

Baptist & Reflector

Statewide Edition

Telling the Story of Tennessee Baptists

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For Copper Basin residents

Tennessee Baptists help put the 'merry' in Christmas

By Lonnie Wilkey
Baptist and Reflector

DUCKTOWN — Food, socks, underwear. Sounds like a shopping list for back to school.

But for children and teenagers who live in the Copper Basin region, those items are more likely to be their Christmas "wish" list.

Life is never easy in the Copper Basin, which consists of southeast Tennessee, northern Georgia, and western North Carolina. During the Christmas season as colder weather moves in, it only gets worse.

The Copper Basin got its name from the local copper mining industry, which at one time made the region very prosperous.

In the 1950s and '60s, the Copper Basin was a booming region with more than 3,600 people employed either in the mines or the local processing plant, recalled Al Patterson, director of missions for Copper Basin Baptist Association.

Patterson and his wife, Margaret, are very familiar with the history of Copper Basin. Both were born and raised in the region, on the Georgia side of the basin.

In the 1970s, however, jobs began to disappear. In 1978, 700 jobs were lost when part of the mining operation closed.

In 1986, all of the mines were shut down and another 900 people were without work, Patterson said.

It was then that the 12 churches which comprise Copper Basin Baptist Association realized there were going to be numerous opportunities for ministry.

The association voted to begin a Crisis Center which opened in 1988 at a time when employment continued to deteriorate.

Today, the once booming mining operation employs only 35 people.

And to make matters worse, the other smaller businesses in the area either closed or moved operations elsewhere.

There are simply not enough jobs in the region to support the population, Patterson said. Most of the people with steady incomes commute to either Cleveland (about 35 miles away), or to Chattanooga (about 60 miles away), or even to Atlanta (100 miles away), he noted.

As income of local residents dwindled, the need for the Copper Basin Crisis Center increased.

The Pattersons say they minister to about 650 families each month. Some are "regulars." Others come when times are really difficult.

"We minister to a lot of elderly people and families with a lot of children," Patterson said.



AL AND MARGARET PATTERSON are surrounded by gifts donated to the Crisis Center of Copper Basin Baptist Association for needy children in the area this Christmas. Patterson is the association's director of missions.

Many of the people the center ministers to live on incomes of \$400-\$500 a month or even less, said Margaret Patterson.

Christmas for most of these families would be non-existent were it not for

the Crisis Center and the help of others, including many Tennessee Baptists from all over the state. "Many of these children would not have anything for Christmas without help," she said.

— See Tennessee, page 8



Painting by Netbe Chandler

Wishing you a blessed Christmas and holiday season

The staff of the *Baptist and Reflector* — Connie Davis Bushey, Susie Edwards, Mary Nimmo, Betty Williams, and Lonnie Wilkey — is thankful for the privilege and opportunity God gave us to tell the story of Tennessee Baptists in 2004.

We are proud to be a part of the Tennessee Baptist Convention family. The *Baptist and Reflector* reaches nearly 50,000 homes and more than 100,000 readers each week. In addition, we have one of the most viewed pages on the TBC web site each month. We are appreciative for the support and encouragement shown to us this year.

As we enter a new year, we encourage our readers to keep us aware of news and events in your area. We also ask you to become advocates for the paper and to encourage friends and fellow church members who do not receive the paper to subscribe.

As a reminder of our production schedule, this is the last issue of 2004. This issue contains Sunday School commentaries for Dec. 26 and Jan. 2, 2005. Sunday School commentaries for Jan. 9 will be posted on the TBC web site (www.tnbaptist.org) on Jan. 5. Our next issue will be dated Jan. 12, 2005.

The staff of the *Baptist and Reflector* wishes for each of our readers and their families a blessed Christmas and a joyous and happy new year. □ — Editor

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Belmont receives \$10.5 million gift for nursing school

Belmont news service

NASHVILLE — One of middle Tennessee's most successful entrepreneurs and business leaders, Gordon E. Inman, has today given Belmont University the largest single gift in the university's history.

His \$10.5 million gift will help pay for construction of the new 100,000-square-foot two-building health care complex on Wedgewood Avenue that will house the university's College of Health Sciences & Nursing. The first of two buildings is currently under construction and scheduled for completion in 2006.

The college will be renamed the Gordon E. Inman College of Health Sciences & Nursing, and the complex, including class-

room, office space, and a large community conference center, will bear Inman's name. Building One will house Belmont's nursing, occupational therapy, and social work programs. The second building will provide space for Belmont's physical therapy classes as well as expansion room for nursing and other potential health programs.

"We are immensely grateful for Gordon's generosity," said Bob Fisher, president of Belmont. "He has been a faithful and valued trustee and advisor to the university for many decades, and we are enormously fortunate to be able to expand opportunities for students interested in nursing or other healthcare careers.

"This will have a significant impact on our community that, like so many others in our country, continues to experience a

nursing shortage. This donation for a new facility will allow Belmont to grow its nursing program to 600 students or almost triple its current enrollment."

"I've always had a passion for Belmont because it is a Christian school with commitment to excellence in education," Inman said. "I appreciate the school's dedication to the kind of practical and experiential learning that prepares its students for successful careers."

Inman, a member of Brentwood Baptist Church, Brentwood, will begin his fifth term as a Belmont trustee in January.

"I admire Belmont's entrepreneurial spirit, its focus on building a Christian community of students, and its mission helping students discover and build the talents for the real world," said Inman. □

New stats show parallel to TLW

Baptist Press

ATLANTA — Richard Ross sees something quite interesting about new data that sexual activity declined significantly for girls ages 15-17 and boys ages 15-18 between 1995 and 2002.

Ross, one of the founders of the True Love Waits abstinence movement, noted: "The first TLW promises were made by one youth group in 1993" — promises made by teenagers in church settings to refrain from premarital sexual relations.

"In 1994, teenagers displayed over 110,000 promises of purity on the National Mall," Ross continued. "In 1995, teenage promises were becoming behavior. In addition, the national attention on TLW in 1995 was fueling the establishment of scores of abstinence organizations. Soon after came government support for those organizations.

"In many ways, the history of the decline in teenage sexual activity is the history of TLW," Ross noted, commenting that, "It is especially helpful that the new CDC study analyzes the years from 1995 to 2002."

Ross is professor of student ministry at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and a former staff member at LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention, which spearheads the True Love Waits movement. While at LifeWay he also served as minister of youth at **Tulip Grove Baptist Church, Old Hickory**, where True Love Waits was first introduced.

The new data, reported by the Centers for Disease Control's national statistics office, compares new findings from the 2002 National Survey of Family Growth with the previous survey conducted in 1995.

The proportion of never-mar-

ried females 15-17 years of age who had had sexual intercourse dropped significantly from 38 percent in 1995 to 30 percent in 2002.

For male teens, the percent of those who were sexually experienced dropped significantly in both age groups: from 43 percent to 31 percent at age 15-17, and from 75 percent to 64 percent at age 18-19.

The only statistic remaining stagnant is that 68 percent of females 18-19 years of age had had intercourse in 1995 compared with 69 percent in 2002. □

Samford honors WMU leader

Baptist Press

BIRMINGHAM — The top executive of the million-member Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union, has received the 2004 Alumni of the Year award from Samford University along with retired business executive Marvin Mann.

A 1969 Samford nursing graduate, Wanda Lee served as president of WMU from 1996 to 2000 when she was named to her current post as executive director. She is the first woman in WMU history to hold both positions.

Lee has been active at all levels of WMU — church, association, state, and national. Early in her career, she worked as a registered nurse in hospitals in Georgia, Louisiana, Alabama, and the Windward Islands, where she and her husband, Larry, were missionaries from 1979-81. WMU, an auxiliary to the Southern Baptist Convention, employs about 115 staff members at its Birmingham headquarters and has more than a million members of all ages in Baptist churches worldwide.

"As CEO of the premier woman's missionary support organization in America, Wanda Lee applies all the sensitivity and care she learned as a nurse and nurse administrator to the promotion of missions," Samford President Thomas E. Corts said. "In our diverse world, hers is an extremely important task and

she fulfills it with a warm, genuine Christian spirit." □

Christmas-themed gifts allegedly banned by school

Baptist Press

PLANO, Texas — Two pro-family groups filed a federal lawsuit against a Texas public school district Dec. 15, alleging that it banned elementary students from exchanging Christmas-themed candy canes, prohibited students from writing "Merry Christmas" on greeting cards sent to soldiers, and even prevented the use of traditional Christmas colors at a school party.

The Alliance Defense Fund and the Liberty Legal Institute filed the lawsuit in federal court against the Plano Independent School District, arguing that district's policy is unconstitutional and violates the students' religious freedoms.

A federal judge has told a Texas schoolboy he can pass out candy canes and other gifts that represent a religious viewpoint a year after the boy was told to stop.

U.S. District Judge Paul Brown in Sherman handed down his decision Dec. 16, saying he was convinced the boy's family and three other families in the suit would suffer "irreparable" damage and "immediate" injury if he did not act, according to the Associated Press. The 52,000-student Plano school district was ordered to allow 9-year-old Jonathan Morgan and other students to pass out gifts — even those about Jesus — at their school parties Dec. 17. □

Noted atheist changes mind; sees evidence for God

Baptist Press

NASHVILLE — Antony Flew, a legendary British philosopher and atheist, has changed his mind about the existence of God in light of re-

cent scientific evidence.

Flew — a prolific author who has argued against the existence of God and the claims of Christianity for more than 50 years — first revealed his change of mind in a video of a discussion with several others at New York University organized by the Institute for Metascientific Research. The video, released December, is titled, "Has Science Discovered God?"

Flew, 81, said he is now best described as a deist — a person who believes God created the universe but is not actively involved in people's lives today.

"I don't believe in the God of any revelatory system, although I am open to that," Flew said in an interview for the winter 2004 edition of *Philosophia Christi*, the journal of the Evangelical Philosophical Society. "But it seems to me that the case for [a] God who has the characteristics of power and also intelligence is now much stronger than it ever was before."

Gary Habermas, chairman of the department of philosophy and theology at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Va., told Baptist Press that Flew's decision to believe in God points to the strength of theistic arguments.

"His conversion is a testimony to the many, especially scientific figures, who are coming to a way of intelligent design," said Habermas, who conducted the interview with Flew in *Philosophia Christi*. "... The fact that he has become a theist is testimony to the type of evidence we have for God's existence today."

Despite his belief in the existence of God, Flew said it is unlikely that he will ever become a Christian. The major evidence against the God of Christianity is the problem of evil, Flew said.

The problem of evil refers to the apparent tension between the existence of a good God and the presence of evil in the world.

Although he does not accept Christianity, Flew emphatically denies the possibility that he would ever become a follower of Islam, citing Islam's commitment to conquer all of its opponents. □

Couple helps family through Hale Community Ministries

By Connie Davis Bushey
Baptist and Reflector

ELIZABETHTON — The Baptist volunteers and staff of Hale Community Ministries who serve at the Lynnwood/Lynnridge apartments get to meet a lot of folks. The government-subsidized apartments are home to about 200 families.

Folks come in and out of the office, which actually is a converted apartment given to Hale Community Ministries by the apartment owners. The residents learn when they move in about the help they can obtain from the ministry, which is referred to as Lynnwood/Lynnridge Ministries.

Folks can pick up small bags of food and diapers. They can use the telephone. They learn about TeamKids, Sunday morning worship service, and the "laundry ministry Bible study."

Julie Lyons, ministry assistant of Hale Community Ministries, explained the laundry ministry Bible study was developed because residents often don't have enough money to do their laundry. If people come to the study, they hear a short Bible presentation and once a week they receive some detergent and enough quarters to do three loads of laundry.

One of the residents who began attending activities of Lynnwood/Lynnridge Ministries several months ago was Chris Talton. He and his wife, Brandi, had just moved in. They have two children, one school age, and one younger.

Chris and Brandi met several volunteers including Lyons and developed friendships with them. When Lyons learned Chris and Brandi weren't believers, she presented the gospel to them. They listened intently, responding that they weren't

ready to make a decision.

But the Taltons kept coming to the ministry activities.

"We had gotten to know them and really enjoyed having them there," said Lyons.

One day in November Lyons was driving her car up the mountain to reach the Lynnwood and Lynnridge apartment complexes which are located at the top. She passed Chris walking. She stopped and gestured for him to join her in the car.

He was so depressed, she recalled. He had walked about two hours to catch a ride which didn't materialize. He needed to go to a temp agency in Johnson City about a job.

Lyons turned the car around and took Talton to the temp agency so he could take a drug test. While there he met with a lady Lyons knew, a Christian and Baptist. "She was definitely a positive witness for Christ to Chris," Lyons said. Talton was hired for a job.

On the way home Lyons felt God telling her to talk to Talton again about becoming a Christian.

She did and Talton made a profession of faith.

Lyons was glad to tell the other workers of Lynnwood/Lynnridge Ministries the good news about Talton's profession of faith and job although he had to travel to it by bike. Talton did that until his father was able to loan him his car. But soon Talton learned his father needed the car back because he had lost his job. It looked like even though the weather was getting colder, Talton would be riding his bike to work again.

When Becky Brumitt, director, Hale Community Ministries, learned about Talton, she decided to mention his need in the December issue of the newsletter of Watauga Baptist Association.



CHRIS TALTON stands with his wife, Brandi and child beside their new car which was given to them through Hale Community Ministries of Watauga Baptist Association by Ray and Eleanor Hale of Calvary Baptist Church, Elizabethton.

Joe Sorah, pastor, Calvary Baptist Church, Elizabethton, learned about the young man and his situation and need for a car. His wife told him about it one evening. The newsletter had arrived that day in the mail.

Sorah was amazed because just the day before he had received a call from church member Eleanor Hale. She told him she and Ray, her husband, had decided to stop driving. They would like to give their car to an organization or person who needed it.

Sorah called the Hales the next day and after they gave their approval he called Brumitt. Soon Sorah was delivering a 1989 Dodge Dynasty to Hale Community Ministries.

He did have some rather bad news to tell Brumitt. Because the car hadn't been driven a lot, it needed new tires.

But Brumitt wasn't fazed. She

called Hayworth Tires in Elizabethton, which is owned by Christians. Soon the Taltons were standing by their new car with new tires.

Sorah said, "Sometimes God allows you to be an in-between person to connect people. That's what God allowed me to be this time." He added the whole experience "was neat."

Julie Lyons said, "God just went before us and worked this out."

Of Chris Talton, she said, "Every time you see him he has this big smile on his face." He and his family are still coming to activities of the ministry. "A lot of them really feel uncomfortable going to a regular church," she added.

"I feel like maybe God was giving Chris a tangible reminder of His love for him personally and of His faithfulness to always provide for Chris' needs," she said. □

Women, girls of Robertson County Association honor Lottie Moon at tea

By Connie Davis Bushey
Baptist and Reflector

SPRINGFIELD — On the cool but sunny Sunday afternoon of Dec. 5, about 200 women and girls dressed in their Sunday best gathered to honor a woman they had never met.

They participated in a Lottie Moon Tea Party held by the Woman's Missionary Union of

Robertson County Baptist Association, based here. It was held at a historic home in Springfield.

Lottie Moon is the Southern Baptist missionary who served in China from the age of 33 to 72, when she died of illness related to lack of food. She served from 1873-1912. She died on Dec. 24, Christmas Eve. The Southern Baptist mission offering for interna-

tional missions is named in honor of her and collected at Christmas partly because of the timing of her death.

Kay Woods, Women on Mission director of the association's WMU, who organized the event, said the participants raised \$301 for the offering through the event fees.

The program consisted of presentations on Lottie Moon by Mary Yates, a member of

Mt. Carmel Baptist Church, Cross Plains, and Mary Kay Holman of Barren Plains Baptist Church, Springfield. The women also dressed like Moon.

Participants enjoyed tea cakes made from a recipe of Lottie Moon. The tea cakes were prepared by Wanda Mason. Mason and her husband, Thomas hosted the event in their historic home, The Bless-

ing, which was decorated for the holidays.

The women and girls attending also enjoyed musical entertainment by instrumentalists of several churches.

Before they left, participants were given tea bag prayer reminders, printed information on the LMCO, and girls were given a bank for the LMCO. □



GIRLS AND WOMEN attending the tea party listen to Mary Kay Holman of Barren Plains Baptist Church, Springfield, tell about Lottie Moon, whom she portrays.



MARY YATES a member of Mt. Carmel Baptist Church, Cross Plains, makes a presentation on Lottie Moon during the tea party held at The Blessing, a historic home in Springfield.

Is your life clearly making a difference for God?

from both sides of the pulpit



By Johnnie Godwin

When the pulpit side failed

Deacon Aubrey Boyd asked, "Pastor, based on your sermon this morning, what is it that you want us to do?" It was at the beginning of Sunday afternoon deacons' meeting. The question both surprised and grieved me because it reflected a double failure from my side of the pulpit: (1) I had preached a whole sermon on the meaning of church membership and had not clearly called for it to make a difference in the lives of the listeners. (2) Also, I had seemingly left the impression that the church should do what I wanted them to do rather than focusing on what God wanted them to do.

However, surprise and grief turned to joy as the deacons and I discussed the sermon and considered what God would have us to do as members of His church. The outcome was meaningful and got presented to the church. The church followed up so that the covenant relationship between God, the members, and their church took on new and lasting meaning.

Preaching clearly for a difference

From that experience, I learned a lesson about preach-

ing in a way that clearly calls for a difference in our lives after we listen to God's message. At the time, I was a seminary student and had had homiletics classes and other training. I had pastored two other smaller churches, but deacon Boyd taught me a lesson I hadn't learned well enough in the classroom.

