

AUGUST 1997

CONTACT

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
FREE WILL BAPTISTS

.....

The Perfect Pastor

.....

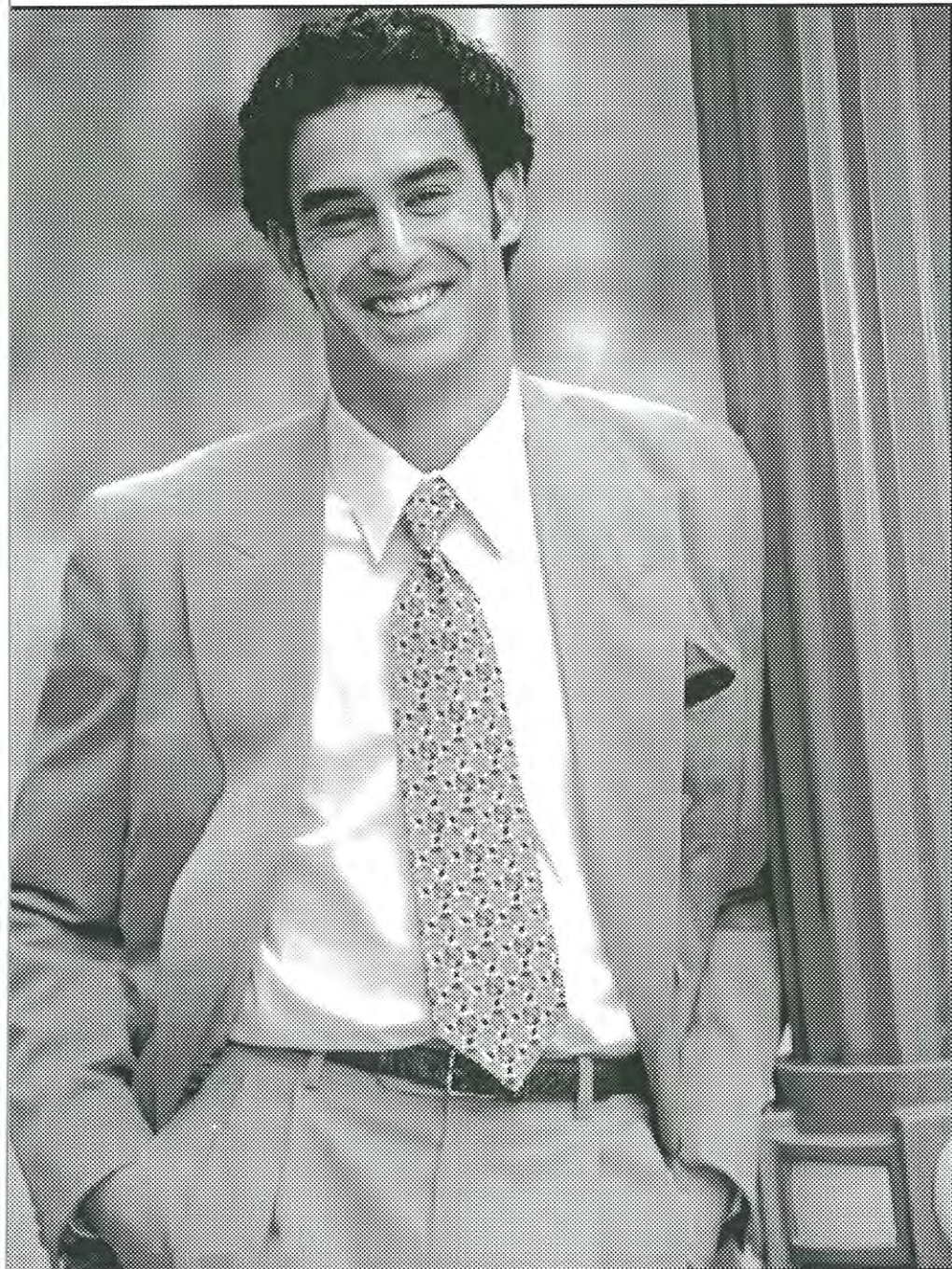
Take Care of Your Pastor

.....

How to Get Rid of Your Pastor

.....

The Toughest Job in Town



INSIDE

AUGUST 1997

VOLUME 44, NO. 8

ARTICLES

4 The Perfect Pastor

An Oklahoma minister explains the four qualities every preacher needs to be a "perfect" pastor.

6 Take Care of Your Pastor

Who takes care of the man who takes care of everybody else? Learn what your church can do to keep the pastor in good working order.

8 How to Get Rid of Your Pastor

A humorous report of an imaginary meeting concerning a not-so-amusing subject.

10 Why Isn't Our Church Growing?

Eight diseases can start or stop numerical growth in a church. See if your congregation has the symptoms.

12 Working the Soil

The parable of the sower revisited.

14 The Red Bear Goes to Church

Understanding the opportunity for ministry in Russia. The door is open . . . for now.

COLUMNS

3 The Secretary Speaks

A Parishioner's Perspective

24 The Department Pages

27 Especially for Young Preachers

Your Daily Bible Reading

28 Green Tree Bible Study

Thomas—the Twin

29 Top Shelf

31 Briefcase

The Toughest Job in Town

NEWS

18 Free Will Baptist Newsfront

Kansas State Association
West Virginia State Association
North Carolina State Association
Florida State Association
Idaho State Association
New Jersey District Association
Texas State Association
Ohio Church Turns 40
Reverend Tommy Day Dies
FWBBC Awards Johnson Scholarship

22 Currently

30 Religious Community News

Editor-in-chief: Dr. Melvin Worthington
Editor: Jack Williams
Editorial Assistant: Marilyn Pritchard
Circulation: Dari Goodfellow
Printed by: Randall House Publications

Contact (ISSN 0573-7796), published monthly by the National Association of Free Will Baptists, 5233 Mt. View

Road, Antioch, TN 37013-2306. Address all correspondence and subscriptions to Post Office Box 5002, Antioch, TN 37011-5002. Phone 615/731-6812.

Annual subscription rates: Individual—\$12 per year, Church Family Plan—\$12 per year, Church Bundle Plan—\$12 per year. Periodical post-

age paid at Antioch, TN and additional offices.

Copyright privileges, reserved © 1997. Member of the Evangelical Press Association. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to CONTACT, P. O. Box 5002, Antioch, TN 37011-5002.

USPS 130-660

A Parishioner's Perspective



Melvin Worthington

How is the pastor to be viewed? Has the perception of the pastoral role changed? How should the role and responsibility of the pastor be viewed by members of the congregation? Pastors often view themselves differently than their parishioners do.

I was converted in 1954 and ordained to preach in 1957. Following graduation from college in 1959, I pastored 20 years in five states. I viewed the pastor's role from a pastor's perspective. But that changed in 1979 when I became executive secretary for the National Association of Free Will Baptists. For 18 years I have viewed the pastoral role from a different perspective—that of a parishioner.

Embrace His Worth

The pastor is a special person gifted and called by God. He needs understanding and appreciation. Paul beseeches his readers to know those who labor among them (1 Thess. 5:12). He means that they were to get personally acquainted with them. We should not be distant or cold toward our pastor nor ignorant of his wants and needs.

Albert Barnes suggests, "While a people are not obtrusively to intermeddle with the business of a minister, there are things in regard to him with which they should be acquainted. They should make him their counselor in spiritual troubles. They should seek his friendship. They should not regard him as a distant man."

Embracing your pastor's worth as a person provides a strong foundation for his pastoral ministry to you.

Esteem His Work

Pastors have a unique role in the church and we should esteem them for their work. Paul notes this when

he says, "And to esteem them very highly for their work's sake . . ." (1 Thess. 5:13).

One task of the pastor is *labor*. A great part of this labor is preaching the gospel. Paul uses the word "labor" to convey the idea that preaching demands constant attention. Development as a preacher takes time. It is a formidable task and pastors must diligently devote themselves to it.

Another task of the pastor is *leader*. Not only are we to know those who labor among us, but we must remember that they are over us in the Lord. The pastor leads his congregation.

Paul notes this when he declares, "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord . . ." (1 Thess. 5:12). God has given to pastors the oversight of the congregations they serve.

Pastoral leadership should be respected. Members who respect their pastor serve as models for other Christians to imitate. Members who belittle and battle the pastor sow seeds that result in spiritual disappointment, discouragement and disaster.

The pastoral task includes that of *lecturer*. He preaches and teaches the whole counsel of God—the Word of God. Paul writes, "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you," (1 Thess. 5:12).

It is part of the minister's duty to put his people in mind of the truth, to warn them of danger, to exhort them to perform their duty, to admonish them if they go astray.

Emulate His Walk

The pastor sets the example for parishioners to emulate. Paul admonished readers to imitate him as he imitated Christ. He reminded Timothy that he was a pattern to be imitated.

Observe the pastor's manner of life—his holiness, honesty, humility and humanity. He serves as a model for the membership.

Encourage His Witness

The pastor has opportunities which are not readily available to others. We should encourage pastors to seize every opportunity to share and show the gospel. Provision should be made to set him free from routine matters in order that he might give himself fully to pastoral ministry.

As the leader he sets the example for witnessing and outreach. We should assume tasks that can be done by others and set the pastor free for prayer and the ministry of God's Word.

My perspective of the pastoral role, now that I am a parishioner, is different than when I served as a pastor. I want to always have the same appreciation, affection and admiration for my pastor that I believed was due me when I served as pastor.

While it is a privilege to serve as a pastor, it is also a privilege to be a parishioner. My prayer is that I will be a help and not a hindrance to my pastor, a contributor rather than a critic. ■

The Secretary's Schedule

August 1997

7/31-8/3 Mexico District Association
Monterrey, Mexico

6-7 Arkansas State Association
Conway, Arkansas

The Perfect Pastor

By Keith Burden



How do most churches rate their pastors? The perfect pastor—is he a Ph.D. or a high school dropout? Is he market-driven or a people pleaser? Is he married with kids or single? Is he denominationally active or an isolationist? Is he an executive who manages the program or an evangelist who beats the bushes?

You may be surprised to learn that he is all the above, depending on your perspective, of course. The fact of the matter is, in a denomination as diverse as Free Will Baptists, other than the Bible there is no absolute standard when it comes to rating or evaluating the man of God.

"Perfect" is a relative term. What one congregation considers perfect in their pastor might well be considered undesirable by another church. It all depends on a member's background or expectation level. Each church is different.

It is impossible to describe a pastor who would be considered perfect by every congregation's standard. There are, however, four characteristics that are universally desirable qualities when it comes to the leader of the flock of God.

Imperfect Person

First, the "perfect pastor" must be, ironically, imperfect. I am not advocating lowering the standard for the man of God. The Word of God is explicit when it comes to what the Lord expects of those who are His undershepherds (cf. I Timothy 3:1-7).

My point is simply this . . . there is a great need for transparency in the ministry today. Too often we preachers project an image that causes others to think we have no weaknesses or shortcomings. God forbid that we should ever appear to be anything less than a tower of strength.

Our people want to know that we are human too—clay pots! They need to see that we struggle with sin, make mistakes and sometimes fail. Unless we can be honest and open about these things with our people, we will never truly connect with

them and be effective communicators and role models.

Intimate With God

Second, the "perfect pastor" is a person who is intimate with God. There is a danger today of depending too heavily on our talents, training and technology. While all these things are important, by themselves they are not nearly enough.

Our preaching will be powerless and our ministry mediocre if we do not regularly retreat to that secret place where we can become intimate with God. The average church member is perceptive enough to discern whether or not we have been *in* the Word and *on* our knees.

Spiritual intimacy is the result of two disciplines: study and prayer. The apostles sensed this in Acts 6, and for that reason gave themselves almost exclusively to these tasks. There are no short-cuts when it comes to getting close to God.

In Touch With Family

Third, the "perfect pastor" is someone who is in touch with his

family. Aside from his personal relationship with God, this is, in my opinion, the pastor's most important role. Regardless of how successful he may be as a communicator or administrator, his greatest influence and effectiveness will be determined by how he does at home.

Churches desperately need to see their pastor loving, honoring and meeting the needs of his wife. They know his children occupy a high priority in his life when he takes the time to attend a parent/teacher conference, ball game or school concert. It is not necessary to sacrifice your family on the altar of ministry.

It is possible to be a good husband, father and pastor at the same time. In fact, the better husband and father a pastor is, the more effective he will be as a leader in the church.

Man of Integrity

Finally, the "perfect pastor" is a man of integrity. This is so obvious that I hesitate to mention it. And yet, we are reminded almost daily that there is an integrity crisis in the ministry today. Moral failures, fiscal irresponsibility, inappropriate behavior

and careless remarks by pastors have created a credibility gap between the pew and the pulpit.

Integrity is not something you *do*—it is something you *are*! It has to do with being honest . . . honest with God, ourselves and others. And that is what the average churchgoer is looking for in a pastor today—a man of integrity.

So how about your pastor? Is he perfect? Probably not. But neither are you. In light of that fact, I guess that makes the two of you a "perfect" match. ■



ABOUT THE WRITER: Reverend Keith Burden pastors First Free Will Baptist Church in Ada, Oklahoma.

