

T E N N E S S E E ' S B A P T I S T & REFLECTOR

Volume 166/ Number 15

Statewide Edition

April 12, 2000

this week's news

1,250 attend statewide event

Dramatic Arts Festival celebrates new century

By Todd Starnes
Special to *Baptist and Reflector*

FRANKLIN — Approximately 1,250 Southern Baptists from several states attended the Tennessee Baptist Convention's 2000 Dramatic Arts Festival, held March 31-April 1, at First Baptist Church here.

"Prepare the Way, A New Century for Christ," was the theme of this year's combined festival. In previous years, the festival has been held in three separate places.

"We wanted to bring everyone together for a big festival to celebrate the new century," said coordinator Ev Robertson, a faculty member at Carson-Newman College in Jefferson City.

Plans are being made to return to the traditional regional festivals for the 2001 season, he noted.

From clown troupes to drama teams, the festival featured a Who's Who in the world of Tennessee Baptist performing arts including Images, Re:Creations, Tom Toombs, Matt and Darlene Tullos, and Jeff Atwood. A team of 46 faculty members taught more than 100 workshops ranging from interpretive movement to beginning mime.

The workshops were designed to reach



RE:CREATIONS, comprised of Charles and Rebecca Reese, First Baptist Church, Maryville, present a skit during the recent Dramatic Arts Festival held at First Baptist Church, Franklin. — Photo by Justin Cook

the needs of both small and large congregations. And the classes were structured to challenge even the most veteran stage actors.

"That's one thing I really appreciated about this conference," said Belmont University student Bethany Clark. "There was something for everyone."

With a large number of students involved in this year's festival, organizers planned a Friday night youth rally that featured Fusion, the student ministry

praise band at First Church, Franklin, led by MTSU student Craig Shuff.

"This was an incredible weekend," said Rena Page, of Paris. "It was so much fun worshiping together and using the performing arts to glorify God."

Renee LaFever, of Fairview Baptist Church in Lebanon, agreed. "It really helps to meet other people that are working on drama too," she said. "That's why I appreciate this festival."

In addition to workshops and worship services, the church was transformed into a performing arts shopping mall, with many exhibits from drama companies, costume stores, and props stores.

"It was very exciting around here," said drama coordinator Scott Shepherd. "But there was just a wonderful sense of worship as well."

This year's coordinating team included Sheridan Barker, clowning coordinator, from Manley Baptist Church, Morristown; Linda Grammer, puppetry coordinator, Crieewood Baptist Church, Nashville; Ev Robertson, festival director; Shepherd, drama coordinator, First Church, Franklin; Julian Suggs, festival consultant; April Vincent, festival administrator; and Penny Williams, festival administrator. ■

Jesus models Christian response to stress, leaders say

By Ken Walker
Special to *Baptist and Reflector*

CEDARMORE, Ky. — The bad news: It's a stress-filled world whose pace is likely to accelerate. The good news: Jesus Christ modeled a way to live in his grace amid the tensions caused by rapid change.

That was the message of several speakers and workshop leaders during a recent deacon-pastor-spouse retreat here at Cedarmore Baptist Assembly.

An underlying theme of the conference was the need to pray about daily challenges and pressures.

Like the introduction of *A Tale of Two Cities*, keynote speaker Les Hollon said Charles Dickens' classic describes life in the 21st century: the best of times and the worst of times. Despite the fruits of progress, the technological age poses many challenges, he said.

Using Matthew 9 as an illustration, Hollon, pastor of St.

Matthews Baptist Church, Louisville, recounted that Jesus endured a daily routine filled with demands and criticism. He healed people of various diseases while bystanders either blamed the victims for their illness or mocked him, Hollon said.

Jesus also persuaded Matthew to follow him and confronted John's disciples who questioned his methods. And he was verbally abused by skeptics before the day concluded, he said.

"Stress is the inner accountability of expectations," he said, noting some stress can be good.

Antidotes to unhealthy stress, Hollon said, include laughter, dedicating one's life to God each day and confessing the need for his wisdom, reconciling personal relationships within the family and church, and praying about anxieties and meditating on God's goodness.

The most dramatic example of relying on God to answer the

stress of life came from Skip Ford, deacon chairman at St. Matthews Church. He described drawing closer to God as his wife, Ruthie, struggled with a fatal neurological disease. She died Dec. 31.

"The only prescription (was) you must learn to live with it. Her strength was strong because of her confidence in God's grace.

"We had to learn to live with stress and with the fear, anger, and frustration of a disease that wouldn't go away," Ford said.

"Our spiritual strength was challenged and tested, yet we chose to live in God's grace," he related. "Experiencing peace in the stress of today will not be found in an absence of distress, but in a relationship with Jesus Christ."

Some people try to pretend stress doesn't exist or wrap the string of pressure tighter around their emotional box, said Chris White, pastor of First Baptist Church, Carrollton.

But stress has consequences that can't be outworked or escaped, said White, who led a workshop on stress and leadership.

He told of recently recognizing his own workaholic tendencies and said he must make changes to avoid health problems, including heart attack.

White noted that adequate rest, a good diet and exercise, a sense of humor, and a stable home are positive choices that can counteract the stress of life.

"Most of what we feel from stress isn't from outer forces," he said. "It comes from our core beliefs and conflicts with meeting (others') expectations. The answer to stress comes from within."

"It can be stressful to go through the days Jesus did, but he was eating and drinking from a relationship with God," White said. ■ — Reprinted with permission from the *Western Recorder* in Kentucky.

Addition expands TBC Web site

By Marcia Knox
Special to *Baptist and Reflector*

BRENTWOOD — The most recent addition to the TBC Web site — the TBC Discussion Group — provides online forums for discussion about topics related to various ministries and services, according to Denise Stott, TBC Communications Services Web site/communications specialist.

The goal of the new feature is to provide a helpful, interactive environment that facilitates open and focused communication among participants, she said.

The new TBC Discussion Group, which went online April 4, has expanded the capability of the TBC Web site. See Addition, page 3

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➤ **Web Site** — www.tnbaptist.org

➤ **Publisher** — Tennessee Baptist Convention Executive Board

➤ **Convention Communications Committee:** Mattie Mullins, chairman; Benny Keck, vice chairman; Randall Cummings, Mark Gregory, Jerry Legg, Mark Mangrum, Wallace McGill, Bob Osburn, Vern Powers, Glenda Roach, Michael Smith, Joseph Sorah, Ambers Wilson

➤ **Postmaster** — Periodical postage paid at Brentwood and at additional mailing office. (USPS 041-780) POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Baptist and Reflector*, P.O. Box 728, Brentwood, TN 37024.

➤ **Frequency of issue** — Published weekly except for the weeks of Christmas, New Year's, Fourth of July, and Labor Day.



Printed on recycled paper

Says church historian

SBC unlikely to disappear 'anytime soon'

For *Baptist and Reflector*

JEFFERSON CITY — In just under 50 minutes, church historian Bill Leonard covered some 350 years of Baptist history.

Speaking as Carson-Newman College's 2000 T.B. Maston lecturer, Leonard, dean of the Wake Forest University divinity school, explored the glories, excesses, and external critiques of what was once understood as the "most intact religious subgroup in contemporary America."

Leonard's visit marked the 10th anniversary of the T.B. Maston Lectures on Baptist history. Maston, a C-N alumnus, was professor of Christian ethics for more than 40 years at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas.

Leonard noted Baptists were not looked upon highly by their earliest critics. He said that dur-

ing those early periods many saw being Baptist as disgraceful. "They (Baptists) don't all agree on one tune," Leonard quoted Anglican pastor Charles Woodmason as writing just prior to the American Revolution.

Leonard, a former church history professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., said the use of "Baptist" as a pejorative term declined in the mid-19th century. The tide, he said, shifted around 1830 when Baptists, along with Methodists, became the majority in both rural and urban areas of the South.

As their congregations grew late in the century, Southern Baptists were establishing a religious hegemony and became seen as the equivalent of the "Catholic Church of the South."

Leonard went on to note the great impact on Southern life and culture caused one observer to assert: "In the South, Baptists are the center of gravity."

By the 1970s, Southern Protestantism — and particularly the Southern Baptist Convention — was seen as among the most intact and powerful subculture in contemporary America, Leonard observed. "Indeed by the mid-20th century, growing up Southern Baptist seemed relatively easy. You knew where you stood on Sunday and throughout the week," he said.

Leonard's discourse included the historical consideration of the "fundamental and moderate issue" and the dispute over inerrancy. He also discussed the rise of the "mega-church" and cited some positive aspects of new energy breathed into Baptist life such as the growth of 10 or so new theological schools in less than a decade and the fact Baptist students are attending a variety of theological schools.

Leonard expressed concern that "the controversy has impacted the stability and system



of the denomination in many ways." Among examples he cited were some connections between convention entities: churches have been hindered that at least two state conventions have splintered, new organizations have cropped up, some individual churches have dropped "Baptist" from their name.

Leonard concluded that Baptists are entering the 21st century in a state of "major transition."

"Will the SBC disappear," Leonard asked. "Not anytime soon, I would suspect."

Leonard closed his address noting that, "In the South, Baptists are no longer the center of gravity. In the Kingdom of God (we) never were. So it goes."

Movement for Bible instruction for public school students builds

By Ken Walker
For Baptist Press

KINGSPORT — Although her local school board curtailed its experiment to give public school students an opportunity for off-site biblically based instruction, Ann Bennett is continuing her push for released time education.

Her motivation is the 14-year-old boy who accepted Christ as his Lord and Savior two years ago. His cousin had invited him to attend the final term in the pilot project at a Kingsport middle school.

"The last day of class he said, 'I want to make an announcement. I've accepted Jesus as my Lord and Savior,'" recalled Bennett, a member of Indian Springs Baptist Church. "I've never seen that happen in Sunday School, let alone in front of a public school class. This is the greatest home missions opportunity out there."

After a new superintendent recommended the Sullivan County school board discontinue the one-hour, off-campus sessions, the mother of three took her fight to the state legislature.

A bill to authorize released time instruction statewide is pending in both branches of the Tennessee legislature. It was revised by a citizen group after a similar proposal last year was voted down in a subcommittee the day shooting erupted at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colo.

Similar legislation has been proposed this year in Alabama, part of a grassroots effort that supporters say will expand these classes nationwide.

Originating in 1914, released time education offers Bible classes and related subjects. These sessions, which must be conducted off campus, vary from 30 to 60 minutes. Some meet weekly, others once a month.

Although its constitutionality was upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1952, released time education sometimes faces an uphill battle.

Sullivan County's board voted to scuttle the program after an atheist complained she should be allowed to offer classes in her beliefs, Bennett recounted. Last January, a

school board in Lubbock, Texas, voted 6-1 against a proposal from a citizen-led group.

Despite these obstacles, supporters believe the movement is on the upswing.

"We hope we're on the verge of an explosion," said Dave Johnson of Knoxville, a missionary with CBM Ministries who oversees programs in three Tennessee counties. "People are so frustrated with the lack of religious instruction in public schools they want to do something. Most school boards don't know about it and are afraid to take the first step."

