

Baptist & Reflector

Statewide Edition

Telling the Story of Tennessee Baptists

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During annual meeting at Bellevue

Messengers adopt \$37 million budget, affirm 2000 BFM

By Lonnie Wilkey
Baptist and Reflector

CORDOVA — During last year's annual meeting in Clarksville, Tennessee Baptist Convention messengers dealt with a tornado. At the 2006 annual meeting here, Tennessee Baptists were given an eviction notice, albeit in a very nice manner.

The Wednesday afternoon (Nov. 15) session, scheduled to conclude at 4:30 p.m., continued past 5:30 p.m., with the 2006-07 budget still unsettled.

Faced with Bellevue Baptist Church's Wednesday evening service, messengers were asked to move to the nearby chapel.

The approximately 400-500 messengers who remained quickly filed to the chapel where it was filled to standing room only and finally adopted a \$37 million budget for 2006-07 after a substitute motion had been adopted and rescinded due to confusion in the language of the substitute motion, compared to its author's intent (see story below).

In other business, messengers affirmed the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message statement; elected a new slate of officers including Ron Stewart, pastor of Grace Baptist Church, Knoxville, as president; heard a report from the Belmont Study Committee; remembered Adrian Rogers, retired pastor of Bellevue who died prior to last year's annual meeting; and dealt with a myriad

of other business items.

The Nov. 14-15 meeting at Bellevue drew 1,439 registered messengers from 552 churches. Last year at First Baptist Church, Clarksville, the annual meeting drew 1,473 registered messengers.

Baptist Faith and Message

Messengers added a question about the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message statement to the information form used by the Committee on Committees and Committee on Boards. Messengers later affirmed the 2000 BFM in a separate action.

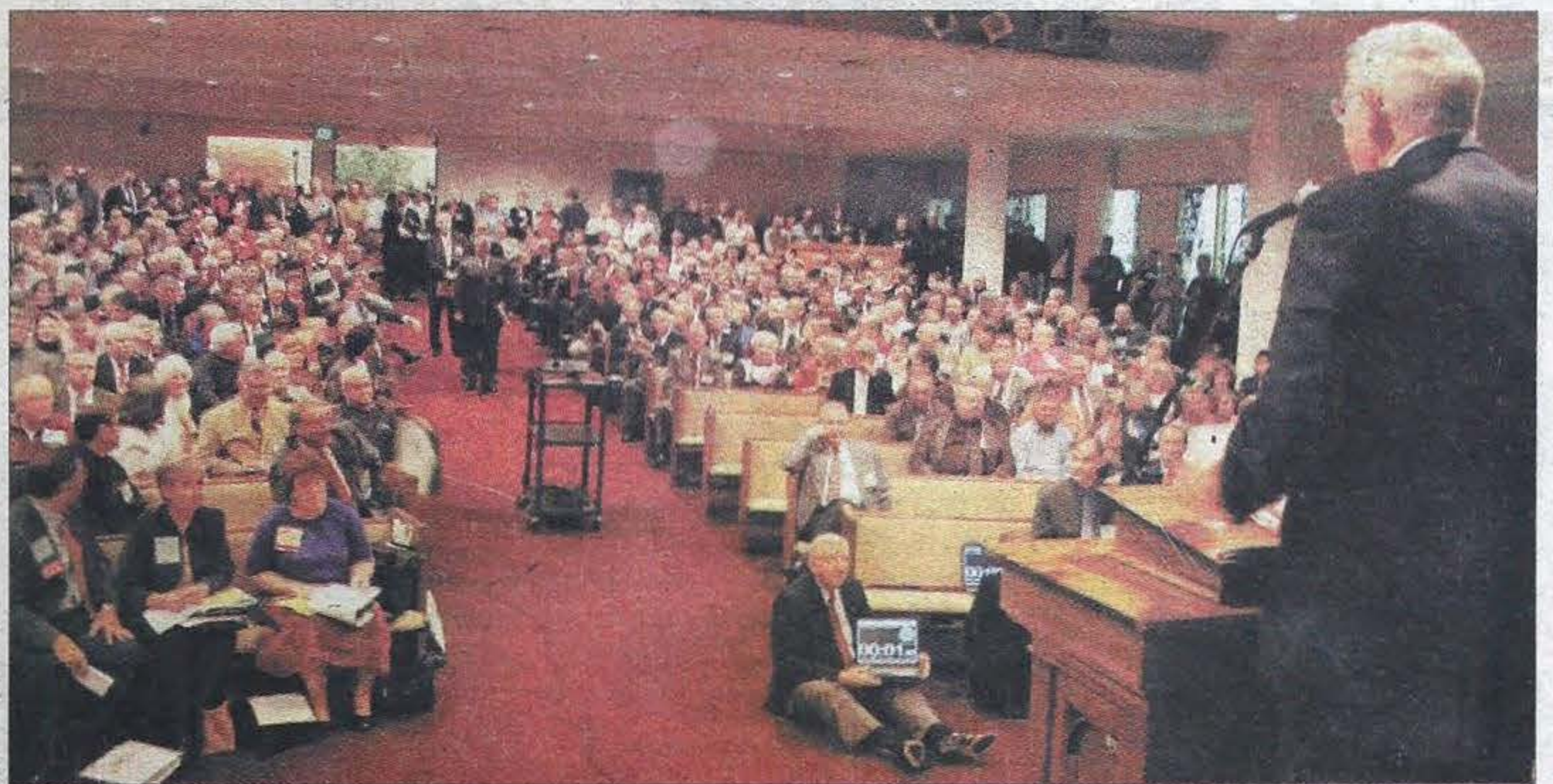
During the opening miscellaneous business session on Tuesday (Nov. 14), messenger Jerry Sutton of Two Rivers Baptist Church, Nashville, moved that the following question be added to the seven current questions on the information form: "Do you affirm your belief in the Baptist Faith and Message 2000?"

Sutton noted that when decisions are made about who is appointed to Tennessee Baptist boards and committees there is a "tacit assumption" that Tennessee Baptists are "vitally connected" to the Southern Baptist Convention.

"In the past 20-25 years we have a group that's not loyal to Southern Baptists, and yet these people go on the Executive Board and make Cooperative Program allocation decisions for — See Messengers, page 3



RON STEWART, left, pastor of Grace Baptist Church, Knoxville, and newly elected president of the Tennessee Baptist Convention, is congratulated by Tom McCoy, center, pastor of Thompson Station Baptist Church, Thompson Station, who was elected vice president; and Raymond "Buddy" Boston, pastor, First Baptist Church, Covington, who was elected second vice president. **BELOW**, TBC President Phil Jett leads discussion on the 2006-07 budget. The afternoon session, which ran over, had to be moved to the chapel at Bellevue Baptist Church so the church could have its Wednesday evening service. — Photos by Connie Davis Bushey



Board requested to amend budget

Substitute budget rescinded, original budget adopted

By Lonnie Wilkey
Baptist and Reflector

CORDOVA — Tennessee Baptist Convention messengers originally rejected a \$37 million budget presented by the TBC Executive Board and adopted a substitute motion offered by Bob Agee, a messenger from West Jackson Baptist Church, Jackson.

By the end of an afternoon session that lasted nearly two hours after it was scheduled to end, however, messengers rescinded the budget and finally adopted the original budget presented by the Executive Board.

Messengers then adopted a motion requesting the Executive Board to amend the budget based on the intent of Agee's substitute motion.

The contended budget centered around how the approximately \$2.3 million that had gone to Belmont University in previous years was allocated after an amount of \$750,000 was set aside for possible legal fees related to a lawsuit filed by the convention.

Agee's budget differed significantly from the Executive Board's budget in how the funds would be divided.

Most of the confusion centered around the wording of the written motion which was given to the Budget and Ministry Committee to consider.

When the committee determined the budget allocations based on Agee's proposal it differed from what he intended due to wording on his written

motion. Agee had written "that the balance of all TBC budget be distributed among institutions and entities, according to percentages used in the 2005-06 budget." He meant to have written "that the balance of all Belmont monies ..."

As a result the Budget and Ministry Committee came up with different monetary figures for each section of the budget than what Agee had calculated. For example, Tennessee Missions and Ministries bore the brunt of the reductions. This was not his intent, Agee said.

Agee said that under the Executive Board budget three institutions (Union University, Carson-Newman College, and the Tennessee Baptist Children's Homes) had to bear the

Board will revisit budget: Massey

Baptist and Reflector

BRENTWOOD — The TBC Executive Board's Budget and Ministry Committee will "revisit the budget for this year," said Jerry Massey, president of the Executive Board and pastor of First Baptist Church, Paris.

"We will be putting into practice the process that was started at the convention," he told the *Baptist and Reflector*.

He said the committee would meet with the presidents and chairman of trustees at each institution along with the chairman of the Executive Board committees that relates to them. In addition, Massey said the Relational Strategic Study Committee would also be invited to the meeting.

"An effort will be made to have this meeting prior to the Executive Board meeting in January, Massey said. □

brunt of the cost of the convention's decision to file a lawsuit.

"If the convention is intent on suing Belmont, the only fair and equitable approach to funding that action is to take the cost

from the funds that would have gone to Belmont and spread the cost over all the entities which benefited from the re-allocation of Belmont funds," Agee said. — See Substitute page 13

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Baptist volunteers respond as tornado kills 8 in N.C.

Baptist Press

RIEGELWOOD, N.C. — North Carolina Baptists were quick to respond when the state's second-deadliest tornado in 50 years swept through a small community, killing eight people, injuring 20, and destroying dozens of homes.

"We are running a small feeding operation and have some disaster relief chaplains in place, and we'll be assisting the survivors with going through the debris that was left by the storm," Gaylon Moss, disaster relief director for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, told Baptist Press.

The feeding unit is set up at Riegelwood Baptist Church, about 20 miles west of Wilmington. A 1,000-foot-wide tornado struck Riegelwood in the early morning Nov. 16, carving a path more than a half-mile wide and almost a mile long, according to the *Star-News* newspaper in Wilmington. The sights of scattered bodies, heaping debris, and flipped cars are being described as a "major catastrophe" and "total devastation." □

Ala. Baptists consider missions, evangelism

Baptist Press

HOOVER, Ala. — Alabama Baptists focused on missions during much of their Nov. 14-15 annual meeting at Hunter Street Baptist Church here.

Messengers approved a new partnership with Michigan Baptists to help reach that state's population with the gospel. Rick Lance, Alabama's executive director, said 8 million of Michigan's 9 million people do not know Jesus.

Alabama Baptists took a turn at reaching their state for Christ during Crossover Birmingham Nov. 11 as volunteers blitzed the downtown area during one of the nation's largest Veteran's Day parades. Five metro-area Baptist associations set up tents at five sites along the parade route to reach out to parade-goers.

Baptists were prepared to hand out about 18,000 bottles of water, register people for \$2,500 in gas card giveaways and talk to passers-by about their spiritual condition. Several people prayed to receive Jesus that day.

During the business portions of the annual meeting, messengers adopted a record Cooperative Program base budget of \$43.9 million, up 3 percent from the current year. They approved a \$44.9 million record challenge budget, which is a 2.92 percent increase over the current year. The convention plans to forward \$18,582,505 from the base budget — or \$18,836,305 from the

E.T. hospital terminates partnership with Triad

Baptist and Reflector

CORDOVA — A partnership between Baptist Health System of East Tennessee and Triad Hospitals Inc., is off.

At a called meeting of the Tennessee Baptist Convention Executive Board Aug. 1, board members approved the partnership between the two entities.

The partnership was to be a joint venture, not a sale. Triad was to have had 80 percent ownership with Baptist Health System retaining 20 percent. The two entities would have shared 50/50 governance of the new company which was to retain the Baptist name.

At the Executive Board's Nov. 13 meeting at Bellevue Baptist Church here, members learned the partnership has been terminated.

Richard Cramer, chairman of trustees for the Knoxville-based health system, gave an update on what has happened since August.

"You deserve to hear from us about what's going on at our health system, especially when major transactions are pending," Cramer said.

Acknowledging the proposal the board had approved with Triad, Cramer said, "unfortunately, we have to advise you today that we are not going to be able to consummate that transaction."

He said Triad had encountered "significant earnings challenges in the last four-five months,

to the extent that their largest shareholder has filed papers with the SEC asking that they be stopped from making any significant deals until they improve their earnings per share."

Cramer said it might take up to four months to close a deal with Triad and it is possible even then the deal might not come about. "Our board feels that we can't afford to wait three to four months on a deal that might not close. Not only would we just lose that much more money, but we might lose out on the ability to go back to other offers we had on the table and reconsider them."

"For those reasons, our board voted (in late October) to terminate the letter of intent with Triad and re-look at other options."

Cramer said there are other serious options available and the trustees "are vigorously pursuing them."

Cramer stressed the hospital would not make "any binding commitments without your approval. We appreciate your support in the past, and we will continue to honor our commitment to the Tennessee Baptist Convention as trustees."

"We want our health system to keep the Baptist name, and the Baptist influence, for generations to come."

Messengers to the TBC annual meeting were also updated to the situation with Baptist Health System of East Tennessee. □

challenge budget — to national and international Southern Baptist Convention causes, remaining at 42.3 percent of Cooperative Program gifts received from the churches.

Roger Willmore, pastor of Deerfoot Baptist Church in Trussville, was elected convention president. He previously served two years as first vice president and two years as second vice president, making him only the second person in Alabama history to move through the ranks of officer positions.

Messengers passed resolutions pertaining to Wal-Mart's support of homosexuality, the humanitarian crisis in western Sudan and ethics in state government. According to the resolution on Wal-Mart, Baptists should inform the company at the local and national level of its breach of Baptists' beliefs on homosexuality when it joined the National Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce and ask that Wal-Mart reconsider the affiliation. It also calls for Baptists to pray for the store's key leaders. □

La. Baptists still ponder recovery from hurricanes

Baptist Press

LAKE CHARLES, La. — The need for physical rebuilding remained evident in Lake Charles when the Louisiana Baptist Convention held its Nov. 13-14 annual meeting. Numerous blue tarp roofs continue to flap in autumn winds across the city. Located just 30 miles north of the Gulf of Mexico, Lake Charles first was inundated with Katrina evacuees and less than three weeks later with

Rita's 120 mph winds.

Randy Roach, mayor of Lake Charles, was added to the annual meeting's program so he could express appreciation for the thousands of Southern Baptist disaster relief and recovery workers who helped in southwest Louisiana.