How do you show your pastor that you appreciate him?

- Demand that he be perfect?
- Ignore *his* needs?
- Make his job more difficult?
- Stifle church growth?

*Why not find a pleasant, creative way
to express your appreciation to your pastor on*

*Pastor Appreciation Sunday
September 14, 1997*

Take Care of Your Pastor

By Edwin Hayes

H. Armstrong Roberts



Everywhere we turn today, we see people in need—physical need, emotional need and most importantly, spiritual need. People desperately need the service of our churches. Without the ministry of our local churches, what will happen to them? While it is our responsibility to care for them, sometimes their needs seem overwhelming. Providing care is very tiring work. All who become involved with the needs of people know this.

Usually, it is the pastor who shows the most care. He must be ready at a moment's notice to offer a patient ear,

an encouraging word or some compassionate counsel. It is expected of him—we want him there when we need him.

More often than not, however, his needs and the needs of his family are overlooked. They serve but are seldom served. They stand in silence as other's needs are met and their own neglected.

I am convinced that this is one reason we see so many pastors and their families discouraged. Many conflicts and problems in our churches can be traced back to these roots, and pastoral turnover is the end result.

What can be done about the problem? What can our churches do to help? We have a reciprocal responsibility to care for our pastor as well as he cares for us. There are several areas we can explore to offer better care for our pastors.

Areas of Care

The most important way we can care for our pastor is to assist him *spiritually*. We expect him to feed us weekly with biblical doctrine, wise counsel, stirring inspiration and timely encouragement. This is a mam-

moth task. He must be "up" spiritually each service in order to do this.

To perform this tremendous task, he needs the church's support. Pray for him daily. Understand that he must have time to prepare himself to minister. He needs to have sufficient time alone with God and His Word. Let's not expect Him to do most of the day-to-day ministering of the church.

As the apostles in Acts saw the need to delegate responsibilities to others, we can do the same. Guard your pastor's time. Allow him to attend retreats and conferences. These will build him up, encourage him and enable him to be a better pastor.

We must support our pastor and his family *emotionally*. The pastorate is emotionally draining on a pastor, his wife and children. There is much loneliness in the family of a leader. Sometimes they encounter difficulty fitting into their role in the church family. They must be careful not to become too close to certain families at the expense of others.

"After all, doesn't the pastor's family belong to everyone!" some would say. They must take care to not appear aloof. It is a difficult balance. This balancing act can create frustration and isolation for the pastor's family.

We can support them emotionally in several ways. First, take on the task of expressing encouraging words to the pastor and his family. Let them know they are appreciated.

Don't expect more from the pastor's children than you do from your own. Show interest in the sermons he preaches and when they speak to your needs, let him know. Many only speak to their pastor when they have a problem.

Second, we can cooperate with the pastor's plans for the church. I am not saying we should all be rubber stamps, but we can make every effort to support the total program of the church and the pastor. The Lord has given him some insights that we may not have. Trust him and support him.

Last, let your pastor and his family know that you are their friend and will stand with them. Have them in your home and take time for good fellowship with them at their convenience. Take them out to lunch. Remember their birthdays and anniversary. Allow them to befriend others

without being offended.

A pastor and his family are just like other families. They want to feel accepted. They need friendship. By providing this, your church will give an emotional boost to your pastor and his family.

Our pastors must be supported *financially*. This area is important in the pastor/church relationship. The scriptures teach that the pastor should be supported financially by those to whom he ministers. Consider these thoughts concerning our obligation.

Let's be fair to the pastor and his family in finances. His salary should be adequate to meet his family's needs and commensurate with what is expected of him. This includes regular review of the pastor's pay package.

Consider the benefits that others receive on their jobs such as retirement, social security, expense accounts, and health, life and disability insurance. Include these in the pastor's pay package. We should not expect him to sacrifice what we are unwilling to sacrifice.

If the church cannot afford a complete pay package, then they should be understanding of the pastor's limited time. We expect fairness from our employers; our churches should offer no less to our pastors.

Benefits of Care

There are several important benefits the church will enjoy by supplying adequate care and feeding for the pastor and his family.

The first benefit is a pastor who is *contented*. When he and his family are adequately supported spiritually, emotionally and financially, they will not be tempted with feelings of anger and bitterness toward the church. People who are happy where they are and with what they are doing are far more productive than those filled with resentment and hidden anger.

Second, the church will have a pastor who is *focused*. If he and his family are well cared for, the pastor can give more attention to the needs of the church. Just like a soldier who must give total concentration to his task, the pastor will be free to focus on his ministry. He will be more effective and less divided. The church will notice the difference!

Third, the church will set a good example to all of its membership in seeing that the ministry is *respected*. We will show that we value the ministry highly. Remember the "double honor" for the pastor mentioned in I Timothy 5:17? The church that cares for its pastor exhibits a true biblical concern for honoring the Lord's ministry.

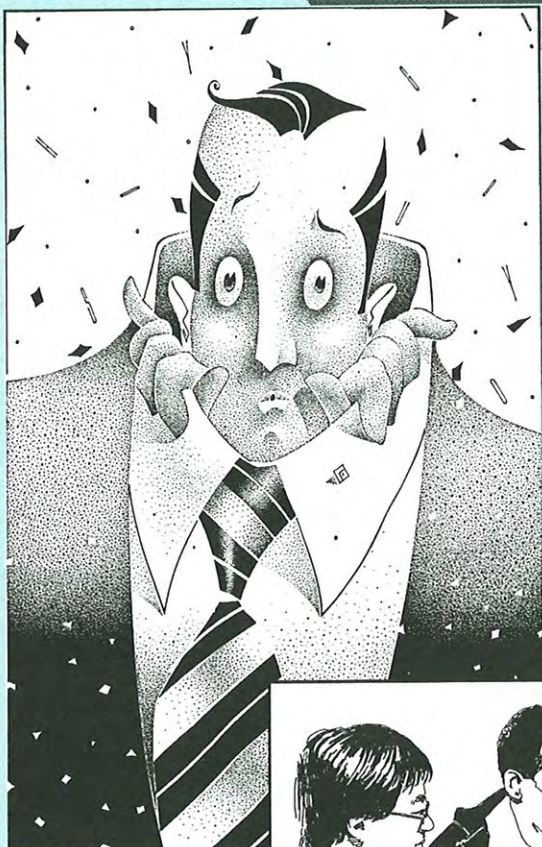
When the pastor's ministry is esteemed, his preaching, leadership and counsel are more effective. The church and pastor will enjoy a far more potent and long-term ministry.

The church that invests in providing spiritual, emotional and financial support for their pastor is building a relationship that will last. They are accepting their biblical responsibility. They will be heading off problems before they become emergencies. Their pastor and his family will live with contented hearts, serve with focused minds and minister in a respected place.

As the churches minister to our members, our community and our world, let us not forget to minister to the one who ministers himself—our pastor! ■



ABOUT THE WRITER: Reverend Edwin Hayes is executive secretary for the Ohio State Association of Free Will Baptists. He serves on the Sunday School and Church Training Board. He chaired the Steering Committee for the 1997 national convention.



How to Get Rid of Your Pastor

By Greg McAllister



The following is a transcript of a meeting that could have been held in an undisclosed location sometime last January. The names have been changed to—well, they've just been changed, that's all.

John: I guess you all know why I've called you here. It's January, and if we don't switch pastors soon, we'll have to pay for his vacation. On the other hand, if we time this just right, we can not only avoid the vacation expenses, but we can probably put off hiring a new pastor until next January and then we won't have to shell out for a Christmas present, either.

Donna: I'm warm. Is anyone else warm or is it just me?

John: Wyatt, check that heat, will you? Okay, does anybody have any new ideas, or do we just go with the same plan as always?

Wyatt: You can't argue with success.

John: Exactly. Well, then, who's going to plan the weekends off? Joe?

Joe: I thought we were going to have donuts.

John: They're coming. Get back on the subject. From Easter to July 4th, there's a holiday every two or three weeks; if we time it right, one-third of the congregation will be gone each holiday weekend, maybe half on Mother's Day. That really frustrated Brother Stone. He was completely freaked by

Memorial Day and gone by Labor Day.

Joe: I get the 4th of July this time.

Donna: No way! I've got a condo time-share that week!

John: Fine, I'll schedule the vacations. I've never heard such whining. Joe gets the Fourth...

Donna: What?

John: Don't worry, Donna, you get Mother's Day. You can go see Pete's mom.

Donna: Well, remind me to thank you for that.

Evelyn: (Just arriving) Here's the donuts.

Joe: Great! I'm starved!

Donna: Yeah, you're just wasting away.

Joe: Donna...

John: Stop picking at each other, and we'll get this over with.

Wyatt: A house divided against itself cannot stand.

John: Thanks, Wyatt. Okay, I'll get a vacation schedule out to everyone by Valentine's Day. Now, who's going to complain that the sermons just aren't feeding them?

Donna: How about Joe?

Joe: (Mouth full) Mmmph?

Evelyn: Sounds good.

Joe: (Swallowing) I don't think that's funny.

Donna: (Sweetly) Why, whatever do you mean?

Joe: You think it's really cute for someone who weighs 300 pounds to complain that he's not getting fed. Well, I don't.

Evelyn: Oh, shush. Now—I'll gripe about how the attendance is down.

John: Don't you usually resign your Sunday School class, and use the "burnout" excuse?

Evelyn: Well, yes, but I always have to do that. Last time, I didn't know if they were going to let me have it back.

Joe: (Muffled comment.)

John: (Sharply) Joe, that's not helpful.

Donna: I'll complain that there's nothing for families. And Wyatt should gripe about how everything is geared for the young people.

Wyatt: I don't like the music.

Evelyn: Let's keep personal feelings out of this, Wyatt.

John: Okay, that leaves starting a problem in the choir. Judy is always willing to do that. Then we all need to start earmarking our tithes for the building fund, and everyone has to do it this time, all right? After that, I'll start saying that all Pastor ever talks about is church growth, but with the budget in the shape it's in, we had better take care of our own first. Now, if we all pull together, I think we can have this wrapped up by Father's Day.

Donna: (Slyly) And Joe can say we don't have enough church dinners.

Joe: I'm not kidding with you, Donna...

John: Okay, is that about it?

Evelyn: I need a dollar each for the donuts.

Donna: Joe owes you five.

Joe: (Choking) Okay, that's it! I'm...

John: Calm down, Joe, and finish swallowing, so you can dismiss us in prayer.

Joe: (Sulking) I don't think so.

John: Fine. Wyatt, will you do it? (Sound of chairs scooting back from table.)

Wyatt: Lord, for this which we are about to receive, we thank thee.

John: Uh, thanks, Wyatt. I'll do it. (Clears throat.) Lord, we thank Thee for the opportunity to serve Thy kingdom. Guide us as we do Thy bidding. And help us find a new preacher real soon. And all God's people said...

All: Amen.

Joe: (Burp.)

End of transcript.

It's hard to believe that a meeting like this would take place intentionally. But it's obvious that people carve out ruts for themselves, doing the same things, following the same cycle, making the same mistakes.

Christianity is not an abstract religion. It doesn't deal primarily with a futuristic vision of what humanity might be. God deals with us as we are—sinners saved by grace, striving to cast off the things of this world. That's why Paul wrote,

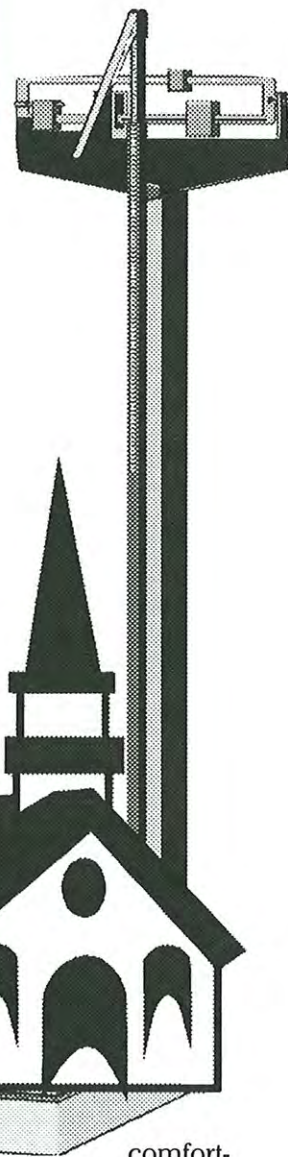
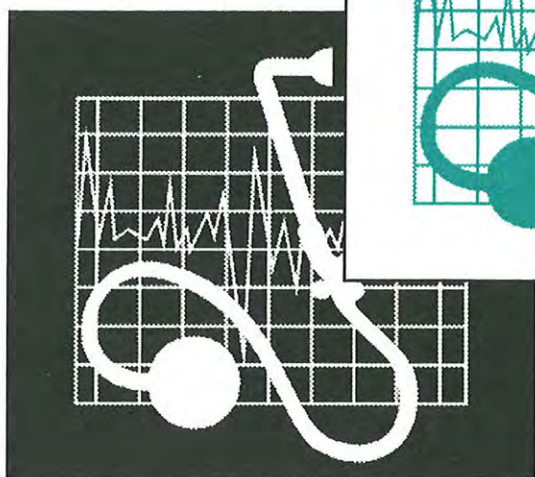
Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you (Eph. 4:29-31). ■



ABOUT THE WRITER: Reverend Greg McAllister serves as academic dean at California Christian College in Fresno, California.