The executive director of a new, national association promoting released time education said programs have sprung up this year in California, Oklahoma, and South Carolina. In addition, he has received requests for information from several other states.

Bob Entner of the BEST (Bible Education in School Time) Network said whenever his group publicizes its efforts, many parents ask, "Why can't we do this in our community?"

"We're real encouraged," Entner said. "This is a wonderful way of reaching thousands of kids and it's very efficient. You can teach the same lesson to students in different areas." Released time programs have been such a grassroots effort that leaders aren't even sure how many students are enrolled, he said.

Although the commonly accepted estimate is 250,000, Entner said that may be too low. He knows of 17,000 students from one Catholic archdiocese in New York and said there are Jewish and Mormon groups who probably aren't counted.

Even organizations like Child Evangelism Fellowship don't maintain a nationwide count of pupils, he said. His group is currently working to raise funds for research to verify enrollment statistics.

"We've got a lot of work to do," Entner said. "A lot of these programs are run by volunteer, stay-at-home moms and senior citizens. That's why we feel it's important to have a national organization to link them together and give them encouragement."

Bennett calls the new organization a significant step, saying it will provide more help for groups like the Sullivan County Re-

leased Time Committee (on the Internet www.isbc.org).

Bennett and a network of Christians from Memphis spearheaded the move toward statewide legislation.

Prepared with the help of attorneys who have worked with other released time programs, the proposal requires at least the parents to request classes, with all funding and liability assumed by the instruction organization.

"We have a black Memphis sponsor in the House and a white rural senate sponsor which reflects most released time programs," Bennett said. "They're in the inner city, rural areas. It meets resistance in the suburbs. They have the best schools and they don't need God."

"We always meet anti-Christian bigotry from people who don't want the Bible taught," she added. "But released time has been part of the school day since 1914. It was here before family life education, AIDS education or drug and alcohol education. Arguments against it are brought up by people who want total religious confinement."

The president of the Southern Baptist Convention's church-state agency, meanwhile, has called released time the best alternative for offering Bible instruction to public school students without church-state problems.

Richard Land, president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, said recent guidelines to offer "fair and impartial instruction about the Bible in public schools will be a nightmare."

"Those with the best of motives who have been pushing teaching the Bible in public schools are going to hate the results when the lawyers and school administrators get through with it," he said.

Under released time education, Land said, "a Catholic, Protestant, Jewish or Muslim student [can] be 'released' during ... to be instructed in his understanding of the Bible by a qualified, religious teacher from a faith perspective under a syllabus worked out jointly between representatives of the faith tradition and the public-school officials." ■

Tennesseans preview IMB training program

by Marcia Knox
for Baptist and Reflector

NASHVILLE — How do you witness to someone from another country who doesn't even have the word "God" or "sin" in his or her vocabulary? How do you politely eat food from another country that looks like worms and smells like it too?

A select group of 50 Tennessee Baptists learned how to better prepare for an international mission trip when they reviewed the new International Mission Board pilot program — the International Missions Training Institute — during the Minister of Missions Conference March 29-31 at First Baptist Church here.

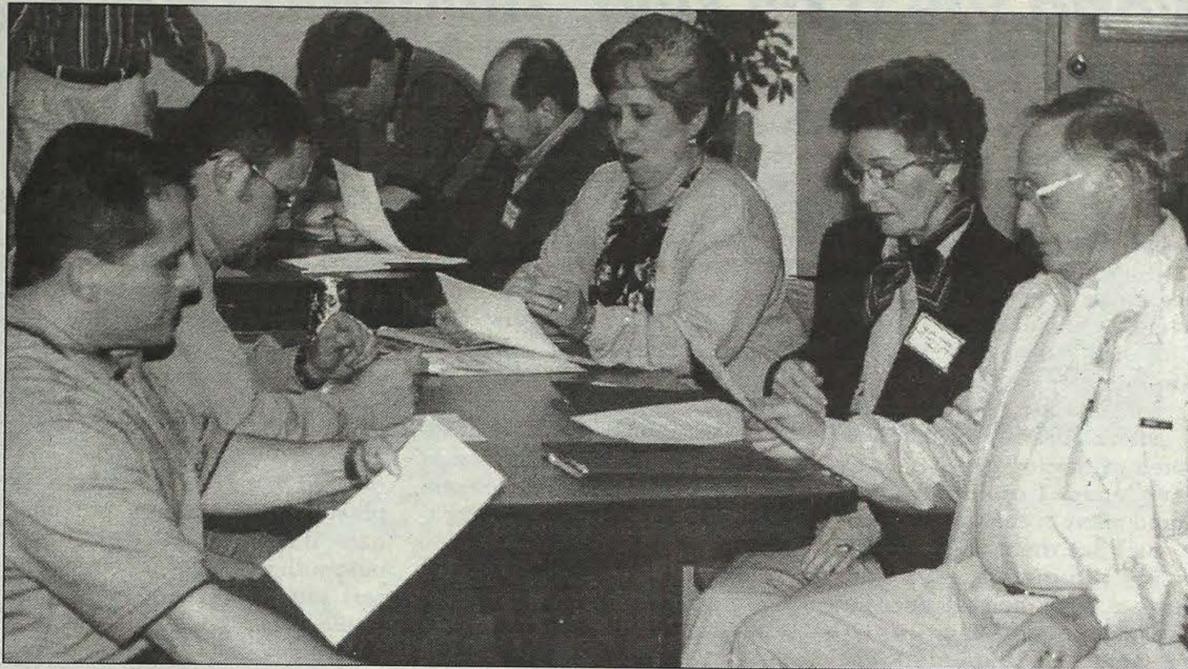
Sponsored by the Tennessee Baptist Convention's Partnership/Volunteer Missions team and staffed with trainers from the IMB, the conference catered to the information needs of ministers of missions and missions coordinators in churches across the state.

"Mission groups who experience cross-cultural training receive an awareness of the area before they serve on the field," said Steve Peek, minister of missions at First Baptist Church, Concord, in Knoxville.

"This additional training helps volunteers to be more in touch with their feelings, and the feelings of the people that they are trying to reach," he continued.

"If we are more in tune with their culture, then we can be better prepared to be successful on mission trips. We can eliminate costly mistakes for the team, and the missionaries on the field," Peek added.

Leading the training for the IMB were Corella Ricketson,



ANSWERING QUESTIONS in a group case study during the Minister of Missions Conference at First Baptist Church, Nashville, were, from left, Chuck Tanner, Silverdale Baptist Church, Chattanooga; Alfred Burgess, Whitten Memorial Baptist Church, Memphis; Ted Holmes, Forest Hills Baptist Church, Nashville; Jerry Highfield, Two Rivers Baptist Church, Nashville; Linda Crouch, Grace Baptist Church, Tullahoma; and Helen and F.B. Fisher, First Baptist Church, Humboldt.

cross-cultural training resources associate director; Bill Cashion, volunteer missions department director; and Tom Warrington, volunteer missions department, Spanish South America and Middle America associate director. Bill Morgan, IMB public relations vice president, spoke on Global Priority Churches.

TBC speakers included James Porch, executive director-treasurer; Tim Bearden, Missions Awareness and Involvement Group leader; and Terry Sharp, Partnership/Volunteer Missions team leader.

Ricketson told conference participants that "the foundation in cross-cultural training examines and calls for the participants to examine their own culture to learn while recognizing similarities and differences

in another culture along with communication.

"The training is highly interactive centered on biblical basis, missiological issues, cross-cultural inventory, and witnessing," Ricketson said.

She led those attending the conference in "hands-on" activities where key issues of cross-cultural differences were discussed. Case studies of true incidents that occurred on mission trips were passed out to three groups and each group was asked to develop solutions.

"Most mistakes we make on the mission field are made with good intentions," said Cashion, who hosted volunteer mission groups when he served as a missionary in Venezuela.

"When we see a great need on a mission trip, we want to be a blessing to the people.

Sometimes our good intentions backfire with the culture.

"We need to learn how we go about working with the people, but give the people something they can use or maintain."

In the case studies, most of the mistakes resulted from communications breakdowns on the field, Ricketson noted. "You don't have to solely rely on a missionary to learn about the country that you are going to visit. Go to the country's Web sites. There is a whole new world of information online that we can access."

The TBC Partnership/Volunteer Missions team stands ready to assist volunteers with valuable resource information online through the TBC Web site at www.tnbaptist.org and through their office, Sharp told conference participants. ■



Glatt joins TBC staff

For Baptist and Reflector

BRENTWOOD — Roderick J. Glatt has joined the Evangelism/Missions Strategies Group of the Tennessee Baptist Convention as black church extension specialist.

Glatt will work to help establish new African American churches across the state.

He has been serving as pastor of Second Missionary Baptist Church in Lebanon since 1994.

For the past year he has worked as program coordinator/office manager for the Metropolitan Human Relations Commission.



GLATT

He also is a former publications coordinator for the National Baptist Publishing Board.

Glatt holds the bachelor of science degree from Tennessee State University, Nashville. He also has done additional graduate work there. Glatt received a bachelor of theology degree from American Baptist College, Nashville, and plans to begin the master of divinity, pastoral care, program at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky. ■

Addition to TBC Web site expands online capability ...

Continued from page 1

In addition to browsing TBC Web pages, e-mailing state missionary staff, and registering for events, TBC Web site users can now meet their peers online and respond instantaneously on various topics.

"People who use the Internet today want experiences online," Scott said. "The TBC Discussion Group offers an online experience for Internet visitors by establishing forums for interaction and creating community, which is what communication is all about.

"This feature will assist the TBC staff by providing a platform to connect people involved in various ministries, but separated by physical distance. The Discussion Group

presents a new way to facilitate that communication," she said.

One example of an online discussion group is the Ministers of Missions forum, introduced to participants at the Minister of Missions Conference held March 29-31 at First Baptist Church, Nashville (see story above). Conference participants were able to go online and give their opinions on their meeting after they returned home and digested the materials.

Forum participants can post

new topics or replay to existing topics, Scott said. Discussions within each forum are "threaded," meaning Internet users can view posted messages and all replies to the original message. Participants also are able to see online how the conversation has developed and then add to the discussion, Scott added.

The Discussion Group is comprised of public forums (open to anyone who wants to register) and private forums (password-protected and open only to specific individuals). TBC staff members who serve as forum moderators are responsible for all discussions that take place within their designated forum. Questions regarding a particular forum

should be directed to the appropriate forum moderator(s).

There are currently 13 discussion forums available on the TBC Discussion Group. The nine public forums are Sunday School, Discipleship Training, evangelism, youth evangelism, Tennessee Baptists on Mission, Tennessee Baptist secretaries, TBC Web site, and favorite Web sites. The four private, password-protected forums are: collegiate ministers, directors of missions, ministers of missions, and Tennessee Baptist associational secretaries. Forums will continue to be added to the Discussion Group when needed.