"I wanted to thank you, to thank Southern Baptists for what you have collectively done," Roach said during the opening session of the annual meeting. "From my perspective you have made a difference and continue to make a difference. You're carrying out God's work and that's making a difference.... America is who she is and will continue to be who she is as long as we have people like you."

Nearly 1,450 messengers at the annual meeting also voted unanimously to forward 35.5 percent of receipts from the churches to Southern Baptist national and international missions and ministries through the Cooperative Program. The \$21 million budget — and its 35.5/65.5 allocation split — is unchanged from 2006, but new this year Louisiana is to forward 50 percent of receipts in excess of budget requirements to the SBC, with the remaining 50 percent to be distributed to LBC programs on its standard ratio of budget amounts.

Previously, any budgetary excess was distributed proportionately across the board.

Crossover Lake Charles, which resulted in about 500 professions of faith and a probable church start as a result of focusing on six areas of the region, and the annual pastors conference, preceded the two-day annual meeting.

With "A Time to Rebuild" as the overall theme, speakers and singers at all venues focused on

getting back to the basics, to the foundations of faith in Jesus Christ.

President Bill Robertson, pastor of First Baptist Winnsboro, was re-elected without opposition. □

S.C. messengers increase budget

Associated Baptist Press

TAYLORS, S.C. — Messengers to the 186th annual meeting of the South Carolina Baptist Convention increased their budget by \$600,000 for 2007 and elected a strong Cooperative Program supporter as president Nov. 15.

For nine of the past 10 years, South Carolina Baptists have met or exceeded budget requirements and are on track to exceed its 2006 budget goal. The 2007 convention budget represents a \$600,000 increase over this year's budget of \$32,150,000.

Sixty percent of the budget, or \$19,705,000, will go to support the state convention's ministries and missions endeavors. Forty percent, or \$13,045,000, will go to the Southern Baptist Convention for national and international missions causes. Any overages are divided equally between the Southern Baptist Convention and the state convention's Kingdom Challenge Fund, a newly created fund designated for special international, North American, and state missions projects.

Mike Moody, pastor of First Baptist Church in Honea Path, S.C., won the presidential election with 550 votes, or 67 percent of the votes cast, over Tom Tucker, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Rock Hill, S.C. □

Messengers adopt \$37 million budget, affirm 2000 ...

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those of us who are committed to the Southern Baptist Convention."

He compared it to "foxes guarding the hen house."

Randall Adkisson, pastor of First Baptist Church, Cookeville, and chairman of the convention's Committee on Boards, asked if the motion was in order, since the convention had chosen in 2000 not to adopt the Baptist Faith and Message as its own statement of faith.

"We have not adopted the 2000 BFM. If the convention adopts the statement of faith it would be wise to add it to the process, but until then it would not be wise to do so," he said.

The convention's parliamentarians said the motion was in order, since it was only to add a question to a questionnaire and not to require that nominees affirm the confession in order to be elected.

Brady Tarr, messenger from Manley Baptist Church, Morristown, agreed with Sutton's motion, noting "we need standards to live by. We need to ask people up front what they believe."

Messenger James Robertson of Sharon Baptist Church, Knoxville opposed the motion on the basis that the TBC does not have a statement of faith and that the "impact of this proposed motion" would, in effect, place it in the constitution.

Robertson also questioned the action on the grounds that "it seems to me that those who want to make budget allocations should be people who give to the Cooperative Program, whose gifts are not designated around the Cooperative Program."

Sutton's church designates much of its Cooperative Program gifts around the TBC, sending them to the SBC.

Messenger Chris Francis of New Sevier Home Baptist Church, Knoxville, offered an

amendment to Sutton's motion to add that messengers be informed of the nominee's response to the question "with a simple yes or no answer."

The amendment passed.

Messenger Bill Sherman of First Baptist Church, Fairview, offered a substitute motion to replace Sutton's question with "Do you affirm your belief in the Bible alone in matters of faith and behavior?"

Sherman said asking the question and publicizing the answers makes it a "litmus test" for service in Tennessee Baptist life. This action would also make it a creed, something Baptists have historically opposed, he added.

"I believe in all of the Bible and I will sign every page of it. It should be sufficient guide alone. When you bring in a statement of faith you place it ahead of the Word of God."

"I cannot believe that anybody, any committee, any denomination, or any group can improve upon the Word of God," Sherman said.

Other messengers contended that simply asking the question did not make it a creed. Sutton opposed the substitute motion noting "we are confusing institutional integrity and loyalty with loyalty to the Word of God."

The amendment failed on a show of ballots vote by a substantial margin. Messengers then adopted Sutton's motion.

Sherman was recognized by Ron Stewart, vice president who was presiding during that session. Sherman asked if the question that had just been adopted would be used for information or as a litmus test.

Stewart said the spirit of the motion was that it would not be used as a litmus test.

During the Tuesday afternoon session the BFM once more was brought to the floor.

Messengers affirm BFM

Messenger Paul Brown of



PHIL JETT moderates the afternoon session on Wednesday which featured discussion on the 2006-07 budget. In the background, TBC attorney Randle Davis, left, talks with Bob Agee, a messenger from West Jackson Baptist Church, Jackson, regarding the intent of his substitute budget which was originally adopted by messengers, then rescinded.

Bellevue Baptist Church, Cordova, moved that the "Tennessee Baptist Convention, meeting in this annual session, go on record as affirming the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message."

"With all my heart I believe the Bible to be the inspired Word of God. Affirming this statement does not imply that it puts it on par with the Word of God," Brown said. "It clarifies how we understand the Bible."

Bill Sherman amended the motion to include any of the three adopted Baptist confession statements (1925, 1963, or 2000). "We are not here to tell each other what to believe," Sherman said.

Jimmy Stroud, messenger of Third Creek Baptist Church, Knoxville, spoke against the amendment.

"I feel we can be united if we approve the 2000 BFM understanding that the preamble of 2000 is almost identical to the 1925 and 1962 statements of faith," Stroud said.

"In the preamble it is clear that the statement of faith is not to be considered a creed."

Messengers voted the amendment down and later approved the motion affirming the 2000 BFM by a large majority of votes.

Officers elected

Messengers elected Ron Stewart, pastor of Grace Baptist Church, Knoxville, over Clay Austin, pastor of First Baptist

Church, Blountville.

Stewart received 575 votes (58 percent) to 413 (42 percent) for Austin.

In nominating Stewart, who served this past year as vice president, Ray Newcomb, pastor of First Baptist Church, Millington, described him as a family man, denominational leader, and a missions leader.

"He has a vision and passion for the Tennessee Baptist Convention and Southern Baptist Convention," Newcomb said.

Austin, pastor of First Baptist Church, Blountville, and president of the TBC Executive Board and chairman of the Belmont Study Committee, was nominated by Marvin Cameron, pastor of First Baptist Church, Kingsport.

Cameron cited Austin's passion for missions and his leadership in the TBC.

"He is a steady hand leader. Tennessee Baptists are living in the times of pitfalls and wrecks, and a good steady hand helps to wheel the TBC through life."

Tom McCoy, pastor of Thompson Station Baptist Church, Thompson Station, was elected first vice president over Michael Adams, pastor of First Baptist Church, Lexington.

McCoy was nominated by Roger "Sing" Oldham, pastor of First Baptist Church, Martin, while Adams was nominated by John David Laida, pastor emeritus of First Baptist Church, Clarksville.



GENE NELSON of Trenton Street Baptist Church, Harri-man, casts a ballot at the annual meeting at Bellevue Baptist Church, Cordova.

McCoy received 548 votes (62 percent) to 342 (38 percent) for Adams.

Raymond "Buddy" Boston, pastor of First Baptist Church, Covington, was elected second vice president by 15 votes over Tim McGehee, pastor of Grace Baptist Church, Tullahoma.

Boston, who was nominated by Leonard Markham, pastor of First Baptist Church, Fairfield Glade, received 365 votes (51 percent) to 350 votes (49 percent) for McGehee, who was nominated by André Dugger, pastor of Grace Baptist Church, Nashville.

Elizabeth Holmes, TBC administrative assistant and member of Southeast Baptist Church, Murfreesboro, was re-elected as TBC recording and statistical secretary by acclamation. She was elected to the position in the opening session of the annual meeting due to the resignation of Fletcher Allen, retired editor of the *Baptist & Reflector*, who was elected to the two positions last year.

Dan Ferrell, TBC production services manager and member of ClearView Baptist Church, Franklin, was re-elected registration secretary.

Belmont Study Committee

Messengers heard a report from the Belmont Study Committee, a special committee appointed to study the convention's relationship with Belmont University.

— See Messengers, page 4



JOYCE ROGERS, right, is hugged by Marilyn Jett and presented with a bouquet of roses during a ceremony honoring the memory of her husband, Adrian Rogers, during the opening session of the annual meeting of the Tennessee Baptist Convention held at Bellevue Baptist Church, Cordova, where her husband served as pastor for 32 years. Looking on are current Bellevue pastor Steve Gaines and his wife, Donna.



LARRY ROSS, center, a chief master sergeant in the United States Air Force, and deacon at Englewood Baptist Church, Jackson, speaks to messengers in a tribute to veterans held during the annual meeting at Bellevue Baptist Church, Cordova. With him, from left, are Thomas Askew, Army, Bellevue Baptist Church; Vernon Pruitt, Navy, Lucy Baptist Church, Millington; Ross; and Steve Ross, Marines, Thompson Creek Baptist Church, Como. — Photos by Connie Davis Bushey

Messengers adopt \$37 million budget, affirm 2000 ...

— Continued from page 3

The school's trustees amended its charter last year to remove the power of the convention to appoint board members, making the board self-perpetuating.

That action triggered a repayment clause in a 1951 agreement signed by officials of both schools. The convention filed a lawsuit in September seeking to reclaim the more than \$50 million in Cooperative Program funds allocated to Belmont since its founding.

Austin explained the decision to file a complaint with Davidson County Chancery Court.

"First, both sides have discussed mediation and indicated a desire to pursue that course," Austin said. He noted that in most cases, a "complaint" is filed before mediation begins. "It is still our hope that this issue will be settled out of court," Austin told messengers.

The second reason for filing suit, Austin continued, was to "seek to honor the faithful Tennessee Baptists who foresaw such a time as this as they wisely sought to protect the interests and investment of Tennessee Baptists across the years."

Third, Austin said the committee filed suit to "seek to honor our current convention membership." The convention, which held a special, called meeting in May, expressed itself clearly, Austin noted. "Tennessee Baptists have contributed more than \$23 million to Belmont in the past decade alone. That financial support demonstrated that you viewed Belmont as a valid kingdom enterprise. We honor your commitment to protect this investment."

Fourth, Austin stressed the filing of the complaint or lawsuit was not done vindictively.

And, finally, Austin said, Belmont's change of charter "pulled the legal trigger."

"As the convention has instructed us to seek all remedies in the best interests of the convention, we came to the decision to move forward in a legal process with the continued desire to settle at any time. No avenues of resolution are closed," he stressed.

"Private negotiation and/or mediation are still the desired route," Austin said. "We are now in a time of discovery that hopefully helps both sides to move more quickly to settlement."

Austin said the question is often asked, "What will keep another school from doing the same thing?" He related that the only answer he can give is "relationship. We must work to strengthen the ties of trust that bind."

After the report was presented on the first day, Austin asked messengers to write down any questions which the committee would respond to



TBC STAFF MEMBER Kent Shingleton, left, and Brad Bennett of Real Encounter Outreach based in Springfield, Mo., demonstrate how creative ministry can be effective during the Executive Board Ministries report at the TBC annual meeting in Cordova.

the following day.

"We are now involved in a legal process. No one member of the committee can speak with legal authority. We want to consider your questions and bring informed answers back to you," Austin said.

No questions were submitted by messengers.

Rogers remembered

A tribute was held in memory of Adrian Rogers, who served as pastor of the host church for 32 years. Rogers died last November, just prior to the annual meeting in Clarksville.

"It was my privilege to parallel Dr. Rogers' ministry here," said TBC President Phil Jett, pastor of Englewood Baptist Church, Jackson. "I know first hand he was a tremendous friend to pastors. He was a friend to me."

Current Bellevue pastor Steve Gaines talked about his predecessor and friend.

"Dr. Rogers was a mentor. He was a Paul to me and I was privileged to be one of his many Timothys," Gaines observed.

Gaines also noted that Rogers was an inspiration. "Most of us have been inspired by his preaching. No one can preach like Adrian Rogers."

The Bellevue pastor said he was privileged to be serving the church Rogers led for 32 years.

"We thank God for the loving memory and continued legacy of Dr. Adrian Rogers," Gaines concluded.

Rogers' widow, Joyce Rogers, was introduced to the convention and presented a bouquet of roses by Jett and his wife, Marilyn. Mrs. Rogers received a standing ovation from messengers.

Nomination challenged

Convention messengers approved the reports of the Committee on Committees and Committee on Boards with one exception.

Larry Reagan, pastor of Adam's Chapel Baptist Church, Dresden, nominated Ken Polk, pastor of Northside Baptist Church, Murfreesboro, to fill a position on the TBC Executive Board.

The Committee on Boards

had nominated Steve Durham, pastor of Radnor Baptist Church, Nashville, for that position.

Randall Adkisson, pastor of First Baptist Church, Cookeville, and chairman of the Committee on Boards, defended the committee's recommendation of Durham. While acknowledging that the 1.42 percent total listed for CP giving from Radnor was low, Adkisson pointed out that Durham has only been pastor at Radnor for a year. In that year he led the church to increase giving to 2.5 percent.

While Cooperative Program giving is an important criterion, it is not the only one, Adkisson said. He cited Durham's past leadership on the Committee on Boards and observed that Durham "has the ability to serve all Tennessee Baptists evenhandedly."

Reagan called Polk a "great pastor and missions supporter," noting that Northside gives 10 percent of its income through the Cooperative Program.

Kelly Porch, a member of Radnor, spoke against the amendment to the Committee on Boards report.

"I am proud to call Steve Durham my pastor and my friend," she said.

She noted Radnor is an inner-city church with a small budget.

John Dickerson a staff member at Northside Baptist Church, spoke in favor of the amendment. Noting that Polk is his pastor, he cited Polk's strong support of the Cooperative Program. "He is as Tennessee Baptist as anyone I know," Dickerson said.

A ballot vote was taken and the amendment was passed by a 302-272 margin, meaning Polk will be on the Executive Board instead of Durham.

Durham was recognized to speak following the results.

