is recognized, and three times he denies knowing Jesus. In Luke we are told that "the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter."

There are times when all of us fail God. We fail him in ways that are blatant and ways that are subtle. But, we all fail. I don't believe that 99.9 percent of us fail him like Peter, because we are afraid for our lives.

But, think about this — could you imagine looking into the Lord's face after a failure?

Peter did what I would have done, "he went out, and wept bitterly" (v. 75).

Peter is known for his wavering faith, not for the rock-solid faith that, according to tradition, took him to a cross of his own.

Recently, I was asked why I believed in Jesus for my salvation. There are a million reasons why we each believe what we do. Some people will cite the way the prophecies are coming true each day. Others will tell you about how the Lord worked in their lives.

Those things are good reasons, but for me it is the unwavering faith of Peter and the other apostles. Faith that took them to a cross, a sword, a hanging, and other painful deaths.

When I think of them, my faith is strengthened, because men don't die for a lie. If the New Testament were not true, they would not have given their lives for it.

I thank God that ahead of me he sent Simon Peter, Andrew, Philip, and James. Men who "all forsook him and fled" (v. 56b). Then came back to him with a faith that sustains those of us who follow.

Do we all hesitate, waver, and have problems?

Yes. But if we follow in Peter's footsteps, we will end up back with the Lord. And, that is where we belong. ■ — Wright is a member of First Church, Newport.



THE LAST SUPPER

Pray for others

By Mike Shelton

Focal Passage — II Thessalonians 1:1-12

Dr. Russell Dilday, former president of Southwest Seminary, told of the time he received a number of letters from some GAs, Girls in Action. Many of the letters displayed great enthusiasm. He could tell one of the girls had written her letter out of obligation. It read, "I am writing you because it is a step in my GA book. I'm supposed to pray for you. I will."

Praying for others is one of the greatest joys and responsibilities we have as Christians. It is an act of love that calls for the best from us. In II Thessalonians Paul described how he prayed for the church in Thessalonica. We may use his statements as a pattern for intercessory prayer in our own lives.

Thanksgiving (vv. 1-10). When Paul prayed for the Christians he began with expressing gratitude to God for them. Their standing in Christ was so strong that he felt "bound" to thank God for them. He mentioned that he spoke of their growing faith and love wherever he went. He felt their maturity and witness would help carry them through times of trial. He ex-

Family Bible Lesson

pressed thanks that God would vindicate those fine saints when Christ returned. He appreciated the fact that he could point to their church as a model for what Christ can accomplish in lives fully yielded to him. As we pray for others we should look for the good in them and then give thanks to God for them and for the Christlike qualities we see in them.

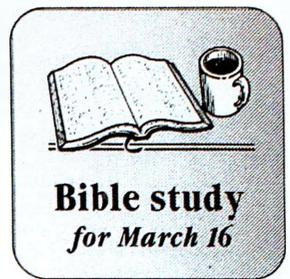
Specific requests (vv. 11-12). Intercessory prayer requires that we pray for others and their

needs as fully as possible. Paul poured his heart and soul into particular requests on their behalf. One request he made for the Thessalonians was that they might be brought to completion in Christ. It should always be our prayer for fellow believers that they might experience the continuance of God's work of grace in their lives all the way to the moment of glorification.

Paul also requested that God would "fulfill all the good pleasure of his goodness," that the Christians would continue to desire God's goodness. People today are tempted strongly to forsake goodness and holiness in order to "get ahead" in an increasingly corrupt world. They need prayer partners who will keep asking God to strengthen their desire to lead pure and loving lives. You can be the one to pray for them in this way.

Another petition made by Paul was that they might engage in powerful and faithful service to God. Christ has saved us so that we might worship and serve him in the power of his spirit. If we are not serving him faithfully, then we are neglecting our calling. Many servants of Christ need people who will pray regularly for them and for the strength they need to serve the Lord on a daily basis.

Praying for others is a privilege that we must not abandon. If we truly believe that God moves in response to the prayers of his people, then we need to pray specifically for one another. God can do things in our lives that might not be done in any other way. Make intercessory prayer a regular part of your day and you will begin to see God touch the lives of the people for whom you are praying. ■ — Mike Shelton is pastor of Bellevue Church, Nashville.



Be open to the truth

By Howard Kitter

Focal Passage — Matthew 26:62-66; 27:20-26

There is safety in numbers. Have you ever heard that? It seems, the more people agree about something the more weight it carries. If people who are in important positions "push" something or throw their support behind it, that issue seems to take on a resemblance of truth. We have all heard some say "how could all these people be wrong?" Most impressionable is the role a government takes. As uncanny as it may seem, if a government deems something legal people have a tendency to see it as truth. This could not be any farther from truth. A case in point would be abortion on demand. Even though it has been legalized, it does not make it a truth to follow. Some may be legal in their actions and very far from the truth of the matter. This becomes even more clear in this lesson.

