TBC executive director announces ‘transition’ plans

By Lonnie Wilkey
Baptist and Reflector

BRENTWOOD — James Porch, executive director/treasurer of the Tennessee Baptist Convention has informed the Executive Board he is beginning to consider when he will transition from Executive Board leadership to a new ministry.

"I am not using the 'R' word because, as ministers, we don’t really return," said Porch, executive director/treasurer of the Tennessee Baptist Convention.

Porch’s comments to members of the TBC Executive Board came during their Jan. 9 meeting here, just moments after he was honored for completing 15 years of service as executive director/treasurer of the Tennessee Baptist Convention.

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The executive director continued his emphasis on verse 10, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." (KJV).

— See TBC, page 9

Churches encouraged to reach out to communities

By Connie Davis Bushey
Baptist and Reflector

JAMES PORCH, executive director of the Tennessee Baptist Convention, addresses the Executive Board.

CHAIRING THE various committees of the Tennessee Baptist Convention Executive Board for 2007-08 are, from left, Wes Turner, Nashville, Shared Ministries; Frank Bowling, Medina, Church Health; Mike Dawson, Columbia, Education; Mickey Basham, Riceville, President, Executive Board; Phil Young, Knoxville, Christian Services; Chuck Groover, Mt. Juliet, Administrative; Jewell Jennings, (vice chairman), Lebanon, Collegiate, and Lon Shoopman, Madisonville, Budget & Program. — Photos by Connie Davis Bushey

TBC CP giving off to slow start

Baptist and Reflector

BRENTWOOD — Ten­
nessee Baptist Convention
churches gave $2,844,050
through the Cooperative Pro­
gram in December.

After two months of the current fiscal year, Tennessee Baptists have contributed $6,005,825 through the Cooperative Program.

Year-to-date gifts are $254,543 or 4.1 percent below the amount given after two months last year.

Gifts also are $407,841 under budget needs.

The 2007-08 budget goal is $38,500,000.

James Porch, executive
director/treasurer of the Ten­
nessee Baptist Convention, acknowledged the slow start, but said he anticipates giving will increase.

"Tennessee Baptists are committed to missions and ministry in our state and around the world. I anticipate our churches will rise to the challenge to fund these endeavors with their gifts through the Cooperative Program," Porch said.

Virginia Christians are encouraged to reach out to communities

By Connie Davis Bushey
Baptist and Reflector

Vickie Anderson of the Ten­
nessee Woman’s Missionary
Union staff who is helping coordinate the event, said last year, the first time the emphasis was held, 86 churches in 37
associations in Tennessee partic­i­
ated. She hopes more Ten­
nessee Baptists will become
involved this year.

One difference this year is that We Have a Heart for You is being promoted not only as a WMU event but as a Tennessee Baptist Convention event.

To participate, Tennessee Baptists should plan “ministry evangelism” projects, said Anderson. The term ministry evangelism may be new to some people, she explained. A ministry evangelism project is one that includes both ministry and evangelism, which are both equally important for Christians.

She noted people might be familiar with a similar kind of ministry which is referred to as acts of kindness - because of their love for Jesus Christ - and be ready to witness of their faith.

The event can use Valentine’s Day as a theme for the ministry evangelism projects, Anderson added.

We Have a Heart for You

We Have a Heart for You is an avenue for Ten­
nessee Baptists to meet needs and share Christ’s love in a vari­
ety of ways in our churches, towns, and neighborhoods, the TBC website explains.

Anderson already has heard from members of Donelson View Baptist Church, Nashville, who plan to be a part of We Have a Heart for You. Members of the church plan to make up and deliver baskets of baked goods to nur­es at a hospital and workers at police and fire stations.

Other ideas are for folks to

• Wash windshields and refill windshield washer fluid;
• Provide front yard cleanup or leaf raking service;
• Offer a winter car wash to

spray off salt and road grime;
• Go door-to-door distribut­
ing copies of the “Jesus” film and bags of popcorn;
• Provide a one-day sports camp for children;
• Offer quarters to pay for washing machines and dryers at local laundromats;
• Give away stamps in front of the post office;
• Give away cof­

fe at a major bus

stop;
• Offer free shoe shines at stores, malls, or other pub­

lic places.

For more ideas, see www.tnbpast.org or e-mail heartforyou@tnbpast.org.

Anderson also encouraged everyone who participates to go to www.heartforyou.org and download a reporting form.

Such reporting helps in planning, she noted, and allows ideas to be shared with others.

"We want to make a differ­
ence in our communities and share Christ and create avenues for people to become involved in ministry evangelism projects for the first time," said Anderson.
Bible comes to life through memorization: DeLap

By Art Toalston
Baptist Press

FRANKLIN — "A lot of people will say, 'This guy knows the whole Bible.'"

"Well, I really don't," Rollin DeLap admits, but he reasons they say that because most people have memorized so little of the "Word of God."

DeLap says that after he was asked to contribute a capital W when he spoke the word "Word," attaching so deep a sort of respect to the Bible than mere paper, ink, and ancient stories and wisdom.

When he started memorizing various passages from the Word more than 40 years ago, he was a college student who "never dreamed what impact it would have on my life."

But it led to a career of speaking at camps across the country, exhorting col- leges to put the Word of God in their hearts and to tell others about how faith in Christ, rooted in the Word and enlivened by the Holy Spirit, could change their lives.

DeLap, 71, worked in student evangelism for 15 years with the North American Mission Board, 10 years with the Baptist Sunday School Board (now Baptist Christian Resources), and 10-plus years with Baptist Student Union ministries at several Texas campuses.

He now speaks of memorizing the Word, his conversation has an everyday tone and phrasing until it shifts toward eloquence when he quotes a Bible passage — and people's attentiveness heightens.

"People respond to the Word of God," DeLap says. "It's not my authority, but it's God's authority. It's His Word. All I am doing is detecting it from my heart to their hearts through Proverbs 9:9 says, "Give instruction to the wise and they will become wiser still; teach the righteous and they will gain in learning.""

When he was first challenged to memorize Scripture as a college sophomore, DeLap says he focused on three verses a week. After his seminary studies, it became a chapter from the Bible each month for five years. Since then, he has memorized a verse a week, "52 weeks a year."

"I was a skeptic at first," as an engineering student, DeLap acknowledged. But two verses soon "caused me to think about my life" — Psalm 119:9,11, "How can a young man keep his way pure? By doing according to your word ... I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you."

Gradually, DeLap recounts, "The more I put the Word of God in my heart the more I was interested in what God wanted for my life."

The Bible "began to take on new meaning. I began to pay attention to the content and the context of the what the Lord was saying." To those who may think Scripture memory is too difficult, DeLap asks, "Well, what's a chain saw? And what's your best friend? What's your phone number? What's your address? ... Why do you remember these things? Because they're important to you."

"The Word of God becomes important enough to us," DeLap says, "we'll begin to memorize it."

The aging process has made it more difficult for DeLap to keep his Bible open. "They're getting away from me faster and they're harder to recall," he says, "But that's why we have our best friend."

DeLap continues to employ the same Scripture memory method he has taught to students over the years: He writes the passage on a small card (2 x 1-inch), and keeps a leather pouch, and an instruction booklet-titled "Memorize to Evangelize.""The Word challenges your life, it corrects your life," DeLap says. Memorizing verses about God's call to love, for example, can help a person become kinder-more interested in others' well-being, and more merciful, he says. D

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Tennessee DR teams needed in Oklahoma

Baptist and Reflector

BRENTWOOD — Tennessee Baptist Disaster Relief has issued a call for more chainsaw teams to respond to Oklahoma, according to Tennessee Baptist Convention state disaster relief director David Acres.