Why Isn't Our Church Growing?

By Greg Hollifield



Another Sunday has passed. It was a good day but not a great one. Honestly, it was another Sunday like every other Sunday for the past how many years? It wasn't always this way. There was a time when our church was alive with growth and excitement, but that was so long ago. Lord, why isn't our church growing?

Many of us, pastors and laymen alike, have lain awake at night having this conversation with ourselves and the Lord. Why isn't your church growing? What's holding back the people who need to hear the gospel your church preaches?

People who have devoted themselves to studying church growth have identified eight diseases which can stunt and, if left unchecked, stop the numerical growth of a church. These

eight diseases are *Ethnikitis*, Ghost Town Disease, People Blindness, Hyper-Cooperativism, Koinonitis, Sociological Strangulation, Arrested Spiritual Development, and Saint John's Syndrome. Could it be that your church isn't growing because of one of these diseases?

Ethnikitis

Ethnikitis is one of two terminal church growth diseases. A church infected with this disease is a cultural island in a changed community. For years the community was made up of blue collar workers, but a new development moved in and several white collar professionals took up residence there.

The people in the church don't feel

comfortable worshipping with doctors and lawyers, and the doctors and lawyers don't feel comfortable in the church. Over time the church's members who are no longer comfortable in that community move out into other communities and churches.

I purposely chose this example to show that *Ethnikitis* is not just about skin color but a host of cultural differences. Churches can be different from

their communities in the areas of race, education, economic standing, age, etc.

One church with several members who homeschooled their children discovered it was no longer growing, because people in the community who sent their children to public and Christian schools didn't think they would be welcome.

A church suffering with *Ethnikitis* would be well advised to minister to the new culture as best as it can and eventually give the church building to the new membership. Such an act may seem to be a great sacrifice, but when you remember that we're here to build God's kingdom and not our own little kingdoms, it becomes the reasonable thing to do.

Ghost Town Disease

Ghost Town Disease, also known as *Old Age Disease*, is the second terminal disease. It has nothing to do with the age of people in the church but the age and size of the community. When the population of a town in which a church is located declines, so too will the church's membership and prospects for growth.

A community of less than 200 people won't grow a church of more than 200 members unless the church draws people from other communities. A congregation in this situation becomes a nursing home for those who refuse to move. It can minister to the people who are there, pray for other ministries and raise financial support for missionaries. Over time, such a church will die.

People Blindness

People Blindness, though not terminal, is closely associated with *Ethnikitis* and can lead to it. Churches that fail to see the needs and different cultural biases of people in their area suffer with *People Blindness*. Instead of adapting their ministries and trying to minister to people where they are, they expect people to change to feel at home in their church.

Here's a silly comparison but it makes the point. Imagine a department store built for people less than five feet tall. If you're six feet tall, you can shop there, but if you stand up-

right you're going to bump your head on the ceiling. How long will you do business with a store that didn't take your needs into consideration?

Churches that fail to pay attention to the needs of their community are as blind as that store. If their eyes are not opened, these churches will find themselves ministering to an increasingly smaller segment of their community.

Hyper-Cooperativism

Hyper-Cooperativism strikes those congregations wherein ecumenical endeavors are given greater emphasis than church evangelism. Citywide crusades, countywide Thanksgiving services and ecumenical sunrise Easter services may have their place, but such activities do little to grow individual churches.

True, they provide opportunities for fellowship between brothers and testify to the world of our love for one another. But how many people do they actually reach with the gospel?

Koinonitis

Koinonitis is the disease whose symptom is an "us four and no more" mentality. Fellowship is the main thing in churches affected with *Koinonitis*. Undoubtedly, fellowship is important for the growth of a church. It is one part of a church growth strategy that has been said to be unailing.

(The four parts of this strategy are: the pastor makes five evangelistic visits per day; every Sunday School class attempts to enroll one new member per month; Sunday School absentees are contacted weekly; and each Sunday School class holds a fellowship once a quarter.)

As important as fellowship is, it must not become the main thing in the church. The church is not a social club for the saved. It's a hospital for the unsaved. Every church needs to make sure that the words "Everyone Welcome" on its church sign aren't just words.

Sociological Strangulation

Sociological Strangulation is the only good disease for a body of believers to have. It results from too

much growth in facilities that are too small. When a church is 80% full, it is on the verge of *Sociological Strangulation*.

For parking, worship and educational purposes, it has been estimated that a church needs 1½ acres per 100 people. Adding space or offering multiple services is the cure to this disease.

Arrested Spiritual Development

Arrested Spiritual Development describes the church whose members' spiritual growth has been stunted through unconfessed sins and a lack of discipleship. Christians who are like the world will never win the world. Only the convicting work of the Holy Spirit in conjunction with the preached Word of God can correct this problem.

Saint John's Syndrome

Saint John's Syndrome eats away at churches where spiritual passion is absent. This absence of love for Christ may result from Christians who are preoccupied with other matters or a congregation consisting of unconverted members. Only when Jesus is Lord indeed will such a church grow again.

Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church. He never gets sick. He lives forevermore. We believers compose His Body. We must diligently guard against contracting these eight diseases. ■



ABOUT THE WRITER: Reverend Greg Hollifield, a Free Will Baptist minister, is pursuing Master of Divinity studies at Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary. He is a graduate of Southeastern Free Will Baptist College.

Working the Soil

By Glenn McReynolds



Yes, a garden! It was a fabulous idea. A wonderful diversion from the hustle and bustle. I soon sold my wife on the idea. Then with no experience, tools or known green thumbs in the family we began our garden. We just imagined luscious ripe cantaloupe, delicious green beans, succulent watermelon and bright orange carrots.

Even the kids got into our gardening fanaticism. Each day they searched diligently for a new leaf on the melon vines. Well, to make this long, painful story short, we had more cucumbers than a small army could consume and little else. Our garden was not a wonderful success. But my wife and I admit it was fun and we plan another this year.

Gardening requires that you work the soil, that you work it skillfully and often. Jesus used gardening stories to illustrate the truth He spoke. One

of my favorites is the story of the sower in Matthew 13:1-9.

The story is about a sower who sowed his seed. However, the thrust of the message is regarding the soil. Jesus interprets the parable for us by showing us four types of soil (vv. 18-23), or four types of hearts that hear the truth of the gospel and respond differently.

Misunderstood Gospel

The first type is the soil of the misunderstood gospel (v. 19). The message of the kingdom is preached, but Jesus says it is not understood. Since it is not understood or received, it is snatched away by Satan. Satan loves it when the gospel is not understood. With this in mind, it is critical to recognize that we live in a biblically illiterate country. Most Americans have only a vague recall of the Bible.

According to Barna research:

- 58% cannot recite five of the 10 commandments.
- 52% do not think that Jonah is a book of the Bible.
- 50% believe that Thomas is a book of the Bible.
- 12% believe that Joan of Arc was Noah's wife!

Then there are the expressions we use that only Christians can understand.

- 63% of America has no idea what the gospel means.
- 75% do not know what John 3:16 says despite its popularity on Monday Night Football.
- 93% do not know what the Great Commission means.

Then there is "washed in the blood," "I've been convicted," "sweet fellowship" and "get in the Word." These are all terms and language we dearly love. They carry special meaning for us. But they often are misunderstood only to be snatched away by the evil one.

We are not only a nation that is

biblically illiterate, but we are becoming more and more illiterate in general. There are over one million high school graduates who read at a fifth grade reading level.

— 23% of America is illiterate.

— 26% of America is basically illiterate.

This means that almost 50% of our nation either cannot read or can barely read. This has tremendous implications for the farmer planting the seed of the gospel. Most older translations of the Bible require a 12th grade reading level to understand. This means that three of four Americans can't read well enough to understand the translations that many believers read and carry to church each week.

Satan loves to twist and confuse the truth of God. He delights each time he is able to snatch the truth from the heart of those who would believe if they could understand. We can work the soil of the misunderstood gospel. We do so by making the message of the Savior easier for people to hear, understand and receive.

Rootless Gospel

The second type of soil Jesus mentions is the soil of the rootless gospel (vv. 19, 20). My son planted a tree for Arbor Day this year. He asked me to join him as he dug the hole to plant his tiny pine sprout. I watched as he dug the hole as deep as he could. He understood that for his tree to have a chance the roots must go deep into the soil. He was also careful to replace the soil around the tree in a firm supportive way.

Without much help from me, my son, at age 10 knew to get the tiny tree as deep into the ground as possible. He then would provide a solid base of cultivated soil to support its growth.

The people who come to Christ today are very different from those who came to Christ years ago. It is not the exception now to have new converts with a difficult and painful past. Drug addiction, sexual abuse and promiscuity, disease and a host of other ills are common today.

Coming from this kind of world, a new Christian needs help for his survival. He needs time, patience, support, loving accountability, much prayer and good biblical teaching. In many cases, new Christians need

counseling and possibly even hospital treatment for the problems they bring from their sinful past. It is the wise Christian who recognizes that the soil of the rootless gospel can be tilled providing a more supportive, growth-oriented soil type.

Strangled Gospel

The last type of soil Jesus mentions that is non-productive is the soil of the strangled gospel (v. 22). Jesus says that "worries of this life . . . choke it." What are the worries of this life? Finances, family, career, crime, disease—things that we face every day.

These issues would consume us were it not for our faith in a loving God who deeply cares about us. This is exactly what our world needs: faith in a loving God who cares for them. Barna research studied how people in America respond to Christianity in general.

Ninety-one percent of America says that the Protestant church is not sensitive to the needs of people. When asked, "How do you feel about Christians?" most gave a poor opinion.

Then the question was asked, "What is the difference between yourself and Christians?" Two things were mentioned. The first was that Christian people go to church more. The second tragic difference identified by non-Christians was that Christians are more judgmental.

The heart of the person who is being strangled by the cares of this world has deep needs. We must project ourselves as Christians who care and understand where they are. We do care. But the perception is that we do not.

Problems such as depression, divorce, abuse and addiction are real-life problems. And they are opportunities for us to show our love how much we do care. We can work the soil a bit to provide real help to people who are hurting in our generation.

Conclusion

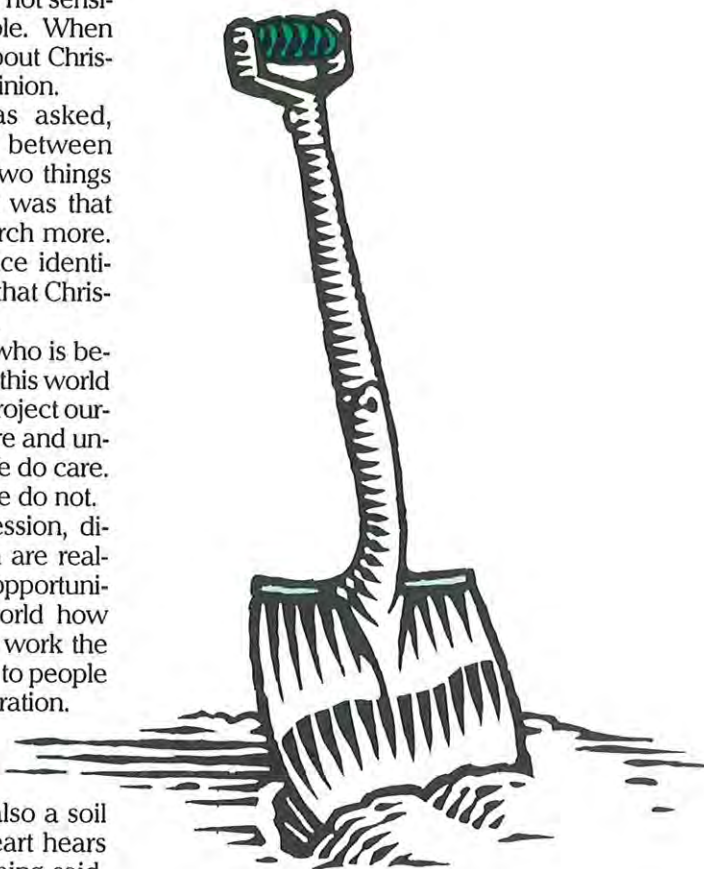
Jesus said that there is also a soil that produces faith. This heart hears and understands what is being said. He finds the loving support he needs early. And he finds that those who sow the seed understand and care deeply about the issues he faces

everyday and are prepared to help.