In Matthew 26 there is a great deal of legal activity going on, but very little concern for the truth to be acknowledged. I believe the very reason for this activity is obvious. The truth in this case

Explore the Bible Lesson

would have disturbed the entire system already in place. Rather than be open to the truth, these people chose to close themselves off from the truth and honor their own ideas as the truth. One could say, being legally correct but far from the truth.

In verse 63 the defense Jesus gave was absolutely mind boggling. It is amazing how far it is from our own idea of defense. I'm sure we would want the best defense lawyers money could buy. But Jesus had the best defense available. In fact money could not buy his defense. He had the truth. He was the truth.

I once had a man tell me that if I had to defend my ministry it wasn't worth defending. What he meant was, if it was from God, then let God defend it. I think that the best perspective to view this lesson from today is found in answering this question, "Why did Jesus not aggressively defend himself against this unfair onslaught of hate, lies, and abuse?" I would venture to say it is because he was far more concerned with his obedience to the Father in

truth, than the defense of his life. Remember, Jesus was totally surrendered to the Father in all circumstances, not just the pleasant ones.

With this in mind, look at both the leaders as well as the people. It seems that they fed one another with encouragement to destroy Jesus. It is more than obvious that the truth was far less important to them than what they really desired. They wanted their own way, legally, without the slightest regard for the truth. Their mentality was "safety in numbers. Surely all these people can't be wrong. What we are doing has to be the truth." This sight should bring us to a different question: "What could be done to help people be more open to the truth of Jesus?" Could the answer to that be to allow the simple truth of Jesus be more evident in our own lives? For every believer to be more submissive to God's truth in their lives, rather than looking for things to be legally correct without regard for the truth?

Ask yourself: Does my life clearly reflect the truth of Jesus? ■ — Kitter is pastor of First Church, Bethel Springs.



world news

Killer tornadoes strike Arkansas

Baptist Press

ARKADELPHIA, Ark. — Hours after killer tornadoes ripped through several counties in Arkansas, Baptist disaster relief efforts were in full operation here and in Little Rock. The March 1 storms killed at least 24 people, injured more than 300, and damaged or destroyed more than 800 houses and businesses.

While feeding efforts were underway in Arkadelphia, three cleanup teams of Arkansas Baptist men were mobilized early March 2 in areas of south Pulaski County and north Saline County. The work crews helped families remove debris from their yards and roofs — or what was left of their homes. ■

Louisville storm spares seminary

Baptist Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — A deadly storm that dropped record amounts of rainfall here over the March 1-2 weekend caused minor damage across the campus of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Michael Besspiata, director

of facilities management at Southern, put a preliminary estimate of the damage at \$7,000 to \$10,000. Flooding occurred in classrooms in Norton Hall and basements in the Carver, Cooke, and Mullins buildings as well as five buildings in the school's residential area known as Village Manor. Several computers and water heaters in the basements were destroyed.

The balcony of Alumni Chapel suffered the most extensive damage as water leaked through the roof around the steeple. ■

BC trustees tap Williams as NAMB consultant

Baptist Press

MEMPHIS — Trustees of the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission voted to extend the ministry of President James D. Williams as a consultant of the North American Mission Board through 1999 during their Feb. 28-March 1 meeting here.



WILLIAMS

The commission will be dissolved in June when it becomes a part of the North American Mission Board.

The contract agreement will be contingent on the approval of NAMB trustees. The agreement empowers Williams to continue as a consultant with salary and benefits and assume the duties of executive director of the Baptist Medical-Dental Fellowship "until his planned normal retirement date, Nov. 1, 1999." ■

Potential cloning carries host of ethical problems

Baptist Press

WASHINGTON — The report of the successful cloning of adult sheep in Scotland brings with it a host of ethical problems related to the potential cloning of human beings — issues that the United States is not prepared for, Southern Baptist and evangelical scholars say.

The cloning of human beings jumped from science fiction to what some forecast as inevitable reality when Scottish researchers announced Feb. 22 they had successfully cloned a 6-year-old sheep.

President Bill Clinton instructed the National Bioethics Advisory Commission Feb. 24 to study the ethical and legal issues of cloning and to bring a report in 90 days.

Ian Wilmut, 52, an embryologist, and his fellow researchers in Edinburgh, Scotland, said they were interested only in cloning farm animals, not human beings. Cloning people "would be ethically irresponsible," Wilmut said, according to the *Washington Post*.

Ben Mitchell, a consultant with the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, said the event opens the "Pandora's possibility of cloning human beings," something he described as "unconscionable."