In addition, two chain saw teams with 37 volunteers responded Jan. 6-11 Oklahoma helping victims of recent dual ice storms in the Midwest.

The Tennessee teams worked in Tulsa, Okla., and the surrounding areas. They were: a 21-member team from Beech River Baptist Association, Leitchfield, Ky., who worked Jan. 5-11; and a 16-member team from Bradley County Baptist Association, Cleveland, who worked Jan. 6-11.

To volunteer for Oklahoma, contact Elizabeth Holmes, disaster relief off-site coordinator, at 1-800-558-2090 ext. 7926.

Southern Baptists respond to hunger needs in Kenya

NASHVILLE — Southern Baptists are responding to critical hunger needs in Kenya, where an estimated 250,000 people have been driven from their homes by violence that erupted after the controversial presidential elections of December's result.

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With each Bible passage he memorizes, DeLap initially focuses on the reference. He then adds other verses of the passage, continuing to repeat the reference before and after each repetition; gradually, he commits the full passage to memory phrase by phrase.

He reviews his recent memory verses every three to four weeks by rotating a few of the cards in his leather pouch each day. He has memorized hundreds of verses over the years.

"The more you say a verse and the more you review it, the more it becomes a part of you," he says. "It's soon before you start to call it your verse ... It feels like the verse belongs to you."

At his home in Franklin, DeLap has all the letters he has received from college students over the years that have embraced his call to memorize Scripture. The comments he has seen most frequently are "I've never felt so close to the Lord" and "I've never wanted to die as much as I do right now."

"They feel emotionally and spiritually close to God," DeLap, a member of Clear Creek Baptist Church, says. "When he was first challenged to memorize the Word in their lives, they start getting a confidence that they will have something to say," he says. "Whether consciously or unconsciously, they begin to share their witness for the Lord." They are increasingly sensitive to the Holy Spirit's activity "to help people see the way to get into the kingdom of God through the Word of God — by seeing the dimensions of their sinfulness, turning to Jesus for forgiveness, and inviting Him to dwell in your life now and forever.""When you read the Word, you can read the Word, and you can study the Word, and these are good," DeLap says, "but memorizing it is an added blessing and helps you not get from the other ways of putting the Word of God in your life."

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B&H leader Ken Stephens retires

Baptist Press

NASHVILLE — Ken Stephens, vice president of the B&H Publishing Group of LifeWay Christian Resources, retired Jan. 15 after 11 years with the organization.


"I've been privileged to serve in ministry with Thomas Nelson and B&H over the years," he said. "Without a doubt, B&H has been the better employer.

"B&H is a company that is putting the Kingdom of God first. As we said when we left the Southern Baptist Convention, we're going to put the Kingdom of God first here.

"It's been a privilege to be a part of the life of the organization, and it's been a privilege to serve the churches."

With B&H, Stephens served as president of the Baptist Press, a B&H publication, before becoming vice president of the Baptist Press and managing editor of the Baptist News and Southern Baptist Life. D
But are open to Christians

Unchurched Americans turned off by church, study shows

By Mark Kelly
LifeWay news office

NASHVILLE — A majority of unchurched Americans are turned off by the institutional church and don’t have a biblical understanding about God and Jesus, yet they believe Jesus makes a positive difference in a person’s life and would enjoy an honest discussion with a friend about spiritual matters.

Those are just a few of the findings from a new study of unchurched Americans conducted by LifeWay Research in partnership with the North American Mission Board’s Center for Missional Research. LifeWay Research is the research arm of LifeWay Christian Resources.

The results of the study, which polled 1,402 adults who had not attended a religious service at a church, synagogue, or mosque in the previous six months, are available at LifeWayResearch.com.

The findings have important implications for Christian churches and individuals who want to effectively reach unchurched people with the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ, said LifeWay Research director Ed Stetzer.

“A full 72 percent of the people interviewed said they think the church is full of hypocrites,” Stetzer said. “At the same time, however, 71 percent of the respondents said they believe Jesus ‘makes a positive difference in a person’s life’ and 78 percent said they would ‘be willing to listen’ to someone who wanted to share what they believe about Christianity.”

**Lack of understanding**

Many unchurched people don’t have a biblical understanding about God and Jesus, the survey found.

“While 72 percent of those surveyed said they believe God — a higher or supreme being — actually exists, only 48 percent agree there is only one God as described in the Bible, and 61 percent believe ‘the God of the Bible is not different from the gods or spiritual beings depicted by world religions such as Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, etc.,’” said Scott McConnell, associate director of LifeWay Research.

“At the same time, 66 percent of adults ages 18-29 agree that Jesus died and came back to life, compared to 54 percent of adults 30 years and older.”

It’s not surprising that people who don’t attend church don’t understand what the Bible teaches, McConnell added.

“If you aren’t going to church, you don’t have an opportunity to be informed about what the Bible teaches or what other faiths teach,” he said. “It’s not surprising then that unchurched people lump world religions all together and consider the gods described in them as being the same.”

The problem is compounded by a widespread notion of religious tolerance that says religious and spiritual truth is a matter of personal opinion, Stetzer said.

“We found a real openness to hearing about matters of faith, but the study also clearly documents what I call the Oprah-ization of American Christianity,” he said. “It’s very much a generi­ cally big guy in the sky view of God and a ‘you believe what you believe’ viewpoint on theology. People say, ‘Who am I to judge?’

“We have seen this in the current political campaigns, in regard to Mormonism,” Stetzer added.

“Recently a Christian leader was asked whether Mormons are Christians, and he replied that no, Mormons are outside the standard definition of what an orthodox Christian is. The host was shocked somebody would say that. How dare we say someone else is or is not a Christian? We have seen this in the current political campaigns, in regard to Mormonism,” Stetzer added.

“Christians begin with a faith system that teaches who God is, but the people in our culture not only don’t believe that, but often consider us intolerant because we dare to believe it,” he said.

**Tripping over the church**

The negative perception for many people, however, seems to be the church, not Jesus himself, according to the study.

While 64 percent of the respondents think “the Christian religion is a relevant and viable religion for today,” 71 percent think Christianity is “more about organized religion than about loving God and loving people.” Seventy-two percent said they think the church is full of hypocrites, people who criticize others for doing the same things they do themselves, and 86 percent believe they “can have a good relationship with God without being involved in church.”

The belief that church attendance isn’t necessary for spiritual well-being is just as common among adults who grew up in church as it is among those who attended church less often as children, McConnell said.

Unchurched people do not understand the difference between having a relationship with God and being with other believers in church,” he said. “In the Christian faith, these are inseparable. Jesus’ last prayer before being arrested, as recorded in John 17, was that everyone who believes in Him would be unified and work together to let the world know that God loves them and sent Jesus.

“People on the outside see the church as candles, pews, and flowers, rather than people living out their love for God by loving others,” he added. “Such skepticism can only be overcome by churches and believers who demonstrate the unity and love for which Jesus prayed.”

Stetzer explained, “There will always be the stumbling block of the cross. Yet our study shows that many are tripping over the church before they hear the message of the cross.”

**Open to friends**

Despite their negative opinions about the institutional church, most unchurched people are open to discussing spiritual matters with a friend. The research showed:

- 78 percent of those surveyed said they would be willing to listen to someone who wanted to talk about their Christian beliefs.
- The number rose to 89 percent among adults 18-29 years of age.
- Only 28 percent of adults 30 years and older said they think Christians they know talk to them too much about their beliefs.
- 78 percent of adults 30 years and older said they would enjoy an honest conversation with a friend about religious and spiritual beliefs, even if they disagreed with the friend.

