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Retreat for ministers in northeast Tennessee

'Earth's Beulah Land' provides setting to seek God

By Lonnie Wilkey
Baptist and Reflector

SNEEDVILLE — Believe it or not there's still a place in the United States to get completely away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life.

Nestled high atop Newman Ridge in Hancock County in northeast Tennessee lies "Earth's Beulah Land." Try dialing from a cell phone while standing there and the words "no service" appear.

The 100-acre tract, chock full of God's natural beauty, provides the perfect setting as "a place of prayer for men of God."

Earth's Beulah Land is the fulfillment of a vision of Seven Gibson and a ministry of Elm Springs Church where he has served as pastor for the last 20 years.

Located on the property are Gibson's house, a cabin, for a pastor (and his wife), and a prayer garden where the minister can go and spend time alone with God in a quiet natural setting.

"One of the most difficult things a busy pastor has to do is find time to refresh his soul, renew his vision, and reaffirm God's plan for his life," Gibson said.

He speaks from experience.

Gibson is constantly on the go, ministering not only to his congregation, which has a membership of about 200, but the community as well. A lifelong resident of Sneedville, Gibson knows everybody and everybody knows him.

About three years ago Gibson was studying in the Gospel of Luke and was



SEVEN AND KATHY GIBSON welcome Ray Gilder, right, TBC bivocational ministries consultant, to 'Earth's Beulah Land' in Hancock County. Earth's Beulah Land is designed for pastors and other ministers who need some place to go and be alone with God.

struck by the fact that Jesus constantly was going to the mountains to pray.

"Being an old mountain man myself I thought that might be a good place for me," Gibson said.

He knew exactly where to go — the old homeplace of his grandparents. "I came here. It was the only place in the county where I knew no one could find me," he said.

Gibson began going regularly to Newman Ridge to pray and spend time alone with God. Not long afterwards his church "began to take on new life. I saw move-

ment I had not seen before."

He noted the experience was like "a shot in the arm.

"We (the church) were struggling. I was empty and barren. Coming here was such a boost to my own ministry."

One day Gibson felt a special need to go to the mountain and pray. "God moved in my heart to build a place where busy and broke pastors could come to pray and seek his face," he recalled.

Gibson knows many pastors who are discouraged and burned out. Many of them — See 'Earth's, page 4

TBC CP giving remains strong

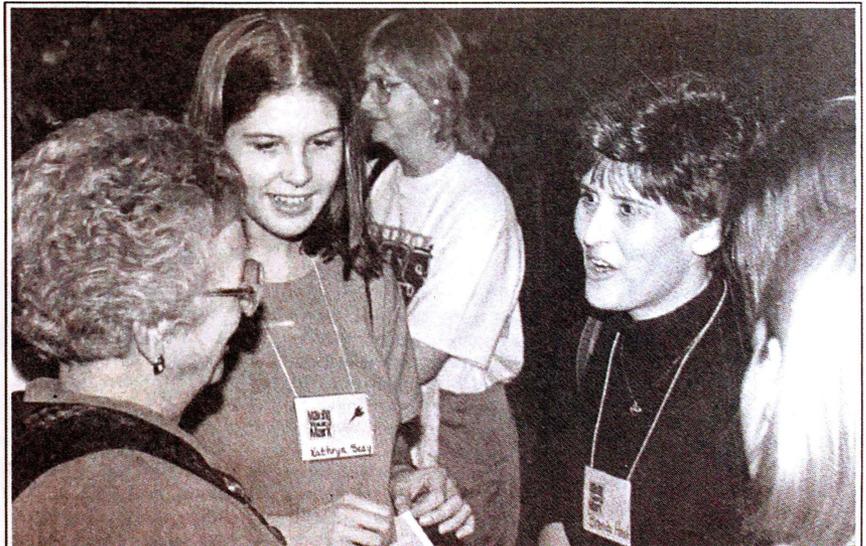
For *Baptist and Reflector*

BRENTWOOD — Members of Tennessee Baptist churches gave \$1,964,446 to the Cooperative Program in March.

The figure is 3.99 percent over the amount given at the same time last year.

After five months of the current fiscal year, Tennessee Baptists have given \$12,296,316, or 4.68 percent over the current budget needs.

"Tennessee Baptists continue to give generously to the cause of Christ through the Cooperative Program," said William Maxwell, leader of the TBC Administrative Services Group. "We are pleased that giving through the CP continues to exceed both the prior year and current budget needs," he said. ■



Katharine Bryan visits at Acteens Summit

Tennessee Woman's Missionary Union director, Katharine Bryan, visits with Brenda Hauk, right, Acteens leader at First Church, Franklin, and Kathryn Seay of the Franklin church, after a session of the summit. Bryan announced her retirement during the event. (See stories on pages 3 & 7.)

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Staffing process begins for new SBC agency

By Martin King
For Baptist Press

ATLANTA — On behalf of the Implementation Task Force, officials of the Southern Baptist Convention's Home Mission Board have begun offering support positions in the new North American Mission Board to current HMB employees.

Gary Jones, HMB vice president of services, said the process of hiring staff for the new agency and of terminating those employees who will not be offered positions began April 1 and will continue for two to three weeks. The process, Jones told Baptist Press, was approved by the ITF, an SBC Executive Committee-appointed group which has guided the creation of the new agency as part of the denomination's restructuring.

NAMB, officially an agency of the SBC following the June annual meeting in Dallas, is a merger of the HMB, Brotherhood Commission, and Radio and Television Commission. All position offerings are subject to action by the new board of directors at an organizational meeting in Dallas June 19.

The ITF has previously announced NAMB would have 350 employees, 165 fewer than the three present agencies. A handful of separations has occurred at the two commissions, but due to its relative size, most terminations will occur at the HMB. However, Jones said the exact number of positions offered and number of people separated will not be available until completion of the process. He said 27 positions were offered and 15 HMB employees were severed the first day of

the process.

Focus for the first few days of the process will be support positions such as clerical and secretarial, with managerial positions to be dealt with later. Current employees of the two commissions also have been considered for NAMB positions and will be notified soon.

Those offered NAMB positions say they are excited about being part of the new agency but are hurting for co-workers who will not be.

"This time of transition is difficult," said Lois Mitchell, a secretary in the promotions department who has accepted a similar position in NAMB. "But I am thrilled to be part of something that could have such a tremendous impact on North America and eternity. How could you not be excited at the opportunity to be part of

something new in Southern Baptist life?"

Jones said those employees who will not be offered NAMB positions are counseled individually by their immediate supervisor and a member of the human resources staff regarding severance benefits which have been previously announced. The severance package includes a minimum of four weeks salary and benefits as well as an additional week for every year of denominational service. Pastoral counseling and assistance in job searches also are being offered to terminated employees.

Reactions from employees have been varied, according to Jones. "Some staff are surprised and some are hurt, but most knew the possibility of their separation and have accepted it," he said. ■

Partnership Prayer Requests

April

9 — Pray for seven members of a discipleship group in Coto 47 in the South Zone of Costa Rica. The group is led by missionary Bill Egbert. Ask God that the group will share their faith in the community.

10 — Pray for the church in Bialystock, Poland, which is in need of a spiritual choir to share their testimony.

11 — Pray for pastor Michael McElroy and First Church of St. Albert, Saskatchewan, Canada, who are holding revival services this week.

12 — Pray for Bangor Church in Bay City, Mich., which is without a pastor.

13 — Praise God for the five people who were recently saved during a door-to-door survey in Laurel, a small town in the South Zone of Costa Rica. Pray also for the new Bible study that missionary Bill Egbert began last month in the home of one of these new Christians.

14 — Pray for the church in Bielsk Podlaski, Poland. The church members need six Tennessee Baptist volunteers to come and teach English to 100 students.

15 — Pray for Friendship Church in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, and its evangelism ministry. Pray also for the church family of Friendship Church as they seek to minister to lost individuals in love and boldness by sharing the Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit.

SBC giving down for month, ahead for year

Baptist Press

NASHVILLE — Southern Baptist Convention Cooperative Program receipts for March declined 8 percent compared to the previous year's month, but fiscal year-to-date gifts are more than \$3.5 billion ahead of the previous year, said Morris H. Chapman, SBC Executive Committee President.

March CP gifts totaled \$11,599,359, compared to \$12,652,229, a decrease of 8.32 percent compared to March 1996.

At the mid-point of the SBC fiscal year, October through March, CP gifts total \$76,519,392, compared to \$72,971,906 after the same period last year. The amount represents a 4.86 percent increase.

Designated gifts for the month were down

1.39 percent over the same time a year ago — \$17,263,757, compared to \$17,507,489. Year-to-date designated gifts are up by .93 percent — \$87,897,962, compared to last year's \$87,087,489 at the same time. Designated gifts include such things as the Lottie Moon and Annie Armstrong mission offerings.

For the SBC's CP Allocation Budget for 1996-97, the March total was \$488,432 below the monthly required total of \$12,087,791, or 4.04 percent.

For the year-to-date, however, CP receipts are \$3,992,642 or 5.51 percent over budget requirements.