Years later, I sat by Friend Elton Trueblood at a meeting of educators in Williamsburg, Virginia when he reinforced the same lesson for me. Just before he was to speak, Elton leaned over and whispered to me, "Johnnie, I didn't come to give a speech; I came to make a difference." Then he got up to speak and make the difference he intended to. But his whispered words also made an indelible imprint on my life. From that moment on, I've always tried to deliver every message with the intent of clearly making a difference.

In my senior years, friend and former boss Lloyd Elder invited me to co-author with him one of 12 books in a series on leadership skills for Christian leaders (for the Moench Center for Christian Leadership on the Belmont University campus). Lloyd let me choose from one of the 12 key subject areas. I chose Communication Skills: Clearly Making a Difference. As co-author with Lloyd, I came to an even greater sense of stewardship about the speaker's responsibility to clearly make a difference in communication — which is especially the

pastor's job. The sermon from the pulpit is the message God intends to be a difference-maker for all who will listen and actively respond.

Signs God's message makes a difference

There's an old preacher story that may be more fiction than fact, but it does make a good point. As the story goes, a new pastor preached the same sermon three Sundays in a row. The church membership moved from appreciation to toleration to frustration by the third repetition of the same sermon. The chairman of deacons asked the pastor when he was going to preach a different sermon. The pastor replied, "When the church obeys the message I've had to preach three times." Truth or fiction, the point is well made.

Baptist churches give invitations to respond publicly to God in Christ when the earthly messenger has concluded and come to the "so what?" of the sermon. Accepting Christ as Lord and Savior calls for confessing that publicly and being obedient in baptism and the covenant of church membership. Other public responses may be personal renewals, confession of sin and asking for forgiveness, moving church membership with a new covenant relationship, and other decisions. Some of the best indications a message from God has clearly made a difference aren't stated publicly, but they show up in changed lives of living, giving, caring, and sharing. How we observe Christmas

can be one sign of the difference God's supreme message makes in our lives. To many, Xmas is no more than a secular holiday. Naive minds often try to rescue Christmas when they read "Xmas." With algebraic thinking and sometimes a degree of pharisaism, critics have said, "They've taken Christ out of Christmas and replaced Him with X, an unknown quantity." Possibly but not probably. Ever since about 1100, people have abbreviated "Christ" with the Greek letter "X," which is "Chi" and the first Greek letter of Christ's name. What looks to us English readers like "Xp" is really "Chi" and "Rho," the first two Greek letters of Christ's name. The world is not apt to opt for atheism by removing Christ for Christmas and replacing Him with an unknown quantity of "X." At least, we Christians aren't. Rather, our biggest danger likely is to abbreviate Christ by focusing on Him and the difference of His life at Christmas and not spelling out the full Christ event of His life all year long. The eternal message of Christmas as God's gift in Christ is to show up as a difference in our lives every day of each year. And when Christmas comes, how Christians observe it should clearly be different from how pagans or secularists observe it.

God loved the world in this way: At a precise moment in time, He gave His only Son, Jesus Christ, as the essential gift of salvation on the first Christmas tree — which was the cross

(John 3:16; Galatians; Philippians 2:5-11; and "tree"). God in time that which He clea meant to make an eternal difference for all the world.

Is the difference clear in your life?

God clearly gave His message to make a difference your life. Are you still asking "Based on Christmas, what does God want me to do?" If the clear answer is that He wants you to receive His gift Christmas, which means accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The Savior prefers to eternal life. The latter part refers to living all of life God's design. Worship is about God in Christ. The Gift Christmas is for us: A child to be born for us, a son will be given to us (Isaiah 9:6, Holman CSB). Receiving the Gift Christ is all about our decision to receive the message God clearly gave to make an eternal difference.

From one who has failed before on the pulpit side, I hope this message hasn't failed is clear in what it calls for. What a man wants you to do but what God wants you to do. From personal testimony, I'm glad to say the good news Christmas has made all the difference in the world to my life. Christ is the eternal difference-maker. So I wish you a Merry Christmas and a life that clearly makes a difference for God. — Copyright 2004 by Johnnie Godwin, who welcomes a challenge to clearly make a difference. johnniegodwin@comcast.net.

Christian counselor gives tips for enjoying the holiday season

families matter



By Paul Barkley

As I begin to write, the words of one of my clients is ringing in my ear. She is facing some of the most devastating events that one could imagine and still trying to give her young child a good Christmas. "I feel bad," she observed, "because this is supposed to be a happy time."

Many look around at this time of year and see all the hustle and bustle of the season, the faces of the shoppers looking for just the right present, the smiles, the laughs, the happy songs, everyone else seems to be having a great time. Maybe we go back in our minds to that Christmas when everything was great and we know that we will never forget how happy we were then. For many the Christmas season is a "set-up" that they do to themselves chasing the illusive, flitting butterfly of happiness.

Instead of feeling happy, merry, and jovial, many find the season produces feelings of hollow loneliness, haunting memories, and helplessness of the tyranny of time. The layoffs in some industries, hospitalization of relatives, emotional disappointment of let down of family members, grief over that special person who is not here this year, frustration because of lack of employment advancement, and the list is endless.

There is an acronym used by Alcoholics Anonymous and other self-help, 12-step groups to help each other take better care of personal needs. H A L T reminds them not to let themselves get too Hungry, Angry, Lonely, or Tired.

I have a one-track mind. When I have my mind on a project or task, I may even forget to eat. I usually then get real hungry. So when I do eat, I eat everything that doesn't crawl off the table before I can get it. I have also noticed that when I do not eat regularly I am more likely to get down emotionally. We need to replenish the energy reserves by regularly recharging the bat-

teries with the energy of regular meals. Much of what is available to us at the season is loaded with sugar and will overcharge the battery and become depleted too soon. It is important to eat sensibly and regularly during the holidays.

Despite popular idealization, the holidays are a wonderful time to nurse grudges, harbor anger, especially with family members. We have stock piled and cataloged the slights and slams of different family members so that the expected reunion for the holidays brings visions of revenge or at least avoidance. When we have been hurt by someone close to us, we want them to know how much we hurt. The best way to do

this is to hurt him or her so he or she will know how much we hurt. Most of us will have a good time with people as we make up our mind to have. The holidays provide a good time for "truces" not only in international conflicts but also in family feuds.

Even if you can't get "home for the holidays," why not make up your mind to spend the time with someone, maybe a co-worker's family, church group, social group, or somebody. One of the insidious aspects of loneliness is that it seems to feed on itself. We feel lonely and stay away from others in fear of rejection. Many need to make themselves go. Others of us might think of those who don't

have any place to go for the holidays and invite them to our house.

One of the biggest contributors to holiday depression is physical exhaustion. Don't do too much. We cannot do everything everywhere and do everything. We need to plan a reasonable calendar with time planned for rest. Billy Hanks taught me a valuable lesson years ago in his book on daily devotionals. He said, "The most spiritual thing you can do when your are tired is REST!"

I wish for you and your family a happy and holy holiday season. □ — Barkley is associate professor of psychology and religion at Baptist College of Health Sciences in Memphis.

MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM THOM TAPP, AND THE GANG FROM THE... CHURCH OF THE COVERED DISH



Count your many blessings — and start with baby Jesus

Reflections



By Lonnie Wilkey, editor

The time-honored hymn "Count Your Blessings" says it all: "When upon life's billows you are tempest tossed, When you are discouraged thinking all is lost, count your many blessings, name them one by one, and it will surprise you what the Lord hath done."

"So amid the conflict, whether great or small, do not be discouraged, God is over all; count your many blessings, angels will attend, help and comfort give you to your journey's end."

Some may be thinking I have my holidays mixed up. This is Christmas, not Thanksgiving.

It is the Christmas season, not "Thanksgiving" should be year-round and not limited to one Thursday in November each year.

What better time to count our blessings than Christmas?

And, what better place to begin than a manger in Bethlehem where the baby Jesus was born?

Over the years the Christmas story found in Luke has been a part of our annual celebration, whether it be in a Christmas Eve service at our church or read in our home on Christmas day.

Here's the story from Luke 2:1-20 as found in the new Holman Christian Standard Bible. You can never read it too many times.

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole empire should be registered. This first registration took place while Quirinius was governing Syria, so everyone went to be registered, each to his own town.

And Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem because he was of the house and family line of David, to be registered along with Mary, who was engaged to him and was pregnant. While they were there, the time came for her to give birth. Then she gave birth to her firstborn Son, and she wrapped Him snugly in

cloth and laid Him in a feeding trough — because there was no room for them at the inn.

In the same region, shepherds were staying out in the fields and keeping watch at night over their flock. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Don't be afraid, for look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people: today a Savior, who is Messiah the Lord, was born for you in the city of David."

This will be the sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped snugly in cloth and lying in a manger." Suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying: "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to people He favors!"

When the angels had left them and returned to heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go straight to Bethlehem and see what has happened, which the Lord has made known to us."

They hurried off and found both Mary and Joseph and the baby who was lying in the feed-

ing trough. After seeing them, they reported the message they were told about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary was treasuring up all these things in her heart and meditating on them. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had seen and heard, just as they had been told.

We get so caught up in the hustle and bustle of Christmas that we tend to lose sight of why we celebrate.

First and foremost, we need to take time this year to thank God for the greatest blessing of all — His Son, Jesus Christ.

Christmas also is the time of year when we need to look back over the year and count our blessings. As the song says, no doubt we will be "surprised" by what "the Lord hath done."

Personally, this past year had some difficult times for my family, but on reflection, our difficulties were minor when compared to all the blessings God stowed upon us in 2004.

Sometimes it takes seeing or hearing about people who really have been through difficult times to make you appre-

ciate your blessings.

Last week I went to the Copper Basin region of Tennessee (see page 1). Things we take for granted, such as food, clothing, heat, etc., are treasures for many people in the Copper Basin. Entire families have to subsist on \$400-\$500 a month or less. There are some who can only afford to buy five gallons of kerosene at a time to heat their home and hope it lasts until they have the money to buy five more gallons.

Children ask for food, clothing (basic clothes, not designer clothing), and blankets for Christmas. One parent asked for food to send to his daughter in college because she was literally going hungry (that one struck home because I have a teenage daughter in college).

We get so caught up in our "wants" such as a bigger house and a newer car, that we aren't thankful for the fact that we do have a nice place to live and a vehicle to drive.

As Christmas and a new year approaches, stop and count your blessings and "thank God for all He hath done," beginning with the gift of His Son. Merry Christmas! □

Take time to 'ponder' season and keep thoughts 'in your heart'

Heart talk



By James Porch

Once again, along the way of my annual Christmas season trek, I have awaited a unique blessing from His birth story. The right time for the right insight sometime taxes my patience. Nevertheless, special grace has arrived to add and enhance this nativity event in my life.

Recently, while participat-

ing in a creative worship experience during chapel, the word ponder rapidly, but momentarily, consumed my consciousness. Initially, the experience defied my response amidst the singing, Bible reading in a variety of translations, Christmas wishes, and just good fun. Then the call to ponder returned and prevailed.

I believe Luke chose the graphic term to offset our focus on Mary's anxiety, awe, fear, excitement, or any of the young virgin's first-time emotions. Pondering requires disciplined attention. The word describes the practice of assembling — putting pieces together.

Assuredly the range of

Mary's thoughts extended beyond any other person's grasp. The magnitude and uniqueness of such incomprehensible happening demanded she make some sense of the phenomena amidst her faith in her Heavenly Father's announcement that she was His choice to mother His son.

Even though the pregnancy taxed her physical, emotional, and spiritual stamina, she responded to the natal development of the child tempered by the angel's recurring message, "You will conceive in your womb, and bear a son, and you shall call him Jesus" (Luke 1:31).

Luke's inspired writing oc-

curred years passed Jesus' earthly ministry. The nature of the Gentile writer's text indicates Mary's pondering extended beyond her pregnancy and His birth event even through the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension. Assuredly, each year on His birth date, Mary celebrated by again pondering and again and again bringing together pieces of the event known only to her as true to the nature and privacy of any mother.

Christmas 2004 will be for me a season to join in the legacy of His mother in attempting to ponder. Alas, what a challenge as each of my yule seasons brings a struggle vying

with my hope to glean the Father's fresh message. As the days hasten by, I become more vulnerable to the weather, presence, and/or absence of precious loved ones, degree of financial solvency, physical and emotional stress, tensions of disappointments and hopes, malady of unforgiven sin and refreshment of forgiveness, distraction of delicious food and anticipation of gifts. "But, please Heavenly Father, please lead me to ponder as Mary, 'these things and keep them in my heart.'"

A Christmas Grace to you. □
— Porch is executive director-treasurer of the Tennessee Baptist Convention.

As 2004 ends, check list offered for last minute tax planning

Guest columnist



By Sherre Stephens

As 2004 draws to a close, tax planning may not be at the top of your "to do" list. Yet, it is important not to lose sight of certain tax breaks amid the excitement of the holidays. A recent flurry of tax legislation may have an impact on your year-end tax planning for 2004. Here are some important tax aspects to consider:

(1) The American Jobs Creation Act of 2004 creates tougher deduction and substantiation rules for post-2004 charitable contributions of autos. If you plan to donate an auto, do it before 2005.

(2) The Working Families Tax Relief Act of 2004 extends certain credits through 2005, keeps the child tax credit at \$1,000 through 2009, extends marriage penalty relief, and provides certain other tax advantages as well.

Other year-end tax tips include the following:

(3) Maximize deferrals to your retirement plan. By deferring the maximum amount, you decrease federal income

tax withholding and enhance retirement savings.

(4) Deplete your flex dollars. If you don't use all of your flex dollars, you lose them. Remember that you can get tax-free reimbursements for over-the-counter drugs such as aspirin and antacids.

(5) Take last minute deductions. Charitable contributions are a worthwhile way to maximize itemized deductions. Consider donating appreciated stock or property instead of cash thereby avoiding potential capital gains taxes.

(6) Defer income. If you are self-employed, you may have more latitude to defer income into 2005. Nevertheless, if you

expect to receive a year-end bonus, ask your employer to hold the bonus and pay it to you in January.

(7) Convert a Traditional IRA to a Roth IRA. You will need to do the math, but if retirement is many years away, the tax-free distributions may prove worthwhile. And since a Roth IRA is not subject to the required minimum distributions rules, you can pass your Roth IRA account onto your heirs without settling them with a tax liability.

(8) Consider gifting. Take advantage of the annual gift tax exclusion. You can save gift and estate taxes by making gifts up to \$11,000 to an unlim-

ited number of individuals. You cannot carry over the exclusion to 2005.

(9) Beware of the Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT). Originally enacted to ensure that the wealthy pay their fair share of taxes, now the AMT impacts the middle class.

In light of the new rules, you may need a software program or tax professional to guide you. □ — Stephens is a certified executive benefits specialist and director of executive and institutional benefit design for GuideStone Financial Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention.

GAs, RAs, Mission Friends develop passion for missions

guest
columnist



By Gene Fant Jr.

My father was a church planter in western New York when I was a child. In fact, for a few years we lived in a house church, with a baptistery in the garage and folding chairs in our living room sanctuary. My brother and I both made our public professions of faith in that living room.

Our church was small, so programs had to be customized to meet the realities of the mission church. On Wednesday nights, the boys would play football in the back/church yard until we joined the girls in the garage for missions education in GAs.

Not many Girls in Action groups have sweaty boys in them, but ours sure did. The trick was that they never told us what the initials "G" and "A" stood for. In our minds, it was just the time when we learned about missionaries, prayed for them and ate

snacks. When Christmas came around, I became fascinated with the stories of Lottie Moon, the legendary missionary to China. My parents bought me her biography, which I dutifully read and submitted as a book report in third grade. I was hooked on missions.

When I was in sixth grade, we moved to a larger church with a strong Royal Ambassador program, but by that time I already had a good foundation in missions. I loved studying other cultures, I liked hearing about what our missionaries were doing, and I especially enjoyed working with the Acteens at their annual Queen Regent presentations. I think I was a high school senior before it suddenly hit me that I had had the rare experience of being a boy GA!

In college, I decided to extend my study of world cultures by majoring in anthropology. As I sought God's calling in my life, I felt called to be a missions supporter by teaching college students to be sensitive to the opportunities that surround them. I teach at one of our Baptist colleges, Union

University, where we have scores of students who are planning on pursuing missions on either a full- or a part-time basis. I now teach a linguistics course that helps to prepare many of these students for

put their coins in the offering plate on Sundays, they know that a portion of that gift supports Southern Baptist servants on the other side of the world.

In the hubbub of our fami-

and a lively examination of the heart of the Gospel — that all of humanity is fallen and requires salvation through Christ. By learning about other cultures, we are reminded that each of us bear the image of God.

By studying what our missionaries are doing we are informed about the careful stewardship of our missions entities and the beauty of the Cooperative Program channel for missions support.

God does not call every child in our church missions programs to be a full-time missionary, but I do believe that God call

each of them to cultivate a heart for missions.

Those ladies who taught me as a child, those brave RA leaders, and my pastors (especially my father) have all helped me to develop that passion.

God has a plan for us as Baptists, that we all share His love with a lost and hurting world. Even if you were once a boy in the GA program. □ — Fant chairs the English department at Union University in Jackson.

God does not call every child in our church missions programs to be a full-time missionary, but I do believe that God calls each of them to cultivate a heart for missions.

their calling.