Although the unchurched have a confused view of God and a negative view of the church, they are overwhelm­ ingly open to someone sharing about their Christian faith,” Stetzer said. “We think religion is a topic that is off-limits in polite conversation, but unchurched people say they would enjoy conversations about spiritual matters.”

**Roadblock: Challenge**

Stetzer added that, “Increasingly, the God Americans believe in looks less like the God described in the Bible. They are a long way from where people were 100 years ago, when there was more of a consensus about who God is. That is a rebuke to us as Christians and, at the same time, a challenge. What is it about the faith we live that causes them to turn away from it?”

One of the most important insights of the study is that the vast majority of unchurched people are not only open to spiritual conversations but already know someone who is a Christian, McConnell said.

“Eighty-nine percent of these unchurched people say they have close friends who are Christians,” he said. “We don’t have to search for the unchurched folks around us; we actually know them. It’s really a matter of starting conversations about spiritual matters with the unchurched people we know.

“Although we may not have the home-field advantage we have, people are open to spiritual conversations, open to hearing about a genuine faith, and God is still at work, using us to help others share the Good News in an increasingly confused world,” McConnell said.

“That should propel us to action and help us move beyond fear to share our faith.”

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**The Fellowship of Tennessee Baptist Evangelists**

Larry Gilmore, State Director of Evangelism
Keith Cook, President, Springfield
Gary Buck, music coordinator, Nashville
Jeffrey Harvel, President Elect
Henry Linginfelter, Alcoa
Richard Hamlet, Cordova

2008 Evangelists Conference

When: Jan. 21, 9:45 a.m. - noon
Where: First Baptist Church, Hendersonville, 106 Bluegrass Commons Blvd., Hendersonville

Come and hear great preaching from Jeff Harvel, Henry Linginfelter, and Richard Hamlet. We also will have outstanding music from our music evangelists. Everyone is invited to attend the sessions at First Baptist Church, Hendersonville.

For more information, contact Fellowship president Keith Cook at (615) 299-0222.
Former C-N star now lives out Christian faith in the NFL

By Mark Brown
Carson-Newman news office

JEFFERSON CITY — Former Carson-Newman College tight end Leonard Weaver headed for Green Bay last weekend hoping to help his Seattle Seahawks move one step closer to the NFC Championship game and then on to the Super Bowl.

Though his team lost to Green Bay on Saturday, Weaver had some significant milestones during the past NFL season.

Three seasons after Seattle signed him as an undrafted free agent, the Melbourne, Fla., product accounted for his first regular season touchdown and added to it with a 17-yard scoring dash in the club’s wildcard victory over the Washington Redskins.

Having been converted to a fullback behind Mack Strong, Weaver moved to the first spot in the depth chart when Strong retired following a vertebral injury earlier this season.

“I have the utmost confidence in Leonard Weaver (taking over at fullback),” Strong, a 16-year veteran wrote on his Seahawks blog after his retirement. “I think he’s going to make people forget about Mack Strong around here. He’s going to have that type of impact. He has that type of ability and that type of talent.”

Seattle’s most effective (per-carry) runner this year, “Weav,” as he is called by former and current teammates, lined up as the sole back in a four-receiver formation. While Washington and commentators thought that meant pass, quarterback Matt Hasselbeck gave the handoff to Weaver on a draw. He went over the right tackle and scampered 17 yards toward his first playoff score. The result was an early 7-0 Seattle lead.

While Washington gave Seahawks’ fans a scare by taking a 14-13 lead early in the last quarter, Seattle’s defense turned the tide in their favor. The final 35-14 score sends Weaver and teammates to Lambeau Field and a chance for the conference title game on Sunday.

While he is beginning to make an impact on the field, teammates say he has already had a significant impact on their lives.

“She’s just a great guy to be around,” noted Strong on the blog (The Strong Report). “There are similarities — being undrafted, in our faith, us spending a lot of time just studying the Bible together and talking about spiritual things. Those have all been things that have helped us become closer as friends. He sings a lot better than me. My wife can vouch for that.”

C-N teammates attest that while he has a new role in the NFL, Weaver’s lived-out faith has been consistent.

“My favorite memory of Leonard is his spirit,” affirmed Chase Fleming, who, as part of a group of Eagle alumni, attended the Seahawks’ last regular season game in Atlanta. “Leonard lives and displays on a daily basis what Carson-Newman is all about. Whether it is giving his time for others, singing at a church, or helping friends to improve their walk with Christ, Leonard does all of these things. He truly lives his life full speed.”

Another former Eagle in attendance for the December 30 Falcons game, Dusty Phillips, remembered a night in Newport when Weaver met his mechanical match.

“Leonard and I had been asked to speak at a FCA rally at Cocke County High School,” noted Phillips, who lives in the Tri-Cities area. “We arrived, listened to the band, and just generally took in the scenery for a few minutes before it was our time to speak. I went first, naturally, because I am good for about 15 minutes, tops.”

“As Weaver spoke I listened and began to realize some of the things he had been through to be where he is,” continued the high school teacher and coach. “I had never heard his testimony so it gave me a new appreciation for the man Leonard had fought to become.”

After the rally, the pair stayed for an FCA-sponsored fair.

That will forever be the night that I remember introducing Leonard Weaver to the mechanical bull. Even in all his athletic grandeur, (he) could not conquer the bull. I said that night as proof that I was more athletically inclined than him for a long time. No matter if he outran or out jumped me, I always had the bull to fall back on.

“My appreciation of Leonard’s athletic ability pales in comparison to my respect for him as a Christian,” Phillips concluded.

Weaver attributes faith in Christ as the key factor in his development, as a person, a husband and father, and as professional football player. He says the game has provided him life lessons that dovetail with his devotion.

“Football teaches a lot about faith, especially with me,” he said in the Seahawks’ locker room following a defeat in Atlanta. “There are hardships and hard times, but, if you continue to keep your head up and keep your confidence, good things will happen later on.”

Called “Bishop” by his teammates for his Christian commitment, Weaver says he is thrilled to be a part of what he calls “a big faith community” with fellow Seahawks.

“We pray together before every practice and after each game,” he smiled. “And there are a core group of guys, and we hit Bible study every week. Ultimately, it’s all about accountability to one another.”

When most people think Seattle is about as far away as one can get from Atlanta and Miami, Weaver says recent unexpected numbers from those cities has rippled throughout the Seattle community. The murder of Washington’s Sean Taylor who lived in Miami and Atlanta’s Michael Vick’s admission of guilt to dog fighting charges — as well as his imprisonment — have rattled the professional ranks.

“Those have had a big affect,” said Weaver. “They are just like brothers. You know, half of the guys in the NFL have either played together or against each other. So something like these things happen and it’s hard. But we have to move on, so we pray, try to send them blessings, and we move forward.”

He said he has also learned something about his spiritual growth in the wake of success on the field.

“After a big play you cannot really get caught up in the moment because nothing’s final. You just have to continue to play your hardest.”
Needed: revival in congregational singing

words from the Word
By Johnnie C. Godwin

When I was just a boy growing up in Midland, Texas, our First Baptist Church was starting a revival. After the evening service, my truck-driving dad offered his opinion of the singer as we drove home: "That old guy can't sing very well, but he can get more singing out of a crowd than anyone I ever saw."