We hope to have a better garden this year. The spring air brings with it visions of rich green plants. But it will require that I work the soil skillfully and often. Then we can expect a harvest of 100, 60 or 30 times what was sown! ■



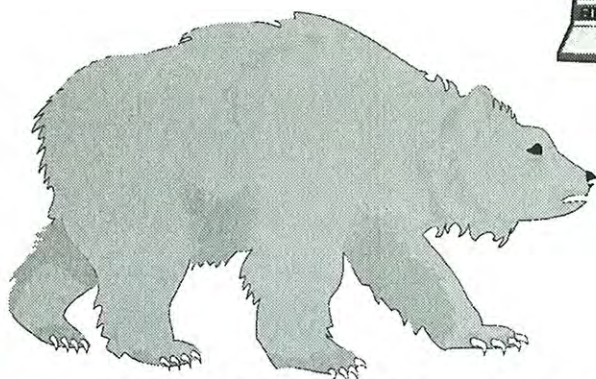
ABOUT THE WRITER: Reverend Glenn McReynolds pastors Pardue Memorial Free Will Baptist Church in Clarksville, Tennessee.



Understanding the opportunity for ministry in Russia.

The Red Bear Goes to Church

By Leroy Forlines



Unbelievable! What has taken place in the Former Soviet Union (FSU) in the last few years is simply unbelievable. Improvements began in 1988 under Gorbachev with new freedoms during glasnost and perestroika. When opportunities to preach the gospel openly were granted, the Christian world looked on with suspicion.

We thought it was all a trick of

communism. We feared that the cruel arm of the Soviet government would revert to its persecution and harassment of the church. Instead, to the amazement of the whole world, the USSR broke up on December 25, 1991. The doors of religious liberty opened wide.

In our 1996 visit to the FSU (February 1-May 26), my wife and I said anything we wanted to say. We could even criticize communism.

We observed what was happening among Baptists in Ukraine and Russia. We traveled to Kiev and Odessa in Ukraine. In Russia we visited Seltso, Moscow, Chelyabinsk, Yekaterinburg, St. Petersburg, Novosibirsk, Irkutsk and Khabarovsk. We traveled the entire breadth of Russia.

In Ukraine and Russia, we visited 21 churches, four seminaries, two Bible institutes and one Christian university. I preached in 12 churches,

taught in three seminaries, two Bible institutes and spoke at one pastor's conference.

When we were in Moscow, Peter Konovalchik, president of Russian Baptists, gave me three two-hour sessions to speak on Calvinism and Arminianism to 43 Baptist superintendents.

We visited Bible for Everyone Publishing House in St. Petersburg, the publishing house that translated and published 10,000 copies of *Biblical Systematics*. Five thousand copies were for Russia and 5,000 for Ukraine.

I would like to share some observations regarding the opportunity and responsibility to assist our Baptist brothers and sisters in the FSU. For the sake of simplicity, I will speak of Russia, even though we know it has been divided into several independent republics. People in the FSU use the word *Russia* in this broad sense also.

Suffering of the Russian People

As a people the Russians know suffering that staggers the imagination. The Russians have always had cruel leaders.

They have suffered the ravages of war, losing 20 million Soviet citizens in World War II. In contrast, the United States lost 295,000 men. This means that for every American who died in the war, 72 Russians died. Added to this was the devastation to their towns and cities (Albert Marrin, *Stalin*, 208-209).

Persecution for Baptists did not start under communism. From 1867, Baptists suffered persecution under the tsars as a result of the influence of the Russian Orthodox Church. Persecution eased up a little under Lenin. The Lenin years have been referred to as the Golden Years for Baptists.

Severe persecution came under Stalin's rule with the execution of many who refused to deny their faith. The inhumane treatment in prisons defies our imagination. The pain of the Stalin years lingers among the Russian people.

We met a 90-year old Baptist preacher in St. Petersburg who was imprisoned and unmercifully treated under Stalin. In Chelyabinsk, we met two sons of a Baptist preacher who

waited 55 years to learn that their father had been shot on January 1, 1938. Their mother died without ever knowing.

One of the sons took us to the site near Chelyabinsk where his father's body had been disposed of. Some estimate that during the Stalin regime the bodies of 20,000 who had been executed were dumped in abandoned gold mine shafts on this site.

We were told about a Baptist pastor in Bryansk who was given a choice. He could deny his faith and be free or he would be fed to the dogs. He chose to be faithful.

The killing slowed under Khrushchev, but people continued to be imprisoned for their faith. Khrushchev boasted that he would destroy Christianity and march the last Christian across on television for the people to see.

We saw many people who had been imprisoned for their faith. One man asked if I prayed for them while they were in prison. He said that he could tell people were praying for them. I felt ashamed that I had prayed so little.

The worst imprisonments ended with the Khrushchev years, but imprisonment and harassment by the KGB continued until 1989. We heard many Christians tell how they were moved from job to job, their children harassed in school. They were denied opportunities for higher education.

On February 18, 1996, we attended a service in Kiev where Georgi Vinns spoke. Vinns spent eight years in prison for his faith. President Jimmy Carter arranged for his release along with others by releasing some Russian spies. This was the first time he had returned to his home church. The service lasted three hours.

In spite of severe persecution, the communists were unable to destroy Christianity. Many criminals were converted in prison when they saw how Christians stood after being singled out for special punishment and torture.

Economic Condition in Russia

While everyone we met agreed that they fared better economically under communism, the economic condition was not good under communism. Economic disaster followed

the breakup of the USSR. Consider the soaring inflation.

In 1988, for instance, 50,000 rubles were worth 80,000 American dollars. I asked Gary, a Russian student from St. Petersburg, what 50,000 rubles would have bought in 1988. He said, "Ten cars."

When we were in Russia, one dollar was worth almost 5,000 rubles. The most we got for a dollar was 4,960 rubles. If a man in Moscow had buried 50,000 rubles in 1988 and dug it up when we were in Moscow, he could have taken his wife to McDonald's for supper. With careful spending, they could have paid their bus fare with the change left from buying supper.

Art, Beauty and the Russian People

Art is very important to the Russian people. We met several artists. Oleg, who traveled with us our entire time in Russia, was an artist. He served as an artist in the Soviet Army. We toured a crystal museum and a crystal factory near Bryansk. Vladimir, one of the artists who worked at the factory, was our guide. He had work on display in the museum. Vladimir was a leading layman in the Baptist church there.

We will not understand what we see in Russia if we do not understand the significance that art and beauty have in the Russian mind. Communism emphasized plainness and sameness, for the most part. However, under the tsars and in the history of the Russian Orthodox Church many palaces, opera houses, museums, cathedrals and monasteries were erected. These demonstrate extravagant beauty. While much of it was destroyed or damaged under communism, much which was damaged has now been restored.

Russian people walking down the street or in their churches look better off than they are. This is because they care about the way they look. Dressing down is not the in-thing to do in Russia. I think this desire for the good and the beautiful is part of the motivation that helps them dig out of their bad situation.

Even though they are in tough

economic times, the women still find ways to demonstrate beauty in their flats. When they have company, the women show an artistic touch in the way they prepare meals.

Few people own cars. The vast majority of their cars are old (20 or more years old) and in bad shape. While they effectively move large numbers of people, their vehicles are in need of repair. I saw a bus driver in Novosibirsk hand-crank his bus. We could hear the transmission moaning on the bus we took from Chelyabinsk to Yekaterinburg. It shook because the shock absorbers and springs were in bad shape. The trains and buses did keep a good time schedule.

The buildings they live in, the food they eat and their low wages reflect hard times. My wife read in an English newspaper in St. Petersburg that a factory worker makes \$145 a month. A school teacher makes \$100 a month. The people in St. Petersburg were better off than they were in the other places that we traveled. In Novosibirsk, a university English teacher made \$50 a month.

Condition of the Church

When the bells of freedom began to ring, the Baptists had no theological schools. Every theological school that exists among Baptists in the FSU started during or after 1989.

They had almost no literature. Some had been produced by underground presses. Occasionally, the communists would allow token amounts of literature to be produced.

They had few Bibles. Thanks to the response the U.S. Christians and those in other Western countries, this situation has been greatly relieved. This is especially true in larger cities. I am not sure what the need for Bibles is in smaller towns and cities.

The lack of educational institutions meant that they had few who were able to teach when Bible institutes and seminaries were allowed to open.

They had few church buildings. Communists allowed only one Baptist church in a city. That's why a few places have large churches. In Moscow, a city of over 8 million people, had only one Baptist church until perestroika.

In 1961 communists confiscated the three buildings of the only Baptist

church in Novosibirsk, a city of 2 million. They moved one of the buildings 20 miles away on a river bank. This allowed the communist mayor to say that there was no Baptist church in his city. For 30 years this was the only Baptist church near Novosibirsk. Today there are 10.

In 1993 the two remaining buildings that had been taken from the Baptists in 1961 were returned to them. I preached in this church as well as the one on the river bank. I also preached in three of the 10 churches that now exist there. One of the churches met in a rented palace of culture. Under communism, a palace of culture served as a center for propaganda.

Only a few churches that have started in recent years have their own buildings. In light of their severe economic situation, the lack of church buildings is one of the biggest problems they face. This is complicated by the fact that Russian Orthodox churches have such beautiful buildings. They made light of the Baptists for not having better buildings.

The longing for a beautiful church building is so strong among the people that it is hard for them to deal with reality and build simpler buildings. I remember well the words of Vladimir, the crystal artist referred to earlier. He was in charge of the building program at his church. Vladimir took us to where it was to be built and said, "Let us live in our simple places, but let us build a beautiful house for God."

Baptist Churches in the FSU

We noticed some changes while going to different places, but there is a general uniformity among the churches. We could tell that we were among God's people. They preach the same gospel that I do.

They are a zealous people taking advantage of their opportunities. People repent in almost all their Sunday morning church services. When a person makes a profession of faith, they say, "He or she repented."

When I asked Oleg when he was saved, he said, "I repented in 1988." The year 1988 marked the end of 1,000 years since Christianity was first brought to Russia. Oleg was baptized in the same river that Vladimir

baptized the first converts in 988. That was important to him.

We saw children and adults repent. We saw many people 60 years old and older saved. In some churches they would hold a microphone before the person and let him or her pray aloud before the whole congregation. In St. Petersburg we saw a young deaf man repent in sign language before the church.

A service usually lasts two hours. As a rule there are four sermons. Usually, a sermon lasts 15 or 20 minutes. When they are about one hour into the Sunday morning service, the children are dismissed for Sunday School. Ten years ago, it was a crime to teach religion to anyone under 18.

Of those in attendance, 75% to 90% are women. Russian churches owe a great debt of gratitude to the *babushkas* (Russian grandmothers) who by their prayers and attendance helped keep the church alive when the days were dark.

There is usually a season of volunteer prayers after each sermon. This is true even in large churches. If three people lead in prayer, two of them will be women. There are no long waits between prayers.

In their services women and children recite poetry. Though we could not understand them, we could tell that some of them were very good at it.

Singing is important in Russian churches. They have about three choir specials in each service. Being a member of the choir is considered important. Some of their singing is outstanding. Some singers sound as if they trained for the opera. Singing in the majority of churches is traditional, not contemporary.

They are conservative in their lifestyle. On most issues of separation, they are where we were 40 or 50 years ago. I heard Peter Konovalchik bring a good message on admonitions about watching television.

I inquired to determine if there was any influence of theological liberalism among them. I am convinced that they are free from theological liberalism. One thing that accounts for this is the fact that under communism they were shut off from a lot of bad influences as well as good influences. Whatever negative influences the communists had on the churches,

they did not corrupt their theology.

Russian Baptists are Arminian. Some told me that they had never heard of Calvinism until people started coming in from the outside and teaching it. Since the doors have opened up, they have been bombarded with Calvinism especially on the doctrine of perseverance. I was told more than once that I was the first American Arminian that they had seen. After hearing me speak, some of them told me that I was a Russian Baptist.

The doctrine of the possibility of apostasy is important to Russians. It is more important to them than it is to us. Many chose death rather than deny their faith. Many went to prison rather than deny their faith. Many withstood the pressures of the KGB rather than deny their faith.

They are moving ahead with educational institutions and the publication of literature. Free Will Baptists have plans to provide a printing press that will be located in Chelyabinsk. It is our understanding that this will be the first printing press operated by the Baptists in Russia.

They will for some time need teachers to come in from the outside and lecture. It will take several years before they can staff their schools with their own teachers.

Unique Russian Challenge

In the FSU we do not need to start churches where there are none or almost none. We are not trying to wake up a dead church. The Russian church is a strong church.

In assessing today's Russian churches, we must keep in mind that their first light of freedom was seen less than 10 years ago. It has been less than six years since the breakup of the USSR. While theirs is not a perfect church, we can feel good about association with it.

They have many who are eager to go out and start new churches. The opportunity is far beyond their economic resources. In light of their economic setbacks, the Russian churches could not have been ready economically for the challenge that stands before them. They will have to act responsibly in the future.

Under communism, they could not own property. If they had, their property would have increased in value along with inflation. If they had saved money, its value would have been destroyed by inflation.

These special economic circumstances should cause us to respond with compassion.

The Future

The question is how long will this freedom last? Nobody knows. I am more optimistic than some people for the following three reasons.

1. Even if they elect a communist president, that would not necessarily mean a return to the persecution and harassment of the past. For communism to be at its worst, it must be the only political party.
2. I do not believe that the people will tolerate such treatment as

was once forced upon them. They understand the preciousness of freedom.

