

# TENNESSEE'S BAPTIST & REFLECTOR

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**this week's news**

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**High attendance, record budget**

**Messengers stay with witnessing theme, do business**

Wm. Fletcher Allen  
*Baptist and Reflector*

JACKSON — A near-record number of 2,155 messengers to the 123rd annual session of the Tennessee Baptist Convention meeting here Nov. 11-12 approved a record budget, a new Partnership Missions agreement, and accepted an Executive Board committee for reconciliation.

The messengers, second largest only to the 2,286 registered at Gatlinburg in 1992, met at West Jackson Church. They elected Doug Sager, Knoxville pastor, as president, approved a record Cooperative Program budget of \$30,105,514, and endorsed committee nominations.

The budget was increased by \$1.9 million, or 6.8 percent. The 1997-98 budget continues to allocate 37.5 percent to the Southern Baptist Convention and 62.5 percent for TBC causes.

A three-year Partnership Missions plan with the Carioca Baptist Convention, Brazil,



RECEIVING THE GAVEL from President Herbert Higdon, left, is Doug Sager, second from left, newly elected president and pastor, First Church, Concord, Knoxville, as other new officers look on. They include Ken Clayton, second vice president and pastor, Tulip Grove Church, Old Hickory; and Joyce Rickman, recording secretary of Clearview Church, Franklin. — Photo by Connie Davis

was approved, and the current agreement with Canadian Baptists was extended for three more years.

Pastor of First Church Concord in Knoxville, Sager won over Earl Wilson, also of Knoxville, a former pastor and retired Tennessee Baptist

Foundation executive. The vote was 968 to 850. Although he was not endorsed publically, Wilson probably was the choice for many moderates.

Sager was the announced candidate of Concerned Tennessee Baptists and other conservative groups, and was en-

dorsed by Pastors' Conference president Morris Anderson who encouraged that group to vote for Sager.

TBC President Herbert Higdon, Jackson, reported to messengers that he had appointed a 15-member Relationships Focus Group.

The group will report its findings to the Executive Board next September and to the TBC when it meets in November in Kingsport.

Messengers adopted three resolutions — one opposing gambling, and one opposing religious persecution.

Another resolution expressed appreciation to West Jackson Church and others who had assisted in the functions of the session, including committees and TBC staff persons.

Speakers in each of the six sessions spoke to the Empowered to Witness theme. Bob Reccord, president of the North American Mission Board, spoke Tuesday.

(See more news about convention actions on pages 3-4.)

**Soul-winning top priority with Sager, new TBC president**

By Wm. Fletcher Allen  
*Baptist and Reflector*

JACKSON — Doug Sager is unabashedly conservative. And he is one of a few presidents of the Tennessee Baptist Convention whose candidacy was announced weeks before the annual session.

Sager, pastor of First Church Concord, Knoxville, was elected TBC president during the annual session on Nov. 11.

He has been married to the former Faye Thompson for 38 years, and both are natives of Bessemer, Ala. She says his ministry is also her ministry.

The former trustee of the Baptist Sunday School Board says he is committed to helping Tennessee Baptists grow in evangelism and missions. He is now a trustee with the International Mission Board.

"I am confident that together in the Spirit of Christ, we can achieve our goal — not to polarize but to maintain our identity as Tennessee Baptists and Southern Baptists." He would also like to see every TBC church baptize at least one person each year. "We ought to encourage and help them do that if they need help," he said.

Speaking about his election to the presidency, Sager said, "To me, it was not that I would win, but that God's will would be done. We are all part of God's family."

He is committed to the Cooperative Program. "The people have been giving generously," he said, "and they share my feelings about the Cooperative Program.

"In our building program, when we realized we couldn't do the entire plan and continue our level of

Cooperative Program giving, we eliminated a building. It's that important to us."

The new president came to First Church, Alcoa, in 1971, from New Orleans. He says that was a turning point in his life, and "God began pulling our ministry together. It was a great experience. The people helped shape us."

The Sagers were at Alcoa for 13 years before serving in Birmingham for a time. He became pastor of First Church Concord in 1993. The Sunday School has grown from 800 to more than 1,800. Eight hundred people have been baptized since then and missions giving continues to rise. Currently the church is giving more than \$1 million to missions causes.

The church put together a mission that became WestLake Church just five miles away, serving a contemporary group.

Sager says Concord is a church strong in lay leadership, due in part to a former pastor, Joe Stacker. He sees his role as president to encourage pastors, to emphasize soul-winning, and to get people involved in Partnership Missions.

"We need to get to the point where, when they join the church, we can say to them, 'Get a visa.' That's the message."

Sager also encourages Tennessee Baptists to be constant in prayer for a mighty harvest of souls. **BR**



FAYE AND DOUG SAGER

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# Proposed representation change falls short at Kentucky convention

Baptist Press

LEXINGTON, Ky. — A constitutional change in the way churches gain representation to Kentucky Baptist Convention annual meetings failed to get the two-thirds majority vote needed for adoption Nov. 12.

A slim majority of messengers favored changing the KBC's constitution to include the words "and/or other convention work" alongside "Cooperative Program." However, the 298 to 271 vote fell far short of the two-thirds majority required.

Impetus for the change came from moderates who want to continue full participation in the KBC but don't want to continue sending undesignated offerings to the Southern Baptist Convention. That led Bob Fox, pastor of West Point Church, Centertown, to propose a motion at last year's annual meeting to substitute the words "convention's work" for "Cooperative Program."

The KBC's Committee on Constitution and Bylaws, which is charged with reviewing any proposed constitutional changes, offered a compromise wording that retained the words "Cooperative Program" while adding the reference to "convention work."

Committee members and KBC President Floyd Price, an ex officio member of the committee, argued the compromise would benefit both moderates and conservatives. Not only would it have allowed moderates to give

to the KBC without giving to the SBC, it would have allowed conservatives to give more money designated directly to the SBC without the KBC taking a percentage out.

In the election of officers, KBC messengers chose three veteran Kentucky Baptist pastors who have served lengthy tenures in their current churches.

Gayle Toole was elected president in a race with Richard Oldham. Toole is pastor of Edgewood Church, Nicholasville. Oldham is pastor of Glendale Baptist Church, Bowling Green. Toole received 642 votes (58 percent) to Oldham's 463 (42 percent).

Although not identified with Kentucky Baptist moderates and not running as a moderate candidate, Toole had been endorsed by leaders of the Kentucky Baptist Fellowship. He was widely considered to have drawn support from moderates and centrists in the convention.

Oldham was nominated by Mike Routt, pastor of Rose Hill Missionary Baptist Church, Ashland, and a leader of Southern Baptist conservatives in Kentucky.

Other officers elected include Charles Midkiff, 20-year pastor of First Church, Greenville, first vice president, and Don Mantooh, 15-year pastor of First Church, Morehead, second vice president.

In other business, KBC messengers expressed opposition to gambling and partial-birth abortions. ■

## N.C. Baptists elect Royston as new exec

Compiled from Baptist Press

WINSTON-SALEM, N.C. — Tennessee Baptist pastor James Royston of Colonial Heights Church, Kingsport, was elected by acclamation to serve as the next executive director-treasurer of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina.



ROYSTON

Royston, 49, said equipping the local church for missions and evangelism will be his top priorities. "Local congregations will be perhaps the most significant focus for me," he said.

In other business at the annual meeting, North Carolina Baptists elected conservative pastor Mac Brunson of High Point over moderate candidate Jack Causey, a Statesville pastor, by a 2,624 to 2,296 margin.

Also, a proposed constitutional amendment that would have required churches to contribute at least 1 percent of their undesignated budget gifts to the state convention Cooperative Program, beginning in 1999, to be eligible to send more than two messengers, came up 153 votes short of receiving the two-thirds vote needed for approval. ■



### Bivocational, small church pastors honored

Bivocational and small church pastors of the year were announced at the annual meeting of the Tennessee Baptist Convention in Jackson. Above, bivocational pastors of the year, from left, were Billy Murphy, Howse Church Atwood, and his wife, Nancy, west; Jim Woodard, Hopewell Church, Springfield, and his wife, Carole, middle; and James Baumgardner, Mouth of Richland Church, Blaine, east. BELOW, small church pastors of the year, from left, Greg Kelly, Lakeview Church, Harriman, and his wife, Julie, east; Nathan Hale, Immanuel Church, Murfreesboro, middle; and Greg Brewer, North Fork Church, Puryear, and his wife, Beth, west.



### Partnership Prayer Requests

#### November

- 19 — Pray for Rich Caruthers, director of the BSM at Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, British Columbia, Canada.
- 20 — Pray for churches in Costa Rica.
- 21 — Pray for the partnership between Tennessee and Costa Rica. Ask God to bless Sue Smith, SBC missionary who serves as volunteer coordinator for the Costa Rica Mission and Jorge Arias, a national pastor who helps coordinate the efforts.
- 22 — Pray for the Baptist State Convention of Michigan's evangelism associate search committee as they seek God's person for the position.
- 23 — Pray for Freedom Christian Fellowship in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, as the church seeks to reach out to its neighbors and friends in the surrounding area.
- 24 — Pray for Rich Ratts, youth consultant for the Baptist State Convention of Michigan.
- 25 — Pray for the SBC missionaries who are in language school in Costa Rica. Ask God to help the families find a church home where they can serve others and the Lord.