"I love Tennessee Baptists. I have had great opportunity to serve and look forward to continue doing so," he said, pledging his support for the Tennessee Baptist Convention.

Resolutions

In addition to the traditional



MEMBERS OF the Tennessee Baptist Men's Chorale perform during the opening session of the Tennessee Baptist Convention annual meeting on Nov. 14 at Bellevue Baptist Church, Cordova.

resolution of gratitude for everyone involved in making the 132nd annual meeting of the TBC a success, messengers adopted a resolution to "affirm the biblical concept of marriage as it impacts corporate America."

The resolution noted that Tennessee Baptists "affirm the biblical concept of marriage" and that on Nov. 7, more than 1.4 million Tennesseans (about 81 percent of the voters) "chose to place an amendment protecting biblical marriage, between one man and one woman, into our Tennessee State Constitution."

The resolution also noted that "many major corporations in our country have supported the homosexual agenda" and resolved that Tennessee Baptists "affirm the many businesses that uphold the biblical concept of marriage and family."

It also resolved that the TBC "encourage pastors and members of our churches to be informed and educated as to the actions of corporate America as it relates to family issues" and to encourage Tennessee Baptists "to respond prayerfully and prophetically to corporate America with their actions and to be engaged in reaching corporate America with the gospel of Jesus Christ."

Constitution and bylaws

Messengers also approved minor changes to the Constitution and Bylaws to clarify the nomination process for members of boards and institutions. Another bylaws change, requested by the TBC parliamentarians, dealt with the proceedings of the annual meeting by clarifying that people who wish to speak must approach a microphone and when acknowledged by the chair "state the general nature of his or her reason for wishing to be recognized."

Other actions

Other actions and events which took place at the 2006 annual meeting included:

- Messengers approved a motion from Scott Linginfelter of Mt. Carmel Baptist Church, Maryville, that "the Committee on Committees and Committee on Boards review and amend

the recommendation process to make sure in the future that every recommendation is received and submitted to the committees by sending a form of confirmation to the recommender that the recommendation was received."

- Messengers heard a report from the Relational Strategic Study Committee, appointed by then TBC president Mike Boyd two years ago. The report was given by Ray Newcomb, pastor of First Baptist Church, Millington, and co-chairman of the committee. The committee is looking at relationship, communication, trust, and budget issues among others, Newcomb reported. Messengers approved a motion to continue the committee for another year and added the president-elect (Ron Stewart) to the committee.

- Messengers selected William Vest, pastor of Wildwood Baptist Church, Englewood, to preach the 2007 convention sermon at the annual meeting in Kingsport. Rick Dinkins, pastor of Looneys Chapel Baptist Church, Surgoinsville, was elected alternate.

- The 2009 annual meeting of the TBC will be held Nov. 10-11 at West Jackson Baptist Church, Jackson.

- Messages were preached by Phil Jett, James Porch, and Steve Gaines (see stories on each throughout this issue).

- A motion to set 5 percent of undesignated gifts from a local church through the Cooperative Program as the minimum level of giving for service on a TBC board or committee was referred to the Constitution and Bylaws Committee.

- Theme interpretations on "Boldly Teaching" were delivered by Lyle Larson, Todd Stewart, and David Leavell (see story on page 6).

- Reports were presented by Tennessee Baptist Executive Board Ministries and other institutions and entities of the TBC.

The 2007 annual meeting will be held Nov. 13-14 at MeadowView Conference Center in Kingsport. □ — Marcia Knox contributed to this story.

As usual — never a dull moment at the TBC annual meeting

By Lonnie Wilkey, editor

As I was leaving the annual meeting of the Tennessee Baptist Convention last week in Cordova, several people said they couldn't wait to see what I wrote, especially about the final session that went almost two hours longer than planned.

I just laughed. At that point I had no idea. Like most messengers, I had to return home and begin to sort it out in my mind.

A few days have since passed and it is becoming clearer, somewhat. For those of you who may laugh at that statement, you had to be at the annual meeting to understand.

Here's an attempt to sort out some of the things that transpired.

Strong leadership

First and foremost, Tennessee Baptists owe a debt of gratitude to President Phil Jett for his leadership during the convention. Several potentially divisive topics were addressed during the two-day meeting and Jett handled them with humor, class, and fairness, especially on the last day.

While he was admittedly in favor of the substitute budget presented by Bob Agee, he was fair in letting both views be presented. And at one point when his decision was overruled by the body, he was genuinely pleased. He agreed with the intent, but his ruling was based on TBC documents.

When the last session was forced to move to the chapel because of time constraints, things could have gotten "heated" because there were a lot of people crowded into a much smaller room. Jett kept the atmosphere upbeat and messengers were able to laugh even in a tense situation.

Baptist Faith and Message

Some of the early discussion centered around a motion to add a question to affirm one's belief in the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message to the questions asked by the Committee on Committees and Committee on Boards to potential trustees and committee members of TBC entities.

As one would expect, there were both

strong support and equally strong opposition for this motion.

Messengers approved the addition of the question. There is nothing wrong with the question as long as it doesn't become a litmus test for service. Belief in the Baptist Faith and Message is just one area that committees will now look at.

Those who supported the addition say it will not be a litmus test. That remains to be seen. We won't know for sure until someone is recommended who for personal reasons do not feel comfortable answering that question, regardless of how they would answer. If the convention begins to "bump" people off boards and committees who do not answer the question, or who may answer "no," then it becomes a litmus test.

We need to be careful not to focus so much on what we say we believe as Baptists that we forget what we believe in — the Bible, the inspired, Holy Word of God.

If everyone who attended the annual meeting would be honest, myself included, most of us are going to have to go find the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message statement we have stuck in a folder or desk drawer somewhere and re-read it to see what we affirmed.

While the Baptist Faith and Message sets us apart from other denominations (and that is important), the Bible is what sets us apart from other religions, and, for me, that is most important.

When we go out to witness and tell believers about Jesus, when we go on mission trips, do we take the Baptist Faith and Message with us, or do we take God's Holy Word?

I have no problem affirming the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message but it needs to be kept in proper perspective.

Hopefully, the affirmation of this document will enable some pastors and churches to feel more comfortable with the TBC as a whole. Let's face reality. Some people who pushed for the adoption of the affirmation and the addition of the question to the survey of the Committee on Committees and Committee on Boards were messengers from churches who have designated funds from the Tennessee Baptist Convention. My

prayer is they will now channel their funds through the Cooperative Program channel to include their state convention.

If churches would not designate (either way, all to the SBC or all to the TBC) there would be more funds for both ministries in the Tennessee Baptist Convention and the SBC as well. We would not labor over budget decisions as we did at this year's annual meeting.

The budget

The budget was another main topic of debate. Bob Agee, who presented an amended or substitute budget the first day of the convention, sincerely felt the original budget penalized three institutions.

Because of how his motion was actually worded (see story on page one), his motion had the unintended effect of severely penalizing the TBC Executive Board budget, particularly the Tennessee Missions and Ministries section.

When this was pointed out after the substitute motion had been adopted late Wednesday afternoon, some messengers expressed both concern and frustration — concern because they did not intend to cripple Executive Board ministries and frustration because TBC governing documents prevented them from making a simple amendment to reflect Bob Agee's intent.

Messengers who left after the substitute motion was adopted no doubt are angry that it was later changed. Keep in mind that the only way it could be changed was for someone who voted for the budget to make a motion to reconsider.

Roger "Sing" Oldham demonstrated courage in making that motion. He was a strong supporter of Bob Agee's motion, but he led out in trying to correct an unintended result.

We need to keep in mind that the Cooperative Program is the primary source of funding for Tennessee missions and ministries. The CP allocation for the institutions is a small percentage of their overall budgets because they have income from other sources.

We seemed to be at an impasse. As I stated earlier, President Jett correctly

ruled that the budget could not be amended on Wednesday (the second day of the convention) because of our governing documents.

I understand the reason for the motion to overrule the chair and the reason messengers supported that motion. Everyone was frustrated. We could all see the solution to the problem, but we couldn't get there because of the rules.

We set aside the rules and took an action against our governing documents, which, according to convention attorney Randle Davis, is an unlawful act in Tennessee. That was a dangerous precedent.

If the rules hinder what need to be done, we need to change the rules according to proper procedure at the appropriate time.

But by voting against the substitution motion, which was amended to reflect Agee's intent, messengers did not do anything unlawful.

As a result, however, we were left with the decision to adopt the original budget, or have no budget and revert to the 2005-06 budget.

After all was said and done, messengers finally adopted the original budget presented by the TBC Budget and Ministries Committee.

Messengers also adopted a motion to request the Executive Board to amend the budget in January to reflect the original intent of Bob Agee's substitute motion that was first adopted. Jerry Massey, president of the Executive Board, has assured Tennessee Baptists that the Board will revisit the budget (see page one). I have no reason to believe they will not take this matter seriously.

So much more happened during those two short days, but space is prohibited in this issue.

As we move beyond the annual meeting and look toward the coming year, may we be united in our efforts to increase giving through the Cooperative Program so that all ministries in our state and beyond can be funded so we can share the good news of Jesus Christ with those who do not believe.

A non-Christian world will be convinced more of the God we serve by how we live our lives, not by what we say. □

Too early to think about 2006 tax preparation? Think again

financial matters



By Sherre Stephens

Think it's too early to start your tax preparation? A recent flurry of tax legislation and expiring tax credits and deductions that Congress may retroactively extend at year's end calls for early preparation despite a later filing date (April 18, 2007).

Get organized. Start now and use a checklist. Checklists facilitate organization and minimize frustration. Many checklists are available on the web. Just Google "checklists for tax preparation."

Identify last-minute savings opportunities:

- Maximize retirement plan

elective deferrals. The basic deferral limit is \$15,000 (\$20,000 for age 50 or older).

- Contribute to a traditional IRA. The limit for taxpayers younger than 70 1/2 with sufficient income is \$4,000 (\$5,000 for age 50 or older). Consider an IRA for the non-working spouse. To qualify, the couple must be legally married at year's end and file a joint tax return.

- Coordinate capital gains and losses. Review stock and other capital assets. Are some ripe for sale? Such tax harvesting can offset gains with losses thereby lowering taxable net gains.

Make the most of tax deductions:

- Itemize deductions. The list is myriad and some impose thresholds in order to take the deduction.

- Make a direct transfer from an IRA to a qualified char-

ity. Taxpayers age 70 1/2 and older may transfer up to \$100,000 to a qualified charity tax-free. The transaction must go directly from an IRA to the charity. Don't wait until the last minute. Many IRA providers have cut-off dates for year-end transactions — some as early as Dec. 15.

- Donate clothing and household items. Contributions of clothing and household items made after Aug. 17, 2006, are not deductible unless the property is in good used condition or better.

Take advantage of tax credits. A tax credit reduces tax whereas a deduction reduces the amount of taxable income:

- Child Tax Credit. This credit can reduce taxes up to \$1,000 for each qualifying child. For more information, see IRS Tax Tip 2006-45.

- Retirement Savings Contributions Credit. Taxpayers

eligible to contribute to an employer-sponsored retirement plan or an IRA may qualify for this credit (up to \$1,000 or \$2,000 if filing jointly). See IRS Tax Tip 2006-49.

- Hybrid Car Tax Credit. The credit, \$400 to \$3,400, is available for qualifying vehicles purchased after Dec. 31, 2005.

- Qualifying Alternative Fuel Vehicles. Purchase of an AFV between Jan. 1, 2005 and Dec. 31, 2010 may yield a tax credit of up to \$4,000.

- Home Energy Efficiency Improvement Tax Credits. Purchase and installation of energy efficient products qualify for a tax credit of up to \$500. Additional credit is available for certain other qualified purchases and applies only to the taxpayer's principal U.S. residence. The total credit caps at \$2,000.

- Earned Income Tax Credit. Generally available to taxpay-

ers with 2006 earned income under \$38,348, the EITC may also provide a refund.

Know where to go for help. The IRS web site, www.irs.gov, offers a number of fact sheets, tax tips, and a toll-free help number. The Internet offers copious tax helps, but use caution, because some tips may or may not be reliable. Tax preparation software and services are viable resources.

This educational information is not intended as legal or tax advice. Individuals with legal or tax questions should consult a legal or tax adviser who can provide specific information to their unique situation. □ — Stephens is a certified employee benefits specialist and director of executive and institutional benefit design for GuideStone Financial Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention. Reprinted from Baptist Press.

Phil Jett challenges Tennessee Baptists to 'do church'

By Connie Davis Bushey
Baptist and Reflector

CORDOVA — Phil Jett, president of the Tennessee Baptist Convention, challenged Tennessee Baptists to "do church" during the president's message. The message included music by the choir and praise leaders of Englewood Baptist Church, Jackson. Jett is pastor of the church.

The message was given Tuesday morning of the TBC annual meeting which was held at Bellevue Baptist Church here Nov. 14-15.

Jett said doing church is not about programs but about people, not about worship style but about worshipping Jesus, not about location but locating the lost, and not about "me or you" but "about Jesus."

He referred to Luke 19:9-10 and said church is about three things — "reaching the lost with the good news of Jesus Christ," "strengthening believers to be more like Jesus," and "lifting the name of Jesus in everything we do."

Because of this, church leaders of Englewood Baptist review every program and element of the church and if it doesn't carry out one of these three elements, it isn't done, he explained.

Concerning reaching the lost, Jett noted, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. People in your communities, rich or poor, are going to hell." This is true although this truth is "not very popular in our society," he added.

The view of Jesus toward the lost can be seen in the parable of the lost sheep and lost coin, the parable of the prodigal son which tells of the younger son and older son, the parable of the rich man and



PHIL JETT, president of the Tennessee Baptist Convention, presents his president's message on Nov. 14 of the TBC annual meeting.

Lazarus, and His interactions with the rich young ruler, the blind man, and Zaccheus.

In his more than 40 years as a pastor, Jett said, he has never seen a time of greater hunger by "lost people wanting to see Jesus."

Tennessee Baptists also must consider the "clarity of our message," he suggested, which is "Only Jesus saves."

In the Bible we see Peter develop the first megachurch in Acts 3, he noted. "There's no reason why we can't build megachurches all over this state if we start preaching the word of God and calling people to Jesus."

Church leaders and members of bigger churches will still have problems, but it's better to have those problems than the problems associated with a

dying church, he noted.

"I believe if we do church we will grow churches and they will be healthy churches."

Churches shouldn't be ashamed of trying to entice people to come to events at the church and should purposely do so, he said. Jett told of the very dramatic presentation, "Heaven's Gates, Hell's Flames," held at Englewood.