3. I believe that God will honor the faithfulness of those who paid such a high price in staying true under such difficult circumstances.

They may lose some of the freedoms they now have. They may suffer some limitations. We may have more trouble getting in to preach and teach than we do now, but I do not expect a return to the bitter days of the past. Maybe such days are ahead for them, but I don't expect it soon.

Let us accept the challenge and the opportunity to work with these brothers and sisters of like faith. It is a privilege that none of us expected. My wife and I still find the whole experience almost unbelievable. God has been so good in opening doors of religious liberty in Russia and providing this open door for ministry. ■



ABOUT THE WRITER: Reverend Leroy Forlines chairs the Commission for Theological Integrity.

COMING NEXT MONTH

FULL CONVENTION COVERAGE



Write-Up



Elections



Pictures



Registration

FREE WILL BAPTIST NEWSFRONT

Reverend Tommy Day With The Lord

SPRINGDALE, AR—The Reverend Thomas Sewell (Tommy) Day died May 7 at Northwest Medical Center in Springdale after 51 years in the ministry. He was 86.

Brother Day was ordained as a Free Will Baptist preacher in January 1948. He was the founder of Phillips Chapel FWB Church in Springdale, and pastored the church four years. He held membership there at the time of his death.

Day pastored 12 Free Will Baptist churches in Arkansas, Oklahoma and Missouri during his half-century long ministry. He also did extensive evangelistic work in those states as well as in Kansas, Idaho, California and New Mexico.



Rev. Day served on the state executive boards in Arkansas and

Missouri. Active in the ministry even after he retired in 1975, he taught Sunday School until he was 84 years old.

He was born September 16, 1910, at Henryetta, Oklahoma.

Funeral services were conducted May 10 at Phillips Chapel FWB Church. Reverends Burton Perry,

Cecil Garrison, Bobby Shepherd and Lonnie Burks officiated. Burial followed at Friendship Cemetery.

He is survived by three sons, Elvin Day of Porterville, Calif.; Tommie L. Day and Charles Day, both of Springdale; eight grandchildren and 16 great-grandchildren.

Ohio Church Turns 40

URBANA, OH—Members of Urbana FWB Church celebrated their 40th anniversary on May 18, according to Pastor Roger Childers. Some 200 people gathered for the day-long celebration.

Ohio executive secretary Edwin Hayes preached the celebration message. After a noon meal prepared by the church, members and guests returned for a 2:00 p.m. service of music and sermon.

The afternoon message was delivered by Reverend David Mingus, son of the founding pastor.

Seven men have pastored the church in its 40-year-history, five of whom have died. Former pastor Billy McCarty traveled from Georgia to attend. The widows of three former pastors attended: Mrs. Lillian Conley (Kentucky), Mrs. Dorothy Mingus (Ohio) and Mrs. Ruth Moore (Ohio).

The church began in May 1957 in the home of Robert and Lucy McNeely, both of whom are still members.

Pastor Roger Childers is completing 19 years in leadership.

300 Attend West Virginia Meeting

ELLENBORO, WV—The 52nd annual West Virginia State Association met June 6-7 at Bonds Creek FWB Church in Ellenboro, according to Clerk Norwood Webb. Moderator Luther Sanders presided.

Some 300 people, including 75 ministers and 53 lay delegates, registered for the two-day session.

Delegates adopted two resolutions, one of which deletes the Publications Board from state listings, since the promotional director's office handles that responsibility.

A second resolution instructed the Executive Board to stipulate how many will serve on the Nominating Committee, their duties and term lengths.

The Mission Board presented two checks during the meeting, a \$6,000 check to Home Missionary Russell Wright, and a \$4,000 check to be divided between four West Virginia foreign missionaries—Alice Smith, Jim Combs, Jim Sturgill and Dave Franks.

Three ministers preached sermons during worship sessions: Evangelist Tom Blake, Pastor Daniel Kelly and Home Missions staffer David Crowe.

The 1998 state association will meet June 12-13 at Heritage FWB Church in Inwood.

Johnson Scholarship Awarded At FWBBC

NASHVILLE, TN—The first Dr. L. C. Johnson Scholarship was awarded in chapel May 13 to Brian Lewis, a junior pastoral training major from Grand Junction, Colorado. Dr. Johnson is the first president of Free Will Baptist Bible College.

The \$1,200 scholarship is funded by Pine Level FWB Church in Alma, Georgia, Dr. Johnson's home church. The church is pas-

tored by Rev. Wayne Miracle.

The award will be made annually to a student showing academic promise and good character, with a preference for students who plan to enter the gospel ministry.

"Brian is an excellent first recipient for what we feel will become a highly honored scholarship," FWBBC officials said.



Dr. and Mrs. L. C. Johnson with Brian Lewis, scholarship recipient

North Carolina Honors Tom Lilly

ROCKINGHAM, NC—Promotional Director Tom Lilly said goodbye to delegates and visitors at North Carolina's 35th state association on June 2-3. More than 100 ministers were among the nearly 200 people gathered to thank Reverend Lilly for 16 years of leadership.

The Association presented Lilly with \$2,500, a plaque of appreciation, a new suitcase and an album of letters from friends and colleagues. They also gave Loretta (Mrs. Tom) Lilly \$250 for her own use. She served as secretary.

The state association met at Maple Street FWB Church in Rockingham, according to newly-elected promotional director, Jim Marcum. The North Carolina Missions Board presented a plaque of appreciation to Dean Dobbs for 14 years of service.

Moderator Tim Stout led all business sessions as delegates adopted a \$723,000 budget. The funds were allocated to four ministries: Promotion (\$104,000), Rest Home (\$402,000), Youth Board (\$2,800) and North Carolina Missions (\$213,000).

In other action, delegates adopted a resolution opposing the Promise Keepers movement and encouraging the National Association to do the same.

Kentucky pastor Tim York delivered the keynote address on "The Season for Preaching." Three North Carolina pastors (Randy Cox, Tim Stout, Larry Ball) completed the preaching program.

The 1998 state association will meet June 8-9 at Tabernacle FWB Church in Kinston.

Florida OKs Full-Time Promotional Office

OCALA, FL—Delegates to Florida's 53rd annual state association adopted a \$116,000 budget for 1998 that includes provisions to place the promotional office on full-time status, according to state clerk, Randy Bryant. Reverend Millard Sasser serves as Florida's executive secretary.

The May 7-10 meeting caucused at the Ocala Hilton Hotel. More than 500 people attended the combined state association, Florida Women Active for Christ and youth convention. Forty-three ministers registered.

Moderator Tim Owen was elected to his second two-year term. Delegates approved a constitutional change raising representation fees from \$30 to \$75 per member church.

The association adopted a plan of missions support whereby the state will underwrite the accounts of Florida missionaries. The plan calls for selling 750 shares at \$15 per month.

Four pastors preached sermons developing the theme, "Landmarks for Victory." Miami pastor Jose Rodriguez preached "Our Foundation in Christ;" Bratt pastor Kevin Flannigan preached "Our Faith is in the Word;" Cocoa pastor Jim Christian preached "Our fellowship Unites Us" and presided over a communion and feet washing service; Moderator Tim Owen (Winter Haven) preached "Our Future as Free Will Baptists."

Trena Owen, missionary to Uruguay, addressed the Thursday FWAC missions luncheon.

The Youth Board presented a plaque of appreciation to Jimmy Aldridge for 10 years of service.

The 1998 state association will meet May 20-23 at the Ocala Hilton.

Texas To Publish *Yearbook*

BRYAN, TX—Delegates to Texas' 83rd annual state association voted to begin publishing a *Yearbook* similar to the National Association's publication, according to Clerk Thurmon Murphy. The new publication will include minutes, all reports used at the state meeting, constitution and by-laws, a directory of churches and pastors, and related materials.

"We expect to save about \$500 per year with the new publishing format," said Thurmon Murphy, clerk.

The June 4-6 gathering met at Fellowship FWB Church in Bryan. Thirty-three ministers were among the 181 attendees.

Moderator David Sutton was elected to his fourth term. Delegates passed a resolution encouraging clerks to fill out report forms for district and state meetings. They also passed a resolution cautioning members about using the New NIV Bible.

In other action, delegates adopted budgets topping \$74,000 with undesignated cooperative funds allocated: State Office (40%), National Coop (25%), State Mission Board (23%) and C. E. Board (12%).

Five speakers developed the state association theme, "Texas—A Mission Field." Wichita Falls pastor Thurmon Murphy preached

"The Power of Unity." Arlington pastor Brad Hanna preached "The Acts of a Growing Church."

Woodlands home missionary Dwain Crosby preached "Breaking the Barriers." Theologian Leroy Forlines preached "Six Ways God Has Manifested His Goodness to Us." Home Missions director Trymon Messer completed the messages with "God's Concern for the City."

A fajita dinner and baked potato lunch prepared by the host church raised almost \$1,000 for the mission church in Woodlands.

The 1998 state association will meet June 10-12 at Collin Creek FWB church in Plano.

Kansas Association Meets

KANSAS CITY, KS—Fifty-seven people registered for the 36th annual Kansas State Association, according to Clerk James O. Brewer. The June 5-7 session met at Bethel FWB Church in Kansas City.

Five ministers, nine lay delegates and two deacons conducted the business of the association. Moderator Robert Brown presided; he was elected to his fourth term.

Retired minister Wayne Bookout (Blackwell, Okla.) preached four times during worship services.

Jean Sanstra (Oak Grove, Mo.) addressed attendees at the Woman's Auxiliary Banquet on Friday.

Delegates gave special recognition to eight Kansas youth who participated in the National Youth Conference, and the Truth and Peace Leadership Conference.

The eight were: Starla Shelby, Tim Shelby, Mike Shelby, Amy Brewer, Kami Warden, A.J. Warden, Scott Collins and Amanda Brown.

Clerk James Brewer said, "We had a good spirit of unity. The good preaching was uplifting and encouraging."

The 1998 state association will meet June 11-13 at First FWB Church in Wichita.

Idaho Elects Jenkins Moderator

NAMPA, ID—Delegates to Idaho's fourth annual state association elected Buhl pastor Earl Jenkins moderator, according to Assistant Clerk Tom Barton. Reverend Jenkins succeeds Nampa pastor Delmar Hopkins.

Fifty-one ministers, delegates and visitors registered for the May 16-17 session which met at Nampa FWB Church in Nampa.

Foreign Missions director Eugene Waddell preached Friday evening. Oklahoma pastor and former Idaho home missionary Wade Jernigan preached Saturday. North Carolina pastor Bobby Cardin led the Saturday morning

devotional service.

Delegates voted to give General Board member Earl Jenkins \$500 toward his expenses at the national convention.

Woman's Auxiliary groups reported that they planned a June 13-14 prayer retreat and expected 50 women to attend. Scheduled speakers were Rosalee and Pat Thomas from Colorado.

The churches also planned a July 21-25 youth camp. The Obituary Committee reported five deaths.

The time and place for the 1998 state association will be determined later.

Giunta Keynotes New Jersey

CENTERTON, NJ—The fifth annual New Jersey District Association met March 14-15 at Centerton FWB Church. Rev. Frank Giunta, field representative for the FWB Foundation, preached twice. The subjects for his messages were "Involvement" and "The Scriptures."

Moderator William Brown led business sessions, according to Clerk Vergel Maness. Twenty-four people registered for the meeting, including eight ministers and five lay delegates.

The 1998 district meeting is scheduled March 20-21 at Thompson Memorial FWB Church in Vineland, New Jersey.

Want to show your pastor that you appreciate him . . .
. . . but have limited funds?



Would you like to help him

- Stay informed on denominational news?*
- Find information on pertinent issues?*
- Have access to information Especially for Young Preachers (no matter what his age)?*
- Catch up on the latest book review by Thomas Marberry?*
- Read the latest Bible study by Robert Picirilli?*

We have a solution . . .

Give him a gift subscription to Contact for only \$12 a year and show your appreciation 12 times a year!

Yes! I want to show my pastor I appreciate him with a gift subscription to Contact.

Please send a gift subscription to:

From:

Name

Name

Address

Address

City/State/Zip

City/State/Zip

☐ My \$12 check is enclosed

☐ Bill Me

Georgia's Twin Cities Association hosted a retirement reception for Executive Secretary **Herbert Waid**. The Waid's received a \$500 check, two baskets of personal items and a plaque. Two hundred people attended the May 5 reception at White Rock FWB Church in Phenix City, AL.

Colquitt FWB Church in **Colquitt, GA**, celebrated its 50th anniversary in June, according to Pastor **Matt Pinson**. **Ralph Lightsey**, who launched the new church as an evangelist at a tent meeting, was guest speaker.

Fifty-five people registered for **Georgia's Couples Retreat** this spring. Dr. **LaVerne Miley**, former missionary to Côte d'Ivoire (West Africa), led the sessions.

New microphones, monitors and an upgraded sound system resulted from a special gift by a member of **First FWB Church** in **Tecumseh, OK**. The congregation also replaced the organ with a new keyboard. Pastor **Roger Ballard** leads the congregation.