The old guy was B. B. McKinney; and without my judging his singing ability, I would agree that Dad nailed it on. Though B. B. McKinney was one of a kind, we need one like him in every church to get the best singing out of the crowd.

Oh, I know Baylus Benjamin McKinney was the author of the words and music of 149 gospel hymns and songs. I know he composed the music for another 114 texts by other authors. I know he arranged more than 100 works. But his "Wherever He Leads I'll Go" has led me to go where angels fear to tread and fools enter in: namely, into the worship wars of music. However, I enter the subject area on behalf of the Prince of Peace and with positive motivations. A word about the worship wars of music

When I hold a garage sale to move on much of my religious books to church staff members and libraries, I study the yellow pages before I sent out personal invites to area churches. The yellow pages revealed that most churches were up-front about advertising that their music was (1) traditional, (2) contemporary, or (3) blended — besides other differences. Most of the churches claimed to be conservative, so style of music stood out more than the theology did. I wasn't biased, so I sent all of them the same letter of invitation and moved on a lot of unused books to be a better steward of them.

Given that context, you might think I'm ready to wade into the worship wars of music and take a side. Wrong. I'm sensitive to the reality of what one pastor of a large church said about its young minister of music's efforts to lead our church in worship through music. In essence, the pastor said, "We've got four generations under one roof, and our minister of music tries his best to bring all of us to the throne of grace in one blended service — despite the fact that some kick and scream all the way." We've got enough critics.

So let's accept William J. Reynolds' statement, "Southern Baptists have always been a singing people with great diversity in our music" (from Baptist History and Heritage). Then let's agree that our congregational singing isn't nearly as good as it ought to be and could be. This categorical statement is rare in my writing, but it's true. As someone said, "You don't have to be sick to get better." That fact applies to the need for revival in congregational singing.

A word of context about this author and music

I'm not a musician or the son of one, but I love music of all kinds — well, almost all kinds. When I was waiting in a customs line in a New Zealand airport, I turned around and noticed the guy behind me had a smile as big as a laugh on his face. So I asked, "What's so funny?" He replied in his UK accent, "Usually, you don't hear people whistling classical music in a customs line." Since my whistling is like Muzak to me, I asked him what I had whistled. He replied, "Beethoven's 'Hymn to Joy.'" But I also whistle Neil Diamond and Willie Nelson stuff and wore out my CD on "Oh, Brother, Where Art Thou?" I took five years of mother-foresd-piano lessons, but I can't play Chopsticks. Nevertheless, I am a music participator. I can carry a tune and even let it out. My first unpaid church position came when I led congregational music after I had an arm-waving course under Evell Porter at Baylor. The little chapel didn't have anyone but the pastor announce hymn numbers; and he had never heard of a preparatory beat. So I volunteered for the job.

Now, I'm basically a preacher type; but I always participate in the worship music — even if I have to whisper it when I suffer bouts of laryngitis. Someone said, "There's nothing worse than a singing preacher but a preaching singer." I understand the role of each worship team member; but I also understand that the Bible supports every­member participation in psalms that praise God.

A word about the need for revival in congregational singing

Yogi Berra said, "You can observe a lot by watching." That's why I have trouble feeling we need a revival in congregational singing. I've traveled over a lot of the world and been on both sides of the pulpit in life-changing worship services. Although there are some strong, singing churches, I've observed a serious decline in congregational singing as a whole.

When we're asked to stand and sing, I make it a point to look all around the church and see whose lips are moving and whose aren't. For all the world, it looks to me like we've got a bunch of standing zombies who both don't get it and aren't a part of it in congregational singing. Admittedly, there are exceptions who sing, pat a foot, and sway a bit sometimes. I have observed recently that something is missing big-time in most of the congregational singing. We've become too much spectator-oriented of performance-based music rather than participat­ing with heart and soul along with those who lead.

A word about what's next

In seminary mission classes, former Tennessean Cal Guy began each class with a pumped fist and a mighty lead in singing, "Oh, Zion Haste!" And if we didn't share his mighty leadership with our own voices, he stopped and made us start over. The world is lost, but praise God, there is a Savior! We've got much to sing about, and I want to say more about the singing next time.

Reflections

By Lonnie Wilkey, editor

An important year awaits

I don't know about you, but I am already tired of the political campaigns and it is only January. We have already fielded six candidates before the presidential election in November. That tells me one thing: The campaign battles and rhetorics of the current year are as bad as the two primary parties pare their potential candidates down to one. I have listened to some of the debates. It is amazing how political candidates, regardless of party, can give a five-minute answer and not even come close to the question that was asked. I am also tired of candidates, again, regardless of party, who tell me how bad their oppo­nents are and why they are not qualified to serve as presi­dent of the United States. It would be nice if candidates quit focusing on the elections and would instead focus on their own qualifications.

Tell me what you can do for your country, not what your opponent won't do. Tell me what the key issues are and what you will work on if elected to do these address those issues.

We live in a divided nation. A good president must be an individual who can build consensus among leaders with diverse and often opposing views to do what is best for the country. I am partial, but I believe a good president needs to have a Christian-based faith, regardless of denomination. Many will disagree, and my religion must be kept out of politics. I agree with that up to a point. But keep in mind that a leader makes decisions based on his personal life experiences and one's faith is an important ele­ment of those experiences.

Richard Land of the SBC Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission recently told a news reporter that he would not reject a Muslim candidate for office because of his radical Islamic faith. Instead he would reject the candidate because of "how his faith impacts his character, con­science, life, and public policy positions." It is hard to separate one's faith from the office he or she seeks to hold.

As Christians we need to do "due diligence" and take our right to vote seriously. Even though we can be faithful, I listen to the speeches and sort through the rhetoric and determine who you think will be the best person (regardless of party) to lead our na­tion for the next four, and pos­sibly eight, years. Most of all, pray for God's wisdom in this election year. We need His hand upon us.
Prayer Matters

How do you make an impact on church youth through prayer?

If the youth group at your church is similar to the make up of most youth groups in Tennessee, about half of the teens in your group attend without their parents. This is true especially on Wednesday nights in Tennessee churches across our state. I'm concerned about this growing trend. Are you?

Realizing that the church often becomes the primary discipler and spiritual mentor to these students, I want to ask you to examine your ministry impact with the teenagers God has given your church.

In this new year, I want to ask you first to examine the Prayer Impact that your church has with teenagers. Most parents and church leaders say they pray for their teenagers.

But deep down I really wonder what that means. Do we intentionally pray for our teenagers? Do we pray Scripture over their lives each day? Do we as youth workers, church leaders, and parents know the real needs in the lives of our students?

I asked my 17-year-old son how important prayer support had been to him the past several years. He told me that genuine prayer support has meant more to him as a teenager than any conference, camp, youth retreat, or youth event that he has experienced as a teen.

Wake up church! I wonder, how many of us are focusing on the minors when God desires we reconnect with Him and His ways of Christ-honoring ministry?

What if this year we decided as churches to pray for our teenagers? I'm talking about genuine sincere intentional prayer. Don't worry, I'm not asking you to pray for every teenager in Tennessee.

Perhaps, we should start with the teens God has given to us in our churches. Are you ready to pray? Prayer warriors, please help in casting this vision to your church.

Included below is the contact information for members of your state missionary staff that are available to help you and your church on any area related to a youth prayer partnership.

Kent Shingleton, Youth Evangelism............. (615) 371-2077
Don Pierson, Youth Prayer........................(615) 371-7909
Bruce Edwards, Youth Ministry...............(615) 371-2094

Pray for Your Children

By Don Pierson

I have kept a journal since my children were small. At times I wondered why I bothered to do so. At special times, it became helpful to share my burdens and prayers with my children.