As the popularity of the TBC Discussion Group grows,

we anticipate that people will find the online discussions to be useful and will participate eagerly in this new means of Internet communication," Scott said.

Participation in the TBC Discussion Group is simple. Log onto the TBC Web site (www.tnbaptist.org), click on the link to "TBC Discussion Group," and view active discussions. To post a new topic or reply to an existing topic, Internet users will need to register their username and e-mail address by clicking on the "register" link at the top of the Web page.

"Our hope is that TBC Web site visitors will enjoy the discussions and come back often," Scott added. ■



SCOTT

In a perfect world we'd all sing 'Amazing Grace'

Reflections

by Lonnie Wilkey,
editor



As I look into the mirror each morning and see a few more gray hairs, I realize I'm becoming a part of the older generation.

When I hear one of my kid's listening to a contemporary Christian music station, there is no doubt that I'm a full-fledge member of that generation.

In a perfect world (or at least my concept of it) we would all sing Southern Gospel music and "Amazing Grace," "Standing on the Promises," and "I'll Fly Away" would all be "required singing" in church on Sunday mornings.

Unfortunately, we do not live in such a world and I have come to the realization that the music

I like and enjoy is not necessarily the music my kids and their friends like and vice versa.

We also live in a world where many people simply will not enter into God's house and we have to find ways to reach them.

I attended YouthLink at the beginning of the new year. The event, sponsored by LifeWay Christian Resources, the North American Mission Board, the International Mission Board, and Woman's Missionary Union, had some of the loudest music I've ever heard. I could not understand many of the words.

As I sat there mentally criticizing the music, it suddenly dawned upon me that they were not singing to reach a (then) 41-year-old "fuddy-duddy." They were attempting to reach a much younger audience.

I have heard some concerns about music at the recent TBC Youth Evangelism Conference and the pre-crusade event for youth sponsored by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association.

Everyone has a different view of what music is appropriate and what is not. I have a great appreciation for music ministers who must juggle their music selection with the varied tastes of people that comprise a congregation. There are some churches where people complain that there are too many praise choruses and not enough hymns. Then there are the churches where the opposite is true.

I also appreciate youth leaders such as Kent Shingleton at the Tennessee Baptist Convention who try to balance programs that will attract some teenagers who would never go to a church service while at the same time appealing to Christian young people who do not like the "hard rock" approach of some groups. It's not an easy job. I definitely would not want it. I know for a fact that at the TBC level, Kent is sensitive to the issue and is taking a serious look at those concerns and programming for future conferences.

As I've looked into some of

the music Joanna and Daniel listen to, and read the words that are printed with the CDs, I have discovered the tapes they have do contain a Christian message. And, not all contemporary Christian music that our kids like is of the "hard rock" variety.

The presentation of the music may not be what I like, but the message is there. And while I am not familiar with the really "hard rock" music, the same probably can be said of that style as well.

Such "hard rock" music has no place in God's house, but perhaps, if used to reach non-Christian youth, it can be used in a concert setting to reach teens who would never set foot inside of a church building. Who am I to say what God cannot or will not use?

We always run a risk when we equate our opinions and what we like with the will of God.

In the meantime, I will keep my ear plugs handy along with my assortment of Southern Gospel tapes. **B&R**

prayers will ascend to God for the great way he has used those men to bless us and so many others.

God is mindful of their lives and works and they are not forgotten by us.

Frederick E.A. Johnson
Goodlettsville 37072

Strive for unity

My fervent prayer for those who unleash antagonistic and divisive words and actions against Christian individuals and institutions is that they would have a revitalizing experience of the love of God in their hearts. All who have God's genuine love in their hearts should love their brothers and sisters in the same sacrificial way that Jesus loves us, as he commanded in John 13:34-35. Surely those who really love the Lord would strive for unity in response to Jesus' prayer that his followers should be as united as he and his father are (John 17:21).

If brothers in Christ cannot be loving and united, how can a lost world believe that God's love can heal the rift between sinful man and a holy God?

Perhaps the greatest deterrent to the spread of the Gospel is not opposition from without, but division from within the

body of Christ. Let us, therefore, covenant to earnestly pray that love and conciliation would replace antagonism and division throughout the body of Christ. Let us all endeavor to put flesh on those prayers by directing words and deeds of love and healing toward all our brothers and sisters in Christ — especially toward those who would antagonize and divide the fellowship.

John Burton
New Market 37820

Dislikes music

Having attended the recent Youth Evangelism Conference in Nashville, I wish to offer the following opinion.

The speaker preached the Word of God. Powerful testimonies were given. A part of the music program was very uplifting. Although much of the program was excellent, and many made decisions, I do not believe they did so because of the part of the program which was given to extremely loud, hard rock music, in which it was impossible to distinguish the words.

This hard rock music was accompanied by smoke or vapor, flashing lights, and body contractions on the part of the singers and musicians. This would seem to be an imitation of

the very type of music we believe has done great harm to the spiritual welfare of our young people. Since the words could not be understood, we see no way a positive Christian message could be delivered to the hearers.

We fear that such a musical program at a Baptist event sends a clear message to youth that we sanction hard rock music, perhaps changing only words which can't be understood anyway. I cannot imagine my Lord Jesus presenting any such program on the streets of Jerusalem or anywhere else for that matter. I sense something dreadfully wrong in this approach to worship.

It is argued that today's youth like such music style and we should use it for the glory of God. I have remained silent as one Baptist too long, telling myself this same thing. Using that logic, why not invite the World Wrestling Federation to perform at our next conference, since many of our youth like wrestling also.

Everything that moves is not of God. I write this letter knowing that many will not agree; however, I must stand on my convictions.

Thurman Seber, pastor
Upper Helton Baptist Church
Alexandria 37012



editorial/
opinion

just for today

by Fred Wood,
pastor emeritus,
Eudora Church,
Memphis



Start with a smile

Lady in crowded office where the air conditioner wasn't working: "I sense a strange odor. Someone's deodorant must not be working." Young man whose desk was near the center of the room: "It can't be me. I'm not wearing any."

Take this truth

We become like that which we constantly admire.

Memorize this Scripture

"Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John... they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus."

Acts 4:13

Pray this prayer

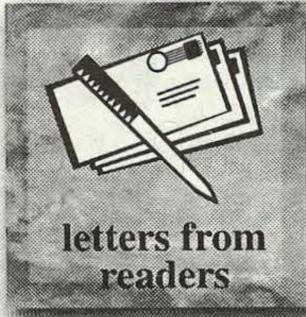
"Lord, help me to take at least critical looks at myself before I take one critical look at someone else." ■

Partnership

Prayer Requests

April

- 13 — Praise God for a 41-member BSU S.P.O.T.S team from Belmont University, Nashville, that worked March 10-19 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, doing creative ministry and Backyard Bible Clubs.
- 14 — Pray for the 42nd annual meeting of Michigan WMU being held today and tomorrow in Battle Creek.
- 15 — Pray for Arabic Christian Fellowship Church in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, as the church seeks a pastor.
- 16 — Pray for David Fairchild, son of IMB missionaries Sharon and Ray Fairchild in Rio de Janeiro. David is undergoing chemotherapy.
- 17 — Pray for First Nations Church in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada, as the church seeks a pastor.
- 18 — Pray for Tuesday night Bible studies held by Marvin and Peggy Emmons, IMB missionaries in Lisbon, Portugal. Ask God to open the participants' eyes to him.
- 19 — Pray for the Baptist churches in Fatima, Portugal, who will present evangelistic opportunities on May 13 to two million Catholic pilgrims. Ask God to bless the churches that reach out.



letters from
readers

Seeks Input

This year at the Youth Evangelism Conference, God blessed youth groups representing over 650 Tennessee churches.

Please know that I highly value evaluation from all churches participating in the weekend. Your suggestions and comments help me know how I can better serve Tennessee Baptists in the future. My prayer is that God be glorified as we together whole-heartedly share the good news of Jesus Christ with teenagers in our state.

Kent Shingleton
TBC youth evangelism
specialist
Brentwood 37024

Spiritual giants

We have a wonderful fellowship at the Nashville Baptist Ministers' Conference. There is a great appreciation for one another, especially for those spiritual giants who served among us — men like James Sullivan, former SBC president, president of the Baptist Sunday School Board, and church historian.

Others have been mentioned like the great preacher, pastor, and past SBC president Franklin Paschall. Names like Albert McClellan, Porter Routh, J.W. Falwell, and Guard Green have been mentioned with admiration, affection, and appreciation at our meetings. Other spiritual giants certainly come to mind, and as they do our

Church of the Covered Dish

By Thom Tapp, pastor, Oral Baptist Church, Lenoir City



Association's 'encouragers' see positive results

Donnie Wilkey
List and Reflector

INDEN — Excuses for not going out and sharing the news of Jesus Christ are plentiful. They range from not having time to being too shy to share faith in person.

The North American Mission Board's Evangelism Response Center helps eliminate excuses. The program allows people to share Christ and talk with people from the comfort of their home.

"You can talk about Christ while sitting in your Lazyboy," Steve Atwood, pastor of Eastview Baptist Church, Huntingdon. Just make sure you have a Bible and tract with you, he added.

"It's a great opportunity to share Jesus," Atwood said, noting they have seen "marvelous results including people who have accepted Christ as Savior and others who have made public declarations."

Atwood learned about the program while attending the annual Tennessee Baptist Pastors' Conference at Carson Valley Baptist Conference Center last summer.

After hearing of the need for "telephone encouragers" from Shingleton, TBC youth



TELEPHONE ENCOURAGERS in Carroll-Benton Baptist Association include, from left, Steve and Jeal Atwood, Eastview Baptist Church, Huntingdon; John and Virginia Cole, First Baptist Church, Huntingdon; Doris and Jim Humphreys, Eastview; and Bettie and George Hill, Eastview.

evangelism specialist, Atwood and George Hill, director of missions in Carroll-Benton Baptist Association, led an effort which culminated with 38 individuals from the association receiving training from the North American Mission Board, based in Alpharetta, Ga.

Joy Neal of NAMB, who led the training for the Carroll-Benton group and is scheduled to provide training for sessions sponsored by the Tennessee Baptist Convention's Evangelism/Missions Strategies Group (see ad below), noted the Evangelism Response Center is comprised of two networks — response and followup. The response network

is comprised of "encouragers" who take phone calls from people who call NAMB's toll-free number. NAMB also is working on an internet component as well, she added.

The follow-up network is comprised of Southern Baptist churches committed to making contacts with people who call in and leave addresses, Neal said.

The program was launched at last year's SBC annual meeting in conjunction with Cross-over Atlanta. It began on a national scale in October. Tennessee Baptists joined the effort with a campaign in November centered around the Nashville area.

A media campaign provides a toll-free number individuals can call (1-888-Jesus-2000), Neal said.

Once the call is made, an "encourager" can counsel with them about spiritual needs. If an encourager is not available, the person has an option of listening to a recorded version of the plan of salvation.