Years later he met a lady who said she attended that event and was saved.

"I'd rather have fire in my church and see people saved than have no fire in my church and people go to hell."

Churches should try to draw crowds which include one-third who are not Christian, one-third who are young believers, and one-third who are mature warriors. The warriors are important, he said, because they clean up the problems left by the others.

Jett referred to the Baptist doctrine of salvation. Citing Acts 4:11-12 he noted salvation is in Jesus and in Him alone and everyone has the choice to choose Jesus. W. T. Conner, theologian, wrote, "God desires the salvation of all. He has provided salvation for all. He gives every person the invitation to come to Jesus," Jett added.

The church's ministry is a part of doing church, said Jett. He cited I Corinthians 15:55-57. He told of a family of Englewood who lost a son in a car accident. The young man was 16 years old. Jett introduced his mother, Robin Parrish, who was a member of the praise group performing that day. She led the Englewood musicians in singing, "Through the Fire."

"You're either in a crisis or coming out of a crisis or you're going toward one and you'd better get hold of the fact that the

only hope you have is in Jesus Christ," declared Jett.

Finally, the church's mandate, he stated, is to "stay the course."

Some Baptist ministers "have turned away," he noted.

He admitted he has wanted to go back to driving a truck to make a living. "I flat out wanted to quit."

Yet I Corinthians 15:58 is a "mandate for all of us as Tennessee Baptists," he said.

It doesn't matter what church a person is in or their age, he said, adding he is 70 years old. People who are 50 and older face the temptation "to ride it out. That is Satan," observed Jett.

He told of Robert Orr, retired pastor of First Baptist Church, Dyersburg, his mentor who is in a nursing home now. Jett said Orr, though 93 years old, is still doing church in his room as he studies the Bible, sings hymns, and prays.

"We must stay the course ... at whatever juncture we're in."

"When we do the work of the Lord we are guaranteed to be successful," he said, according to the Apostle Paul.

At Englewood, church leaders are glad to see about 100 unsaved youth come every Wednesday night. They come to "party and eat" but they come, said Jett. Children come to Awanas. About 40 percent of them are not attending other church activities. The church uses music which will draw people regardless of whether it was written yesterday or 500 years ago, he reported.

The mission of the church is "seeking the lost for salvation," the message is "only Jesus saves," the ministry is "victory in Jesus," and the mandate is "stay the course," concluded Jett. □

Three TBC pastors interpret meeting theme: Boldly Teaching

By Connie Davis Bushey
Baptist and Reflector

CORDOVA — The theme of the Tennessee Baptist Convention annual meeting, "Boldly Teaching," was interpreted by three TBC pastors during the meeting held here at Bellevue Baptist Church Nov. 14-15.

Lyle Larson

Lyle Larson of First Baptist Church, Ripley, noted the bold teaching mentioned in the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20 was the last thing Jesus said before he exited the earth.

"We need to live boldly before our people," he said, and be "passionately devoted to living for God."

Christians will face setbacks just as the Jews escaping Egypt, observed Larson. They complained to Moses about many things although God was performing miracles all around them.

"People are going to complain no matter what you do," he stated. It has been true through the ages, he added. Jonathan Edwards, pastor in early America, was forced from the church he started. John the Baptist, Paul, Peter, and Jesus also were criticized.

God told Moses in verse 15 to "quit praying and get moving," Larson said Moses immediately obeyed.

Churches should follow their polity and allow people to be involved in the decision-making process, said Larson, but church leaders should be careful that those things don't "slow us down or deter us from doing what God has called us to do."

Todd Stewart

Speaking on Tuesday afternoon was Todd Stewart of Mosaic Community Church in Knoxville. He told about his church which reaches many addicts and prostitutes. He told of a 16-year-old man whose father and uncle were drug dealers. Yet he accepted Jesus Christ and today is a "deeply, deeply devoted disciple of Jesus Christ," said Stewart. He thanked the TBC for its support of the church.

The question is, said Stewart, not how do Christians and Baptists boldly teach but "what are we boldly teaching?"

Baptists are not often known for what we are for, he stated.

"Jesus was for people," said Stewart, the hurting, poor, and marginalized. "This is what's on God's heart." Church members don't need a committee to

know this, he added.

Stewart reported that Sodom was destroyed by God not because the residents were involved in sexual sin such as homosexuality, but because the residents were arrogant and unconcerned for the poor which led them to do "detestable things." This is cited in Ezekiel 16:49-50.

He referred to a recent article in *Newsweek* magazine entitled "Politics of Jesus." In the article evangelicals in their 20s identified the greatest Christian activist alive today. The young people named Bono, the rock musician of the group, U-2. Bono works to help victims of AIDS in Africa and victims of the war in Sudan.

That should lead Christians to understand that people want a "greater demonstration, not a greater proclamation," said Stewart.

Christians and Baptists do not often act in boldness and power, he noted, unless they are against something.

Stewart challenged churches to buy a house and give it to a homeless person or family.

He encouraged the crowd to follow the example of Jesus when he responded to John the

Baptist. John the Baptist asked Jesus if he was the Messiah. Jesus answered by referring to his works of giving sight to the blind and raising the dead. He didn't answer by saying He

teachers should strive for holiness, purity and "blameless lives," he added.

He referred to the sin of Ted Haggard, an internationally-known pastor in Colorado who was in the news recently. Leavell said Haggard's example should be a warning to all Christians to avoid "any enticements. The devil's bag of tricks have not changed," said Leavell. He referred to Internet pornography which is a sin snaring more church goers than non-

Christians, he reported.

Leavell suggested Christians "build integrity" into their lives by forming relationships which will hold them accountable.

He also warned the crowd against becoming "worship attendees" rather than "holy believers."

Leavell said he's not proposing that Christians be caught up in legalism or a list of dos and don'ts. Instead they should strive for the "extreme makeover" promised as part of the Christian life.

Then Christians will "go out boldly teaching. If you don't who will?"

"It's our calling. It's our passion. It's our privilege," he concluded. □

Boldly Teaching
Matthew 28:19-20

taught the truth and protected the integrity of Scripture "like we do," said Stewart.

David Leavell

David Leavell of Springfield Baptist Church, Springfield, spoke on Wednesday morning on boldly teaching from Titus 2.

Christians and Baptists must teach "what is in accord with sound doctrine," said Leavell.

We must teach God's Word which is His "love letter" to people and is perfect, he added.

Teachers of the Word should be teachable, said Leavell, seeking additional knowledge all of the time.

Teachers can be comforted by the fact that God works through them. He "uses us in spite of ourselves," said Leavell. But

Celebration of Healthy Churches & Church Health Breakout Conferences

Tuesday evening activities were new this year and included the Celebration of Healthy Churches and Church Health Breakout Conferences. The celebration was made up of numerous displays of churches with a variety of ministries. The breakout conferences also focused on church health.



MEMBER OF Hope Community Church, Atoka, Terry Newman, left, visits with Brandon Lindsey of Macedonia Baptist Church, Ripley, at the Hope Community display.



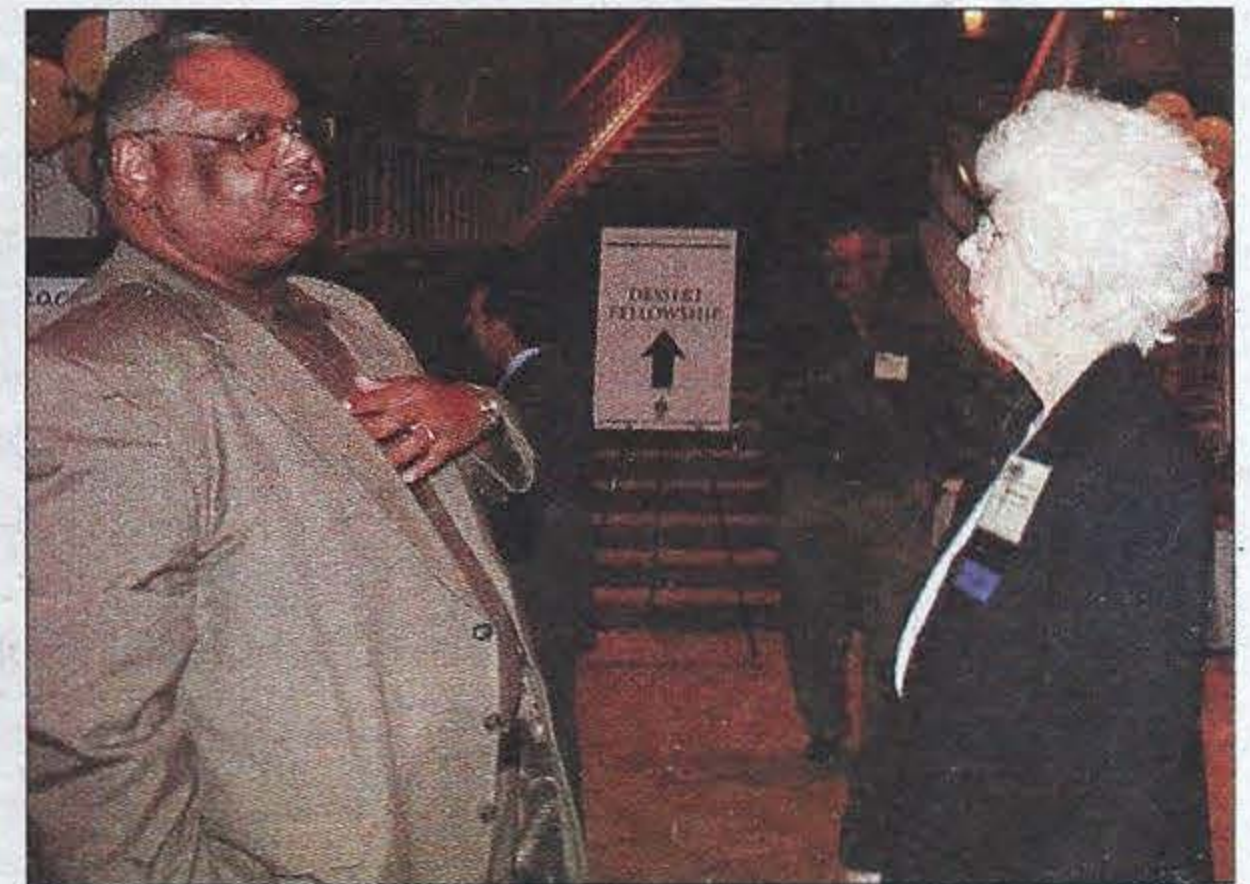
BILL SEXTON, left, of East Maryville Baptist Church, Maryville, visits the display of New Bethlehem Baptist Church, Dyer, and discusses it with John Coleman, pastor.



PAUL BARKLEY, associate professor of psychology and religion, Baptist College of Health Sciences, Memphis, leads a breakout conference on Tuesday night.



ANI STALLINGS of First Baptist Church, Bolivar, gets ready to toss a ball at the hole on the back of the display of First, Bolivar. Looking on are her parents, Ron and Lisa, and Mike Malone, left, and Stan Doyle.



THOMAS BESTER, founder and bivocational pastor of Forerunner Baptist Church, Ripley, visits with Gail Yarbrough of First Baptist Church, Covington, at the display of Forerunner Baptist.



DISCUSSING the Church Without Doors in Memphis are, Stanley Williams, left, mission pastor, and Bill Overway, Friendship Baptist Church, Beech Bluff.



VISITING AT THE EXHIBIT of First Baptist Church, Trimble, are, from left, John Whittaker, youth and children's minister, First Baptist Church, Martin; Matt Stafford, youth minister, First Baptist, Trimble; and David Powell, outreach director, First, Trimble.



Church Health Matters

"Building healthy churches empowered by the presence of God."

Evangelism Matters

Evangelism is a primary function of the church, and it is the responsibility of every Christian to be actively engaged in evangelism in some way. Evangelism includes sharing the joy of your relationship with God with someone, who needs to know His expression of love found in Jesus Christ.

Included below is the contact information for members of your state missionary staff that are available to help you and your church in any area related to evangelism.

Church Evangelism Strategies

Larry Gilmore,

State Evangelism director (615) 371-7915

Steve Pearson,

Evangelism specialist (615) 371-2012

Church Planting

Bill George,

Church Planting, West Tennessee (615) 371-2043

Wayne Terry,

Church Planting, Middle Tennessee (615) 371-7905

Fred Davis,

Church Planting, East Tennessee (865) 988-7783

Tim Hill,

Ethnic Church Planting (615) 371-2032

Chuy Avila,

Hispanic Church Planting (615) 371-7913

Youth Evangelism

Kent Shingleton (615) 371-2077

Evangelistic Sunday School

Steve Pearson (615) 371-2012

Evangelistic Sunday School

Kathy Trundle (865) 805-9946

Barbara Owens (615) 371-7905

Ministry Evangelism

Beverly Smothers (615) 371-2044

Who You Gonna Call?

By Gary Rickman

The statement is said from time to time, "I do not know who to call at the Tennessee Baptist Convention to help me." In order to address this concern, a new feature is being added this week to the *Church Health Matters* pages called, "Meet Your State Missionary."

Occasionally, a missionary working with churches in one of the seven ministry function areas will be introduced to you.

This week's issue introduces Steve Pearson, who serves in the area of Evangelism.

Pearson is new to the state missionary staff and recently comes from serving as pastor of Bounty Land Baptist Church in Seneca, S.C. He brings a pastor's heart for the local church, and its call to reach people for Christ.

He is a native of Chattanooga and is married to Glenda Woodside Pearson. On June 19 they will celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary.

The Pearsons have two children: a son, Bailey, who attends Clemson University, Clemson, S.C., and a daughter, Loren, a sophomore at Blackman High School in Murfreesboro.

Steve is a graduate of the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, with both a master degree in Divinity and a master of arts in Religious Education.

Steve has served 26 years in ministry, 24 of those years in local church ministry positions and two years on the Ohio Baptist Convention, Columbia, Ohio, staff.



Meet the Tennessee Baptist Convention Missionary: Steve Pearson

1. How does being a part of the Tennessee Baptist Convention relate to your calling and passion for ministry?

Even before I surrendered to the call for ministry, I felt comfortable sharing my faith. The death of a friend and the many missed opportunities with that friend drives me in the passion to do evangelism.

As a church member, youth pastor, and senior pastor of churches in Tennessee and S.C., I have noticed the giftedness and the drive to do evangelism. In 26 years of ministry, I do not remember a year or a season that evangelism was not in the windshield of my focus and in the rearview mirror of my remembrance.