# As usual, convention messengers are vocal

By Wm. Fletcher Allen  
Baptist and Reflector

**JACKSON** — Tennessee Baptists evidently thought this 123rd annual session was important because they turned out in near record numbers.

A cold, steady rain couldn't keep them away. A touted contest for the Tennessee Baptist Convention's presidency may have been the main attraction, but the 2,155 messengers participated in much more than elections.

Some convention actions:

✓ For TBC president — Doug Sager, Knoxville, won over Earl Wilson, Knoxville, 968-850.

For first vice president — Jim Hutson, Rockwood, and Hollie Miller, were in a runoff. Howard Hannah, Harriman, was eliminated and Miller defeated Hutson 560-543.

For second vice president — Ken Clayton, Nashville, won over Clay Austin, Blountville, 516-463.

Two other officers were re-elected — Joyce Rickman, Franklin, recording secretary; and Dan Ferrell, Franklin, registration secretary.

✓ President Herbert Higdon named a Relationships Focus



**CONVENTION PRESIDENT** Herbert Higdon presides during a business session. Assisting him, were from left, Marvin Spivey, chairman, Committee on Credentials; Lynn King, second vice president, Joe Stacker, chairman, Committee on Arrangements; and Reed Dixon, parliamentarian.

Group (story on this page).

✓ TBC Executive Director James Porch signed a three-year Partnership Missions covenant with leaders of the Carioca Baptist Convention, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, which will begin in January.

Belardin de Amorim Pimentel and his wife Heloisa were joined by missionary Elizabeth Oates, on-site partnership coordinator, and a Tennessean.

The Poland partnership

ends and the Canadian partnership is extended for three years. Costa Rica continues.

✓ Executive Board recommendations — In addition to three concerning partnerships, three others were presented — and discussed at length.

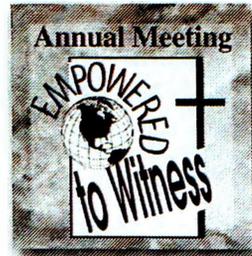
A recommendation to change "owned and operated" in TBC institutions' program statements to "affiliated with" was passed and later reconsidered. After a very long debate, messengers approved it again. It was explained that the legal term according to IRS and other governmental guidelines prohibiting entities such as the TBC from owning property. The matter of liability was explained and that trustees elected by the convention manage the institutions.

A recommendation to messengers asking them to join the board in affirming Carson-Newman College, Belmont University, and Union University, after several protests, was referred back to the Executive Board. There were concerns that without some changes there could not be overall affirmation.

✓ Constitution and Bylaws Committee recommendations

— After a long discussion, messengers defeated a recommendation that wording in Article II be changed to clarify the identity of cooperating Tennessee Baptist churches. It was amended twice, but still was defeated.

A recommendation changing wording in Article VII was approved, stating that, "No person shall be eligible as a director (Executive Board) if such would result in more than one member of the same church serving as a director."



**SIGNING** the partnership agreement is Belardin de Amorim Pimentel, left, of Brazil, as James Porch of TBC Executive Board ministries, who previously signed it, watches.

✓ The Executive Board staff explained ongoing ministries with skits and multimedia presentations. Staff members did role playing in portraying the work of each Executive Board group.

— See As usual, page 4



**TBC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR** James Porch leads in prayer for new TBC president Doug Sager, left, and Ken Clayton, right, second vice president. First Vice President Hollie Miller of Knoxville was called away from the convention.



**THE NEW FACILITY** of West Jackson Church provided an excellent setting for the 123rd annual session of the Tennessee Baptist Convention. West Jackson members began occupying their new building approximately four weeks before the TBC annual meeting.

## Relationship group explained

Outgoing Executive Board president Gene Cotey explained a newly formed Relationship Focus Group to messengers.

Messengers generally seemed to favor the effort for improving relationships.

At the Executive Board meeting in Brentwood last December, Paul Durham recommended that the board name a "Bridge of Unity" committee to study relationships within the TBC and to bring some recommendations to the board.

His idea was referred to the Executive Committee which brought it to the board in September. It was rejected by the board.

Durham referred to unrest among Tennessee Baptists concerning "representation" and leadership positions.

In October, TBC president Herbert Higdon called former convention presidents to prayer and dialogue.

Out of that session, 18 former presidents and Higdon recommended a similar study group to the Executive Board at its Nov. 10 meeting.

It was approved, and board president Gene Cotey, Murfreesboro, presented it to convention messengers for information.

Cotey explained the purpose of the study on the first day of the annual session.

He said the Relationships Focus Group would focus on "ways to maintain and strengthen our relationships."

He stressed that "we are the strongest we have been and we need to build on that."

He warned that this should not be a "feel good" committee.

Cotey said the study would operate within the parameters of the TBC Constitution and Bylaws and Committee guidelines.

He said the group is to "focus on and explore ways and means to strengthen the ties and foster good relationships among the TBC churches, laity, and clergy, in order to pursue the mission of the convention."

Items to be addressed include diversity, commonality, alleviation of stress, effective communication, makeup of boards, committees, and programs.

Higdon named Ray Newcomb, Wayne Allen, Charles Bailey, Bill Sherman, Frank Hawkins, Marvin Cameron, Leonard Markham,

Raymond Boston, Fred Steelman, Paul Durham, Jewel Jennings, Elizabeth Laida, and Bill Bates. Two more will be added.

He specified that as convention president, he would be an ex-officio member, as would Doug Sager, the newly elected TBC president. **B&R**

# Missions focus features partnership, MRM

By Connie Davis  
Baptist and Reflector

JACKSON — About 1,000 people gathered for the last session of the Tennessee Baptist Convention annual meeting on Wednesday night. It was one of the biggest crowds in recent years at that session.

The program focused on two areas of missions work coordinated by Tennessee Baptist Convention Executive Board ministries — Partnership Missions and the Mississippi River Ministry.

## Partnerships

Terry Sharp of TBC Execu-

tive Board ministries was accompanied by representatives of the Carioca Baptist Convention, which encompasses Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, to introduce the Carioca/Tennessee Baptist Partnership. It was adopted by messengers on Tuesday. Belardin de Amorim Pimentel, general secretary of the convention, his wife, Heloisa, and Elizabeth Oates, missionary there, participated. Sharp, a former missionary to Brazil, translated.

Pimentel said the six million people of the city have many problems, including materialism, violence, immorality,

and secularism. His hope is that Tennessee Baptists can "produce evangelism and a social impact" on the city's people.

Goals of the partnership he detailed were to strengthen 25 small churches, build 10 church facilities, strengthen urban work, hold evangelistic crusades, support homes for the homeless, conduct health care work, and hold educational exchanges.

The city is like a "great hidden treasure," he said, if considering the souls which are lost and hidden there.

In accepting the challenge of the three-year partnership, James Porch, executive director, TBC Executive Board ministries, said the new partnership will help Tennessee Baptists "focus on the vision of the world in need."

Sharp also reported that 1,198 Tennessee volunteers participated in the three-year partnerships with Poland and Canada. Additionally, 141 volunteers have served in Costa Rica. That partnership began at the beginning of this year.

## Mississippi River Ministry

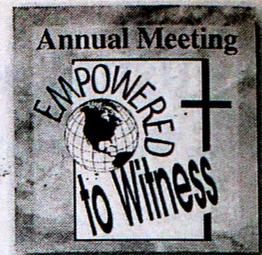
The report on the Mississippi River Ministry included testimonies, a video, and a tableau of kinds of ministries

portrayed by dramatists.

Tim Cox, pastor, Brinkley Heights Church, Memphis, told how Ruth Turner was helped by volunteers who painted her house. As a result, she became a Christian before she died of leukemia this year.

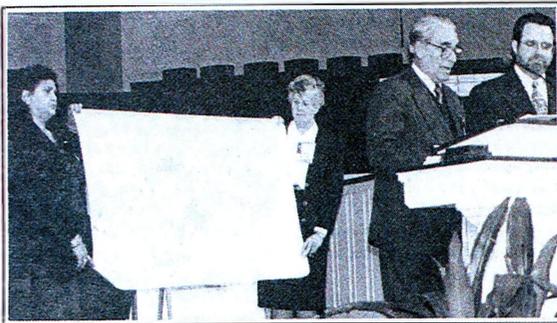
James Henderson, pastor, Zoe Church, Memphis, told how volunteers helped his congregation rebuild after a fire caused by a mechanical malfunction. In just 10 months, he said, the congregation has grown from 56 to 100, which includes 30 new Christians.

Suzanne Frost of Bolivar, a student at Union University, told about serving as a summer missionary for Madison-Chester and Crockett associations. "I pray that God will



open our hearts to the people that we never knew existed in our own Jerusalem," she said.