I can't remember the first time that I shared one with them, but I do remember some of the most pivotal moments. One was while we were still in Belize; my children were preparing to return to the states for college. It would be their first time away from us, and it was an emotional time for all of us. My wife and I called our children together, and we read excerpts from our journals to them. Prayers we had prayed for them as they were growing up, our fears, and emotional struggles now; and then we laid our hands on them and sent them off with a prayer of blessing.

I also had the opportunity to conduct both of their weddings. I seized the moment to read the prayers that I had prayed for them while they struggled with coming to Christ, while they dated, while they struggled with new found freedoms in the United States, and even the prayers that I had prayed for their new spouse. Once again my wife and I came near to them, laid our hands on them, and invited the congregation to join us in doing the same. We prayed a blessing over the new couple.

Now each Christmas we gather and journals are read. We each share our one prayer need for the year. We lay hands on one another and pray prayers of blessings for one another. Throughout the year, we keep in touch with what God is doing concerning our prayer needs and find our prayers being adjusted and answered as we go.

How to Pray for Your Children

The next Christmas we praise, and we pray again. My grandchildren are approaching the age where they will soon be able to join our circle of prayer. They will discover at that time that their parents have been praying for them for a long time. They will know that their grandparents laid their hands on them when they were born and prayers of blessings were prayed over them.

Many of our youth who worship in our churches, both those whose parents attend with them and those who do not, have rarely been prayed over as students. They have heard prayers of blessings over meals and in their churches, but many have been robbed of the praying hands from their parents and others.

I have many a testimony of how someone was saved, because of the memory of their mother praying for them. My story is how the prayers of my grandparents were used as instruments of God to bring me to Him.

I would ask you not to just pray for your children, but that you would pray prayers of blessings over your children, for your children, and with your children. Think beyond the blessings of your meals, but do as the fathers and mothers did before us. Bless your children.
3 Ideas to Get a Prayer Ministry to Teenagers Started

By Kent Shingleton

Senior adult and youth prayer partners - Help your students host a Sunday morning breakfast honoring senior adults. At the breakfast, have student information prayer cards available then invite senior adults to participate by taking one of the information cards. The card should include a photo of the student, their name, contact information, information about their school and family, and some unique details about activities or hobbies. Make sure to lead out in a time at the end of the breakfast where the students personally meet their prayer partners. Then lead the adults and students to begin this partnership by verbally one-on-one praying for each other that morning before dismissing from the breakfast.

Wednesday night prayer meeting for youth and adults together - Once a month adjust your Wednesday schedule so that all youth and adults are together for prayer meeting. Involving key students alongside the pastor in the planning and leadership for this prayer time. Make sure that a part of the prayer meeting directs adults to partner with teenagers so that adults may personally and verbally pray over and lay hands over teenagers. Then make sure to give teenagers the opportunity to pray over the adults participating in the prayer meeting. You may want to consider adding a time into this service specifically praying over youth leaders and volunteer youth workers.

Adopt a youth - Ask active families in your church to consider reaching out to "adopt" teenagers in your church who attend alone without their families. The beginning of this relationship could be initiated by the host family inviting the adopted teenager to Sunday lunch after church. During that lunch, take time as a family to learn as much as you can about your adopted teen. After lunch, surround the teenager and ask each person in the family to pray over the adopted student. Try to meet at least once a month together as a family with your adopted teen for focused prayer, fellowship, and encouragement.

One final thought is I am so blessed to have a mom who is a daily prayer warrior. I know without doubt she has prayed for me daily since the day I was born.

When a Shout-Out Becomes a Prayer-Cry

By Steve Gervasi

What began as a 700 mile shout-out for a generation is now three years later becoming a prayer movement in the making.

I'll never forget the afternoon in mid-November 2004 when I approached my 18-year-old son, Justyn with an idea. "Ride a bicycle with me from Flint, Mich. to Columbia, Tenn."

"When?" he said.

"Well, son, all I can say is, 'We'll be home for Christmas! We're going to ride our bikes 700 miles in the winter as a shout-out for the younger generation.'"

In typical wild-man fashion, Justyn responded, "I'm there, Dad. Count me in."

Fewer than three weeks later, we were packed and headed to Flint, my boyhood home, where our ride would commence. However, a week earlier I had decided to dedicate our 700 mile shout to a 16-year-old from our church named Emilye. Emilye was in a drug rehab at the time, and to me she was symbolic of an entire generation of kids "at risk."

Emilye's mom, Bobbye, worked in our church office. One day I stopped by to see her. "Bobbye, I'd like to dedicate our 700 mile shout to Emilye, and everywhere we go I want to ask people to pray for her."

Bobbye was nearly moved to tears. She quickly handed me the picture of Emilye sitting on her desk and said, "Here, you're going to need this."

From that moment on I carried Emilye's picture with me everywhere we went. Anywhere and everywhere from Michigan to Tennessee, we shared Emilye's story asking people to pray for her.

When they interviewed us on the American Broadcasting Company affiliate in Flint, we showed them the picture of Emilye. We stopped at places all along our route, passed out flyers, and told Emilye's story. We went forward at the altar call in churches and asked the people to pray for her.

We rode our bikes into Cincinnati, Ohio, to the ABC news affiliate, put our bikes on the elevator and rolled them into the studio for a live interview. The camera zoomed in on Emilye's picture, and once again we shared her story. There must have been hundreds of shouts going up on Emilye's behalf.

Justyn and I completed our journey pedaling into Columbia's town square on Christmas Eve 2004 at 4:30 p.m., and nothing has been the same since that ride. For the past three years, I have been traveling from church to church recruiting adults to pray for students and to actually adopt one of the students in their church family for whom they will lift a prayer shout every day.

And like the shout that brought the walls of Jericho down hundreds of years ago, the shout of "prayer mentors" is beginning to bring the walls of a Jericho culture down in the lives of the kids for whom they pray.

To learn more about how you can bring the Shout Prayer Mentor Initiative to your church, or to order a copy of Steve's book, Shout's Prayer Dare, which tells the full story, visit www.shoutpmi.org.

(Gervasi is a prayer network coordinator in southern Middle Tennessee.)
Decline noted among under-40 attendees at SBC meetings

Baptist Press

NASHVILLE — A new study of attendance at Southern Baptist Convention annual meetings shows the percentage of messengers in the 18-39 age group steadily declining since 1980 — the early days of the SBC’s Conservative Resurgence and dropping sharply since 2004. The percentage of messengers in the 60-plus age group, however, has increased dramatically.

Conducted by LifeWay Research, the study analyzed messenger registration survey data for every annual meeting since 1980 for three major age groups: 18-39, 40-59, and 60-plus.

The findings include:

- Messengers ages 18-39 represented 33.6 percent of the total in 1980, but dropped to 13.1 percent by 2007.
- The 40-59 group stayed fairly constant: 49.9 percent in 1980, compared to 51.6 percent in 2007.
- Registrants age 60 and above accounted for 12.9 percent of the messengers in 1980, but 35.4 percent in 2007.

“This sample represents all messengers, and historically 40 percent of the messengers have been senior pastors,” said Ed Stetzer, director of LifeWay Research. “The percentage of messengers at the annual meeting has remained relatively constant, but the age of attendees has risen dramatically.”

“Simply put, the proportion of those under 40 attending the SBC is declining precipitously — down by more than 50 percent since the beginning of the conservative resurgence.”