The SBC Cooperative Program total includes receipts from individuals, churches, state conventions and fellowships for distribution according to the 1996-97 CP Allocation Budget. ■



Officers elected

The West Tennessee Pastors Conference met April 1 at Union University and elected officers for next year. From left are, Ralph Thomas, Oakland Church, Oakland, president; Randy Crews, First Church, Rutherford, vice president; Neal Chatham, Fowlkes Church, Fowlkes, secretary/treasurer; and Tim Sanderson, First Church, Medina, music director. Union University hosts the meeting of the West Tennessee Pastors Conference each month during the academic year and provides a complimentary luncheon and fellowship for pastors' wives.

Porch family send thanks for prayers

For Baptist and Reflector

NASHVILLE — James M. Porch, executive director/treasurer of the Executive Board of the Tennessee Baptist Convention, continues to convalesce following surgery last week at Baptist Hospital here.

His wife, Lynn, is continuing chemotherapy treatments for her malignancy.

Both Dr. and Mrs. Porch wish to express thanks for the many prayers and expressions of concern. Continue to lift them both up in prayer during the days ahead. *B&R*



April 20
is CP
Day

Tennessee WMU's Bryan to retire July 4

For Baptist and Reflector

BRENTWOOD — Katharine Bryan, executive director of Tennessee Woman's Missionary Union since 1985, has announced her retirement, effective July 4.

Bryan, 62, a native Tennessean, came to her present position from the Dallas County (Texas) Community College District, Richland College, where she served as director of the adult resource center.

Bryan also served on the staff of the Southern Baptist

Convention Missions Education Council (1977-80) and was editor of *Missions Digest*, a monthly publication for pastors and other denominational workers.

From 1967-77 Bryan was director of age level organizations (youth, children, and adults) for the Baptist General Convention of Texas' Woman's Missionary Union.



BRYAN

Prior to that (1961-65) Bryan was a program associate for SBC Woman's Missionary Union in Birmingham, Ala.

Bryan is a graduate of Carson-Newman College, Jefferson City, and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary where she earned both the M.A. in religious education and Ed.D. in adult education degrees.

Bryan said she feels the time has come for her to step down. "I feel that our work is at a wonderful place. The staff is extremely capable and I feel it is the right time for

other leadership to assume this role.

"I'm grateful for the 12 years I've had here and for the relationships I've developed with church and associational leaders. I'm also grateful for the significance that I think Tennessee Baptists feel for WMU as an organization.

"During this time I've had numerous opportunities to work with leaders in our partnership countries and in other states. I'm aware that it is the mission hearts of Tennessee Baptists that have made these opportunities possible." ■

Ken Story retires at Germantown

For Baptist and Reflector

GERMANTOWN — Some 32 years ago Ken Story became pastor of the then 292-member Germantown Church.

On Sunday, April 6, Story announced his retirement effective May 18 to his congregation which now numbers over 6,000 members.

In sharing his decision with those in the morning worship service, Story said, "The Lord has permitted me to see exceeded almost every goal we ever



STORY

set or even dreamed. Now he is telling me it is time for the church to have a new pastor who will help you realize an even brighter future."

Though Story's ministry at Germantown could be remembered for the astounding growth of the church, it will be remembered by many as one characterized by a genuine love for people.

A native of Paducah, Ky., Story, 59, was called to be a pastor at age 15. He holds degrees from Union University, Jackson, and New Orleans (La.) Baptist Theological Seminary.

Story served as president of the Tennessee Baptist Convention in 1988 and has served Southern Baptists in numerous areas at the associational, state, and national levels.

Germantown members will recognize Story and his wife, Liz, for their years of service on May 18. ■

Dramatic Arts Festival attracts 1,122 participants

By Julian Suggs

For Baptist and Reflector

HENDERSONVILLE — The 17th annual dramatic arts festival held April 4-5 at First Church here drew 1,122 people from 133 churches in seven states. The Tennessee Baptist Convention traditionally has had the largest dramatic arts festival of any Southern Baptist state convention.

Ev Robertson, ministry consultant in music and worship served as festival director for the first time. He served as a leader in the first festival in 1981 and has participated on the faculty in years since.

For years the festival was the responsibility of the Church Media Library and Recreation Department under the leadership of Eleanor Yarborough.

Under the recent restructuring of the Tennessee Baptist Convention Ex-

ecutive Board staff, the festival is now assigned to the Church Staff Leadership Group. Yarborough is now leader of the Communication Services Group.

The annual event offered a six-pronged educational experience through classroom training along with performances by church teams and observation. The 1997 festival under the theme of "Going to the Real World," provided a valuable opportunity for gaining effective skills in learning to minister through the performing arts.

The event featured Christian mime artist Doug Berky of Nashville as guest performer.

The six major areas of festival creative arts and their coordinators were: Scott Shepherd, First Church, Franklin, drama coordinator; Sheridan Barker, Carson-Newman College, Jefferson City, clowning coordinator; Becky Sumrall, Creeview Church, Nashville, interpre-

tive movement and mime coordinator; Linda Grammer, Baptist Sunday School Board, puppet coordinator; and John Garner, BSSB, recreation coordinator.

In addition the following individuals also had major responsibilities in staffing and coordinating the approximately 100 classes, led by nearly 40 faculty members, provided during the two-day event:

Cindy Pelphrey, Third Church, Owensboro, Ky., special events coordinator; Sam Sanders, First Church, Nashville, general conference coordinator; Brad Goad, First Church, Goodlettsville, festival advisor; Matt Tullis, BSSB, festival advisor; Julian Suggs, TBC ministry specialist in music and worship, festival consultant; and Christy Patterson and Penny Williams, TBC ministry assistants in music and worship, festival administrators. ■

Rooms canceled for SBC meeting

Baptist Press

NASHVILLE — Six hundred rooms in a major Dallas hotel for the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting June 17-19 have become unavailable necessitating transferring reservations to other hotels, according to Jack Wilkerson, convention manager and SBC Executive Committee vice president.

The Wyndham Anatole Hotel in the Market Center area of Dallas notified Wilkerson recently that the rooms previously reserved under contract for the convention would not be available because of a scheduling conflict.

People with reservations will be moved to a hotel of comparable quality at the same rate, Wilkerson said.

Questions may be directed to the Dallas Convention Housing Office at 1 (800) 792-1029, or to Lynn Richmond, SBC housing coordinator, at (615) 782-8612. ■

Steps taken to prevent future occurrences

Conference center admits mistake in hosting New Age group

Baptist Press

GLORIETA, N.M. — After a "New Age" group was mistakenly allowed to hold a meeting earlier this year at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center, officials at the Baptist Sunday School Board-owned and -operated facility are taking steps to make sure it never happens again.

"This should not have happened. We made a mistake," Glorieta director Larry Haslam admitted, referring to a Feb. 13-16 meeting at the conference center involving the group "Star Visions." The organization is apparently linked with the Ft. Collins, Colo.,-based World Health Alliance Limited.

The Star Visions event involved 179 guests. Haslam said, adding references to New Age practices and philosophies were made in the group's conferences and in printed materials distributed during its meet-

ing. The group's presence drew protests and concern from various Southern Baptists attending other meetings at Glorieta during the same time period and from other ministers who learned of the event in recent weeks.

After Glorieta personnel learned of the group's practices and beliefs, Haslam said leaders of the organization were immediately informed they could not use the conference center for future events.

Glorieta officials also apologized to representatives from other groups present on campus during the meeting.

"This group should never have been booked at the conference center," Haslam said. "We have strict guidelines about the types of groups we have on campus.

"We didn't do a good job of following them, but we have already taken steps to make sure this never happens again."

Glorieta does allow some non-Baptist organizations to hold meetings at the conference center, Haslam explained, but they must be Christian, nonprofit or educational groups. Non-Christian religious groups are not allowed access to the facility. In addition, groups are made aware in advance that the conference center maintains a smoke-free and alcohol-free environment, he said.

"We feel it is good stewardship to offer our conference center to other groups during winter months, and it also helps keep the rates down for Southern Baptists," he said.

"But we are committed to maintaining a Christian environment at Glorieta. We will not compromise on that."

Several steps are normally taken to ensure groups meet admission guidelines, Haslam said, adding most were followed by the marketing representative who booked the Star

Visions group.

"We checked the *Encyclopedia of New Age Organizations*, and this group was not listed. If a group is not included in that publication, but we still have questions, we usually call the Home Mission Board's interfaith witness department. We did not do that in this case."

However, Haslam said the marketing representative did check with another Christian conference center which had hosted the same group last year, adding officials at that facility "did not raise any red flags about the group."

"We should have done a better job in investigating this group and we will do a better job in the future. Southern Baptists can depend on a Christian environment at Glorieta. That's what we've been providing for four and a half decades, and that's what we'll continue to provide," Haslam said. ■

'Earth's Beulah Land' provides setting to seek God ...

— Continued from page 1
cannot afford to go anywhere to find time alone with God if they wanted to, he added.

"Earth's Beulah Land has been provided by God as a place of rest and renewal for pastors (and other ministers) who are tired, discouraged, and need to get alone with the Lord for a few days of prayer and meditation," Gibson affirmed.

He acknowledged the initial idea from God was "a shock. It was nothing I had planned," he said, adding that it looked like "an impossible undertaking."

His first problem was that the land was no longer in his family. It was owned by Jay Fishman in El Camino, Calif.

Others had tried to buy the land but to no avail.

Gibson wrote the owner and told him he would like to buy the land. To his surprise Fishman called and asked him, "Are you going to do something for the Lord on that mountain?" Gibson told of his concept for a retreat cabin for pastors and Fishman responded that he would pray about it.