"We are eager to train more encouragers so the encouragers can take more phone calls and have the opportunity to lead people to make meaningful spiritual decisions," Neal said. Since the program began there have been 65,000 calls and 522 salvation decisions. Neal pre-



dicted more salvation decisions would be recorded if there were more people trained as encouragers.

Neal observed that unlike regular outreach programs where you make door-to-door visits and hope someone will be home and be responsive, this approach normally produces people who are eager to talk about spiritual matters.

An encourager chooses when he or she is available to take calls by logging into the Response Center system, Neal said. The person who calls in does not know who he or she is talking to and calls cannot be traced.

The program is an excellent way to share Christ in a setting that is not threatening to either party, Neal and Atwood agreed.

"More people in Tennessee need to become encouragers," Atwood observed.

For more information about the Evangelism Response Center and upcoming training, call Larry Robertson at the TBC at 1-800-558-2090, ext. 2059. ■

Do You Have a Heartache for the Lost?

If so, the Tennessee Baptist Convention and the North American Mission Board would like to offer you the opportunity to be a witness for Christ without ever leaving your home.

Here is how it works: Individuals seeking spiritual help call a toll-free number and a computer will then route the call to an "encourager" who is

logged into the system at that time. The system has been named The Evangelism Response Center and is a concept whereby committed Christians are trained to become telephone encouragers.

To become involved, attend one of the free training sessions shown on the map below.

- May 11, 9 a.m.
New Harmony Baptist Church, Paris (901) 593-5276
- May 10, 6 p.m.
Judson Baptist Church, Nashville (615) 833-6606
- May 9, 6:30 a.m.
Washington Avenue Baptist Church, Cookeville (931) 526-1917
- May 8, 6:30 p.m.
Knox County Baptist Association Office (865) 693-9097
- May 8, 9 a.m.
Holston Baptist Association Office, Johnson City (423) 939-1196
- May 11, 6:30 p.m.
Madison-Chester Baptist Association Office, Jackson (901) 668-5690
- May 10, 9 a.m.
Tennessee Baptist Convention, Brentwood (615) 371-2059 1-800-558-2090
- May 9, 9 a.m.
Bradley County Baptist Association Office (423) 476-5493
- May 13, 9 a.m.
First Baptist Church, Millington (901) 872-2264
- May 12, 9 a.m.
Cordova Retreat, Cordova (901) 754-7028

Anonymous — The volunteer identifies himself or herself by first name only, and the respondent will never know the volunteer's phone number or location.

Low Risk — Since this is usually done from home it doesn't involve approaching people in public or their homes.

Accessible — Volunteers who are homebound can participate in this ministry.

Fruitful — The respondents have already shown an interest in a relationship with Christ by accessing the Evangelism Response Center.

For more information, call your Tennessee Evangelism Specialist, Larry Robertson, Tennessee Baptist Convention, at 1-800-558-2090, ext. 2059, or e-mail him at lrobertson@tnbaptist.org. Volunteers need to be growing Christians, active members of a Southern Baptist church, at least 18 years of age, and not attending high school.

Association adds 64 congregations since 1992

By Connie Davis
Baptist and Reflector

NASHVILLE — In eight years Nashville Baptist Association has added 64 congregations. Church starting or "planting" has been a focus of the staff, reported Mark Hobafcovich, language missions/church extension director until March 31. He is a new national missionary for the North American Mission Board, based in Franklin.

The work was started by Clifford Horne, church extension director, and continued by Jim Freedman, director of missions who began serving the association in 1992, reported Hobafcovich (pronounced hoh-bahf-kuh-vich). And he was well-prepared for church starting because he was helping start the Romanian Baptist Church, here. Hobafcovich began serving the association part-time in 1995 and full-time in 1998.

Why more churches?

Hobafcovich, a native of Romania, explained a person just has to have a few facts to understand the urgency of planting new churches.

In Middle Tennessee, which includes 40 counties, there are 1,539,606 people who do not attend a church regularly. Tennessee Baptists have 262 churches and other denominations have 938 churches. To provide for the 1,539,606 people not attending church, each existing church would have to provide for 1,283 more people.

In Tennessee, about 3 mil-

lion residents do not attend a church regularly. Tennessee Baptists have about 3,000 churches and other denominations may have an additional 5,000 churches. If all 3 million attended church one Sunday, each church would have to provide for 375 more people.

Despite these needs, Tennessee Baptists only started about 60 churches last year. That's less than one per association, Hobafcovich said. Tennessee has 68 associations (which are based loosely on county lines).

Why positive strategy?

Baptist congregations who view another Baptist church in their community as a threat should realize even though some members may leave to join the new church, there are enough unchurched people to fill both, he noted.

And the excitement generated by the new congregation will encourage the older congregation to conduct more outreach in the community.

Another reason more churches are needed is that existing churches can't reach some groups of people. Those groups include international groups, generational groups, and cultural groups, said Hobafcovich.

Generational groups include people in different age categories, such as baby boomers,

and Generation Xers. People in various cultural groups include professional groups, sports aficionados such as people who follow Nascar racing, and lifestyle groups such as young people who adopt alternative lifestyles. Another group could be labeled a cowboy group which is a professional/hobby group of people, he said.

Strategy

Hobafcovich said he and other leaders of Nashville Association focused on starting three kinds of churches — language, African American, and Anglo.

Thirteen African American churches were added mainly by including existing churches who were associated with the National Baptist Convention. The association led them to dually align with the Southern Baptist Convention.

Hobafcovich explained he had an advantage in building relationships with the leaders of these churches. Because he is a Romanian, he wasn't associated with past difficult relationships with Southern Baptists concerning race relations. And African American pastors were happy to realize the SBC was interested in their community even though decisions were made to phase out funding for the American Baptist College here, he added.

Of course, Hobafcovich was well equipped to help develop language congregations because of his ethnicity. Twenty-five language congregations were begun, mainly by existing

congregations.

Twenty Anglo churches were started in Nashville Association in eight years. Among the Anglo churches, about six were started by groups in existing churches which left because of differences between the church members and the group, admitted Hobafcovich.

But he likes to see this scenario in another way. These churches can be viewed as churches ready to multiply themselves although they didn't know it. Even though this kind of church plant is not preferable, "God still can use it to extend his kingdom," he added.

Finally, six churches were started in other states and Canada and Nova Scotia. Those were counted because they were efforts of Nashville Association churches, he said.

God-directed effort

Hobafcovich explained his vision for planting churches came from a passion from God for non-Christians and was shaped by the *Experiencing God* study.

"We are so busy doing our own thing we don't see him (God) as already preparing the way for us to step in and join him. He opens doors amazingly," he described.

"Actually, it's hard to keep up with what God is doing."

He explained he has gotten phone calls from people living out of the state who reported they felt called by God to call and to consider planting a church here. After receiving some information about the



growing area and some encouragement, these people have moved here and have begun churches.

He's been reminded through all of this God has a sense of humor, because he has seen God use many different people in many different situations for his purposes.

Hobafcovich also has directed the more conventional approach of church starting which is to conduct surveys by car and in person of residents, study demographics of the area, develop a proposed congregation tailor-made for the community, enlist a leader of leaders to start the church and seek financial assistance from the association, Tennessee Baptist Convention, or North American Mission Board if needed.

Leaders of effort

Jim Freedman helped develop the effort by leading the association to focus on church starting, said Hobafcovich.

And some great churches have done much of the work, he added. Among many churches he credited were Belmont Heights Baptist Church, First Baptist Church, Nashville; Bluegrass Baptist Church, Hendersonville; United Baptist Church, First Baptist Church, Old Hickory; Brentwood Baptist Church, Brentwood; and Radnor Baptist Church. **B&R**

Wright named DOM in Dyer

For Baptist and Reflector

DYERSBURG — Joe E. Wright Jr. has been called as director of missions of Dyer Baptist Association based here effective April 15.

Wright has been pastor of First Baptist Church, Minnville, where he served for five years; pastor, Greenway Baptist Church, Fountain City, Knoxville; and pastor of churches in North Carolina and Mississippi.

He is a graduate of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C., and Reformed Theological Seminary, Jackson, Miss., where he earned a doctor of ministry.

He and his wife, Teresa, have two sons, Andrew 14,



WRIGHT

TBC Communication Services wins two awards from BCA

For Baptist and Reflector

BRENTWOOD — Winners in the Baptist Communicators Association's (BCA) 36th annual Wilmer C. Fields Awards Competition were recognized for their work on Saturday, April 1 in Chicago, Ill. The awards ceremony was held in conjunction with the Religious Communicators Congress 2000, which meets every 10 years. Among this year's BCA award winners was the Communication Services Group of the Tennessee Baptist Convention.

The honors competition, named for Fields, is designed to encourage professional excellence among association members. Fields served as vice president of public relations, Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee.

Awards are presented annually by the BCA in recognition of exemplary work in a variety of categories. Almost 500 entries were submitted.

The group received awards in the Print Media/Design Division for the redesigned TBC stationery (includes letterhead, envelopes, business cards) and in the Electronic Media Division for the TBC Web site.

Eleanor Yarborough, group leader, was the project manager on the stationery. Former TBC design artist Daniel Brown was the graphic designer.

Denise Scott is the TBC Web site manager and Web Team leader, who won for the Web site.

Yarborough said, "We're honored to be among the select group of winners who were recognized for their achievements by the BCA last week. The Communication Services Group strives for excellence in all we do — as unto the Lord." ■

WMU, Nashville Association to celebrate its centennial

For Baptist and Reflector

NASHVILLE — The Woman's Missionary Union of Nashville Baptist Association will celebrate its centennial at its Annual Meeting April 27. It will be held at Creeview Baptist Church here.

Activities include a dinner at 6 p.m., program at 7 p.m. featuring Katharine Bryan, retired executive director, Tennessee Baptist Woman's Missionary Union, based at the Tennessee Baptist Convention office in Brentwood. Karla Worley, recording artist, will perform.

Other activities are to be offered at 4 p.m. and include displays, prayerwalking, a world crafts party, and swap shop of ideas.

Tickets for the meal and program (\$8 prior to April 12 or \$10 after) can be obtained through Nashville Baptist Association Office by calling (615) 259-3034. No tickets will be available at door.

Money is still being accepted to apply toward the Habitat House Nashville Association WMU hopes to build in May to celebrate the centennial. Checks can be made to NBA/WMU marked for Habitat. Gifts also can be given at the April 27 meeting.

For more information, contact Nelda Brown, president of the association's WMU, at (615) 370-8510. ■

UT players make 'spiritual plays' in off-season

Todd Starnes
Baptist Press

KNOXVILLE — The day he foot on the green grass of Neyland Stadium at the University of Tennessee, Will Bartholomew had a simple prayer request — he wanted to see his teammates accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Nearly two years later, Bartholomew's prayer was answered.

In February, Bartholomew, kicker David Leaverton, and several other teammates attended a retreat sponsored by the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. By the end of the weekend, Cedric Wilson, Eric Westmoreland, and Charles Hall had accepted Christ and three other teammates recommended their lives to the Lord.

