

TENNESSEE'S BAPTIST & REFLECTOR

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Statewide Edition

November 5, 1997

this week's news

Parents need to monitor TV viewing of their children, leader cautions. — Page 2

Bylaws amendments to be offered for action by TBC messengers. — Page 2

Tennessee Baptists have a variety of opinions. — Pages 3-4

Mississippi Baptists adopt record budget. — Page 5

Associations hold annual meetings. — Page 6

Tennesseans give record amount to CP

For Baptist and Reflector

BRENTWOOD — Tennessee Baptists gave a record amount to the Cooperative Program during the 1996-97 convention year which ran from Nov. 1, 1996 through Oct. 31 of this year.

Churches sent \$30,046,449 to the Tennessee Baptist Con-

vention to be used for world missions, evangelism, Christian education, and benevolent needs through the Cooperative Program. It is the first time gifts have exceeded \$30 million.

The total is an increase of \$1,673,329 or 5.9 percent over the \$28,373,117 given last year.

In October churches sent

\$2,744,478 in CP receipts, up from the \$2,643,824 given in October 1996.

For the fiscal year Tennessee Baptist monthly gifts to the CP exceeded \$3 million twice and \$2 million eight times.

Budget needs for 1996-97 totaled \$28,192,138.

"Such a record of giving

must be seen as an expression of intent by Tennessee Baptists to maintain the priority of missions and evangelism," said James Porch, executive director-treasurer.

"Through such giving, we continue to envision the needs of a lost world and focus on each lost individual in need of Christ," he concluded. ■

SBC Cooperative Program gifts surge in October

Baptist Press

NASHVILLE — Southern Baptist Convention Cooperative Program receipts for October, the first month of a new SBC fiscal year, surged nearly 7 percent over October 1996, according to Morris H. Chapman, SBC Executive Committee president.

For October 1997, the SBC received \$13,176,027 in CP gifts, compared to \$12,315,117 in the previous year's Octo-

ber. The \$860,910 increase is 6.99 percent.

For the first month of the SBC Cooperative Program Allocation Budget, the October figure surpassed the required monthly budget figure of \$12,348,756 by \$827,270, or 6.7 percent.

Designated gifts for the month also showed a gain: \$1,964,478 compared to October 1996 of \$1,715,893, an increase of \$248,585 or 14.49 percent.

The October increases come on the heels of a fourth consecutive year of record

giving by Southern Baptists through the SBC Cooperative Program. The 1996-97 SBC fiscal year ended with more than \$155 million in SBC CP gifts, surpassing the previous year by nearly \$7 million and the budget by nearly \$10 million.

The SBC Cooperative Program total includes receipts from individuals, churches, state conventions, and fellowships for distribution according to the Cooperative Program Allocation Budget. Designated gifts include special offerings. ■

A personal word

Keeping God's vision in focus is a priority

By James Porch
TBC Executive Director-Treasurer
For Baptist and Reflector

BRENTWOOD — "That night Paul had a vision ... he saw a man in Macedonia, pleading with him, Come over and help us."

The world is calling Tennessee Baptists, "Come over and help us."

In our own state three million lost people cry out, "Come over and help us."

Every day, Baptists in Costa Rica, Poland, Brazil, western Canada, and Michigan plead with Tennessee Baptists to "come over and help us."

The world vision does not stop there — discussions already are underway with the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention as to how Tennessee Baptists can respond to the call of more than four and one-half billion people on the other side of the world to "come over and help us."

Thanks be to God, hundreds of individuals and countless groups from Tennessee Baptist churches and associations are responding to the call to "come over and help us" as never before. The fact is, Tennessee Baptists have taken up this evangelistic and

mission cause to be part of the greatest vanguard for Christ this state has ever witnessed.

The evidence of God at work among us continues to mount. As Tennessee Baptists are sharing the Gospel at home and in other needy countries, they are giving as never before to make it possible for many others to know our Lord as Savior. To date, Tennessee churches have surpassed ALL goals and more in their mission giving.

By fiscal year's end, the churches gave \$30,046,449 for world missions through the Cooperative Program. That is not all! The churches are giving at record levels to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, (\$7,336,541); Annie Armstrong Easter Offering, (\$2,984,998); and the Golden State Missions Offering (1,225,536).

When all the churches' giving is totaled for 1997, their gifts to missions will be far more than ever anticipated. God is at work among us!

In a few days, messengers from the churches will gather in Jackson for our annual meeting. Whenever Baptists assemble they are faced with the heavy responsibility of reaffirming and declaring their priorities to evangelism and missions.

This is inescapable as a people who are committed to the Great Commission. Once the convention sessions are history, the priorities will be known by

all.

However, before the convention, messengers have the opportunity, privilege, and responsibility to shape the importance and destiny of their priorities. My daily prayer, and I know it is yours as well, is that Tennessee Baptists will see their vision clearly to share the Gospel to those who plead with us to "come over and help them."

The vision is the big picture of the awesome need of our state with three million lost people and a world drowning in lost people who desperately need the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Our vision must ever remain clear — a world beckoning Tennessee Baptists to "come over and help us."

So much depends upon our commitment to focus upon accomplishing this vision. To set aside this vision for any other purpose is to divert our focus from the call of our Lord.

In the hours and days before the Jackson meeting, we must and are called of God to pray diligently that he will give us the desire that together we become empowered to witness to the calling world. And further, to prepare ourselves to stay focused upon the vision to which God has entrusted to us all.

Could Tennessee Baptists have a more worthy priority than to stay focused upon the vision of winning the lost to Christ? ■



ANNUAL MEETINGS

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Parents must monitor the 'powerful medium'

Baptist Press

NASHVILLE — Parents must take an active role in monitoring the television viewing habits of their children, a leader in children's television told Southern Baptist church leaders Oct. 23.

Hedda Sharapan, associate producer of the "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood" television program on the Public Broadcasting System (PBS), was a featured speaker at the National Children/Preschool Seminar at

the Baptist Sunday School Board. The meeting, which has a theme of "Thru the Eyes of a Child," drew more than 500 registrants.