He's back! After seven months of retirement, Rev. **Owen Barger** returned to the pastorate at **First FWB Church** in **Weatherford, TX**. The 82-year-old minister said, "The church is supposed to be looking for a pastor." He's eager for a younger minister to call him at 817/244-1101, and let him retire again.

Something's stirring at **Bright Light FWB Church** in **College Station, TX**. Seven new families joined the church. The youth began publishing a church newsletter. The local WNAC began a puppet ministry and raised funds to send Bibles to children's homes. The church is 110 years old. Pastor **Herbert Richards** just came out of retirement to lead the congregation.

Did you hear about the big offering at **Peace FWB Church** in **Granite City, IL**? Pastor **David Malone** promoted a big-day attendance of 400 and a \$50,000 offering for the new church building. Some 331 people showed up and gave a \$52,869 offering. And best of all, **Andy Clark** got saved.

Pastor **Bill Hayes** is all smiles this month. He reports 16 conversions, 13 baptisms and 10 new members at **Hillview FWB Church** in **Reynoldsburg, OH**.

Fifteen conversions and 15 baptisms later, Pastor **Greg Miller** started a new convert's class at **Heritage FWB Church** at **Hamilton, OH**. He also conducts a 15-minute radio program that airs twice weekly on Monday and Saturday.

Pastor **John Meade** said, "The Holy Spirit moved in our services." The results? Fifteen conversions and three baptisms at **Southwest FWB Church** in **Columbus, OH**.

Five baptisms and 14 new members boosted the excitement level at **Fairview FWB Church** in **Mount Vernon, OH**. **Crate Sparks** pastors.

Members of **Williams Road FWB Church** in **Columbus, OH**, broke ground for their new multi-purpose facility, according to Pastor **Clellon Lucas**. One group (Willing Workers) presented a \$10,000 check to the building fund. The church also reports 10 conversions, 10 rededications and eight baptisms.

Pastor **Mark Rucker** celebrated 12 years at **First FWB Church** in **Springfield, OH**. He recently witnessed six conversions, five in one family.

Wyandotte FWB Church in **Mansfield, OH**, reports 21 new members and 16 baptisms. **Brian Phillips** pastors.

Reverend **Bob Morrison** died January 3, 1997. Brother Morrison was pastor of **Raynelle FWB Church** in **Dallas, TX**, at the time of his death.

Pastor **Jim McComas** reports that 308 people attended March 23 dedication services for the new building at **Canaan FWB Church** in **Creston, OH**. Morning worship services average 150. The congregation witnessed seven conversions, 10 baptisms and welcomed 17 new members. The church youth group serves as official greeters welcoming guests and ushering them to seats.

More than 100 men attended the **Oklahoma Ministers' Retreat** this spring. Speakers for the retreat were **Holland B. London, Jr.**, and **Sammie Davis**.

Pastor **Herman Wood** led dedication services for 2.5 acres donated to **Collinsville FWB Church** in **Collinsville, OK**. Twenty-five people met on the new land one-half mile north of town. Construction plans call for a 190-seat, 2700-square-foot sanctuary to include classrooms, offices, kitchen and fellowship hall.

Five former pastors were on hand to help **Blue Bell FWB Church** in **Sapulpa, OK**, celebrate its 65th anniversary. The congregation honored **Mary Myrick**, a faithful member for over 50 years. **Glen Hood** is in his sixth year as pastor.

Pastor **Stanley Smith** reports 17 conversions at **Keota FWB Church** in **Keota, OK**.

Reverend **Charles Judson Stump** (87) died February 18, 1997. He pastored six **Oklahoma** churches during his 46-year ministry. Brother Stump was a World War II veteran with the U.S. Army. He received the Bronze Star, Purple Heart and other medals.

White Oaks FWB Church in **Macon, GA**, reported tires slashed in the church parking lot and thefts at the church. Pastor **Charles Barnard** and members came up with a unique solution to the problem. When a police officer moved into their neighborhood to help fight crime, the congregation "adopted" the officer.

Expect a foyer three times as large at **First FWB Church** in **Moore, OK**, when \$8,000 and donated labor finish the renovation project. **Dan Farmer** pastors.

Pastor **Jim Fairchild** reports more than 55 conversions in six months at **Waldorf FWB Church** in **Waldorf, MD**.

Capital Stewardship/Victory Campaign

May 1997
Update

State	Goal	Gifts	Balance
Alabama	\$76,397.63	\$ 5,026.15	\$71,371.48
Arizona	1,228.93	2,883.71	(1,654.78)
Arkansas	76,860.94	43,422.13	33,438.81
Atlantic Canada	1,570.51	897.00	673.51
California	17,216.76	1,444.20	15,772.56
Colorado	789.18	1,165.00	(375.82)
Florida	20,703.30	6,347.42	14,355.88
Georgia	38,179.19	29,040.88	9,138.31
Hawaii	184.54	727.26	(542.72)
Idaho	353.37	25.00	328.37
Illinois	16,176.29	4,949.47	11,226.82
Indiana	7,868.27	1,846.75	6,021.52
Iowa	266.99	0.00	266.99
Kansas	1,287.82	280.00	1,007.82
Kentucky	35,454.34	5,949.29	29,505.05
Louisiana	94.23	1,925.00	(1,830.77)
Maryland	6,812.10	1,539.38	5,272.72
Michigan	15,116.19	16,004.22	(888.03)
Mississippi	15,559.86	3,843.23	11,716.63
Missouri	60,484.40	33,809.91	26,674.49
Montana	27.48	100.00	(72.52)
Nebraska	102.08	119.00	(16.92)
New Mexico	596.80	630.55	(33.75)
North Carolina	59,118.06	7,131.40	51,986.66
Northeast Assoc.	883.41	270.00	613.41
Northwest Assoc.	1,087.58	201.00	886.58
Ohio	40,923.66	19,588.10	21,335.56
Oklahoma	92,271.60	10,432.08	81,839.52
South Carolina	18,335.75	3,102.00	15,233.75
South Dakota		175.00	(175.00)
Tennessee	78,557.09	64,283.98	14,273.11
Texas	11,547.20	7,516.52	4,030.68
Virginia	24,323.33	2,027.93	22,295.40
Virgin Islands		200.00	(200.00)
West Virginia	46,204.51	1,023.00	45,181.51
Wisconsin		61.00	(61.00)
Other		2,978.85	(2,978.85)
Totals	\$766,583.39	\$280,966.41	\$485,616.98



May 1997

Receipts:

State	Designated	Co-op	Total	Year To Date Designated	Year To Date Co-op	Year To Date Total
Alabama	\$ 692.95	\$.00	\$ 692.95	\$ 2,412.14	\$.00	\$ 2,412.14
Arizona	835.45	20.00	855.45	1,748.25	164.50	1,912.75
Arkansas	9,566.34	8,804.47	18,370.81	58,699.61	59,337.23	18,036.84
California	.00	839.39	839.39	55.00	4,719.83	4,774.83
Colorado	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Delaware	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Florida	.00	6,000.00	6,000.00	97.12	12,000.00	12,097.12
Georgia	24,030.60	2,563.08	26,593.68	92,475.57	14,793.80	07,269.37
Hawaii	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Idaho	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Illinois	13,664.59	2,680.10	16,344.69	47,862.49	12,449.63	60,312.12
Indiana	1,054.70	.00	1,054.70	5,178.32	773.63	5,951.95
Iowa	.00	.00	.00	130.00	1,113.90	1,243.90
Kansas	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Kentucky	1,686.50	604.82	2,291.32	3,097.50	3,074.22	6,171.72
Louisiana	.00	.00	.00	50.00	.00	50.00
Maryland	.00	.00	.00	.00	1,498.03	1,498.03
Michigan	9,617.19	3,405.72	13,022.91	54,419.05	13,719.97	68,139.02
Mississippi	60.50	484.19	544.69	614.75	1,969.84	2,584.59
Missouri	36,984.14	.00	36,984.14	222,918.37	.00	22,918.37
Montana	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Nebraska	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
New Jersey	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
New Mexico	725.84	52.92	778.76	3,968.78	259.40	4,228.18
North Carolina	1,678.69	3,256.86	4,935.55	5,070.04	6,525.26	11,595.30
Ohio	10,855.56	3,670.00	14,525.56	38,799.44	16,723.63	55,523.07
Oklahoma	63,448.92	100.00	63,548.92	298,088.19	269.00	98,357.19
South Carolina	34,091.78	.00	34,091.78	163,712.09	480.62	64,192.71
South Dakota	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Tennessee	12,604.07	1,528.00	14,132.07	44,069.40	8,698.95	52,768.35
Texas	7,163.32	292.41	7,455.73	31,645.85	1,466.36	33,112.21
Virginia	745.38	25.00	770.38	4,957.51	125.00	5,082.51
Virgin Islands	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
West Virginia	7,067.60	83.51	7,151.11	22,404.26	297.76	22,702.02
Wisconsin	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Canada	94.88	5.51	100.39	778.24	24.67	802.91
Northwest Assoc.	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Northeast Assoc.	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Other	.00	.00	.00	.03	.12	.15
Totals	\$236,669.00	\$34,415.98	\$271,084.98	\$1,103,252.00	\$160,485.35	\$1,263,737.35

Disbursements:

Executive Office	\$ 10,415.86	\$17,208.02	\$ 27,623.88	\$ 50,900.52	\$ 80,242.77	\$ 131,143.29
Foreign Missions	153,678.91	3,957.83	157,636.74	663,613.90	18,455.78	682,069.68
FWBBC	10,225.09	3,957.83	14,182.92	69,972.71	18,455.78	88,428.49
Home Missions	53,831.67	3,097.44	56,929.11	274,187.24	14,443.63	288,630.87
Retirement & Insurance	1,219.36	2,409.13	3,628.49	6,322.03	11,233.95	17,555.98
Master's Men	1,915.02	2,409.13	4,324.15	10,153.94	11,233.95	21,387.89
Comsn. for Theo. Integrity	142.43	86.03	228.46	595.95	401.23	997.18
FWB Foundation	1,195.92	1,032.48	2,228.40	4,889.12	4,814.54	9,703.66
Historical Commission	108.25	86.03	194.28	492.54	401.23	893.77
Music Commission	108.78	86.03	194.81	455.86	401.23	857.09
Radio & TV Commission	117.44	86.03	203.47	500.80	401.23	902.03
Hillsdale FWB College	1,161.82	.00	1,161.82	6,397.47	.00	6,397.47
Other	2,548.45	.00	2,548.45	14,769.92	.03	14,769.95
Totals	\$236,669.00	\$34,415.98	\$271,084.98	\$1,103,252.00	\$160,485.35	\$1,263,737.35



FOREIGN MISSIONS

Yumiko Mino

By Dale Bishop

Yumiko, a 22-year-old young woman, was raised by her grandmother. Her mother lived with her aunt and supported the family as best she could. Yumiko had never known her father.

After graduating from school, Yumiko entered the workforce and moved in with her mother and aunt. Because of personality conflicts with co-workers she was constantly changing jobs. Finally, after quitting her latest job, Yumiko's mother kicked her out of the house.

Nights in the Train Station

With no place to go, Yumiko spent nights in the Sapporo train station. After several nights at the station, the police picked up the homeless girl for questioning. Upon learning of her situation, they suggested she might try entering some kind of religious organization.

Yumiko was taken to the local Buddhist temple to look for advice and help in becoming a priestess. She was told they had no facilities for her to live and study there at that temple, but the priest called a friend to ask if he might give her some help in finding a place to stay. The friend was director of a halfway house for women recently released from prison. He agreed to take her into the house.

A couple of days later the director told Yumiko the halfway house was not really suited for her situation because she had not really been in trouble with the law. He told her about his brother-in-law's company and later took her to meet Mr. Hirabayashi at the factory.

An Open Heart

After meeting with Yumiko and hearing of her situation, Mr. Hirabayashi offered her a job. He explained that he was a Christian and would like her to come to know Jesus. She said she did not know anything much about Christianity but was open and willing to learn.

Mr. Hirabayashi brought Yumiko to a concert at our church that Saturday night. She

heard the gospel for the first time. The next day she was back for worship service. That was the next to last Sunday before our family returned to the States for furlough. It was also special because we were having a baptismal service for another woman, Mrs. Maino.

Interest in Bible Study

After the service Yumiko expressed an interest in studying the Bible. Mr. Hirabayashi asked if I could teach her at his company every day until our departure for the United States. I agreed. The next day I started with the tract "The Four Spiritual Laws." That was Monday and on Thursday she accepted Jesus as her Savior. She asked to be baptized the following Sunday, our last Sunday before leaving for furlough.