Today with the TBC, evangelism has become more than the thing that drives me. It has become my purpose in ministry: to resource churches to evaluate with integrity and enhance with intentionality their evangelism ministries and skills with the goal of moving all of our TBC churches to a Healthy Church Evangelism.

2. What do you see as Healthy Church Evangelism?

Start with the word Evangelism, and I'll come back to what it means to do Healthy Church Evangelism. Will McRaney in his book, *The Art of Personal Evangelism*, (B&H Publishing Group, 2003) said this about evangelism:

"The word evangelism is not an emotionally neutral word. Much like the home environment with preschoolers, there are always high emotions around evangelism. Our reactions to the topic of evangelism are more often fear, guilt, discouragement, and uncertainty rather than courage, passion, and excitement. Whether we are comfortable with the word evangelism or choose to use a different word to describe the task before us, the church has been and forever will be undeniably linked to personally communicating the hope found only in Christ."

Healthy Church Evangelism is not baptizing 100 each year for the last three years and then finding at the end of that third year that we only have 20 more in average Sunday School attendance. Healthy Church Evangelism is not farming our evangelism out to the staff of my church. "But that's what I pay my pastor to do," we say. Listen, if God has placed your neighbor on your heart and given you a concern, and He will, He did not do that so your pastor could receive the joy of sharing the hope found only in Christ. Healthy Church Evangelism is not giving up as so many churches and individual believers have done. Their reasons are as varied as the number of churches.

Let me simplify their reasons for not doing evangelism:

The Inclusive "Everybody's gonna make it. God wouldn't send anyone to Hell."

The Intrusive "I don't share my faith, because I'm afraid that I'll run them off."

The Illusive "It won't make any difference if I share. If God wants them to be saved, they will be saved with or without me and my help."

Healthy Church Evangelism is the process of clearly communicating the gospel to all men and assimilating them into the life of the local church as God saves them.

I don't know how each evangelism strategy for each church will end. But I do know how they all start on our knees.

3. What is your role in resourcing churches in the area of evangelism?

If I could do a little role playing, I would be a judge in the life of the churches of the TBC. I could pardon every church and every believer who is imprisoned by the experiences of guilt in the area of evangelism.

Our churches start an evangelism/outreach program and for the first couple of years it works great. But then the participation begins to diminish, the enthusiasm begins to wane. The pastor, the staff, the deacons begin to second guess themselves. They begin the blame game. They begin to imprison

themselves and others in the chains of guilt. They have guilt over a failed or failing outreach program.

Stop, stop it now! It's not you! It's not your church! In the business world, a company that wants to stay on top of the market has to reinvent itself every two to three years. Churches, and in particular, outreach strategies have to be reinvented every two to three years. My role is to assist churches in developing the strategies they need.

4. How can churches engage you as a partner in their ministry?

Just ask! Every church is different. We are not serving in communities that are identical. They are as different as the names of the towns in which they serve.

Evaluations of the church and communities they serve are vital to churches who truly want to accomplish Healthy Church Evangelism. We need to be asking the right questions. What kinds of people live in my town? Who are the people that live within five miles of my church? What kind or style of evangelism will work best with the people that live closest to my church? What is it going to take to reach them? When it comes to evangelism, what is the commitment level of my church? Folks, it is unrealistic to expect a church that has never had any outreach strategy to jump right into a strategy that the demands the members to be there each week, for 16 weeks, and three hours each night.

I see churches calling upon the TBC Church Health Evangelism team to help them evaluate their community and church and help them decide how to reach their community best. I see churches contacting us to give them a fresh pair of eyes when it comes to evaluating the evangelism commitment level of the church.

5. Since coming to the TBC, how are you sensing God at work among the churches that make up the TBC?

I'm sensing a spirit of revival. I have done revivals and "One Day Harvest" meetings in several of our Tennessee churches. I marvel at God to see Him at work where He works best: the invitation time. I was speaking just the other day in one of our churches. The deacon leading the service asked everyone in the sanctuary to come and kneel at the altar for prayer. To my amazement everyone in the building came. The worship continued, and the sermon was preached. The invitation was given, and five precious souls were added to the kingdom that morning.

I'm sensing a spirit of cooperation. I've been a pastor in Tennessee. I understand the temptation to develop turf. Praise God those days are gone in the churches where I've had the privilege of relating to this past few months. I'm hearing congregations and pastors say things like, "It's a kingdom work. I'm not worried about whether they go to my church. But I want them going and growing wherever they wind up."

For a boy who grew up in the hills of East Tennessee, this fresh wind of ideas and thinking is refreshing.



Coming Up! Coming Up! Coming Up!

Dec. 3-10	Week of Prayer for International Missions/Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, Statewide emphasis
Jan. 11	Tennessee Men's Chorale Concert, Middle Tennessee, TBA
Jan. 26-28	International Student Retreat, Montgomery Bell State Park, Dickson
Jan. 26-27	Youth Project, West Jackson Baptist Church, Jackson
Feb. 1-3	Youth Ministry Conclave, Chattanooga Convention Center, Chattanooga

For information see the TBC web site at www.tnbaptist.org.

Speakers encourage TBC pastors to 'magnify Jesus'

By Tim Ellsworth
Baptist and Reflector

CORDOVA — Persecution goes along with life in the ministry, Steve Gaines told pastors at the Tennessee Baptist Pastors Conference Nov. 13 at Bellevue Baptist Church in Cordova.

"There is no easy job in the ministry," Gaines said. "If you think there is one, you won't find it."

Gaines, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church, was one of seven speakers at the annual conference preceding the annual meeting of the Tennessee Baptist Convention. The theme for this year's conference was "Magnifying Jesus."

Gaines used I Corinthians 6:9 as his text, in which Paul told the Corinthians that while he was in Ephesus, "a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries."

From the text, Gaines pointed out that God appoints the placement of His preachers.

"You don't have to open any door for yourself," Gaines said. "God will do the opening. God knows where you are and God can take you to where He wants you to go."

God also allows the persecution of His preachers and anoints the performance of His preachers, Gaines said, telling pastors that an effective ministry in God's sight doesn't always mean a successful ministry in man's opinion.

"You don't have to worry about how many are walking the aisle, you don't have to worry about how many are sitting in the pew," Gaines said. "Even if it is in obscurity, it's effective service for the Lord Jesus Christ."

Junior Hill, an evangelist from Hartselle, Ala., preached from Matthew 6:28 on "some lessons from a flower." He told ministers they were created by God to do a unique task.

"I can do something nobody else in all the world can do," Hill said. "I can be the best Junior Hill that there is. Nobody can be what God made me to be. And nobody can be what God made you to be."

Hill said ministers should derive their value from who they are, not by where they are, and he encouraged them

to be faithful wherever they serve.

"Will you learn to be faithful when nobody knows your name?" Hill asked. "Will you be faithful to God in the valley of obscurity?"

Niki Ballew, pastor of Locust Hill Baptist Church in Travelers Rest, S.C., preached from Hebrews 12:1-3 and said ministers must be faithful in completing the course set before them.

That involves being faithful students of God's Word, Ballew said, and living lives free from entangling sin.

"We must magnify Jesus in our preaching because the Word of God is the power of God unto salvation," Ballew said.

Randy Davis, pastor of First Baptist Church in Sevierville, said the church is facing a crisis in the United States, as Christianity is becoming increasingly irrelevant to the culture.

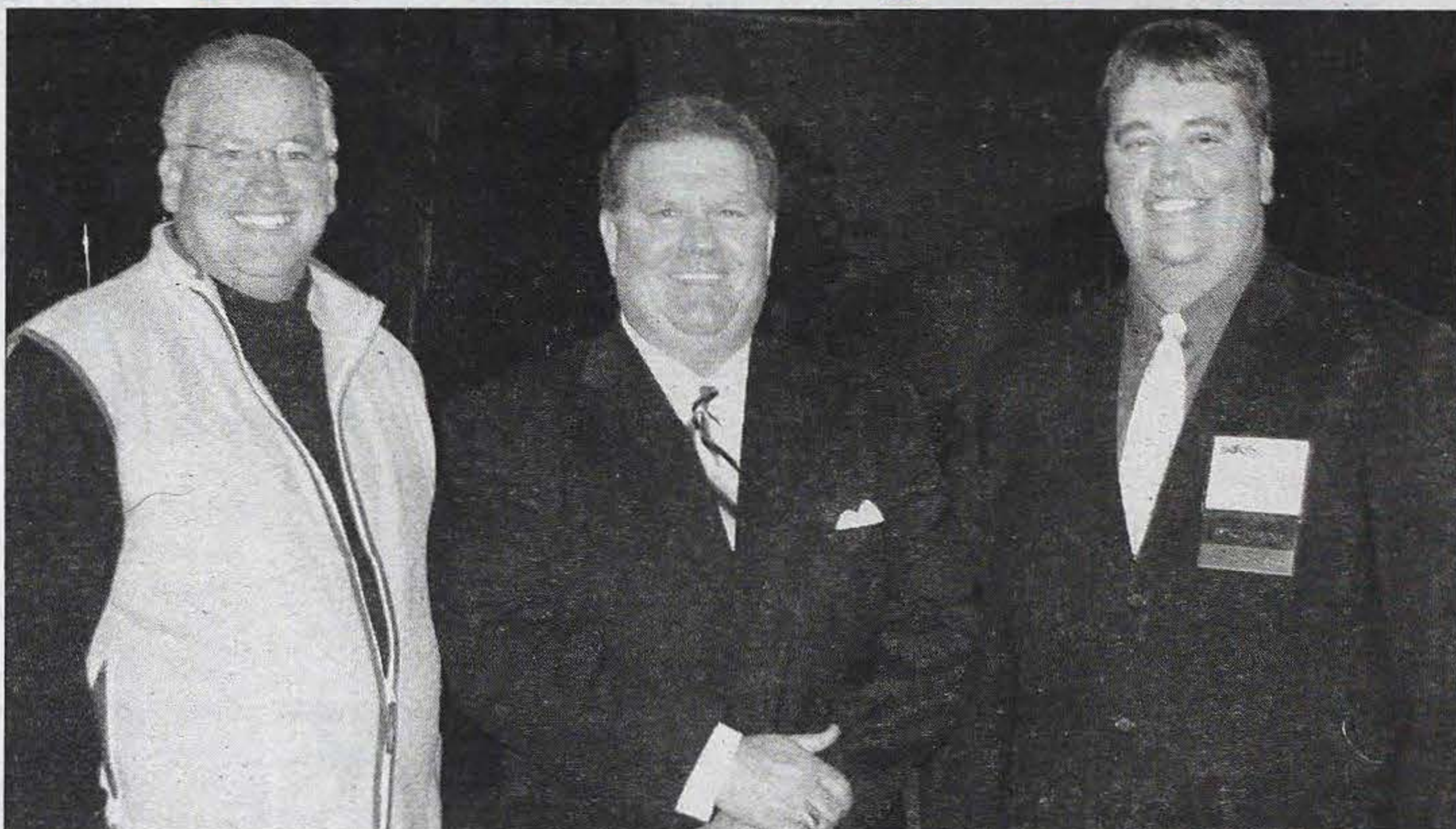
He encouraged ministers to be faithful in their evangelistic efforts, and not to be satisfied simply with additions to the church — because the Bible speaks of the church multiplying.

"There's something wonderful and thrilling about seeing a baby born," Davis said. "Can you imagine how excited the heavenly Father is about the next person at your church who's going to be saved?"

Joseph Hensley, pastor of Hunter Memorial Baptist Church in Elizabethton, preached from II Corinthians 5:21 and gave four reasons why Jesus should be magnified — because of His sinless life, His precious blood, the empty tomb, and the blessed hope.

"When the devil's on every hand, when it seems like you're all alone, when there's no one to turn to, when there's no one to talk to, remember, one of these days, it's going to be worth every ounce," Hensley said. "It's going to be worth every second, when you get to lay that crown at the feet of the one who hung on the cross for you, at the feet of the one who took your place and took my place."

Todd Morris, pastor of Abney Baptist Church in Abney, S.C., spoke about the wedding feast described in



ELECTED AS OFFICERS of the Tennessee Baptist Pastors Conference for the coming year were, from left, David Leavell, pastor, Springfield Baptist Church, Springfield, secretary-treasurer; Randy Davis, pastor, First Baptist Church, Sevierville, president; and Roc Collins, pastor, Indian Springs Baptist Church, Kingsport, vice president/president-elect.

Revelation 19:1-9, after the union of Christ and His bride, the church. Ministers are preparing their wedding garments every day they labor for the Lord, Morris said, and he encouraged them to remain faithful in their task — because one day they will be rewarded.

"There's coming a day when Jesus Himself will gird Himself and serve me," Morris said. "I believe it's following that wedding celebration in heaven."

Cody Deese, an evangelist

with Fan the Flame Ministries in Marietta, Ga., said it's time for the church to start shocking the culture, instead of vice versa.

Christians are guilty of ignoring the culture and creating their own sub-culture so they won't have to interact with a lost world, Deese said.

"Stop following the culture and start shaping the culture," he said.

"Don't be too far to the left where you lose your mission, but don't be too far to the right

where you lose your identity. Balance."

In officer elections, Roc Collins, pastor of Indian Springs Baptist Church in Kingsport, was elected as vice president (and thus president-elect for the following year). David Leavell, pastor of Springfield Baptist Church in Springfield, was elected as secretary/treasurer.

Davis was this year's vice president and will automatically serve as president for next year's conference. □

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Convention sermon

Gaines tells Baptists to worship in the face of battles

By Connie Davis Bushey
Baptist and Reflector

CORDOVA — In the convention sermon of the Tennessee Baptist Convention annual meeting, Steve Gaines spoke on turning to worship in the face of battles. He is pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church here, which hosted the meeting.

Gaines referred to what happened to King Jehoshaphat in II Chronicles 20. He suggested it is a guide for America which needs revival and for individuals.

Before the great commission is presented in the Bible, the great commandment is presented, said Gaines. It calls people to love God with their heart, soul, mind, and strength. It calls people to do this "even before we've witnessed" about God.

He asked the crowd what they do in a crisis. "Regardless of what your circumstances are ... you can worship God," he said.

"Did you know God can send revival in the midst of problems?" he asked.

Gaines noted Jehoshaphat loved the Lord, yet he "came under attack."

The people wanting to attack him were the descendants of the children of Lot who slept with his daughters, he noted.