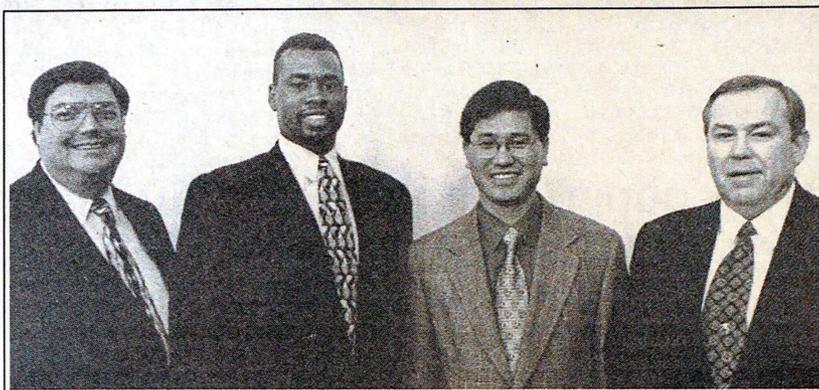
Sharapan quoted recent studies which found only 15 percent of parents guide their 3- to 8-year-olds in watching television, and children are watching from three to five hours a day. One California study, she said, found that 43 percent of kindergartners through 12-year-olds have TVs in their bedrooms.

In addition to monitoring programs their kids watch on TV, Sharapan urges parents to watch the shows with them and discuss the content and how it relates to their values and beliefs. "Children tend to imitate what they've seen. ... They take what they see and apply it to their everyday lives," she said.

Sharapan shared a letter from a woman whose grandchild had become aggressive and unruly in school after watching a heavy dose of "Pow-

er Rangers" on television. When the child's parents stopped letting him watch the program, his behavior at school improved.

While television has its negatives, Sharapan reminded seminar participants the medium can also play a positive role in child development. For example, Mister Rogers, now in its 31st year, receives 15 to 30 fan letters a day, many from parents whose children have been helped by a particular episode. ■



Historic annual meeting in Concord

Concord Association met with First Korean Church, Murfreesboro, possibly the first such meeting with an ethnic church in Tennessee. Messengers admitted Mt. Zion Church, Smyrna, as a new member. From left, Mike Hollaway, pastor of Ward's Grove Church, moderator; Amos Howard, Mt. Zion pastor; Moses Yu, First Korean pastor; and James Powers, director of missions.

TBC Messengers to consider bylaws changes

The following proposals from the Constitution and Bylaws Committee will be presented to messengers at the Tennessee Baptist Convention annual meeting Nov. 11 at West Jackson Church for consideration.

Recommendation 1

That Article II. COMPOSITION. be amended in the first sentence by deleting the word, "churches" and adding the words, "Baptist churches in Tennessee" after member. In the last sentence insert the words, "located in Tennessee" after the word "churches."

Present Reading:

The Convention shall be composed of messengers who are members of churches affiliated with the Tennessee Baptist Convention. Each church shall be entitled to two messengers. Each church shall also be entitled to one messenger for each one hundred members or fraction thereof beyond the first one hundred subject to a maximum of ten messengers from any one church. A messenger shall be a member of the church by which he is elected. The term "cooperating Baptist church" shall be applied to such churches as contribute financially to the Convention or its agencies and subscribe to and support the principles, programs, and policies of the Convention.

Proposed Reading:

Strikethrough Letters — deletes present wording
Bold Letters — indicates new wording

The Convention shall be composed of messengers who are members of ~~churches~~ **Baptist churches in Tennessee** affiliated with The Tennessee Baptist Convention. Each church shall be entitled to two messengers. Each church shall also be entitled to one messenger for each one hundred members or fraction thereof beyond the first one hundred subject to a maximum of ten messengers from any one church. A messenger shall be a member of the church by which he is elected. The term "cooperating Baptist church" shall be applied to such churches **located in Tennessee** as contribute financially to the Convention or its agencies and subscribe to and support the principles, programs, and policies of the Convention.

Recommendation 2

That a new sentence be added to Article VII. THE EXECUTIVE BOARD, Item 2

Bold Letters — indicates new wording

Present Reading:

2. The directors shall be resident members of churches affiliated with The Tennessee Baptist Convention.

Proposed Reading:

2. The directors shall be resident members of churches affiliated with The Tennessee Baptist Convention. **No person shall be eligible for election as a director if such would result in more than one member of the same church serving as a director.** ■

Joggers' Jubilee set; last minute TBC details given

For Baptist and Reflector

BRENTWOOD — The Joggers' Jubilee, an annual event sponsored by the *Baptist and Reflector*, will be held on Tuesday morning, Nov. 11, in front of the administration building at Union University.

Tennessee Baptists who like to walk, run, or jog are invited to this time of fellowship and fun. The event is not a race. Prizes, donated by TBC entities, will be given to all participants.

In other last minute information regarding the Tennessee Baptist Convention's annual meeting Nov. 11-12, the **convention phone number at West Jackson Church is (901) 660-3869**. This number may be used to send emergency messages to messengers attending the annual meeting.

Tapes for sermons and special addresses at the annual meeting and the Nov. 10 Pastors Conference will be available from Smith Brothers for \$3 per copy. The tapes will not include any musical presentations. For information on these tapes, contact Smith Brothers at (502) 726-3705.

At the Baptist Book Store exhibit, Don Mathis of the Baptist Sunday School Board, will sign his new book, *Surviving and Thriving in the Ministry*, at 2 p.m. on Nov. 10 and host pastor Jerry Tidwell of West Jackson Church will sign his book, *Outreach Teams That Win*, on Tuesday, Nov. 11, at 10 a.m. and on Wednesday, Nov. 12, at 3 p.m.

The first 200 customers at the Book Store exhibit will receive a free copy of *Holiday Ideas!* ■

Exclusively for Christ; all in the TBC family

A few days ago a mailout asked those who "would like to be better informed about the shenanigans that are going on in and out of Brentwood," to attend a meeting at a Memphis Baptist church.

A dictionary definition of "shenanigan" calls it "a devious trick used especially for an underhand purpose."

It's likely that "Brentwood" was used generically, to refer to the work of the Tennessee Baptist Convention's Executive Board and its employees at the Baptist Center. It's certainly okay to meet, but what about the so-called "shenanigans?"

The invitation said the meeting was for "conservative pastors, staff members, and laity who want to be a part of turning the TBC back to our overwhelming theologically conservative majority. It is time to get it out of the hands of CBFers and those who have sympathy for their cause."

This is confusing because a huge majority of Tennessee Baptists has been, and still is, solidly conservative in theology, and daily life and work. It's a given that there are varying descriptive degrees of conservatism.

Some Tennessee Baptists are moderately conservative, and some are extremely conservative. If those two groups are taken out of the equation, the great majority of Tennessee Baptists are *Tennessee conservative* — just as they have been for

many years.