For Bartholomew, it was a moment he won't forget. "I had been praying for everyone on the team ever since I got to campus," he said. "That's why I believe God brought me to UT, to tell people about Jesus." And Bartholomew isn't the only member of the UT football team who sports a desire to tell others about Jesus Christ. From the coaching staff to the players, some observers have noted that revival has broken down on one of the nation's most prestigious football programs.

That's not to say the road to spiritual revival has been easy. Along the way, the Volunteers have dealt with injuries, hurt, and a heartbreaking loss to the arch rival Florida Gators that ended their quest for consecutive undefeated seasons.

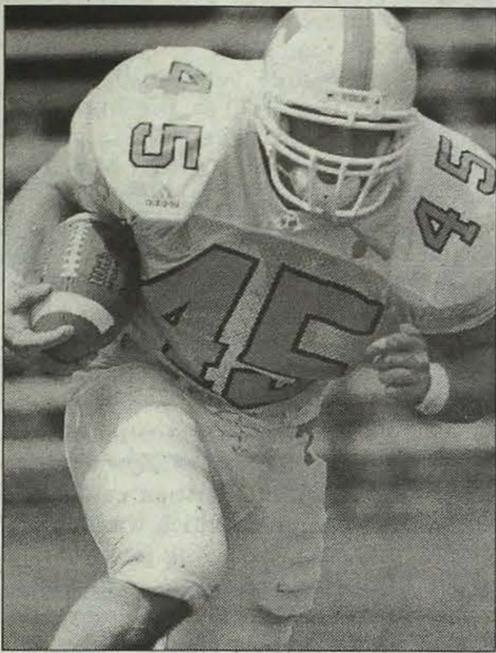
"That loss to Florida hurt pretty bad," said Bartholomew. "But like David [Leaverton] said, 'It's only a game.'"

Bartholomew credits that outlook to his relationship with the Lord. "It's like that for just about the whole team," he said.

And some members of the Volunteers have something in common — Southern Baptist ties. Bartholomew, Leaverton, coach Phil Fulmer, and sports information director Bud Ford are all members of Baptist churches.

Baptist Press recently visited the UT campus in Knoxville to learn about how their Baptist heritage has impacted their lives.

Will Bartholomew
Bartholomew's Southern Baptist roots are about as long as his family's heritage in UT. The hard-nosed fullback's grandfather played for the team during the legendary 1938 and 1939 seasons. Like his grandson, Sam Bartholomew Sr. played on the only other UT team to go undefeated.



FULLBACK Will Bartholomew charges through the line. — Photos courtesy of the University of Tennessee

Bartholomew Sr. played on the only other UT team to go undefeated.

On the field, Bartholomew is known for his tough, determined spirit. Off the field, Bartholomew carries those same qualities into his walk with Christ.

"Every morning I wake up and surrender to a higher authority," Bartholomew said. "Nothing matters in this world but Christ."

He's quick to say he doesn't do anything without consulting with the Lord — even in football. "I remember when I was trying to decide where to go and I asked God to reveal the answer to me. I prayed real hard," he said. At the time, he was considering attending another school and the decision weighed heavily.

In the end, Bartholomew listened to God and went to UT, winning two SEC championships and one national championship. And he also met his wife.

"She is such a godly woman," Bartholomew said of his wife, Shelley. "God has truly blessed me."

And if his plate wasn't full enough, Bartholomew has served as president of UT's FCA the past two years.

On Sundays, the Bartholomews worship at Sevier Heights Baptist Church in nearby Sevierville. As for the future, he said it's in God's hands. "My first thoughts are playing in the NFL or going into the business world, but I haven't ruled out the ministry either," Bartholomew said. "I'm just going to try to live like God would have me to live."

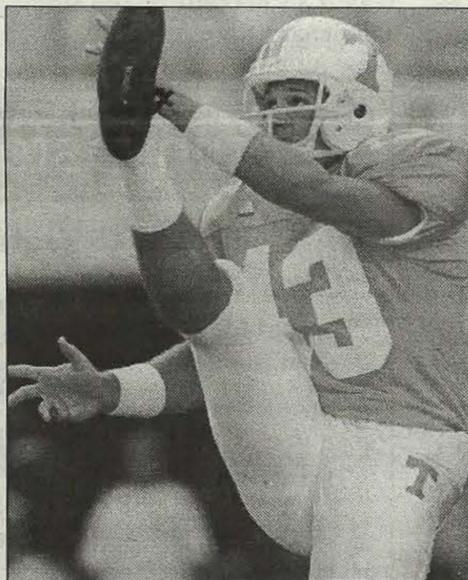
David Leaverton
Leaverton came to the hills of Tennessee from the plains of

Texas, having grown up and accepted Christ at First Baptist Church, Midland, Texas. And it was at First Baptist where Leaverton learned to be a committed follower of the Lord.

For the team's ace kicker, that means being at church every Sunday morning, even during football season.

"My relationship to Jesus is even more important than sleep," Leaverton said. "It's difficult on some weekends, but I try to stay faithful." One way Leaverton stays focused is through discipleship provided by his pastor in Knoxville.

Leaverton also finds the time to help with the youth ministry at Christ Covenant Church, a small congregation in Knoxville. "I've enjoyed the smaller church," Leaverton said. "I've enjoyed the family atmosphere."



DAVID LEAVERTON launches a punt for the University of Tennessee.

Back on campus, Leaverton has been busy helping Bartholomew disciple their fellow teammates. "Will and I are starting Bible study groups and we are helping some of the guys who just got saved," he said. "It's a humbling responsibility, but it's been such a blessing."

As for his own daily walk with the Lord, Leaverton said it's important to remember that Satan is always lurking. "We're under spiritual attack. And the best way to combat that is to spend time daily with the Lord. The Bible is our spiritual bread."

Phil Fulmer
The man responsible for heading one of the most powerful football teams in America is

a quiet, unimposing man who came to a relationship with Jesus through a combination of examples set by the congregation of First Baptist Church, Winchester, the FCA huddle group at his high school, and his parents.

"Christ has been a very strong influence in my life," he said. "He died for my sins. No one is perfect. When we do falter, his love and grace forgives us. He wants us to spread the Gospel. He has shown us how he expects us to live. It's our obligation and responsibility to live as close to these principles as we can."

As the team's head coach, Fulmer sets an example of Christian living through his relationships with the players and staff. "God is doing remarkable things today," Fulmer said. "I am blessed to have such great players."

For Fulmer, the emphasis is not on football, but family. He and his wife, Vicky, have been married 18 years. They are the parents of three daughters, Courtney, 16; Brittany, 14; and Allison, 12.

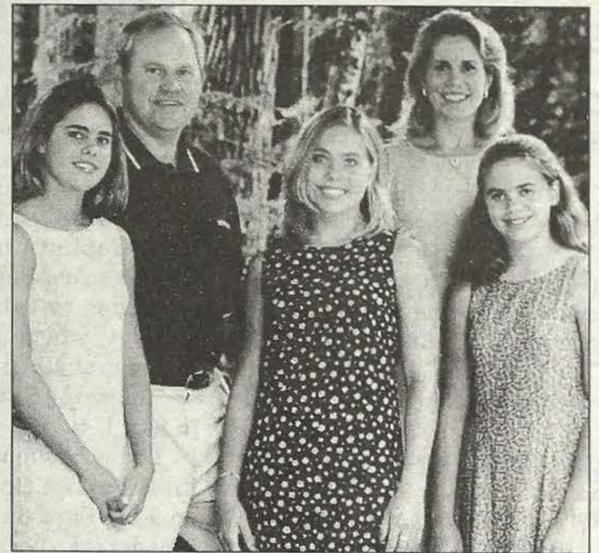
"Our family is very strong in the local church and also in the FCA. We try to have a quiet time together as a family each day," Fulmer said.

The head coach credits his wife with being a strength for him in his own walk. "My wife is a tremendous Christian lady and a real strength for me," he said.

At UT, Fulmer was instrumental in forming a FCA chapel program. "My first year here, I started a chapel program. There were six guys at the first meeting. Now we have numbers in the 50s and 60s," he said. "We have a very strong commitment to that."

And Fulmer doesn't plan on quieting his message of Christian values. "The fact that he will come again, I live with those principles every day. I share those principles with the football team."

Bud Ford
Ford and his wife, Sandra, were married at Salem Baptist



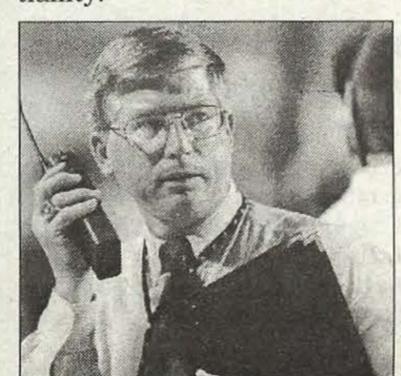
WHEN NOT ON the football field, UT coach Phil Fulmer enjoys time with his family — wife, Vicky, and daughters Courtney, Brittany, and Allison.

Church in Halls Crossroads, in 1970. They've been members there ever since. Ford, the sports information director at UT, was ordained 18 years ago as a deacon.

His wife serves on an advisory committee for the Tennessee Baptist Children's Home in East Tennessee.

Ford said it is a blessing to be around a group of athletes and coaches who are not only committed to athletics, but to a relationship with Jesus Christ.

"Coach Fulmer speaks out very well about how he feels about our athletes," Ford said. "He definitely takes a Christian stand and he is involved in programs that promote Christianity."



SPORTS INFORMATION DIRECTOR Bud Ford communicates with players both on and off the field.

Ford's office also assists players who enjoy sharing their personal testimony. "We hook up churches and players for youth meetings and other activities and we try to direct people to athletes who are willing to share their faith," he said.

"These young men are looked to as role models and they accept that responsibility," Ford said. ■



SBC CP gifts continue to increase

Baptist Press

NASHVILLE — March receipts of the Southern Baptist Convention's Cooperative Program were up 14.12 percent compared to the same month a year ago, according to Morris H. Chapman, SBC Executive Committee president.

For March 2000, SBC CP gifts totaled \$14,900,357.94, or \$1,843,971.90 above March 1999's total of \$13,056,386.04.

For the year to date, CP giving is 5.79 percent above the same period in the last Oct. 1-Sept. 30 fiscal year. At the end of March, a total of \$88,079,806.20 had been received, compared to last year's mark of \$83,257,241.19.

For the SBC Cooperative Program Allocation Budget, the year-to-date receipts totaled \$88,079,806.20, or \$8,287,934.70 above the budgeted total of \$79,791,871.50.

In designated gifts for March, \$21,461,422.89 was received compared to March 1999's total of \$21,766,337.77, a decrease of 1.40 percent or \$304,914.88. Designated gifts totals for the year were reported at \$101,494,421.38 compared to the same period a year ago of \$94,791,111.01, an increase of 7.07 percent or \$6,703,310.37. ■

Falwell's church partners with NAMB

Associated Baptist Press

LONG GROVE, Ill. — Southern Baptists are hoping to plant a mega-church in an upscale Chicago suburb starting this fall, with more-than-a-little help from Moral Majority founder Jerry Falwell.

