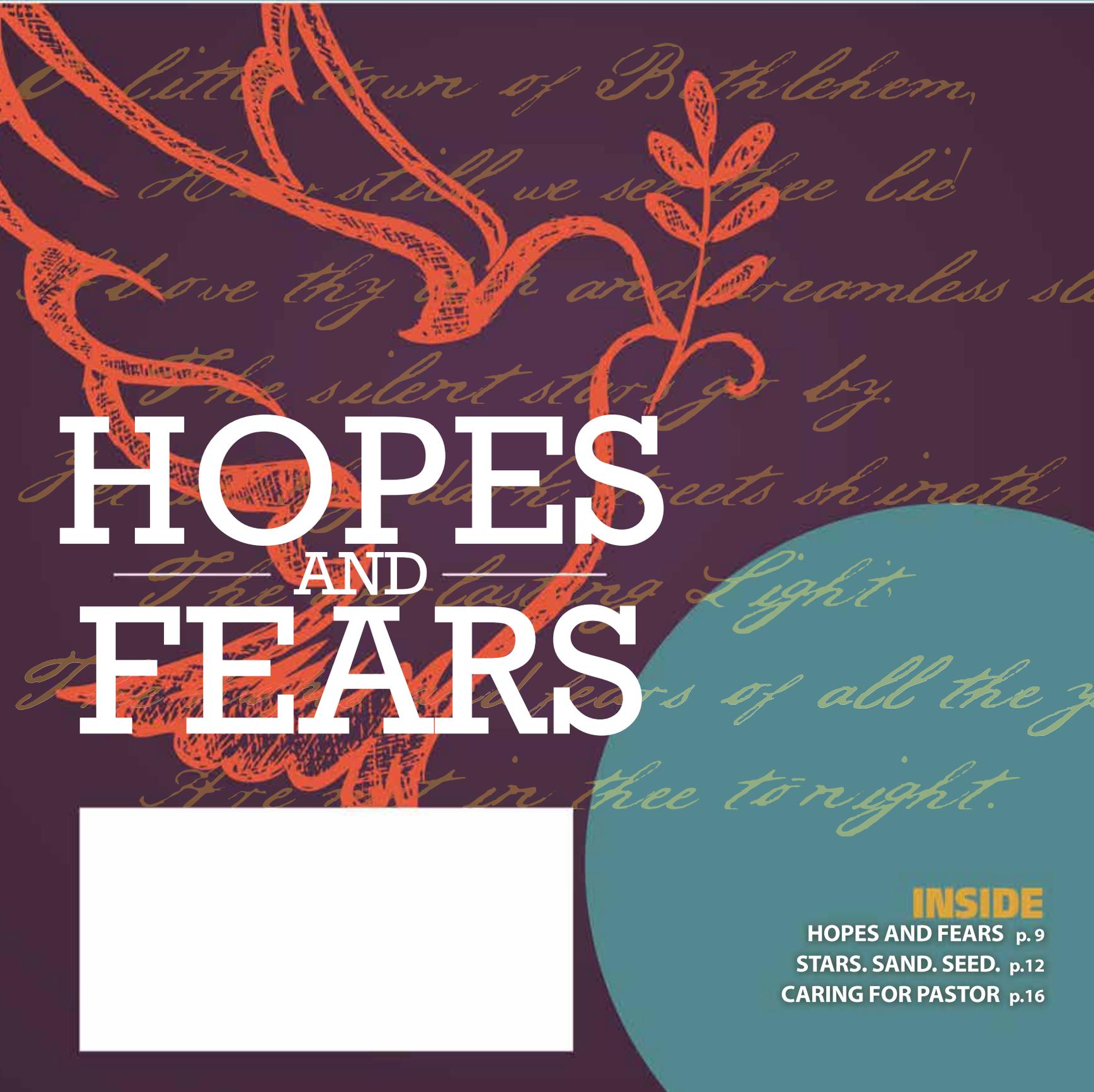


BAPTIST BIBLE TRIBUNE

DECEMBER 2014 | VOL. 65 NO. 4

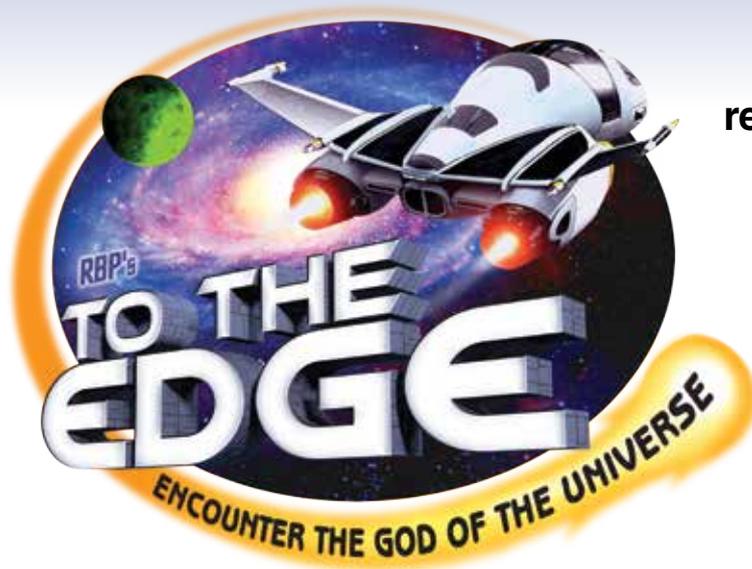


HOPES AND FEARS

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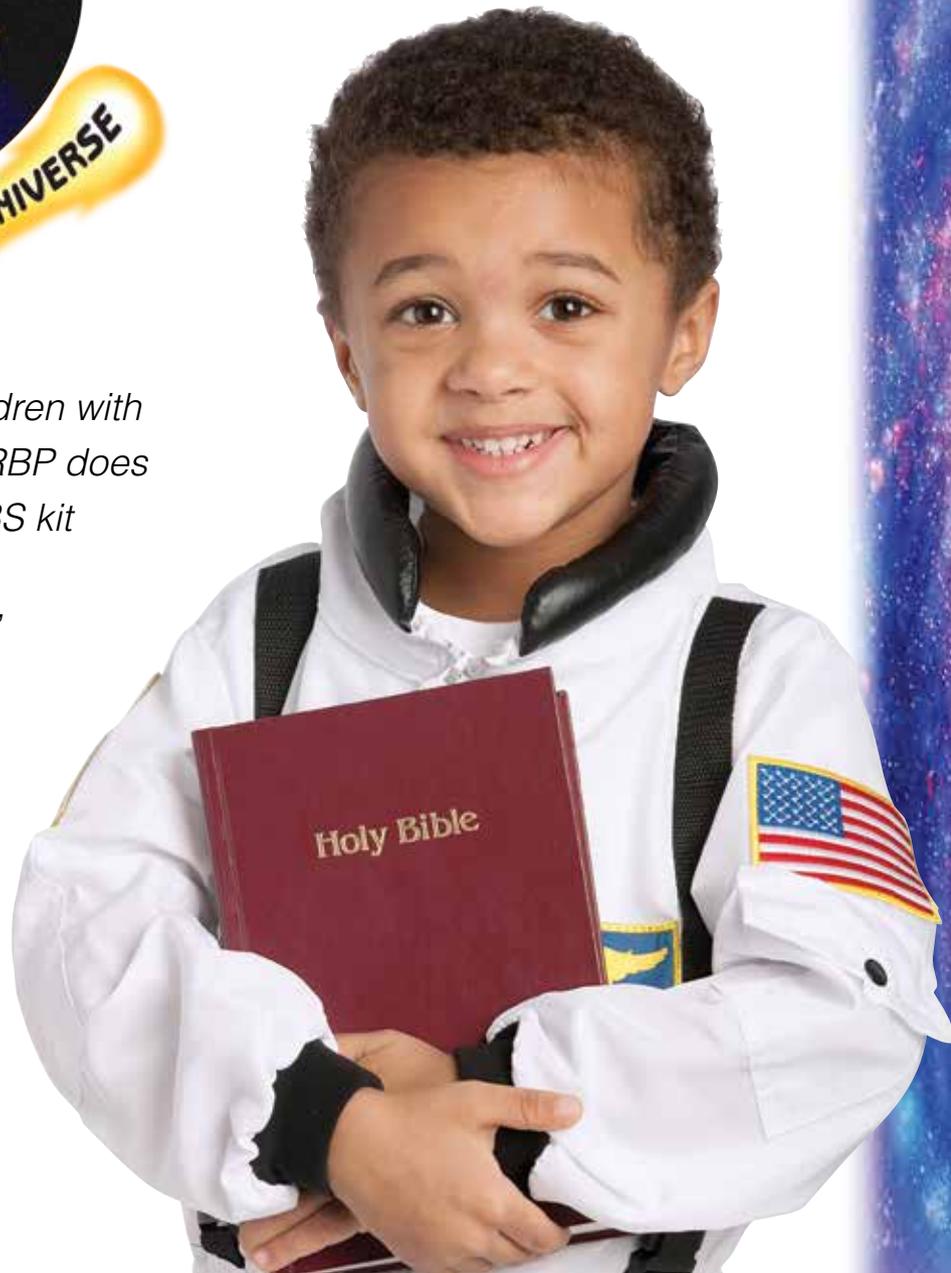
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ON THE TABLE
Christmas sand

by Keith Bassham | Editor

One of my Bible college teachers — I believe the course was Christology — was relating to us the unlikelihood of a Hebrew prophet's ability to foretell the place of Messiah's birth and getting it right merely by guessing. We are speaking, of course, of Micah's prophecy: "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting." (Micah 5:2, given about 700 years in advance of the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem.)

Our lecturer said that the chances of this happening as foretold (humanly speaking) were roughly the same as picking out one grain of dark sand in a pile made by a convoy of sand-hauling dump trucks. Examples like this help one visualize the concept better than using numbers with lots of zeroes to make the point. But not everyone appreciates the effort. My teacher went on to say that he was giving this example to a group of senior church members when one of them said he wished the preacher would quit talking about dump trucks and get back to preaching the Gospel!

In this issue, I am risking similar wrath in an essay, "Stars. Sand. Seed." The point I make is different, but we are talking about some pretty large numbers and their relation to the birth of Christ.

Incidentally, as I was writing the article, I came across some information about synagogues in Jamaica with sand floors. Why sand floors? No one knows for sure, and there are several explanations. One thing is certain, the sand is there on purpose, as it is poured into a wood base (somewhat like concrete in a form) which overlays brick. And over time, the sand has to be replaced and replenished.

Some think the origin is the landscape itself: sand is everywhere. Others believe that when the island was under Spanish/Portuguese rule, Jews, who had come back to their faith after a forced conversion, met stealthily in places with floors covered with sand to muffle their movement and worship noise. Still others like to say the sand is a reminder of the wandering of the Children of Israel across Sinai during the Exodus.

And then some believe (as I would like to) that the sand is a symbol of God's promise to Abraham, that his seed would be as multitudinous as the sand of the sea, a promise recalled in the New Testament, "Therefore sprang there even of one [Abraham], and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable" (Hebrews 11:12).

Steve Van Winkle's "Hopes and Fears" and an Afterwords column by former *Tribune* editor Mike Randall round out our Christmas features in this, our last *Tribune* for calendar year 2014. We trust and hope your Christmas will focus on the promises of God fulfilled in the Savior of the world.