As the danger became real, Jehoshaphat became afraid. He even admitted he and the people he ruled didn't know what to do. Then he sought the Lord and proclaimed a fast.

"Fear is only sin when it drives you away from faith," said Gaines.

Thankfully, Jehoshaphat knew of



STEVE GAINES, pastor, Bellevue Baptist Church, Cordova, delivered the convention sermon on Nov. 15 of the Tennessee Baptist Convention annual meeting. The meeting was held at his church.

God's works. His father and the people who followed him had escaped an attack by one million Ethiopians because of God. Jehoshaphat declared "the battle is God's."

God gave a speedy answer to Jehoshaphat, noted Gaines. "Now He doesn't always do that, but this time He did," Gaines stated.

God sent Jehoshaphat reconnaissance information, said Gaines. It was like when Moses stood with the Jewish people who had just escaped Egypt. They faced the Red Sea and Pharaoh and his soldiers were about to trap them.

"One word from God is worth 10,000 words from any person."

Christians don't need to fight the battles of today, Gaines continued.

God told Jehoshaphat to lead his people to worship Him. They fell down,

stood up, and shouted praise with a loud voice, described Gaines, referring to verse 19.

Then they marched to the enemy with the choir in front of the other people.

The Lord set up ambushes by angels or humans for the enemy and they were killed, he continued. Jehoshaphat and his people found all of the enemy dead.

They received the spoils of victory, they rejoiced in victory, but they also continued to fear God, Gaines added.

Worshiping is not a protection from evil and opposition, Gaines explained. Satan wants to be worshiped, he added. Even Jesus was asked by Satan to worship him.

Christians should worship God before He delivers them. "Anyone can worship God after He delivers us," he said.

Gaines referred to Paul and Silas when they were in jail after being beaten. They were in chains and hurting, but they sang hymns and God delivered them, Gaines said.

God will encourage His worshipers, he continued.

The woman at the well in the Bible learned from Jesus that God seeks those who worship Him "in spirit and truth."

God is looking for worshipers in spirit and in truth, stated Gaines. Then He will "draw near to you."

Christians should not be seeking blessings, but "the blessing," he suggested, referring to God.

God will give worshipers wisdom and He will punish "those who oppose His

worshipers." He noted one example of this truth was Pharaoh who ruled Egypt when it enslaved the Jewish people.

Christians shouldn't be intimidated by their enemies. Instead they should feel sorry for them, said Gaines. The battle is God's so "we don't have to protect ourselves."

Christians also should worship God after He delivers them and enjoy the joy He gives His worshipers.

Gaines admitted at times he has lost the joy of his salvation.

"There ought to be joy, celebration in the house of God," he declared. Christians become enthralled at such things as a football game, but ultimate joy comes from a "cross of redemption, empty tomb, and a coming Savior," he stated.

Christians who become weak "don't need to be saved again," he said. They "need to get the joy back."

God honors His worshipers and gives them protection and peace, said Gaines. "This world is not your home. God is your home," he observed. He cited Isaiah 26:3 and its promise of "perfect peace" for people "whose mind is stayed upon" God. He also quoted the promises of Isaiah 61:3 for those who mourn.

Christians should say, "Lord we are powerless. Praise God."

"Worship the Lord. Love Him with all of your heart, mind, soul, and strength."

Christians aren't paupers, proclaimed Gaines. "God can do what man cannot do. Satan is a liar."

"Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord," he concluded. □

Executive director's address

Leadership best understood through the life of Jesus: Porch

By Lonnie Wilkey
Baptist and Reflector

CORDOVA — There is a lot of confusion about the word "leadership," in the world today, observed James Porch, executive director/treasurer of the Tennessee Baptist Convention.

In addressing messengers at the annual meeting held Nov. 14-15 at Bellevue Baptist Church here, Porch acknowledged he has read the books, listened to the tapes, and attended seminars on leadership.

Porch noted that the leadership syndrome is a victim of "idefusion."

This new word, which he coined, "combines the term idea and confusion, and means a confusion of ideas," Porch told messengers.

"The proliferation of leadership techniques, models, principles, and methods, all often contradicting each other, has contributed to the ineffectiveness and especially loss of servant mentality in leadership."

Jesus, however, understood leadership. "He got it," Porch said.

Jesus led effectively and

today He lives and seeks to teach believers to lead through the Holy Spirit, he continued.

"There is only one way to understand the meaning of leadership and that is through the living Christ," Porch stressed.

He cited principles of leadership that can be found in the life of Jesus.

First, Jesus led by authenticity, Porch said.

Citing the story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well, he noted she asked Jesus if He was a prophet and the one who was "greater than Jacob."

After she professed a knowledge of the coming Messiah, Jesus replied to her, "I who speak to you am the Messiah."

Jesus bore witness to His own realness, Porch observed.

"Our Lord was the most authentic leader of all leaders."

Porch offered a word of caution about authenticity. It means "you probably will not be well liked," he said.

Second, Jesus led with integrity, Porch told messengers.

He recounted the story of Jesus returning to His hometown of Nazareth. While the

crowd who gathered was expectant, Porch noted the atmosphere changed radically when Jesus began to speak.

He basically informed them that He had not returned to Nazareth to be their "at home healer." In effect, He told them, "You will not limit my ministry."

Integrity is not truth alone, Porch shared. "Integrity is about living the truth."

Porch noted that "we are living in a compromising world today." He noted that a lack of integrity today among leaders comes from those who "shoot from the lip" rather than from careful thought.

"Integrity is not shooting from the lip. It is holding the words in until you are ready to tell the whole truth," he said.

The third principle of leadership taught by Jesus is the "giving of grace."

Citing the story of the feeding of 5,000 in John's gospel, Porch noted Jesus asked Phillip, "Where are you going to find bread to feed so many?" Jesus already knew what He intended to do, Porch related.

"Jesus intended to grace the people. Where you serve, are



JAMES PORCH, executive director of the Tennessee Baptist Convention, addressed messengers several times throughout the annual meeting and delivered his yearly address to messengers.

you intending to grace the people?" Porch asked.

He observed that "grace by itself is inadequate. It is the applying of grace that enables one to be an effective leader," Porch said.

He observed that leaders who lead with grace usually must be content apart from accolades, recognition, and even the privilege of writing a book on leadership. It also prevents "reigning over local Baptist fief-

dom," he added.

He acknowledged that "grace leaders" will be misunderstood, but stressed that "our people need leaders willing to grace their lives."

And, finally, Porch said the last principle shown by Jesus is that a good leader "finishes well."

Porch asked when did Jesus finish? "The answer — He has not. Jesus is not through."

"Our leadership is His leading through us," Porch said.

Porch cited a poster in a classroom at Radnor Baptist Academy where his wife, Kelly, teaches. The caption reads, "Even if you are on the right track, you can be run over if you're sitting still."

Finishing well for Jesus never meant stopping, he told messengers. "I am talking about finishing well."

He also recalled a trip where he saw a shepherd leading his sheep across a road. He led not in front or in the rear, but in the middle, moving together.

"Leadership is about leading in the middle, being real, living the truth, giving our grace, and, by the grace of God, finishing well," Porch said. □

Leaders

◆ Salem Baptist Church, Trenton, called **Joel Pigg** as pastor effective Nov. 12.

◆ **Arthur Nute** has resigned as pastor of Keeling Baptist Church, Stanton. In addition, **Jerry Paden Jr.** resigned as youth director of the church. Both resignations were effective Nov. 5.

◆ Alcoa Way Baptist Church, Knoxville, has called **Ken Inman** as pastor.

◆ Parkway Baptist Church, Townsend, has called **Jack Huskey** as pastor.

◆ Bells Campground Baptist Church, Powell, has called **Tom Chadwick** as interim pastor.

◆ Hinds Creek Baptist Church, Clinton, has called **Terry Hopper** as pastor.

Statewide Events

◆ The Tennessee Baptist Convention Restorative Justice Affinity Team is encouraging all churches to participate this Christmas in the **Prison Fellowship's Angel Tree ministry**, according to Gene Williams of the TBC staff. The Angel Tree project provides

needed items to 6,000 children of inmates in Tennessee prisons. Over 2,800 children remain to be sponsored. To participate in the ministry contact Williams at (615) 371-2064 or 1-800-558-2090 ext. 2064, the National Prison Fellowship Hub Office at 1-800-445-5244, or www.angeltree.org.

Churches

◆ **Riverdale Baptist Church, Knoxville**, will hold revival services Nov. 26-29. Morris Anderson of Maryville will speak.

◆ **East Athens Baptist Church, Athens**, will hold revival Dec. 3-6. Phil Glisson, evangelist of Memphis, will speak.

◆ **Wolf Creek Baptist Church, Spring City**, will hold a Sportsman's Banquet Dec. 2 and a one day revival Dec. 3. Morris Anderson, evangelist of Maryville, will speak.

◆ **Brush Creek Baptist Church, Brush Creek**, will hold the Life of Christ Drive-thru Dec. 9-10 from 6:30-8:30 p.m. For more information, call (615) 444-7972.

◆ **Fairfield Baptist Church, Centerville**, held a noteburning celebration Nov. 15 to recognize its debt-free

status. Members also are holding meetings to discuss a possible church expansion.

◆ **Silver Springs Baptist Church, Mt. Juliet**, will hold the 11th annual "In Bethlehem Inn" Nov. 30 - Dec. 2. Reservations are necessary to attend. For more information, contact (615) 641-0280 or carol.ssbc@tds.net.

◆ Tennessee Baptist Disaster Relief chain saw teams responded to Amherst Baptist Church, Amherst, N.Y. to help local homeowners recover from recent severe snow storms. Teams from **Hermitage Hills Baptist Church, Nashville**, served Nov. 13-18.

◆ **Lick Creek Baptist Church, Linden**, celebrated

its 25th anniversary Oct. 22. Don Franks, pastor of Corinth Baptist Church, Darden, and former pastor of First Baptist Church, Decaturville, which launched Lick Creek Baptist Mission in 1978, spoke. In addition, Lick Creek Baptist held a revival Oct. 27-29. Frank Kemper, pastor of Cross Roads Baptist Church, Bells, spoke.

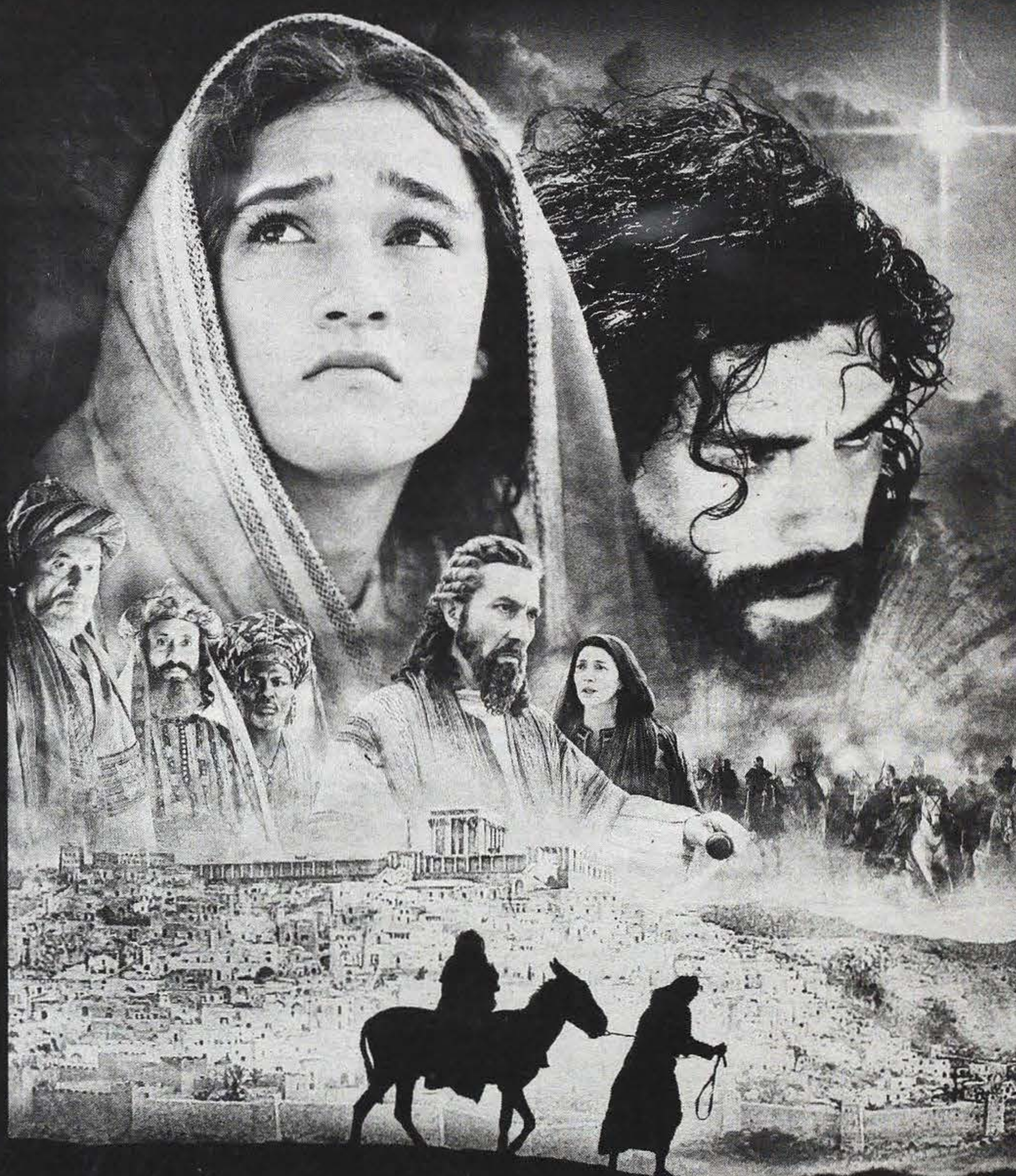


DONALD OWENS, left, pastor, Dry Creek Baptist Church, Dowelltown, stands with his wife, **Audrey**, and **W. L. Baker**, center, longtime friend, at the church's Pastor Appreciation Night on Oct. 29. Many friends and family attended.



MINISTERS AND LEADERS of Westhaven Baptist Church, Cookeville, stand together recently. They are, from left, Charles Anderson, former minister who is leading missions work in Brazil; Don Wynn, pastor; Wes Garner, new youth director; Jeff Howard, new associate pastor; and Ralph L. Palmer, pastor of new church start of Westhaven in the Mine Lick Creek area of Cookeville. The church also has added and renovated facilities during the past year.