The study was prompted by anecdotal evidence, said Scott McConnell, associate director of LifeWay Research. “We heard a lot of people make comments like, ‘It looks like the attendees at the Southern Baptist Convention are getting older,’” he said.

Response rates to the convention’s messenger survey vary from year to year, “but the methodology was pretty consistent,” McConnell said. “Many of the questions have remained the same, so there are some pretty good comparisons you can do through the years.”

The highest year for 18-39 attendance was 35.9 percent at the 1985 meeting in Dallas, followed closely by 35.8 percent the next year in Atlanta, according to the data. By the 1992 meeting in Indianapolis, however, participation in that age group had dropped to 27.4 percent, and the slide continued with few exceptions until the 2005 meeting in Nashville, when it fell to 16.1 percent.

The 60-plus group, on the other hand, did not consistently begin to break the 20 percent mark until the 1990 meeting in New Orleans (21.6 percent) and jumped sharply for the 2005 meeting, from 17.6 percent the year before at Indianapolis to 31.1 percent in Nashville.

“Obviously, some of the fluctuation year to year can be attributed to the city in which the meeting is being held — the travel involved, the expense of traveling, the appeal of a particular city,” McConnell said. “But even as you compare meetings in the same city on different years, you still see a clear decline [in younger attendees].”

“For example, the 1991 and 1995 meetings both were held in Atlanta, which tends to be one of the better locations for young adults because of its convenience in the Southeast. The 18-39 age group accounted for 30.6 percent of the messengers in 1991, but only 24.8 percent in 1995. While Dallas attracted 35.9 percent of young adult messengers in 1985, this dropped to 24.6 percent in 1997.

“This is a clear decline over time,” McConnell said. “The other two age groups are both increasing, and 60-plus is increasing more markedly. The natural trend is the aging of the attendees at the Southern Baptist Convention.”

“Oddly enough, in some quarters of the church, there has actually been debate about whether the SBC attendance is aging and losing its young leaders,” Stetzer said. “Of course, facts don’t convince everyone. My hope is that now finally, we will stop debating and instead ask the hard question: What is causing so many young leaders to stay away?”

November 15, 2007

Hampton County Emergency Services
703 2nd Street West
Hampton, South Carolina 29924

Re: Recognition of extraordinary service by Hampton County Fire Department

Dear Fire Chiefs & Fireman of Hampton County:

Southern Mutual Church Insurance Company was founded in 1928 to serve rural Baptist churches that could not find or afford insurance. Our original mission was to serve churches and always do the right thing. Today we still hold true to those core values and now serve over 7,300 churches of all denominations and sizes in South Carolina, North Carolina, Georgia and Tennessee. We have served the insurance needs of Sandy Run Baptist Church for over 45 years. They have trusted us for many years, and we will stand by them in this time of need. We are also proud to serve many other churches in Hampton and surrounding counties.

On Sunday, November 4th, Pastor Reid awoke to a loud crash and was shocked to see the church in flames with the steeple collapsing. He quickly responded and contacted emergency services. Within minutes Hampton County Emergency Services responded with back up by other neighboring emergency service providers. Frankly, upon visiting the site on Monday, November 5th, I was shocked to see the fellowship building standing with minor damage. Based on the proximity of the fellowship building to the sanctuary, it is obvious superior organization and skills were required to contain a fire of this magnitude. The citizens of Hampton County are blessed to have the level of service provided by Hampton County Emergency Services. Sandy Run Baptist Church gives testament to this by having the ability to continue church services in the fellowship building.

On behalf of Robert Bedell, President, and all the staff of Southern Mutual Church Insurance we are pleased to present the enclosed check for $1,000 to Hampton County Emergency Services to be used at their discretion. It is given with sincere gratitude for extraordinary service.

Sincerely,

Rob Bates, CRM, CIC, AIS
Executive Vice President
cc: Robert Bedell, President
Sandy Run Baptist Church

South Carolina, North Carolina, Georgia and Tennessee

Lincoln Park Baptist Church
is now accepting applications for pastor of this inner city church.
Resumes, personal statements, and references should be mailed to Pastor Search Committee, 830 Chilacamauga Ave., Knoxville, TN 37917. Visit our website at LincolnParkChurch.org for information about our church and to apply online.

Clymersville Baptist Church in Rockwood, Tenn., is seeking God’s man to lead our congregations in a full-time pastorate position. Please send resumes to First Baptist Church, Attn: Pulpit Search Committee, 504 East Main Street, Henderson, TN 37340.

College Heights Baptist Church 2321 Illinois Ave., Eldorado, IL 62930 is in need of a full-time pastor. We need someone who is willing to go into the community to help the church build up again. Our strong point is a successful van ministry. Our urgent need is to reach ages 20 through 40. The contact person is Loren Wilson at the above address or e-mail for further information chbc2321@gmail.com.
DYER COUNTY — An F-1 tornado, which crossed the Tennessee River in a line of severe thunderstorms Jan. 8, roared through northern Lauderdale County, and crossed into southern Dyer County, destroying homes while damaging other homes and a church, according to Dyer Baptist Association, Dyersburg, director of missions Joe Wright.

"It seemed to touch down in five different rural areas while hopping on the ground," said Wright, who was immediately on site in the worst hit area near Williams Chapel Baptist Church, Halls, in northern Lauderdale County. "There were at least six homes destroyed around the area by the jumping tornado."

In fact, the home of Paul Hogue, pastor of Church Grove Baptist Church, Newbern, was one of the homes destroyed near Williams Chapel Baptist.

In addition to the pastor's home, there was shingle and tree damage to Williams Chapel Baptist, which is located around 100 yards from his home.

"Church Grove Baptist just joined the Dyer Association," added Wright. "The church is currently under the watch care of the association."

As soon as the damage was reported, the association began assessing the situation. By Tuesday night, the association al disaster relief leadership team was on-site.

Beginning at 6:30 a.m. Jan. 9, associational disaster relief teams were activated on the field including one chain saw team, two clean up teams, and a second assessment team.

"All church teams began with pitching in with food and clean up," Wright reported. "Wednesday was a work day. All homes that were damaged, but salvageable, received blue tarps. All trees that needed to be cut were removed immediately.

"The teams responded to five homes in different locations, which included three homes in the Williams Chapel Baptist area and two homes in other locations."

In the area around Williams Chapel Baptist, around six houses were destroyed and eight homes sustained damage, Wright reported. "We focused first on the homes of our church members, which involved two homes where we placed tarps, two homes that were destroyed, and one home where we removed a tree.

"The association will have an ongoing assessment of clean up for the community to find the opportunity to put more teams in the field. The actual associational disaster relief team has been devastated. Mission teams from the churches will be going out to help."

"Dyer Association had at least 100 volunteers working on Wednesday, which included people delivering food, cooking, checking on people, doing pickup, and clean up."

"Our churches in Dyer Association really turn out to help one another. The association is composed of 43 churches, who understand that an association is more a family of faith than a group of disjointed churches. Our association functions more like a family than it does a business. Our greatest bliss as you can tell is maybe our greatest problem is that sometimes we have too many volunteers."

This home belonging to Newbern pastor Paul Hogue was damaged by the tornado which struck Dyer County Jan. 8.
leaders

- Gene Fant Sr. recently celebrated the anniversary of his 50th year in the ministry. He was ordained on Dec. 15, 1957 at Harmony Baptist Church in Laurel, Miss. Fant served as pastor of churches in Mississippi, Tennessee, New York, Virginia, and California. He was the state president for New York Baptists in 1971. Fant has preached more than 120 revivals in 21 states. Since retirement, he has served several churches in Middle Tennessee as interim pastor and was president of the Nashville Baptist Ministers Association in 2006. He and his wife, Mona Faith, have two children, Steve and Gene Jr., who is dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Union University, Jackson.