GAs, RAs, Acteens, and Missions Friends all are in full swing this time of year. My twin first-graders just loved Missions Friends and now are in RAs and GAs.

I am amazed at how they already love to pore over maps of the world. When my brother and his family moved to Germany a few years ago, both of my children exclaimed, "We studied Germany in Missions Friends! We have missionaries there!" Now when my children

ly's lives, it's so easy to squeeze church activities out of our schedules. We can fall into the trap of thinking that worship and Sunday School are ample, teaching our children that a checklist approach to faith is enough to sustain our lives. We can check the box on Sunday mornings and be done with it. We can sit passively in a pew, learning little and feeling weakly engaged with our faith.

On the other hand, missions education involves Bible study

Did you pray today? Well then, will you pray tomorrow?

guest
columnist

By John Kramer

Have you ever wondered if the people you know ever pray on a weekday? How about you, do you ever have a one-on-one with your Father on any other day but Sunday? When you pray, is it in request, or do you occasionally get in a "thank you"? Do you pray for others or is your prayer pretty much centered on your needs? Here's one for you — have you ever prayed that the Lord would have a good day today? That simple request told God you care and that you know He's listening!

Life can deal us a headache from time to time. Who am I fooling? Life can deal us a catastrophe from time to time! God never said this world would be a piece of cake.

There will always be challenges that include burdens, mountains, obstacles, and problems. They are part of the scenario and not likely to disappear in your lifetime or mine. So what's a solution for handling this "normalcy" that we define as "life"? We could go to the doctor and tell him we're stressed out, or we could just moan, groan, gripe, and complain. We could go to our pastor and tell him we need his prayers, or we could pray

ourselves and develop something that perhaps some of us are missing — a relationship that can make every burden lighter, every mountain smaller, every obstacle easier, and every problem simpler, a relationship with Him who made us.

You might wonder "well, how do I start? I've got to have a reason to pray." You're right and you have one. As a matter of fact, you have many.

When you awoke to another day in your life this morning, that was one! The comfort of the home that sheltered you last night and your night's rest, was another! The job or finances that allowed you the home and comforts you have were gifted to you also! They started coming when God allowed you to be! The love and care to get you where you are and every segment of your existence in between was granted you by your Father. The air you breathe, the sights you see, the smells you smell, and the sounds you hear, all bestowed upon you individually!

Awesome, isn't it?

You contribute in a big way to what you are and God knows it. The sweat, the concern, the effort, the sacrifice, He knows that they are part of your contribution, but to give those things and not recognize why can create an emptiness! To struggle and work for something in life, perhaps your first

home, or a family, or a job, or a strong portfolio and to attain it, is the most wonderful feeling in the world and sharing it with loved ones makes it even better, but to recognize why you were successful, and include God in your joy. Now that's an experience no words can describe.

Sharing time with your Father also creates other pluses in your life. He becomes your friend, one that stays by your side as long as you want Him to. His presence gives strength, stamina, and vitality to the weakest of hearts and His company cures all forms of loneliness. He is there to hear you any time you want to talk and without being asked.

If you have a sincere desire to thank God for what He has done in your life, you have but to tell Him. If you have a request for yourself or another, you have but to ask. It could be that someone you know doesn't believe in themselves or anything else for that matter, let alone God and that you would like to see happiness replace their misery. It could be that you want to be a blessing, instead of asking for a blessing. All you have to do is pray. Find a place that suits you, preferably a quiet place and open your heart. God will hear and help. You can be sure!

When you crank up your day tomorrow, take a look around, a real look. Depending upon where you live, you may

be able to see majestic mountains that appear to touch the heavens or experience the stillness and solitude surrounding a nearby pond or lake. It may be that you will see and delight in the smile of a child or be witness to the palette of a rainbow in a flower garden. You may observe the seasons of the year changing the colors of our world or watch in awe as lightning illuminates God's heavens. These things and many more like them are for you, no strings attached and with your Father's compliments and love.

Every moment of our life creates a reason to recognize God's presence in prayer. We can praise Him for blessings received or ask His help regarding a need! We can start off with a simple "Thank you, Lord" and ask Him to help an elderly friend in the hospital get well. We can pray to Him about our world and ask His intervention and help, regarding peace. We can pray for others who need His help in their life or for those who are grieving over the loss of a loved one. You can pray that God will grant you His grace and help you to be more of what you should be as a person.

You can pray for a moment with sincerity and God will be pleased. You can set aside some quiet time each day to spend with God and you will sense His smile over your

shoulder. Including Him in your life makes every day better.

So tell me, would you consider praying today, or how about tomorrow?

Is it possible that you know of a need that you could talk to God about? Do you suppose that there is something in your life that warrants a word of thanks to your Father? Take a moment now and think of something wonderful in your life. It could be your spouse, your child, your folks, or even your own well being. Chance are, God gave it to you, just like He gave His only Son so that you could benefit, so that you might pray.

As you pray, take time to listen with your mind and with your heart. God answers all prayer in His own time frame. Your Bible can be a profound tool, allowing you to gain wisdom, understanding, and stature. It will inspire and guide you in prayer. Go to the Scriptures and check out Matthew 6:6 and then read Luke 11:1-4. Your Father even offers an outline and method for you to get started! The rest is up to you. Keep God's Word near for reading, reference and questions and stay in touch with your pastor.

Don't forget, including Him in your life makes every day better! □ — Kramer is a deacon at First Baptist Church, Bozeman.

At church in Nashville

Bill Highsmith leads senior adults, recreation, activities

By Connie Davis Bushey
Baptist and Reflector

NASHVILLE — Bill Highsmith, minister of recreation, activities, senior adults, and disaster relief, Tusculum Hills Baptist Church here, stays busy, as one might assume with all of the areas he leads.

But he also has time to stop and visit with a new visitor to the gym who has come to walk for exercise. He always waves to folks who pass by his open office located near the main entrance of the church's Family Life Center.

He loves to tell stories about folks he has worked with the past 13 years at the church. He could write a book, he said. But he probably won't take the time. Highsmith has senior adult trips to lead, church events to host, outreach groups to meet with, nursing home ministries to check with, basketball teams to coordinate, and probably at least one mission trip to plan.

Striders Club

Each morning dozens of people drive up to Tusculum Hills Church in southeast Nashville at 7:30 a.m. People such as Joe Scruggs of Nashville are regulars. Scruggs, who is retired from BellSouth, learned about the indoor walking track here from friend Joe Reed, a church member.

Scruggs, a member of another Christian church, walks about seven miles a day at the church six days a week. He was advised to do so by his doctor after developing diabetes. He often walks with his friend, Reed. Scruggs is the top walker of the church's 2004 Striders Club at 1,731 miles.

People who wish to walk just have to register, providing information in case of a health emergency, and sign in and out. They receive a pedometer for encouragement.

Church volunteers track the mileage of the about 400 striders and publish the stats each month. Each year, a banquet is held to recognize the top striders, said Highsmith.

The church's walking track is an example of "what churches should do," said Highsmith. It meets a need of people and the community and thus draws people who aren't members of the church. Until recently it was the only indoor walking track in the area, explained Highsmith. People are referred here by health care workers at nearby Southern Hills Medical Center, he noted.

Church members have been able to minister to striders who aren't members of a church, he said, and really make a difference in their lives, often drawing them to God. In fact, a church committee ministers to the Striders Club participants. Striders also often attend a Tuesday morning Bible study

which is offered in the Family Life Center.

Other activities/recreation, etc.

Highsmith sees other people like the striders helped through his ministry. For example, he knows of people who save for a year so they can participate in one of the trips he plans and leads.

He and a group of 93 people — 30 of which were non-church members — just returned from an annual Christmas trip to Pigeon Forge. The trip filled up in July. On Dec. 21 he took 112 to Princeton, Ky. Both were one-day trips.

Two ladies who went to Pigeon Forge each told Highsmith separately the trip made their Christmas meaningful. One of them had tears in her eyes as she thanked him, he described.

The church's trips are so popular the 2005 offerings are already published and many are full, he said. He limits the number who can participate so he can develop a relationship with most of the people. In 2005 he will offer six one-day trips, two two-day excursions, and a trip to Britain/Ireland and Western Canyon Country in the United States. He targets different groups, such as young families who are sports fans for the yearly trip to a major league ballpark.

Working with about 125 volunteers and a staff including Judy Andrews and Kim Wood, Highsmith offers other activities at the Family Life Center.

He is especially proud of a dinner theatre which he and Greg Skipper, a church member who works in the music area of LifeWay Christian Resources, Nashville, lead. This year "Hello Dolly" involved over 150 workers, was accompanied by an orchestra, and drew 1,200 to its three performances.

He leads a summer program for children with a trip every week for 11 weeks, one or two mission trips, and leads disaster relief volunteers to respond to needs through Tennessee Baptist Disaster Relief. Workers from the church served four times in 2004, which is more than usual, he said, because of the four hurricanes which hit Florida and Alabama.

Highsmith is committed to disaster relief because of his prior work as a staff member of the Brotherhood Department of the Tennessee Baptist Convention. He worked with Roy Gilliland, department director, from 1968-75.

Other activities overseen by Highsmith range from a ceramics group to 39 basketball teams to AARP driving classes to jazzercise. Highsmith also directs the church's food service.

He said God blesses him in unique ways. For instance, a church member arranged for the church to receive a portable

stage and 400 chairs from Opryland Hotel. And another member arranged for the church to receive restaurant equipment which was worth \$20,000. The church only had to pay \$10,000 to provide a setting for the equipment.

"This is why I stay excited. There's stuff like this that goes on here all the time," he explained.

Senior adults

Highsmith is especially proud of the church's senior adult group.

They serve through 14 ministries and really make a difference in people's lives, he described, including his own. Of course, he can't take credit for much that they do, he added. Many ministries of the seniors had been going long before he came to the church. One group has been ministering at the Bordeaux Nursing Home, which is located about 20 miles away, each week for at least 30 years. The group leads a service there.

Another group, about 15 men, form the Fix-It Squad, repairing things for people. A group makes "goodie bags" for shut-ins and another group of about 25 couples deliver the gifts and visit with the shut-in once a month.

About 20 seniors tutor children at three elementary schools once a week. And a group travels to an apartment building which is home to senior adults and takes them grocery shopping once a week.

About 50 senior adults form the very active senior adult choir of Tusculum Hills Church. They perform at least one musical a year. They also travel to perform.

His ministry

Highsmith has held a number of jobs simultaneously before. In addition to working for the TBC, he worked for four years for the Northwest Baptist Convention (Oregon and Washington) in evangelism and Brotherhood while serving as a university collegiate minister and a church youth director.

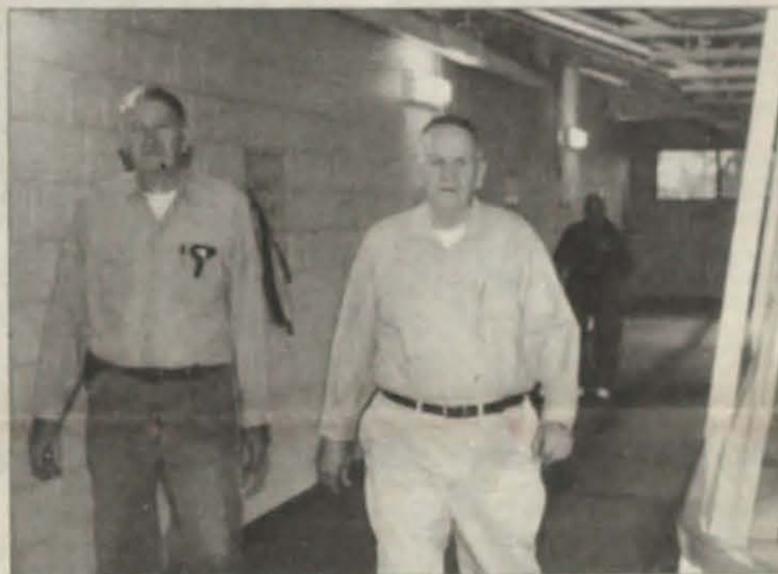
Back in Middle Tennessee Highsmith started and ran a cleaning business for 15 years. He also served as minister of recreation and activities for Belmont Heights Baptist Church, Nashville.

He tries to be an administrator while "being involved in the lives of all these people everyday."

For instance, when volunteers came recently to decorate the main dining room for Christmas parties, Highsmith



VOLUNTEER WORKER Lela Taubert of the church visits with Bill Highsmith at the main office of the church's Family Life Center.



JOE REED, left, of Tusculum Hills Baptist Church, Nashville, and Joe Scruggs of Nashville walk together six days a week at the church's Family Life Center. Scruggs, though not a member of the church, has the top mileage for the year of the church's Striders Club — 1,731 miles.

stopped what he was doing to join them.

He explained he never apologizes for "meeting and eating. If you're meeting together, you're meeting a need. ... But that shouldn't be all you're doing."

He gives credit to the church, which provides a full-time minister for the areas he covers, to his staff, and the volunteers who help him. He tries to be quick to thank people.

He is intrigued by the steps by which people develop and energized by seeing people develop, sometimes through relationships and sometimes through events and experiences.

"I'm committed to raising the



BILL HIGHSMITH holds a baseball from a major league game which he keeps in his office. It and others remind him of the many trips he has led for the church. The ball is signed by all who were a part of the trip.

standard for our people, providing the very best.

"This is where I get my fuzzies, seeing these events and experiences play out in the lives of people," said Highsmith.

When you provide these opportunities, "you're going to win people" to Christ, he added. □

4-year-old Mt. Juliet congregation dedicates first unit

By Lonnie Wilkey
Baptist and Reflector

MT. JULIET — In mid-November Victory Baptist church here held a celebration worthy of its name.

The 4-year-old congregation dedicated its first unit — a 44,000-square-foot, \$5.2 million, multi-purpose building.

The facility will allow the Victory congregation to do several different things as far as ministry is concerned, said Pastor Chuck Groover, who has been with the church since its formation in June of 2000.

A former pastor at Hobson Pike Baptist Church in Mt. Juliet, Groover was focusing on his teaching and coaching at Mt. Juliet High School when the new church, which was meeting at the school, approached him about preaching on the second Sunday the church met.

After preaching that Sunday Groover and his family went to Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center.



GROOVER

"There the Lord impressed upon me this was something I needed to consider," he recalled.

After returning home, he met with the leadership of Victory Church and was called as interim pastor. Then in October he was called to serve as pastor.

In June of 2001, Groover gave up his teaching and coaching position to serve as full-time pastor.

Accepting the pastorate of a new church start wasn't a problem for Groover. He had previously worked with three new starts

while serving in Florida. Each of those were soon growing, thriving congregations, he said.

Groover moved to Tennessee in 1993 when his wife, Syble, accepted a position at LifeWay Christian Resources.

He settled into a bivocational role, teaching and serving as pastor at Hobson Pike before joining with the new congregation which was formed out of a neighboring church.

Groover said Victory began to grow as the congregation became unified with a common goal.

"There was a sense of people pulling together. They knew that if they were going to establish a successful work, they would have to count on each other," the pastor said.

He recalled that several members came to him and admitted they used to be "pew sitters," but knew they needed to become more involved.

Groover noted the early days were tough because members had to get to the school early to set up the church and then take it down afterwards.

"It was a chore to set up and take down," he acknowledged.

"But I believe those are days we will look back on and really appreciate," he said.

Looking back Groover said he never doubted the congregation "would make it."

"After the second Sunday I preached, I felt this group really had a heart to work for the Lord," he said.

In February of 2001 the church began to prepare for the future when it purchased 30 acres of land on Tate Lane. In October of the that year, they were able to burn the note on the property.



VICTORY BAPTIST CHURCH in Mt. Juliet recently dedicated its new 44,000 square-foot multi-purpose building. It is the church's first unit.

At that point the congregation began to get serious about building a facility, Groover said. Plans were finalized and construction began in August of 2003.

The church neessitated the seriousness. The church began with about 100 people. Prior to the move from the high school to the new facility, the church was averaging about 330 in Sunday School and 370 in worship.

Since the move to the new site on Nov. 7, Victory has averaged about 400 in Sunday School and 600 in worship, the pastor said.

"It's been amazing to see what God has done in a short time," he said.

The move has enabled the church to quickly expand its ministries. They now offer a Mother's Day Out program. Discipleship, youth, and children's programs have been expanded. In addition, the church can now have Wednesday during the week other than a Wednesday night, Groover said.

The church even hosted a concert by the legendary Chuck Wagon Gang that drew a number of people to the facility.

Groover is excited about the future of the church because of the continued growth in Wilson County. "We anticipate 6,000 new homes being built in Mt. Juliet in the next five to 10 years," Groover said.

The church hopes to expand its ministries to a growing population of senior adults as well as families with young children. "We'd like to be known as a church that reaches across generational lines and touches all generations," he said.

"There will be a lot of opportunities. We have to be forward thinking and aggressive in reaching people.

"The Lord has blessed us for a reason — to reach new people He is bringing to us," he continued.

"This is a mission field. We must work to take advantage of the opportunities He has given us." □

Tennessee Baptists help put the 'merry' in Christmas ...

— Continued from page 1

Since its beginning the Crisis Center has had a "Christmas Program" for children and teenagers in Copper Basin. While it has been modified at times, basically children in the area write Christmas letters to the association and provide a "wish" list, along with needs. They are also asked to describe their family situation.

And while there are typical requests of computers, games, etc., most of the wish lists center around food, socks, toiletries, school supplies, and even blankets.

"It says something when kids ask for food," said Margaret Patterson.

Wish lists

Here are a few "typical" letters which the Pattersons receive each year at Christmas.