Finally, a video, produced by TBC Executive Board ministries, showed numerous kinds of MRM ministry, including the Church (Without Doors in Memphis; Hispanic work of First Church, Bells; multi-housing work of Monument of Love Church, Memphis; and the Sugartree Truck-stop Ministry of Carroll-Benton Association. B&R



**SPEAKING** that night is Belardin de Amorim Pimentel, second from right, general secretary of the Carioca Baptist Convention, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, along with Terry Sharp of TBC Executive Board ministries, who is translating. Showing a map of the convention is Heloisa Helena Ribeira de Amorim Pimental, left, and Elizabeth Oates, missionary in Rio de Janeiro.



**LAWRENCE HUDSON**, 1998 Mississippi River Ministry prayer coordinator, along with wife, Lee, speaks as different aspects of the ministry are portrayed in tableau format.

## As usual, convention messengers are vocal ...

— Continued from page 3

✓ The convention's closing session on Wednesday night featured a stunning feature on the Mississippi River Ministry (see story above).

The various ministries that are a part of the overall project were presented for messengers.

✓ Main addresses during the two-day session were given by Herbert Higdon, convention president; Jerry Tidwell, West Jackson Church pastor and convention sermon speaker; James Porch, TBC Executive Board executive director; and Bob Reccord, president, North American Mission Board.

Higdon's message keyed on the convention theme, "Empowered to Witness."

He said that the diversity which Baptist groups prize can be a problem, and was, even for Christ's disciples.

He said diversity is not as important as unity of the group, referring to the Tennessee Baptist Convention.

"Tennessee Baptists will never conquer in the name of Jesus until there is unity among us," he told the messengers.

He added that when the love of Christ is put first, total fellowship will follow.

Jerry Tidwell, who gave the Convention Sermon in place of Gary Coltharp who no longer is at First Church, Jackson, placed the Great Commission at

the center of his message.

He said that when Baptists focus on things other than the mission to preach the Gospel to the whole world, a dull ax will result.

He said Tennessee Baptists must sharpen their axes and work toward implementing Christ's mandate.

Like Higdon, he said the diversity is a common thing among Baptists — but it's wrong to major on "two umbrellas."

As long as we are under God's Word, one large umbrella is sufficient, he said.

Porch's message dealt with the vision of Tennessee Baptists' vision for lost people in the state and the world.

He emphasized that the vision must be "balanced with a clear and unmistakable focus upon the task before us."

✓ Messengers approved the speaker for the convention sermon in 1998, and an alternate.

Richard Emmert, pastor of Manley Church, Morristown, will give the sermon, and Robert McCray, First Church, Dandridge, is the alternate.

✓ Messengers attempted to overrule President Higdon on his decision to refer the Executive Board's statement of affirmation of the three colleges back to the board, but efforts fell far short of a two-thirds majority which was needed.

Joey Rosas and Ray Newcomb, Executive Board members, spoke in favor of convention affirmation. Rosas said,

"This statement of affirmation does not mean we approve of everything our colleges do, but that we should take any concerns directly to the colleges, contact the trustees."

Newcomb said that any Tennessee Baptist with concerns should go to the schools. "I've learned that if I get the proper information and take any evidence to the colleges, they will give me the answers."

Higdon sent the statement back to the Executive Board.

✓ Several special features were included in ministry reports from the institutions, colleges, and Executive Board staff.

For example, Gail Kennedy of Knoxville, a special friends camper at Camp Carson last summer, sang from her wheelchair. Concluding her song about "If You Believe in Love," she admonished the messengers to "just keep on giving."

✓ Two former TBC presidents nominated candidates to the presidency.

Ray Newcomb, 1994, nominated the eventual winner, Doug Sager. He presented him as a family man who is faithful to his Master, and faithful in every phase of his ministry.

Jim McCluskey, 1986, nominated Earl Wilson. He reminded messengers of Wilson's 40 years of service with Tennessee Baptists — his experiences as a pastor and then as president of the

Tennessee Baptist Foundation. He remarked that Wilson was not a candidate of any group and was theologically sound.

✓ As a result of a motion made by Dan Haskins, the Committee on Arrangements will consider whether to begin the annual convention on Monday and conclude on Wednesday afternoon.

Haskins said some state conventions now are beginning on Monday. He said it might help boost attendance at the last sessions.

Committee Chairman Joe Stacker said input is welcomed from Tennessee Baptists.

✓ On one occasion several messengers shouted approval of an action taken, and were told by Higdon, "If you want to holler, go out and do it in the streets."

The Wednesday afternoon business session became entangled with motions and discussions, counter proposals and chair action. Several times, convention officers had to huddle with Parliamentarian Reed Dixon and convention attorney Randal Davis.

Theme devotionals by Hoyt Wilson, James Best, Roger Freeman, Larry Fields, Mike Glenn, and Tommy Vinson were "on target."

Next year's meeting is in Kingport's MeadowView Convention Center, Nov. 10-11. B&R

# Was it a good annual session? Well, mostly

Where would you expect to find harmony and discord together under the same roof — in a crowd of 2,155? Where could you find two strongly opinionated but differing groups meeting together with many of the same faith beliefs and goals?

Where would you see unanimity on some issues and loud disagreement on others? Why, at the annual session of the Tennessee Baptist Convention, of course!

Last week as the 123rd annual session was held at West Jackson Church, Jackson, it was evident that this diversity, much discussion, and many suggestions could have rattled President Herbert Higdon at times. But he was never short of help. He did an exceptional job of presiding in fairness. Vice presidents Vern Powers and Lynn King, and parliamentarian Reed Dixon were valiant helpers.

And if they ever needed help in those maddening minutes, there were 2,155 messengers present to tell him what to do — and they sometimes did.

Some may think a radical shift of direction is imminent for the Tennessee Baptist Convention; we don't think so.

The new officers of the convention, all conservative pastors, work for the best interests of the convention and answer to their constituency. There was a measure of success for groups of conservatives who openly sought to "get out the vote." They

did just that. They probably were responsible for the election of Doug Sager and Hollie Miller.

They also had promised to challenge reports of the Committee on Committees and the Committee on Boards. They abandoned that strategy when it became apparent that both committees nominated enough candidates to satisfy — for the time being. As one conservative leader expressed it, "this is just one step."

The close vote for the presidency shows the equality of division between Tennessee conservatives and moderates. Even so the entire idea of labeling Tennessee Baptists is repugnant and confusing to some of us. As one perturbed pastor confessed, "I just want someone to tell me what I am. Why do we have to have these labels?" he asked.

Sager, candidate of at least one conservative group, defeated Earl Wilson by 116 votes. In an even closer vote, Knoxville pastor Miller was elected first vice president. Better known as a member of the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee than any involvement in TBC affairs, Miller won by 17 votes of 1,000 cast, in a runoff.

He beat Rockwood pastor Jim Hutson, currently a member of the TBC Executive Board, who has been involved for many years in convention service.

It's true that TBC officers have little power as such, but they do have involve-

ment by virtue of the office prestige.

Some may question whether conservatives provided the voting numbers to elect their choices — or whether it "just happened." It only takes a quick review of convention history to remind us that we have elected "conservative" leaders before.

Some quick observations:

✓ It's easy to second guess actions of others, but some laymen should have been placed on the Relationship Focus Group. They would have put some salt and light into the study. The committee makeup is good, but has few new faces and that may weaken it.

✓ Tennessee Baptists need to focus on the many good results of the meeting. We need to support in prayer and action, the Relationship Focus Group, be thankful for a good year in CP giving, be encouraging to all our leaders, and appreciate the lack of challenges to the committee reports.

✓ The messages were excellent and the six devotionals were superb. They were on target with the witnessing theme.

✓ We need to stop carping at each other. A measure of our love for Christ is how well we get along together. When we don't respond to biblical truths, hard times are ahead.

✓ About the Pastors' Conference — how refreshing it was that Jimmy Terry was elected to lead that group — the first of his race to do so! — *WFA*



just for today

by Fred Wood, pastor emeritus, Eudora Church, Memphis



Start with a smile

Jimmy to his father: "Teacher told us today in school that English is our mother tongue. Why do they call it that?"

Father: "Well, Jimmy, I think it's because we daddys seldom ever get to use it."

Take this truth

That statement isn't fair to women, is it? Men are probably as bad if not worse about "getting people told off." Which gender exceeds the other is not the question. All of us need to control our tongues and learn to let others have a part in the conversation. Try it. You'll be much more popular with your friends.

Memorize this Scripture

Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing. — Proverbs 12:18 NIV

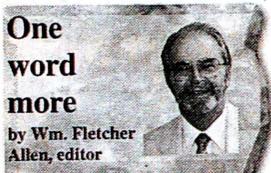
Pray this prayer

Lord, help me to remember the tongue offers a great medium for communication. Help me to use it wisely. ■

Who said that?

A view of the Bible that affirms its divine inspiration and total truthfulness is of little value if it is not accompanied by an enthusiastic commitment to the Bible's complete and absolute authority. An approach to the subject of biblical authority must begin with God himself, for in God all authority is finally located. — *David Dockery, The Doctrine of the Bible, Convention Press, Nashville, 1991*

## Thanksgiving invokes memories of Puritans



One word more

by Wm. Fletcher Allen, editor

They dropped anchor on the shores of the new land, land unknown and offering promises — on November 21, 1620.