- JoAnn Scaife has been named collegiate ministry specialist at Tennessee State University and Fisk University, both in Nashville. She has served as interim collegiate ministry specialist since last August. Scaife is originally from Fort Walton Beach, Fla. She is a graduate of Belmont University, Nashville. She previously has been employed in Christian publishing and multimedia production. She is a member of Grace Community Baptist Church, Brentwood.

- Jim West, pastor of Petros Baptist Church, Petros, recently returned from the United Kingdom where he was elected to membership in the Baptist Union of Great Britain.

**MINISTRY — STUDENT**

West Tenn. SBC seeking two youth ministers. Rural area with great growth potential. Currently at 189 membership, www.mfrbc.org. Please send resume to Middlefork Road Baptist Church, 3955 Middlefork Road, Laurel, TN 38352. Attn: Youth Committee.

- South Gate Baptist Church is accepting resumes for the position of student minister (part-time staff position). We are looking for a person (or married couple) who is outgoing, enthusiastic about ministry and possesses a solid theological foundation. Please mail resumes to Youth Minister Search Team, 3254 Murfreesboro Rd., Antioch, TN 37213 or e-mail at sgse01@bellsouth.net for full job description see www.southgatebaptistchurch.com.

**MINISTRY — COMBINATION**

Ministry - youth and recreation West Tenn. area. South Fulton Baptist Church is looking for a full-time youth and recreation minister, www.southfultonbaptist.org. Please send resume to South Fulton Baptist Church, 509 Forestdale Ave., South Fulton, TN 38257, Attn: Search Committee.

**MINISTRY — OTHER**

Wanted church planters in Iowa. Want to be on the frontlines of North American missions? Iowa needs church planters. For more information call the Baptist Convention of Iowa (615) 278-1566 or e-mail smurlock@bscibc.com.

- Edgefield Baptist Church is seeking an piano or keyboard player to assist in providing leadership for a blended worship style for Sunday morning and Wednesday evening services. Knowledge of worship music and hymns. Edgefield is located at 700 Russell St., Nashville, TN 37206. If interested please e-mail your resume to ecbcsb@bellsouth.net.

- **MINISTRY — DOM**

Cumberland Plateau Baptist Association is prayerfully seeking the one that God has called to the position of DOM for our association. Resumes are currently being accepted through Jan. 18. CPBA, DOM Search Committee, P. O. Box 2508, Crossville, TN 38557 or cpba1@frontiernet.net.
Helping children learn to love
By Carolyn Tomlin

One of the most important processes in child development is socialization. Simply stated, this is the process whereby individuals, especially children, become functioning members of a particular group and take on the values, behaviors, and beliefs of the group's other members.

Although the process begins shortly after birth and continues throughout a person's life, many of the behaviors that it affects become particularly apparent during childhood. Among these are parent-child, sibling, and child-teen interactions.

All children have the same basic needs: to be loved, to have shelter, to have food, and to have medical care. Added to these is education, friends, being safe. When these needs are met, children develop a sense of trust in their parents or caregivers.

Could the following suggestions help your child reach out to others and develop a healthy self-concept? Look at the ways socialization develops:

- Look for small ways to praise a young child. For example: give the child a choice between two items. As either one is OK with you, whatever the child chooses, praise the child for making that decision. This may be as simple as selecting clothing for school or choosing a game.

- To develop positive growth, a child can clean up a glass of spilt milk instead of being punished or scolded.

- Refrain from comparing siblings. Realize that each child is an individual and has special talents and interests. Find those characteristic traits unique to each child and offer positive feedback.

- Know and understand appropriate child development for each age. For example: a 10-year-old could walk down the street to play with a friend. You would never allow a toddler to do the same.

- Know your child's friends. Invite them to your home. Whether we agree or not, as children become teens, their peers often exert more pressure than parents.

- Keep the doors of conversation open to your child or youth. Let them know you are always ready to talk over concerns — even the smallest problems. A wise mother once said, "Children face the same problems as adults. Yet, they often have no one to share these issues."

- John Leonard said, "It takes a long time to grow an old friend." Teach children to make new friends, yet treasure the old ones. Offer families vacations together, sharing meals, and helping each other care pool children to various activities. Fortunately for these children, they are learning through role playing that families help each other and everyone is blessed. That's how friendships are made.

- The Book of Ecclesiastes says, "Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: if one falls down, his friend can help him up." Friends help each other. Friends know the need of others. Friends are God's way of taking care of His children.

As parents and grandparents, we have many opportunities to help our children and grandchildren form lasting bonds of friendship. They look to us for guidance. They watch as we live our lives. In so doing, we teach them about the important socially responsible individuals who will make the world a better place.

Tomlin is a freelance writer in Jackson where her husband, Matt, is pastor of Ward's Grove Baptist Church.

God wants us to value everyone
By Mike Dawson

Focal Passage: Genesis 1:27; 9:6; Matthew 21:22; 22:36-40; Mark 10:46-52

I like the old story about a Communist teacher who was attempting not to respect other persons. His school children into atheistic thinking. One pupil was showing resistance, so the teacher made him go to the blackboard and write 100 times, "God is nowhere." The youngster obediently wrote the words, but used some ingenious spacing; 100 times he wrote, "God is now here."

Since the LifeWay lesson plan is shifting from its Genesis studies to a timely sanctity of life lesson, I will use some "creative spacing" myself to help with this week's topic. This week's lesson title could be written this way: "God wants us to value everyone." It's not so much that "everyone" is important to God and should be honored by us, it's that "every one" is important to God and should be honored by us.

The selected Scriptures reveal to us the value every one, because:

1. Every one is designed as the creative work of God (Genesis 1:27; 9:6). "Sanctity of life" is not a special emphasis that's happened since the Whole. Sanctity of life began when the Lord God, as His crowning work of creation, made human beings in His own likeness. Although Christians should honor the whole environment as the creative work of God, no created life (whole, owl, or whatever) is passionately protected by the Lord like human life.

2. Every one is designed as more than a "living thing" by God (Matthew 5:21-22). These words of Jesus show that we should not just respect other persons, we should respect them as persons. Unprovoked anger or calling someone names could be the first steps toward thoughts of murder. At times an inconvenient pregnancy can create anger toward the little one; sometimes the baby is called "tissue," etc. Name-calling or anger could make it easier to take a baby's life!

Jesus clearly defines every one — that you'll call from babies inside the womb to the aged approaching the tomb — as deserving respect and honor.

3. Every one is "divined" by the Lord to be loved and honored (Matthew 22:30-40). In the Lord's grand statement, Jesus condenses all commandments into two basic rules: "Love God. Love people." No one has ever seen people in quite the light Jesus sees in the place as Jesus did. He calls us to love and honor everyone even as we do our own. The Bible tells us that all people are created "little lower than the angels" and are "crowned with glory and honor".

Sunday School Lesson

Explore the Bible

Jan. 20

(Psalms 85:8; God has truly divined everyone and every creature, not just to honor all (Psalm 2:17).

(4) Every one is declined until Christ makes us whole (Mark 10:46). A declined person is one who's been lowered or degraded. That describes all of us ever since the first one of us sinned. It certainly describes Bartimaeus who was blinded, got his treatment and the man to the other side. Friends help each other. Friends know the need of others. Friends are God's way of taking care of His children.