Groups — Call Keller's Country Dorm Resort, Eureka Springs, Ark, for excellent seats at The Great Passion Play, plus lodging, recreation, and meals. All for just \$36 each. Details: 1-800-859-8952.

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Falwell's church, Thomas Road Baptist in Lynchburg, Va., has agreed to provide \$125,000 for each of the next two years. The North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention will match that amount.

It's a new strategy for the Alpharetta, Ga.,-based mission board, in which the agency seeks out partnerships with some of the SBC's largest seed money for new "regional" churches in major cities.

The 22,000-member Thomas Road Baptist Church is one of the first five Southern Baptist churches to take part in the strategy, which has an immediate goal of starting a "regional" or "flagship" SBC congregation in four U.S. cities.

The other four churches are First Baptist Church in Orlando, Fla.; First Baptist Church in Woodstock, Ga.; Prestonwood Baptist Church in Dallas; and First Baptist Church in Euless, Texas. They will sponsor new churches in Philadelphia, Las Vegas, and Boston.

Another 15 mega-churches have indicated they are interested in similar partnerships.

Falwell's formerly independent church joined the SBC in 1997 and contributed \$10,000 that first year to SBC causes through the then-newly formed Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia.

Financial support of the SBC's unified budget for the coming year at Thomas Road will be at least \$100,000, Falwell said, which will be the first time the Cooperative Program has been included in the church's budget. Prior giving has been designated gifts, he said. ■

IMB missionary resignations remain low, trustees told

Baptist Press

FORT WORTH, Texas — International Mission Board trustees, during their March 30-April 1 board meeting, received a staff report showing only a slight increase in missionary resignations last year, disproving rumors that the IMB's "New Directions" emphasis is spawning a large increase in resignations.

Trustees also approved veteran missionary leader Larry Cox as the new vice president for the office of public relations and development and received without action another committee decision to make no changes on the board's current policy on appointing divorced people as career and associate missionaries. Cox has been serving as regional leader for the board's North Africa and the Middle East region. He replaces David Button, who resigned in January to pursue business interests.

The report, presented by David Garrison, associate vice president for strategy coordination and mobilization, showed missionary attrition in 1999 was 5.35 percent of the total missionary force, now at 4,886. New appointments in 1999

more than made up for the losses and the actual number of IMB missionaries under appointment in 1999 climbed by more than 200.

The 5.35 percent attrition rate for 1999 is the highest since 1992, when the rate hit 5.55 percent. For the past 10 years, attrition rates have fluctuated between 3.8 percent and 5.55 percent.

The IMB counts resignations, terminations, and deaths in its attrition rates. It does not count retirements. The board has for years consistently had one of the lowest attrition rates of mission agencies anywhere.

The 1998 attrition rate was 3.96 percent, which was lower than the preceding four years. Garrison said a year of high attrition usually follows a low year.

The report showed only 26, or fewer than 10 percent of those who resigned, cited concerns with IMB policy or personnel. Issues pertaining to calling, stateside job offers, and matters relating to children were the dominant reasons given for the other resignations.

The report also showed that resignations tend to be higher in "older fields," such as South America and Western Europe, and lower in "newer fields," such as East Asia, and also the highest among people 41 to 50 years old. Garrison said people 41 to 50 are often struggling

with issues pertaining to teenage and college-age children and aging parents.

New Directions is the name given the board's decision three years ago to organize in such a way as to target the whole world outside North America. It includes focusing on people groups instead of countries and seeking to promote church planting movements. People groups are ethnic or socioeconomic language or socio-economic groups, of which more than 12,000 exist worldwide.

A special trustee committee studying whether to appoint divorced people as career and associate missionaries also reported that it voted 6-2 to not change the current policy, which allows divorced people to serve only as two-year International Service Corps workers. The ISC program allows for re-assignment, and some divorced people have served as many as five consecutive two-year assignments. ■

CLASSIFIED

MUSIC MINISTER: Bakers Grove Baptist Church is seeking part-time music minister, Hermitage/Mt. Juliet area. Send resume to Bakers Grove Baptist Church, 3562 Earhart Rd., Mt. Juliet, TN 37122 or call (615) 883-5039.

MUSIC MINISTER: Lucy Baptist Church (near Memphis) is seeking a part-time bivocational music minister. Send resume to Search Committee, Lucy Baptist Church, 4005 Lucy Rd., Millington, TN 38053.

YOUTH MINISTER: Part-time/bivocational youth minister needed. Position to be filled in fast growing church in east Tennessee. Must be excited, full of spirit, and willing to work in a newly established youth group. Send resume to White's Creek Baptist Church, 131 Abel Valley Rd., Rockwood, TN 37854, Attention: Matt Ellison.

YOUTH/CHILDREN: Part-time minister of youth/children needed. Contact Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, Martin, TN, (901) 587-5939.

MUSIC DIRECTOR: Gillespie Avenue Baptist Church is presently seeking a part-time music director. Please submit resumes to Attn. Kerry Lett, 1701 Gillespie Ave., Knoxville, TN 37917.

PASTOR: Resumes being sought for pastor. Growing church, new 500-seat facility, 300+ worship attendance, our pastor is retiring. Send resumes to Southside Baptist Church, 1928 Wheeler, Johnson City, TN 37604, fax (423) 926-0067.

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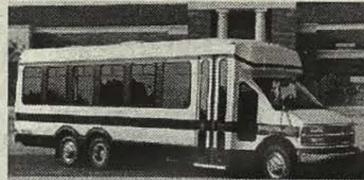
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leaders

Hilldale Baptist Church, Clarksville, recently held a 20th-long celebration observance. Pastor **Verlon Moore's** anniversary with the church. The celebration began with a special recognition for his family, vacation trip to Alaska, and a mantle clock. Moore and his wife, Jean, were honored with a reception on March 26. On Sunday, Moore, in his "State of the Church" message, urged the church to "keep the focus on souls and the future and continue to be people of faith. During his tenure at Hilldale, Moore has seen the church baptize an average of 11 per year, build new facilities and purchase property for current and future growth.



MOORE

Donald Pride of Coalfield was elected on April 2 as the new pastor of Tuppertown Baptist Church, Oliver Springs. On the same Sunday the church held an appreciation dinner for interim pastor **Be Rose** and his wife, Martha.

Lester Morelock has been called as bivocational pastor at Bays Mountain Baptist Church, Kingsport.

Joe Byars recently resigned as minister of music at Mack's Grove Baptist Church, Druden, to accept a full-time position at First Baptist Church, Norphlet, Ark.

Jerry Gallimore has

been called as pastor of Old Bethel Baptist Church, Palmersville.

■ **John Paschall** has been called as minister of music at Southside Baptist Church, Martin.

deaths

■ **John Plymton Stuart Humphrey** died April 4 in Sevierville. Humphrey, 67, was a long-time Baptist pastor and evangelist. He was president of the Fellowship of Tennessee Baptist Evangelists in 1989. He is survived by his wife, Nancy, four children, and 10 grandchildren.

■ **Anita Leftwich**, wife of Herb Leftwich, pastor of Wolf Creek Baptist Church, Silver Point, died April 1 after a long bout with cancer.

churches

■ **West Haven Baptist Church, Knoxville**, will sponsor a youth rally April 26-30. The rally will be led by Steve Roach, minister of students at First Baptist Church, Powell. For more information, call the church office at (865) 588-1416.

■ **Emmanuel Baptist Church, Humboldt**, will be in revival April 16-21 with guest evangelist John Adams.

■ **Hillcrest Baptist Church, Morristown**, recently held revival with guest evangelist Morris Anderson. There were 21 professions of faith and other decisions.

■ **Rocky Hill Baptist Church, Knoxville**, will pre-



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, GREENEVILLE, recently hosted a "Woman of Virtue" Conference. The guest speaker/Bible teacher was Kathy Lindsey of Morristown, who spoke on "Praying God's Will for your Family" and "Feasting on Fasting." The music was led by the "New Covenant" ensemble from FBC. More than 150 women attended the conference. There were 24 churches and 13 denominations represented. Among those participating, from left, were Tracy Green, FBC; Kathy Lindsey, featured speaker; and Becca Hill, Wellsprings counselor, Morristown.

sent an outdoor Easter pageant April 21-23. The event will feature a cast of 150 filling the outdoor slope of the church's back field. The pageant will begin at 8 p.m. each night. People are encouraged to bring a lawn chair. For more information, call the church at (865) 691-7685.

■ **Prosperity Baptist Church, Auburntown**, will host Jason Graves, a missionary in the Middle East April 16 who will speak during the 10:55 a.m. and 6:50 p.m. services. A luncheon will follow the morning service.

■ **Oaklawn Baptist Church, Crossville**, will hold revival services April 23-26 with guest evangelist Billy Smith.

■ **First Baptist Church, Livingston**, will host Gospel music artist/evangelist Carroll Roberson April 15 at 7 p.m. He will lead in revival services at the church April 16-19. Love offerings will be taken at all

services. Also, at FBC, the choir and drama team will present "The Door" April 21 at 7 p.m. and on April 23 at 6 p.m.

■ **White's Creek Baptist Church, Rockwood**, will host a sunrise Easter service and continental breakfast on April 23 at 7 a.m. Also, the church will host Frank and Mary Alexander, missionaries from Sturgis, N.D., on April 30 at 6 p.m.

■ **Harmony Baptist Church, Jonesborough**, recently burned a note to celebrate paying off the debt on their remodeled sanctuary six years early.

■ **Trinity Baptist Church, Cordova**, will hold a "Community Seniors Health Fair" April 27-28. Admission to the community-wide event is free. The April 27 session will be a "health-screening" day from 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. while the next day's session will be devoted to hearing loss problems. It is set for 10:30 a.m.-noon. A



THE NORTH AMERICAN MISSION BOARD has appointed Scott and Connie Price to serve in Rockvale. Price will serve as a church planter intern with Rockvale Community Church in Concord Baptist Association. He is a former pastor of Walnut Grove Baptist Church, Ripley, and youth director at Lighthouse Baptist Church, Memphis. Mrs. Price is serving as the secretary at Rockvale Community Church.

free lunch will be served on April 28, but reservations are needed. They may be made by calling (901) 759-5955.

■ The sanctuary choir of **Parkway Baptist Church, Goodlettsville**, will present its Easter musical "The Story" on April 16 at 6 p.m.

schools

■ **Carson-Newman College, Jefferson City**, will hold its Spring Pastors' Conference April 27 from 9 a.m.-1 p.m. The featured preacher will be Tennessee Baptist Convention President Jerry Tidwell, pastor of West Jackson Baptist Church, Jackson. Don Garner, chairman of the C-N religion department, will lead a Bible study on the book of Job. New C-N President Jim Netherton will be the luncheon speaker. A complimentary luncheon will be provided. For more information or to register, call (865) 471-3218.