They had crossed the wild and broad Atlantic, still only partially charted. They had voyaged under the stars and bright sun, sailing through dismal, foul weather at times, often catching the full wind in billowing sails, and sweeping them ever westward.

They numbered 102, an insignificant band of hardy pilgrims, offshoots of a group of Protestants known as Puritans.

They were bold enough to believe they could purify the Church of England from within. When tyranny and the status quo balked at every suggestion of change and blocked each attempt at renewal with violent

reaction, these Puritans separated themselves and set up their own congregations.

They were "separatists." Under the leadership of William Brewster, they fled persecution in England — thence to Holland — and in 1620 to form the beginnings of a Christian colony on the beaches of America, the strange, unexplored virgin land of tall tales and tall trees.

We can well imagine that these pilgrims walked the decks of the Mayflower during the long voyage, thinking of the hardships to be endured in establishing a new colony in a wilderness.

Perhaps Brewster or William Bradford or another "sailor" leaned against the prow on a bleak night and cried aloud to God for guidance. More than likely, they had prayer meetings, and in the dimly lit cabins read the Bible.

There were 42 free men aboard who gathered to forge an agreement of government. Men such as Edward Winslow, Isaac Allerton, Samuel Fuller, Christopher Martin,

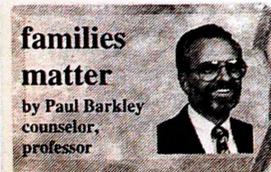
Richard Warren, Moses Fletcher, Thomas Rogers, Miles Standish. And yes, John Alden, the cooper, was there too.

Well, there was something to be done before they put ashore. They talked about the necessity for good government, these seaway pilgrims. They talked about stable leadership, for assurances of liberty — both civil and religious.

They wrote a priceless document, known now as the Mayflower Compact. And though the wives did not sign, we can be sure they discussed it also — Rose Standish, Catherine Carvell, Sarah Eaton, and others.

They were thankful, and told God so. They brought out of their heritage the old home harvest. Though more than half their number perished during that first harsh winter, they had a bountiful harvest — and a few months after the Plymouth Colony was established, they honored God with a day of Thanksgiving. William Bradford decreed that prayer and thanks would rule the day. God grant that we forget not that idea. *B&R*

## Using your eyes to communicate with other people



families matter

by Paul Barkley, counselor, professor

One of the important ways that we all communicate with each other is with our eyes. "Gaze" has been described as the way we use our eyes to give information, receive information

and establish relationships. The way we look will determine how we get information, give information, and get involved with those in our family as well as others.

The gaze is one of the most effective ways of getting information. We use the gaze to monitor the appearance of others and their response to us. The old adage to "keep your eyes open" is very appropriate for

the effective communication in the family. By doing this we can tell how family members feel physically, how they are responding emotionally and sometimes even the early warning signs of drug abuse, depression, or other problems.

A study among anorexic teenagers found that they made less eye contact and maintained eye contact for shorter periods of time than subjects in the control groups. It is vitally important that we keep our eyes open to get all the information available in the family.

The gaze is also effective for giving information. It is a way of regulating whose turn it is to talk and to listen. The term often used in communication process is feedback. In a conversation the speaker will usually establish eye contact but break it before beginning a long discourse. He will then likely make periodic

checks to see if the listener is still listening. The speaker uses the gaze to make sure the listener is "still there." The listener can use the gaze to signal both interest and disinterest as well as agreement and disagreement.

The third way the gaze can be used is to get involved or establish relationship. This is done by expressing emotions such as surprise, fear, happiness, dislike, sadness, etc. A study found that patients who received a longer gaze from their clinician tended to talk more freely, to present more problems, and to give more information. This emphasizes the importance of gaze when we desire to get involved with the other person.

The way we look at each other in the family can help control information gained and given, and the involvement we gain. ■

# Sharpen axes, swing away at Great Commission

By Lonnie Wilkey  
Baptist and Reflector

JACKSON — Tennessee Baptists need each other so they can swing sharp axes and chop away at the Great Commission, Jerry Tidwell declared.

Basing his message on Ecclesiastes 10:8-10, Tidwell observed that "when we become so consumed with things other than the Great Commission, we swing a dull ax rather than a sharp ax."

Tidwell, pastor of the host church, West Jackson, delivered the annual convention

sermon during the morning session Nov. 12.

"Are you swinging a dull ax? Are you focused on what God has called you to do?" Tidwell asked.

Tidwell noted the text from Ecclesiastes deals "with us being the very best we can for God."

The focus, he continued, is to lead men, women, and children into a faith-relationship with Jesus Christ.

Tidwell made three observations about swinging a sharp ax.

(1) Dedication does not always translate into success, he said.

He credited Baptist preachers for being more committed to their professions than any group in the entire world.

Yet, dedication to the task alone will not get the job done, Tidwell said. The fact is, he continued, "we have become unfocused, diverted from the Great Commission."

Tidwell related his life changed when he discovered the simple truth that evangelism is supposed to be fun and that he could no longer do it (grow a church) himself.

"What you see here (at



**JERRY TIDWELL**, pastor of West Jackson Church, delivers the annual convention sermon.

West Jackson) is a result of mobilizing people" committed to outreach and evangelism, he said.

(2) The task is worthy of our best effort." The last thing Jesus said, Tidwell observed, was to "go win the lost."

"A lot of us have become content with guarding the fort. We're not doing anything else in terms of evangelism and what God wants us to do," he said.

He noted Baptists so many times become consumed with the wrong things and thus swing dull axes.

"Sometimes we are so divided among ourselves that we shoot ourselves down. And, a

lot of times, we shoot at one another. I've taken my share," he admitted.

Yet, Tidwell continued, "I want to point you to the task, to develop a sharp ax we can swing."

(3) "Iron sharpens iron," Tidwell said.

"We need one another."

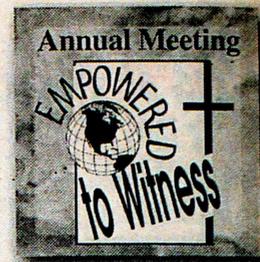
Tidwell said he is convinced "that as Tennessee Baptists we can have a large, large umbrella as long as we're under God's Word."

Yet, he cautioned, there "is not room for two umbrellas" in the Tennessee Baptist Convention.

Tidwell praised the leadership of TBC Executive Director James Porch and the state convention staff. "I don't know of a state convention anywhere with a finer group leading them than what we have in Tennessee.

"We need to be in this thing together," he continued, aligning up under one umbrella supporting Southern Baptist Convention missions agencies. "We can't follow what we've seen in Texas," he said (see story on page 10).

Tidwell said that does not mean Tennessee Baptists cannot be diverse. "We can handle some diversity as Tennessee



Baptists. We cannot handle being divided," he said.

He shared a story about his congregation. "We have some in our church who would walk on the pews on Sunday morning if we let them.

"We have others who wouldn't clap if Jesus walked down the aisle.

"That's diversity. But on Tuesday night they go out together to win souls for Jesus Christ."

Tidwell reminded messengers "we are called to be the light of the world. When light is diffused, it shines, but doesn't accomplish a whole lot. But when light is focused, it can set the woods on fire or cut through metal.

"It's time for us to focus the light and sharpen our axes," he urged.

Tidwell related there are 4,200 Southern Baptist missionaries across the world. "They deserve more than a divided convention....

"When we leave tonight, let it be said we left swinging a sharp ax." **BER**



**HOST PASTOR Jerry Tidwell** of West Jackson Church enjoys a moment with his daughter, Chrissy.

## Porch encourages Tennessee messengers to 'build upon the rock'

Baptist and Reflector

JACKSON — Rocks have a multitude of purposes but they shouldn't become projectiles "to distract us from our God-given vision and focus," Tennessee Baptist Convention Executive Director James Porch told messengers during his message Nov. 11.

It is best to drop the rocks and build upon them for God, Porch said.

Basing his message on John 8:1-9, Porch shared two examples of rocks that have been meaningful in life: the diamond he gave to his wife Lynn 35 years ago and the "big rock" he moved near 20 years ago — Monteagle Mountain.

The diamond he gave his wife "remains the symbol of the strength of our love for the past 35 years," he said.

Monteagle Mountain is a reminder of endurance. It never seems to wear away, he observed.

Over the years, however, he has discovered that some rocks are symbols of fear and discouragement. Unfortunately Baptists carry around some of those rocks.

"Satan uses rocks of hurt to divide and divert our attention from carrying out the Great Commission," Porch noted.

In discussing vision and focus

Porch observed that "vision without focus can lead to trouble."

Tennessee Baptists have a vision for three million lost people in the state, plus four and one-half billion other lost people around the world, Porch observed.

"This vision is before us — a vision which has been bestowed upon us by our Lord as our mandate and responsibility.