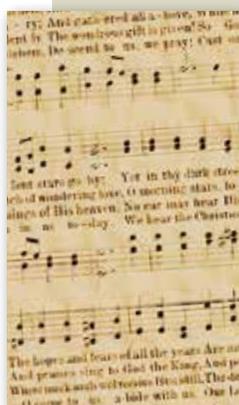
Keith Bassham

BAPTIST BIBLE
TRIBUNE

DECEMBER 2014

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PRESIDENTIAL PERSPECTIVE

Communication is key



by Eddie Lyons | President | BBF

Communication among the early churches was a high priority. When Paul wrote the book of Romans he wrote “to all who are in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints,” apparently intending to communicate to the churches in Rome. When he wrote Galatians he wrote “to the churches of Galatia.”

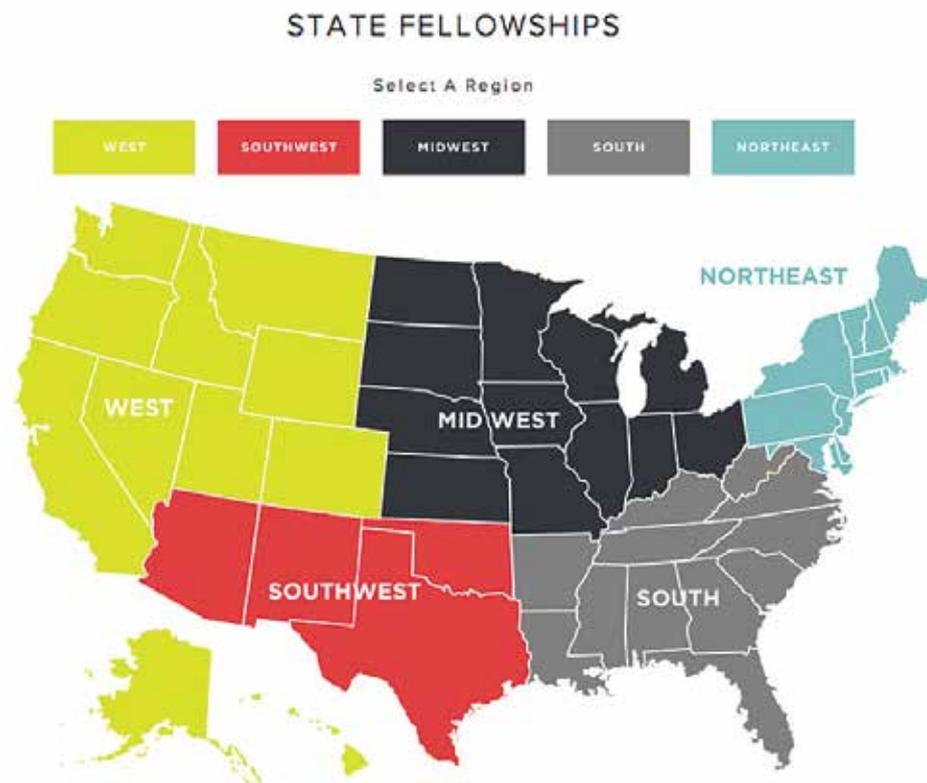
When our Fellowship began there was emphasis placed on communication. The *Baptist Bible Tribune* has been our primary communication tool since our beginning. And now the *Tribune* is providing the funding of our new website, www.bbf.org, to expand and to enhance our communication as a Fellowship.

We need to strengthen our grassroots, and that is one of my priorities. With this new website we have a new platform to visualize and coordinate these grassroots efforts. Our Fellowship is not a top-down but a bottom-up effort. We have always understood the importance of the local church as the centerpiece of all we do. The local churches form the State Fellowships, and the State Fellowships come together to establish the Baptist Bible Fellowship at a national level. And then our goal as national officers is to serve and help coordinate these local efforts.

We need the participation of our State Fellowship leaders to keep the website current. I ask Fellowship officers in the states to be sure we have this information:

- Officers: names and pictures
- Next election cycle
- State Fellowship bylaws
- State Fellowship policies
- Scheduled meetings
- Churches planted in the last five years
- Missionaries sent

As you look through the website, you will also notice some states do not cur-



rently have an organized Fellowship. This immediately identifies an opportunity. A pastor from one of those states contacted and asked if he could help get something started. That is what we want to see happen. If you know pastors in states without an active Fellowship, encourage them to work toward starting something and let us help where we can.

The Fellowship is a network of church planters, pastors, and missionaries working together to advance the Gospel around the world. We believe that we can accomplish more together than we can alone. Together we can plant more churches, send more missionaries, and strengthen each other in ministry. We exist for the sake of the Gospel.

Another goal for the new website is to be able to “celebrate the wins” together. I am inspired when you share stories of what God is doing in your ministry, so please take the time to celebrate your wins with us by emailing pictures and stories.

Communication within our Fellowship is key to our success. Soon, *Tribune* Editor Keith Bassham will be making his calls asking for your support. He needs our help now more than ever. After taking on the task of funding the development and maintenance of our new website, he needs to raise more money than before. It is a worthwhile investment. Good communication is a key to healthy and effective cooperation with the Fellowship. This will “strengthen the grassroots.”

The need for career missionaries - Part 2



by Jon Konnerup | Mission Director | BBFI

Last month I wrote concerning the need for church planting around the world. Acts 13 provides a clear example of the Antioch church fulfilling God's plan of spreading the Gospel to the ends of the earth by sending out those who the Holy Spirit called.

As a Fellowship of churches, the BBFI has the same commitment to send missionaries globally. Currently, we have missionaries sent by local churches serving in 90 different countries. The biblical mandate to send out those "set apart" as missionaries should not be abandoned.

Last month, I discussed how people in the church need to have a great concern for the lost and how, once they have seen the need to share the Gospel, must be willing to surrender to God's leading.

This month, I would like to conclude my thoughts on the components essential for a successful church plant.

5. Expecting God to do supernatural works through a career missionary in a church planting movement can strengthen through the prayers of others. Missionaries who live on the field and present the Gospel need the power from on high that comes from the intercessory prayers offered on their behalf. As a result, God receives the glory for the salvation of lost souls and churches being started.
6. Equipping leaders to eventually lead the congregation is a vital part of church planting. Career missionaries model Christ-like leadership before the people as they train co-laborers to teach and involve others in the work.
7. Training new leaders to multiply their church by making more disciples is also an integral part of church planting. Helping a church become indigenous so that it can propagate other new churches is brought about by the efforts of a well-trained missionary.
8. Mentoring indigenous leaders in a church planting movement allows the career missionary to move on to a new work while continuing to lend the leadership support in times of need. The career missionary goes through these steps — reaching, teaching, modeling, and equipping. As new churches begin to understand their responsibility to carry forth the Great Commission, they join in our efforts of sending their own to the regions beyond.

With career missionaries serving all over the world, many church planting movements have been started which are now even sending their own around the world. Without our Spirit-led missionaries on the ground, willing to follow these necessary steps, we would not have over 15,000 churches outside the United States today. We need more missionaries to join our efforts, and guess what? They come from our churches. It's all about churches starting churches around the world using career missionaries. That has always been God's plan.

Structuring for growth



by Dan Greer | BBFI 3rd Vice President | NCPO

Over the past few months I have seen a groundswell of enthusiasm for planting churches in our movement or among those wanting to affiliate with our network. I regularly receive calls from young men who have recently planted churches and from those who want to become church planters in our Fellowship. This is good news, because according to www.churchleadership.org, over 4,000 churches are closing their doors in the U.S. each year.

Historically, the BBF has been known for church planting and evangelism resulting in thousands of church starts across the land and millions of people coming to Christ. What's exciting is that there has been a recent upsurge of enthusiasm over starting new churches that is gaining momentum in many areas of our country.

I live in Houston and have had contact with young men such as Jeff Williams in Humble, Gary Melbourne who started a work in the Rosenberg/Pearland area, Harold Payne, Jr. who planted a church in Pearland, and Lynn Phipps who is starting a new church in the Kingwood area. Ira Walton came to Houston during October to work with some of the young men who are planning to start new works in this area. North of Houston, Dan Greer has had meetings with Robbie Pollard who has launched a new work in The Woodlands, and Willie Gains who is meeting with about 40 adults in preparation for a launch soon.

To accommodate this resurgence, our subcommittee has approved a plan to divide the nation into ten regions that will cluster states together for assessing, training, coaching, mentoring, and assisting in the fundraising effort for new churches. Already New Mexico, Texas, and Louisiana have united efforts under the leadership of Terry Kiser and their state chairmen, while Oklahoma, Missouri, Kansas, and Arkansas are pulling together under the leadership of Linzy Slayden and their state chairmen. Other clusters are now beginning to form in the Ohio River Valley and the Deep South.

Out in California, John Markum just launched a new church in the Bay area with 93 in attendance, seven saved, and five following the Lord in baptism. Markum recently wrote, "As a movement, I'm very excited that our Fellowship is thoroughly exploring the options of a decentralized, regional church planting emphasis. In my experience, this will give us the ability to do five things: (1) Better assess the qualifications of a potential planter for a specific part of the country. (2) Create a more local and regional passion among Fellowship pastors and churches for planting more congregations in their region. (3) Expedite fundraising and resourcing for planters. (4) Create local networks for sharing tools, experience, resources, and ideas among established pastors and other planters. (5) Enable tenured pastors/planters to mentor and coach new planters. A regional structure will enable us to plant many more churches, tailor the vision to reproduce churches to each region's context, expand our great movement, and reach more people with the Gospel."



DIGRESSIONS

Digressions incontestably are the sunshine; they are the life, the soul of reading.

-Laurence Sterne

Six judges resign over North Carolina's new same-sex marriage law

Six judges in North Carolina have all decided to step down in October, saying that they do not believe in marrying couples of the same sex because it violates their faith as Christians.

According to the magistrates, the Tar Heel State is trying to compel them to do something their faith will not allow them to do, which they believe is obstructing their religious freedom.

"It was something I had to do out of conscience," Gaston County's Bill Stevenson explained to NBC's Charlotte affiliate, WCNC-TV. "I felt like to perform same-sex unions would be in violation of the Lord's commands so I couldn't do that."

Just weeks after the new North Carolina marriage law passed, Stevenson says that he is not resigning to make a political statement, but insists that he would rather please God than man when it comes to the way he should live his life. Even though his recent announcement

of stepping down was just publicized last week, he turned in his resignation papers on October 16 — less than a week after same-sex marriage became legal.

Just days after a court decision was made to legalize same-sex marriages in North Carolina on October 10, judges were called to perform such union ceremonies as a requirement of their jobs.

The six judges say that there is little question in their minds and hearts that it was the right decision to leave their benches and they are waiting on God to lead them and provide direction as they begin new chapters in their lives.

With 670 county judges presiding across North Carolina, only six have resigned so far. Yet, many Christian magistrates still serving at their posts have stated they will not perform same-sex marriages if asked — decisions that may very likely result in their future terminations.

Source: www.OneNewsNow.com

Red Cross volunteer dismissed for stating traditional marriage beliefs

Bryan Barkley was a 20-year volunteer for the Red Cross in the United Kingdom. But that all came to an end last March. On the first day same-gender marriage was legal in Britain, Barkley protested with a sign that read, "No Same Sex Marriage" and "No Redefinition of Marriage."

The Red Cross immediately and permanently fired Barkley, 71, as a volunteer.