Even if the answer was yes, Gibson was not sure he could afford the property. He knew the man had been offered as much as \$60,000 for the land.

Fishman called and told Gibson he would sell the land. All he wanted was the \$24,000 he had paid for the property 17 years before.

After that everything began to fall in place. Gibson sold his house to his daughter and began building his home first on



SEVEN GIBSON pauses for a moment on a bench provided in the prayer garden of Earth's Beulah Land.

Newman Ridge. His house sits on the approximate location of his grandparents' home. In the front yard are trees under which his grandfather used to hold services nearly 90 years ago.

Gibson, a former bivocational pastor who was a builder, began to work on the cabin, paying for it as he went. Elm Springs members caught the vision and helped him with labor and money. The ladies of the church furnished the cabin with antiques.

Earth's Beulah Land stands today as a testimony that God answers prayers, Gibson affirmed.

The cabin is offered at no cost to those who use it, Gibson said. It is available on a first come-first served basis.

The cabin is completely furnished with a fully equipped kitchen. Linens and towels are provided at check-in. Meals are not provided. Those who use

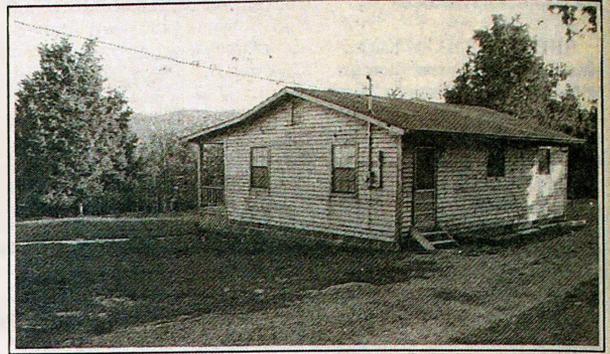
the facility can bring their own food to cook or drive into nearby Sneedville to eat.

Neither Gibson or his wife, Kathy, have much contact with those who come to the cabin. Other than greetings at check-in, the people are basically on their own. "I don't try to minister to them. They come here to meet God. They have needs I can't meet," Gibson said.

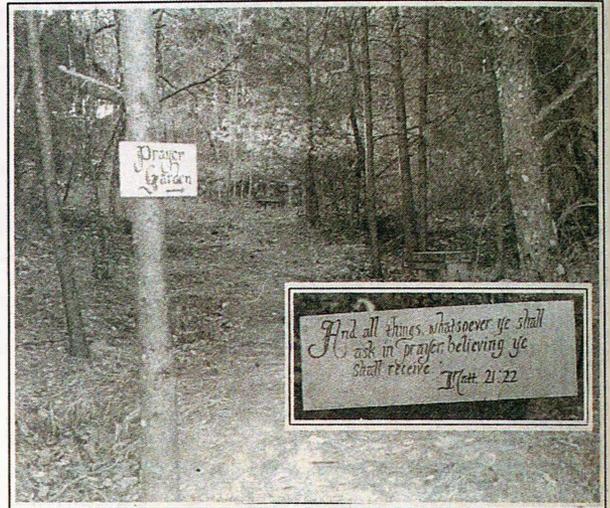
The Elm Springs pastor is confident Earth's Beulah Land will be around for years to come. Gibson noted his son has "given me his word that pastors can use this even after I am gone. We're in it for the duration."

Meanwhile, the facility is ready for ministers who need it. "My hope is that the pastor down on his luck who needs to get alone with God will come and use it," Gibson said.

Ministers interested in using the facility should call Gibson at (423) 733-4800 between 10-11:30 p.m., EST. ■



A VIRGINIA MOUNTAIN provides the perfect backdrop for Earth's Beulah Land, located in northeast Tennessee.



A TRAIL leads up to the prayer garden in Earth's Beulah Land. The prayer garden provides a quiet picturesque setting for individuals to pray and have time alone with God. Seven Gibson, who developed the retreat getaway for pastors, plans to construct a small chapel on the site in the future. The Scripture message, shown in inset, is one of several located on the path to the prayer garden.

Ministers need time to get alone with God, Gilder affirms

For Baptist and Reflector

BRENTWOOD — All pastors and ministers, and especially those who are bivocational, need to get away for a time of rest and renewal, affirms Ray Gilder, bivocational ministries consultant for the Tennessee Baptist Convention.

Places such as Earth's Beulah Land (see story which begins on page 1) and two other sites in Tennessee (see adjoining box) provide ministers those opportunities, Gilder said.

"The extreme demands placed upon the bivocational pastor often leave him drained, exhausted, and in need of a few days of rest," he explained.

"God is moving in different ways to provide a place for men of God and their wives to get away for a few days of rest and spiritual renewal," he continued.

Gilder noted bivocational pastors have such heavy schedules. Many work 40-50 hours per week in a secular job

and then 20-30 hours per week at their church, he said. Add to that time to spend with family and there's not much time left, Gilder observed.

"That makes it easy not to take time to be with God," he said.

Pastors, bivocational or full time, need to realize that taking time to get away and be alone in prayer with God "is not a waste of time," Gilder said.

"We encourage them to see that refreshing themselves is important so they can be of better use to themselves and to others." Spending time with God can give ministers a renewed source of vision and energy to do what God has called them to do, Gilder added.

Another argument for taking time to spend alone with God is that it is biblical, Gilder affirmed.

The Lord told his disciples to "come apart for awhile and rest," Gilder noted. "If our model, the Lord Jesus Christ, saw that leaving the crowds and getting alone for time with the Father, was important, why shouldn't we?"

In addition, places such as Earth's Beulah Land and Jeremiah's Place can

help ministers and their wives strengthen their marriages and families, Gilder added, noting, "families of ministers are falling apart."

"Places like this give the pastor and

his wife an opportunity to spend time together and talk," he observed.

By doing this, hopefully they can strengthen their marriage and build happier homes, he said. ■



GILDER

Retreat facilities available for ministers

For Baptist and Reflector

BRENTWOOD — In addition to Earth's Beulah Land in northeast Tennessee, Ray Gilder, bivocational ministries consultant for the Tennessee Baptist Convention, knows of two other options available to ministers to get away for rest and spiritual renewal. They are:

Jeremiah's Place — A lovely two-bedroom cabin in a quiet cove in the foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains just outside of Newport. The cabin is provided by pastor/evangelist Jerry Nash for weary men of God, Gilder said. For information about Jeremiah's Place, contact Nash at (423) 487-5624.

Zion Church Pastorium — Zion Church in Benton recently voted to make their pastorium available to bivocational pastors who need to get away for a few days, according to W.L. Shipman, director of missions for Polk County Association, in a recent letter to Gilder. The house is located in Polk County at the foot of Copper Mountain near the Ocoee River. The letter noted the church is in the process of getting furniture for the house and when that is done, it will be ready for use, Shipman wrote. For more information, individuals can contact Paul Snyder at (423) 338-8638 or (423) 338-7724. ■

Don't cry for the family — celebrate



A speaker at Glorieta's home missions week in the summer of 1980 told his listeners that human society will end when the family ends.

He was somewhat of a prophet, but he understated his claim. Not knowing what the world would be like seventeen years later, he was too optimistic.

He said that "the abolition of families is a biological, psychological, and theological absurdity." David Sapp, then a Christian Life Commission staff member, was aware of some of the dangers, but he could not foresee the evil onslaught that was being aimed toward our families.

By Wm. Fletcher Allen, Editor

He said the idea of the disintegration of the family is perpetrated by those who deify the philosophy of "do your own thing," and see participation in a nuclear family as a surrender of individual freedom.

In seventeen years, families still are suffering greatly in relationships. Families — whether they are two people or more, or even one with church family as support — must not continue retreating to a defensive position. The family is God's institution. We flirt with danger when we try to put together elements that are falsely acclaimed as family.

Since it is God's institution, the family always will be under assault by evil or unconcerned forces. The Glorieta speaker warned against making the family a fortress that must be defended constantly. "Throughout Christian history," he remarked, "we probably

have rendered our least distinguished service to the kingdom of God when we have tried to defend God's institutions. The world has tried to push the church under, but it won't submerge and neither will the family."

Building stronger families through church support is certainly one way to be on the offensive. Jesus Christ said that the gates of hell would not prove stronger than his church, nor be able to withstand it (Matthew 16:18).

That's not an illustration of a feeble church trying desperately to fight off the attacks of satan. It is a perfect word picture of a strong and relevant church striving to overcome evil with good.

The family must be like that. The family must not adopt the "survivor" attitude, huddling behind locked doors and waiting for the seige to be lifted.

The seige will never be lifted. But churches that care enough to provide holistic ministry to families will teach, lead, encourage, and lock arms with them. The church and the family can become the strongest tandem available in God's cadre of Christian soldiers.

Nurturing the family should be, must be, a top priority for churches. The churches can help families face radical frontiers such as aging, parenting, restoration after problems, diagnosing problems, teaching love and respect for each family member, and strong relationships. Materialism is a devastating monster that must be met head on. We cannot continue to court affluency. Gated communities, for example, may be safe, but they also separate.

Affluence has changed too many families from units of economic production into units of economic

consumption with goals centered on houses, cars, boats, clothes, jewelry, real estate, entertainment, wearing apparel, sports equipment, lessons for elite activities, and club memberships.

David Sapp also said that the church and the family would not be overcome by the world.