"To whom it may concern: We have no money. We don't have no one to help. We have three kids and no money for Christmas. It is hard to raise the kids on no money. I am in need."

"I am a single mother of four. I'm writing to you because I'm worried about Christmas for my kids. I am so behind on all my bills and we barely make it as it is and now that Christmas is around the corner, I am worried."

"My name is Hannah and I'm 14 years old. Here are some things I'd like to have for Christmas — pants (ladies blue jeans tall), shirts, pocket book, makeup and a watch, and a

pair of pajamas, XL."

"Thank you for your assistance. We have been having a hard time. My daughter is in college and has two and a half years left. We cannot afford to send her money for food. If you can help her with food and in any other way, that would make us very happy. She has been struggling to get food for a month now. Sometimes a whole day will go by and no food passes by her mouth. She is not the only student going through starvation within college dorms. Please help her. We appreciate you all. God be with you."

"The majority of the letters we receive are from people in desperate situations," Margaret Patterson acknowledged.

Working with others

With only 12 small churches (none would have more than 75 in Sunday School), the association depends on outside help to meet the needs, the Pattersons said.

Some of the help comes locally from churches of other denominations. A lot of help comes from fellow Tennessee Baptists.

For several years Concord Baptist Association, based in Murfreesboro, has asked for letters each year. Churches "adopt" the letters, buy gifts, and deliver them to Copper Basin each year, Patterson said.

This year, Concord Baptists accepted 130 letters. Two other associations also pitched in — Cumberland Baptist Association, headquartered in Clarks-

ville, took 60 letters while Dyer Baptist Association, based in Dyersburg, took about 30 letters. This is the first year Dyer has participated, Patterson noted.

In addition, the Christian Growth Development Group of the Tennessee Baptist Convention "adopts" and has done so for several years, according to group leader Tim Holcomb.

He noted the idea was originated by retired staff member Sue Raley, who at the time was the group's liaison to associations in southeast Tennessee, including Copper Basin.

Raley, though retired, has stayed personally involved. Raley and two friends helped provide gifts for two families this year, she said.

Raley found out about the Christmas program of the association as she worked with the Pattersons. "I was amazed at the work they did and the number of families they touched," she said.

Raley shared the needs with her co-workers and they agreed to begin buying gifts for children in the association instead of purchasing gifts for each other.

"My feeling is that every family they minister to has a heart-tugging story of survival," she observed.

She recalled one boy who asked for a blanket because "it was cold in his bed."

"They don't ask for frivolous things," she observed.

After Raley retired, the TBC group decided they wanted to

continue the ministry, said Ken Marler, general leadership growth specialist.

Marler noted the needs are great in Copper Basin and the ministry that is done there is "overwhelming."

This year the group provided gifts for about five families and 12 children, he said.

David Pittman, director of missions for Concord Association, noted their churches had a ministry in Copper Basin before he came.

"We believe in Al and Margaret (Patterson) and in what they're doing," Pittman said.

"We just want to join hands and help them in what they are doing. They know the people and they know the needs."

In addition to the Christmas program, Pittman said the association has taken several mission teams to the area and helped with home repairs and construction.

"We feel a real kinship with the people of Copper Basin," the DOM said.

The Pattersons are extremely grateful for the help received from others in the area and across the state.

This is a big task for 12 small churches, he noted. "There is no possible way we could do it without help from other Tennessee Baptists," Patterson said.

God has it on layaway

The Pattersons estimate they will receive about 750 letters this year. Of those, 500 or so will be "adopted." Yet, every child re-

ceives a present of some kind, or a gift certificate, the couple stressed.

Patterson noted some money comes in to the Crisis Center very close to Christmas. That money is used to purchase gift cards from a department store for children or families who enter the process late.

"God has always been faithful to provide enough so we could do something for everyone," Patterson observed.

Margaret Patterson shared one of her favorite stories about a young girl who had requested only one thing for Christmas — a certain kind of doll. The Pattersons searched everywhere for the doll, including Atlanta while they were there during a trip. The search proved fruitless. As they returned home and Christmas fast approaching they decided to stop and buy her any kind of doll they could find.

They found a store in Blue Ridge, Ga., and went in. "The clerk asked me what I was looking for and I told her I knew she didn't have it," Margaret said. "She insisted I tell her so I did."

The Pattersons couldn't believe their ears when the clerk told them, "I just took one of those off layaway. Let's see if it's still there."

As she retold the story, she almost wept as she remembered how God had provided that doll.

"God has everything we need on layaway. We just forget to ask," she said. □

NAMB offers plan for new materials

By Marcia Knox
"Men's Ministries Newsletter"

ALPHARETTA, Ga. — The North American Mission Board's Mission Education Team is offering a new materials incentive plan, according to Joe Conway, NAMB Mission Education Organizations manager.

The new incentive plan includes *Men@WORK* magazine in addition to the RA magazines as well as 20 percent discounts for core resources for all three organizations including RAs, Challengers, and Baptist Men. The new plan also offers free magazines for one quarter. This offer is good until Jan. 31, 2006.

The new incentive plan is designed for new starts only, which is defined as a church that has had no work in Mission Education organizations for at least two years.

The plan can be used to begin one of the organizations even if the church already has an existing group for another age level.

Forms are available to explain how to use the incentive plan with churches that are starting new units of RAs, Challengers, and BMEN.

To receive a "New Start Order Form" or a "20% Discount on Supplemental Resources" Order Form, contact Gene Williams, TBC Men's Ministry specialist, at 1-800-558-2090 ext. 2064 or e-mail him at gwilliams@tnbaptist.org. □

Following hurricane responses

RAs, GAs raise funds for disaster relief

By Marcia Knox
"Men's Ministries Newsletter"

NASHVILLE — RAs and GAs from across the state have participated in raising money for Tennessee Baptist Disaster Relief efforts during the recent four hurricane responses to Florida and Alabama.

Centerville's Fairfield Baptist Church RAs and GAs raised over \$473 for the hurricane responses by combining their mission efforts, according to Cindy Clark, Fairfield Church WMU director.

"Our RA boys shot basketballs for which they received monetary pledges, and the boys also showed their support by attending the mission love offering presentation," said Clark.

"Our GA girls performed chores and took up a love offering at a Wednesday night prayer meeting," noted Clark. "During the love offering the girls presented a re-enactment of their class discussion, which not only educated the church members about the recent Disaster Relief effort, but also cit-

ed Bible verses that inspired members to give with love.

"It is my prayer that these children may inspire others to help through what they have done for this mission effort. With 3,000 Tennessee Baptist Convention churches, I can see how God can use us to inspire them."

RAs at Creevewood Baptist Church, Nashville, donated over \$2,524 to recent Disaster Relief efforts by holding an emergency fundraiser, according to Brian Holt, Creevewood Church RA director.

"With only one week prior notice, we conducted a Basketball Dribble-Thon for the LADS where they collected sponsors for each minute that they dribbled a basketball non stop for up to 30 minutes," said Holt. "The Crusaders held a Basketball



THESE ROYAL AMBASSADORS and Girls in Action of Fairfield Baptist Church, Centerville, and their leaders collected over \$473 for the recent hurricane responses of Tennessee Baptist Disaster Relief.

Shoot-Out where they collected sponsors for each point that they scored in three minutes. We had 12 boys participate in the events.

"Thanks to Tennessee Baptist

Disaster Relief who has worked so hard with the massive relief efforts in September, and we hope that the money will help those continued efforts." □

National BMEN Conference/Challengers Rally set

By Marcia Knox
"Men's Ministries Newsletter"

ALPHARETTA, Ga. — Embarking on a new idea, the North American Mission Board will hold its first national men's conference Feb. 25-27 in Gatlinburg combining it with its annual Challengers Rally, according to TBC Men's Ministry specialist, Gene Williams.

The 2005 National BMEN Conference and Challengers Rally will be held at the Gatlinburg Convention Center, Gatlinburg.

"Combining the BMEN Conference and Challengers Rally is one of our first steps in intentionally tying our Mission Education organizations back together," said Joe Conway, NAMB Mission Education Organizations manager. "We are strongly promoting the need for Baptist Men to take responsibility for the leadership and administration of Challengers and Royal Ambassadors."

"With the re-launch of Baptist Men resources this year, we felt it was important to be-

gin to make the connection on every level possible. Since we have not sponsored a national men's event, we felt it would be better to build off of what we already have in the Challengers Rally and further emphasize the intentional tie rather than attempting to start a men's event on its own."

All Baptist Men on Mission and Challenger groups are invited to attend this first combined conference. Cost is \$40 per person (Early Bird - \$35 per person if registered before Feb. 15).

Featured speaker will be Steve Moore, founder of Keep Growing Inc. and noted author of leadership books. Special guest is Anthony Clark, the World's Strongest Man. Special Music will be brought by This Hope. Worship leader is David Glenn, Contemporary Christian recording artist and songwriter.

Register your Baptist Men on Mission and Challenger groups on line at www.bmen.net or www.challengers.cc. For more information, call 1-770-410-6491. □

LifeWay Christian Resources launches new ministry, Men's Fraternity

By Marcia Knox
"Men's Ministries Newsletter"

NASHVILLE — LifeWay Christian Resources based here has now launched a new Men's Ministry materials resource, entitled Men's Fraternity, according to Gene Williams, TBC Men's Ministry specialist.

"As men we need to connect with and strengthen each other," said Williams.

Beginning at a church in

Little Rock, Arkansas, Men's Fraternity was designed to build men up and is impacting men everywhere to examine their lives and take steps to embrace authentic biblical manhood. This ministry grew out of a pastor's home beginning with 30 men in its first year to over 1,400 who regularly attend.

Created by Robert Lewis, pastor of Fellowship Bible Church in Little Rock, Men's Fraternity is designed to foster

true spiritual and emotional growth among men as they meet for weekly teaching sessions and small group interaction.

The study is designed to engage the heart as well as the mind by stripping away the myths of manhood and focusing on how each individual can be transformed into a true man of God.

Available this month at LifeWay is *Men's Fraternity: The Quest for Authentic Man-*

hood, a 24-session study of life hindering wounds to a place of wholeness where life is experienced as God intended. It is available in a DVD set, Viewer's Guide workbook, and a CD pack.

Available in April 2005 is *Men's Fraternity: The Great Adventure*, a 20-week study designed to help men understand their true identity and guide them to break free from the bondage of boredom to embark on the adventure

of their lives. It is also available in a DVD set, Viewer's Guide workbook, and a CD pack.

To order call LifeWay at 1-800-458-2772, or visit the nearest LifeWay Christian Store. □

MEN'S
FRATERNITY

A Word from Gene

I believe great spiritual growth will occur among men if they identify and stay far away from the edge of biblically based boundaries.

Scriptures describe the abundant life available to believers (John 10:10). They also describe the consequences of being carnally minded (Romans 8:6). While attempting to gain the abundant life, kingdom-minded Christians are careful to avoid carnal activity. We often seek council about gray areas asking each other if certain activities are sinful.

In reality this questioning is an attempt to identify boundaries for Christian conduct. Boundaries are important. Their identification will help us avoid sinful practice. The unexpected danger lies in our inclination to dance up to and "unintentionally" cross the boundary.

How easy it is to "innocently" click one of the pop-ups so prolific on the internet today. Suggestive, sometimes vulgar, very often cheesecake in presentation, they become the hook needed to pull us over the boundary. Hanging out just on the "safe" side of the boundary is sure to offer an enticing invitation to cross it.

Boundary identification should be used to mark the spot from which we run. May I say that again? Boundary identification should be used to mark the spot from which we run. The abundant life lies in the opposite direction. Kingdom-minded Christians press ever closer to the purifying, white hot, consuming presence of God leaving far behind the limits of merely acceptable behavior.

In II Chronicles 16:9a, it tells us that God is searching the earth for those whose heart is perfect toward Him. When He finds them, He shows Himself strong and powerful in their behalf. Finding the boundary, leaving it far behind, and perfecting your heart toward God will produce God-sized power in any Christian man.



WILLIAMS

Gene

Gene Williams
Men's Ministry specialist

Baptist Men's Day to be moved

"Men's Ministries Newsletter"

BRENTWOOD — In breaking a long standing tradition, the North American Standing Board recently announced that Baptist Men's Day will now be recognized on Father's Day beginning in 2006.

"Baptist Men's Day has always been held the last Sunday in January," noted TBC Men's Ministry specialist, Gene Williams. "The annual emphasis was dropped from the Southern Baptist Convention calendar several years ago although NAMB continued promoting it and provided material to be used in its observance."

"This action restores the level of attention given to SBC dates and increases awareness that churches benefit greatly when they include a male focus in their strategy."

The theme for Baptist Men's Week Jan. 23-30, 2005 is "Manpower for the Mission." Downloadable materials will be available at www.bmen.net. □



Volunteers hold event for inmates

By Marcia Knox
"Men's Ministries Newsletter"

NASHVILLE — A group of 12 volunteers from First Baptist Church of Franklin: The People's Church and Covenant Baptist Church, Nashville, provided a Christmas celebration with dinner and worship time for 100 inmates Dec. 2 at the Charles Bass Correctional Complex in Nashville.

First Church members Ted and Sharon Schempp led the volunteers, made up of the church's Brass Ensemble members and others including TBC Men's Ministries specialist Gene Williams. The Schempps serve in an ongoing prison ministry and travel to local prisons and provide music and ministry. Once a year, the Schempps provide a Christmas celebration with music and a meal at a different prison. At this year's celebration, First Church do-

nated the food, Kroger donated the drinks, Williams donated LifeWay's *Stand Firm* devotional magazines for men, and others donated their time and talents.

Following the dinner, Ted Schempp, a local songwriter and performer, led the inmates and staff in Christmas carols, accompanied by other volunteers. Jeff Anderson, First Church's horn section leader and staff arranger, led the musicians in an assortment of Christmas instrumentals. In addition, an inmate, trumpet player, who had not played in two years and had been unsuccessful in getting his instrument into the prison, sat in and played with the ensemble. Darrell Darnauer, also a member of First Church, gave a short message. There were four professions of faith.

Bass Correctional Facility chaplain Peggy Meade thanked the ministry team for their time and fellowship given to the inmates. □



VOLUNTEERS WHO led the event were, from left, first row, Ted Schempp, Sharon Schempp, Jan Yuill, Shelley Moeller, Nan Perdergast, and Herb Chapman, all of First Baptist Church, Franklin, and Jay Scott, Covenant Baptist Church, Nashville; back row, Darrell Darnauer, Rick Yuill, Jeff Chandler, Jeff Anderson, and Bill Munn, all of First Church.

Carver Hibbett wins annual essay contest

By Marcia Knox
"Men's Ministries Newsletter"

MT. JULIET — A middle schooler from Mt. Juliet was the recipient of the second "Father of the Year" essay award Oct. 17 at Victory Baptist Church in Mt. Juliet.

Carver Hibbett, winner of the fourth-sixth grade division, received his recognition plaque and other prizes for his winning essay about his dad.

Frank Green, TBC RA/Challenger field worker, made the presentation during the church's Sunday morning worship children's sermon time. Green emphasized the need for children to be taught character virtues and missions. He shared the specifics of the essay award and thanked the church for being an On-Mission Church and supportive of the Cooperative Program.

Victory Church Pastor Charles Groover recognized and thanked the RA leaders of the church. He also asked present and former church RAs to stand for a round of applause.



CARVER HIBBETT, center, winner of the Father of the Year Essay Contest, holds the plaque he received from Frank Green, right, of the TBC staff, as Hibbett's dad, Bobby, stands by him.

Carver Hibbett's dad, Bobby Hibbett, who is a National Guardsman, received the most applause from the congregation.

Groover also emphasized the importance of the church's ministry to children. □

Stone Baptist Association based in Cookeville attracts 36 boys to RA Camp

Men's Ministries Newsletter"

COOKEVILLE — The Stone Baptist Association, Cookeville, recently held a Royal Ambassador Camp at Camp Sandy Stone where 36 campers and staff attended representing six associational churches.

Bill Hicks, Associational RA leader, and Tom Howard, Associational Men's Ministry leader, led the camp this summer. Both men are also State RA trainers and members of Caney Fork Baptist Church, Cookeville. Special thanks also go to retired Stone Association director of missions Mike Prowse and his wife Beth Prowse and numer-

ous other volunteers.

Gordon Vasseur, ministry clown and a member of First Baptist Church of Cookeville, and Frank Green, TBC RA/Challenger field worker, gave mission presentations. Serving as camp pastor was Damon Corley, former pastor of First Baptist Church of Gainesboro.

Camp activities included cooking out, swimming, water slide, hiking, worship, Bible study, missions, campcraft, canoe safety, campfire service, and crafts. □



ENJOYING A CAMPING project at Camp Sandy Stone are several RAs from the Stone Baptist Association, based in Cookeville.

A Word from Frank

Let me tell you about John Robert. He is my great nephew and is nearly two years old. Recently while visiting one of his grandparents, he was noticeably attracted to a small statue of Jesus with an outstretched hand, a prized possession of that grandmother.

He was scolded and told to stop touching it. But his child's curiosity would overcome him, and back to the forbidden statue he would go.

My nephew, John Robert's dad, finally paid closer attention and noticed that John Robert was doing something that his son had learned to do with him. Dad had taught John Robert to do the "high five" greeting that is popular in all kinds of sports and other times of celebration.