"Nobody should be dismissed whether they're a volunteer or whatever simply for believing that marriage can only be between a man and a woman," Simon Calvert, with The Christian Institute, which is representing Barkley, tells OneNewsNow.

Millions of other British citizens also believe in traditional marriage, says Calvert, who wonders if the Red Cross will "comb through" its list of volunteers and exclude those whose views on marriage mirror Barkley's view.

Source: www.OneNewsNow.com

Missionary freed by North Korea

Missionary Kenneth Bae, one of two Americans who were being held in North Korea, arrived in the U.S. November 9. The two were released after President Obama send a note to North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and a visit made by U.S. Director of National Intelligence James Clapper, according to the *Wall Street Journal*.

Bae was released after serving two years of a 15-year hard labor sentence for "crimes against the state." Upon his return he thanked his supporters for their prayer and for "not forgetting me."

According to World Watch Monitor, the top ten nations where it is most difficult to be a Christian are North Korea, Somalia, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Maldives, Pakistan, Iran, and Yemen. North Korea has been at the top of the list 12 years.

Sources: www.christianitytoday.com, www.worldwatchmonitor.org

LifeWay study: Americans and prayer

According to a LifeWay study sponsored by Max Lucado in August, men are less likely to talk to God than women: one in five say they never pray (22%), versus 1 in 10 women (11%). Roughly 20% of whites (19%) and Hispanics (20%) say they never pray; in contrast, only 5% of African Americans say the same.

Southerners are more likely to say their prayers are answered compared to dwellers in the North, and Catholics are more likely to pray for their sports teams victories than Protestants (about 20% to 11%).

The research also indicated wealthier Americans are more likely to pray for someone to get fired, and for "bad things to happen to bad people." One-quarter of respondents with an annual income higher than \$150,000 pray for "bad things to happen to bad people," while only around 8% of respondents making less than \$50,000 said they would do so.

The survey conducted August 7, 2014, asked 1,137 Americans about the frequency and content of their prayers.

Sources: blog.lifeway.com/newsroom/2014/10/01/new-research-americans-pray-for-friends-family-but-rarely-for-celebrities-or-sports-teams/

Baptist Bible Tribune

FOR BIBLE BELIEVING BAPTISTS

[Founded June 23, 1950]

VOL. V

SPRINGFIELD, MISSOURI, FRIDAY, DECEMBER 10, 1954

NO. 20

\$82,500.00 RAISED AT DENTON

ART WILSON HAS MISSIONS CONFERENCE

\$175,000 Building Program Now in Progress

BY WALTER BINNEY

WICHITA, Kas.—The sixteenth annual missionary conference of Wichita's Baptist Tabernacle came to a close Sunday evening Nov. 21, but the missionary spirit kindled by it will continue to burn. God manifested His presence in power from the very first meeting on Wednesday evening, with souls coming to Christ and the dedication of lives to His service.

Rev. Fred Donnelson, chairman of the Mission Committee of the Baptist Bible Fellowship, was present on the opening and closing nights of the conference. His messages were challenges to both missionary and church.

A missionary and a pastor were

[Continued on page 6]

Baptists In Canada True To The Faith

BY W. E. DOWELL

Pastor High Street Baptist church, Springfield, Mo., and Chairman of the faculty of Baptist Bible College.

It was my privilege recently to conduct my first revival in Canada. When the invitation came from Pastor Leander Roblin, who for several years has been the very aggressive pastor of the one hundred and three year old historical Benton Street Baptist church of Kitchener, Ontario, I felt very deeply impressed that I should go. Now that the meeting is over and I am home again, I am sure that my going was of the Lord. Not only because of the wonderful revival we had in the Benton Street church, but because of the blessings that came to my own heart and life.

The people at Benton Street are a great people who really love the Lord and I have never worked with

Next Year's Thanksgiving Meeting to Be in Ft. Worth

DENTON, TEXAS.

Following an address on the High Priesthood of Christ by Dr. John W. Rawlings, pastor Lockland Baptist church, Cincinnati, Ohio, and vice president of Baptist Bible College, Springfield, Mo., Dr. G. Beauchamp Vick, pastor of Detroit's Temple Baptist church, and president of Baptist Bible College, raised in cash and pledges a special offering of \$82,518.50 for the Baptist Bible Fellowship's work for 1955.

a nobler pastor than Brother Roblin. He has a pastor's heart and is a real soul winner. He had led his people in through preparation for the meeting, conducting special prayer meetings for several weeks prior to the revival. God honored their efforts by giving them a great harvest of souls.

The people received me from the very beginning with a warm welcome, and stood by with their prayers and works as well.

I shall never forget the wonderful send-off they gave me as I boarded the train in Gault to re-

[Continued on page 6]

This special offering, which was raised on Thursday morning at the Fellowship's fifth annual Missions conference held in Central Baptist church here, is over and above the regular weekly and monthly offerings churches of the Fellowship make to Baptist Bible College, Baptist Bible Missions, and The Tribune.

Of the total amount raised, \$17,042.04 was handed in on the spot in cash and checks. The pledges are to be paid next January.

Amounts Raised in Former Years

At the four previous meetings a total special offering of \$165,763.37

[Continued on back page.]

1955 Should Be Our Greatest Mission Year

Two More Missionary Families Approved for Foreign Service

To make predictions and resolutions for the new year may be rather premature at this time. The Thanksgiving Missions Rally at Denton is still a vivid memory to over 100 preachers, and most of us will want to linger over the victories experienced there. We will dwell on the hospitality of Central Baptist church, its pastor, Rev. Lester Singleton and his fine people.

By F. S. DONNELSON

We were much blessed by the preaching both during the days of conference and the evenings of challenging addresses. From Monday night on, Ingram, Wilson, Hodges and Dowell preached their hearts out to a sympathetic audience. John Rawlings was at his best Thanksgiving morning when

he delivered that masterful missionary address. Big Jack McGaughey was not the only one who shed tears of thanksgiving to God for the finished work of Calvary. Big Jack is always a blessing to our meetings. A life of sin and drunkenness transformed by grace Divine, has left him tender to the story of the Gospel.

I wonder if I am prejudiced in favor of the kind of preaching we

get in our Fellowship. This year a friend of mine, Rev. Ivan Brown, pastor of Messiah Baptist church in Chicago—where I ministered for eight years before going to China—was our special guest. He spoke in superlative terms of the preaching heard. From a personal point of view, to meet with scores of pastors and discuss their problems,

[Continued on page seven]

WINTER IN ORLANDO!

COMPELLED 2015

BBFI NATIONAL FELLOWSHIP MEETING

February 16-18, 2015

ORLANDO BAPTIST CHURCH

ORLANDO, FLORIDA | PASTOR DAVID JANNEY

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



RICK BLACKWOOD
Senior Pastor
Christ Fellowship Church
Miami



EDDIE LYONS
President
Baptist Bible Fellowship
International



DAVID NASSER
Senior Vice President
for Spiritual Development
Liberty University



BAPTIST BIBLE FELLOWSHIP
INTERNATIONAL

BBFI.ORG

O little town of Bethlehem,

HOPES AND FEARS

By Steve Van Winkle – Pastor of Fellowship Baptist Church, Bozeman, MT

I had a professor in seminary who draped his wrist in the ubiquitous rubber bracelet used to signify an array of causes and commitments in our society these days. That symbolism has become so commonplace and so diffused in meaning anymore that, unless told, no one really knows what inner resolution is being displayed. And since he taught a counseling course, he wasn't afraid to share without prompting...

This professor was a man getting along in years, with gray hair and fully aware he was sailing past the sweet-spot age for marketeers who target the lively part of society, while “your” commercials are now found only on television reruns from the 80s and early morning Fox News programs. He said, when he recognized that, he also recognized he had grown more critical of things around him; of change he didn’t appreciate; of people whose innocence he found annoying.

The bracelet, he said, was a reminder not to allow himself to become a grumpy old man.

That wasn’t so long ago for me, and, in fact, I’m still younger now than he was then. But the grumpy old guy within me is stirring.

In Christmas parlance, it’s the rise of the “bah-humbug.”

I feel growing inside my soul the propensity to be disgusted with a variety of things. From politics to church to people to young people to puppies, nothing is immune from a low-grade, thinly veiled “bah, humbug.”

In the adult faces of those I once knew as children, I see those who hold my future, those who will care for me in my infirmities. I shiver sometimes (for no good reason) at the prospect of this. In the news, I see the proverbial hand-basket in which our nation seems to be traveling to a certain end. In the trends of our culture, I feel an alienation that goes beyond taste or style to confusion.

For some reason, 20 years ago I thought I’d never hear my bones snap, crackle, and pop before I make it to the kitchen in the morning (most people 20 years my younger don’t even get the “snap, crackle, and pop” reference). Like most my age, I thought rap music would pass. Like most 20 years my elder, I can now understand how life pushes people into forced retirement from relevance.

And the “bah, humbug” grows more insistent — defiant, even.

As I began work on this essay, I had Phillips Brooks’s Christmas carol, “O Little Town of Bethlehem,” on my mind. In the first stanza is a poetic and yet cryptic phrase I’ve never quite understood. You might remember it:

The stanza begins, “O little town of Bethlehem,” and ends with “the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.”

What hopes? What fears? All the years? How are they met? Why do they need to be met?

When I was a kid in Nebraska, the hopes of my years probably pointed me to the Sear’s wishbook where my heart’s desires were circled in red like government entitlements. The fears were probably that those reddened football uniforms, trains, games, and all associated paraphernalia were going to be overlooked by the Spirit of Christmas and I’d be left with the 20th century version of coal on Christmas morning in their stead: underwear, fruit, and a jigsaw puzzle.

Simple hopes; simple fears.

As life moved forward, the hopes and fears matured. Instead of toys in a Sear’s wishbook, what I had circled in red was hopes for respite from cold realities. Realities attending people like me in broken homes in the late 70s included chronic financial shortfalls, seismic uncertainty about the future, and a general bunker mentality against an encroaching, harsh world.

I had hopes that, for a time, what couldn’t be escaped 51 weeks of the year could be forgotten for that last one near the end of December. As that spot on the calendar approached, the only fear I knew was the one that whispered: reality may be at bay, but January was where we would find it again.

Lesser hopes; living fear.

Lurching beyond childhood, my hopes turned to what could be; what I could be. Then, when I married Cheryl, what we could be. Hopes then were more the architecture of dreams and the limitless possibility of unwritten years. Framed in optimism, our hopes were everything that was good about marriage, ministry, and kids; we were building and growing and wondering.

Fear was not a word found in my vocabulary much. That was due, in part, I suppose, to the fact that life was young enough that a course correction was affordable, should one be needed.

Also, when you are young you acquire a stockpile of mulligans, so as our family grew and as my ministry was new, this knowledge served as a comfort attending every decision and even disappointment. Maybe the roads I chose at the various forks of life were wrong, but I could always fix it; I always had time.



Big hopes; lesser fears.