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In Theatres Everywhere December 1

Substitute budget rescinded, original budget adopted ...

— Continued from page 1

"All institutions ought to pay for the Belmont lawsuit in proportionate share," he noted.

Much of the debate around the proposed Executive Board budget centered around the \$750,000 which had to be budgeted for the Belmont Study Committee should funds be needed for a lawsuit.

Elsie Danley, chairman of the Budget and Ministry Committee, explained that last year, after Belmont said it would not accept Cooperative Program funds, the committee allocated Belmont monies in response to "perceived needs."

Danley used the analogy of a bonus compared to a raise. "When you give a person a raise you do not take it away the next year," he said. A bonus, however, is a one-time gift and may or may not be extended the next

year, depending on circumstances, Danley continued.

Danley acknowledged there was unclear communication between the committee and the institutions regarding the Belmont funds.

An attempt was made to amend the budget, but was ruled out of order.

Under TBC bylaws, the budget is presented on the first day of the convention. Any amendments to the budget must be made during the presentation and is referred to the Budget and Program Committee of the Executive Board for consideration. No amendments can be made to the budget on the second day.

"By our legal documents no amendments to what was presented yesterday can be made today," Jett told messengers.

Several messengers argued



BOB AGEE, messenger from West Jackson Baptist Church, Jackson, makes a point during discussion on the TBC budget on Wednesday afternoon.

for and against the substitute motion.

"We need to stand behind our committee that has worked diligently," said Chuck Groover, pastor of Victory Baptist Church, Mt. Juliet.

Several messengers spoke in favor of the substitute motion, agreeing that it seemed to be the fairest way to allocate the funds.

The substitute budget passed by a show-of-hands vote.

Later in the session, TBC Executive Director James Porch was recognized by Jett to speak to the messengers.

He informed them that under the budget adopted by the convention, Tennessee Missions and Ministries would lose \$478,691. This is work that is done for our churches and associations, Porch said.

"It will impact our mission and our work this year," he told messengers.

Later, Roger "Sing" Oldham, pastor of First Baptist Church, Martin, spoke, noting that "our hands are being tied by the process (in reference to the fact the budget could not be amended on the second day).

In light of the fact the motion to amend was a good faith effort to spread proportionately the reduction of the \$750,000 among all the entities that benefited the previous year and that the adopted budget had the unintended consequence of unduly penalizing Executive Board ministries and other entities, Oldham made a motion to reconsider the budget.

The motion to reconsider passed.

"I wish there were some way to tweak these three words (all



PARLIAMENTARIANS Carl Creasman, left, and Norm Templeton, center, confer, as TBC President Phil Jett looks on.

TBC budget) that would clarify and settle this issue," Agee said.

"We are clarifying an intent to make sure it is clear and understandable. What I am asking would help the convention, not hurt it."

Jett ruled, with the advice of the parliamentarians and legal counsel, that because of the convention's legal documents, "we cannot do it."

Oldham challenged the ruling of the chair, which messengers voted to do.

Messengers were then prepared to vote on the substitute motion to reflect Agee's original intent.

Convention attorney Randle Davis cautioned messengers that they overruled the chair on a legal issue and would be going "against your governing documents."

"Under Tennessee law, it is an unlawful act by this body," he told the messengers.

He noted that all it would take would be one person to object to the convention's action and the budget would be nullified and revert to the 2005-06 budget.

A show of hands vote was inconclusive. Because of time constraints, Jett asked messengers to stand and remain standing until all sections were counted.

The motion to approve the budget as Agee intended failed by a vote of 214 to 192.

Messengers then moved to the chapel to finish deliberations on the budget.

Since the substitute motion failed, messengers then had to approve the budget originally presented by the Executive Board. They were told that if the

budget was not approved, it would revert to the 2005-06 budget and the Executive Board would have to meet and draft a budget for 2006-07.

The original budget passed.

Oldham was recognized by the chair to speak. He noted that he made the motion to reconsider the budget in "good faith." He moved that the Executive Board be requested to consider "the budget at its January meeting and amend the adopted \$37 million budget to reflect Bob Agee's intent."

Jett ruled the motion out of order, but then was advised by parliamentarians that it was in order.

In discussing that motion, Jimmy Stroud of Third Creek Baptist Church, Knoxville, opposed the motion. He noted the messengers who remained were still in session. "It is not our fault anyone left. We have made a decision." He noted that the Executive Board is "prohibited from taking an action contrary to a clear action of the convention."

Jett received clarification from the parliamentarians and legal counsel and ruled the motion was in order.

Oldham's motion passed by a substantial margin.

In addressing the messengers following the action, Porch assured them the Executive Board "will do the best job it possibly can in response to this action."

"I ask for patience and understanding as we handle it as expeditiously as we possibly can."

Porch appealed for cooperation from everyone involved. "This is a crucial matter we seek to fulfill." □



MEMBERS OF the Budget and Ministry Committee of the TBC Executive Board listen to chairman Elsie Danley (not pictured) explain the budget process. — Photos by Connie Davis Bushey

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Wal-Mart mentions 'Christmas' again

Baptist Press

NASHVILLE — Wal-Mart, which recently upset some Christians over its partnerships with homosexual groups, has announced that it will use "Merry Christmas" in its stores again this year.

"We, quite frankly, have learned a lesson from last year," Linda Blakley, a Wal-Mart spokeswoman, told *USA Today*. "We're not afraid to use the term 'Merry Christmas.' We'll use it early, and we'll use it often."

During last year's Christmas season, several groups, including the American Family Association and the Catholic League, protested retail stores' decisions to ban the religion-specific Merry Christmas in favor of the more general "Happy Holidays."

So this year, Wal-Mart said it will air television ads mentioning Christmas, change the name of its seasonal decorating department back to "The Christmas Shop" instead of "The Holiday Shop," post signs in stores counting down the days until Christmas, play Christmas carols on speakers throughout their stores, and carry about 60 percent more merchandise with the label "Christmas" rather than "holiday," according to *USA Today* Nov. 8.

At least one other store is following suit. Macy's, the largest department store chain in the United States, plans to post "Merry Christmas" signs in all departments and give Christmas themes to all of its window displays. □

Pro-homosexual churches excluded by N.C. Baptists

Compiled from BP, ABP reports

GREENSBORO, N.C. — The Baptist State Convention of North Carolina strengthened its membership criteria Nov. 14 to specify churches that do not support homosexuality and do not allow homosexuals to be members until they repent.

Messengers voted by nearly a three-fourths majority to change the convention's articles of incorporation, Article VI.A.3 concerning membership as proposed in the "Sanderson Motion," brought before the convention last year by Bill Sanderson, pastor of Hephzibah Baptist Church in Wendell.

The original article stated, "A cooperating church shall be one that financially supports any program, institution, or agency of the convention, and which is in friendly cooperation with the convention and sympathetic with its purposes and work."

The addition to the article states, "Among churches not in friendly cooperation with the convention are churches which knowingly act to affirm, approve, endorse, promote, sup-

port, or bless homosexual behavior. The Board of Directors shall apply this provision. A church has a right to appeal any adverse action taken by the Board of Directors."

The action needed a two-thirds vote during two consecutive annual meetings.

Opponents of the revision did not see it as necessary. While they all agreed homosexuality is a sin and sinners need to repent, they did not feel such a rigid stance is necessary when the mechanism for membership removal already is in place.

Milton A. Hollifield Jr., the BSCNC executive director-treasurer, said he does not feel there will be a mass exodus of churches from the state convention. However, about 20 BSCNC churches are members of the Alliance of Baptists, a Washington, D.C.-based group which does not exclude homosexuals as church members or "same-sex marriages."

"Churches are autonomous in nature," Hollifield noted. "The Baptist State Convention of North Carolina does not mandate what will happen in churches. Today, we are just relating to churches in our convention. We want to reach out in love and minister."

In other business, messengers to the annual North Carolina Baptist state convention meeting struck down proposed bylaw changes that would have given convention-related institutions more influence over the appointment of trustees and directors.

The proposed amendments, more than a year in the making and supported by convention officials, received just 38 percent of the 2,198 ballots cast in the Nov. 14 meeting.

Some observers say the move could trigger an exodus of N.C. Baptist colleges and other convention-related entities, which have sought more control over selection of trustees.

Even before the convention, one institution signaled it will exercise more autonomy over trustee elections. Wingate University in Wingate, N.C., announced a plan to use an option in convention and university bylaws that allows it to appoint up to 50 percent of its trustees. □

Virginia Baptists launch mission service program

Baptist Press

VIRGINIA BEACH, Va. — The Baptist General Association of Virginia adopted a \$14.2 million budget to fund their ministries in 2007 — a \$100,000 increase over this

year's budget goal.

The 1,053 messengers attending the BGAV annual meeting in Virginia Beach also elected officers for the coming year, adopted four resolutions, and commissioned the first group of Venturers, a new Virginia Baptist mission service program.

The new budget will go into effect Jan. 1, following action taken by the Virginia Baptist Mission Board's executive committee to make the BGAV's fiscal year coincide with the calendar year. Previously, the fiscal year was Dec. 1-Nov. 30. Contributions received this December will be applied to the 2006 budget, essentially giving the 2006 fiscal year 13 months.

Messengers modified three allocations in the budget proposal presented by the BGAV budget committee. Bluefield College will receive \$307,000 next year, up from the \$142,000 recommended by the committee. The additional funding will come from cuts to Fork Union Military Academy, which was reduced by \$100,000 to \$10,000, and Hargrave Military Academy, reduced by \$65,000 to \$10,000.

The budget committee's proposed reduction of Bluefield was due to a policy decision enacted by this year's committee that any entity receiving 5 percent or less of its budget from the BGAV may not receive a BGAV allocation of more than 1 percent of the BGAV's budget. That policy impacted not only Bluefield, but also Virginia Intermont College, Virginia Baptist Homes, and Virginia Baptist Children's Home and Family Services.

The new Venturers program offers opportunities for persons age 18 and older to serve in mission settings around the nation and the world for six months to two years.

"We have received requests for long-term volunteer assistance [from our mission partners]," said Jerry Jones, team leader of the Virginia Baptist Mission Board's global missions and evangelism team, which oversees Venturers in conjunction with Woman's Missionary Union of Virginia.

"We have heard and have taken their requests seriously. In the past few years, we have heard Virginia Baptists asking if there are opportunities for longer-term service. Thus, Ven-

turers has been born in response to these requests."

Boyce Brannock, a Staunton attorney and member of First Baptist Church in nearby Waynesboro, was elected president without opposition. □

Texas Baptists adopt measures to 'restore trust'

Associated Baptist Press

DALLAS — "Together We Are Doing More" was the stated theme, but healing from financial scandal was the subtext that dominated the annual meeting of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Messengers to the Nov. 13-14 meeting elected officers, adopted a \$50.6 million budget, and went on record speaking out in favor of environmental stewardship and against human trafficking.

But some of the most significant business occurred prior to the general sessions at a closed-door meeting of the BGCT Executive Board — scheduled in response to an investigation that discovered mismanagement and misuse of church-starting funds in the Rio Grande Valley.

Two weeks earlier, an investigative team reported Texas Baptists gave more than \$1.3 million in start-up funding and monthly support to three pastors in the Rio Grande Valley who reported 258 church starts between 1999 and 2005. Investigators presented evidence that up to 98 percent of those churches no longer exist — and some never existed except on paper.

Meeting in executive session immediately before the opening session of the BGCT, the board

voted to implement all of the investigative team's recommendations. The board instructed BGCT Executive Director Charles Wade to explore with legal counsel "the full range of methods for recovery of funds" and determine whether to refer the reports' findings to law enforcement.

But at least one messenger to the BGCT annual meeting wanted the convention to itself ask legal authorities to investigate criminal actions that may have occurred in the Rio Grande Valley.

That motion was ruled out of order by BGCT president Michael Bell.

David Montoya, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Mineral Wells, questioned the wisdom of giving Wade authority to decide whether to pursue any criminal investigation, saying "he still has questions to answer" about his handling of the Valley church-starting fund scandal.

In his report to the annual meeting, Wade underscored his commitment "to right wrongs" and "clean up this mess." He stressed his desire to restore broken relationships with pastors and church leaders in the Valley, emphasized the overall good work done by church-starting staff, and pledged to rebuild trust. □

CLASSIFIED

MINISTRY — PASTOR

The congregation of First Baptist Church of Philadelphia is seeking a full-time pastor. Inquires and resumes may be sent to First Baptist Church, P.O. Box 45, Philadelphia, TN 37846 or by e-mail to hillm@loudoncounty.org.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

French Broad Baptist Church in Dandridge, Tenn., is seeking a bivocational pastor. We are a small congregation of approximately 70 in AM worship. Interested parties should send resumes to the following address, French Broad Baptist Church, P.O. Box 1577, Dandridge, TN 37725. Our web site is www.frenchbroadbaptistchurch.org.

MINISTRY — MUSIC

First Baptist Church in McKenzie, Tenn., is currently accepting resumes for a full-time minister of music/family. Send resumes to the attention of the Search Committee, First Baptist Church, 619 Stonewall St., McKenzie, TN 38201.

MINISTRY — STUDENT

First Baptist Strawberry Plains, Tenn., is searching for a full-time minister of students with additional administrative duties. Please send resume and references to First Baptist, P.O. Box 310, Strawberry Plains, TN 37871, Attn: Personnel Committee.

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MINISTRY — CHILDREN

Exciting, established children's ministry seeking person to lead preschool/children's ministry. Bachelor's degree required, Master's degree from a Southern Baptist Seminary preferred. Resumes may be e-mailed to searchcommittee@fbcjoelton.org or mailed to Search Committee, First Baptist Church, 7140 Whites Creek Pk., Joelton, TN 37080.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

LaBelle Haven Baptist Church is accepting resumes for a part-time children's minister. Interested applicants may submit resume to, 6825 E. Holmes Rd., Memphis, TN, 38141, fax (901) 547-1650 or labellehaven@bellsouth.net. Attn: Winford Baker.

MINISTRY — COMBINATION

Seeking associate pastor & minister to students. Full-time position. Please submit resumes to Meridian Baptist Church, Search Committee, 6513 Chapman Hwy., Knoxville, TN 37920, webmaster@meridianbaptist.org.