Getting back to the basics such as practicing Christianity to the fullest will help us discover the family as God's nursery where he nurtures us, shapes us, molds us to become fit citizens in his service.

Now how can the church help the family?

When families are beginning, the church must get involved by involving the family with the church. And churches cannot sit back and wait for families to ask for help. Many families do not have a church family, and many do not have strong ties with any church.

Churches cannot hang out a sign that says to the public, "Members Only." Of course the church helps itself by helping church families. But authentic Christianity reaches further than that.

Real Christianity is when the church body reaches out to its community, displaying the true servant attitude. Families are growing, changing constantly. The church must help prevent divorce and other problems that debilitate families. The church takes care of its own — but also stands to help all families. **B&R**

Just for today

By Fred Wood
pastor emeritus
Eudora Church, Memphis

Start with a smile

Mary: "I'm sorry Sam. I like you, even respect you, but I can't marry you." Sam: "Is there someone else?" Mary: "Oh, Sam, there must be!"

Take this truth

Substitutes can sometimes serve a useful function, but not always in our spiritual obligations. Sometimes we substitute lesser service as an excuse for rendering a larger or more effective, meeting of a need. How many people do you know serving as a class secretary in a Sunday School class that should be teaching? Are they hiding behind a substitute?

Memorize this Scripture

"Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord" (Romans 12:11)

Pray this prayer

Lord lead me to be flexible enough to realize when I need to make a substitute. Help me to be mature enough to be wise in my decision concerning that substitute. ■ — Comments may be addressed to Fred Wood at 726 Forest Lake Drive, Memphis, or (901) 685-6849.



WOOD

Yes, 'the world is too much with us, late and soon'

Fermin Whittaker, California Baptist Convention leader, says the evangelism plan for that state convention is a simple one:

"If it moves, we claim it for Christ."

When Southern Baptist state executive directors and editors met in San Francisco in February, Whittaker was one of the speakers. As he discussed strategies for that great state which is heavily populated, he stressed evangelism.

He didn't call it an uncontrollable fire, but he said, "We don't have time to practice selective evangelism. We need an evangelism that is all inclusive."

He added, "It is us, believers in Christ, to minister in the name of Christ to Mexicans across the street — and to Mexicans in Mexico." It is a broad evangelism that starts at home and reaches out.

"Our job," he said, "is too great to be spending our time killing flies. There are people everywhere we are that need Christ." They refuse to be discouraged.

Courageous action can be powerful testimony

I have prayed for months about a serious problem in our family that I am ashamed to mention to anyone, but nothing has changed. Legal action may be necessary, but I am afraid to do anything.

The ironic trait of passivity is prevalent among some Christians and undermines the resolution of problems in their lives. The assumption seems to be that if Christians act in a dynamic, assertive way this suggests a lack of faith and takes matters out of God's hands.

The old maxim "God helps those who help themselves" is, in many respects, theologically sound, and is certainly applica-



SCARBOROUGH

one word more

— by Wm. Fletcher Allen, editor

A few years ago a Baptist pastor from England was visiting in our country.

He was interested in visiting some Baptist churches and, in those visits he was able to talk with church leaders. He was a polite guest and eager to learn about how Southern Baptists "do church."

He unknowingly set off a small controversy.

Most of us know that Southern Baptist churches are different in some ways from churches in other nations. One noticeable difference is the size of our buildings.

In a conversation with a pastor and some church leaders, the pastor from England almost apologetically noted he was happy to be an English pastor. He said he knew God's will for his life.

Someone in the group asked him,



ALLEN

"Hadn't you rather live here where more people go to church, and most churches don't have to struggle in order to survive?"

The answer must have come easily for him. His response was thought-provoking, though some folks may have thought him to be brash or thoughtless.

"No," he said, "I had rather be in England working with our own small congregation and worshipping in our small building."

"Why?," someone asked?
"It's like this," he said. "I am glad I don't have the responsibility of explaining to God why I would build such huge and costly buildings — for such limited use. I wouldn't like the responsibility of dealing with that. Your buildings, beautiful and comfortable, use too much of the people's time and the Lord's money." His church had a heart for outreach, evangelism. I think he's on to something.

families matter

— by Ivy Scarborough, attorney, mediator

ble to many of life's problems, including those with legal ramifications. Our duty is to seek God's will through prayer and Bible study, get the wise counsel of others, and then act if action is needed. The most eloquent statement of demonstrating faith by actions is found in James: "What good is it my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? ... As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead."

After Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, the people became deeply fearful. Apparently, so was Moses. With the Red Sea to their front and thousands of Egyptian soldiers bearing down on them in

chariots from the rear, Moses fell on his face and began to pray. God's response is fascinating: "Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Why are you crying to me? Tell the Israelites to move on' (Exodus 14:15). God literally told Moses to quit praying and get moving! This was not a subordination of prayer to action, but simply a clear lesson that there is a time for faithful, trusting action. Often we demonstrate our faith best by acting.

Concealing our fear even from ourselves behind a facade of false faith weakens Christians in their confrontations with life's adversities and in their Christian witness. No one admires fear, but what a powerful testimony and attraction is courageous action. — Scarborough, an attorney and mediator in Jackson, is a Tennessee Baptist layman.

State RA Congress mixes fun, education; decisions made for Christ at Belmont

For Baptist and Reflector

NASHVILLE — The 1,066 Royal Ambassadors and leaders from all across the state who attended the 43rd Tennessee Royal Ambassador Congress March 27-29 at Belmont University got a good dose of missions education mixed with plenty of fun.

What's more, lives were changed as 31 decisions for Christ were made during the Congress, including 13 first-time professions of faith and eight rededications.

Boys were able to attend mission conferences and a mission fair where they could have personal contact with home, foreign, and state missionaries. In addition, they raced their derby cars, did various campcraft activities, and much more.

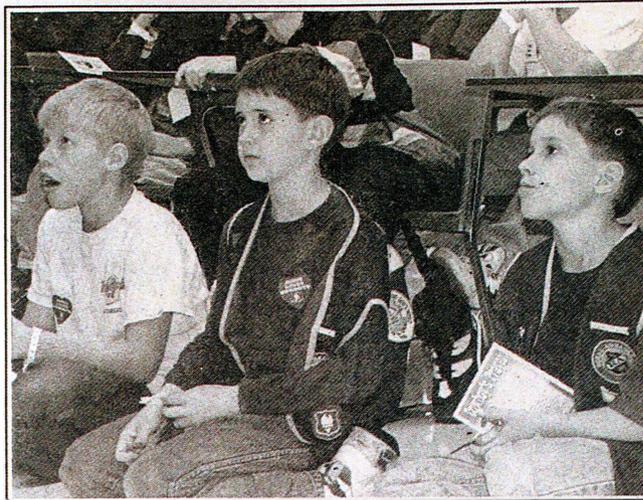
RAs also provided \$2,607.50 for a missions offering which benefits the Steinmann/Black Memorial Fund which provides scholarships and associational Tennessee Royal Ambassador Camps. Money was raised through a 5K Walk/Run for Missions, a missions carnival, and a special offering during the Friday evening worship service.

During the Congress new state officers for 1997-98 were elected: Rusty Edwards, Southeast Church, Murfreesboro, president, and Josh Mullinax, First Church, Woodbury, vice president.

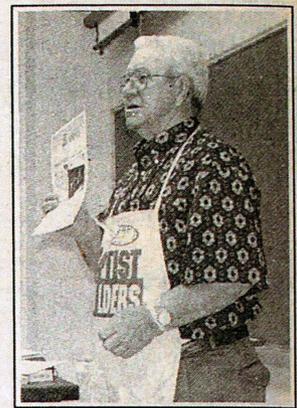
Worship leaders included Jest for Jesus, a clowning troupe from Fellowship Church, Knoxville, and Kevin Shrum, pastor, Inglewood Church, Nashville. ■



Tennessee features



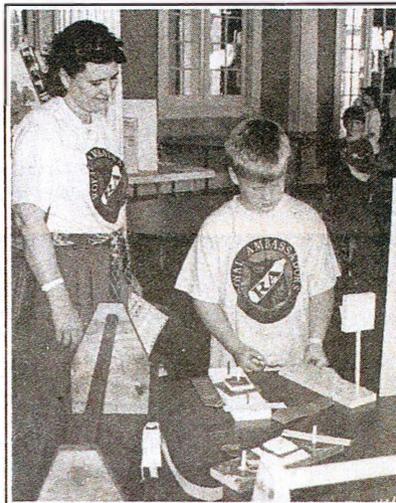
LISTENING ATTENTIVELY to a missionary presentation are three Royal Ambassadors from South Harriman Church, Harriman. From left, are Kyle Bird, Adam Ford, and Michael Arwood. — Photos by Lonnie Wilkey



M.B. HOWARD of Oak Grove Church, Covington, tells RAs and their leaders how he makes toys to use for mission work around the world.



JEST FOR JESUS, a clown troupe from Fellowship Church, Knoxville, led worship on Friday night of the state RA Congress at Belmont University. Clowning around are Matthew Francis, Laura Mosher, Jama Mosher, Linda Francis, Betty Hicks, Judy Sherrod, Alice Julian, and Betty Stootes.



LOOKING OVER a display in Project Hall are Sharon Berry and Dustin Maples of East Maryville Church, Maryville.