These two groups probably don't cooperate with each other or those in the middle — so who are true *conservatives*? The answer is whoever claims to be.

Everyone knows that the labeling that has continued for several years, dominated by a "love me or leave me" attitude, has caused some problems in our convention. Often we aren't willing to listen to those with whom we differ. And though the TBC tent is big, seems as though it isn't big enough for everyone.

Before anyone thinks that this is a call to include those with no faith in Christ as Savior and little or no belief in God's Word, relax. We are just saying, Tennessee Baptists need to continue a good work in a blessed convention.

When Paul reminded the Roman church that "There is no one righteous, not even one," it's safe to assume that he included all of us.

We'd be wise to be wary of our own judgments and labeling, unless of course, someone has been given authority to classify and divide up sheep and goats.

The Baptists who have been elected and who are serving as faithful members of the Executive Board — and those Baptists who are employed by the board to serve Tennessee Baptist churches do not deserve to be called part of a "devious trick" or underhanded.

It's not true.

A reference was made about the "wonderful direction" taken in recent years by the Southern Baptist Convention. As great as the SBC is, it is not the mother of state conventions. State conventions established the SBC as a way of working together. The states are not arms of the SBC, though we should work together as kindred spirits.

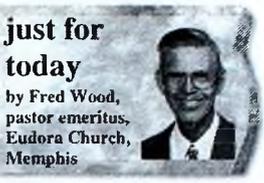
State conventions are not obligated to mimic the SBC, nor should they. And the SBC does not have any rights of leadership relating to the state conventions.

So let's not get confused. Current leadership within the Tennessee Baptist Convention is not a part of any grand design to control. Leaders were elected and employed, as always, in an open and free process. That process also allows others to speak up and state their case.

It is unfortunate that any Tennessee Baptists would feel so uncomfortable with the fellowship that we would think the worst of each other. Let's not let that happen. If there are suspicions, try to approach them with the mind of Christ.

One more thing. The editor has had much advice from both "sides" of the dispute about fairness in board and committee nominations — but no "pressure" from the Executive Board staff or anyone else.

Let's have a constructive, Holy Spirit-inspired meeting in Jackson. — *Wm. Fletcher Allen*



just for today

by Fred Wood, pastor emeritus, Eudora Church, Memphis

Start with a smile

Sue: "How do you rate Ned?"

Sara: "I'd say he's a '10'."

Sue: "I don't think he's all that cute."

Sara: "I don't either. I mean it would take me about 10 seconds to get over him."

Take this truth

How long does it take you to forget something negative done toward you? The secret of happiness often lies in having a good "forgetter." Theologians call this forgiveness.

Memorize this scripture

Forgetting those things which are behind ... I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. — *Philippians 3: 13-14.*

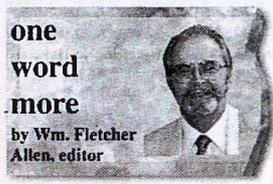
Pray this prayer

Lord, teach me that harboring resentment or bad memories is one of the most self-defeating things I can do. ■

Who said that?

From Dietrich Bonhoeffer's last words in a Nazi Germany prison, December, 1944: "You, the parents, all of you, the friends and students of mine at the front, all are constantly present to me. Your prayers and good thoughts, words from the Bible, discussions long past, pieces of music, and books — gain reality as never before.... I am grateful every day that I have you and that makes me happy." — *Letters and Papers from Prison, Eberhard Bethge, MacMillan Publishing Co., New York, 1978*

It's all about heroes, values, and choice of gods



one word more

by Wm. Fletcher Allen, editor

What do England's Diana, Mohammed Ali, and Elvis Presley have in common?

There are different opinions about the trio, and of each of the three — but idolization is a common denominator.

Diana's death, though tragic, touched off a huge display of emotion, almost hysterical.

Ali's popularity began in part with his youthful brashness and claims that "I'm the greatest."

Presley's prominence grows as the years pass, until even in death he has reached almost god-like idolization and cult status.

In the heart of most of us, there is a longing for a hero, or heroes. And there is a deep desire for a spiritual God.

But with the shallowness of many peo-

ple, worship of a person or persons supplants God's place in the heart. So we develop that cultic idolization of humans who may be godly.

The sympathy for Diana has enabled remembrances of her to reach epic proportions. She has been placed far above ordinary people, even Christians, who serve humanity faithfully every day in sacrificial ways — with no claim to fame or recognition.

Commemorative plates bear her likeness, and we are urged to buy quickly before they sell out. The tribute portrays her as the most loving, kind, compassionate, and generous person of our times — just a little lower than the angels.

I think Diana herself would be embarrassed at the exaggerated tributes.

Elvis? It's difficult to understand the god-like status he has gained in death. We all know about the constant rumors that he's still alive, has been seen in a certain place.

Though he reached stardom early in life and garnered millions and millions of dollars

through his music — he was very human and subject to human vices.

It has been said by many "experts" that Ali is the most recognizable person in the world, and probably the most famous.

And that too is sad. He is known for his boxing skills, his willingness to defy authority, and the ability to back up his audacity.

These three attained greatness in their area of life, and perhaps contributed more than most of us could.

They had qualities that deserve praise — but not worship or idolization.

Americans, indeed people of the world, look for heroes. It's okay to have heroes, but we tend sometimes to make heroes out of unworthy people.

We Christians often fall short in presenting Christ the Creator and Savior to those around us. In fact, we may tacitly approve of worldly heroes.

There are heroes in unlikely places. You know them, and I do too — heroes of the Faith. ☺☺☺

to the Tennessee Baptist Convention while our affiliation to the Southern Baptist Convention is secondary, subsidiary, and now optional.

Those who disdain the SBC and support the CBF instead are saying "let's all work together." To many of us, this is an unacceptable arrangement. We do not want happening in Tennessee what has transpired in Texas. We believe the historical exclusive relationship between the TBC and the SBC must remain in place.

In my mind, it is hypocrisy that some people on our Execu-

tive Board determine for the rest of us what percentage of our Cooperative Program dollars remain in our state and what is passed on to our SBC Executive Committee should themselves be working to undermine everything the SBC is and stands for. It has the appearance of the fox guarding the hen house. Minimally, it is conflict of interest.

If the new insistence that we are Tennessee Baptists first and foremost is maintained, then perhaps the responsibility of determining the TBC/SBC division of funds should revert back to each lo-

cal church and not the Executive Board. Perhaps this should be discussed in Jackson.