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a parent speaks

Thanksgiving memories

By Carolyn Tomlin

In 1621 Pilgrims who came to this country in search of religious freedom, set aside a special day to give thanks to God for harvest and health. On this first Thanksgiving Day that small band welcomed Indian friends who provided food over the long, cold winter. Scheduled as a legal holiday on the last Thursday of November, families gather for a time of enjoying delicious food and being with relatives and friends.

As we gather this Thanksgiving Day, we must remember the cost to these few colonists who gathered at Plymouth. They left their families, livelihood, and ancestral homes. Many of these people had lived on the land for generations, farmed the same fields and worshiped in the same village church. But in search of a better life, they left everything and ventured to a new place.

Can you imagine the different lifestyle they faced? Where a few months before, they lived in a comfortable home — now they felt fortunate to have a hut made of logs and mud mortar. In the old country, they probably enjoyed bountiful foods — but now wild game and roasted corn was a real treat. But more important, these early settlers taught their children to adapt and to accept responsibility. And in so doing, they made memories that were passed down to generation upon generation.

What memories are you teaching your children about Thanksgiving? Is the day endless platters of food? Or, is it the parades and football games that follow? Is it about the big after-Thanksgiving sales on the following day? Granted, this is part of the holiday, but could there be more?

Perhaps some of the following ideas will help your child remember Thanksgiving in a special way?

- Decide on a Thanksgiving project of giving to others. This could include working at a soup kitchen for homeless people, inviting a lonely person to your home for the big meal, taking a plate of food to a shut-in. Let your child be part of the project.

- Work together as a family to prepare the Thanksgiving meal — including making out the menu, shopping, food preparation, and clean-up. Allow each person at least one favorite dish.

- Guide children to create the holiday centerpiece and make simple place cards.

- Put on a tape or CD of favorite Thanksgiving music including those hymns that praise God for His goodness and blessings.

- Start your meal with reading a passage from the Bible, such as Psalms 23.

- Ask everyone to share at least one Thanksgiving memory or to tell some way God has blessed them.

As you remember the first Thanksgiving Day, make memories with your family to cherish for years to come. □ — Tomlin writes for numerous Christian publications. She lives in Jackson where her husband, Matt, is pastor of Ward's Grove Baptist Church.

a way with words

Since I found Jesus —
and He wasn't even lost

By Hugh X. Lewis

Like a hunter stalking through the human jungle,
I took my trophies in spite of the cost.
I'd set my sights on happiness, then stumble,
Till I found Jesus and He wasn't even lost.

Like a wandering soul I felt born out of season
With my will to live or die an even toss;
I was searching just to give my life a reason
When I found Jesus and He wasn't even lost.

My brand new guide leads me through greener pastures;
I've laid down all my weapons for the cross.
I've got a lifetime hunting license for the Master
Since I found Jesus and He wasn't even lost. □

Copyright by Hugh X. Lewis. Lewis, a Baptist layman, is poet laureate of Christian country music in Tennessee. He has written more than 250 songs and is featured daily on 110 Southern gospel radio stations throughout the country. He is available to speak to church and senior adult groups. For more information, call (615) 883-0086.

Live now ... and forever

By Craig Christina

Focal Passage: Isaiah 55:1-13

Have you heard about the change in Wal-Mart's marketing strategy for this Christmas? Last year, the policy was to stick with "happy holidays." They reasoned that they could appeal to all people by choosing the generic theme — that way, no one would be offended. However, they forgot about one little detail. The holidays are really holy days because of the birth of Christ. If not for Jesus, there would be no Christmas.

What they forgot, Christians remembered; and Wal-Mart's sales have dropped significantly since this time last year. Therefore, guess what the theme of this year's holiday is going to be at Wal-Mart? That's right, "Merry Christmas!" They will shout it from the roof tops and play it in their stores through religious Christmas music. This year, Wal-Mart is putting Christ back in Christmas.

Before we become too critical of Wal-Mart, perhaps we should examine our own lives. Why do we celebrate the holidays? Is it to give or receive presents? Is it about spending time with family? Or is it first and foremost about celebrating the birth of Christ in our world and in our hearts? Have we really given our lives to Jesus?

There is only one way to receive life now and forever, and that is by having a relationship with God through faith in Jesus.

Examine the choice (vv. 1-5).

Our choices in life are very simple. We can choose to invest our lives in the things of the world, or we can choose to invest our lives in the things of God; eternal things; the things of Christ. Isaiah asks, "Why do you spend money on what is not food, and your wages on what does not satisfy?" (v. 2a). How foolish to waste time, money, and energy on things we think will satisfy us but don't.

How many empty beer bottles, dead-end jobs, or broken relationships must we experience before we re-examine our lives? Only Jesus can offer us a fulfilling, eternal life of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Only Jesus can set us free from the shame and guilt of our sin. But we must begin by honestly examining the choices we are making with our lives.

Experience the compassion (vv. 6-7).

God, through the prophet Isaiah, offers a compelling invitation to compassion and forgiveness. Once people realize the emptiness and futility of their previous choices, they have the option to "seek the LORD while He may be found" (v. 6a). Those who truly seek God's forgiveness through faith in Christ's death and resurrection will receive "compassion" and God "will freely forgive" (v. 7).

However, Isaiah explains the necessary prerequisite to salvation, and that is repentance. We must "abandon" our sinful ways and thoughts as we "return to the

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Bible Studies for Life
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LORD." To repent simply means to turn around. We must turn away from our sinful way of life and turn to Jesus as Lord in order to experience God's compassion. Never forget that repentance is a vital part of a person's salvation experience.

Express the confidence (vv. 8-13). How is all of this possible? How can God blot out our transgressions and breathe new life into us? God's ways are not our ways, and He can always accomplish what He desires (vv. 8, 11). In other words, if God says it, I believe it and that settles it.

We need to have confidence in God to do what He promises to do. God will send us out "with joy" as we are "peacefully guided" (v. 12). He will turn our thornbushes into cypresses as we faithfully follow Him (v. 13). As we turn and trust in the Lord, He will fill our lives with good things that will bless us and others for eternity.

So why not put Christ into your Christmas? If Wal-Mart can do it, so can you! □ — Christina is pastor of First Baptist Church, Jackson



CHRISTINA

Love one another

By Bob Orgeron

Focal Passage: Hebrews 13:1-25

People to love (vv. 1-6). In verse 1, "Keep on," implies an ongoing action. It is a command that says: "it is imperative that you continue to love each other." The meaning is not merely having warm feelings toward others, but rather a love that takes action on behalf of another, seeking to meet the other person at the intersection of his or her need. This admonition serves as the theme of the chapter.

Verse 2 expands this idea of continuing to love each other by challenging the reader: "Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it." This phrase "entertaining angels without knowing it" reminds the reader of Abraham's visitors in Genesis 18:1.

Hospitality was highly esteemed in the ancient world, and was especially important for Christians. Lodging was expensive, and in many cases, unsafe places to stay. As Christian preachers traveled around, believers gave them lodging and so facilitated their mission. Without such hospitality, the spreading of the gospel would have been greatly hindered.

In verse 3, attention is given to "prisoners." A stranger or a guest at one's home may come uninvited, but prisoners must be sought out by name. Some believers withheld help from prisoners for fear of suffering a similar punishment.

However, the writer is here teaching that Christians should have compassion on those who are in prison "as if they were their fellow prisoners." Believers should feel compassion for their friends and or fellow believers who are in prison or for "those who are mistreated."

Verse 4 opens with another imperative, "Marriage should be honored by all." A Christian home begins with a Christian marriage.

Leaders to imitate (vv. 7-11). In this section we are reminded of believers' responsibility in assisting those servants who are currently leading them. In a later verse we are to pray for our ministry leaders.

Examples of leaders are given in these verses. In

verse 8, we read that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever." In this profound, yet succinct verse the reader's attention is turned to Christ. The lives

of those former servants certainly were worthy of emulation. However, in this verse we receive the most excellent example of all — Jesus Christ.

Ministry to perform (vv. 12-16). This third section is based on the understanding that Jesus' crucifixion occurred outside the gate. Seeing therefore Jesus, that, His death might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate's of the city, "let us also



ORGERON

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go outside the gate to Him, bearing His reproach."

Christians are reminded in verse 16 to "not to neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased."

Benediction and conclusion (vv. 20-25). In verses 20 and 21, there is a prayer of benediction of blessing. In this benediction, some of the important themes of the letter are mentioned again. The prayer includes the greatness of Christ, the risen Lord in verse 20. Then we find the importance of the believers call to living holy lives, in that the Lord had "equipped them in every good thing to do His will, working in them and us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ."

In verses 22 through 25, there is a word of exhortation. Verse 23 says, "Take notice that our brother Timothy has been released, with whom, if he comes soon, I will see you," and exhorts them to exchange greetings in verse 24.

Then in verse 25, we are left with the blessing of "grace." Grace is a fitting note on which to end. He closes by praying for God's grace for all his friends. He omits no one from his concern or from God's for he prays, "Grace be with you all." □ — Orgeron is pastor of Park Avenue Baptist Church, Nashville.



LOOKING AT JEWELRY and other items for sale at the WorldCrafts display of the Missions Extravaganza are, from left, Jessica Coffman, Sarah Singleton, Allisha McCready, Kimberly Thomas, and Kelsey Maness of Mt. Gilead Baptist Church, Lexington.



JOE AND LINDA LEDFORD, Mission Service Corps missionaries in Townsend, visit with Laura Lee Moore, who was a journeyman missionary for two years in Tanzania. The Ledfords served as MSC missionaries in Canada from 1999-2005.

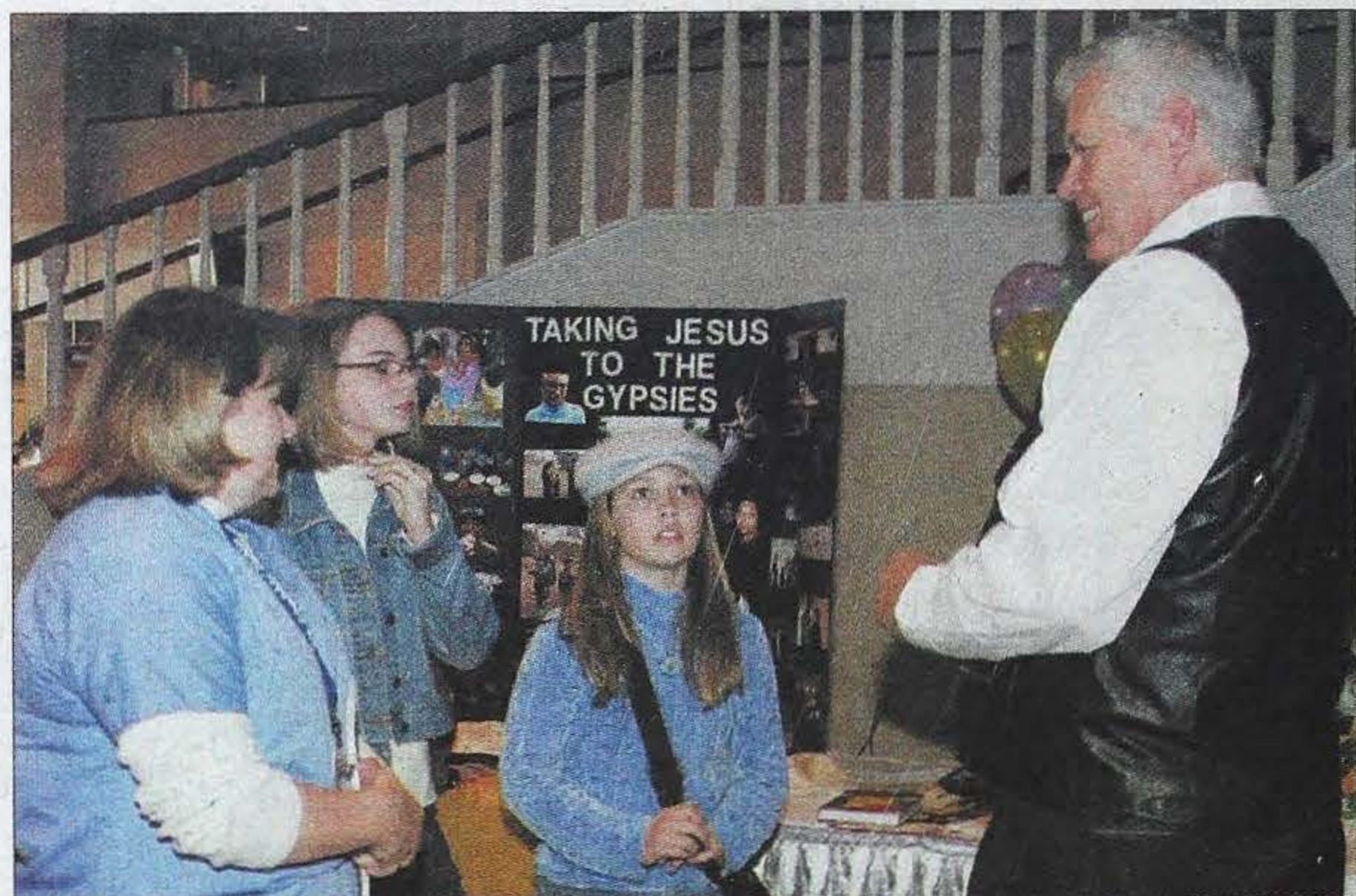
Missions Extravaganza — held by Tennessee WMU prior to TBC annual meeting



MISSIONARY Carla Roy of Uruguay talks about one of the items in her display about Uruguay with Terrell Marcom, pastor, Excell Baptist Church, Clarksville.



THE NORMAN FAMILY of Pleasant Grove Baptist Church, Mountain City, learn about Peru from Melissa Smith, who served there as a journeyman missionary for two years. The Normans include, from left, Ashley, Christopher, Samantha, Olivia, and James, who is pastor of the church.



VISITING WITH BOB Hill, missionary to the Gypsies in Romania, are, from left, Cathy Akin, Claire Babcock, and Alex Andrews of First Baptist Church, Somerville. Hill along with his wife, Gayle, are missionaries in residence of Union University, Jackson. The Hills are originally from Gibson County Baptist Association, Trenton.



REUNITING AT THE Missions Extravaganza are relatives after a separation of about six years. Jessie Rushing, left, and Betty Rushing, second from right, missionaries to Southeast Asia, stand with the niece of Jessie, Ginger Duke, right, and her family. They include Arlon Duke, second from left, and, from left, Emily, Katie, and Ashley. The Dukes are members of Bellevue Baptist Church, Cordova, where the Missions Extravaganza and TBC annual meeting were held.