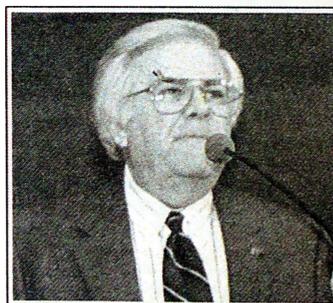
"It is unsettling and perhaps even dangerous if this vision is not balanced with a clear and unmistakable focus upon the task before us," Porch related.

A vision must be focused, Porch said. He shared a story about a family vacation several years ago. Armed with a new camera he took photos of Yellowstone National Park. When he returned home he discovered that several times he failed to focus the camera properly and he lost many of those beautiful scenes.

"We will lose the vision if we are not in focus," he stressed.

Porch reminded Tennessee Baptists that Jesus kept his vision clearly focused. Jesus saw the individuals, not just the multitudes, he related.

"That is is message to us — for Tennessee Baptists to keep our balance of vision and focus. ... Maintain-



**TBC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR James Porch** speaks to convention messengers during his address on Tuesday afternoon.

ing the delicate balance of vision and focus will depend on whether or not we exercise the best choice concerning those rocks we may carry."

Porch shared several options for what Tennessee Baptists can do with their rocks.

(1) Holding the rock. In the story found in John about Jesus and the woman who was about to be stoned, the men were armed with their rocks ready to kill the woman who had committed adultery, Porch said.

"It has occurred to me that there are times when we walk around hold-

ing rocks, spreading intimidation and anxiety, perhaps even unknowingly."

When this happens, Porch continued, "we will destroy community and togetherness."

(2) Throwing the rock. "Once rocks are thrown, direct contact between adversaries are widened and the chances of reconciliation are eliminated," Porch said.

(3) Dropping the rock. Porch said at first he thought the best option for the rocks was to simply drop them, as the men did in the Bible passage.

On further thought, Porch said, he came to realize we need to drop the rocks and begin building upon them.

"I believe Tennessee Baptists are weary and tired of the load of carrying rocks. Our Lord waits for us to turn loose of rocks we might hold so that he can build his kingdom.

"His kingdom cannot be built while we hold our rocks. God will only build with rocks that we surrender to him."

Porch told Tennessee Baptists now is the time to "lay aside every weight which so easily besets us. It is time now to turn the rocks loose for God to build upon," he said.

"I put my rock on the altar and I invite you to do the same so that God might build upon the rocks," Porch concluded. **BER**—Lonnie Wilkey

# NAMB president addresses messengers

By Connie Davis  
Baptist and Reflector

JACKSON — Bob Reccord, new president of the North American Mission Board based in Alpharetta, Ga., spoke during the Tuesday evening session of the convention.

He suggested Christians already are "Empowered to Witness," the theme of the meeting, but the challenge is not to "get redirected," he said.

"It's so easy to forget the only reason God's still got you here is to tell others about Jesus Christ and to build churches in which to grow them up," stated Reccord.

He directed the crowd to Joshua 1, in which Joshua was given direction for claiming the Promised Land. From this passage, Christians can learn how to claim the United States and Canada for God, explained Reccord, because "we're in a raging war."

From this Bible passage, Christians



BOB RECCORD points during his message to make a point. — Photo by Connie Davis

can learn to be individuals, to be interdependent, to be intense, and to be intimate with God, he said.

## Be individuals

Joshua was called by God to fill the role Moses had filled, Reccord said, but he wasn't told to be like Moses.

"We start out like originals, but so many of us end up as carbon copies," said Reccord.

Christians should remember that leaders of the faith like Abraham, Noah, Moses, and Samuel were unique individuals who did not lose their individuality as they served God, he said.

"I don't care where it is you're serving, God doesn't want you to be Adrian Rogers," said Reccord. "He's looking for you to be who he created and called you to be."

## Be interdependent

Despite the need for individuality, Christians also need to be interdependent, said Reccord. He said the agency he leads relies on that needed attribute of Christians.

"There's not a thing we can do by ourselves. It is absolutely essential that we are in partnership with you," he stated. He further explained the relationship of the NAMB with Tennessee Baptists by saying, "We are there to serve you."

When he was a pastor, said Reccord, he learned that many churches and church leaders are competitive. But that's not the approach of the NAMB, he said.

## Be intense

Joshua also was told by God it was going to be tough to take the land, observed Reccord. Christians face a similar challenge in a spiritual battle in North America, he added.

A measure of the spiritual battle can be determined by considering the recent action of President Clinton to attend a gay rights rally, he said. By his presence, the President "seems to authenticate an alternative lifestyle."

"Oh, Mr. President, if indeed Christ lives in your heart, please replace political expediency with biblical authority," declared Reccord, as the crowd applauded.

He also noted the battle will be difficult, despite the religious media programs which teach Christians should have lives of ease.

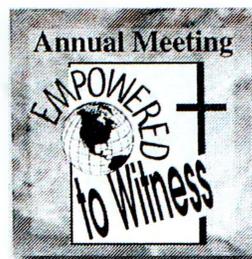
To participate in the spiritual battle, the NAMB has four focus points, said Reccord. The NAMB will focus on strategic cities, ethnic congregations, student populations, and missions volunteers, he explained.

In the top 50 U.S. cities, 57 percent of the population lives; and in the top 10 U.S. cities, 33 percent live, said Reccord.

In those metropolitan areas, one out of every four Southern Baptist churches exist. However, outside the South, only one of every 10 Southern Baptist churches exist.

How many people must those churches serve? In the South, there is one Southern Baptist church for every 6,600 people; but outside the South there is one Southern Baptist church for every 35,000 people.

The needs are generally greater in



Canada, Reccord added. In the U.S. one Southern Baptist exists for every 16.6 people; in Canada, the ratio is 1 to 3,640.

Ethnic congregations are a focus because they are growing, he said. These congregations worship in 113 languages in North America each week. Also, in statistical terms, it only takes 11 ethnic Southern Baptists to baptize one person, whereas it takes 44 Anglo Southern Baptists to baptize one person.

The student population is a focus because this age group is more receptive to the Gospel and because most schools aren't being impacted with the Christian message, he reported.

The NAMB will work toward placing missions personnel in towns and cities to coordinate outreach into schools, he added.

Also the agency will work toward appointing 100,000 young people in 2000-2001 to short-term projects, in partnership with the Baptist Sunday School Board.

## Be intimate with God

Reccord called the crowd to meditate on the Bible and follow it because only then, as Joshua 1 promises, will one have good success. Reccord also directed Christians to memorize the Bible.

"It is time for Christians to move out and go to war," he said. B&R

# President Higdon directs messengers to keys to unity

For Baptist and Reflector

JACKSON — Herbert Higdon, president of the Tennessee Baptist Convention, spoke on Tuesday morning, addressing the question of why Tennessee Baptists aren't "Empowered to Witness," the theme of the annual meeting.

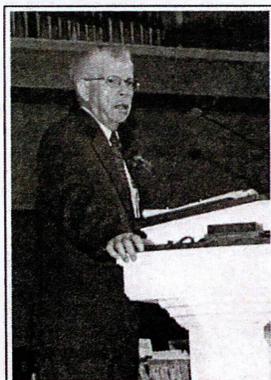
Despite the education and skills of Tennessee Baptists, 60 percent of Tennesseans are unchurched, said Higdon, retired director of missions, Madison-Chester and Crockett associations, based in Jackson.

Tennessee Baptists can learn from Joshua 3, which details the directions of God to Joshua to help him lead the Jewish people to claim the Promised Land.

The Jewish people faced many obstacles, such as fear of failing again as their ancestors failed when they tried to claim the land 40 years previously. The Jewish people also feared crossing the river because it was flooding.

God told them to prepare to claim the land by sanctifying themselves "because tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you," noted Higdon.

Just as those people who



SPEAKING during the Tuesday morning session is Herbert Higdon, president of the convention. — Photo by L. Wilkey

lived long ago followed their priests and crossed the river despite their fears to claim the land, Tennessee Baptists can claim this state for God, he said. The purpose of Tennessee Baptists in claiming the state would be to give every Tennessean an opportunity to know God, Higdon explained.

Tennesseans should follow the example of those people, but instead "we have allowed selfish sin and fear to mar the purposes of God for us.

"If we are to achieve any measure of Kingdom success, it will be only because we follow God," he declared.

## Unmarred future

Joshua and Caleb still remembered the crossing of the Red Sea, reported Higdon, but that had occurred a generation ago. God's challenge to take the land represented a new venture which is another parallel to the challenge for Tennessee Baptists.

"Just like Joshua, we have not passed this way before," he stated.

No one can predict the future, he said. Tennessee Baptists should be encouraged by the fact that missions knowledge has been broadened and possibilities are greater because of technology in today's world.

However, economic conditions in the world are less secure, the population is more pluralistic, and the world is more secular, he added.

The challenge for Tennessee Baptists is great because of these final factors, said Higdon. Humanism rules in today's world. "People are in charge of their lives and God has nothing to do with it," he reported.