*Jerry Sutton, pastor
Two Rivers Church
Nashville 37214*

Is it fair?

Why is it some individuals have served on the Executive Board of the Tennessee Baptist Convention, over and over for many years, and the vast majority of Tennessee Baptist pastors have never served in this position, and never will. If this is correct, is it fair?

We need "fairness" in Tennessee when it comes to health benefits, retirement benefits, and salary supplements. Today we don't have that. If this is correct, is it fair?

There are many injustices in the TBC. If this is correct, and I believe that it is; is it fair?

There are many things in the TBC that divide us and distract us, much more than those "issues" that concern "Concerned Tennessee Baptists!"

*Virgil Presley, pastor
Curve Church
Ripley 38063*



Additional letters on page 4

Lulled to sleep

We as Tennessee Baptists have been lulled to sleep. We are told our first allegiance is



about letters

- > Make it concise, no more than 250 words. Letters may be edited for length.
- > 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.

Serving together

My wife, Brenda, and I, will attend the TBC annual meeting in Jackson. This will be my 26th convention. We look forward to the reports, music, preaching, and business.

Our congregation is very supportive of the TBC and the SBC. We practice the Baptist principle of the "priesthood of the believers." Only Christ and the Scripture can tell us how we are to believe. This year our budget included another increase to the Cooperative Program. We trust God and one another. And we have confidence in fellow Tennessee Baptists who serve through our boards and committees.

I am embarrassed when others witness our unwillingness to cooperate and to love one another as Christ has commanded us. But we all can renew fellowship by forgetting the past and by looking to the future.

I have served on various state committees and the Executive Board. It was a good experience and everything was open and fair. My desire is to continue to pray and to work for an even greater convention.

My first love is the Gospel of Christ. Let us keep our eyes upon the Master and strive to be good servants. How thankful I am for the local church. It is a joy to serve as a pastor and to find harmony and peace made possible by our unity in his one spirit.

Paul Moody, pastor
Erin Church
Erin 37061

Additional letters on page 3.

Thanks committees

Concerned Tennessee Baptists has planned for months to challenge some nominees to the Committee on Boards and the Committee on Committees. We were working under the assumption that this year's report would follow the pattern of past years. I feel a personal obligation to say I believe that assumption was premature and incorrect. Both committee reports exhibit an effort to be fair and equitable.

Approximately one half of the messengers to last year's convention said they want change even if it requires changing the constitution. I appreciate the fact that our concerns were heard.

I believe we are still a long way from balanced representation and by no means have our goals been met. I waited 18 years for the New York Yankees to win the World Series last year. You can rest assured that I will not give up on a matter as important as the direction of our state convention.

In my opinion there should be no challenges to these reports this year but simply a "thank you" for a job well done. Every journey begins with a first step. I hope we've taken that step.

Charles D. Bailey, pastor
Laurel Bank Church
Friendsville 37737

Who cares?

Wouldn't a letter sent to all the pastors in our state convention urging them to gather prior to our TBC for prayer and the purging of trivial ambitions and selfish agendas of the past have been more appropriate than a letter asking pastors to show up in force to support their favorite political agendas?

Have the shepherds forgotten their first love? Have they forgotten the flock they promised to lead? Have they become so blinded by the comfort of their own eternal security that they no longer see the hurt and despair in the eyes of the sheep?

The vast majority of people in our congregations across the state could care less about the political and theological struggles and divisions. They have their own struggles. You, dear pastors, are accountable to the Lord for the spiritual condition of your congregations. What priorities do the pastors of our TBC hold dear to their heart? Some seem to "have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith" (Matthew 23:23b).

Malachi 2:7-10 also speaks to this situation.

Debbie Greeson
Hermitage 37076

Remember our schools

Concern is sometimes expressed that only 36.2 percent of the TBC Cooperative Program budget is distributed through the Southern Baptist Convention. The TBC is ninth out of 14 major state conventions in CP percentage going to the SBC. (Georgia is highest with 44.5 percent).

Tennessee Baptists are not selfishly hoarding CP money for in-state denominational pro-

grams. We rank 13th (26.8) in convention ministries allocation as a percentage of our total budget. Convention ministries include things like Sunday School, evangelism, student work, conferences, camps, and in-state missions.

Tennessee ranks first in percentage given to support Christian higher education. Belmont, Carson-Newman, and Union are unique. No other state convention attempts to give equal "flagship" level funding to three colleges or universities. In actual dollars given the TBC is third.

Even with this generous support, the CP share of the three schools' budgets is significantly lower today than it was 10 years ago. Our schools have grown — and our ability to give has not kept pace with their needs.

The SBC Covenant for a New Century was approved with the expressed goal of increasing resources for missions. Among the casualties of the SBC restructuring was the Education Commission. The state conventions now are the only denominational resource with a direct investment in Christian higher education.

Tennessee Baptists are justifiably proud of their colleges. As rancorous and divisive as TBC politics has been of late, it is significant to note that the Education Committee and the entire Executive Board have both unanimously and without equivocation endorsed our schools. The TBC has opportunity to join in this affirmation in Jackson.

L. Joseph Rosas, pastor
Union Avenue Church
Memphis 38104

Building bridges

Some among us wish to posture churches who give to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship as "other" than normal Tennessee churches. This isn't so. Churches giving their national monies to the CBF are loyal Tennessee Baptists. There is no such thing as a "Fellowship church." If you give money to the Gideons, are you a "Gideon church?" We are all Tennessee Baptists who believe in the autonomy of the local church.

Yes, some Tennessee Baptists whose churches relate to CBF are used in state work. Why? Because they are cooperative and supportive. Speaking of support, a mailout across our state saying that nine churches who relate to the Fellowship are giving virtually nothing. Ain't so. The TBC business office has recorded that those nine churches have given in excess of \$100,000 each to TBC and SBC causes in the last five years. Is this a lack of support? Furthermore, a dollar given to the Fellowship has the same 62.5 cents sent to Brentwood for TBC use as a dollar given to the Cooperative Program. Does 62.5 cents of every dollar given to Mid-America Seminary go to the TBC?

Haven't we had enough of "they are of Apollos and we are of Christ" in this state? We need each other. We must work on acceptance and inclusiveness and stop the spread of deliberate misinformation. Will we be bridge-builders or wall-makers in Jack-

son? I'm for building bridges and include all Tennessee Baptists in the work of our state.