SEEING HOW FAST they can build a camp fire are these RAs from First Church, Dickson. From left, are Johnny Kerr, Jason Griffen, and Matthew Sager.



RAS AND COUNSELORS await with anticipation the start of the RA Derby Race. Waiting to 'start the engines' are Aubry Jones, left, of Bluegrass Church, Hendersonville, and Rusty Edwards, right, of Southeast Church, Murfreesboro.



ROYAL AMBASSADORS from Tulip Grove Church, Old Hickory, gather with others to listen with interest as missionary Joyce Harms of Honduras shows items from her country, including this machete, at a display during the state RA Congress held Easter weekend at Belmont University.

1,500 Acteens consider 'making their mark'

For *Baptist and Reflector*

NASHVILLE — The annual Tennessee Acteens Summit drew more than 1,500 Acteens and their leaders to the Opryland Hotel here March 27-29.

For the first time, the teens participated in an on-site ministry project. They hosted a Block Party for about 100 children from Woodcock Baptist

Center, Nashville. Acteen groups, which had volunteered to participate, provided various ministries for the inner city children, including games, crafts, puppet shows, and clowning. The center is led by Linda Knott.

During the summit, Katharine Bryan, director, Tennessee Woman's Missionary Union, made the first pub-

lic announcement of her retirement (see story on page 3). She thanked the Acteens for continuing to be a source of motivation to her.

Acteens considered the theme, "Making Your Mark," as they heard missionaries and their peers speak and sing and as they participated through music, drama, and projects. The six Acteen State Panelists

helped lead sessions.

Acteens also contributed items to the Costa Rican Shoe Box Ministry to support the Tennessee/Costa Rica Baptist Partnership. The gifts will be distributed to children in Costa Rica at Christmas, reported Amanda Day of the WMU staff. *B&R*



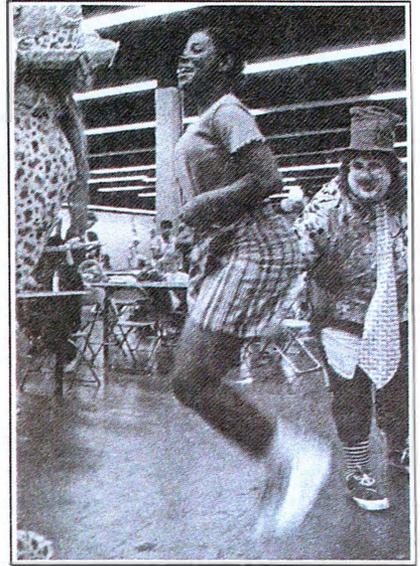
Tennessee features



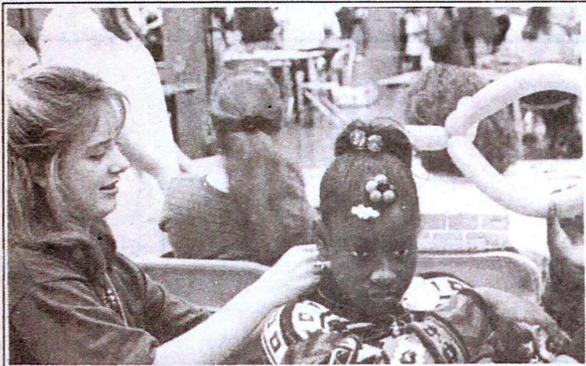
HELPING a new friend with a craft is Kim Burger of Morgantown Church, Greenback.



THE NOSE of clown Angie Castleberry of New Zion Church, Pulaski, is hard for this girl to resist touching. — Photos by Connie Davis



SWINGING A jump rope for a girl is Michelle Busby, left, and Teresa Perry of New Zion Church, Pulaski.



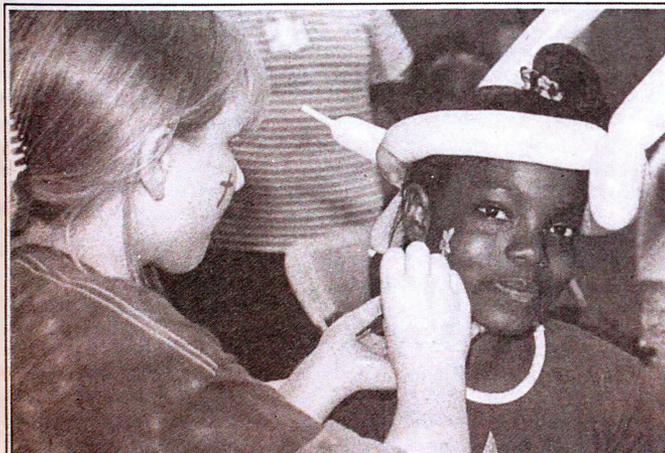
PUTTING a necklace on Ja Kimberly Harris of Nashville is Amanda Hensley of Oak Grove Church, Mt. Carmel. The necklace has beads which represent the steps to making a profession of faith, which Hensley explained to Harns.



CHECKING on one of her charges is Linda Knott, director, Woodcock Baptist Center, Nashville.



DRAMATIZING a song at a session of the summit are State Panelists led by Lisa Gillespie, in front, Nashville-based dramatist. Panelists pictured are, from left, Laura Howell, Melody Maxwell, and Jennifer Ladd.



GETTING HER face painted is Mechelle Maclin of Nashville by Celeste Lackey, Antioch Church, Humboldt.



PUPPETEERS from Gladeville Church, Gladeville, who helped lead the Block Party are, from left, Abbey Chamness, Christy Gaines, Summer Boyd, and Brandy Wright.

Depression not sinful, counselor says

By Marv Knox
For Associated Baptist Press

DALLAS — Is it a sin to be depressed?

No, stressed a veteran Christian counselor. But he acknowledged many people believe feeling blue is a blight on their faith.

"Depression does not reflect a person's faith experience, commitment to Christ, or obedience to God," said Glenn Booth, coordinator of the Texas Baptist Ministers Counseling Service.

"That's what people sometimes think," he reported, noting Christians often come to him and say, "If I were a person of faith, I could get over this."

"A lot of pressures, tensions, illnesses, and stressors can depress a person," Booth explained. "Depression is the holistic body — mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual — responding to life circumstances. Not all of us have the same capacity for handling depression."

Two types of depression afflict people, he said.

Clinical depression is a reaction to a chemical imbalance in the body, he added. Clinical depression often is helped by medical treatment.

Most people, however, occasionally suffer from less-severe situational de-

pression, Booth said.

"Most of us are 'depressed' because things aren't going right," he related. "Our dreams are shattered; our goals are blocked. Perhaps we lost a job and can't pay all our bills, our marriage is under stress, or a child is in jail or pregnant out of wedlock.

"As a result, we feel down, blue, depressed."

Clinical depression "can be very debilitating," Booth said. "A clinically depressed person can come to the point where he doesn't want to face the world anymore." Such a person needs the help of a physician, he added.

"Situational depression often is helped by accepting the fact depression and disappointment are part of life," he said. "By deciding to go on despite feelings of depression, you often don't feel it as intensely as before."

Most of the depressed people helped by Ministers Counseling Service — and most people helped by their ministers — suffer from common situational depression, Booth reported. Like everybody else who doesn't have a perfect life, they get out of bed and get on with living, despite their troubles.

And they may find solace from the Bible, particularly the poems found in the Book of Psalms, he said. Booth recommends Psalm 77 as an aid for people battling situational depression.

"The writer is 'crying out to God for help,'" he said, quoting part of the first verse. "'Is God hearing me?' the writer asks. 'It's like he's trying to grab hold of a lifesaver and grasped nothing.'"

Psalm 77 honestly expresses how depressed people often feel, he said, noting the depression causes them to doubt God.

Ironically, that point of utter hopelessness is the place where the psalmist — as well as faithful people who fight situational depression — turn to God, Booth stressed.

He advises depressed people to follow the same course of action the psalm writer took to climb out of depression:

► "Affirm God, despite how you feel," Booth said.

"You can't always depend on your feelings for being a good thermometer for what God is doing in your life. We often associate feelings with what is real.

"We may feel abandoned by God, but what we believe — what we know about God — tells us that's not real."

► "Pray to see God in the midst of the 'enemy,' in this case depression," Booth urged.

He recalled a story from the sixth chapter of the Book of II Kings in the Old Testament, where a servant of the Prophet Elisha panics because the city is surrounded by enemy soldiers. Then



helping families

Elisha prays for the servant to see God's presence in the midst of those enemy soldiers, which he does.

"The secret was not for the enemy to go away, but to see God," Booth said. "Sometimes, we spend so much time praying that depression would go away, when we should be praying that we would see God in the circumstances.

► Rely on your belief that God will not fail you and affirm God's presence in your life, Booth insisted.

Even when depression feels like a formidable enemy, the Christian's ability to handle it increases when God's presence is acknowledged, he said.

"The changing agent is faith," he added. "It's not how much faith we have, but where we point it. We often point it toward our feelings rather than toward our belief system — where we know God is present."

Booth's prescription for handling depression "doesn't diminish the intensity of the feeling," he said, but it stresses the temporary nature of the circumstances. "Depression will not entrap us forever." ■

Parents need help leading their families, educators warn

Baptist Press

NASHVILLE — Want to be successful in ministry in the 21st century?

One important key will be focusing on family ministry and equipping parents to raise their children in an increasingly complex and stressful world.