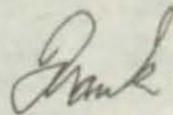
John Robert was giving Jesus "high fives." Although we would be considered weird or at least strange, maybe we should give Jesus a "high five" every

once in a while. Perhaps John Robert in his own way was saying, "thank you" to Jesus. John Robert somehow understands what Jesus has done for us all. The Bible makes references to "coming as a little child" and "child-like faith."

I think we all could use some of John Robert's enthusiasm toward Jesus. This time of year, it is really easy to take our eyes off Jesus. Even though it is His birthday that we are celebrating, we often let material things capture our attention.

This is the season that we should celebrate. Let us remember to make the main thing, the main focus of our celebration. Let us also remember that Jesus is never out of season. We should celebrate Him every day.

Jesus left heaven and came to a sinful world to die for sins that He did not commit. If that doesn't deserve a "high five," I don't know what does.



Frank Green
RA/Challengers field worker



GREEN

Grizzlies night set for RAs

By Marcia Knox
Men's Ministries Newsletter

MEMPHIS — The Mid-South Royal Ambassadors will hold its Memphis Grizzlies Group Night Friday, Jan. 7, at 7 p.m. at the new, state of the art, FedEx Forum in Memphis.

All RAs, Challengers, Baptist Men, and their families are invited to come cheer on the Grizzlies as they take on the New Orleans Hornets in an exciting game at the FedEx Forum.

RAs and others can receive discounted tickets for Terrace III (S) at the group price of \$15 or at the gate for \$18. RAs will be the color guard for the evening game. Grizzlies court time after the game will include Pastors 2-Ball Challenge including layman and just shooting around with dads and RAs.

An autograph signing session will be held for 30 RAs and Challengers to be selected from the largest top 10 groups in attendance.

Checks may be made payable to: Memphis Grizzlies. Send checks to: Herschel Wells, Mid-South RA director, 6733 Amersham Drive, Memphis, TN, 38119.

For information, call Wells at 901-568-0466 or e-mail him at hwells1@midsouth.rr.com. ☐



RA University set for Jan. 28-29

Men's Ministries Newsletter

MEMPHIS — The annual Mid-South Royal Ambassador University will be held Jan. 28-29, 2005 at Camp Cordova, and it is limited to 35 participants, according to Herschel Wells, Mid-South RA director.

Featured speakers on the program will be: three National Royal Ambassador certified trainers; TBC RA/Challenger field worker, Frank Green; a local elementary school principal; a local CLUE teacher; Mid-South Baptist Association Missions coordinator, Lisa Travis; and representatives from local ministry and mis-

sion organizations.

The group will remain overnight at Camp Cordova for 7.5 hours of intensive training. The sessions begin Friday evening, Jan. 28, at 5:30 p.m. with dinner and end Saturday, Jan. 29, at 4 p.m. The sessions are open to all RA leaders.

All participants will be provided with meals, materials including a RA Leaders Book and a notebook of helps, housing, and yellow polo "T" shirts with their names and "Royal Ambassador University" embroidered on it.

Registration is \$50 per person, and advanced registration is required. For information contact Wells at 901-568-0466 or e-mail him at hwells1@midsouth.rr.com. ☐



RAs/GAs collect 1,137 lbs. of food

By Marcia Knox
Men's Ministries Newsletter

BARTLETT — RAs and GAs from Faith Baptist Church in Bartlett recently collected 1,137 pounds of food for The Food Bank in Memphis during its annual "Trick or Treat, So Others Can Eat" food drive.

A seventh year tradition for Faith Church, it is a friendly competition between the RAs and GAs prior to Halloween. "Trick or Treat" is only one of the church's many projects that teach the importance of missions. As a hands on mission project it also exposes the children to real-life problems such as hunger and poverty that they may not experience.

The missions groups were paired off and given maps of their neighborhoods near the church, according to Herschel Wells, Mid-South RA director. Chaperoned by adults on a Wednesday night, the groups took flyers to

homes asking for can goods. The children went out on Sunday afternoon before Halloween to pick up the food.

After the mission project, the first-fifth graders at the church learned during a question-and-answer session who receives food from The Food Bank and how much is given. "They learned that over 45 percent of people served by The Food Bank are under 18-years-old," said Alisha Tillery, communications manager for The Food Bank.

"We care about ministering to the whole community," said Ken Cole, RA director, who first began the "Trick or Treat" program at Faith Church seven-years-ago. "It's not about us; it's about everybody, and that's what I teach the kids."

At least three churches in the Mid South Baptist Association, Memphis, participate annually in the "Trick or Treat" program.

To learn more about the RAs at Faith Church, log on to www.midsouthras.org. ☐



FAITH BAPTIST CHURCH, Bartlett, RAs and GAs display the food collected in Trick-or-Treat So Others Can Eat with their leaders at the church.

Mid-South RA Racers compete four times

By Marcia Knox
Men's Ministries Newsletter

MEMPHIS — The Mid-South Royal Ambassadors conducted four RA Racer competitions this year ending with a Nov. 20 race at Hope Baptist Church in Olive Branch, Mississippi, according to Herschel Wells, Mid-South RA director.

RA chapters attending this year-end event came

from North West Mississippi along with others from Tennessee including Faith Baptist Church, Bartlett, Trafalgar Village Baptist Church, Memphis, and First Baptist Church, Millington.

Mid-South RAs conduct these events at four different locations during the year to make it easy for all chapters to attend.

The next RA Racer event is Feb. 19 from 9 a.m. to 12

noon at Trinity Baptist Church, Memphis. Each participant is asked to bring at least one can of food for the Tennessee Baptist Children's Home in Memphis. To compete in the event go to www.midsouthras.org web site where detailed information is posted prior to the event.

Boys were also asked to bring can goods in November for Brinkley Heights Baptist Church Ministries in Memphis. More than enough food arrived to not only help Brinkley Heights Church, but also to meet the needs of a number of hungry families in Olive Branch, Miss.

Featured with the November RA Race Car event was a display of "Estes" Rockets. Mid-South RAs annually conduct a RA Rocket launch, which is set for March 19, 2005, at Shelby Farms in Memphis.

RAs interested in competing in the rocket launch can go to www.midsouthras.org for information on this event and other opportunities in mission education for children. ☐



ADMIRING A trophy are Chris Leppanen, left, Faith Baptist Church, Bartlett, and Ross Shackelford, First Baptist Church, Olive Branch, Miss., at the Nov. 20 competition at Olive Branch, Miss.

Anglers for Christ develops TV show

"Men's Ministries Newsletter"

KINGSPORT — Anglers for Christ (AFC) Ministries embarked on a journey by launching a new television series, called "The Christian Angler." The show is hosted by Tony Sellars, former professional fisherman and director of AFC Ministries.

Filming and production is being maintained in house by the ministry staff. After 18 months of production, the show aired in October.

"The Christian Angler" goal is to blend great outdoor entertainment with strong Christian family values. The show consists of all types of fishing from bass fishing in Florida to trout fishing in Arkansas.

Along this journey, many AFC Pro Staffers such as Jay Yelas, Shaw Grigsby, Lonnie Stanley, Guy Eaker, Randy Howell, Woo Daves, and Mark Davis join in for great fishing fun, tips, and testimonials.

Another goal is to show the spiritual lives of some of America's favorite fishermen. In addition to great tips and testimonials, each show offers a special time of fun for the kids in "Reel Kids" with Hunter and Dane. Hunter Knight, a member of Manley Baptist Church, Morris-



town, and Dane Odom, son of Al Odom, Fishers of Men national director, host fishing for kids by kids.

"All shows are very true to life," said Sellars. "Not every show is filled with the 8-10 lb. lunker. The show features the dog days of summer to the very difficult heartaches of winter time fishing. This show is a little unique, but today the world needs uplifting in peoples' daily lives.

"Production would not be possible without sponsors who are excited about putting a Christian faith-based product on the market."

Currently "The Christian Angler" can be viewed on i-LifeTV (Inspirational Life Television) on Thursdays at 2:30 a.m. and Saturdays at 10 a.m. and on WVLR-TV 48 CTN (Christian Television Network) Knoxville on Saturdays at 12:30 p.m.

For information visit www.christiananglertv.com. □

Outdoor network trains Iowa Baptists to reach outdoorsmen

By Jason Cruise
"Men's Ministries Newsletter"

NASHVILLE — If we want to reach a non-believing world, we've got to learn to think like a non-believing world. If we want to reach men, then we've got to think like men.

A turkey hunter's analogy can point to some similarities with churches and church leadership. A lot of turkey hunters that I meet spend 87 percent of their time trying to learn to imitate the sounds of a wild turkey.

These energetic hunters stick a latex reed in their jaw and take off trying to imitate a hen by yelping, cackling, cutting, clucking, or doing kee-kee runs. The usual result is that what once was an energetic hunter is now a disenchanted spiritual shell of a man by the end of turkey season, because he never filled his tag.

I've often said that if a turkey hunter would spend 87 percent of his time actually learning to "think" like a turkey, then he'd fill his tag to the limit each spring.

Again I say, if we in the church want to reach men, then we've got to think like men.

Recently we helped our ministry partners in Iowa do just that by teaching them how to launch an outdoorsman's ministry. Iowa is a breeding ground for outdoorsmen. Over 671,451 Iowans bought a hunting or fishing tag in 2002. I think that qualifies as an un-reached people group.

Iowa churches have a lot in common with churches in Tennessee. Many of them want to have an outdoorsman's ministry, but they don't

quite know where to start. And that is where the Tennessee Outdoor Network (TON) appears.

We want to help churches build a ministry, which is a lot more than just an annual wild game dinner. In September-2004, through cooperative efforts, we helped the leadership in the South Central Iowa Baptist Association learn how to launch an outdoor ministry in their local church communities.

TBC Men's Ministries leadership has been a godsend in all of this work. When we launched this ministry through the TBC in January 2003, I had no idea it would go so far so fast. In just 21 months, we've trained 28 Tennessee churches spanning 9 counties. But that's not all; we've also trained 20 churches in 8 other states.

There's a lot that outdoor ministry can do for a church, but I would say the number one boost that it can give is in reaching those who I've come to call "The Marginal Man."

The most significant insight that God has shown me in these last 21 months has been a surprise to say the least. At every conference I teach, I hear leaders say, "Jason, we just cannot seem to get our men connected with church life."

There's a reason for that, because most men are bored. The church has neglected to think like a man.

Most men in your church are on the margins. They come to church, but they are not connected. They do believe in God, but they don't see anything that is appealing to adventure when they look at the church. Outdoor ministry can change that forever. We'll help you do it at www.tennesseeoutdoornetwork.com. □

Cruise is TON founder and senior pastor at Belmont Heights Baptist Church, Nashville.



CRUISE

Church Renewal Journey conferences set

By Marcia Knox
"Men's Ministries Newsletter"

ALPHARETTA, Ga. — The North American Mission Board wanted to let people know that there is exciting news about Church Renewal, and they have scheduled three 2005 Regional Church Renewal Journey Conferences.

Today laypeople are rediscovering their first love through Church Renewal Journey (CRJ), a Bible-based approach to motivate laity to return to a passionate walk with God, and as a result join Him on mission. It is a church-

wide process of awakening God's church, equipping and discipling her members, and sending them out with the joy of knowing their unique ministries.

The conferences planned are: Feb. 25-27, Alabama Baptist Conference Center, Shocco Springs in Talladega, AL, with guest speakers Bob Record, NAMB president, and Cheryl Reccord, leading a ladies session, contact Shocco Springs at 1-800-280-1105; March 18-20, Highland Lake Baptist Camp, Monrovia, Indiana, with guest speaker Randy Singer, NAMB chief



counsel and special assistant, contact Highland Lake Camp, Marty Beck, 1-317-241-

9317, ext. 246; and April 8-10, North Texas Baptist Conference Center at Camp Corpus, Denton, TX, with guest speaker Singer, contact North Texas Center, Cathy Lawrence, at 1-214-828-5356.

For information on Church Renewal contact, Don Hanle, Tennessee State Church Renewal coordinator, at 865-681-1465 or e-mail him at donald-handle1@aol.com. □



SOME OF THE VOLUNTEERS who served on the last day of the Nashville Baptist Association Toy Store Dec. 9 were, from left, Eleanor Bell and Karen Hooker, both of Eastwood Baptist Church, Thomas Lynch, Hermitage Hills Baptist Church; Jim Batts, Grace Baptist Church; Bobby Huff, Hillhurst Baptist Church; and Tom Sires, Hermitage Hills Church. Over 800 families received gifts. Volunteers recorded 17 professions of faith and two other spiritual decisions.

Tennessee Baptist Camps 2005

Camp Linden at Linden

- June 10-12 — Journey Weekend for Dads/Sons & Mom/Daughters
- June 13-15 — Journey Mini Camp for Boys
- June 13-17 — All Nations Camp
- June 15-17 — Journey Mini Camp for Girls
- June 27-July 1 — Journey for Kids
- July 11-15 — Youth IMPACT

Austin Peay State University, Clarksville

- June 27 — July 1 — Super Summer

Camp Carson at Newport

- July 8-10 — Journey Weekend for Dads/Sons & Mom/Daughters
- July 22-24 — Journey Mini Camp for Kids
- July 25-29 — Mission IMPACT

Register call Linden Valley at 1-877-354-6336, Carson Springs at 1-877-704-6336, or Nancy Hamilton at 1-800-558-2090.

Baptist Men's Ministry Dates 2005

January	
23-20	Baptist Men's Week
February	
25-26	Associational Men's Ministry Leadership Training, Tennessee Baptist Convention, Brentwood
25-27	2005 National BMEN Conference and Challengers Rally, Gatlinburg Convention Center, Gatlinburg
April	
1-2	RA Wilderness Challenge, Camp Boxwell, Lebanon
June	
19	Baptist Men's Day (Father's Day)
September	
23-24	Men's Ministry Fall Retreat, Fall Creek Falls Conference Center, Pikeville
October	
7-8	Tri-State Camp-O-Ree, Camp Cordova, Cordova
22	Smoky Mountain Regional RA Challenge, East Maryville Baptist Church, Maryville

Missions blitz grows into interdenominational effort

by Wayne Grinstead - Associated Baptist Press

FAYETTEVILLE, N.C. — Ten years ago, Snyder Memorial Baptist Church here was a church ready for a new challenge. To revitalize the congregation, staff members envisioned a brief local-missions blitz with the ambitious goal of involving more than half of the people attending Sunday morning services.

What resulted was a one-day effort to minister to "the least of these" in and around Fayetteville, a military town. Blending military and biblical terminology, they called the project "Operation Inasmuch," taking inspiration from Jesus' parable in Matthew 25.

The first event drew 450 participants from the church — two thirds of the average Sunday attendance.

"The day after, ... some members came to me and said, 'that's our idea of missions,'" recalled David Crocker, at the time the church's new pastor.

"Operation Inasmuch became the heart of the church's mission statement. It changed the identity of the church in the community. From that point on, the church was sold on it," said Crocker, now pastor of Central Baptist Church, Fountain

City, in Knoxville. So apparently were a lot of others.

A decade later, more than 300 churches representing many denominations now participate, as the idea has spread from North Carolina into Tennessee, Georgia, Alabama, Florida, and even across the Atlantic — Burton Latimer Baptist Church in England held an Operation Inasmuch last year.

"When you start something like this," Crocker said, "you have no idea where it's going."

Crocker says people of all ages gravitate toward expressing their concern for missions in local and personal ways. "They want hands-on involvement," he said.

Operation Inasmuch attempts to get church members outside of the church and into the community. But it's not about church image. "It's about doing what Jesus said," Crocker explained. "It's practicing what we say we believe. I grow weary of how often we gather in comfortable places and talk about doing missions. And I know that when you offer a way to do missions, laypeople in particular

are very enthusiastic about it."

An event last spring at Central Church, Fountain City, included Presbyterians and Methodists and provided hands-on missions activities for almost all age groups. That is a key to involvement, said Martha Johnson, a registered nurse who has been Central's volunteer coordinator for three Operation Inasmuch efforts.

During the April event, children in the church were part of a pizza party given for guests at a Ronald McDonald House, which offers temporary housing for families of ill children. The church children also packed personal-care kits that were distributed to people in local homeless shelters. Senior adults participated in light assembly projects.

Other church members prepared and froze 112 casseroles for the Fellowship Center, another organization that houses out-of-town families of local hospital patients. Central sponsored a baby shower, with all gifts donated to a home for unwed mothers. They prepared 500 "compassion bags." Each item inside had a Bible verse attached. Church members sorted food and clothes that had been donated to the Fountain City Ministry Center, an interdenominational project of eight church-

es that is housed at Central Baptist.

Youth and adults, working under the direction of project leaders, completed 20 construction-related projects during the one-day event, including painting, roofing, landscaping, and the installation of a wheelchair ramp in a home.

Even when construction is involved, the costs are kept to a minimum, Crocker said. It's often possible to partner with local groups that are "pass-through organizations" for projects funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

"HUD makes money available to almost every community in the nation for repair of resident-owned property for people who are unable to do the repairs themselves," Crocker said. "These organizations are looking for volunteers. Our proposal is, 'You provide the materials. We provide the volunteers.'"

The Operation Inasmuch churches provide lunches for all participating volunteers. And churches must purchase items to be used in the personal-care kits. But the average out-of-pocket cost for Central Baptist for an Operation Inasmuch with approximately 500 volunteers is only \$3,000. "So often people are willing to donate things," Crocker

er said. "Lots of businesses are eager to help out when they understand what this is."

In many Operation Inasmuch projects, those ministering and those ministered to are in direct contact. Does this then become an evangelism effort? And, Crocker was asked, how do you keep the recipients from feeling patronized?