In the future, Christian must present "a moral, Christian view to a new generation," which is almost a "lost generation," he suggested, because the church has emphasized social ministry over evangelization.

## Importance of diversity

Higdon acknowledged the current discussion concerning the call for diversity of representation on TBC boards and committees by at least two political groups in the state.

Diversity was a problem even for the disciples, he noted, referring to their complaints that Gentiles and Samaritans were being accepted by Jesus. Diversity "is secondary to the thing that binds us together as children of God," he said.

## Set yourselves apart

To prepare for claiming the land, God told the Jewish people to sanctify themselves. By this, he meant they were to set themselves apart, explained Higdon.

Actually, each person is sanctified before he or she is born, he said, which is one reason abortion is sin. Each Christian is "a saint whether you act like it or not," he said.

However, Christians need to make sure they remain sancti-

fied by confessing their sin to God. Even Baptist preachers sometimes "don't like to admit that we have any sins to confess," said Higdon.

## Finding unity

Tennessee Baptists will "never conquer in the name of Jesus until there is unity among us," said Higdon.

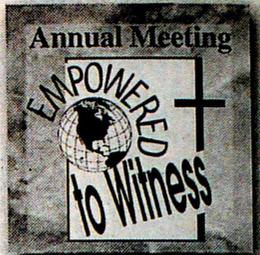
It won't be found in an organizational structure or through "doctrinal hair-splitting, one-upmanship, or trying to stay ahead of our fellow Baptists," he proclaimed.

"If we sanctify ourselves, if we clean up our lives, churches, clean up our act, God will do wonders among us," said Higdon, referring to the Scripture.

Tennessee Baptists should "really love others," but that is conditional on the accomplishment of sanctification and on following God's direction, he explained.

"It's love that actually puts Jesus first in our lives," he said, and love that will lead to "total fellowship with Jesus Christ."

"We do not need to get sidetracked with self-aggrandizement or self-centered secularism," he declared. B&R — Connie Davis



**At Pastors' Conference**

# Speakers focus on critical leadership roles

By Kevin S. Trowbridge  
For Baptist and Reflector

JACKSON — A cold, rainy day didn't deter pastors from across the state gathering for worship and encouragement Nov. 10 in the new sanctuary of West Jackson Church.

The 1997 Tennessee Baptist Pastors' Conference focused on the theme, "And God Gave Some ... Teachers ... Evangelists ... Pastors."

**Teachers**

Albert Mohler Jr., president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., opened the conference with a sermon based on the parable of the sower (Luke 8) and drew parallels to today's ministerial responsibility.

"Our business is not the sovereignty of the seed, but it is the sowing of the seed," he said.

"Ministry is stressful and challenging," said David S. Dockery, president of Union University here.

Basing his message on II Corinthians 1, Dockery noted three practical benefits can come through times of distress in a person's life.

- (1) Being able to identify and comfort others.
- (2) Being able to identify with Jesus who suffered so others could have life with God for all eternity.
- (3) People are energized for



**ELECTED OFFICERS** of the Tennessee Baptist Pastors' Conference were, from left, John Rushing, Northside Church, Columbia, secretary; Edgar Pierce, Cedar Grove Church, Kingsport, vice president; and Jimmy Terry, Tabernacle Church, Clarksville, president.

future ministry because their hope is in the Lord's strength.

Dockery encouraged pastors to maintain their faith and passion for God even in the midst of rejection and silence. For six hours, God was silent as his only son hung on the cross, Dockery recalled.

"Sometimes in the silence of God, he is accomplishing great things in our life."

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary President Charles Kelley Jr. concluded the morning session by reminding conference participants that "God has chosen us for serving in his field."

**Evangelists**

Evangelist Ron Herrod of Oak Ridge began the afternoon

session with a call for revival in our nation. "America is no longer a Christian nation," he said. "The problem is not in the White House; it is in God's house."

Herrod urged pastors to return to the basics of the Word of God and cited homosexuality and abortion as issues that have led to the fall of America.

Jackie Kay, evangelist from Millington, observed "there are times when we (men in ministry) need to be inspired, chastised, and encouraged."

He cited several instances when a person knows he can trust God.

Kay instructed pastors to

"rest in your defender, Jesus Christ.

"Our people are tired of hearing about Jesus from us. They want to see Jesus in us," he exclaimed.

Baptist Sunday School Board staffer Don Mathis concluded the afternoon session by reminding pastors Jesus "was moved with compassion when he saw human need. And, our churches should be in the business of meeting needs."

He challenged conferees that if there is "anything in your life that keeps you from reaching people one by one, lay it down, and don't pick it up again."

**Pastors**

Knoxville pastor Hollie Miller of Sevier Heights Church encouraged his counterparts in ministry to "preach the Word.

"Your task is not to be successful, but to be faithful," he reminded.

"We're in a society going down. On the way down are you and I willing to stand up and share the Gospel?" he asked.

The Bible is the sure, saving, sacred, sufficient Word of God, Miller said.

Another Knoxville pastor, Doug Sager of First Church, Concord, emphasized the call of God.

"I have never gotten over my call," he said.

He noted the call of God is sovereign, singular, significant, specific, and sufficient.

"Pastors, God has called you to be ministers of the Gospel. Preach the Word of God ... Quit messing with stuff that doesn't matter and stick with the stuff that does."

Sager encouraged young pastors not to get discouraged. "Go back to where you were called. Remember God is still faithful to you."

Fred Wolfe, evangelist from Mobile, Ala., closed the evening session by focusing on the importance of the presence of God.

Programs are good, he said, "but we must have the presence of God. It's futile without it."

When God's presence is manifested, things will be accomplished, Wolfe said. Holding up his Bible, Wolfe said, "I'm tired of people writing books telling me what God can't do. I've got a book that tells me what he can do." — **B&R** Associate Editor Lonnie Wilkey contributed to this story.

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Mountain Top CONFERENCES

# 'Extravaganza' provides missions fun, interaction



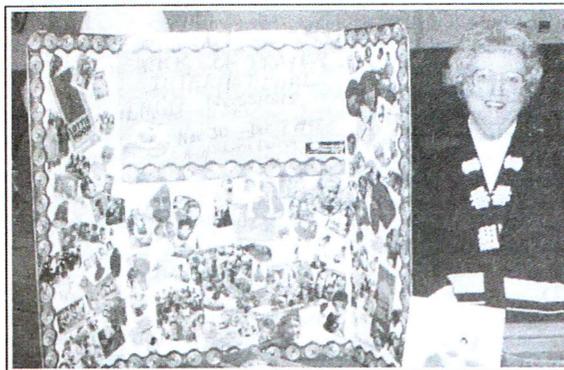
**AMANDA DAY** of Tennessee Woman's Missionary Union paints the face of Jenny Binford of Leawood Church, Memphis, during the Missions Fair at First Church, Jackson. **BELOW**, Pastor Jim Growden of Hillcrest Church, Nashville, has fun playing a game.



**CLOWNING AROUND** with balloon animals is Jimmie Lynn Phillips of East Union Church in Jackson.

**JACKSON** — An estimated 400 Girls in Action, Royal Ambassadors, and adults met Southern Baptist missionaries and enjoyed hands-on missions activities during the Missions Extravaganza sponsored by Tennessee Woman's Missionary Union Nov. 10 at First Church, Jackson. The missions event was held prior to the annual meeting of the Tennessee Baptist Convention Nov. 11-12 at West Jackson Church.

Participants walked through a Missions Fair where they could meet and talk with retired and furloughing missionaries and enjoy games and activities. **B&R**



**RETIRED MISSIONARY** Ramona Hall Mercer of Jackson reminds Tennessee Baptists of the upcoming Week of Prayer for International Missions. — Photos by Lonnie Wilkey



**GLORIA PATTERSON**, right, of Haywood Hills Church, Nashville, visits with missionary Clara Lynn Williams at the Brazil exhibit.



**CHERYL NEWBERRY** of First Church, St. Bethlehem, and her young friend, Allison Thomas of Liberty Grove Church, Jackson, visit with missionary Merna Jean Hocum.



**JAMES AND LAURA** DeJulio, and their daughter, Janina, stand in front of their exhibit at the Missions Fair. The DeJulios lead the Hispanic ministry at First Church, Bells. Janina is an adopted child from Honduras who hopes to return to that country some day as a missionary.

## Messengers enjoy 'stroll through the park' between convention sessions

*Baptist and Reflector*

**JACKSON** — The fellowship hall of West Jackson Church was magically transformed into a picturesque park for the annual meeting of the Tennessee Baptist Convention.

Between (and sometimes during) sessions, messengers could

take a break and stroll through the park, enjoying cokes, popcorn, cookies, and donut holes along the way.

At the same time they were introduced to TBC Executive Board ministry staff and learned of their ministry assignments. Messengers also could visit with representatives from TBC and

SBC institutions.

"We were trying to present a relationship-building atmosphere in keeping with the annual meeting's theme of 'Empowered to Witness,'" said Beverly Smothers, display team leader.

She noted the display team wanted to get away from the traditional "trade show" approach for the Executive Board ministries. "We wanted to provide a relaxed atmosphere conducive to fellowship," Smothers said.