That was the consensus of a five-member panel March 21 at the National Bible Teaching-Reaching Leadership Summit at Opryland Hotel here.

Addressing educational trends likely to affect church ministry in the 21st century were Jane Hannah, assistant professor of pediatrics at Vanderbilt University's Child Development Center in Nashville; Ken Hemphill, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas; Thom Rainer, dean of the Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Church Growth at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky.; Margarita Trevino, president of the Christian Education and Research Institute, Inc., Keller, Texas; and Bill Young, a childhood education and family life consultant from Franklin.

"I really believe the American family is in crisis," Trevino said. "Our families are under attack. Our parents are overextended."

Single parents and their children need special ministry, Trevino said, adding women in particular "are crying out for help across the country."

Trevino also said the church must continue to teach biblically based self-esteem to individuals.

"I believe it takes a strong individual to make a strong family, a strong family to make a strong church, and a strong church to make a positive difference in the community," she said.

Young identified the "minister of family life" as an emerging church staff position among evangelical churches.

"But who has been trained as a family life educator?" he asked, urging colleges, seminaries and churches to include more family life and pastoral care education in their training.

Rainer agreed seminaries must do a better job of equipping pastors and church staff for family ministry.

"We have to look at new delivery systems — partnerships with other agencies and institutions."

Rainer also encouraged the Baptist Sunday School Board to continue its focus on age-graded Sunday School.

Hemphill agreed Sunday School still has merit, claiming it will be "the number one evangelistic tool of the 21st century."

With society's emphasis on tolerance of a variety of belief systems, Hemphill said churches are going to have to do a better job of teaching apologetics, a "reasonable defense of the faith."

Yung expressed concern that Southern Baptists not lose their focus on teaching based on developmental appropriateness. He identified fifth- and sixth-graders as a key age group, adding, "As far as I'm concerned, here is where we need some of our best teachers." ■

School official asks churches to target 'at risk' children

Baptist Press

NASHVILLE — Churches may need to take another look at what they are all about in order to be able to make an impact on children as the 21st century approaches, a secondary schools administrator told church media librarians meeting at the Baptist Sunday School Board.

Aldorothy Wright, Metropolitan Nashville Public Schools assistant superintendent for instruction and administration, told participants in the Church Media Program National Seminar-East, March 20-22, churches "may need to redefine their vision and mission."

America's youth, like the immigrants welcomed to the United States, "long to breathe free" amid the hopelessness that seems to plague their generation," Wright said.

"The United States has the highest rates of child homicide, suicide, and firearms-related deaths among industrialized nations. Our children are in crisis. They are an at-risk population."

If the past decade is any indication of what is on the horizon, she said, Americans will enter the year 2000 in a state of uncertainty about their children's future.

"Our children are in crisis both economically and socially. Welfare reform, latchkey children, single-parent homes, teenage parents, drug and gang violence all contribute to the deterioration of society and to youth crises. All one has to do is read the newspaper, watch the news, or read reports on the status of our youth to realize they are on a downhill run that doesn't seem to have an endpoint."

Adults cannot blame children for all the problems that confront them, she observed, "because they are not the architects of the ills that plague their lives and society. Our youth are growing up in an America where a child is abused or neglected every 26 seconds, where a child is killed by a gun every two hours. Is it no wonder that education is not a priority for some families? Is it no wonder that educators must deal with more than teaching children the basics?"

Wright said she believes schools are sometimes the only safe haven children have. "The hours a child spends in school may be the only calm, structured, productive, and reinforcing hours they experience in a given day."

The National Seminar — East was sponsored by the Baptist Sunday School Board. ■



Tennescene

people

■ Lincoln Heights Church, Tullahoma, ordained **Larry Bowles, Jack Fletcher, and Ralph Sheid** as deacons March 16.

■ Eastwood Church, Cookeville, has ordained **Steve Huddleston, Lloyd Holt, and Aaron Oaks** as deacons. Raymond White preached the ordination sermon.

leaders

■ Antioch Church, Sevierville, called **John Tarwater** as pastor on March 2.

■ First Church, Tullahoma, has called **J. Herbert Hester** as pastor.

■ **Terry Mitchell**, evangelist based in White House, has been called as pastor of Foun-



PAUSING on Louise Hunter Appreciation Day held recently at Eastwood Church, Cookeville, is **Hunter**, who has served the church for 35 years as church treasurer until her recent retirement. She was given many gifts, including a gas grill from the church.

tain Head Church, Portland.

■ New Prospect Church, Rutledge, has called **Earl Cummings** as pastor. He was pastor of West End Church Rogersville.

churches

■ **First Church, Jacksboro**, will hold revival April 13-16. David Hill, pastor, First Church, Knoxville, will speak and Barry Miller of Crestwood, Ky., will lead the music. The theme will be "Reviving the Experience of God."

■ John T. Brown of Olive

Branch, Miss., will speak during an April 20-24 revival at **First Southern Church, Pikeville**.

■ **First Church, Dover**, will hold revival April 20-23. Phil Glisson, evangelist based in Memphis, will speak and Judy Leigh of Paris will lead the music.

■ **Alicia Williamson**, a contemporary Christian musician, will present a concert April 13 at **First Church, Morristown**, at 6 p.m. She also will perform during the morning worship services which begin at 8:15 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. For more information, call (423) 586-0522.

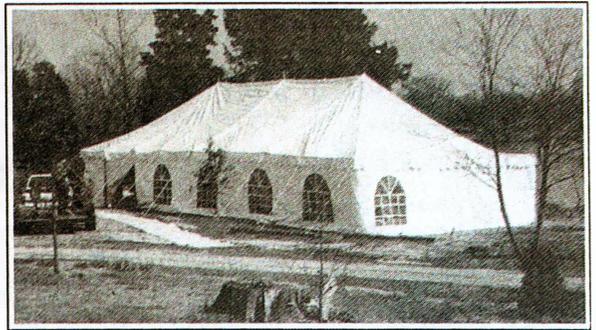
■ **Noeton Church, Bean Station**, has voted to build a new sanctuary.

■ **Olive Hill Church, East, Olive Hill**, will hold revival April 14-18. Benny Taylor will speak. On the last day of the revival at 7 p.m., "N Harmony," the 1995 nominee for the Horizon Group of the year, will hold a concert.

■ **Holly Grove Church, Bells**, recently held a farmers appreciation night for the farmers of Haywood and Crockett counties. About 45 people attended to pray for good crops, good weather, and safety for all farm-related workers.

■ **Adriel Church, Bean Station**, will hold revival beginning April 13. Gary Jenkins of Zion Hill Church, Clinton, will speak.

■ **Blue Springs Church, Rutledge**, will hold revival April 13-16. John "Bull" Bramlett, former professional foot-



THE SITE of Youth Escape '97, a March 15 event hosted by Bible Union Church, Martin, was this tent posted by Lake Nowhere. Over 300 youth from West Tennessee, Illinois, and Kentucky gathered to hear **Trey Boucher**, who witnessed using his strength; **Brady Weldon**, who spoke; and **Crossfire and Singing Hands**, who led in music and worship. About 40 youth made professions of faith during the event.

ball player, will speak. Gary and Kathy Miller will lead the music.

■ **Block Springs Church, Blaine**, will hold revival May 25-29. Jackie Kay, evangelist

based in Memphis, will speak.

■ **First Church, Clinton**, will hold revival April 13-18. Floyd "Lammie" Lammersfeld, evangelist based in Gleason will speak.



THANKING Burgess Guinn, right, of Cornersville, for serving eight years as a trustee of the Baptist Sunday School Board, is James T. Draper Jr., president. Guinn is a member of First Church, Pulsaski.

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Preschool Spring Get-Together

A day of refreshing and training for teachers and directors of Preschool Ministries, including Day Care, Mothers' Day Out, Weekday Programs, Sunday School, & Discipleship Training.

West Tennessee: April 12, 9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m., Germantown Baptist Church, 9450 Poplar Ave., Germantown

Middle Tennessee: April 19, 9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m., Brentwood Baptist Church, 409 Franklin Road, Brentwood; registration deadline: April 12

East Tennessee: April 26, 9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m., Concord First Baptist Church, 11704 Kingston Pike, Knoxville; registration deadline: April 19.

For more information, call Sue Raley, TBC Christian Growth Development Group, at (615) 371-2082.

Classified

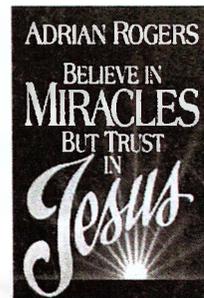
MINISTER OF MUSIC: Bivocational minister of music needed at Lynn Garden Church, Kingsport. Write Lynn Garden Baptist Church, P.O. Box 4035, Kingsport, TN 37665 or call (423) 246-2562.

FOR SALE: Sixty-eight oak finished padded church pews; good condition; \$175 each. If taken as lot, price negotiable. Call South Harriman Baptist Church at (423) 882-1816, M-F, 8 a.m.-4 p.m.

WANTED: Organist, First Baptist Church, Murfreesboro. Salary plus travel. Call (615) 893-2514.

EMPLOYMENT: Pianist needed for First Baptist Church, White Pine. Applications available at church office, 1809 Maple Street from 9 a.m.-4 p.m. Resume may be sent to P.O. Box J, White Pine, TN 37890.