In home-repair projects, volunteers are asked to take time to visit with homeowners, get to know them, share with them, and pray with and for them. Operation Inasmuch gives homeowners a Bible with the names of the volunteers listed inside.

"While volunteers are putting on a new roof, other volunteers are meeting and talking with the owners," Crocker said. "We do ask volunteers to inquire about their spiritual situation and, to whatever extent they will allow, to share with them. But we don't want it done in a heavy-handed way."

Operation Inasmuch has contributed to church growth at Central Baptist. "We've had people join the church because they were impressed that people would do such things," Crocker said.

A manual for Operation Inasmuch is available for a nominal charge from the web site, www.operationinasmuch.com. □



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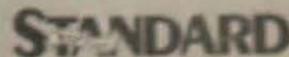
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Agree Union University leaders

Despite politics, prayer is important component of Christian life

By Tim Ellsworth
Union news service

JACKSON — The politicization of prayer continues to abound.

Communities in Virginia are debating a federal court ruling that outlawed prayer to begin town council meetings. In Canada, a court decision is forcing the military to change its policies on how soldiers must act during a prayer. In Boston, parishioners at a church closed down by the Archdiocese of Boston are using prayer as a form of protest.

And a cover story in the Dec. 20 edition of *U.S. News and World Report* explores the topic of prayer and what people pray for.

But regardless of the status of prayer in society — regardless of whether the government restricts public expressions of prayer or not — for Christians prayer will always be a spiritual discipline of vital importance, according to Union University professor George Guthrie.

"At its heart, Christianity is relational," said Guthrie, the Perry Professor of Bible and Chair of Professor's Christian Studies department. "It is a relational religion. This is not just about what we do for God. It's not about us simply conforming to a set of rules. It's that God has invited us into a profound relationship with Himself. The barriers have been torn down. He is still awesome, and He's God and we're not, but we have been invited into His presence."

Prayer then is the vehicle through which that relationship is nurtured and strengthened. Prayer is a communication tool that allows Christians to grow in their relationship to God.

"If I do not relate to my wife, if I do not communicate with her in an ongoing way, then our relationship's going to stagnate," Guthrie said. "It's the same way with our relationship with God. We need the ability to talk to Him about things."

But for many Christians, prayer isn't the easiest of tasks, according to Todd Brady,

Union's campus minister

"It's easy to be spiritual these days, but the kind of prayer that we are called to from the Scriptures, no I don't think it's easy," he said. "Even the disciples had major difficulties in prayer. We see that in the gospels. The kind of prayer that is Christian prayer requires focus, patience, and diligence, and that's what makes it hard."

Only through an appreciation for the Word of God and knowledge of the purpose and nature of prayer can a Christian pray obediently, Brady said. That involves studying the examples of prayer in the Scriptures to understand God's standard.

"There's a standard to which we must aspire," Brady said. "Simply praying is not enough. We must pray rightly. I don't think that it is possible to be faithful in prayer from a knowledge of the Word."

So how does a Christian go about praying properly? Union president David Dockery said Christians would do well to fol-

low the model prayer of Jesus.

"Our first responsibility is to recognize the greatness and goodness of God," Dockery said. "We acknowledge His majesty and mercy by saying, 'Hallowed is your name, how great is your kingdom.' The model that Jesus gave us helps us understand that first of all, prayer is more about God than it is about us."

Secondly, another dimension to prayer includes thanksgiving for God's blessings and the opportunity to make daily requests. Other examples in Scripture include believers making specific requests to God in times of illness, danger, and anxiety.

"We recognize our dependence upon God for every provision of life," Dockery said.

Guthrie added that proper prayer includes praying for God to advance His kingdom in the world, for forgiveness, for authorities and government, for church leaders, and for other people — namely, for all relevant parts of life.

"That presupposes that this

world isn't divided into two spheres — the religious sphere and the real world," Guthrie said. "That two-sphere view of life is not the biblical view. The biblical view is there's only one sphere. It's all God's sphere and therefore God can intervene and invade in all aspects of it."

Dockery acknowledged that the concept of prayer can be complex, especially when addressing questions about whether God changes His mind because of the prayers of His people.

"Somehow in the great mystery and providence of God, He has willed that His purposes are accomplished through various means," Dockery said.

"One of those means is prayer. Thus, prayer does not change God, but it is what is used to advance God's purposes in our lives. God is immutable, but he does seemingly respond to His people in Scripture when they come to Him in humble recognition of His divine sovereignty." □

Letters to the editor

Appreciates stance

Thank you for the two articles about our new TBC president, Robert Freeman. All Baptists statewide should be pleased to know we have a leader who is foursquare behind our Cooperative Program.

His challenge to all churches to give at least a tithe of 10 percent to the CP is an important reminder that as good stewards, we must support our missionaries.

My wife and I have the pleasure to be members of Smyrna Baptist Church in Burlison. Members of Smyrna voted years ago to increase our annual contributions to the CP to 20 percent of all undesignated offerings.

A longtime member there told me recently that we have never had a money problem since church members took that forward step of faith. As one of the oldest continuing serving SBC churches in West Tennessee, God has blessed us in many obvious ways too numerous to say.

As my friend and fellow church member Ruby Dawson likes to say, "You can't out give God!" Amen!

Roy Warmath
Munford, TN 38058

Love of the game

As a Southern Baptist I truly enjoyed your editorial on the decline in values in the world of sports (Nov. 24 issue). The sports world truly has been on the decline.

Athletes refuse to control themselves and get caught driving drunk. Money-driven play-

ers and owners bring a halt to the NHL. The Indianapolis Detroit basketball brawl was just icing on the cake.

I played high school baseball years ago and we played for the love of the game. Yes we were competitive but we played fairly and honestly. I graduated in 1980 but it does not really seem that long ago.

My daughter now plays high school sports. She is a freshman at a local high school and plays varsity volleyball and freshman basketball.

To see these young ladies play and compete for the love of the game really is a joy. Yes they make mistakes and yes they may lose the game but they take it in stride.

Perhaps the so called superstars could take a lesson from the young up and coming students. When you lose sight of what's important in sports, you might as well stop playing.

Ian Miller
Nashville 37217

Translators speak

The Thanksgiving week issue of the *B&R* contained a letter which claimed that some unnamed teachers at Carson-Newman College taught that the Bible contained errors.

The best selling book ever in the English language is *The King James Bible*, whose first edition was published in 1611. This edition contained a lengthy forward by the translators, addressed firstly to King James, and secondly, to the reader. I include three quotations from this foreword.

"— how convenient it was, that out of the Originall sacred

tongues, together with comparing the labours, both in our owne and other forreigne Languages, of many worthy men who went before us, there should be one more exact Translation of the holy scriptures into the English tongue;"

"A man may be counted a virtuous man, though hee haue made many slips in life, — also a comely man and louely, though hee haue some warts upon his hand, yea, not onely freckles vpon his face, but also skarres. No cause therefore why the word translated should bee denied to be the word, or forbidden to be current, not withstanding that some imperfections and blemishes may be noted in the setting forth of it."

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MINISTRY — STUDENT

Seeking a full-time minister of students and outreach for a purpose driven church located in suburban Saint Louis County. Must have passion for youth ministry and reaching students for Christ. College degree preferred. Please send resume and/or recording to Minister of Students Search Committee, Fee Fee Baptist Church, 11330 Saint Charles Rock Rd., Bridgeton, MO 63044.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

FBC of Panama City Beach, Fla., has immediate opening for an experienced leader to develop/manage youth and children programs. Huge harvest field for spiritual fulfillment. Send resume to 204 Cobb Rd., 32413, (850) 234-0488; e-mail: fbcpcb@knology.net.

"But we weary the unlearned, who need not know so much and trouble the learned, who know it already."

Could it be that the translators of *The King James Bible* were more interested in true biblical scholarship than we are today?

Barry Robertson
Kingsport 37664

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MINISTRY — PASTOR

South Clinton Baptist Church, Clinton, Tenn., is prayerfully seeking resumes for a senior pastor. South Clinton Baptist is an established place of worship, and currently averages 125 in attendance on Sunday mornings. This person should have a seminary degree from an accredited school. Strong administrative skills are required as pastor will be involved in all aspects of church development and maintenance; thus, a minimum 5 years of experience as pastor is required. Please prayerfully consider if God might be calling you to serve in our church. Send resume with cover letter and video or audio tape to Pastor Search Committee, South Clinton Baptist Church, 1000 Clinch Ave., Clinton, TN 37716, web site: www.southclintonbaptist.org.

MINISTRY — MUSIC

FBC, Lake Charles, La., seeking a full-time music minister. Blended/contemporary, orchestra/praise band, people/technology skills. Experience. Personnel Ministry Team, 830 Hodges St., Lake Charles, LA 70601, or fbc-lc@bellsouth.net.

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MINISTRY — CHILDREN

Healthy, growing church seeking full-time minister to about 15 children. Send resume to East Side Baptist Church, 718 E Ninth St., Mountain Home, AL 35893, or mikesky@cox-internet.com. Visit our web site www.esbcmh.com.

MINISTRY — STUDENT

Full-time minister to students responsible for overseeing a ministry to students from 6th grade through college. Preferred seminary degree. Send resume and inquiries to Sharon Baptist Church, 7916 Pedigo Rd., Knoxville, TN 37938; fax: (865) 938-7076; e-mail: sbcofknnox@frontiernet.net, Attn. Search Committee.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

Part-time interim youth minister for grades 6 through 12. Send resume and inquiries to Sharon Baptist Church, 7916 Pedigo Rd., Knoxville, TN 37938; fax: (865) 938-7076; e-mail: sbcofknnox@frontiernet.net, Attn. Search Committee.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

First Baptist Church, Lebanon, Bible-believing, mission-minded fellowship, prayerfully seeks a minister to youth to oversee a large and active ministry to junior high, senior high, and college students. This is a full-time position. A seminary degree is preferred, but not required. Resumes may be sent in confidence to Youth Pastor Search Committee, First Baptist Church, 311 N. Madison, Lebanon, TN 37536. Resumes will be accepted through Jan. 31, 2005.

Including Iraq

Nashville woman serves in Middle East for two years

By Karen Jordan
The Tennessean

NASHVILLE — It is not a calling an average civilian would choose, but it is nothing out of the ordinary for Southeast Davidson County native Melissa Turner.

The 28-year-old just completed nearly two years of working for a humanitarian aid organization in Iraq.

It was a mission she chose. Turner said she simply felt drawn to the country, so after completing a bachelor's degree in aerospace engineering at the University of Maryland, College Park, and working in the industry in Washington, D.C., she decided to take a leap of faith.

She worked, primarily in Baghdad, helping to rebuild schools, sometimes pass out food to poor Iraqis and work in medical clinics. She said going to Iraq was a move she made without any fear.

"It was never bad in Baghdad," she said. "Things blew up occasionally, but people lived there."

Despite this, she admits living in the country was a major adjustment compared to life in

the United States.

"One out of 10 shops was open when I got there," Turner said. "There was debris around, no police, and no one on the streets. But daily you could see things getting better."

By the time she left last month, she said things had improved, but something that never changed was the need for security.

Turner and her co-workers were forced to have a driver for security reasons. While enjoying outings to the Baghdad Zoo and area restaurants early on, Turner said by March of this year, all such outings ended with the threats of violence.

"We watched a lot of DVDs," she recalled.

Turner was still unafraid. She admits she ditched security one day to drive herself on a solo shopping errand downtown.

While she was able to leave the country unscathed, not everyone she knew was so fortunate. One of her most painful experiences was the loss of four American friends, including a former roommate, to a drive-by shooting outside of Baghdad.

Still, their murders did not give her any second thoughts about living there, she said.

"They were my friends, and I loved them, but I believe very much that God will protect me if that's His will," she said. "And if not, He'll take me home, and I'll be fine either way."

In the midst of the grief, there are also happy memories.

Being included in the wedding of a young Iraqi couple is one. Being in Iraq on June 28, the day sovereignty was returned to Iraqi officials, is another.

"That was a very good birthday present," said Turner of the news, which came two days before her birthday. "Everyone was just thrilled."

Being back in this country, she has been angered by the media accounts most Americans see. Turner wishes they had a chance to find out what is really happening in Iraq.

"You don't get the whole picture," she said. "If you watch the news, yeah, you'd be freaked out to go there."

"What you don't see is people live there. Kids go to school now, (people) go to work, go to the mosque, get married. They live. They die. They have babies."

Her father, Nelson Turner, minister of worship at First Baptist Church, Hermitage, said his family's weekly phone calls to Melissa helped give them the real picture behind the news accounts.

While he said the family was supportive of Melissa, they also were greatly concerned about her welfare. He said he should not have been surprised that she would end up in Iraq because she has always been "the one in the family that's the initiative taker." Most importantly, nothing beat having her home for the holidays. "It gave us more reason to be thankful," he said.



MELISSA TURNER, a native of Nashville, holds a baby in Basra, Iraq, during her recent service there.

Melissa Turner does not plan to stay in town long. The Overton High School graduate will go back to the University of Maryland next year to finish a master's degree in aerospace engineering, and she has not ruled out returning to Iraq, a country she has grown to love.

Considering a way to merge her love of the country with her

profession brings tears to her eyes.

"I am supposed to be working full time for God, but he also made me to be an aerospace engineer," she said. "My absolute dream job would be to work with the Iraqi science community."

"Basically, anything that would get me back to Iraq, I would do at this point." □ — © The Tennessean, Dec. 6.

CLASSIFIED

MINISTRY — MUSIC

West Paris Baptist Church, P.O. Box 1285, Paris, TN 38242, (731) 642-5917, is seeking a bivocational minister of music. If interested, please mail resume to Attn. Personnel Committee.

◆◆◆◆

The First Baptist Church of Telligo Village seeking a part-time minister of music. Senior adult congregation, of approximately 150, residing in recreational-retirement of Knoxville. Strong music program with 35-40 in choir. We lean toward more traditional worship style but enjoy learning new praise music. Anyone who has a deep love of the Lord and celebrates that love through music please send to Karen Hardesty, 128 Daleyuhski Way, Loudon, TN 37774.

◆◆◆◆

Henderson Chapel Baptist Church is seeking to fill the position of part-time music worship leader. Address your resume or questions to the church or phone Dave Tinker at (865) 428-0276. Henderson Chapel Baptist Church, 407 Henderson Rd., Pigeon Forge, TN 37863, Attn. Search Committee. Job description available upon request.

◆◆◆◆

Seeking full-time minister of music/worship leader for a Southern Baptist congregation that engages in a blended style of worship. The church's television ministry covers a 5-state area. Seminary degree preferred. Submit resume to Music Search Committee, Attn. Music Office, 2890 Broadway, Paducah, KY 42001.

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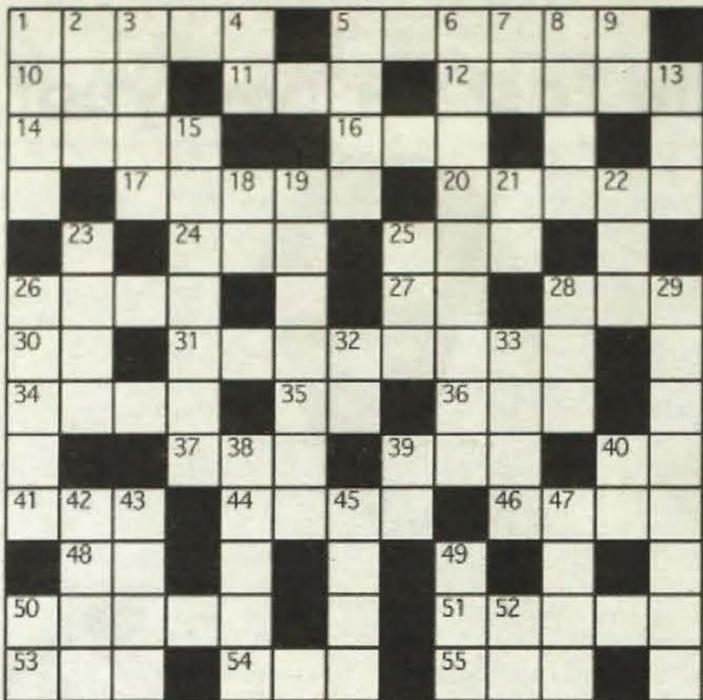
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See answers on page 18

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ACROSS

1. "Give me this ____" (John 4:15)
5. "____ of false prophets" (Matt. 7:15)
10. Jacque's friend
11. Noncommissioned officer, abbr.
12. Angry
14. "Behold the ____ of God"(John 1:29)
16. Small child
17. "Small your affection on things above, not on things on the ____" (Col. 3:2)
20. "Cease your ____" (James 4:8)
24. Dessert
25. "Ye have not because ye ____ not" (James 4:2)
26. "Set thy ____ among the stars" (Obad. 1:4)
27. New England state, abbr.
28. Abram's nephew
30. The son of Peleth (Num. 16:1)
31. "God gave the ____"(I Cor. 3:6)
34. Ruth's second husband (Ruth 4:13)
35. Masculine pronoun
36. "At thy word I will let down the ____" (Luke 5:5)
37. "Every ____ shall see him" (Rev. 1:7)
39. Summer beverage
40. Alternating current, abbr.
41. "The ____ of those things is death" (Rom. 6:21)
44. Spoken
46. "____ thy foot against a stone"(Matt. 4:6)
48. God gave Joshua the victory over ____ (Josh. 8:1)
50. "Clothed in pure and white ____"(Rev. 15:6)
51. Nicodemus was a ____ of the Jews (John 3:1)
53. Alcoholic beverage
54. The Creator
55. "There is none good but ____"(Mark 10:18)

DOWN

1. "We ____ by faith" (2 Cor. 5:7)
2. Japanese pearl diver
3. "Grace to help in ____ of need" (Heb. 4:16)
4. Nurse, abbr.
5. "____ young men, and maidens" (Ps. 148:12)
6. "None is able to ____ thee" (II Chron. 20:6)
7. Relating or resembling, suffix
8. "Who giveth ____ upon the earth" (Job 5:10)
9. And, Latin
13. Elevated trains
15. To immerse or dip in water
18. Smallest state, abbr.
19. "A ____ of babes" (Rom. 2:20)
21. Largest state, abbr.
22. Dead letter office, abbr.
23. Genus, comb. form
25. Score an A
26. "These were more ____ than those in Thessalonica" (Acts 17:11)
28. "If thou ____ this man go" (John 19:12)
29. "False ____ among you" (2 Pet. 2:1)
32. Regarding, abbr.
33. The ____ is the word of God (Luke 8:11)
38. "Teach the ____ women" (Titus 2:4)
39. Louisiana's neighbor, abbr.
40. Preposition
42. "She put her hand to the ____" (Judg. 5:26)
43. "Jesus saith unto them, Come and ____." (John 21:12)
45. "Paul the ____" (Philem. 9)
47. " ____ to keep you from falling" (Jude 24)
49. Male sibling, for short
50. City in California, abbr.
52. International peace-keeping organization, abbr.