Bill Sherman, pastor
Woodmont Church
Nashville 37215

Love reconciles

The dis-fellowshipping fever reported among Tennessee Baptists is a serious and egregious evil. Factionalism seems to come about when the work of God is progressing. The *Baptist and Reflector* reports that church growth, missions, and giving are increasing. Some have just noticed that everyone doesn't agree about everything. At least, we suspect they don't. What are we going to do? What most Christians and Baptists always have done — boot them out.

Preserving the bond of peace in line with one of Jesus' last prayers, "that they all may be one," has never been as important to us as exercising our self-righteous zeal over what we imagine to be the purity of the church. We who represent God's persistent love on earth should persist in our love for our brothers. If we think a brother in error, should we not exhaust ourselves for his correction?

True love reconciles and never gives up, even to the point of death, as we know by Christ's death for us. Fellowship should never be withdrawn over differences of opinion.

The world is supposed to know we are Christians by our love and "love covers a multitude of sins." If we keep putting the opinions of others under a microscope and drawing our circle tighter, we will end up with a circle of one. No one else agrees with us about everything. If we cannot truly love our brother, what do we have to offer the world?

Mary Maddox
Nashville 37204

To be shepherds

In recent years our beloved convention suffered through the "innerrancy" controversy. That was painful, but necessary to earnestly contend for the faith.

We are now embroiled in the "who's the boss" controversy. This is also painful, but it is not necessary. It is about power.

The priesthood of the believer is a 2,000-year-old Bible doctrine, and must remain a Baptist doctrine. The priesthood of the pastor is nowhere in Scripture.

An increasing number of pastors are "driving the cattle" instead of "leading the flock."

Pastors, God has called you to be shepherds, not cowboys.

Leslie J. Murphy
Memphis 38177

Plea for love

I opened the *Nashville Banner* recently and my heart sank. The front-page headline read: "Baptists brace for new battle." It was not about the SBC, but our own Tennessee Baptist Convention. My emotions ranged from grief to anger to humiliation.

For 22 years I had the privilege to work in the TBC executive office with five different executive

directors as Executive Board coordinator. In the hundreds of meetings I was a part of (Executive Board and committees), members were encouraged to express their views and opinions about matters under consideration. All were heard with a spirit of respect and fairness. We on the staff provided background information to help with decisions, but not to influence them for some agenda. Votes on various issues did not please everyone, but I never was aware of bitterness or retaliation. I felt that members left after meetings in a spirit of brothers and sisters in Christ.

I have been proud of the spirit and fellowship within the TBC compared in recent years with that of the SBC as well as some other state conventions. I hope we can rise above divisiveness. Now, from some critical letters circulated and articles written, I have deep concerns for our future.

If we believe the message about love found in 1 John 4:11, we could prove the *Banner* headlines can be reversed after we meet in Jackson.

Ruth Bradley
Nashville 37211

A 'Baptist thing'

To conclude, as J. William Bargiel does in his letter in the Oct. 15 *Baptist and Reflector*, that Michael Smith's election as president of the TBC Executive Board is somehow evidence that Cooperative Baptist Fellowship controls that board does not follow the rules of logic. It's like saying that Bill Clinton was elected president because he is a Baptist and, therefore, Baptists control the U.S. government. We know that's not accurate.

To imply that 60 churches in Tennessee (out of 3,000), which allow members to designate gifts to CBF, constitutes a powerful force bent on controlling the TBC is ridiculous. Most of these churches simply honor members' requests where to direct their contributions — a Baptist thing to do, it seems to me. These churches and individuals are not interested in "control." They are interested in protecting their right, along with others', to serve Tennessee Baptists. No one seems to question their support of TBC causes.

CBF apparently is being used as a "paper tiger" by another group which is interested in control, following the national pattern, that would exclude leadership participation from anyone who doesn't subscribe to its agenda and beliefs. I don't believe the majority of Tennessee Baptists want this to happen here. In the beginning of the movement that now controls the SBC, their leaders claimed they only wanted "fair representation."

Bill Junker
Brentwood 37027

Thanksgiving letters invited

In the Nov. 25 issue of the *Baptist and Reflector*, we will publish letters relating only to thanksgiving and gratitude. They need to be received in our office by Nov. 14. — Editor

Mississippi Baptists adopt \$25 million budget without dissent

Baptist Press

JACKSON, Miss. — The Mississippi Baptist Convention adopted without a dissenting vote among 1,476 messengers a 1998 Cooperative Program budget of \$25,546,608 during their Oct. 28-29 annual meeting here.

The group also passed resolutions which called for person-

al opposition to abortion, commitment or prayer for persecuted Christians around the world, and encouraged worship of God over entertainment on Sundays.

Hattiesburg pastor Dean Register was elected convention president in a run-off vote

with Clarence Cooper, a pastor from Grenada. Crystal Springs pastor Clark Stewart also was a candidate for the presidency.

The abortion resolution comes in anticipation of the 25th anniversary of the Roe v.

Wade and Doe v. Bolton Supreme Court rulings which legalized abortion. The resolu-

tion called for 25 days of prayer, Jan. 1-25, to end abortion. ■

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churches

■ **Mt. Gilead Church, Bethel Springs**, will honor veterans and their families with a Veterans Day emphasis Nov. 9 during its morning worship service. Todd Delaney, pastor, Roellen Church, Dyersburg, will speak at the service, which begins at 10:45 a.m.

■ **Kensington Church, Memphis**, will celebrate its 40th anniversary with homecoming activities Nov. 9, beginning at 10:30 a.m., followed by a meal. Guest speaker will be Mississippi pastor Everett Childers, who was ordained to the ministry at Kensington. Don Connell of Broadmoor Church, Memphis, will lead music.

■ **Miracle Church, La Vergne**, recently dedicated its new facility which will serve members and visitors in the areas of education and welcoming, and as a Media Center and Fellowship Hall. The new facility more than doubles the space available to the congregation.

■ **Bordeaux Church, Nashville**, will hold a musical program Nov. 9 at 6 p.m. The Brake Family of Hendersonville, will lead it. To request transportation or for more information, call (615)

384-0986 or 384-6243.

■ A Spanish interpreter is needed for **evangelistic meetings in Nashville**. If interested, call Terry Mitchell at (615) 672-9509.

association

■ At its annual meeting Oct. 27-28, **New Duck River Association** approved the establishment of a Disaster Relief Van ministry. Local churches will be asked to fund the project.

death

■ **J.L. Baker, 82**, of Shelbyville, who had served as a minister for 55 years, died Oct. 19 after a brief illness. A member of Calvary Church, Shelbyville, he retired as pastor of Emmanuel Church, Shelbyville.

leaders

■ **David Rogers** has served as pastor of Lighthouse Church, Memphis, for 12 years.