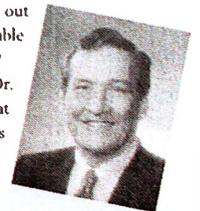
A M A T T E R



O F T R U S T

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State BSU

Conference Set

For Baptist and Reflector

BRENTWOOD — The Baptist Student Union State Spring Conference will be held April 11-12 at First Church, Cookeville.

The theme of the weekend BSU meeting is "Take Hold of the Hope."

Featured speakers include Tim Holcomb, leader of the Christian Growth Development Group of the Executive Board of the Tennessee Baptist Convention, and Mari Wiles, associate pastor of youth and family ministries at West Hills Church, Knoxville.

Music/drama will be provided by Missions USA Live.

Registration is \$10. For more information, call (615) 371-2056 or your local director of missions. ■

Southern Baptist hunger relief gifts increase

By Steven S. Nelson
For Baptist Press

NASHVILLE — After years of decline, gifts to the Southern Baptist Convention World Hunger Fund grew by more than 5 percent in 1996.

Hunger giving rose from nearly \$6.7 million in 1995 to more than \$7.1 million last year.

The increased rate of giving appears to be setting a new trendline upward, said Donoso Escobar, director of church and community ministries for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

Gifts to the SBC World Hunger Fund are distributed between the HMB and the For-

eign Mission Board according to long-established agreements within the convention, 20 percent to the HMB and 80 percent to the FMB unless the donor designates otherwise.

"I praise God for the continuing response of Southern Baptists to the hungry people of the world," said Richard Land, president of the SBC Christian Life Commission. The CLC is responsible for raising awareness of Southern Baptists regarding hunger concerns.

"Each of us can do something, and with God's help, working together we can accomplish much in Christ's name," Land said, noting that 100 percent of the gifts to the

World Hunger Fund received in Nashville goes directly to hunger relief.

While expressing appreciation for the increase in gifts, an FMB specialist in hunger relief said the need worldwide remains enormous.

"While we are grateful for the increase in giving in 1996, we challenge Southern Baptists to an even greater vision. On average, Southern Baptists continue to give less than one dollar per member to world hunger relief," said Bill Cashion, FMB human needs consultant.

Cashion said when South-

ern Baptists fail to give, opportunities to share the Gospel are missed. As an example, he noted an invitation given by the South African government to expand an FMB vocational training program across the country was declined by the FMB due to a lack of funding.

Southern Baptists fund more than 200 hunger ministries worldwide through the World Hunger Fund. ■

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Minister of Music & Youth
Faith Church in Knoxville, Maryland, seeks full-time minister of music and youth. Faith is located in a rapidly growing area outside of D.C. Send resumes to Staff Search Committee, Faith Baptist Church, 2212 Jefferson Pike, Knoxville, MD 21738.

Associate Minister For Music
FBC, Middlesborough, Ky., seeks a minister to lead, develop, and coordinate the music ministry of the church. In addition, the minister will assist the pastor in all areas of church life. The successful candidate will have a minimum of a college degree with a music emphasis and a seminary degree is preferred along with previous music ministry experience. The candidate should also possess a calling to ministry and strong interpersonal and organization skills. FBC has a resident membership of 500 and is a diverse community of faith affiliated with the SBC and CBF. Send resumes by April 30 to Rev. Jeff Roberts, First Baptist Church, P.O. Box 839, Middlesborough, KY 40965-0839.

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Personal counselor

By Gary Rickman

Focal Passage — John 14:15-31; 15:26-27

Each day all of us are faced with making choices about daily living and personal relationships. As followers of Jesus Christ we never have to face these choices alone. God is always with us in the person of his Holy Spirit and will help us with our decisions if we will let him. How do we let him work in and through us?

In chapters 14-16 of John's Gospel we have a group of sayings about the promised presence of the Holy Spirit. Four of these sayings are characterized by the use of the word Paraclete which is translated "comforter" or "counselor." The basic meaning of this word is one who is called alongside to help. The Holy Spirit is the one to come alongside us to help us whenever we need him and whatever the need may be.

This tremendous promise of Jesus was not made unconditionally. "If you love" controls the entire context in which Christ offered help. Obedience is the proof of love. If we love Jesus, we will demonstrate that love by keeping his commandments and by following his teachings. For those who exhibit obedience of love, Jesus will pray to the father who will give another counselor.

During Jesus' ministry he was often thwarted by the spirit of the people whom he wanted to help and could have helped if they had listened to him. Here Jesus warns us that if we are harboring and practicing thoughts and desires and purposes that are contrary to his will, the Holy Spirit will not be working in and through our lives.

Jesus reminds us the Holy Spirit is not a gate crasher to anyone's heart. He waits to be received and is only received by those who know Jesus as Lord and Savior.

In verse 23 the idea of verse 15 is repeated, except this time the emphasis is on obeying what Jesus taught rather than on what he commanded. However, much of what Jesus taught was spoken in commands. As Christians we should have no problem obeying him because we know he never will ask us or command us to do anything that is not in our best interest.

In verse 26 Jesus teaches us the Holy Spirit is at work in the Christian's life to teach. Sometimes we do not understand what the Lord wants us to do. The Holy Spirit's work is to teach us what God's will is and how to apply Jesus' teaching to our lives. The life of a Christian is a life of learning. A Christian who feels there is nothing more to learn is a Christian who does not understand what having the Holy Spirit in you means.

In John 15:26-27 Jesus said the Holy Spirit would "testify" of him. That is, the Spirit would not talk about himself; he would talk about Jesus. He challenges us with the fact that we in turn, must bear witness to what God has done for us in Jesus.

Have we ever wished we could be a powerful witness for our Lord? The way to be a powerful witness is to be constantly aware of Christ's presence in us in the person of the Holy Spirit. We receive the Holy Spirit at the time of our new birth; in fact, the new birth is one of the works of the Holy Spirit. Since he is present, why not let him have control? For if the Holy Spirit controls our lives, we will be filled with the most powerful force in the world. For "greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (I John 4:4). ■ — Rickman is Church Staff Leadership Group Leader, TBC Executive Board.

Smyrna and Pergamum

By Larry Kirk

Focal Passage — Revelation 2:8-17

A letter from home! The greatest time during my days in Basic Training was "Mail Call" time. How my heart would pound as my name was called. All of us have received some type of letter that has caused our hearts to pound.

But no letter ever received compares to those letters from the son of man to the seven churches of Asia. Some suggest they represent successive periods of church history. Others see the churches as those in their day from which one can draw principles for any age.

By whatever system the book is interpreted, it reveals churches that are facing a hostile world, but ones that are still in the omnipotent hand of the almighty. In the midst of danger and difficulty, the people of God shall be preserved until the Lord returns. What a timely and timeless revelation.

Letter to Smyrna (vv. 8-11). Each of the seven letters begins with a greeting to the angel of that church. Many people see this as either the messenger carrying the letter or the pastor of the church.

Family Bible Lesson

Behind the greeting comes a commendation (v. 9). "I know" says the risen Lord. It is easy for the church of any age, with all its problems, to doubt that Christ knows or cares about them. But our Lord assured them he was not unmindful of their tribulation and opposition from the religious leaders of the day. These were those Jews who had allowed themselves to become instruments of Satan and not Jews in general. We must never focus upon a certain people group as the enemy but see Satan as the real enemy.

God chooses to bless

By Tim Holcomb

Focal Passage — Genesis 12:1-3; 17:1-9

Each of us experience transitions in our lives. A transition is the turning point in our lives that leads to growth. A transition is generally introduced by a change in our lives. Of course, some transitions are good and some are bad. All of them can lead to more effective lives.

In our text this week, Abram/Abraham experiences multiple transitions. Here are a few: Terah, Abrams's father dies; God calls Abram to leave his father's homeland and move to a new country; Abram's struggle for an heir; Abram's name changed to Abraham; Sarai's name changed to Sarah and the birth of an heir at an old age.

Each of these transitions brought many dynamics with them, but God became such a force in Abram's/Abraham's life that he was able to move through them and become what God described for him, "I am God Almighty, walk before me and you will greatly increase your numbers" (ch. 17:2).

God's Call

The most powerful words in the Old Testament are the ones God used to call Abram. "And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name

great; and thou shalt be a blessing. And I will bless them that bless thee and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (ch. 12:2-3).

Second only to these words are those found in verse 4, ... "and Abram departed. ..." It has always been a marvelous statement of trust that Abram simply marched out of the familiar into the unfamiliar. There was no script, map, or Global guidance system for Abram. He simply trusted God to lead the way. When you experience transition, God's call to faithfully follow is the major energy for growth and completion of the changes being experienced.

God's covenant with Abram

I really identify with Abram. He has made his way out of his homeland following God faithfully, and now he gets under the load of all these transitions. Somewhere along the way he must have asked a question like, "God how can I continue? What's going to happen to me, Sarai, and others?" Then God in a vision says ... "Do not be afraid. I am your shield, your very great reward."

Sometimes when we are loaded



**Bible study
for April 13**

Our Lord challenged his church to be faithful rather than fearful. Our Lord promises a "crown of life" to those who are faithful. The faithfulness of the believer is not good works that secure one's eternal life, but is a testimony to the genuineness of faith in Christ.

Letter to Pergamum (vv. 12-17). Christ speaks of the faithfulness of his church located "where Satan dwelleth." Satan's throne probably referred to Pergamum being the center for emperor worship. Christ commended the church for standing firm during a difficult time and place. We must be faithful where we are located. If we seek to remove ourselves from a secular world, we will cease to have opportunity to witness to that lost world.