Carson-Newman students use A.O. service to 'wrap' kids up with love

By Mark Brown
C-N news service

FAYETTEVILLE, N.C. — The temperature will drop into the upper teens in East Tennessee by the end of this week. But the colder it gets outside, the warmer it gets in Elizabeth Forry's heart because she knows what love can do.

As Appalachian Outreach ministry center coordinator, Elizabeth oversees an English as a Second Language tutorial program at Jefferson Elementary School. Each Wednesday after school, seven Carson-Newman College students volunteer to tutor Hispanic children. The sessions are split between helping the children with homework, which takes about an hour, and another hour on the playground.

"The same 16 children come every week," said Forry. "And they eagerly hug their favorite C-N student. We have all formed special friendships with them."

By October, trips to the playground depended on the

weather, and just a month later they all but stopped. "With the temperatures dropping, the children had to stay inside because it was just too cold for them," she added.

In November, A.O. Director Jean Ann Washam took a phone call from someone who said the ministry had a particular need they could fill. "Most of the families represented by kids in after-school tutoring simply do not have the money to afford winter wear," noted Washam. "So we figured that 16 new coats was a serious need."

Once the coats were purchased, Forry's Wednesday afternoon volunteers decided a party was in order. For each child, they filled a bag with goodies like dolls and cars, crayons, and stuffed animals. They had a surprise Christmas

party, complete with cupcakes and chips.

The bulk of the afternoon, however, was spent on the playground. Forry said she didn't realize how much the gifts mattered until the day was over.

"We drove the kids home after the party," she said, tears welling up in her eyes. "Every child would get out of the van, and every one of them wrapped their arms around themselves so they could hug their new coat." □

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MINISTRY — COMBINATION
Seeking full-time youth/children's pastor. Please send resume to Search Committee, P.O. Box 239, LaCenter, KY 42056.

MINISTRY — OTHER
Grace Baptist Church of Nashville is seeking a part-time secretary for approximately 30 hours a week. If interested and for more information, call (615) 865-6262 or fax a resume to (615) 860-8734. You may mail a resume to 1510 Old Hickory Blvd., Nashville, TN 37207.

MINISTRY — HOUSEPARENT
Immediate need for full-time relief houseparents at the Tennessee Baptist Children's Home in Chattanooga. Married couples only. Call Lynn Jordan or Bob Segrest at (423) 892-2722.

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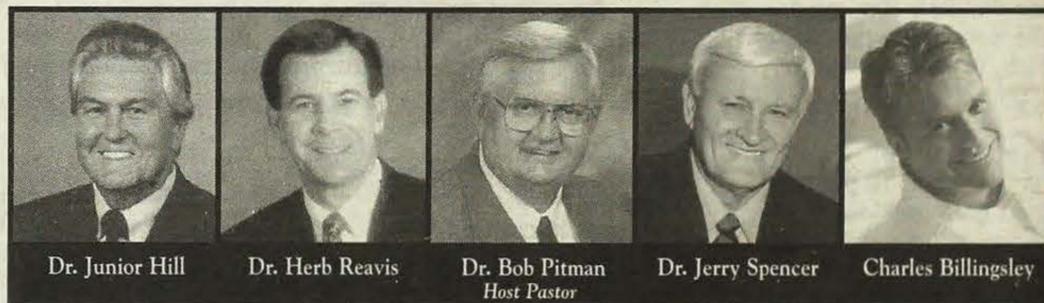
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State evangelism conferences given new format in '05

For Baptist and Reflector

BRENTWOOD — Rather than one large state evangelism conference in 2005, there will be several conferences offered on a regional scale, according to Larry Gilmore, leader of the Tennessee Baptist Convention's Evangelism Strategies Group.

In addition, several conferences will be geared to specific target groups.

The first state evangelism conference will be held Jan. 21-22 at Englewood Baptist Church in Jackson.

Though the conference does not begin until that afternoon, there will be an "early bird" session from 9:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m. with Ken Hemphill, former president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and now SBC national strategist for Empowering Kingdom Growth.

For those coming early, the Old English Inn is offering a special \$35 rate for Thursday night (Jan. 20) only. The Friday night rate is still discounted at \$55.

In the early bird conference Hemphill will be sharing principles on "How to Implement Evangelism/Missions Strategies for Reaching Your Community

for Christ."

On Friday from 2-4 p.m., the Fellowship of Tennessee Evangelists will hold their sessions. Vocational evangelists Charles "Toonie" Cash, Henry Linginfelter, and Morris Anderson will be the afternoon speakers.

"God's Word tells us that the evangelist is a special gift to the church," Gilmore said.

"Pastors are encouraged to hear these men and meet other vocational evangelists at the conference and then to prayerfully consider using them to minister in your church."

The Friday-Saturday schedule is being followed in this conference to accommodate the schedules of the many bivocational pastors and staff members serving our churches.

TBC staff member, Ray Gilder, has scheduled multiple breakout conferences for Friday afternoon which will address various needs from a "how to..." approach.

Visit the TBC web site for a list of the breakout conferences (www.tnbaptist.org; click on

"evangelism," "events," "Bivocational Evangelism Conference).

Two additional breakout conferences will be offered. One will relate to how to reach children and prepare them for baptism and discipleship and the other will address the challenge of reaching teenagers and leading them into lifestyles of faithful discipleship.

A steak dinner will be served at Englewood on Friday beginning at 5:15 p.m. for the first 400 making reservations. The cost is \$9. Reservations may be made by calling Englewood Baptist Church at (731) 668-7194.

The State Directors of Missions and Associational Evangelism Directors will be special guests. Bobby Welch, President of the Southern Baptist Convention, will speak at the dinner meeting.

During the first session of the conference on Friday night, Hemphill will speak in place of Charles Roesel who recently had quadruple bypass surgery and will be unable to attend.

Welch also will speak during the first session. Welch recently completed an extended trip across the United States presenting the "Everyone Can" Kingdom Challenge.

"This challenge combines a

simple plan that unifies all Southern Baptists around Christ, God's Word, and evangelism while allowing each Christian and church to use their own uniqueness, diversity, timetable, and methods to carry out "The Kingdom Challenge," Gilmore observed.

The Saturday schedule includes three pastors who have seen very significant growth through evangelism in their churches, Gilmore said.

Kyle Beverly, pastor of The Potter's House in Harriman, and Tom McCoy, pastor of Thompson Station Baptist Church in Thompson Station, are both church planters in different kinds of settings, Gilmore observed.

"They continue to work through the challenges of growing young churches and have seen much spiritual fruit."

After messages by Beverly and McCoy, David Landrith, pastor of the Long Hollow Baptist Church in Hendersonville, will conclude the Saturday morning session. Long Hollow Baptist has experienced phenomenal growth in the past six years, growing in attendance from 300 to over 2,500, Gilmore said.

A new twist to the Evange-

lism Program is being added this year. Immediately after lunch on Saturday, until 3 p.m., Beverly, McCoy, and Landrith will be on a panel for a question and answer time.

"These are men God has blessed to serve in churches that continue to grow. They are down to earth men who will be honest about what they have experienced in their journey. We can learn from their challenges, successes, and failures," Gilmore said.

The inspiration music will be led by Denny Dawson and the Englewood Celebration Choir.

"You will be encouraged, challenged, and hopefully receive a fresh touch from the Lord to be about the task of 'Winning Your Jerusalem' to Christ.

"The responsibility of taking the gospel message to the over three million lost people in Tennessee is ours and is not optional," Gilmore said.

Other conferences scheduled this year include:

March 11-12 — Bivocational Evangelism Conference, Grace Baptist Church, Knoxville.

March 13-14 — State Evangelism Conference, Grace Baptist Church, Knoxville.

April 25-26 — evangelism@next, First Baptist Church, Smyrna. □



GILMORE

IMB honors top givers to LMCO

IMB news office

RICHMOND — The International Mission Board has released its list of top 100 churches in gifts to the 2003 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering.

The IMB recognized two groups — numerical gifts and gifts per member.

The IMB received a record amount of \$136,204,648 for the 2003 offering. The 2004 offering is currently being collected by churches in Tennessee and across the SBC. The list and amounts are based on IMB guidelines and accounting information.

Tennessee churches in the top 100 churches for dollar amounts include:

Concord First Baptist Church, Knoxville, \$344,170.23 (5); Kirby Woods Baptist Church, Memphis, \$164,943.72 (22); Two Rivers Baptist Church, Nashville, \$155,975.63 (26); First Baptist Church, Sevierville, \$127,587.98 (40); First Baptist Church, Clarksville, \$109,954.74 (55); First Baptist Church, Hendersonville, \$109,331.38 (57); Bellevue Baptist Church, Cordova, \$102,725.00 (65); Red Bank Baptist Church, Chattanooga, \$95,178.53 (77); Forest Hills Baptist Church, Nashville, \$88,101.25 (90); and Wallace Memorial Baptist Church, Knoxville, \$83,147.45 (98).

Churches in the top 100 per capita gifts include: Woodlawn Baptist Church, Ripley, \$200 (\$2,200), (11); Bethel Baptist Church, Greenfield, \$128.22 (\$47,442.32), (61); New Home Baptist Church, Martin, \$118.19 (\$5,903.63), (73); Deer Lodge Baptist Church, Deer Lodge, \$111.11 (\$10,000), (84); Stanton Baptist Church, Stanton, \$101.67, (\$3,050), (97). □

Baptist editors select top SBC news stories of 2004

By Greg Warner
Associated Baptist Press

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — The Southern Baptist Convention's withdrawal from the Baptist World Alliance was the top Baptist news story of 2004, according to a survey of journalists.

The murder of four SBC missionaries in Iraq was the second most significant story, followed closely by President Bush's re-election with support from so-called "values voters."

The annual survey of Baptist state newspaper editors and associates was conducted by Associated Baptist Press, an independent news organization based here.

The Baptist World Alliance, an international umbrella organization representing 211 Baptist bodies, lost its largest member and funder in June. The SBC's conservative leaders said BWA harbors theological liberalism, a charge denied by the Virginia-based alliance and many of its member groups worldwide. The action became official in October, costing BWA \$300,000 a year.

In the deadliest tragedy in 157 years of Southern Baptist missions history, four International Mission Board missionaries were killed in their car March 15 in Mosul, Iraq, by unidentified assailants wielding automatic weapons and rocket-propelled grenades.

The relief workers were researching the need for a water purification site. Killed were Larry T. Elliott, 60, and Jean Dover Elliott, 58, of Cary, N.C.; Karen Denise Watson, 38, of Bakersfield, Calif.; and David McDonnell, 29, of Fort Worth, Texas. McDonnell's wife, Carrie Taylor McDonnell, 26, was severely wounded but survived.

Conservative Southern Baptists, who strongly supported George W. Bush's re-election Nov. 2, have since celebrated

the growing influence of moral issues in American politics and called for Bush and the Congress to push ahead with reforms to outlaw gay marriage and abortion, appoint conservative judges, and expand federal funding for faith-based charities.

The other top stories of 2004 were:

(4) Gay marriage — particularly its approval by the Massachusetts Supreme Court and gay marriages held in San Francisco and a couple of other municipalities — prompted a nationwide outcry from conservatives and legislative attempts to prohibit it.

(5) Four deadly hurricanes smashed into Florida, other Southern states, and the Caribbean in late summer, killing more than 100 people, damaging dozens of churches, and triggering Baptist disaster relief work.

(6) Mel Gibson's blockbuster movie "The Passion of the Christ" debuted in February amid charges of anti-Semitism, but pre-Easter audiences responded favorably, producing record ticket and DVD sales. While the movie made Jesus' death a topic of water-cooler conversation, evangelical Christians turned the box-office phenomenon into an outreach tool.

(7) Constitutional amendments banning gay marriage were passed in 11 states Nov. 2 in reaction to legalization in some jurisdictions. Two other states approved bans earlier.

(8) The SBC International Mission Board adopted guidelines in July requiring volunteer mission workers to endorse the more conservative 2000 version of the "Baptist Faith and Message" statement. The endorsement is already required of IMB missionaries.

(9) Congress defeated the Federal Marriage Amendment on a procedural vote July 14. The defeat of the constitu-

tional ban was hailed as a victory by gay-rights activists, but the vote triggered a cascade of state gay-marriage bans and energized a conservative electorate.

(10) The SBC North American Mission Board voted Feb. 4 not to endorse female chaplains in cases "where the role and function of the chaplain would be seen the same as that of a pastor." The move brought an end to the SBC's endorsement of female chaplains for the military, but may not prevent women from serving as hospital chaplains.

Other stories ranking high in the minds of Baptist editors were: a study showing the number of "declining" Southern Baptist churches on the rise, the worldwide reaction to the election of a gay Episcopal bishop in New Hampshire, and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary's fight against making the SBC the "sole member" of its corporation, ensuring trustees could not break away from the SBC.

A separate survey of religion writers at the country's daily newspapers produced a tie for the No. 1 news story of the year. At the top of the poll by Religion News Service were "The Passion of the Christ" and the role of faith in Bush's re-election.

The rest of the top 10, according to the religion reporters, were: 3. gay marriage, 4. the denial of communion to pro-abortion politicians by some Catholic bishops, 5. the international Anglican report on New Hampshire's gay bishop, 6. the Supreme Court's approval on technical grounds of "under God" in the Pledge of Allegiance, 7. the U.S. role in Iraq, 8. the trial of two lesbian ministers by the United Methodist Church, 9. the controversy over homosexuality in the Presbyterian Church (USA), and 10. the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. □

book review

By Dawn Ferguson

The Miracle You've Been Searching For
by Mac Brunson
Moody Publishers, 2004

God allows life-shaking, sometimes life-threatening storms in our lives to perfect our faith. To prune us. To cause us to grow and mature in our faith in Jesus Christ. To make us more like Him.

While students of God's Word know this to be true, in the midst of a storm it's hard to understand. If you or someone you love is diagnosed with a terminal illness - is in the midst of a painful divorce - is faced with the sudden loss of a job and no prospects for another one in sight - the last thing you want to hear is that God has a purpose for this trial.

But it's during these times when we come to the realization that we can't face it on our own. It's at these times that we turn to God - sometimes as a last resort. And then we realize that God has us right where He wants us! "When we come to a place where we can praise Him and thank Him while in the very midst of a life storm, it will be time for God to move. Time for a miracle," writes Mac Brunson in his new book *The Miracle You've Been Searching For*.

Brunson uses the feeding of the 5,000, the healing of the man who had been blind since birth and Jesus' calming of the storms to give understanding to how God works in performing miracles.

Like the man blind from birth, we are all born in spiritual darkness. And, like the Pharisees who ignored the miracle of the healing and focused on whether or not Jesus had sinned by healing on the Sabbath, some of us remain in the darkness our whole lives.

Brunson, the senior pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas, stresses that unless your relationship with God is personal and real, you will remain blind to the miracles of God.

"Maybe God is asking you to give up some sinful habit. Maybe He's asking you to be reconciled to a family member. ... Maybe He's just asking you simply to step out in faith and share your faith with someone in your sphere of influence. And maybe, just maybe, He's asking you to move into a fuller and deeper relationship with Him by spending more of your valuable time in His presence through prayer, praise, and time in the Word."

Brunson concludes that when we humbly obey God and "give Him everything we have and everything we are, He'll perform for us the greatest miracle of all. We'll see Jesus!"

The message of Brunson's book is good. It's based on God's Word. The text is insightful and true, but it lacks emotion. It lacks passion. It's as if Brunson has never experienced God in the midst of a tragedy.

Paul tells us in II Corinthians that God comforts us in our troubles, "so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God" (II Corinthians 1:4). To me, it is much more comforting to hear these words from someone who has experienced personal pain and suffering and has found God in the midst of their trials than to read the textbook version. □ — Ferguson is a freelance writer from Gallatin.