We rejoiced on that Sunday, June 26, 1994, as Miss Yumiko Mino gave her testimony before the church. Then, she followed the Lord in baptism and joined the fellowship of Koinonia Free Will Baptist Church in Nopporo, Ebetsu, Japan. ■

E-mail Addresses for Foreign Missions Personnel

R. Eugene Waddell, general director	gene@nafwb.org
Don Robirds, director of communications	don@nafwb.org
Robert Conley, treasurer	rob@nafwb.org
Eddie Payne, support coordinator	eddie@nafwb.org
Fred Warner, director of stateside ministries	fred@nafwb.org
Jimmy Aldridge, overseas secretary	jimmy@nafwb.org
Shirley Lauthern, secretary to R. Eugene Waddell	shirley@nafwb.org
Carole Ragan, secretary to Fred Warner	carole@nafwb.org
Barbara Nicholson, bookkeeper	barb@nafwb.org
Gladis Gagg, accounting clerk	gladis@nafwb.org
Ken Eagleton, missionary and TEAM coordinator	ken@nafwb.org
Cheri Ham, information systems manager	cheri@nafwb.org
Charity VanWinkle, editorial assistant	charity@nafwb.org
Heartbeat (bi-monthly magazine)	heartbeat@nafwb.org



WOMEN NATIONALLY ACTIVE FOR CHRIST

Woman's Window on the World

By Mary R. Wisehart

From My Window

"Now, I'm going to give you a buddy strap," the doctor said, removing the awkward splint from my hand. I was relieved to be rid of that splint, but what was a buddy strap?

It was a simple piece of Velcro, holding my broken little finger and ring finger on my left hand together.

"Why a buddy strap?" I asked.

"Well," he said, "this broken finger needs protection and a buddy to help hold it straight."

I thought, *as Christians, we need a buddy strap*. Dr. Schmidt agreed, "That's a good illustration," he said.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10, Two [are] better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him [that is] alone when he falleth; for [he hath] not another to help him up.

We can profit by having someone we trust along-side us to strengthen us when we are weak, encourage us when we become discouraged. We can profit from having a Christian hold us accountable for vows we made. Our buddy may point out some faults and failures for our own good. Proverbs 27:6, Faithful [are] the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy [are] deceitful.

Buddy straps may be parents, mate, church friends, the pastor. These can help when we are wounded and hurting from battles and struggles of life.

I could drive with my buddy strap; I could use both hands on the keyboard. Yet I felt protected, shielded from harm as long as I had the strap.

But guess what. On my next visit, Dr. Schmidt said, "Now we are removing the buddy strap. There comes a time when the buddy strap is more of a hindrance than a help."

While the strap held my two fingers together, protecting the injured one, it prevented them from touching the palm of my hand to make a fist. Making a fist was the next step in my healing.

I walked out feeling vulnerable, and my fingers hurt when I tried to bend them. So it hurts! Bend those fingers, use that hand. Where's my buddy strap?

I remembered Hebrews 5:12. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.

Can we become too dependent on our Christian "buddy straps?" Shall we lean forever, demanding comfort for our grief, balm for our

wounds? Such dependence becomes a hindrance instead of a help. Come on, grow up!

Perhaps it is time to *become* a buddy strap for some other younger, weaker Christian. It's time to leave wounds and hurts behind, move forward and strengthen another who is wounded and hurting.

Remember our Father knows us well. He does not leave us alone, vulnerable. He gave us the great, unfailing buddy strap. This strap will never be a hindrance. John 14:16 says, And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever.

Emphasis Month for WNAC

August is emphasis month for WNAC. Special offerings during the month help with the general expenses of the national office.

The emphasis also gives opportunity for the church to review what Free Will Baptist women have contributed since 1935.

For example, here are some projects women have completed in the past.

- ◆ Establishing, supervising and publishing materials for young people's groups, 1947-1964
- ◆ Declamation contest, 1939-1965 and scholarships to FWBCC for the winners, 1961-1965
- ◆ First organ for FWBCC auditorium, 1953
- ◆ Tent for Home Missions, 1957
- ◆ Memorial Student Loan Fund, 1957-present
- ◆ Station in Côte d'Ivoire, 1958
- ◆ Residence in Japan, 1959
- ◆ Church building in Monterrey, Mexico, 1960
- ◆ \$13,376.63 for medical supplies sent to Côte d'Ivoire, 1961
- ◆ Foreign Student Scholarship, 1981-present
- ◆ Eunice Edwards Loan Fund for Churches Abroad, more than \$43,000 to Spain and Uruguay for church buildings and loan funds, 1986-1991.

In 1996 women gave \$450,173.91 through our office. These gifts helped support WNAC, Foreign Missions, Home Missions, Bible colleges, children's homes and other objectives. Additionally, the value of goods contributed to the Provision Closet equaled \$34,207.12. Women's groups gave \$207,998.66 directly to Foreign Missions.

God has richly blessed Free Will Baptist women, giving them opportunity to serve and contribute to spreading the good news of the gospel around the world. We recall these projects to give God the glory for past blessings.

We look forward to the future and the opportunities and doors that the Lord will surely open for Free Will Baptist women. We can trust the One who has led us in the past to be with us as we go forward into the next century. ■



BOARD OF RETIREMENT

Why Do We Need Your Gifts?

By D. Ray Lewis

From time to time we are asked, "Why should I make gifts to the Board of Retirement?" People look at our financial statements and see our assets approaching \$15 million and immediately assume that we don't need gift support.

These same people look at our missions departments. They see our missionaries, many of them with accounts in the red. They see staff providing services to these missionaries and have no problem supporting the work of the office.

Others look at our colleges. They see the need to provide quality Christian education to our young people. They see overworked professors, the need for buildings or the repair and upkeep of existing ones. Again, they have no problem responding with monetary gifts.

But the Board of Retirement, "Why do they need my help?"

Is it that our people still don't look at this work as ministry? "When I give to missions, every time a soul is won, I have a part in that." "When I give to the college of my choice, and a young person answers the call to full-time Christian service, I have a part in that." But why support a retirement program?

I believe that every time one of our older ministers retires, and can do so in dignity, the Lord is pleased. Our denominationally-funded retirement program can help achieve that level of income. Donors can smile and say, "I had a part in taking care of God's servant when he could no longer do it alone."

It is sad when ministers who lead their churches to give sacrificially to other ministries of our denomination reach retirement age, and retirement is not an option for them. Most of our churches do nothing to benefit their pastor and other employees in their retirement years. This is often true while the agency employees they have sacrificed to support throughout their ministry can retire comfortably.

For too long Free Will Baptists have had the idea that if God calls a man to preach, he will pastor until he dies. Do you or your church have an age criteria for pastoral candidates? How many churches have you heard of in recent history that called a 70 or 80-year-old pastor? What about the pastor who becomes disabled at an

early age? How many will die at an early age, leaving a wife and small children? These are issues that our churches need to consider.

I believe that as Free Will Baptists and more importantly, Christians, we have an obligation to help provide adequate retirement for those who have faithfully served our denomination for many years. This is our mission. Our goal is to see that every Free Will Baptist employee can reach retirement with adequate funds to live on. Few secular employees today work for an organization for 30 or 40 years and retire without retirement benefits. However, it is rare for a Free Will Baptist minister who has served the Lord and our denomination the same number of years to have adequate retirement funds.

Do we need your support? Yes, because this is ministry. Do we deserve your support? Yes, we have the same needs as every other department and agency of our denomination. We have rent, postage, salaries for four employees, equipment maintenance and supplies. The list goes on.

Every dollar you give, directly benefits each participant in the retirement plan. Even though we operate on a modest budget, we currently receive about 10% of our budget in gift income. The rest of our expenses must come from service fees charged against earnings. Therefore, the more gifts we receive, the more we credit to each participant.

Help us minister to our ministers and denominational employees. We need your gifts to do this more generously.

Oh, yes! The \$15 million of assets we have doesn't really belong to the Board of Retirement. This money belongs to the 1,100 individuals who are enrolled in the plan. ■

Your Daily Bible Reading

When you first enter the ministry, you are overwhelmed with responsibilities. Teaching a Sunday School class, preaching three or four times a week, visiting, counseling and more. Besides ministry challenges, you want to devote time to your wife and children.

The lawn must be mowed. The vehicle tuned up. Every day is full of demands that extract time and energy. You go to bed at night exhausted, remembering those jobs you did not get to.

Most Important Responsibility

Daily devotions. Quiet time. Prayer and Bible study. Whatever you call it, a daily spiritual exercise is essential. Nothing must squeeze out your personal, vital time of reading the Word of God and praying. (Next month I will suggest how to conduct a daily prayer schedule.)

Make an Appointment

Decide the best time to observe your quiet time. Determine where you should meet the Lord. Establish a schedule. Develop a method. This will demand trial and error. Your enemy, the devil, will attack from all directions to rob you of a personal relationship with your God.

Early in the Morning

Note in scripture how many spiritual leaders rose early to accomplish God's will. Before the family rises, in the quietness of the den or kitchen, meeting the Lord can be a precious time of basking in His love. Or arriving early in the study before the secretary or associates gather, you could enjoy 30 minutes to an hour of solitude. Determine the best time for you and stick to it.

Not Sermon Preparation

Exercise self-discipline and feed your own soul first. Yes, I know, a preacher reading a passage of scripture can excite his thoughts to begin preparing a sermon. Resist that temptation. Your spiritual battery must first be recharged. Search the scriptures for personal benefit and apply the Word of God to your own life. How that special passage speaks to you could be written in a notebook.

Use a Think Pad

As you read scripture, thoughts of other responsibilities enter your mind. Refuse to ponder those items. Simply and quickly write down those thoughts on your think pad. Keep reading. Don't allow those thoughts to detour you from something more important—personal Bible reading. When finished, place those written items in your calendar book to be acted upon as time allows.

Establish Guidelines

Where to read? Follow a prescribed guideline of profitable Bible reading. Each December, determine where you will read the next year. You could read the Gospels for a year. The entire Bible from Genesis to Revelation should be read in a year or two.

Some believers read the Psalm and the Proverb that correspond to the date of each day. Other suggested reading include devoting an entire year to the Epistles or several months to reading the prophets.

Reading for Special Seasons

The month before Easter, read devotionally Matthew 21-28; Mark 14-16; Luke 22-24; John 17-21. Challenge your people to do the same. The month before Christmas, read Matthew 1-2, and



Dennis Wiggs

Luke 1-2. Your congregation could profit by reading these chapters several times before Christmas Day.

Mark Your Bible?

Some preachers refuse to mark their Bible with a pen. Others mark almost every verse. Underlining verses with a colored marker that does not bleed through the pages may be beneficial.

Excessive writing or marking could be questionable, if you read from your Bible in the presence of those you want to win to Christ. They might be more interested in your written words and method of underscoring than the verses you want them to read.

Use the same color of pen. Allow this marking of verses to benefit you when you read those verses again.

Memorize Scripture

Develop a method of memorizing God's Word early in your ministry. Older ministers just can't remember as well as younger preachers. Write verses on cards. Stick them to the dash of your auto for continued review. Of course, systematic Bible reading will help you to place God's Word in your heart and mind.

Develop a Method

Don't let today go by before determining a beneficial, Bible reading program. A "hit and miss" method will rob you of the daily, spiritual blessings that can be yours by systematically reading the most important book in the world—God's Word. Keep a written record of the scriptures you have read and when you have read them. If anyone should read the scriptures with continued, greater understanding and spiritual profit, it ought to be a preacher! ■



Robert E. Picirilli

Thomas—the Twin

Matthew names Thomas seventh in the list (10:3), while Acts lists him sixth (1:13) and Mark (3:18) and Luke (6:15) put him eighth. Nothing but his name appears in the four lists.

Even so, we know more about him than that, because John's gospel—and only his—gives us additional information. Surprisingly, Thomas shows up in four incidents related in the fourth gospel, and in three of the four John adds that he was also named Didymus, which literally means "twin."

Indeed, "Thomas" reflects the original Aramaic word for twin, while "Didymus" is the Greek translation of it. If we inquire why John was so taken with this form of the name, the answer may simply be that he wanted to be sure any Greek-speaking readers recognized its meaning.

Students of the Word have long since recognized that the four incidents involving the Twin, at least the three that single him out, give us insight into his personality. In the first (John 11:16) we find Thomas with some fairly obvious degree of resignation, saying "Let us also go, that we may die with Him."

Whatever else you do, give him credit for that willingness. But he certainly doesn't get an A+ on confidence in His Master's control of the situation in Jerusalem. He doesn't expect to survive the hostility that reigns there.

We see him again in 14:5, where Jesus has just announced that He is going away to prepare a place for His followers with the Father, and that they must surely know how to follow Him there when the appropriate time comes.

Thomas is quick to express his uncertainty: "But we don't know where; how can we possibly know the way?" In some way Thomas had not grasped

what Jesus felt He had made clear.

And then in John 20:24-29 we see Thomas at his best—or worst, as we should rather say. For some reason he is not present on that first Sunday evening when the resurrected Jesus appeared in the closed room. Was his absence itself an indication of his doubt? We can't be sure.

Regardless, when those who were there told him what they had seen and heard, Thomas was quick to express his true nature without embarrassment: "I will not believe unless I can see and touch the scars!"

At least he was present the next Sunday evening, and this time saw and heard and touched for himself. And then his doubt was swept away in a flood of understanding and faith: "My Lord and my God!" he exclaimed.

Does this have anything to do with John's special interest in Thomas the Twin? We recall how John started his first letter: "That which we have seen and heard and our hands have handled—that we bear witness of to you."