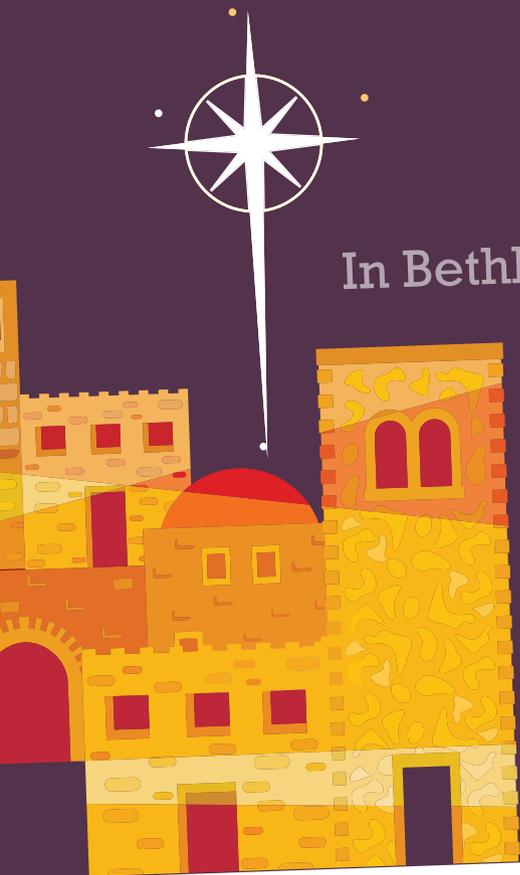
I find today the tide of hope hasn’t turned nor shifted so much as it’s just different. Hope has a shelf life, and as the years pile up on me, they wilt hope just a little. Many of the hopes of my years are now living, well-loved people and vibrant realities; some hopes have expired.

And, hopes are still driving me, still driving us. Yet, I feel them turning a little. The hopes of empire building have receded some, and most of my future has been set. The hopes of my years are now more on the returns of various investments we have made. Hopes are more centered in the people we have introduced to life and the legacies of our labor.

Don’t get me wrong, hope is alive and there is much building yet to do, but there’s a new dimension to hope now. It’s the hopes of seasoned people looking back on who they have been more than runaway hope of who they will be.

It’s a good hope, taking shape from many hopes of earlier days now realized.

Along with those new hopes, however, come new fears. Unlike hope, I find fear has no shelf life, no expiration date. I also, somewhat regrettably, understand how my



In Bethlehem's streets, he may have seen

an intersection where
fear and hope collided
at a manger in which
the answer to both lay
in swaddling clothes.

professor felt the need to fight off the grumpy old man inside.

While still too young to be considered “old” by most standards, I can nonetheless recognize where that grumpy old man finds his strength and influence: fear. That fear, I find, is also the source of my “bah” and my “humbug.”

Instead of hope in what will be, I see where people become dominated by fear of losing what has been. Hope in whom children will become can easily be displaced by fear of who they actually are. And the hope of what can be built often dies beneath the weighty fear of what may be dismantled.

And, that's not so far off from our familiar Ebenezer Scrooge, who was afraid of losing the business he had built and being bilked out of the fortune he amassed over the decades. The man who introduced us to the phrase “bah, humbug” was the slave of fear, once his hopes had been exhausted.

Dickens used his Ebenezer to remind people of the natural enemy of fear. He saw in Christmas an inexhaustible source of hope that vanquishes it.

Perhaps this was on Phillips Brooks's mind when he penned the words “hopes and fears,” words I've mulled over for years. Perhaps he could envision, or sense himself,

how life turns on the ebb and flow of both hope and fear.

He wrote of a town lost to fears birthed in darkness in a world where hope was a mockery. In Bethlehem's streets, he may have seen an intersection where fear and hope collided at a manger in which the answer to both lay in swaddling clothes.

The harsh world and the dim hearts of fallen humanity brought innumerable fears to this cradle. Fears of tomorrow, fears of government, fears of disappointment, fears of loneliness, fears even of hope itself came to silence the cry that doomed them all.

And, they were met.

They were met by the Everlasting Light, Brooks wrote. At the intersection where Christ was found in a stable that evening, the fears of what will be were vanquished by what God was doing to save us all. And, those who had become fearful to hope were called by a baby's cry to dream once again.

On the cusp of another Christmas, I finally believe I understand those cryptic words. I look back at the variegated hopes and fears of all my years and see how Christmas has run through them all. Not simply the season, the traditions, and the gifts, but the Child.

No matter what form, or how grave, or

how bold, the fears of my life have always been tended to by the One born on this day. He has overseen my life in the way He has overseen the world, taking every fear and sustaining me through them, whether they were ever realized or not.

Most of all, He takes fear to hope — the worst fear I have ever known — and does something unexpected. He takes me back to the stable, beside the manger, and offers me, not solutions nor plans nor even rubber bracelets, but Himself.

To those fighting back the grumpy old person inside or trying to fend off the swarm of “bah, humbug,” or shriveling from the fears generated by a dark world, I echo again the beckoning words of “O Little Town of Bethlehem.” No truer, no more pertinent words were ever written about life than those of this old carol.

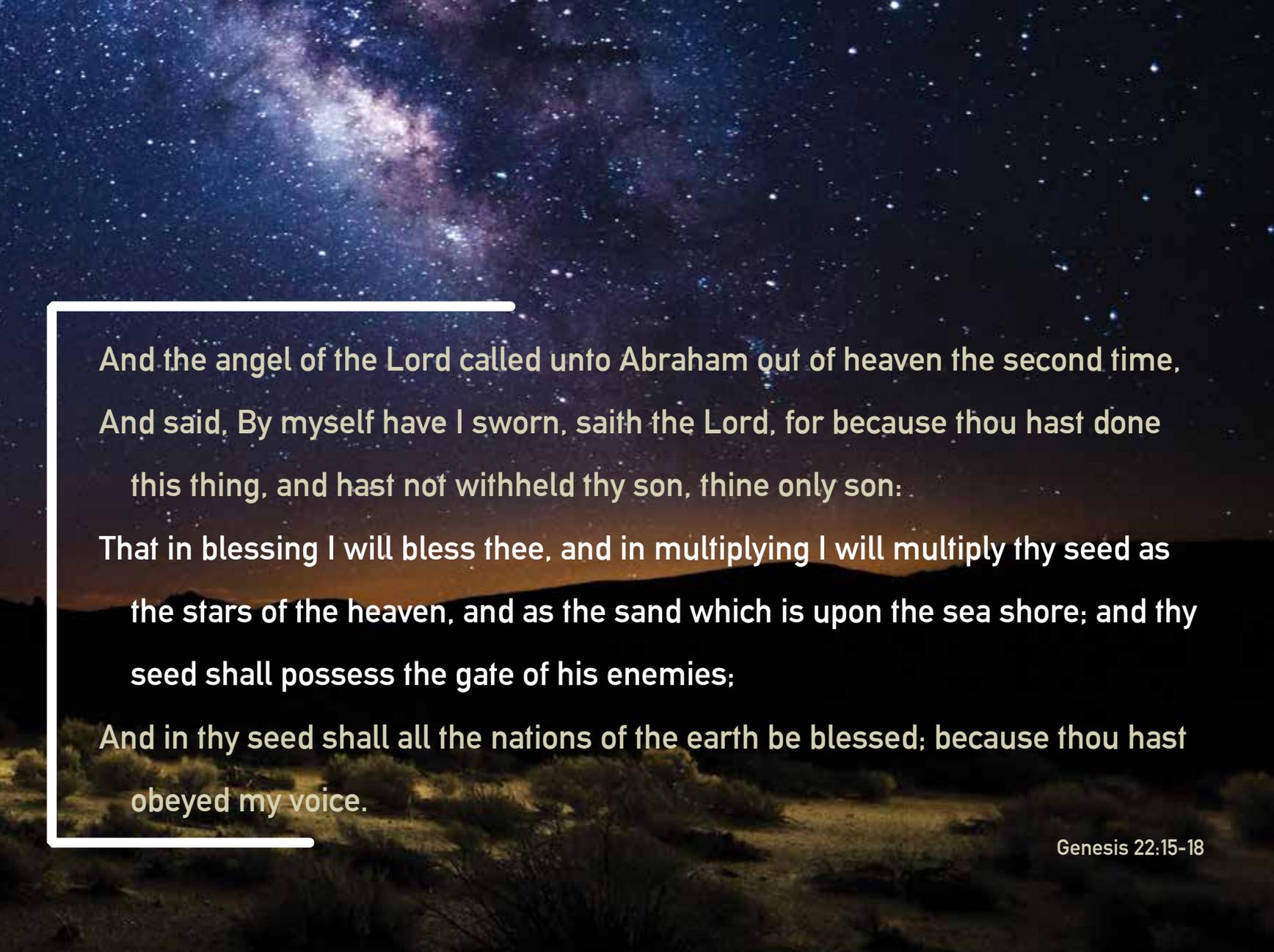
Bring your lilted hopes choking from fear to the streets of Bethlehem. Bring them to an intersection where a manger lay and hear again the cry of a Baby's eternal voice.

Bring them here, because the hopes and fears of all our years are met there in Christ tonight.

Steve blogs at <http://20fore20.wordpress.com>.



**STARS.
SAND.
SEED.**



And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time,
And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done
this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son:

That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as
the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy
seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;

And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast
obeyed my voice.

Genesis 22:15-18

And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Galatians 3:29

By Keith Bassham

As far as I can tell, the first time we encounter the word love in the Bible is in the story we call The Sacrifice of Isaac, and it describes Abraham's affection for his son Isaac. Isaac, whose name meant "laughter," was a miracle child for the aged Abraham and Sarah, their hope for a family that would live and grow to be a great nation.

The story is well known, even among people with little or no Bible knowledge. The great themes of trust, faith, obedience, justice,

and compassion are presented, not in a point-by-point theoretical explanation, but in a narrative — a story — a drama. The narrative is known among the Jews as the *Akedah*, or the binding, a reference to the act of Abraham binding his son to an altar that, for all we know when we first read the story, is to be the place where Isaac will die.

The text says the episode was a test, the final test of ten according to Jewish tradition. The other tests involved leaving his home,

dealing with famine, dealing with his nephew Lot, and other events, but this last test is said to be the most difficult of all.

And why not? On the face of it, it seems ridiculous, almost barbaric and cruel. “Take your son, whom you love, to Moriah and offer him for a burnt offering.” Abraham, who had argued enthusiastically on behalf of the citizens of Sodom and Gomorrah, offered no objection, and he made plans to obey. However, we do have a couple of clues explaining his action, or inaction. As he and his entourage came near the place of the sacrifice, he explained to the others that he and his son were going off a ways to worship, and then they would return. The second clue comes when Isaac, a model of patience and trust himself, asks his father about the “lamb for a burnt offering,” Abraham replies, “God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering.”

These clues, along with some explanation in the New Testament, tell us that Abraham believed God’s promise, given to him years before, that Isaac would participate in a covenant with God, along with his descendants. For this to happen, Isaac must live, and not die childless:

By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son,

Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall

thy seed be called:

Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead;

Hebrews 11:16-19

And so, just before Abraham was to inflict the wound that would kill his son, he was stopped, and directed to take a ram caught in a thicket and sacrifice it in the stead of Isaac (believers in Jesus Christ will see the substitution connection immediately), making Abraham call the name of the place Jehovah Jireh, or “the Lord provides.” And as the smoke of sacrifice went heavenward, Abraham heard these words:

... By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son:

That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies;

And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.

Genesis 22:16-18

The ideas contained in this speech appear several times in the Old Testament.

Stars. Sand. Seed.

Let’s take the last one, the seed, first. One of the first references to seed takes place just

after Adam’s sin when God tells the serpent that he would “put enmity” between the serpent’s seed and the seed of the woman. This is usually seen to be a reference to the battle between Satan and the Son of God, a battle that ends with the Savior’s death and resurrection in which we are delivered and Satan is defeated. Here, the “seed of the woman,” is Jesus Christ.