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Announce Jesus, the source of new life

By Jerry Massey

Focal Passage: John 4:7-42

God did it again! First, the coming of the Messiah was announced to the unlikely shepherds. Just as surprisingly in our passage for this week, Jesus announces to a Samaritan woman that He is the Messiah. Socially, she was an outcast because she was a Samaritan, and morally, she was a bankrupt soul. Her polluted life forced her to draw water from the well in the middle of the day because no one wanted to be around her; but Jesus intentionally came her way.

At first this sin-beleaguered woman had a difficult time understanding what Jesus was asserting. Yet the light ultimately dawned. Immediately, without being prompted, she ran to tell others, "God is here! God has come! God cares even for people like me! Come and see for yourself!" Knowing her as they did, neighbors were not swift to listen. Without faltering, she pressed her new discovery further. "I just talked with a man who knows everything I ever did, and He loves me anyway!" With that they followed her back to Jesus, and believers that hour were birthed into the heavenly family.

Announcing the "Messiah has come!" is not just a Christmas message.

It is "THE" message that's appropriate for every season of the year. Our lesson focuses on the "what," "how," and "why" questions

in the pronouncement of this "good news" gift as demonstrated by the Master soul-winner Himself.

Disciples are to announce the need for new life (vv. 7-10, 13-15). Putting geographical prejudices aside, Jesus daringly went through Samaria on His way to Galilee. Even those Samaritans needed to know that He had come to bring new life. Symbolically, Jesus offered the woman, "living water." He was referring to Himself. Well water, like that at Sychar, was considered "dead water" by the locals. Living water flowed like a river, while dead water was that which came from seepage, and therefore, easily contaminated. Mere well water would never thoroughly satisfy. They would need to drink from it again and again. But, if she received Jesus as the living water, this Samaritan woman would be saved, and saved forever. Jesus knew that only as the woman was right with God would she be right with herself and with others. Such change could come solely as a gift from God through faith in Jesus Christ. He was and is the only "Living Water" that satisfies everlastingly.

The woman's actions teach us that Christians are to announce our testimony of new life to others (vv. 28-30). She hurried back to tell of her experience with the Messiah. The villagers not only heard her story, but they could see the difference that this new Savior had already made in her countenance, at-

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titude, and life. She was now speaking with people she would have formerly shunned, and they her. She was not a salesperson for Jesus. She was an eager witness for her Savior.

After she left, Jesus privately spoke to His disciples and channeled their attention to the fact that they needed to see and announce the urgency for new life (vv. 35-36). The fields "are ready for harvest." The people back in Sychar seemed to be waiting for the news, and even



MASSEY

dared to act upon it. Today's fields are no different. I've been there. I know. These young disciples and evangelists had to understand that the gospel must be announced to all people.

As God's children may we welcome the New Year, and every day of the year, by declaring to our world, "God is here! The Messiah has come! He knows everything about us, and still He loves us. And He loves you just as much!"

Happy New Year and Glad Announcing! □ — Massey is pastor First Baptist Church, Paris.

Handling money

By Lee Porter

Focal Passage: Luke 16:1-13

Since the title of this lesson is handling money let us start by getting some money in our hands. Secure at least two bills from your billfold, purse, or pocket and hold them in one hand. Then get two coins and hold them in the other hand.

Now carefully examine each bill and each coin. Are the bills or coins good or evil? Notice that the coins in your hand have printed on them the phrase, "In God We Trust."

What does this mean to you? Does it mean that the money in your hands will be spent only for God or in a way that God desires or could it be spent for sinful pleasures? For each one of us money can be a major asset or a major liability in our lives.

As we study the verses in today's lesson we also need to keep in mind some other very important Scriptures. *But those who want to be rich fall into temptation, a trap, and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and by craving it, some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains* (I Timothy 6:9-10). *He who loves money will not be satisfied with money nor he who loves abundance with it's income. This too, is*

vanity (Ecclesiastes 5:10).

The parable of the dishonest manager or shrewd steward is very difficult to fully understand.

In every commentary that I have studied concerning this parable, each writer calls attention to the fact that the exact meaning is questionable. We also need to remember that this parable is in the midst of other parables that allude to money and how we should handle it. Just before telling this parable Jesus tells the story of the prodigal son who squandered his wealth in loose or foolish living.



PORTER

Notice that the steward or manager is required to give an account. Each of us needs to remember that we also are required by God to give an account of how we earn our money and how we use or spend our money.

Jesus concludes the parable by telling us that we have a choice to make between God and money or material things. Both want to be number one in our lives. We can serve God with mammon, but we cannot serve God and mammon at the same time. Jesus is telling us that we need to put God first in our lives.

The Pharisees were lovers of money and they regarded wealth

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as a sign of God's approval of a person's life. They laughed and scoffed at the teachings of Jesus. He responded to their laughter by telling them the story of a rich man and Lazarus.

The story shows the extremes of society. The rich man was very rich. He lived in a mansion where every meal was like a banquet and he wore the finest of clothes that money could buy.

Lazarus, on the other extreme was a poor sick beggar who ate crumbs. Both men died, with Lazarus going to heaven and the rich man going to hell. Lazarus had obviously believed in Jesus while the rich man had trusted in his earthly possessions and had not believed the message of the prophets.

All of us are facing a new year. It is a good time for each of us to evaluate our relationship with Jesus as well as our relationship with worldly material possessions.

May the new year of 2005 be a year when you draw close to God and to His will for your life! □ — Porter is a retired employee of Life Way Christian Resources and former SBC registration secretary. He now lives in Greenback.

remember in prayer

Editor's Note: The following prayer requests are from Don Pierson, prayer strategist for the Tennessee Baptist Convention. These prayer requests will be printed monthly in the *Baptist and Reflector*. Following are requests for January.

Tennessee

There are 2,146,249 people in Middle Tennessee and over 1.7 million of these are unchurched. Pray that the witness of the 938 Baptist churches in Middle Tennessee will be bold, positive, and Christ-honoring. Pray for the Cumberland Regional Ministry, which seeks to impact Middle Tennessee.

A church planter-pastor is needed for Oakland, Tennessee in Fayette Baptist Association. Please pray that God will call and send one who has an undeniable love for the lost and who loves God's people.

Iowa

Pray for Ty Berry as he directs the men and evangelism work of Iowa.

Montana

Pray for our new partnership with Montana. Ask the Lord to connect our churches with churches of Montana that will further God's work across Montana.

Canada

Missionary David Brazzeal in Montreal asks us to pray for God's guidance for those who are struggling to maintain the basics of life, such as needing a job, place to live, etc. PRAY for a touch of the Great Physician on those who are dealing with emotional problems.

Brazil

Rio is a crossroad for many Brazilians. Education, jobs, and commerce bring many through its doors. Pray that visiting believers will leave a touch of Christ behind and that those who do not know Christ will find Him and take Him to their friends and family when they depart Rio.

Portugal

Portugal is the vacation home for many Europeans. Pray that their short stays in Portugal will have eternal significance on Portugal and all of Europe. Pray that the gospel will be shared and received. □

just for today

by Fred Wood, Memphis

Start with a Smile: Charles: "My problem is I need a wife. I would give anything to get a wife. I would take care of her and overlook any faults she might have. I really want one." Counselor: "That concludes our interview for today. I have another client waiting to see me." Next client (Calvin): "My problem is my wife. She makes my life miserable. I would do anything to get rid of her." Counselor: "Hold tomorrow open. I have another client I would like you to meet. Maybe you all can work out a deal."

Take this Truth: Life consists of swaps and swap offs. One man's trash is another's treasure — and vice versa.

Memorize this Scripture: *Be content with your wages.* — Luke 3:14

Pray this Prayer: Lord, help me to realize the grass is seldom greener on the other side of the fence even though it may look that way. Help me to realize also that if it is greener, it needs perpetual care to keep it that way. □

Practice integrity

By Jerry Massey

Focal Passage: Titus 2:1, 11-3:8

What a text for the New Year! Cretan society was known for its misconduct in every way imaginable. Therefore, Paul urged Titus to instruct the church at Crete to be conspicuous, to stand out in their world, as saints of integrity. They were to be gracious, courteous, and courageous disciples of conviction as they marched to the beat of a different drummer, the transforming Savior.

Just how important is integrity? Dr. Bob Record shared that a major institution, ranked among the Fortune 500, was prepared to do the unprecedented ... promote a 38-year-old Vice President to President. The candidate was a very convincing businessman who impressed the Board of Directors. Upon completing the final interview, the Board members broke for lunch. Their plans were to reconvene after lunch and offer him the prestigious position. As it happened, the aspiring prospect dined alone at a cafeteria, unaware that several of the Board members unintentionally stood in line behind him. They observed that when he came to the bread section, he placed two 3-cent butter patty squares on his tray and covered them up with his napkin. At check out he never revealed the hidden butter. When everyone returned to the Boardroom for what was to have been a

joyous confirmation, the mood had dramatically changed. The promising young man was not only denied the helm of the company, but was immediately fired from his position as Vice President. His lack of integrity over 6-cents worth of butter cost him personally, vocationally, financially, socially, and no doubt, emotionally.

Integrity comes from God (2:1, 11-15). Our sinful natures are rebellious and our hearts are deceitful. It is God's omnipresence that allows Him to see all of our misbehaviors. His omniscience makes Him aware of our every thought, word, or deed. Still His merciful omnipotence can overwhelm all our sin. By His grace alone, He decides to save us. The compelling desire to be a person of integrity is then instilled within us.

Integrity enhances our relationships with others (3:1-3). Christians within the Roman Empire were perceived with nervous suspicion because of their different lifestyle. Therefore, Paul instructed them "to be ready for every-good work," meaning "to be good citizens, obeying, respecting, and submitting to legal government authorities." The pastor-teacher admonished the Cretons to not be overly harsh about the actions, attitudes, and ways of their unbelieving neighbors, since they too were once comparable. Virtuous saints are proof evidence that salvation by grace not only promises a great eternal hope, but it also provides for an "every day" practical

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help insuring good relationships within the home, church, and community.

Believers can do this because God empowers us to act with integrity (vv. 4-8). When we ask Jesus to save us, our sins are eliminated "through the washing of regeneration." Simultaneously, God "justifies" us, or declares us righteous. This means that God not only forgets our sin, but also forgets that we ever sinned.

What grace! The power of "the renewal of the Holy Spirit," His permanent presence within us, enables us to relate to others as Jesus did. Sometimes our only influence with people for Christ is how we treat them.

The life of "good works" is not just for Sunday activities. A good works' life is an everyday existence outside the church walls too. Integrity is no accident. It is not lackadaisical. Integrity is a deliberate dedication to godliness. Happy New Year and have a happy good works' life! □ — Massey is pastor, First Baptist Church, Paris.



MASSEY

What about the kingdom?

By Lee Porter

Focal Passage: Luke 17:1-37

As Jesus and His disciples traveled through the country side, Jesus was always teaching. The gospel that He taught was so very different from the religious concepts of that time, therefore, it was very natural for many questions to be asked from the persons in the crowd as well as questions from the disciples.

Jesus apparently realized that the disciples had some unanswered questions. Possibly they were murmuring among themselves. Jesus then warned them about being a stumbling block. They must be very careful about what they discuss among new immature believers. Their actions and words were so important that Jesus said it would be better for them to be dead than to cause anyone's downfall (vv. 1-2). They are to be ready to forgive anyone who has wronged them. No matter how often any offense occurs disciples must be willing to forgive. There is no limit to forgiveness (vv. 3-4).

The disciples were so overwhelmed by what Jesus expected of His followers they cried out for more faith. Jesus urged them to use the faith they already possessed. Jesus teaches that faith has an awesome amount of power. Faith may appear small and insignificant, but great things can be accomplished by faith (vv. 5-6).

As Jesus and His disciples con-

tinued traveling toward Jerusalem they encountered 10 lepers who cried out for mercy. Through the power of Jesus all 10 lepers were healed, but only one returned to thank Jesus. Jesus called attention to the fact that the healed leper was a Samaritan, a foreigner. The action of Jesus was surprising to the Jews, but Jesus loves and heals all persons of all races, colors, and creeds who believe in Him. Apparently, this act of Jesus in healing a foreigner caused a Pharisee to question Jesus about the kingdom of God. Probably the Pharisee believed that the kingdom of God was just for the Jews.



PORTER

Most Jews believed the term "kingdom of God" meant that God would rule over Israel instead of some foreign ruler. During the time of Jesus they believed the term meant that the Romans would be driven out and God would reign and rule over their nation.

The Pharisees wanted to know when the kingdom of God would come. Jesus answered by correcting their political idea of the kingdom. He stated that the kingdom is not an earthly kingdom which could be located in a certain place and seen through their eyes. Jesus emphasized that the kingdom is spiritual and could only be understood by

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faith (vv. 20-21). Then Jesus really shocked the Pharisees by telling them the kingdom of God was already among them (v. 21) and He was the king of the kingdom. But, they did not recognize Him. Jesus wanted the Pharisees to realize that the kingdom was spiritual. The kingdom comes within a person as that person yields to Christ.

Earlier, in teaching believers to pray, Jesus used these words, *Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven* (Matthew 6:10). Clearly Jesus was teaching the nature of the kingdom was spiritual and when a person follows the king and follows the will of God, the kingdom is a present reality as well as a future reality.

As we enter the new year, imagine what could happen to America and to our world if each follower would pray thy kingdom come — thy will be done in my heart and life. Remember God's promise to His people, *If my people who are called by my name would humble themselves and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sins and will heal their land* (II Chronicles 7:14). □ — Porter is a retired employee of LifeWay Christian Resources and former SBC registration secretary. He now lives in Greenback.

Leaders

◆ **Bill Roberts**, pastor, Memorial Baptist Church, Crossville, for 13 years, will retire Dec. 23.



ROBERTS

A reception to honor Roberts and his wife, Barbara, will be held Jan. 16 at 6 p.m. Roberts also serves on the Executive Board of the Tennessee Baptist Convention. For more information, contact Shirley Hardin, secretary/ treasurer of the church, at mbc@citlink.net.

◆ First Baptist Church, Alcoa, has called **Freeman Tomlin** as pastor.

◆ First Baptist Church, Gallatin, ordained **Jared Gregory** to the ministry Dec. 19.

◆ **John Putman**, a native of Nashville, and his wife, Jennifer, were recently appointed by the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention to serve in eastern and southern Africa. He is a graduate of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky. The Putmans have two children, Aubrey and Mya.



PUTMAN

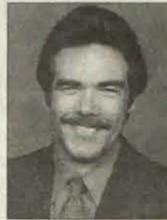
◆ **Brad White**, a Union University graduate and former pastor to Hispanics at Poplar Heights Baptist Church, Jackson, and his wife, Cassie, have



WHITE

been appointed by the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention to serve in South America. His wife also is a Union graduate. The Whites are natives of Paducah, Ky.

◆ **Tracy Gross** has been called as pastor of Eastwood Baptist Church, Cookeville. He served as pastor of the church several years ago. Gross is a graduate of the University of Illinois and Andersonville Baptist College and Seminary. He also has been pastor of Silverpoint Baptist Church, Silver Point, and on the staff of a hospice organization.



GROSS

◆ **Howes Chapel Missionary Baptist Church**, Rogers-

ville, has called **Mark Lee** as pastor. He formerly was associate pastor/youth minister for the church.

◆ **Oak Grove Baptist Church**, Mt. Carmel, has called **Walter Crouch**, vice president of church relations, Carson-Newman College, Newport, as interim pastor.

Church, Cleveland, will hold a one-day revival Jan. 2. **Meris Anderson**, evangelist, Maryville, will speak. For more information contact Anders at (865) 984-6982 or mc_risanderson@bellsouth.net.

◆ **Bethlehem Baptist Church, Oneida**, will hold one-day revival Dec. 26. **Morris Anderson**, evangelist, Maryville, will speak. For more information contact Anders at (865) 984-6982 or mc_risanderson@bellsouth.net.

Churches

◆ **Big Spring Baptist**



STAFF MEMBERS of Loudon County Baptist Association wrap gifts for "Operation Christmas Child." The association, based Lenoir City, and its churches helped provide gifts to needy children in conjunction with the Loudon County Resource Center. Wrapping gifts, from left, are Gail Hooker, Betty Crass, and Betty Atwell, director of missions.



MEMBERS OF THE choir of Rock Hill Baptist Church, Lexington, sing during the church's 120th anniversary celebration Nov. 7. Among 16 members honored for serving the church for more than 50 years was **Rena McPeake**, in above right photo. She also celebrated her 100th birthday Nov. 27. Others honored for 50 years of service were Arbie Jane Blankenship, Nolon and Evalena Deere, Hubert and Willie Gilbert, Ray and Jewel Gilbert, Jenetta Loftin, Robbie Rhodes, Glen and Louise Eason, Linda Camper, Eula Azbill, Stella Hensley, and Ann Garner. Former pastors honored were David Cooper, J.T. Todd, and Johnny Owens. John White, former interim pastor, spoke that day.



MEMBERS OF THE Acteens of Faith Baptist Church, Bartle enjoy a Dec. 4 Christmas party and hold gifts they received from each other. The Acteens also made gifts for residents of Whitehaven Nursing Home. They will be delivered by children and youth at the Bent Tree Apartments in Whitehaven when they make their monthly trip to visit the residents. The Acteens have only been meeting since September.



ELECTED OFFICERS of Holston Valley Baptist Association based in Rogersville, at its recent annual meeting were, from left **Linda Williams**, association staff, clerk; **John Parrott**, director of missions; **John McPheron**, pastor, Persia Baptist Church, moderator; **Gary Gerhardt**, pastor, First Baptist Church, Hill, associate moderator; and **Ray Mullins**, pastor, West View Baptist Church, outgoing moderator.



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