"Since the U.S. has no laws against cloning a human be-

ing, it is imperative that lawmakers quickly pass a moratorium on human cloning," Mitchell said.

"A comprehensive study of the ethical implication of human cloning needs to be done. A moratorium would provide some time for ethical reflection," said Mitchell who also is assistant professor of Christian ethics at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky. ■

Grozny Baptists plan relocation to Russia

Baptist Press

GROZNY, Chechnya — Death, disappearances, and threats have prompted the last Baptists here to plan to relocate to Russia, according to a report in the European Baptist Press Service from the pastor of a church helping relocate the Grozny refugees.

The Chechen church at one time had 800 members from different ethnic groups, but mainly ethnic Russians, EBPS reported.

As of mid-February, 28 families from the Grozny church had been relocated and 88 families remain in the city waiting for a chance to leave, EBPS reported.

Grozny church members had tried to stay and continue meeting and ministering in difficult circumstances. But non-Russian members have been warned attending the church is signing their own death certificates, EBPS reported.

The trip to relocate is expensive for the 120-kilometer drive from Grozny to the Russian border, with banditry and bureaucratic tangles also common.

The Southern Baptist Convention Foreign Mission Board has released \$50,000 in human needs funds to help with the relocation. Another \$50,000 was provided by the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, the German Baptist Union, and several other European Baptist unions. ■

Abortion advocate says he lied about procedure

Baptist Press

WASHINGTON — The head of a national abortion advocacy organization has startled both sides in the debate over America's most divisive moral issue by confessing he lied about partial-birth abortion and declaring his allies are wrong to spread misinformation in order to protect the procedure.

Ron Fitzsimmons, executive director of the National Coali-

HMB commissions last missionaries

Baptist Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — An Arizona couple serving a resort church in the Grand Canyon National Park became the last home missionaries appointed under the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, which will become part of the new North American Mission Board in June.

Paul Kinnison, pastor of Grand Canyon Baptist Church, and his wife, Norma, were among 64 missionaries commissioned Feb. 26 here.

It was the first such HMB service in California and the last such commissioning under the HMB banner.

The HMB will cease to exist after the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in June as part of the SBC "Covenant for a New Century" restructuring. At that time, responsibility for the new appointees and nearly 5,000 other home missionaries will transfer to NAMB, a merger of the HMB, Radio and Television Commission, and the Brotherhood Commission. ■

tion of Abortion Providers, told the *American Medical News* and other publications what opponents of partial-birth abortion have been saying for some time: The grisly procedure done in the second half of pregnancy is not rare and is not performed primarily on women whose lives or fertility are threatened or whose unborn babies are damaged.

Instead, Fitzsimmons admitted, the procedure is more commonly performed than abortion advocates have said and mostly on healthy women with healthy children.

Fitzsimmons told *The New York Times* he lied "through my teeth" when he appeared on the ABC television program "Nightline" in November 1995 and said the procedure was rare and used only on women whose lives were endangered or whose babies were damaged. ■

Retired BSSB editor dies

Baptist Press

CHANDLER, Ariz. — Jack Gullledge, retired editor of the Baptist Sunday School Board's *Mature Living* magazine, died Feb. 19. He was 73. He is survived by his wife and three children. ■

Churches' gifts still appreciated 25 years later

Baptist Press

SULPHUR, La. — It had been 25 years since Olivet Church here had given an offering to help start a new church in South Korea. Few Olivet members remembered the offering and present pastor Mark Broussard knew nothing about it.

Imagine the pastor's surprise when he received an invitation last spring to take part in the 25th anniversary of Taechon Baptist Church. And not only were he and his wife invited, but the Korean church offered to pay all expenses for the trip.

Broussard said he quickly began asking around. "Some of the old-timers remembered," he said, noting the church treasurer had a record of the gift.

"I wasn't even aware the church had done this, but (the South Korean church's pastor) never forgot us. He felt indebted to us."

Olivet's pastor in 1970, Charles Bennett, took part in a crusade in South Korea, organized by the Louisiana Baptist Convention as

part of a partnership the state had with the Korean Baptist Convention.

He told his congregation about a young Baptist, Sung-Jo-Kim, who was starting a church in Taechon. The church sent Kim about \$3,000 to help construct a building for his new church. Another church in Louisiana, Calvary in New Orleans, also supported the work there. Both churches were invited to the 25th anniversary celebration.

Broussard said Kim and the 300-plus-member Taechon Baptist Church saw the recent trip as an expression of gratitude.

Broussard said although his church had forgotten about the gift to Taechon, the congregation in Korea remembered the Louisiana churches fondly. "They told us, 'We consider you our grandparents. We are spiritual kin.'"

Broussard said the experience had renewed his congregation's commitment to missions. "I told them, 'All you did was invest (in) a man that you didn't really know.' And look at what it has become." ■