Included in that atmosphere were opportunities to "snack." Messengers had access to popcorn as they came in and also refreshments provided by the Baptist Student Union of Jackson State Community College.

According to Maurice Hays of JSCC, they served over 2,000 donut holes, 2,500 cookies, 2,800 Cokes, and 1,000 cups of coffee.

Most of the food and drinks were donated to the group, Hays said.

Donations were accepted from messengers and the BSU group earned between \$350-\$400 that



**UNION UNIVERSITY** student volunteers Julie Bradfield, left, of McKenzie, and Tiffany Warren of Gallatin pass out popcorn in the exhibit area. Visiting with the volunteers and enjoying the treat is Brent Lay of Englewood Church, Jackson.

will be used for summer missions.

Smothers explained major props for the exhibit area are constructed every three years. This year's exhibit will be used at future conventions and at other times, she said. Cost was kept below budget thanks to volunteer labor, she added. Particularly helpful were Herb Adams of First Church, Alamo; Billy Futrell, West Jackson Church;

and Rita Randolph McCall of Jackson. In addition to Smothers, display team members included Amanda Day, Bruce Edwards, Irel Harrison, Gary Rickman, Leanne Robbins, Tim Bearden, ex officio. Melanie Allen, ministry assistant, also assisted the display team.

"We appreciate the affirmation we have received," Smothers said. **B&R** — Lonnie Wilkey



**TBC MESSENGERS** learn about Executive Board ministry groups and institutions at the exhibit area which featured a park theme.

# Texas Baptists approve new plan, elect Dilday president

Baptist Press

AUSTIN, Texas — Messengers to the Baptist General Convention of Texas approved an Effectiveness/Efficiency Committee plan for an array of new convention initiatives and elected former Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary President Russell H. Dilday Jr. as BGCT president during their Nov. 10-11 meeting at the Austin Convention Center.

The E/E committee's report was opposed by the Southern Baptists of Texas conservative organization, which argued that the initiative will pull the BGCT away from the Southern Baptist Convention. And, after the vote, a new Baptist convention in the state became more likely, according to a Nov. 11 report in the *Dallas Morning News*.

"We have started the machinery in that direction," SBT President Miles Seaborn was quoted as telling a meeting of about 400 conservatives in a hotel after the BGCT's business sessions Nov. 10. Seaborn, a retired Fort Worth pastor, said the process for a new convention could begin as early

as mid-December, according to the newspaper.

Dilday, distinguished professor of homiletics at George W. Truett Theological Seminary, Waco, who was fired by Southwestern trustees in 1994, received 3,751 votes (71.1 percent) compared to 1,524 (28.9 percent) for Ted Tedder, a San Antonio layman.

Soon after the annual session opened, messengers handily defeated a motion by John Hatch, pastor of First Church, Lake Jackson, to strike consideration of the Effectiveness/Efficiency Committee report and recommendations from the convention's order of business. He pointed out several associations voted to ask that the report be postponed due to the "divisiveness and polarizing language" of the report.

Messengers voted one by one on the 16 E/E Committee recommendations that required a simple majority. The three amendments to the convention's constitution, bylaws, and articles of incorporation require a two-thirds majority approval at two consecutive annual sessions.

Key recommendations cen-

tered around ministry to families, multi-cultural ministries, theological education, partnership missions, and biblically based, Texas-focused literature for churches.

Many of the recommendations sparked extended discussion — particularly those related to theological education, missions, and Sunday School literature — and several amendments were introduced. However, messengers rejected all of the amendments from the floor and approved all of the recommendations as presented by the committee.

Debate centered primarily on issues related to the perception that the BGCT was distancing itself from the Southern Baptist Convention and to the cost of implementing the recommendations.

A constitutional amendment on messenger eligibility to the BGCT received 73 percent approval. The amendment, which still requires final approval at the Nov. 9-10, 1998, state con-

vention in Houston, would link the number of messengers to which a church is entitled to that church's contributions to the BGCT.

Convention messengers approved a 1998 BGCT projected operating budget of \$47,619,101. Of the total, \$44.5 million will come from the Cooperative Program unified budget, a \$1 million (2.3 percent) increase over the previous year's budget. The remainder will come from the Mary Hill Davis Offering for State Missions, endowments and other sources.

Of the total budget, more than \$14 million (29.5 percent) is earmarked for the Texas 2000 priorities of sharing the Gospel with everyone in the state by the year 2000 and for starting and strengthening

new churches.

About \$20 million (43.3 percent) is for the Texas 2000 priorities of equipping God's people for service and developing Christian families. More than \$7 million (14.7 percent) is devoted to missions and ministry support, and about \$5.9 million (12.5 percent) is for ministry to human needs.

In CP giving, the convention retains its current allocation of 67 percent for BGCT causes and 33 percent for worldwide causes, with \$23 million designated for SBC missions and ministries. ■

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## Life and Work Lesson

# Are you listening, God?

By James Hutson

**Focal Passage — Psalm 66:18-20; Luke 1:5-7, 13, 17; II Corinthians 12:7-9; James 1:5-7**

Preachers, authors, and Sunday School writers, to name a few, are always looking for "catchy titles" hoping the title may create some interest. Personally, I don't like the title for this Sunday School lesson. The title suggests God may not be listening when we pray. That is just not so. Everything I believe about prayer tells me that when we ask our Heavenly Father, he hears our prayers. But the lesson does raise an important point. When we ask for a particular thing and what we ask for is not given as we requested, we naturally want to know "why not?"

There are three examples of answered prayer. (A) The example of the psalmist. Here God says "Yes." In verse 16 the psalmist calls upon others to hear his testimony of what God has done for him. The psalmist testifies that he cried unto the Lord, and the Lord heard his prayer. The psalmist also testifies that if he had not confessed his sin, then his prayer request would have been refused. Sin which is cherished, indulged, and unconfessed is a hindrance to answered prayer.

(B) There is the example of Zechariah and Elizabeth. Here God says "Not now." These verses tell us that Zechariah and his wife were godly people, old in years, and childless. In biblical times childlessness was a sign of God's action. In their way of thinking, if a woman had a child, it was God's gift. If a woman did not have children, it was God who closed the womb. This godly couple had prayed for many years for a child, but now they were physically past the normal age of childbearing. On this special day, Zechariah, in the normal routine of his priestly service, encounters the angel, Gabriel, who tells him that he and his wife are going to be the proud parents of a son. This would be an unusual child who would be the forerunner of the Messiah. Persistence is one key to answered prayer. In God's good time, God's answer will come.

(C) There is the example of the apostle Paul. Here God says "No." Of all the people who prayed, you would think the apostle Paul could testify that God always gave him what he asked for. But not so. Paul agonizes over a thorn in the flesh. Whatever the problem was, it was recurring and constant. Paul wanted relief. Instead, he learned that his thorn in the flesh was a gift from God to be accepted. Most of all, Paul learned about the sufficiency of God's grace. We may be short on many things, but God's grace is always sufficient.

Prayer is the avenue for wisdom. Wisdom here is not the kind you find in the laboratory or the library. It is moral and spiritual wisdom that comes by divine revelation which is found in the study of God's Word, the leadership of God's Holy Spirit, and by prayer. James writes that our words must be matched by our personal commitment. We must be constant and determined in our prayers — not double minded — which actually means we don't know what we want.

Does God answer our prayers? Resoundingly, yes. Sometimes our Heavenly Father says "yes." That is a time to rejoice. Sometimes our Heavenly Father says, "not now." That is a time to be persistent. Sometimes our Heavenly Father says, "no." That is when we humbly bow our heads and hearts realizing that our Heavenly Father knows best. The Bible says "we have not because we ask not." Be assured that God hears and answers our prayers. — Hutson is pastor, First Church, Rockwood.

# Courage to continue

By Dennis Trull

**Focal Passage — Nehemiah 4:6-8, 15-23**

In 1865, Charles Haddon Spurgeon began to publish a monthly magazine which he named, in memory of Nehemiah, *The Sword and the Trowel*. It was instrumental in many millions of people hearing the truths of the Bible. In the first issue, he wrote, "We would ply the trowel with untiring hand for the building up of Jerusalem's dilapidated walls, and wield the sword with vigor and valor for the truth."

When we set out to work with God on any project we can expect obstacles and difficulties. Very often those obstacles or difficulties have legs, which simply means that other people can stand in our way. Nehemiah led the Jews to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem and he found himself being opposed by the people in the surrounding areas.

## Family Bible Lesson

**Dedication (v. 6).** Sanballat and Tobiah were the primary leaders of the opposition. Both of these men began to mock the Jews and their efforts to rebuild. Not only did these men hold the Jews in contempt, but incited others to join in and ridicule the Jews. Nehemiah and the people responded by dedicating themselves to ignore the ridicule and continue rebuilding the wall. Their dedication paid off as half of the wall was completed. This probably meant that the entire wall was rebuilt to half its original height. The last part of verse 6 literally says, "The heart of the people was to do the work." They were dedicated to the task. Someone has said, "A diamond is just a piece of coal that stayed on the job."