■ **Barnard's Grove Church, Bean Station**, has called **Gary Satterfield**, interim pastor, as



BREAKING GROUND at Grace Church, Knoxville, are leaders, from left, Steve Richardson; Wendell Cooper; Tim Graham; Wade Smith; Rhonda Thomas; Ken Dyer; Ron Stewart, pastor; Dave Donahue, businessman; Bill Vinson, businessman; Steve Jones, businessman; LaNell Wood; Joann Hipshire; Tim Page; R.G. Shupe; Jack Piper Jr.; and Curtis McGinnis. The church is building a \$7.5 million 2,000-seat sanctuary.

pastor, effective Oct. 1. He formerly served as pastor of Blackwell Church, Rutledge.

■ **Frances Rogers, clerk**, Eureka Church, Rockwood, was honored recently on her retirement Sept. 30 after serving 45 years. Her late husband, Bill, was a deacon of the church and two of their three children are members of Eureka Church.



ROGERS

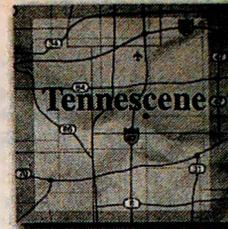
■ **Lighthouse Church, Memphis**, has called **Nathan Coker** as youth pastor/associ-

ate pastor.

■ **Nolensville Church, Nolensville**, has called **Jerry Cook** of Myrtle Beach, S.C., as pastor.

■ **First Church, Memphis**, has called **Eddie Wren** as minister of youth and recreation, effective Oct. 27. He was minister of youth, First Church, Crystal Springs, Miss. Wren also has served as a youth ministry intern and a summer missionary in Michigan. He is a graduate of Union University, Jackson, and is a student at New Orleans (La.) Baptist Theological Seminary.

■ **Charles "Skip" Arn-**



hart of Pensacola, Fla., has been named family evangelism associate for children, North American Mission Board, based in Alpharetta, Ga. He was on the staff of First Church, Millington, from 1991-96. He is a graduate of Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, Memphis. In his new role, Arnhart will help develop and implement evangelistic strategies to be used by churches, associations, and state conventions.

■ **Blue Springs Church, Rutledge**, has called **Maurice Quillen**, former pastor, as interim pastor.

■ **Jim Inman** has been called as interim minister of outreach/pastoral assistant, Tulip Grove Church, Old Hickory, effective Oct. 1. The congregation licensed him to the ministry Oct. 26.

■ **Plainview Church, Woodbury**, has called **Charley M. Heath** as pastor, effective Nov. 2. He also is principal of Woodland Elementary School in Cannon County.

Baptists gather in associational meetings across state



MIDLAND ASSOCIATION met Sept. 22-23 with Texas Valley Church, Knoxville, as host church. Gary Vandergriff, Curtis Tindell, and Sammie Epperson preached. Midland's officers include, from left, front row, JoAnn Hurst, clerk; Georgia Snodderly, historical committee; Robin Hughes, WMU director; Jean Snodderly, association secretary; back row, Mike Harbin, moderator; Herbert Jones, director of missions; Lester Mullins, bivocational pastors' committee; Ralph Waggoner, evangelism director; and Mark Large, pastors' conference.



ELECTED DURING the Oct. 16-17 meeting of Grainger Association were, from left, Terry Greenlee, music director; Garry Samsel, treasurer; Gary Satterfield, assistant moderator; Sarah Tydings, clerk; and Robert Spradlin, moderator.



PAUSING during the Oct. 26 meeting of New Salem Association is Ray McCall, left, director of missions, with the new officers, from left, Randall Hackett, treasurer; Mary Etta Nixon, clerk; and Mark Stinnett, moderator. The meeting was at Carthage Road Church.



RECEIVING the gavel is Oran Creasman, center, new moderator, McMinn-Meigs Association, from Huel Hooker, left, during the association's Oct. 20-21 meeting. Ron Sorah, watching, is the new vice moderator. All three men are pastors in the association.

In Jesus' name

By James Hutson

Focal Passage — John 14:12-14; 15:12-17; 16:22-26; 1 John 5:13-15

I have always had a keen fascination with names and have often wondered where some people get their names. A first grade teacher was filling out the enrollment cards of her new students. One little girl called herself "Femal." Neither the child nor the teacher knew how to spell her name, so the teacher sent a note home. The next day the mother told the teacher the doctor had named her daughter. When the doctor wrote "Female" on the birth certificate, the mother accepted it as the name of her daughter.

In biblical language the name of a person described their character. The name of "Jesus" or "Lord" stands for who he is. To pray in the name of Jesus is to pray "in the power" or "by the authority of." This lesson is intended to help us learn what it means to pray "in Jesus' name."

John, chapters 13-17, finds its setting with Jesus and his disciples in the Upper Room. Here Jesus opens his heart and gives final instruction to his disciples prior to his arrest, trial, and crucifixion.

Jesus makes two promises. He promises his disciples that they would do "greater things" than he has done. This promise came true as the disciples moved out of Judea into Samaria and the uttermost parts of the world with the Gospel. This "greater work" was accomplished by the power and presence of the Holy Spirit within them. Jesus also promises that if something is asked in his name, it will be granted. There is a mutual indwelling between the Father and the Son.

In John 15, Jesus speaks of the vital relationship between the vine and the branches. The fruit produced in the branches is the fruit of the vine. The promise of answered prayer is made to the believer who remains united to Jesus as the fruit bearing branch is united to the vine. The key verse is 5, "Apart from me you can do nothing." Answered prayer is a result of the relationship between Jesus and the believer.

Jesus encourages his grieving and doubting disciples over his departure. But, Jesus says, "when I return your grieving will turn into joy. And upon my return you can address your requests directly to the Father in my name." To pray in Jesus' name is a privilege belonging to the new order which will take place with Jesus' departure and return.

There is power when we pray in Jesus' name. But a prayer "in Jesus' name" must be consistent with his character. It must be a part of Christ indwelling in us, and it must reflect our belief in the resurrected Lord. To pray "in Jesus' name" is not a blank check for anything we want. God, in his wisdom and mercy, will give us what we need, in abundance.