I suspect that John sympathized with Thomas and understood that folks need the witness of those who have seen and handled the evidence. That's one of the things we have as the foundation of our faith, and Thomas' experience makes it more dramatically clear.

The fourth incident only mentions Thomas in passing, as one of the seven who went fishing on Galilee after the resurrection (21:2). But Peter, not Thomas, will occupy center stage there. I mention it only for completeness.

What we've learned about Thomas is that he was one of those folks who doesn't handle the invisible very well. He needed to be able to see things in the human terms he was used to.

He didn't "see" how Jesus could

handle things in Jerusalem, he didn't "see" where Jesus was going or how to get there, he didn't "see" how Jesus could have risen from the dead.

Let's not be too hard on him. We suffer from the same inability. We think God has to explain Himself in our terms before we can get a handle on it. We have to "see" how it can be done before we believe it. "Seeing is believing" isn't in the Bible, but it sure is in man's book. We're all doubting Thomases at one time or another.

Apparently that's one of the main reasons John draws for us this picture of the Twin. Thomas had to "see" to believe. "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed," Jesus said immediately afterward. John adds: "and that believing you may have life in His name." ■

Exploding the Doomsday Money Myths

Sherman S. Smith

(Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1994, 244 pp., hardback, \$18.99)



Thomas Marberry

The writer of this month's book is Dr. Sherman S. Smith, an active pastor and seminary graduate. He also has a successful career outside the church. He holds M.B.A. and Ph.D. degrees in business management and serves as a financial advisor with a securities brokerage firm. He publishes a quarterly newsletter and conducts seminars on financial management for churches.

The author had two purposes for writing this book. First, he wanted to respond to several books from Christian publishers in recent years which predict the collapse of our economy in the United States. Second, Smith wanted to offer sound advice to Christians on how to manage their personal finances.

Part one of the book tells of people who made or were contemplating making bad economic decisions after reading books which predicted economic disaster.

One pastor cashed in his retirement funds early and used the money to pay off the mortgage on his house and other debts. Now he has no debt, but neither does he have any income for retirement. This was not a wise economic decision for that pastor and

his family, and he soon regretted it.

Dr. Smith contradicts some economic theories which have become popular among Christian writers. He argues that the U.S. economy is fundamentally sound and in no danger of collapse. The country has always suffered ups and downs in the economy, and it will continue to do so in the future. He believes that there are many reasons to be optimistic about the economic future of our country.

There are some things which would, in his view, make our economy even stronger. He recommends a flat tax, lower taxes on the middle class, reduced government spending and fewer expensive government regulations.

These would stimulate job growth and bring greater prosperity to people at all economic levels. He sees no evidence that the Social Security system will go bankrupt; the people of the country would not allow it.

Smith denies that there is any worldwide or nationwide conspiracy to ruin our economy. In today's world there are so many different economic forces at work that no individual or group of individuals can dictate economic policies.

The second part of the book gives

sound economic advice to Christian individuals and families. He advises Christians to tithe their income. It is his view that God will bless those who faithfully support His work.

He reminds believers that they must budget carefully. They must discipline themselves to live within their incomes and save for the future. Savings should be invested wisely and for the long term.

He deals with the issue of debt. According to some Christian writers, the Bible forbids all monetary debt. Smith does not accept this interpretation. He notes that sometimes debt is both necessary and advisable.

Most people, for example, will never own a home if they do not go into debt to buy it. Debt must, however, be managed carefully and used wisely. High interest credit card debt is particularly dangerous.

This is one of the most practical books I have read in some time. The author presents a well-researched and knowledgeable approach to complex economic problems. He avoids sensationalism and makes sound recommendations on how Christian families can help insure their financial future. ■

BEYOND BELIEF



RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY NEWS

'Jesus' Film Impacting Millions

GAHANNA, OH (EP)—A group of Ohio pastors who joined together in an evangelistic campaign to reach suburban Columbus, Ohio, launched a campaign to give away free "Jesus" videos to their neighbors. As part of the project, they requested 8,000 videos for their massive city-wide campaign. Their order had greater significance than they could have imagined, since it pushed the total number of "Jesus" videos given away to over one million.

"This is a historic milestone," said Lloyd Olson, executive director of the "Jesus" video project. "As we celebrate the distribution of the first million videos we are propelled ever closer to our ultimate goal of offering a 'Jesus' video to those in every home in the United States by the year 2000."

Produced through Campus Crusade for Christ by John Heyman in 1979, the "Jesus" film has been seen in 219 countries by nearly one-billion viewers and is the most widely translated film in history. The film depicts Jesus' life and is based on the Gospel of Luke. The film is credited by the Center for World Missions with "touching more lives than any other evangelistic effort in human history."

Christians Must Serve, Not Dictate

ABBOTSFORD, B.C. (EP)—Serving others—rather than dictating views—should become the primary goal for North American Christians.

Speaking at the World Evangelical Fellowship Assembly in Abbotsford, British Columbia, Dr. Brian Stiller noted that Jesus could have used political power when facing Pontius Pilate and death but chose not to do so. Instead, Jesus demonstrated a servant's attitude by washing His disciples' feet.

Stiller said North American believers struggle with the concepts that their values are crucial to national life and become frustrated over being excluded from political dialogue. In addition, Stiller said many are confused over how to live out the Gospel in a Christ-like fashion.

"We have been politicized: over the past few decades we have resorted to make every stand a political view. Conservative Christians too often show intolerance and self-centeredness, but this

is not Jesus' way," declared Stiller. Instead, Stiller suggests, Christians should follow Christ's model of servanthood. Christ's towel was a symbol that "would topple the mighty power of Rome."

Though evangelical Christians believe societies need strong biblical leadership, Stiller warned, "We must be careful of our methods. Don't make the kingdom of God synonymous with our society. Our ways are different from others, and our attitudes must disarm those who believe that we are simply another noisy interest group."

Christians Persecuted in Egypt

CAIRO, Egypt (AP)—Anti-Christian propaganda is making life difficult for evangelical and Coptic Christians in Egypt.

In February, 12 Christians were killed inside a Coptic church in Abu Qurgas. A 22-year-old Egyptian convert from Islam to Christianity has faced repeated arrests and subsequent torture by Egyptian security police after his conversion was reported in a newspaper. Last year, 90 Christian homes were razed by a mob spurred on by remarks from a local Muslim sheik.

According to Compass news reports, such activity is fueled by inflammatory speeches from Islamic preachers, anti-Christian radio or television programs or illegal cassettes allegedly produced in the Gulf states and smuggled into Egypt. Many of the tapes oppose Christian evangelization of Muslims.

Anti-Christian sentiment is so strong Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak made a point of condemning sectarian divisiveness. Earlier, a Moslem Brotherhood leader had remarked that Coptic Christians should be denied leading positions in the Egyptian military in case the country went to war with a Christian nation.

Christian Church Growing in Iraq

BAGHDAD, Iraq (EP)—During the last seven years, the Christian church in Baghdad has grown from 250 members to over 1,200 believers. The economic problems bombarding post-Gulf War Iraq have softened hearts to the gospel, believes Abu Kahlil, Middle East director for the Christian Aid Mission.

"Saddam Hussein has done more to advance the spread of Christianity in the Middle East than all the foreign missionaries have done in the last 50 years," asserts Kahlil. "Hussein likes Christians. They usually don't have a violent political agenda. He employs about 50 Christians in the palace."

With much of the population destitute, many have left Iraq, seeking opportunities in other countries. Kahlil points out many non-Christians who were left homeless were warmly received by Christians in their new countries and were exposed to Christianity, and notes that one evangelical seminary in the Middle East boasts 37 Iraqis studying for the ministry.

"Up until this year, there wasn't even one Iraqi pastor," said Kahlil. The Baghdad church now has an Iraqi minister who received training from the Presbyterian seminary in Cairo.

Chinese Church May Send Missionaries

ABBOTSFORD, B.C. (EP)—The Chinese church could become one of the great missions sending forces of the 21st century, according to Hay-Chun Maak, general secretary of the Chinese Coordination Center of World Evangelism.

Maak, who has pastored and taught in several southeast Asian nations, points out the Chinese represent one of the globe's largest unreached people groups, and that a partnership with the Chinese church is needed to multiply its effectiveness both within and outside of China.

As a result of China's recent "open door" policy, churches have new opportunities to work with Chinese believers. As an example, Maak cited the case of the Rev. Hu, who returned home to An Hui province in 1980 and led three people to Christ. By 1997, those three converts have grown to 60,000. Twelve churches, a seminary, two high schools and three primary schools have also sprung out of that initial encounter.

The Chinese church, rooted deeply in persecution, has grown rapidly to numbers estimated up to 60 million. Quoting missiologist Peter Wagner, Maak suggests a Chinese sending force could be as large as 100,000 by the year 2025. ■

The Toughest Job in Town

Guess who has the toughest job in town? You're forgiven if you inserted your chosen vocation in the answer column. But, in my opinion, the most unforgiving 24-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week job belongs to the pastor.

When his alarm sounds, he seldom knows which hat to put on first—counselor, teacher, student, preacher, husband, father, moderator, friend, spiritual policeman.

So, to the young preachers among us, here are six ministerial problem areas and one man's opinion on how to navigate the rough spots.

Your Calling. Nail this one down. No excuses. There are too many good reasons to quit, unless you are absolutely, positively certain that the God who spoke to Moses from the burning bush also spoke to you about this business of preaching.

Plainly put, if you can do anything else other than preach, save yourself a world of frustration and do one of those other things. Be a lawyer. Go to medical school. Drive a truck. Program computers. None of them require a divine call.

But if you are called of God to preach, then prepare better than a trial lawyer facing his biggest case. Study harder than a doctor prepping for brain surgery. Stay more alert than a trucker hauling a nuclear bomb.

If the lawyer loses his case, his client goes to jail—yours goes to outer darkness. If the surgeon's hand slips, his patient spends 30 years in a wheelchair—yours spends forever in Hell. If the trucker breaks concentration, his mistake blasts a hole the size of Yankee Stadium—yours drives off into a bottomless pit.

Your Health. Stay as robust and

hardy as you can. Remember, if you don't take care of your body, where will you live? Walk, don't ride. Buy a push mower for the yard not a self-propelled number. Eat your veggies.

Work up a sweat every day. Climb the stairs and avoid the escalators. If you golf, forget the cart and carry your own clubs. Get a good night's sleep. Get up early and exercise.

Your Books. Build a library that fits your needs and personality. Once you gather basic resource volumes around you, ignore what others insist that you buy. When it comes to libraries, one size does *not* fit all.

You may be hungry for historical data. Go get it. Your slant on study may require more philosophy than mine does. Don't hesitate. Load your shelves with what cranks your motor. If you learn more from biography than from biology, collect everything from Louis L'Amour to Malcolm X.

Whatever else you do, read widely. Read regularly. You don't have to tell everything you know, but you do have to know everything you tell.

Your Preaching. If you don't enjoy your preaching, don't expect others to enjoy it either. Preach as if each sermon is your last . . . because one of them will be, and it could be the next one.

The best sermons are short sermons. Just ask anyone who hears three or more a week. How short is a short sermon? That depends on who's preaching, who's listening and who's got a roast in the oven.

It doesn't take much creativity to grind out a 58-minute sermon on covetousness. But package that same gas-guzzler in 22 minutes of muscle verbs and tight paragraphs, and watch the lights snap on in your listener's eyes. They'll love you and your

sermons. Always finish before your listeners do.

Your Hobbies. What's a hobby, you ask? A hobby is something you do for yourself. Every pastor needs one or more of these stress relievers. A hobby can be anything you want.

Many pastors like to fish. They get off by themselves on a river or lake away from phones, fax machines and deadlines. Some of the happiest pastors I know are avid fishermen . . . even though the big one usually gets away.

If you're not into baptizing worms, go your own way. Be a collector—of stamps or knives or clowns. Build furniture in your workshop. Resurrect old cars. Paint. Grow a garden. Hunt. Watch birds. Schedule time for this special outlet and kick back.

Your Hobby Horses. Skip this section if you're squeamish. First off, hobby horses are neither hobbies nor horses. They're personal prejudices, weaknesses, half-baked ideas and attitudes that got pulled green.

Some of us are better known for riding our hobby horses than for our preaching skills. Mind you, we all keep a few hobby horses in the corral. Don't saddle one and let him trap you in a box canyon of half-truths.

Just like hobbies, hobby horses can be anything. Some draw lines in the theological sand and brand everybody on the other side of the line as compromisers. Others jump on every emotional issue that comes down the pike and make that issue a test of faith, fellowship or orthodoxy.

Think for yourself. Don't ride somebody else's hobby horse.

Now guess who has the toughest job in town? If you said, "My pastor," you have been paying attention. ■



Jack Williams

CONTACT

P. O. Box 5002

Antioch, TN 37011-5002

Periodical
Postage
Paid

Women Nationally Active for Christ

*Flowers
in God's Bouquet*

We want to be . . .

Beacons of hope

Organized for effectiveness

United in purpose

Quick to obey

Useful in service

Evangelistic in emphasis

Teachers of good things

**August 1997
WNAC Emphasis**