Each of the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob), as well as Judah and David are spoken of in “the seed of ___” phrasing.

Seed is also used in an ordinary way, a euphemism for offspring and descendants among humanity. It takes on a more important idea when it is applied to Abraham and his family. We know as we move into the New Testament that the seed takes in more than just physical descendants, and in fact, it comes to refer to Jesus as Messiah, but the Old Testament people don’t really see that clearly, and it becomes apparent only when the New Testament events occur, and the early preachers declare it explicitly.

We see the sand and stars imagery in Genesis 15:5 when God says to Abraham “Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.” And in Genesis 26:4, God says to Isaac, “And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.” Isaac’s son Jacob, in

70 THOUSAND, MILLION, MILLION, MILLION

estimated number of observable stars

7 QUINTILLION, 500 QUADRILLION

estimated number of grains of sand on the earth

a prayer to God, recounts the promise made to him, “And thou saidst, I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea, which cannot be numbered for multitude” (Genesis 32:12).

Other passages use similar language applied to the entire nation of Israel: Deuteronomy 1:10, 10:22, 26:5, 28:62; Numbers 23:10; 1 Kings 3:8, 4:20; 2 Chronicles 1:9; and Nehemiah 9:23. The imagery moves to the New Testament, and here is where we begin to learn that something more than biology and physiology is at work where the sand, stars, and seed are concerned.

Paul lets us in on some inside information when he writes in his letter to the Galatian churches, “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ” (Galatians 3:16). In other words, the focus of the promise given to Abraham and his heirs was not confined to mere physical multiplication, but there is a spiritual lineage in mind as well. Just as God had said to Abraham at the first, before he changed his name, before he left the Chaldees, before he possessed children, and before he began to exercise real faith and trust, “In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.” All families. And the God of Genesis is the God of the Revelation where we read that John saw in his heavenly vision “a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues,” those

who had washed their robes and “made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Revelation 7:9, 14). Thus, “... if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:29).

I was thinking about this sand and star imagery recently as I recalled reading once that until the invention of the telescope, humans could only see a couple of thousand or so stars. Even a pair of ordinary binoculars on a clear night will easily multiply that number. The large observatory telescopes took us into the millions of visible stars, and now the Hubble telescope is allowing us to see parts of the universe and objects in the heavens we never dreamed of. Literally billions of stars are out there. Or at least I thought so.

I don’t ordinarily speculate on such things, but apparently some people have occupied themselves with the question, what is there more of — grains of sand or stars in the sky? Seriously.

And more surprising, someone has given us an answer. Science writer David Blatner, in his book *Spectrums: Our Mind-Boggling Universe, from Infinitesimal to Infinity*, describes a group of University of Hawaii researchers who decided to figure out how much sand there is. You have to take a few things for granted, like an average size of a grain, and then you take a small quantity, perhaps a teaspoonful. And then you multiply that number by what you think is the area of sand covering the earth (I don’t know if ocean bottoms were included), but according to the

research, a rough estimate is about 7.5 times 10 to the 18th power grains of sand — seven quintillion, five hundred quadrillion, give or take a few gazillion (that last part I included just in case a correction was needed).

But get this. According to Blatner, in 2003 we knew about 70 thousand, million, million, million observable stars. And that gives us an idea of the vastness of God’s promise, the sheer audacity of God for making such a promise to a 100-year-old man.

But there is more. Blatner goes on to tell us that even though that number of stars seems to be an “unbelievably large number,” he says, there are the same number of molecules in just ten drops of water. Fascinating, no?

I guess I can understand why God would use sand and stars rather than water drops when he made those promises. How could anyone, let alone people of the Old Testament era, possibly understand such a comparison?

And yet, God does something like that when he talks about a seed. A mere seed. Something small becoming something so large and unfathomable. I wonder if the magi had something like that come to mind when they were crossed over an ocean of sand, followed a star, and came upon a seed in Bethlehem something a little more than 2,000 years ago. And the whole event was surrounded by vastness.

May you come to appreciate the vastness of God, His promise, and His salvation during this Christmas season.

CARING FOR PASTOR

SO PASTOR CAN CARE FOR THE CHURCH

By Rosanne Bowman • Lima, OH

This article appeared in *The Lima News*, October 15, 2014, and is reprinted by permission. Copyright 2014 *The Lima News*.

According to statistics gathered by Maranatha Life, an international ministry to pastors and Christian leaders, around 1,500 pastors leave the ministry every year. Those statistics also showed that 80 percent of pastors feel unqualified and discouraged in their role as pastors, and 50 percent of pastors are so discouraged, they would leave the ministry if they could make a living doing something else.

The Rev. Jerry Burton, pastor of counseling and discipleship at Lima Baptist Temple, said that pastoral care is one way to combat these statistics.

“Personal care needs to happen primarily because pastors don’t have a pastor,” said Burton, who has been in full-time ministry for 54 years. “They don’t have an outlet if a problem arises. They have no liberty to bare their soul to a member of the congregation.”

Because of this, many pastors do not stay in a church for very long.

“The average time a pastor stays in a church is two and a half to five years,” Burton said. “Either the conflict is so great, or they have never resolved previous issues no matter how many times they have moved and those issues keep coming up.”

The constant change of senior pastors in a church can be problematic for the congregation, as well. There is usually a transition period where the congregation and the new pastor and his or her family get used to each other. According to Burton, this can last anywhere from six months to two years.

“Because we view the church as a family,” he said, “it feels like Dad left and abandoned the family when the senior pastor leaves. Especially if the previous pastor has been there 20 or 30 years, you get the comparison game. Congregations can’t expect a carbon copy of the previous pastor. The new pastor needs to be able to minister using his own gifts and leadership styles.”

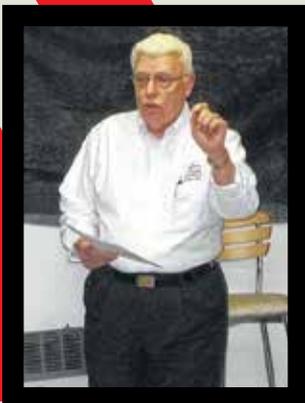
Pastoral care helps not just pastors and their families but also the congregations they serve. Burton has spent the last nine years working with Don Rooks in Connecting Point Ministry whose main focus is ministering to those in ministry. The organization holds international retreats for overseas missionaries and three ministry stress management conferences a year for pastors, missionaries and the adult children of those in fulltime ministry.

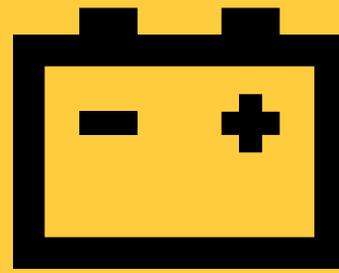
“We find that the children of ministry families often struggle with their view of God,” said Burton.

Each week-long conference begins at 3 p.m. Monday and goes through 11 a.m. Friday. There are morning and evening sessions that include group sessions where participants can discuss issues with others who are experiencing the same kinds of things. There are also one-on-one sessions on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons.

“Every facilitator — there are usually six — talks to every person attending in their area of specialty,” said Burton. “My wife Carol

Jerry Burton





and I specialize in the spiritual gifts and temperament analysis.”

While there are other conferences out there, Burton said Connecting Point Ministry is unique because the conferences are free for attendees.

“The facilitators all pay their own way,” he said. “We give a week of our time, and we don’t get anything out of it except the satisfaction that we’ve helped.”

In the years Burton has been working with people in ministry, the biggest issue he sees is the difficulty pastors have in learning to balance work and family. He also sees marital conflict and unforgiveness as recurring issues among those in fulltime ministry.

“They think they are better and have moved on,” he said, “but unforgiveness can cloud their judgment and affect their ministry and their health.”

Of course, pastoral care involves more than spending a week at a conference once a year. Burton shared several things congregations can do to help their pastors. First, congregations should insist their pastor has a day off and they need to respect the pastor’s day off, so he or she can truly relax.

Burton also advised not putting the pastor and his or her family on a pedestal.

“They need to allow him to live a regular life, to have family time,” he said. “They need

to let him be as human as possible.”

Burton added that if the congregation thinks the pastor has failed in some way, they need to first forgive the leader and then pray about it, rather than talk about it to others in the congregation.

He also suggested that the congregation consider giving their pastor a 30- to 90-day sabbatical every five to seven years.

“It will refresh his body and his mind,” said Burton.

Pastors also need the freedom to seek help if they need it. Those in leadership in the church should encourage a pastor to seek outside counsel or help if the pastor or his or her family are having problems in a specific area.

“Often,” said Burton, “pastors are afraid to share problems they are having because it becomes a threat to their leadership. They should be encouraged to get help without judgment.”

Finally, Burton said that congregants should pray for the pastor and his or her family regularly.

“They get attacks that are not like anyone else,” he said. “There are expectations on pastors that can’t ever be fulfilled.”

Photo courtesy of Craig Orosz, photo editor for The Lima News

7 WAYS TO HELP YOUR PASTOR

- ✓ **Make your pastor take a day off every week.**
- ✓ **Respect the pastor’s day off.**
- ✓ **Don’t put the pastor and his or her family on a pedestal.**
- ✓ **Don’t talk about a pastor’s failures; pray about them.**
- ✓ **Give the pastor a sabbatical every five to seven years.**
- ✓ **If the pastor or his or her family are facing an issue, encourage them to seek help.**
- ✓ **Pray for your pastor and his or her family.**

For information about Connection Point Ministry, visit www.cpministry.com.

Editor’s Note: The BBFI Articles of Faith make clear the office of pastor is limited to men.

HISTORY

BAPTISTS

HENRY JESSEY — Scholar and Pastor

By Doug Kutilek

Throughout the 1600s and well into the 1700s, formally college-trained scholars were rare among English Baptists. Not because Baptists lacked men of intelligence or were particularly anti-intellectual, but because admission to Oxford and Cambridge was strictly limited to members of the Church of England, and Baptists as yet had no colleges of their own. One exception to this rule was Henry Jessey (1601-1663; the family name is also spelled Jacie and Jessy). But even he began as an Anglican, becoming a Baptist in mid-life.

Jessey's father was an Anglican pastor, and he gave particular attention to the education of his son. At age 17, Henry was sent off to St. John's College at Cambridge, where he spent six years, securing both the B.A. and M.A. degrees. His father died during these college days, and Jessey was quite poor, and only with the strictest personal economies did Henry have sufficient money for food and to "hire" (rent) textbooks. Besides the necessary fluency in Latin, he learned Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic/Syriac.

But much more important than the knowledge he acquired in his college days, at age 21 he came to a personal knowledge of Christ as Savior through the study of the Bible. Sensing a call to the ministry, he was ordained — as an Anglican priest — in 1627. For a decade, Jessey served as the private chaplain in the home of landed aristocrats of dissenting (non-Anglican) religious persuasion, during which time he devoted himself to studies to expand his already good knowledge of Scripture. One area of special study for him was ancient Jewish and rabbinic literature.