We are to pray in accordance to the will of God. Verse 13 is a marvelous verse that reveals the assurance of eternal life for all generations who believe in the Son of God. Eternal life is not only length of time (eternity), it is also the quality of life now (abundant). With the confidence that we are God's children, we know that our heavenly Father hears our prayers. Hearing is synonymous with answering. It is God's nature to hear his children.

The words "in his name" should not be tacked on to our prayers as some magical formula. Our prayers must reflect the character and mission of Jesus. When we do this, we pray "in his name." — Hutson is pastor, First Church, Rockwood.

Preserving the faith

By Dennis Trull

Focal Passage — Ezra 9:1-3; 10:9-14

Ezra was known as a priest and teacher of the law of Moses. Through his teaching of Scripture, it was brought to Ezra's attention that God's law dealing with intermarriage had been violated. This issue threatened the life and stability of the community of people called by God into a covenant with himself. Ezra had been in Jerusalem four months when this problem was brought to him. Do not lose sight of this positive side of these events: Ezra's teaching of God's word was bearing fruit. The people were recognizing the error of their ways when compared to God's holy word.

Sin exposed (ch. 9:1-2). Throughout the Bible, God has called his people to separate themselves from the pagan world. Israel's neighbors led a different lifestyle from what God expected from his people. Once a man was observed wearing his wedding ring on the wrong finger. Asked why,

Sorrow expressed (v. 3). A jury foreman once read this note to a judge: "Your honor, we have no verdict and have voted unanimously that we don't want to get involved." We must admire Ezra's willingness to deal with a touchy situation. His initial response was one of complete distress and sorrow. In this culture, it was customary to tear one's garment when faced with great distress. However, Ezra's actions reveal his heavy heart and deep distress over the news of intermarriage. Verse three indicates that Ezra tore not only his outer garment, but his inner garment, too. The extent and seriousness of the problem is further expressed when Ezra tore out hair from his head and beard. He sat down overcome with grief, astonished at the people's actions. Part of Ezra's great distress came as he remembered how gracious God had been to them, and now the people had disregarded God's law.

Solution enacted (ch. 10:9-14). Proclamation was made throughout Judah and Jerusalem for the people to assemble. They were to assemble in the same square where they had gathered when Ezra read the Law to them. It was mid-winter when they assembled and a cold rain was falling. Verse nine tells us that the people were trembling because of this cold rain, and because the matter of intermarriage was so serious. The solution was for the people to confess their sin before God, and to separate themselves from their foreign wives. The Bible does not present this as a model whenever a believer married an unbeliever. This solution was the answer here because of the danger of the Jews ceasing to be the distinct people of God. The assembly agreed with Ezra, and proposed an orderly process for fulfilling the solution. By God's grace, they understood what was necessary. — Trull is pastor, First Church, Savannah.

Family Bible Lesson

he said, "Because I married the wrong woman." For Ezra's countrymen and for many modern Christians, religious intermarriage is no laughing matter.

What was wrong with a Jew marrying a Gentile? This was not an issue of racial prejudice, but a problem of pagan influence that would lead God's people into idolatry and sinful living. Idolatry and the sins that went with it represented the "abominations" in verse one. God's people are called to be holy people, separated from all others. The primary emphasis of this separation was not from whom they were to be separated, but to whom they were to be separated. They were to be separated unto the Lord God.

Challenge to continue in faith

By Michael Ruffin

Focal Passage — Genesis 17:1-5, 9-10, 15-19, 23

One of the greatest statements of faith in the Bible is found in the prophet Habakkuk: "Though the fig tree does not blossom, and no fruit is on the vines; though the produce of the olive fails, and the fields, yield no food; though the flock is cut off from the fold, and there is no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will exult in the God of my salvation" (Habakkuk 3:17-18). Real faith is an abiding, joyful trust in God even when the evidence of his presence and blessing is not obvious. Maintaining such faith was the challenge for Abraham and is the challenge for us. This challenge is multi-faceted.

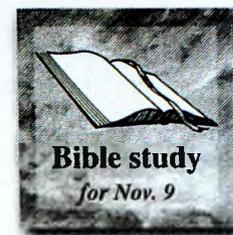
The challenge of time. The passage of time can challenge our faith. Thirteen years had passed since the birth of Ishmael. Perhaps it is significant that we are not told of an appearance of the Lord to Abraham for so long after Ishmael's birth. Did Abraham not experience an appearance of God for all those years? Did he experience a "dark night of the soul?" Maybe Abraham needed some time to consider the consequences of his actions in relation to Hagar. Certainly the ever-advancing age of the patriarch made what God was about to do all the more remarkable. Surely significant is the fact that God came to Abraham to reaffirm the covenant despite the fact

Explore the Bible Lesson

that Abraham and Sarah had tried to gain an heir outside the purposes and timing of the Lord. Abraham had much to think about over those 13 years.

The challenge of change. God challenged Abraham to "walk before me, and be blameless." Such a relationship with God is something into which one grows, and Abraham had experienced many struggles which contributed to his maturity. The Lord pledged again to make his covenant with Abraham, and in response Abraham fell on his face, which was a sign of submissive reverence. Then God said, "No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham." "Abram" meant something like "Exalted father," while "Abraham" meant "Father of a multitude." In the Old Testament, a change in name often signified a change in character. Abraham was successfully meeting the challenge of change. The change in the name of his wife from Sarai to Sarah reveals that she too was making progress in her relationship with God.

The challenge of identity. The sign of the covenant which God made with Abram was the circumcision of males.



This would be an outward sign of an inward relationship. What kinds of distinguishing marks are Christians to bear? We might think of baptism as a distinguishing mark. When we submit to baptism, we publicly proclaim in a very obvious way that we have been buried with Christ and we have risen to newness of life. We also can think of Christian character as a distinguishing mark. When we treat others as Christ would treat them, we bear the identifying mark of a Christian. When we bear witness to the presence of Christ in our lives through our lifestyle, we bear that identifying mark. We bear the marks when we are obedient to the teachings of our Lord.

The challenge of doubt. Doubt is a reality to be accepted and a reality to be overcome. In verse 17, God told Abraham that Sarah would bear his child. As in verse three, Abraham fell on his face, but this time the falling indicated shock and doubt: "Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed." How could a 99-year-old man and a 90-year-old woman become parents? God did in fact fulfill his promise to Abraham, even though Abraham had to wait a long time to see that fulfillment. In some ways, the challenge of doubt is overcome only when we meet the challenge of patience — patiently awaiting the working out of God's purposes. — Ruffin is associate professor, School of Religion, Belmont University, Nashville.



world news

Nevada Baptists adopt record budget

Baptist Press

CARSON CITY, Nev. — A record \$2.17 budget was adopted by the 119 registered messengers to the 19th annual meeting of the Nevada Baptist Convention.