■ **Union University, Jackson**, has launched Cross-Point, a new radio program which will feature lively conversations about the relationship of faith and culture. The hour-long program will be broadcast each Friday at noon on WWGM (93.1 FM) and is hosted by Michael Duduit, Union's executive vice president. Also at Union, Michael Medved, film critic and author, will be the keynote speaker for the Union Forum April 14 at noon. To reserve seats for the luncheon, contact Kent Freeman at (901) 661-5454.



FOURTY-FIVE STUDENTS from the Baptist Student Union at Tennessee Technological University, Cookeville, participated in flood relief in Pactolus, N.C. during their recent spring break. The group, led by Joe Wiles, collegiate ministry specialist, provided labor in repairing seven homes, as well as providing leadership for three worship services and a Backyard Bible Club.



MEMBERS OF the Baptist Student Union at Austin Peay State University, Clarksville, spent their spring break at The Four Corners Home for Children, a part of the Navajo Missions in Farmington, N.M. The mission has been home to hundreds of abused and hurting children since 1953. The team was led by Tom Timmerman, BSU faculty advisor. While at the mission the group assisted with construction and clean-up work and led a worship service at a Navajo church. Team members shared testimonies and performed skits. The team also worked closely with the children.

1999 hunger gifts second highest in SBC history

By Dwayne Hastings
For Baptist Press

NASHVILLE — Giving to the Southern Baptist World Hunger Fund finished last year on an upswing, reported Steve Nelson, director of hunger concerns for the SBC's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission.

Receipts for hunger and relief in 1999 increased 2.8 percent over the previous year, Nelson said. "God is working in marvelous ways to prompt Southern Baptists to give selflessly for the Southern Baptist-directed hunger and relief ministries," he said.

Hunger fund receipts for 1999 were the second highest in SBC history; at \$10,732,302,



NELSON

receipts were 60 percent above the giving three years earlier. Nelson said the goal for 2000 is \$12.2 million dollars.

"Hunger ministry opens countless doors for sharing the Good News of eternal life through Jesus Christ with those in need physically and spiritually," Nelson said. "The increased giving reveals that more and more Southern Baptists are gaining a passion for compassion regarding those who are less fortunate and hurting."

Gifts to the SBC's World Hunger Fund are used exclusively for ministry within North America and around the world, Nelson explained, noting that nothing is taken from the fund's proceeds for promotion or administration. Missionaries and churches already in the field utilize the funds. He noted that when giving drops, hunger and relief resources are not available and the opportunity to reach per-

sons in need can be lost.

With help from the World Hunger Fund last year, more than 10,000 professions of faith in the United States alone were recorded that could be tied directly to hunger ministries.

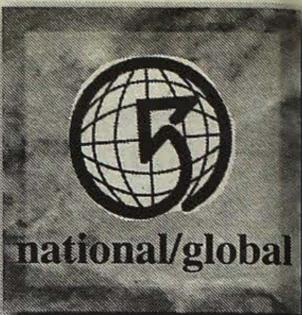
"It is vital that more people adopt the spiritual discipline of gleaning, that is, small gifts given on a regular basis rather than just one time per year," Nelson said. "This practice will raise Christians' sensitivity to the needs of those around us while also making us more sensitive to the Holy Spirit."

"God makes clear in his Word that when we fail to care for the destitute, our prayers

lack power," Nelson continued.

While Nelson was grateful for the increase in hunger fund receipts, he expressed his concern that the continued increase in the number of natural disasters around the world coupled with the full implementation of welfare reform in the United States may prompt needs to increase at a faster pace than the gifts.

Nelson said the "BEAT Hunger" youth retreat kit, dime-a-day cards for children, along with the placement of a hunger canister at the check-



out area of every LifeWay Christian Store in the nation have aided in promoting Southern Baptists awareness of the hunger fund.

For more information about the World Hunger Fund and related products call the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission at 1-800-475-9127. ■

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PASTOR: Long Heights Baptist Church, friendly, growing Southern Baptist church is actively seeking a full-time pastor. Please send resumes to Pastor Search Committee, 6960 Hwy. 423 E, McKenzie, TN 38201. Resumes will be accepted until April 15.

PRESCHOOL WEEKDAY DIRECTOR: Experience in lead classroom teaching and supervision of staff required. Degree in Early Childhood Education desired. Successful applicant will have an ability/desire to mentor staff. Benefits include insurance and pension. Resume and cover letter to First Baptist Church of Goodlettsville, 613 S. Dickerson Rd., Goodlettsville, TN 37072, phone: (615) 859-1346.

CHURCH PLANTER: Church starter needed to assist a team of sponsoring churches in a church plant near Richmond, Va. Should be a self-starter, team-builder, and excellent communicator. Key terms describing the new work are: innovative, seeker-sensitive, worship-based, contemporary, rural/suburban, growing population, strong resource base. Send or e-mail resume with cover letter by April 28 to Doug Frazier, Church Planter Strategist, Dover Baptist Association, 1200 New York Ave., Glen Allen, VA 23060, e-mail: dfrazier@netzero.com.

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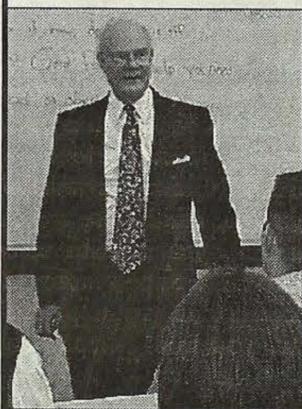
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What about now?

Jimmy Gentry

Focal Passages: Revelation 22:7-17, 20-21

Pastor John concludes his vision of strength and hope by rightly overemphasizing Revelation's central theme: Jesus is coming soon. Mention is made of the Lord's return three times and Jesus is the one speaking: *See I am coming soon* (vv. 7, 12, 20). This brought confidence to those believers who had seen Domitian's persecution in the last decade of the first century. So how does this affect the church now? How are believers to live in light of this truth? The epilogue of Revelation 22:6-21, consisting of warnings and exhortations, affirms some particulars for Christians in every generation.

Believers are to heed God's Word (vv. 7-9). John encourages his Asia Minor brothers and sisters to live an encouraging life by keeping their focus on God and worshiping him and not the emperor. Persecuted Christians are assured rescue from their sufferings in this message — Jesus is coming soon! John adds his testimony, reminding them to obey the Word by worshiping God. Believers are to follow the teachings of Scripture and thereby worship God.

Believers are to live differently (vv. 10-15). Apocalyptic writers often sealed their writings for some distant generation to open (see Daniel 8:26, 9:4, 9). John, however, is told not to seal this revelation because the time is near. While Revelation depicts pivotal aspects of the future, it is foremost writing for the present. It encourages believers to live differently in the world. God's judgment is on the wickedness of the world since his season of probation for the evil antagonists has ended and these will never be in the holy city. For the seventh time, believers are blessed if their lives have been purified by Christ. Pure living is definitely the antithesis to the vices explicated in this section. To live a Christ-like life is to avow a value system that stands with the world's. Again, the impetus for doing this is founded upon the reality that Jesus is coming soon and will reward according to each believer's work (faithfulness and obedience) on his behalf in the world.

Believers are to be purposefully evangelistic (vv. 16-17). John creatively reminds the hearers that this revelation is from Jesus, the root from which David's ancestry thrives and on which it ultimately hinges. The Holy Spirit empowers the church as a prophetic community to implore Jesus "come." There is a future inheritance; but there is also a foretaste of the kingdom in one's current relationship with God. Believers are to encourage unbelievers to come into a relationship with Christ and join the community in a prophetic petitioning of the Lord to come. This is evangelism at its best.

Believers are to pray for the Lord's return (v. 20-21). The uniqueness of John's dramatic approach is attested in the manner he begins and ends the revelation as a pastoral dispatch. For the final time, Jesus says, "I am coming soon" and John replies with an early Christian confession, "Come, Lord Jesus!" Believers are to be persistent in praying this confession. And why shouldn't they? Their ancestor John peeked into heaven and witnessed its brilliance and he peered into hell and saw its horrifying nature. As one exiled on an island writing to his endangered churches on the mainland, all he could say was "Come, Lord Jesus!" That's a good prayer. In the meantime, there is no greater word for the church in every age than "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints." "Grace" is a most fitting finale to Revelation and truly the Bible. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! — Gentry is pastor of Springfield Baptist Church, Springfield.

Different gifts

By Joe Sorah

Focal Passage: I Corinthians 12:4-20, 26

The story is told of a young boy who had his heart set on being in the school play. Although his talent was not great, he went to tryouts with great excitement. On the day that parts were announced, he ran home to tell his mother the news. With a smile on his face and beaming with pride he shouted, "I've been chosen to clap and cheer."

Do you ever wonder what God has chosen for you to do? Do you ever question if God has given you any gifts to be used in his work? Paul addressed the subject of spiritual gifts in today's focal passage. From this most exhaustive passage on spiritual gifts in the New Testament, we can draw the following truths.

Family Bible Lesson

God gives believers spiritual gifts (vv. 4-6, 11). Verses 4-6 are parallel verses to emphasize that God is the author of spiritual gifts. The Corinthians were taking pride in their gifts and calling attention to themselves. Paul pointed out that they had nothing to do with the gifts they had received. God gives spiritual gifts.

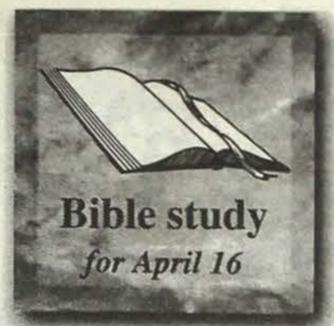
God's plan is for a diversity of gifts (vv. 4-6, 8-10). God did not intend for all believers to have the same gift. God distributed different gifts to different believers. As there are many parts in the physical body, so are there many parts in the body of Christ. God values diversity. He created us to look differently, think differently, and function differently. He means for us to serve differently as well. God did not intend for all believers to share the same gift(s). Thus, there is no one single gift that serves as evidence that one is a child of God. The true mark of a Christian is love for God and for one's fellow man.

All believers have been spiritually gifted (v. 7). This statement is reinforced by every other discussion of spiritual gifts in the New Testament (see Ephesians 4:7, I Peter 4:10, I Corinthians 7:7, Romans 12:3-8). Let no believer claim he or she cannot do anything for the Lord because of not having a spiritual gift. The problem many believers face is the lack of knowledge concerning their spiritual giftedness. Many useful instruments/tests are available to help discern one's giftedness.

Spiritual gifts are to be used for the common good of the church (v. 7). Benjamin Franklin left behind a small poem about talents. "Hide not your talents, they for use were made. What's a sundial in the shade?" When it comes to spiritual gifts, some are like a sundial in the shade. Spiritual gifts are to be used within the context of the local church. God has so gifted and placed within the church those whom he would have carry out the work of the church.

We face a couple of problems in this area. The first problem is that some refuse to exercise their gifts. They are gifted but will not work for the Lord. The second problem is that some serve in misplaced capacities. Like a square peg trying to fit in a round hole, some have never explored their own spiritual giftedness to find where and how they ought to serve. A Christian serving in the sphere of his/her spiritual giftedness will be a fulfilled follower.