In 1633, he was expelled from the pastorate of an Anglican congregation because his Biblical convictions compelled him to refuse to adhere to the superstitious rituals prescribed by the Church. In 1637, he became pastor of an underground dissenting congregation in London, the famous Jacob-Lathrop church. While pastor there, his personal Bible study led him to the conclusion that immersion alone was the prescribed Biblical mode of baptism, and for several years he immersed all infants brought to him for baptism. During this same period, his church lost a growing number of members to the Baptists, and so Jessey examined further the Biblical subject of baptism, concluding that only those who had personally repented and believed in Christ were proper candidates for baptism. He testified to his faith in 1645 by being immersed by Hanserd Knollys. Jessey well-demonstrates A. T. Robertson's

aphorism, "Give a man an open Bible, an open mind, a conscience in good working order, and he will have a hard time to keep from being a Baptist."

Jessey pastored for a time two churches simultaneously in the Southwark region of London (south of the Thames), one Anglican and one Baptist. Two centuries later, Spurgeon would pastor in this same neighborhood.

Like Apollos, Jessey was "mighty in the Scriptures," especially the original Greek New Testament and Hebrew Old Testament, copies of which he constantly carried with him, and which he said were his sword and his shield. He was spoken of as a "living concordance," since he could finish almost any quotation of Scripture started by another, and cite the proper reference, chapter and verse. The "great work" of Jessey's life, in his own estimation, was a complete revision of the common English Bible, to bring it into closer conformity to the originals and to clear it of numerous places where it "spoke the language of prelacy" (Anglican ritual). He worked with other scholars in this project, including John Rowe of the University of Aberdeen. The work was completed before Jessey's death, but never published. I have been unable to discover if his manuscript still exists.

Never marrying, Jessey devoted his time and resources to the Lord and people. He was constantly collecting funds for the relief of the poor (besides contributing from his own meager resources), providing nearly the whole support for some 30 families, and once collected several hundred pounds for the relief of the suffering poor Jews in Jerusalem. Jessey was premillennial by conviction, and believed that the conversion of the Jews was an essential condition before the Second Coming would occur. He personally observed a Saturday Sabbath, but did not impose his personal views on the churches he pastored.

With the Restoration of the Stuarts in the person of Charles II in 1660, and the Act of Conformity that followed, Jessey ran afoul of the law and was imprisoned (not his first confinement) under horrible conditions for several months. He was released five months before his death in September 1663.

Jessey's mortal remains lie somewhere among the 120,000 dissenters buried in London's Bunhill Fields, awaiting the resurrection of the righteous.

Editor's note:

Thomas Ray, whose writings usually appear in this place, is taking some time off from the Baptist History columns. We look forward to his soon return.

URBAN CURRENT

Joy to the jail

"As a young man, with a well-earned street name of Satan, James Anderson said he could pull the trigger, drop his victim's body at the edge of town, stop to eat chicken and potato salad on the way home, and never think about it again," writes Mark Brown in the *Chicago Sun Times*.

Anderson is now an associate pastor. He is often called upon to counsel with young men just out of Cook County Jail.

Michael Carter is now pastor of Mighty God Tabernacle. In his younger days he was a stickup man surely destined for a shortened life.

How about former Vice Lords general finishing up his PhD? Benny Lee works as a drug counselor. What about Edward Bey, an original member of the notorious South Side Blackstone Rangers who spoke of putting down his gun after 15 murders? Then there is Herbert Stevens-EL, known as Thunder.

These are a few of the countless converts of Consuella York, affectionately called Mother York.

At 5'2", Mother York, 72, when she passed away in December 1995, was a one-woman-Holy-Ghost-salvation crusade. Seven days a week toiling past midnight, rising at dawn, bedding down three or four nights a week on her office couch, serving with no salary. After the early Sunday jail service she would help lead the four-hour service at her church. "Mother doesn't eat a balanced diet and doesn't get enough rest," son John observed. "She's been going like this for as long as I can remember."

There are 70,000 admissions every year to Cook County Jail, the largest single jail site in the country.

Mother York first visited the teeming facility as an observer. "I've been a jailbird ever since, serving a life sentence for the Lord," she told the *Chicago Sun Times*. She was the first female chaplain. For 40 plus years she conducted services, scolded, rebuked, corrected, preached,

and prayed. She greeted inmates with "Mother York's goodie wagon," a little red wagon full of treats, toothpaste, and shampoo.

One of her thousands of visits was described this way: First stop, Wing J2 in Division 4. As usual, it's slow going. She's constantly stopping to speak to guards, secretaries, administrators, and police officers, all part of her flock.

She greets them with a kiss, calls them by name, jokes, asks about their families, and shares the contents of a white plastic sack that appears to contain an inexhaustible supply of peanut brittle and pound cake.

At her destination, the guard unlocks the door and she's engulfed by young men in tan trousers and matching short-sleeved shirts.

"God bless you, Mother York," an inmate shouts.

"We love you Mother York," says another. This chorus will be repeated all afternoon. She teases, cajoles, banter. She scolds some who have caused problems for the guards. "I know it can be hard doing time, but you've got to obey authority."

The inmates are polite, behaved children seeking approval from a parent. There's no profanity, no off-color comments. She commands an inmate who has lied to make a public apology. He does.

"The Bible says if you will confess your sins, God will show you mercy," she says. "Salvation is free. You weren't arrested. You were rescued. God pulled you out of the street and saved your life bringing you here. Do you want to end up dying in the penitentiary? The Lord didn't make you to be inmates; He made you to be the masters of the universe. Let's pray. On your knees."

Everyone kneels, heads bowed. Mother York lifts an impassioned intercession that surely moves the heart of God.

Dressed in a floor-length black cape, clerical collar, and a black cassock touching her shiny, black, low-heeled shoes, she moves in quiet authority. She is crowned by a black cap

with a white border. A silver cross on a silver chain hangs around her neck. In Roman Catholic Chicago, her garb alone carries weight with the Irish guardians of the penal system. Her dark face makes her sunny smile all the brighter.

"She's the best thing we have here," says Demetrius, charged with armed robbery. "She's a great spiritual leader. She's always advising people to seek God. She's a mother for those who don't have a mother."

"She's the only person who can go anywhere in this building during a riot," says a division superintendent. "She has that much respect and credibility."

"She's a nurturer, a disciplinarian, a friend," says Rasheed, the jail's Muslim chaplain who met her while an inmate. I was addicted to drugs and charged with burglary when she showed me love. She brings special food for Muslim inmates."

While white churches fled Chicago by the hundreds, before anybody knew Chuck Colson, Mother York was cutting a swath for God in one of the most hopeless crevices in the Midwest.

"We never had any money," says her son. "Mother told us the Lord would provide and somehow He always did." At Christmas, she would provide a feast for inmates and jail personnel. One year they served 6,490 meals over seven days.

"When people are hurting," she said, "they're open to God. The Bible says to minister to those who are sick and in prison. These people are sin sick."

Mother York was a fire-and-brimstone Baptist, full of the love of God, the presence of Jesus, and the Spirit's power.

She is a shining testament to the impact of one available life.

by Charles Lyons, Pastor
Armitage Baptist Church,
Chicago, Illinois
charles.lyons@armitagechurch.org



A whole year of thanksgiving



by Mark Milioni | President | Baptist Bible College

Thanksgiving has passed. The feasting is done. All that remains is a heart of thankfulness and anticipation for Christmas. The Christmas season reminds me of the ultimate reason for thanks-giving, the precious gift God gave to us in His Son. The life, death, resurrection, and Jesus' promise to return are strong reasons for us to give thanks each moment of every day. As I look back at 2014, I am reminded of the tremendous blessings we have experienced at Baptist Bible College for which we should all be thankful.

The year began with a great triumph. The Baptist Bible Fellowship churches, BBC alumni, and friends joined together to raise \$600,000, which was matched by a gift from The Rawlings Foundation. This was a special time in our history and served to promote unity as we worked together to accomplish this great goal. This \$1.2 million allowed us to catch up financially. Thank you!

The Matching Gift Opportunity allowed us to make a great stride toward financial health, but we realized that we could not stop there. Why? Because while our needs are great, our opportunities are greater. We still have major facility issues, a debt, and a desire to keep our tuition affordable for your students. Our needs are great. There has never been a more urgent need for people trained in ministry to share the Gospel. A glance at the headlines will demonstrate the desperate need in our country for strong pastors and ministry leaders who are not afraid to take a stand for Jesus Christ. Our opportunities are greater, so we continue to ask.

In July, we asked again, and The Rawlings Foundation agreed to another Matching Gift campaign of \$600,000. Our Fellowship churches, alumni, and friends once again rose to the occasion, and we were able to complete this match two weeks early! The Owasso Outreach Foundation then offered an additional match of \$75,000, and praise the Lord, we did it together! By the end of the campaign, we had raised over \$1,350,000!

Christmas is a time of giving in order to bless others and also a time to say thanks. Thank you to the many who have blessed us this year — you have prayed, you have given, you have cheered us on. Thank you to the Owasso Foundation for your support and for believing in BBC. Thank you to The Rawlings Foundation for being a tremendous blessing to BBC. You blessed us when everything looked bleak and we did not know where to turn. Thank you to our pastors and parents for trusting us with your students. Thank you all for your love, support, and prayers. Thanks finally and ultimately to God! He has blessed BBC with a year that will be remembered for a long time. Thank you, Lord, for allowing us to be a part of your plan to reach this world and to have a part in sharing the most important story ever told.

Merry Christmas and may God bless you richly this Christmas.

Not-so-normal Christmas thoughts...about Ed



by David Melton | President | Boston Baptist College

The season of giving is here. Christmas is overladen with materialism to be sure, but for those of us who give any effort at all, the wondrous, overwhelming exhilaration that shepherds and Magi experienced back in the Judean hillside lives on. The God of all wonders and might and holiness gave us a Savior. Himself. His Son. In an inexplicable context of simplicity and poverty, God wrapped His Gift for us in a newborn swaddled in rags. No wonder we give gifts in honor and celebration of Jesus.

I've been given many great gifts. But a wise friend of mine, Bill Lane, loved to say, "When God gives a gift, He usually wraps it up in a person." I think Bill was spot on. Certainly Jesus proves that point. And the list of such "gifts" jumps right off the memory of my life as I think about it. But this Christmas season I am thinking a lot about one of my "gifts" in particular. Ed. Because he is not with us this Christmas.

Ed Flynn was my friend of almost 30 years. He had recently agreed to serve on one of our boards at Boston Baptist College — something both of us were excited about. Then, in November, the gift was gone. With no warning, on a normal day, Ed suffered a massive heart attack and the Lord opened heaven's doors for one of the really good guys. I wish you could have known Ed. He was an amazing gift. Nobody knows that better than his much-loved wife, Carole. Dierdre and Siobhan, their beautiful daughters, can tell you, too. But all of us who knew Ed knew we were given something amazing. A godly friend extraordinaire. A partner in godly endeavors. A thoughtful man of the Scriptures. A gift from the Lord "wrapped up in a person."

As far as I'm concerned, Ed and those like him, are what makes our Fellowship what it is. I know we are technically a "fellowship of pastors," and I get all the reasoning for that. But as a pastor, I can tell you we wouldn't be much without the rock-solid church people who serve, who give, who support, who pray, who stay. If we didn't have "Eds," we wouldn't need pastors. They are the ultimate "us." Ed's pastor was another friend of mine, Curt Wiedenroth. Ed always had his pastor's back. A gift like Ed is on every pastor's Christmas list. I wasn't Ed's pastor. I was his friend and beneficiary. For example, when my wife, Kim, and I were first starting out, one of our first vacations (back when we could barely afford to go out the front door) was to spend an awesome week with Ed and Carole and the girls on Martha's Vineyard. We "shared" a house with them. What that really meant was that Ed and Carole paid all the bills and we got to have fun with them. That's a good picture of Ed. And one of my last pictures of Ed? We did a college fundraiser and asked our officers to give a certain amount. Ed gave double. That's just the kind of gift he was. I hope I found a few words to honor him. I wish you could have known him.