As parents and grandparents, we have many opportunities to help our children and grandchildren form lasting bonds of friendship. They look to us for guidance. They watch as we live our lives. In so doing, we teach them about the important socially responsible individuals who will make the world a better place. Tomlin is a freelance writer in Jackson where her husband, Matt, is pastor of Ward's Grove Baptist Church.

Bible teaching

Sunday School Lesson

Bible Studies for Life

Jan. 20
Deaths

* Ralph Duncan, 64, of Memphis, pastor of Audubon Park Baptist Church, Memphis, died Jan. 4. He previously served as superintendent of music and administrator of the church.

Duncan attended Southeast Missouri State University, and served as minister of music, First Baptist Church, Sikeston, Mo. After college, he served in the U.S. Navy. He later served as minister of music, Southland Baptist Church, Memphis, where he also was church administrator, youth pastor, and minister of education; and as minister of music and education, Cherokee Baptist Church, Memphis. For Mid-South Baptist Association, Memphis, he was director of family ministry for senior adults and president of the music council in 2000. He is survived by his godson, Andrew Shikes of Germantown; a sister, and a brother.

Leaders

* Walter Taylor, director of missions, Knox County Associ­ation of Baptists for 18 years, will retire April 30. He was vice-president of the Tennessee Baptist Convention in 2002 and a member of the TBC Commi­tees on Arrangements in 1985. Taylor previously was associate director of missions, Madison-Chester, Crockett Baptist associations, Jackson. He has also served as pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church, Tonne, and Mt. Tirah Baptist Church, Newbern, as associate pastor/minister of education of Ardmore Baptist Church, Memphis, and as associate pas­tor of West Jackson Baptist Church, Jackson. At Knox County Association, Taylor led the association in building a new new building for Montgomery Village Baptist Church, Knoxville, and a new associa­tion mission center. He started the Seminary Extension Cen­ter of associa­tion and served as a teacher. He is a graduate of Univer­sity, Jackson, South­ern Baptist Theological Semi­nary, Fort Worth, Texas, and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky. He is open to preaching opportuni­ties and is a certified Christian Leadership coach.

TAYLOR

* Pat Rough, retired pastor of Jackson, will move to Russellville, Ky., to be near his children Jan. 15. He served as pastor of churches in Tennessee from 1971-1999 and then served churches as interim pastor. He can be reached at (270) 726-1485.

* Lamar Moore was called as transitional interim pastor, First Baptist Church, Loretto, effective Dec. 16. He recently retired as pastor of Lookout Valley Baptist Church, Chattanooga, where he served for 18 years.

Churches

* Wallace Memorial Bap­tist Church, Knoxville, will celebrate the 100th anniver­sary of the birthday of its namesake William "Bill" L. Wallace on Jan. 20. Beginning with the morning worship serv­ice, there will be a presentation by the Holman Bible Founda­tion. Then in the afternoon at Greenwood Cemetery, Knox­ville, where Wallace is buried, there will be the dedication of a marker A native of Knoxville and a member of Broadway Baptist Church, Knoxville, Wallace, a surgeon, served as a medical missionary in South China. He served from 1936 until he was martyred in 1951.

* Central Baptist Church, Martin, will hold a special man's banquet Jan. 19 and a one-day revival Jan. 20. Morris Anderson, evangelist of Mary­ville, will speak.

FRED STEELMAN, interim pastor, First Baptist Church, Dunlap, and his wife, Becky, were honored on Dec. 30 toward the end of his service there. He served the church for 18 months. Steelman was pastor of Red Bank Baptist Church, Red Bank, in the Chattanooga area, where he served for 32 years.

Students of Tennessee Colleges pause at New Orleans (La.) Baptist Theological Seminary during a tour of the school. The students, associated with Baptist Collegiate Min­isters, did disaster relief work with First Baptist Church, Aven­dale, La.; Dec. 16-20. The students were from Dyersburg State Community College; the University of Memphis at Martin; the University of Memphis; and Union University, Jackson. They were assisted by a grant from Tennessee Baptist Convention Disaster Relief. The DSCC BCM has had a two-year relationship with the Avondale church which has resulted in four missions trips. The students are from, left back row, Brad Winters, UT-M; Sam Stephens, UT-M; Joshua Escue, DSCC; Chris White, DSCC; Lee Weaver, UM; Marc Daniels, pastor, First Baptist, Avondale; Zach Webb, UT-M; and Frankie Henry, DSCC; front row, Ericka Pen­nington, Union; Jonathan Cisco, UM; Lisa Sparks, UM; Alyssa Holland, UT-M; Chrystal Selph, UT-M; and Joseph Caldwell, UT-M. Not pictured is Stan Cavness, BCM director at DSCC, who led the team.

** TENNE SCENE **

First Baptist, New Tazewell, gives record LMCO Baptist and Reflector

NEW TAZEVELL.—First Baptist Church here has been without a senior pastor for more than a year. But that didn't stop its internal interim pastor, Gene Leamons, and Women's Missionary Union director, Rose Ann Clark, from leading the church to give a record offer­ing to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offer­ing for International Missions.

Last year the church gave $6,356 to the offering. This year the church gave $13,500 to the offering. All of this came about, reported Debbie Cheatham, church secretary, when in September Leamon asked Clark to pray about doubling the LMCO goal from last year. In 2007 the goal was $6,000.

Clark admitted she was shocked at first, said Cheatham, but then began to pray seriously about doing just that.

Both Leamon and Clark felt God was leading them to double the goal and to add one dollar, reported Cheatham. The church has an average of 110 in Sunday School, she added, which would mean each SS participant, including the stu­dents, preschoolers, and senior adults on fixed incomes, would need to give $109 to the LMCO.

Leamon and Clark brought the recom­mendation before the church and it was unanimously adopted.

During the month of December each Sunday morning worship service focused on missions, and included a Missions Moment. Then on Dec. 16 members partic­i­pated in a Missions March during which they delivered their LMCO to the altar. Then the members formed a large circle and the offering was dedicated.

A potluck dinner followed the service and during the dinner Leamon announced the total amount given — $13,500.

"First Baptist Church gives God the glory and encourages other small churches to pray about increasing their goals for missions giving," wrote Cheatham.

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** FANCHON WATT CRIDER of P oplar Grass Baptist Church, Trenton, pauses during a recog­nition of her on Dec. 2 by the church on her upcoming 100th birthday. Crider, who was a schoolteacher, has been a member of the church for 80 years. **

** STUDENTS OF TENNESSEE COLLEGES pause at New Orleans (La.) Baptist Theological Seminary during a tour of the school. The students, associated with Baptist Collegiate Min­isters, did disaster relief work with First Baptist Church, Aven­dale, La.; Dec. 16-20. The students were from Dyersburg State Community College; the University of Memphis at Martin; the University of Memphis; and Union University, Jackson. They were assisted by a grant from Tennessee Baptist Convention Disaster Relief. The DSCC BCM has had a two-year relationship with the Avondale church which has resulted in four missions trips. The students are from, left back row, Brad Winters, UT-M; Sam Stephens, UT-M; Joshua Escue, DSCC; Chris White, DSCC; Lee Weaver, UM; Marc Daniels, pastor, First Baptist, Avondale; Zach Webb, UT-M; and Frankie Henry, DSCC; front row, Ericka Pen­nington, Union; Jonathan Cisco, UM; Lisa Sparks, UM; Alyssa Holland, UT-M; Chrystal Selph, UT-M; and Joseph Caldwell, UT-M. Not pictured is Stan Cavness, BCM director at DSCC, who led the team. **