But our Lord put a warning label on this church. Although they had overcome the outward pressure of persecution, they were in danger of corruption from within. This danger lurks within the church of any age. Seldom is a church defeated from without — fires, floods, famine just strengthen most churches. Internal strife defeats it.

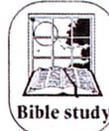
Verses 14 and 15 describe the internal problems. Some doctrine seek to adjust Christianity to the level of the world rather than lift the world to the level of Christianity. They saw no reason why a Christian should not come to terms with the world. Is that problem still with us? If so, we must repent. Judgment awaits the worldly church.

This letter concludes with a promise. For those who would turn away from the world's table could eat at the banquet feast of heaven. There is a place for the faithful at this banquet. ■ — Kirk is Evangelism/Mission Strategies Group Leader, TBC Executive Board.

down with transitions our only hope is to believe God's words and eventually things will be different and most possibly better.

Commitment

God had made a covenant with Abram. Abram was working his own way out of the transitions before him, namely not having an heir. After Ishmael was born Abram again encountered God and God reminded him of the covenant he had made with him and committed once again to make him "the father of many nations."



In this encounter God changed Abram's and Sarai's names to Abraham and Sarah respectively. These name changes, along with circumcision of all the males, showed Abraham God's commitment to the covenant.

It is God's commitment, that clarified to Abraham how these transitions, will equip him for the promise that God has made to him — namely to be the father of many nations.

So what? Ask yourself this question: "How many transitions am I facing? What is God preparing me to do in his kingdom? What could be the blessing in store?" ■ — Holcomb is Christian Growth Development Group Leader, TBC Executive Board.



world news

Board issues call to missions in final emphasis

Baptist Press

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — During the last Home Mission Board-led missions week at a Southern Baptist seminary, HMB Interim President Ernest Kelley urged students to be willing to serve Christ wherever God should call them.

"I'm looking into the faces of people who will be ministering into the mid-21st century," Kelley told a chapel audience in late March at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

The emphasis week, a regular feature at Southern Baptist seminaries, will be led in the future by the North American Mission Board, which is being created in the SBC's denominational restructuring in a merger of the HMB, Radio and Television Commission, and Brotherhood Commission.

Kelley urged students to seek a distinctive service as servants of God. Service is the model for followers of Christ, he said.

He reminded the students that the true mark of greatness is meeting the needs of others. ■

New convention draws nearly 100 churches

Associated Baptist Press

RICHMOND — About 10 percent of Virginia Baptists have aligned with the state's

new conservative convention.

Nearly 100 churches have affiliated with the new Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia (SBCV), formed last year by conservatives dissatisfied with what they call a liberal trend in the Baptist General Association of Virginia.

Sixty-six of those churches are "uniquely aligned" with the new group, while 32 are "dualy aligned," maintaining ties with both conventions, according to the SBCV newsletter.

The combined membership of the 98 churches was about 58,800 in 1995, the last full year such figures are available. No statistics were reported for seven of the churches.

Membership in the Baptist General Association of Virginia's 1,564 churches in 1995 was 594,904. ■

Louisiana College taps Rory Lee

Baptist Press

PINEVILLE, La. — Rory Lee has accepted a five-year contract as president of Louisiana College.

Lee, 47, has been president and chief operating officer of William Carey College in Hattiesburg, Miss., since last summer.

Louisiana College's full board of trustees recorded a unanimous vote for Lee March 21, capping a year-long process to select the Baptist-affiliated institution's seventh president, succeeding Robert Lynn, who is retiring after more than 20 years in the post.

A starting date for Lee's presidency is yet to be set. He brings 26 years of administrative experience to his new role.

The unanimous vote surprised most observers, given recent tensions facing the college and its trustees.

"The search for a new president for Louisiana College has been a unifying effort for the board," said trustees chairman Jim Spencer of Pineville.

"(Dr. Lee) is an outstanding young man who is both a professional college administrator and a dedicated Christian servant. Dr. Lee is a man that all Louisiana Baptists can rally around and support," Spencer said. ■

Easter special featured Texas church

Baptist Press

HOUSTON — Second Church, Houston, was featured in an NBC TV network special, "An Easter Celebration," over the Easter weekend March 28-30.

The program featured a 350-voice choir, 45-piece orchestra, and the church's 10,473-pipe organ, along with the contemporary Christian group, Caedmon's Call, with its debut radio single, "Lead of Love."

The program was produced in cooperation with the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission. ■

Baptist college enrollment up for 15th year

By Tim Fields
For Baptist Press

NASHVILLE — Enrollment at the 50 colleges and universities which maintain paid membership in the Association of Southern Baptist Colleges and Schools showed an overall increase for the fall semester for the 15th consecutive year, according to figures released to the association.

Statistics for the 1996 fall semester show 110,895 students attended the 50 Southern Baptist colleges and universities, a 2 percent increase over the 1995 total of 108,662.

The enrollment figures include both full- and part-time students in college credit courses but do not include students enrolled in non-credit courses. Enrollment statistics were released to the ASBCS by each school.

California Baptist College, Riverside, Calif., had the largest increase from fall 1995 to fall 1996 with 461 additional students, an increase of 38 percent. CBC, along with Wayland Baptist University, Plainview, Texas, tied for the largest numerical increase, both with 461 students.

"The fact that the 50-member institutions of

the Association of Southern Baptist Colleges and Schools have an overall uninterrupted growth in students for the past one and a half decades demonstrates the continued confidence

that Southern Baptists have in their colleges and universities," said Stephen P. Carleton, executive director of the association.



CARLETON

Carleton noted that 15 years of continuous growth is "a powerful testimony to the hard work of professors, administrators, staff, trustees, and students."

Baylor University, Waco, Texas, remains the largest Southern Baptist-related university in the nation with 12,391 students, followed by Mercer University, Macon, Ga., 6,959 students; and Campbell University, Buies Creek, N.C., with 5,702 students.

Reported enrollments for Tennessee Baptist-related schools were: Belmont University, 2,926, down 3 percent; Carson-Newman College, 2,265, up 3 percent; and Union University, 1,975, down 1 percent. ■

CLC withholds support from new amendment

Baptist Press

WASHINGTON — A revised Religious Freedom Amendment endorsed by leading Christian organizations has been unveiled, but the Southern Baptist Convention's public policy agency is withholding its support.

With the backing of such organizations as Christian Coalition and Focus on the Family, Rep. Ernest Istook, R-Okla., announced his amendment March 24 at the U.S. Capitol. The Istook proposal, which was to be introduced April 7 when Congress returned from its Easter recess, is designed to allow school prayer and religious expression on public property.

The new Istook language says: "To secure the people's rights to acknowledge God: The right to pray or acknowledge religious belief, heritage, or tradition on public property, including public schools, shall not be infringed. The government shall not compel joining in prayer, initiate, or compose school prayers, discriminate against or deny a benefit on account of religion."

While the CLC continues to agree with Istook and his supporters a constitutional amendment is needed, a CLC official said this proposal is not the right one.

The CLC and the Christian Legal Society contend Istook's proposal would allow local governments to favor one religion more than others in the community since the text does not place limitations on what type

of acknowledgements are proper.

"We simply cannot support the language which is being offered by Congressman Istook and be true to the principles of the *Baptist Faith and Message* and of the resolution passed at our national convention in 1995," said Will Dodson, the CLC's director of government relations. ■

Deacon shoots would-be robber

Baptist Press

APACHE JUNCTION, Ariz. — Four members of Crossroads Southern Church here ended up face-to-face with an armed gunman despite taking precautions while counting the money following the morning service on March 16.

The situation ended when deacon Bob MacMillan shot the would-be robber who was listed in serious condition immediately after the shooting and remained hospitalized March 27.

Pastor Dale Buchman expressed dismay at how the church and its members have been portrayed by the media. Newspaper and television reports made it sound like the members were protecting the offerings at all costs, when, in reality, their lives were being threatened, he said. ■

Mid-America calls Spradlin

Baptist Press

MEMPHIS — Michael R. Spradlin has been elected as the second president of Mid-America Baptist Theological

Seminary, succeeding B. Gray Allison, the school's founding president, who has announced his retirement, effective June 30.

Allison, 72, founded Mid-America Seminary 25 years ago in Memphis with 28 students. The seminary, now located on an eight-acre campus in suburban Germantown, has grown to 350 students.

Spradlin, 35, who becomes seminary president July 1, has been director since 1994 of Mid-America's 36-student Northeast Branch, Schenectady, N.Y., the seminary's lone extension center. A graduate of Mid-America, Spradlin joined the school's faculty in 1993. ■

Leaders of RTVC to retire in June

Baptist Press

FORT WORTH, Texas — Bob Thornton and Ed Malone, vice presidents at the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, have announced their retirement effective June 19 when the RTVC will merge with the Brotherhood Commission and Home Mission Board to form the North American Mission Board.

Thornton, 64, is vice president of television services, and Malone, 58, is vice president of radio services.

Thornton, who has been at the RTVC for more than 27 years, said "retirement is just a word," and he plans to continue writing and producing on a freelance basis.

Malone, who has been at the RTVC for more than 31 years, said he will work on other radio and television projects in the Dallas-Forth Worth area. ■