Ron & Christine Enoch | **South Sudan**

Just two days ago, Peter called us from Juba to tell us his half-brother had his throat slit by thieves there in Juba. Red Cross Medical personnel tried to save his life, but after three days, he died. Pray for Peter and his family. Several of his family members are not born again, including his parents. Pray for Peter as he witnesses to his family during this difficult time. He has been praying for their salvation.

Also, pray for Anna, Christine's translator. Christine had an opportunity to sit down with Anna and clearly present the Gospel. When she asked Anna if she would like to be born again, Anna answered she had already been saved. Last year, at a Scripture Union meeting at her school, she prayed to receive Jesus as her Savior. Pray she will grow in Christ and understand more fully the decision she made. Also, pray she will not grow weary in well doing. She has faced some persecution since she started helping Christine in Sunday school and helping the children with singing.

David & Karen Freeman | **Nepal**

In April, we officially applied as a NGO to have an orphanage through the NBBF. Then, in early May, final approval was granted and we started the process of getting the children to the home. It took several months for the children to finally arrive. They all had to have medical examinations and full government verification of their status as orphans.

The first group of children arrived in Kathmandu the third week of July. There were three little boys in the first group. Since then nine more children have come for a total of twelve. We have seven boys and five girls. Their ages range from three to eight. One small boy is deaf, and three of the children did not speak Nepali. They spoke a dialect from a remote area. There were several great challenges in starting the home with this group of children.

We are thrilled to report all of the children have responded to the love and care they have received. The love of Christ has already worked miracles in their little hearts. One of the greatest blessings is to watch them as they have learned to go to church for the first time. The members of our church have embraced the children of the orphanage with love, and the children have responded!

Mike & Caroline Tester | **Hong Kong**

Friends in Texas put us in touch with Sally, a young lady in the city just across the border. Her desire was to know how to become a Christian. Caroline was able to travel and meet with Sally for several hours as she asked all kinds of questions about things she had only heard about. Caroline left material with her to study and is slowly answering Sally's questions via email as she reads through the book of John and other materials. We have been able to put Sally in touch with fellow believers in her city. Perfect example of how someone or several individuals plant the seed, others water, and praise the Lord God gives the increase. Pray for Sally's salvation.

Wilhelm & Sandra Falk | **Germany**

A lady, after she read through the Chick tract "This Is Your Life," returned and said, "I need to repent, where do I go?" (These poor folks have been told they have to go to a special place in a church building to repent). She said the tract was very hard. I said, "Everyone needs to repent! You can repent right here and now!" She was amazed, "Here with all these people?" "You and I will go over here out of the way of these people and we can pray together," I told her. She said, "I have so many sins, can God forgive them?" Dear lady, if He cannot, no one can. So we prayed together and she thanked me for taking time for her. Praise the Lord we have the answer to what people need!

Randy & Phyllis Stirewalt | **Kenya**

We started the Kapina Bible Baptist Church in 1983. It was our second church in Bisia County of Western Kenya. It is just a small farming village of a few hundred people, only a few miles from the border with Uganda. The church has had several pastor changes through the years, but for the last several years James Ipete has been the pastor.

James was saved at this church and attended the Bible institute in Busia. He has done a great job and God has blessed his ministry there. A year ago Pastor James lost his wife to cancer, this was very hard for a family with seven children, but through God's grace James carried on raising his family and growing his church.

A few weeks ago word came to us Pastor James Ipete had died. I was shocked! This has made it very hard on these children. The grandmother has moved into the home to help out, but she is very old herself.

Please pray for these children as they continue walking in faith with our God. Please pray for this grandmother trying to care for seven children. Please pray for the Kapina Bible Baptist Church as they have lost their pastor who loved them so.

Dwayne & Valerie Keefe | **Australia**

It has been very encouraging recently to hear about some of the people we have disciplined going into other parts of Australia and being very fruitful in their faith. We are extremely encouraged to hear reports of the young Filipino men from our first ministry here in Australia now preaching and leading their own youth ministries. How wonderful to see them raising their own children in godly homes now. One of the young women in Valerie's Bible study when we lived in Queensland has led several Bible studies on campus during her years at a Brisbane university. Just this past week we heard about one of the women who started out with us in our current church plant. She had to move to another state a few years ago. She has now been helping another church plant and has become very involved in leading ladies crafts nights. Her husband, who was not going to church here, is now very involved in their church, which is a huge answer to prayer. Australia is a very transient place and it can be discouraging when our faithful people have to move. However, we can see God using these people and what they learned in our ministries to go out and disciple others. Keep praying for more fruit!

New Jersey pastor invents handy tool for tablet users

Pastor Dave Bulka has been in pastoral ministry 36 years. His church, located just 30 minutes from Manhattan, is First Baptist in Caldwell, NJ. He and his church are typical in most ways. First supports 90 missionaries, and it has given more than \$2.5 million to missionaries over the years. But Pastor Bulka thinks he has come up with a way to do even more, and at the same time solve a problem for millions.

Bulka says, "Most pastors, if they were given an opportunity to give more money for missions and church planting would do it in an instant. I want to do this through something I invented over several months ago called Clamp Champion."

Clamp Champion (patent pending) is a tablet and cell phone holder. Bulka said he needed something that would hold his phone while he was in his car. In his basement he came up with what he calls Clamp Champion Junior, cobbled from some pvc material used



in his home's central vacuum system. Putting two short sections together to form a figure eight, one part clamped to a stationary object, and the other part clamped the phone. He knew he was on to something so he met with some engineer church members.

They helped finesse the design and go on to create the final version of the clamp.

Though Bulka was offered a large amount of money for his invention, he declined the offer and turned to www.kickstarter.com to enable a startup. He envisions something similar to the Paul Newman Foundation's "Newman's Own" product line that gives millions to charity every year. He said, "We hope to raise thousands, and maybe even millions, for Baptist missionaries

and church planters through Clamp Champion."

For more information about Clamp Champion and its inventor see www.clampchampion.com, or email dbulka@yahoo.com.

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Preacher's delegation helps defuse Houston conflict

Dave Anderson, pastor of Faith Baptist Church in Sarasota, FL, joined six other ministers to form a delegation to the mayor of Houston, TX, during the last week in October. They hoped to have a meeting with Mayor Annise Parker, whose office and city have been in the news since attorneys for the city issued subpoenas to some Houston pastors asking for copies of their recent sermons and other communications. The legal response was a reaction to a lawsuit filed after a citizens' petition to overturn the new Houston Equal Rights Ordinance was turned away by the city council.

While the response to the actual ordinance was local, the response to the subpoena had far greater repercussions. When he and the other ministers decided to go to Houston, Anderson says, "Our goal was not to comment on gay rights or the mayor's ongoing struggle with these pastors, but to openly and aggressively oppose her use of the power of subpoena to control, interfere, restrict, and intimidate a pastor's right to freely exercise faith without the threat of fine and imprisonment."

The delegation held a press conference and a prayer service at the entry of Houston's city hall, and then they asked for a meeting with the mayor. Mayor Parker agreed to meet with them later in the day.

When the meeting began, Anderson reports, "We were sitting at a conference table.

It began tense and terse. She was defensive, and her staff was ready to protect her if they thought she was being overwhelmed. We took turns sharing our concerns with her. Within a few minutes the tension melted, and we had a truly open-hearted and open-minded discussion. It was a respectful dialogue and exchange of ideas." He also said the precise content of the discussion had to remain confidential at this point.

Early the next day, Mayor Parker held a press conference announcing her decision to withdraw the subpoenas. Anderson says, "She said that after numerous meetings, but particularly the one she had with seven pastors from out of town, she had come to accept that the subpoenas were inappropriate and that she was withdrawing them. I immediately sent her and her staff an email thanking her for courageously doing the right thing."

According to a report in the *Houston Chronicle*, Mayor Parker said, "she was persuaded in part by the demeanor of the clergymen she met with Tuesday, saying they were concerned not about the ordinance or politics but about the subpoenas' impact on the ongoing national discussion of religious freedoms."



Pastor Dave Anderson (third from left) was part of a group of religious leaders who met with Houston's mayor in October.

She went on to say that her action was not so much an effort to satisfy her critics but because insisting on the subpoenas "was not serving Houston."

For Anderson's part, he says he is humbled to have had a part in "something much bigger God is doing in Houston." He appreciates the support of his church, and though he notes he has sharp differences with the mayor of Houston regarding theology, politics, and sexual issues, he believed it was his duty to be both helpful and kind during this episode.

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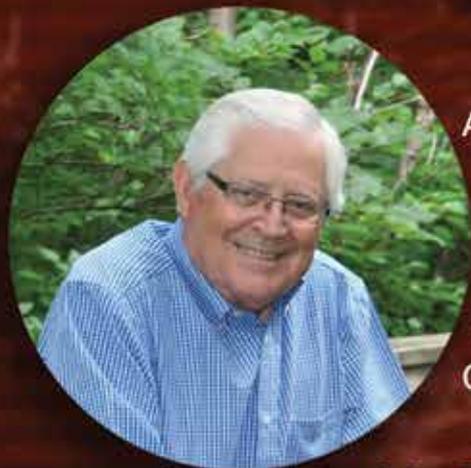
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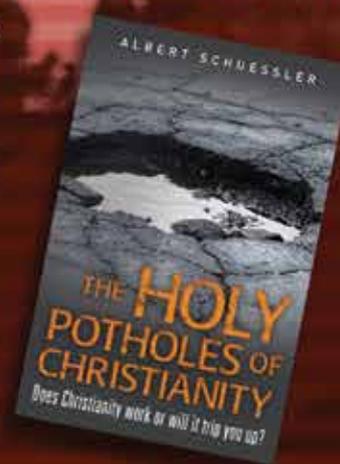
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WEST BRIDGEWATER, MA

William Smith celebrates 25 years at Temple Baptist Church

The members of Temple Baptist Church in West Bridgewater, MA, honored their pastor, William Smith, and his wife Terry on their 25th anniversary of ministry October 26, 2014. Pastor Rodney Price of Mattapan Baptist Church in Milton, MA, delivered the message.

Bill Smith, a native of New Bedford, MA, was saved July 13, 1976, after hearing a sermon by the late Tommy Stone. He was discipled by Pastor Norman Frink, and subsequently attended Bible college, where he came to the attention of Rodney Price. While there, Bill and Terry met and were married in 1979.



During the mid-1980s, Bill pastored Bible Baptist Church in Attleboro, MA, and he became pastor of Temple in 1989. In addition to his pastoral work, Pastor Smith is a professor at Boston Baptist College and a former trustee. He has served as the Massachusetts director with the BBFI. Smith has continued his education, earning a Doctor of Ministry degree from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Boston.

Pastor Smith has fostered a spirit of missions in the church, represented by strong financial and prayerful support of numerous missionaries, and the planting of several churches in the surrounding area. His love for community outreach is demonstrated by his service as chaplain for the Life Care Center of West Bridgewater.