The budget represents an increase of 5.1 percent over the 1997 budget.

Convention president Joe Taylor of Reno was re-elected by acclamation. ■

KNCSB messengers challenged to share Gospel 'one by one'

Baptist Press

OMAHA, Neb. — Southern Baptists in Nebraska and Kansas were challenged to share the Gospel with people "One By One" and reach out to

every home in the two states.

"There is still much land to be possessed," KNCSB President Neal Alford quoted Joshua 13:1b to the 300 messengers and 50 guests attending the 52nd annual meeting of the convention.

Messengers adopted a 1998 budget of \$4,150,920, a 6.2 percent increase over the present budget.

Don Lacy, a pastor from Valley Center, Kan., was elected as new president by acclamation. He served the past two years as vice president.

Tom Wenig, a retired director of missions from Kearney, Neb., was elected vice president of the convention. ■

BSSB president's mother dies Oct. 28

Baptist Press

NASHVILLE — Lois Keeling Draper, mother of Baptist Sunday School Board President James T. Draper Jr., died Oct. 28 at Williamson Medical Center in Franklin. She was 85.

She was the daughter of a Southern Baptist pastor, the wife of a Southern Baptist pastor, and the mother of Southern Baptist pastors.

Mrs. Draper is survived by two sons, seven grandchildren, and six great-grandchildren. ■

Government joins lawsuit against Georgia college

Baptist Press

MOUNT VERNON, Ga. — The federal government has joined a lawsuit against Brewton-Parker College and several administrators for allegedly awarding grants to unqualified students and other financial irregularities.

The lawsuit was initiated last winter by Martha Faw, a former assistant financial aid director at the Georgia Baptist-related school.

According to an article in the *Wall Street Journal* Oct. 15, the federal complaint, filed Oct. 20, could result in Brewton-Parker owing the federal government up to \$25.2 million in reimbursement and penalties, nearly twice the college's \$12.7 million budget.

Y. Lynn Holmes, Brewton-Parker's president since 1983, who is among the administrators named in lawsuit, had denied the charges but admitted errors were made regarding the distribution of financial aid. However, he blamed the errors on carelessness, overworked staff, and outdated computer programs and said the college has taken steps to correct the problems.

Holmes noted that when the college became aware of the irregularities "Brewton-Parker officials also notified the proper government agencies. ... We will continue to work toward resolution of the matter and continue on with our main priority of providing a quality education in a Christian environment. ■

SWBTS trustees ok education degrees

Baptist Press

FORT WORTH, Texas — Two groundbreaking degrees in religious education were approved by Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary trustees Oct. 22 — a doctor of educational ministry and master of arts in Christian school education.

According to Daryl Eldridge, dean of the school of educational ministries, there has been no religious education academic equivalent to the doctor of ministry degree in theology and "just the possibility" of the DEM degree at Southwestern has generated a waiting list of 150 students to apply to the program.

The new master's degree is a response to the continuing explosion of private, Christian schools. "In Texas alone we're told that a new Christian

school is opening every day," Eldridge said. ■

MBTS trustees reiterate stance

Baptist Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — For the third time in recent years, Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary trustees expressed their objection to abortion, dealing specifically with the need for an honest portrayal of partial-birth abortion by government leaders.

Trustees passed a resolution which decried the vetoing of partial-birth abortion bans bills at both the national and state levels on the grounds of medical necessity. It also called on all Southern Baptists and Christians to call and write their elected officials until the practice is banned. ■

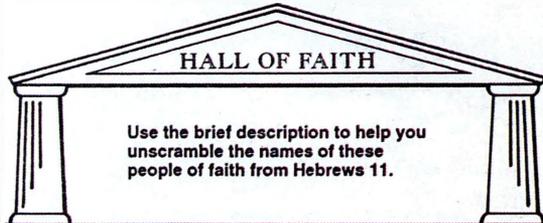
Allen honored

Baptist Press

FORT WORTH, Texas — Former SBC president and agency head Jimmy Allen has been named recipient of the T.B. Maston Christian Ethics Award, named in honor of the longtime professor at Southwestern Seminary. The award is given every other year by the T.B. Maston Foundation. ■

For Adults and Teens

The Book of Hebrews



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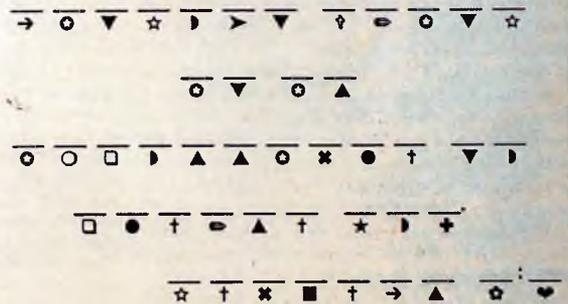
- _____ LEAB — offered an acceptable sacrifice
- _____ CHONE — never saw death
- _____ HAON — builder of the ark
- _____ MAHABAR — offered his son, Isaac
- _____ SHAAR — became a mother in her old age
- _____ ACAIS — invoked blessings on his twin sons
- _____ CAOBJ — blessed his grandsons when dying
- _____ PJEOSH — expected the exodus of Israelites
- _____ SOMES — hidden as a baby, became a great leader
- _____ AEEIISRRTL — crossed the Red Sea on dry land
- _____ ABRAH — a rescued harlot
- _____ VIADD — put foreign armies to flight
- _____ GONEID — conquered many kingdoms
- _____ NOSSAM — won strength out of weakness

Fun for the Family

Just for Kids

The Book of Hebrews

Use the code at the bottom to write the verse.



CODE

A B D E F G H I L M O P R S T U W 6 11
 ● ★ † ‡ † ★ ☆ ○ ● ○ † □ ■ ▲ ▼ † → ☆

Answers to the Oct. 29 Fun for the Family Puzzles

The Book of Philemon for adults

F	O	R	G	I	V	E
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

The Book of Philemon for children

PAUL; IMPRISONMENT; PHILEMON; ONESIMUS; SLAVE; SAINTS; FAITH; JOY; BROTHER; JESUS; PARTNER; OBEDIENCE; GRACE

"Fun for the Family" is a feature of the *Baptist and Reflector* that will appear regularly.