# Sure promises of God

By Michael Ruffin

**Focal Passage — Genesis 21:1-7; 22:6-8, 15-18**

Faith and hope are closely related. Genesis gives much attention to the faith in the promises of God which was displayed by Abraham. His faith is indeed remarkable, for he trusted God despite the long delay in the fulfillment of God's promises. Such trust involves hope, too. In the Bible, hope is much more than wishful thinking. Hope is a looking forward with assurance to the promises of God coming to fruition. Abraham had such hope, because he knew that the promises of God can be trusted.

When Isaac was finally born, what seemed to be impossible had come to pass. Notice how Genesis 21:1-7 stresses the actions of God: "The Lord dealt with Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah as he had promised"; Sarah conceived and bore "at the time of which God had spoken"; "Sarah said, 'God has brought laughter for me.'"

Everywhere we see that what had happened to and through Abraham and Sarah was God's active fulfillment of what he had promised. These events were the result of what God had spoken. We see here the fulfillment of the Word of God. What God speaks comes to pass. We can trust his promises.

The focal passages also lead us to consider the responses of Abraham

## Discouragement

(vv. 7-8). Those in opposition to the Jews heard about the progress that had been made on the wall and came up with another plan. It was possible for the Jews to ignore their ridicule, but it was very discouraging to hear that now they wanted to kill the Jews. At least four groups (v. 7) were joining forces to attack Jerusalem. The thoughts of being attacked began to have an impact on the people. The work began to wane and the people began to repeat the threats against them (vv. 10-14).

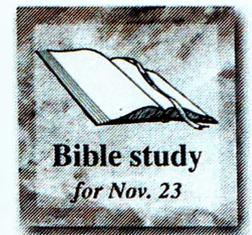
**Diligence (vv. 15-23).** Nehemiah's diligent actions and plans were a result of God's activity. God had frustrated the plans of the enemies of the Jews by revealing their evil plans to his own people in Jerusalem. First, Nehemiah instructed half his servants, probably a special group attached to him, to work on the wall while the other half was to stand guard. The last part of verse 16 most likely meant that the leaders did their part, too. Second, those who built and those who carried materials were armed with a weapon so they could be readily available to go to battle (vv. 17-18). Third, logistically, the people were spread out so Nehemiah used the sound of a trumpet to call the people to arms. But even under this system, Nehemiah reminded the people that God would fight for them. Their ultimate security was the grace and power of Almighty God. Fourth, Nehemiah instructed the people who left the city after their work shift to stay within the walls of Jerusalem for the night. This put them closer to the work and provided more defense for the city. Fifth, verse 23 indicates that Nehemiah and those who accompanied him stood ready to come to the aid of the people and always were in constant readiness for battle. James 5:11 says, "We count those blessed who endured." Let us be people of endurance in the Lord. — Trull is pastor, First Church, Savannah.

## Explore the Bible Lesson

and Sarah to God's fulfilling to his seemingly impossible promises. One response is **obedience**. Eight days after Isaac was born, Abraham fulfilled the requirements of the covenant by circumcising his son, "as God had commanded him." Also, Abraham named his son "Isaac" as God had instructed. The realization of the blessings of God through the birth of Isaac provided a new opportunity to be obedient. We are to obey God at all times, but when we sense the fulfillment of his promises, we are inspired to obey with renewed commitment.

Another response we see is **joy**. The name Isaac means "he laughs" and reminds us that both parents had laughed when they had heard the promise that they would have a child in their advanced age. Here, though, Sarah referred to the name when she said "God has brought laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me." The primary idea seems to be that people would celebrate with Sarah over this marvelous event.

The fulfillment of God's promises brings joy to our lives, and we should celebrate. When we sense that God is always with us as he promised, when we know that things have worked for good as he promised, and when we in-



deed find salvation when we trust Jesus as our Savior as he promised, there is cause for celebration. What kind of joy there will be when our hope of eternal life is fulfilled.

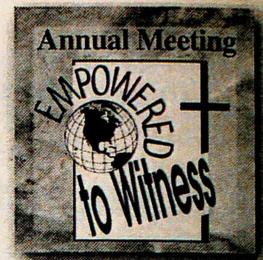
A third response we see is continuing and growing **trust**. The command of God that Abraham sacrifice Isaac causes us to reflect upon the problem of misdirected trust. The Bible reveals the tendency of people to trust in the gifts of God rather than in the God who gives the gifts. The people of Jeremiah's day trusted in the presence of the Temple in Jerusalem and forgot to trust in God and to be committed to him.

Jesus was careful not to trust himself to those whose professed following of him was because of the miracles he had performed. True following of God comes from a personal relationship with him which issues in trust. That trust is maintained regardless of what risks we must take in obedience of God or of what obvious manifestations of his blessing we have or do not have at any given moment.

So, Abraham said to Isaac, "God himself will provide the lamb for a burnt offering." God renewed his promise to Abraham because Abraham had not confused the gift with the giver.

How are we responding to the fulfillment of God's promises in our lives? — Ruffin is associate professor, School of Religion, Belmont University, Nashville.

## Scenes from the TBC annual meeting in Jackson



**JEAN WHITE** of the North American Mission Board points Pastor Tim Cox to where members of his congregation, Brinkley Heights Church, Memphis, are sitting. The church received an award from NAMB for outstanding efforts in church and community ministries.



**CARROLL KELLY**, left, interim executive director of Tennessee Woman's Missionary Union, receives a plaque from Heloisa Helena Ribeira de Amorim Pimentel, WMU president of the Carioca Baptist Convention while Southern Baptist missionary Elizabeth Oates looks on.



**BOB POLK**, right, accompanied by his wife Ruth, receives a plaque from TBC Executive Director James Porch. Polk is retiring as director of missions for Watauga Association.

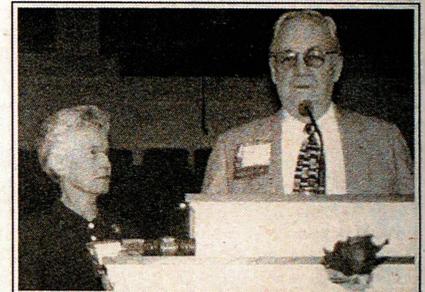
**BILL GEORGE** of the Evangelism/Missions Strategies Group shines the shoe of messenger Glenn Denton of Hillcrest Church, Lebanon, in the exhibit area during the TBC annual meeting in Jackson.



**GAIL KENNEDY** of Mt. Olive Church, Knoxville, sings during the Adult Homes presentation at the TBC annual meeting. She thanked messengers for their giving to the Cooperative Program and Golden State Missions Offering which makes possible Special Friends camps each year.



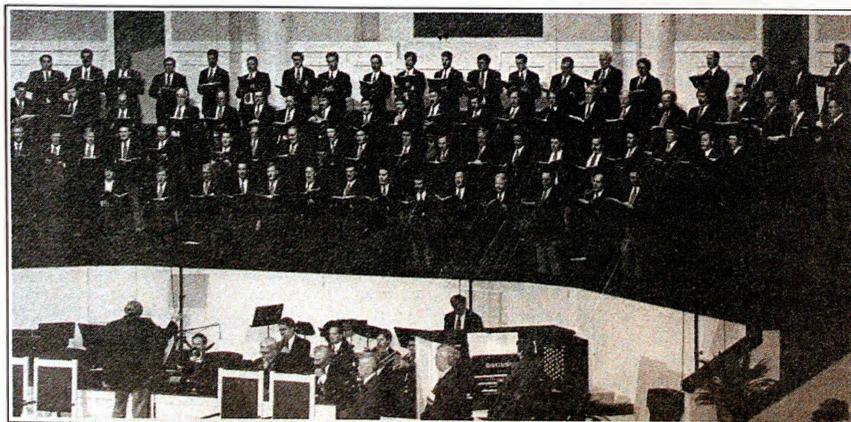
**CHARLES AND BARBARA LAYTON** were recognized by TBC Executive Director James Porch for their efforts in coordinating Tennessee Baptists' partnership with Baptists in Poland. The partnership ends Dec. 31.



**JANE AND SHERMAN HARDAWAY** of Germantown Church, Germantown, speak on behalf of Tennessee Baptists' two camps. They are co-chairs of the Camp Development Involvement Campaign.



**WESLEY PITTS**, director of missions for Cumberland Association, received a plaque from Vertis Butler of Southern Baptist Seminary Extension. Pitts recently was named Seminary Extension Center Director of the Year for east of the Mississippi River.



**THE TENNESSEE BAPTIST CHORALE**, under the direction of Julian Suggs, performed for messengers at West Jackson Church.



**DENNIS PULLEY**, right, director of missions for Robertson County Association, was honored earlier this year by the North American Mission Board with a church planting award. He was recognized at the TBC by Larry Kirk of the Evangelism/Missions Strategies Group.



**CARL PRICE**, left, of LaGuarda Church, Lebanon, and Gary Anderson, a chaplain from Bolivar, relax and visit during the exhibit area at West Jackson Church.