All are important in the body of Christ (vv. 12-20, 26). The diversity of gifts and God's placement within the body insists upon our awareness that all are important. Just as the physical body needs each part, the church as the body of Christ needs each member. The body needs each part to function at full capacity for maximum health and effectiveness. Let no one think himself or another as unimportant despite the roles and responsibilities one may have. — Sorah is pastor of Calvary Baptist Church, Elizabethton.



Committing to faithful service

By Garry Miller

Focal Passage: Joshua 24:14-25a

According to the eminent philosopher and theologian, Aaron Tippin, "You've got to stand for something or you'll fall for anything." We could easily subtitle this week's lesson, "Joshua takes a stand." By taking his stand at the conclusion of a long and illustrious career as their national leader, he also challenged them to make a commitment to faithfully serve the God who had been so gracious to them and so powerful on their behalf (vv. 3, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15).

Joshua was very much unlike the unknown author who penned the following lines: "I get up in the morning and dust off my wits. I open the paper and read the obits. I check all the names to make sure I'm not dead. Then I eat a good breakfast and go back to bed." Two things are obvious from Joshua's farewell speech to Israel. He was totally convinced that Jehovah was the one and only true and living God, and he was totally committed to serving him with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength. Because of his knowledge of who God was and what he had done, Joshua was convinced that he deserved the total commitment of his people.

The key word in Joshua 24:14-25a is "serve." It is used 14 times and includes the elements of reverence,

Explore the Bible Lesson

obedience, and worship. In order for this to be true in the lives of God's people, it requires a total commitment, being sold out to God without reservation and without hesitation.

Some people want to be like the chicken in the story of the chicken and the pig who were discussing the relative importance of the ham and the eggs in a ham and egg breakfast. The chicken felt that the eggs were the most important because without them it just would not be the same. "But," said the pig, "you just don't understand. For you it is a day to day decision. For me it requires total commitment." Total commitment is what the God who saved us, sustains us, and preserves us deserves from us.

Our commitment to God should be a once-and-for-all decision. But, unfortunately, for most of us it requires a periodic revisiting and refreshing. I suppose that is why most Baptist churches have to have two revivals a year, because we have to be reminded of our commitment. In *Be Strong*, pp. 155-156, Warren Wiersbe points out that there are nine memorials in the Book of Joshua. They are: 1. The stones in the midst of the Jordan

(4:9); 2. the stones on the western bank of the Jordan, (4:20-24); 3. The stones in the Valley of Achor (7:26); 4. The heap of stones at Ai (8:29); 5. The altar at Mt. Ebal (8:30); 6. The stones of the law at Mt. Ebal (8:32); 7. The stones at the cave of Makkedah (10:27); 8. The altar built by the Transjordanian tribes (22:10ff.); and 9. Joshua's stone of witness (24:26-28).

The problem with memorials is that they sometimes become objects of worship rather than reminders to worship. This can be something as simple as a person's favorite seat in the sanctuary. I heard recently of a person who went to visit a certain church and was asked to move because they were sitting in someone's seat. There were several people involved in the conversation and almost every one had a similar experience or story to tell.

In a couple of weeks we will see how Israel's failure to remember the commitment they had made got them into a lot of hot water, over and over again. We need to stand for something. Let's just make sure that we are standing for the right thing — committed to reverence, obey, and worship the true and living God and to pass that commitment on to those who follow in our footsteps. — Miller is pastor, Emmanuel Baptist Church, Humboldt.



NAMB uses Internet to help evangelize

Baptist Press

ALPHARETTA, Ga. — The North American Mission Board is helping lead an average of 200 people each month to faith in Christ not by knocking on doors, inviting them to church, or even talking with them on the telephone. They're doing it through the Internet, using interactive websites to share Christ.

Just as the Internet has revolutionized almost every other form of communication, it is opening up new ways for Christians to share their faith. And the North American Mission Board hopes to help churches and individuals be more effective in sharing their faith online through both informational websites and personal interaction.

"Whether we are online because we are looking at something else or intentionally to share the Gospel, we need to be there as followers of Jesus Christ," said Thomas Wright, an associate in NAMB's prayer evangelism unit who coordinates NAMB's Internet evangelism efforts.

The strategy is a natural application of Christ's methodology of going wherever there are lost people in need of the gospel, Wright said. Also, he said, believers are commanded

to share Christ "as we go," and the Internet has become a destination for more than 200 million people worldwide.

A resource is currently under development by NAMB to help churches use the Internet more effectively, and appointment of a national missionary for Internet evangelism is anticipated later this year. ■

LifeWayonline offers special rates for churches, staff

Baptist Press

NASHVILLE — LifeWayonline, a filtered Internet service provider launched Dec. 1, 1999, began offering a discounted program for churches, including paid church staff, on April 3.

Begun in partnership with Rated-G Online, an established Internet service provider with the latest-generation filtering system, the service filters out more than 20 categories of offensive material including pornography, alcohol and drug use, gambling, weapons and bomb making, violence, hate/discrimination, profane language, and various chat sites.

The church program includes filtered Internet access for \$15.95 per month, a discounted rate from the full standard price of \$19.95.

Gary McClure, manager of LifeWayonline, said the LifeWay service is "striving to make it as easy as possible for church leaders to communicate the increasing compromise of our families from unprotected Internet access. Educational materials, ministry kits, pro-

SBC stats to be collected on Internet

Baptist Press

NASHVILLE — A new concept for collecting and giving access to Southern Baptist statistics and directory information was introduced recently to state convention statistical representatives in sessions at LifeWay Christian Resources.

Southern Baptist Directory Services (SBDS) will be built around a secured Internet site, with initial access given to states and associations, said Cliff Tharp, Annual Church Profile and constituent information coordinator at LifeWay. Churches may be given access to the system at a later date. SBDS will be used for the first time in collecting 2000 ACP information.

In addition to serving as a tool for collecting church statistics and names and addresses of leaders, Tharp said SBDS will meet the following needs:

► A real-time listing of all Southern Baptist congregations that is available to all appropriate users. The list can be updated as changes occur instead of once a year.

► A real-time listing of Southern Baptist leaders that is available to all appropriate users and can be updated as changes occur.

► Basic statistics at the national level archived for 20 years that enable evaluation and reporting. Persons with access can then identify statistics they need and customize reports. For example, Tharp said a state or SBC church growth consultant could obtain a church's statistics for the past five years as part of preparing to assist with growth needs.

"Think of Southern Baptist Directory Services as a directory for Southern Baptists by which you access ACP," Tharp said. "The thrust of SBDS is access and use."

He emphasized that most ACP information already is a matter of public record in association and state convention annuals. SBDS will provide electronic access with the capacity of ongoing updates.

Association and state convention site managers for SBDS must sign data protection agreements. They will be responsible for identifying SBDS users within their entity. ACP information will continue to be restricted to the ministry and business purposes of the Southern Baptist network entities, and information will not be given for sale or distribution to third parties or for public use. ■

motional items, on-site presentations, as well as the discounted service are tools we believe will be extremely effective."

Church accounts may be opened by calling 1-888-454-5965. ■

SBC to count on Seminary Extension, says SBTS president

Baptist Press

NASHVILLE — Seminary Extension's future in Southern Baptist theological education was underscored by R. Albert Mohler Jr., president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, to Seminary

Extension state convention representatives during their annual meeting in Nashville, Tenn.

Mohler said he foresees the six Southern Baptist Convention seminaries relying more and more on Seminary Extension to deliver theological education to individuals involved in non-degree programs, freeing the seminaries to concentrate on their main task of providing theological education at the undergraduate, master's, and doctoral levels.

The theme of Seminary Extension's recent workshop, which drew 35 attendees, was "Forward into the Future."

Mohler, in addition to leading Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky., is president of the Council of Seminary Presi-

dents, the SBC entity that governs the work of Seminary Extension. ■

Bill Powell dies after long illness

Baptist Press

BREMEN, Ga. — William A. "Bill" Powell, 74, died March 9 following a long battle with Alzheimer's Disease.

Powell, a former staff member of the SBC Home Mission Board, now North American Mission Board, was considered a leader in the "conservative resurgence."

He founded the Baptist Faith and Message Fellowship in 1973 and edited the *Southern Baptist Journal*. ■

Awareness of church, societal trends help leaders prepare, attorney says

By Charles Willis
For Baptist Press

NASHVILLE — An awareness of changes in churches and in secular society can help church leaders prepare for the future with their church's best interest in mind, an attorney and Southern Baptist layman told pastors, church administrators, and other church staff meeting.

Steve Lewis, an attorney from Oklahoma City told participants in the "21st Century Forum for Church Administration" that today's paid and volunteer leaders need to recognize where the church is today and where society is in relationship to churches — to protect their churches from crises that did not concern congregations a few decades ago.

The March 27-29 conference was sponsored by LifeWay Christian Resources.

Lawsuits against churches, for example, have grown from a few in the 1960s to thousands in the 1990s, Lewis said.

Many churches still operate as though society is the same as it was in the 1950s and 1960s, he said, citing a number of indicators that the world has changed dramatically:

► Topics such as sex changes and homosexuality are presented in a variety of public media.

► Christian witnessing comes under fire from the public.

► Moral character appears to be unimportant for public leaders.

► Signs of Christianity are disappearing from America.

"Many churches today barely survive, much less thrive," Lewis observed. "We have to help fellow church leaders gain skills that allow them to successfully navigate the waters of a culture totally foreign to most of them."

An estimated 85 percent of larger churches have had claims asserted against them through the legal system, Lewis noted.

"Numerous multimillion dollar judgments have been awarded against

churches," he continued.

Among the legal issues facing some churches are failure to comply with government regulations about workers compensation, overtime pay, tax reporting, and confidentiality of medical records.

In contrast to the way churches conducted business in the 1950s, today's church members do not have the right to know everything related to church employees, Lewis said.

Non-ministerial staff, he added, cannot be asked during the interview process about marital status, age, disability, or childbearing issues.

"Why do we ignore the law," Lewis asked, "but expect it to respect us and leave us alone?"

Lewis said he sees churches at a disadvantage when:

► church leaders have no training in business, government, and legal issues;

► the church has no cost-effective place to turn for advice;

► there is a tendency to ignore scary issues or avoid confrontation; and

► matters are delegated to untrained, quasi-interested committees whose members know less about the legal issues than the church staff.

Today's churches do not have the historically protected status in which the government took a hands-off approach to internal church issues, Lewis said.

Compounding the problems churches face today are staff burnout, short-tenured ministries, a crisis of immortality among some church staff persons, staff dismissals by churches, and staff job descriptions that are impractical and unachievable.

On the positive side, Lewis cited expertise at LifeWay and in state Baptist conventions in the area of pastor-staff issues; an increasing need of churches to change form and procedure, but not the gospel message; a growing willingness of churches to train and delegate to accountable lay workers; and an increased recognition of an individual's specific limited role, rather than trying to "do it all." ■