Associate Pastor Jeff Francoeur, a 2005 alumnus of Boston Baptist College, moderated the service which included congregational

hymns, special music, and a message from Pastor Price in which he referred to his joy in watching Smith grow in the ministry, from his salvation in 1976 and call to ministry, to his present ministry at Temple Baptist Church. He said he was honored Bill refers to him as his mentor, even to this day.

The church gave Pastor Smith a gift basket filled with various travel goodies and brochures for a spring vacation. He also received a gift basket from Westside Baptist Church in Emporia, KS, pastored by Ken Armstrong, his predecessor at Temple. Mrs. Smith received flowers, and a catered reception followed the service.

A church member gave this testimony: "Throughout these many years, God has blessed the ministry of Pastor and Terry Smith, as many people have been saved, baptized, and discipled to be faithful ambassadors for Christ. Many families have been restored and are truly thankful for the long-term, faithful ministry of the Smiths. The Smiths' longevity in ministry is truly a special gift from God."

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ALVA, OK

OK BBF honors Linzy and Carla Slayden

Bible Baptist Church and Pastor John Klapp hosted the October Oklahoma BBF meeting in Alva, OK, October 6-7. The theme was World Missions, and preachers included Linzy Slayden of Friendship Baptist Church, Owasso, OK; Jeff McCaskill of Millington Street Baptist Church, Winfield, KS; and BBFI missionaries Dan McCaskill of Scotland and Vladimir Lukynov of Russia.

This was the first fellowship meeting hosted by Bible Baptist Church since their remodel. The auditorium was nearly destroyed during a snowstorm two winters ago.

The Oklahoma pastors honored Linzy and Carla Slayden for his time serving as the president of the BBFI with an appreciation certificate, a check, and flowers for Carla.



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CHARLOTTE, NC

Retreat planned for children of preachers

Several former “PKs” (preachers’ kids) have come together to host a Preacher’s Kid Retreat to take place in North Carolina in February. One of the organizers and leaders, Jon

Leighton, son of evangelist Jon Groves, is happy he is able to fulfill a call he has had for some time. The event happens February 17-20 at the Ridgecrest Conference Center, just north of the Charlotte airport, and is open for any preacher’s kid from sixth grade through college seniors.



He says, “As a fourth generation PK, I relate not only to the spotlight of being a living sermon illustration, but also to the weight of the ministry that often traveled home with us. Without an understanding peer, I believed ministry always had to be a lonely place. I thank God for the fellow PKs He placed in my life later on, and I am excited about this network of young believers being made available to preachers’ kids today.”

The \$250 retreat cost will cover lodging, food, activities, and resources offered. Leighton says the sessions will be led by pastors and their wives who grew up walking in the PK’s shoes.

Registration and additional information can be found by visiting www.preacherskidretreat.com.

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• **Calvary Baptist Church of Oakhurst**, At the corner of Highway 49 and Redbud (location only), 559/641-7984. *Pastor Bob Wilson*

• **The Fundamental Baptist Tabernacle**, 1329 South Hope St., Los Angeles, CA 90015, 213/744-9999. *Pastor Dr. R. L. Hymers, Jr.* sermon manuscripts at www.realconversion.com

• **Ocean View Church**, 2460 Palm Ave., San Diego, CA 92154, 619/424-7870 www.oceanviewchurch.com *Pastor Jim W. Baize*

• **Calvary Road Baptist Church**, 319 West Olive Ave., Monrovia, CA 91016, 626/357-2711, www.calvary-roadbaptist.org *Dr. John S. Waldrup*

CONNECTICUT

• **New Testament Baptist Church and School**, 111 Ash St., East Hartford, CT 06108. 860/290-6696 *Pastor Michael Stoddard*

DELAWARE

• **Southside Baptist Church**, 4904 S. DuPont Hwy. (US 13 So.), Dover, DE 19901, 302/697-2411 *Pastor Chris Kondracki*

• **First Baptist Church**, 6062 Old Shawnee Rd., Milford, DE 19963, 302/422-9795 *Pastor David Perdue*

FLORIDA

• **Palm Springs Drive Baptist Church**, 601 Palm Springs Dr., Altamonte Springs, FL 32701, 407/831-0950 *Pastor Scott Carlson*

• **Tabernacle Baptist Church**, 6000 West Colonial Dr., Orlando, FL 32808, 407/295-3086 *Pastor Steve Ware*

• **New Testament Baptist Church**, 2050 South Belcher Rd., Largo, FL 33771, 727/536-0481 *Pastor Matt Trill*

• **Trinity Baptist Church**, 800 Hammond Blvd., Jacksonville, FL 32221, 904/786-5320 *Pastor Tom Messer*

• **First Coast Baptist Church**, 7587 Blanding Blvd., Jacksonville, FL 32244. 904/777-3040 *Pastor Richard Edwards*

• **Harbor Baptist Church**, 428 Tomoka Ave., Ormond Beach, FL 32173, 386/677-3116 *Pastor Ronald L. Todd*

• **First Baptist Coconut Creek**, formerly Calvary Baptist Church, Ft. Lauderdale, FL. 954/422-9611 *Pastor Jerry Williamson*

• **Calvary Baptist Church**, 123 Thunderbird Dr., Sebastian, FL 32958. 772/589-5047 www.calvary-baptistchurch.com *Pastor Clifton Cooley*

• **New Life Baptist Church**, 35000 Radio Rd (at Poe St.), Leesburg, FL 34788 352/728-0004 newlifebaptistchurch@earthlink.net

• **Suncoast Baptist Church**, 410 Warrington Blvd., Port Charlotte, FL 33954, 941/625-8550, *Pastor Chip Keller* www.suncoastbaptistchurch.com

• **Grace Bible Baptist Church**, 1703 Lewis Road, Leesburg, FL 34748. 352/326-5738, *Pastor George Mulford III* www.gbbconline.com

• **Orlando Baptist Church**, 500 S. Semoran Blvd., Orlando, FL 32807. 407/277-8671, *Pastor David Janney* www.worldchangingchurch.com

HAWAII

• **Lanakila Baptist Church**, 94-1250 Waipahu St., Waipahu, HI 96797. 808/677-0731 *Pastor Steven C. Wygle*

ILLINOIS

• **Sauk Trail Baptist Temple**, 4411 Sauk Trail, P.O. Box 347, Richton Park, IL 60471. 708/481-1490 *Pastor Bruce Humbert*

IOWA

• **Heartland Baptist Church** 3504 N. Grand Ave., Ames, IA 50010 515/268-1721, www.heartlandbaptistames.com *Pastor Randy Abell*

KANSAS

• **Millington Street Baptist Church**, 1304 Millington St., Winfield, KS 67156. 620/221-4700. *Pastor Jeff McCaskill*

• **Friendship Baptist Church** 2209 E. Pawnee, Wichita, KS 67211 316/263-0269, *Pastor Steve Day*

KENTUCKY

• **Florence Baptist Temple**, 1898 Florence Pk., Burlington, KY 41005. 859/586-6090 *Pastor Wayne G. Cox*

• **Oak Hill Baptist Church**, 2135 Oak Hill Rd., Somerset, KY 42501, 606/679-8496 *Pastor Gary Phelps*

LOUISIANA

• **Mid-City Baptist Church**, 5320 Airline Dr., 10 miles north of Barksdale Air Force Base, Bossier City, LA 71111. (318) 742-0772 www.midcitybaptist.com *Pastor Jason D. Filler, Sr.*

MARYLAND

• **Riverdale Baptist Church**, 1177 Largo Rd., Upper Marlboro, MD 20774, 301/249-7000 *Pastor Brian C. Mentzer*

MASSACHUSETTS

• **Temple Baptist Church** 540 Manley St., West Bridgewater, MA 02379, 508/583-5190 www.templebaptist.info *Pastor Bill Smith*

NEBRASKA

• **Plains Baptist Church**, 2902 Randolph St., Lincoln, NE 68510, 402/435-4760. *Pastor Raymond Smith*

NEW JERSEY

• **Open Bible Baptist Church**, 2625 E. Main St (RT. 49), Millville, NJ 08332. 856/863-0226, Email:gardner07@comcast.net *Pastor Danny Gardner*

NORTH CAROLINA

• **Northside Baptist Church**, 333 Jeremiah Blvd., Charlotte, NC 28262, 704/596-4856 *Pastor Brian Boyles*

• **Mid-Way Baptist Church**, 6910 Fayetteville Rd., Raleigh, NC 27603. 919/772-5864 *Pastor James L. Upchurch*

• **Trinity Baptist Church**, 216 Shelburne Rd., Asheville, NC 28806, 704/254-2187 www.tbcasheville.org *Pastor Ralph Sexton, Jr.*

• **Central Baptist Church**, 6050 Plain View Hwy., Dunn, NC 28334, 910/892-7914, www.cbcdunn.com *Pastor Tom Wagoner*

• **Berean Baptist Church & Academy** 517 Glenstord Dr., Fayetteville, NC 28314, 910/868-5156, www.bbcfnc.org *Pastor Sean Harris*

OHIO

• **Bible Baptist Church**, 990 W. Main, Mt. Orab, OH 45154. 937/444-2493 *Pastor Charles Smith*

• **Ashland Ave. Baptist Church**, P.O. Box 86, 4255 Ashland Ave., Norwood, OH 45212. 513/531-3626 *Pastor Jerry E. Jones*

• **First Baptist Church**, 1233 US Rt. 42, Ashland, OH 44805. 419/289-3636 *Pastor F. R. "Butch" White*

• **Calvary Baptist Church**, 516 W. Sunset Dr., Rittman, OH 44270, 330/925-5506 *Pastor Tim LaBouf*

OREGON

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TEXAS

• **Central Baptist Church**, 2855 Greenhouse Rd., Houston, TX 77084. 281/492-2689 *Pastor Larry Maddox*

• **First Baptist Church of Meadowview**, 4346 N Galloway Ave., Mesquite, TX 75150. 214/391-7176 *Pastor R.D. Wade*

• **First Baptist Church**, Hwy. 64, Wright City, TX 75750, 903/839-2700 www.firstbaptistwrightcity.com *Pastor Rohn M. Boone*

• **North Park Baptist Church**, 4401 Theiss Rd., Humble, TX 77338. 281/821-2258 *Pastor Randy Harp*

• **Berean Baptist Church**, 302 N. Town East Blvd., Mesquite, TX 75182. 972/226-7803 *Pastor David Mills*

• **Cypress Creek Baptist Church**, 21870 Northwest Freeway, Houston, TX 77429. 281/469-6089 *Pastor Carl Hughes*

• **Talley Rd. Baptist Church** 3120 Talley Rd., San Antonio, TX 78253, 210/862-3108, www.talleyroadbaptistchurch.org trbc@satx.rr.com, *Pastor Larry Bruce*

VIRGINIA

• **Faith Baptist Church**, 3768 S. Amherst Hwy., Madison Heights, VA 24572, 434/929-1430 *Pastor Brian Hudson*

• **Central Baptist Church**, 13910 Minnieville Rd. Woodbridge, VA 22193, 703/583-1717, office@cbcwoodbridge.org, *Pastor Brad Weniger*

WEST VIRGINIA

• **Fellowship Baptist Church, U.S.** Rt. 60 E. at Huntington Mall, Barboursville, WV 25504, 304/736-8006 *Pastor Jerry Warren*

INTERNATIONAL

BELGIUM
• **Grace International Baptist Church**, Bruges, Belgium 8200 913/871-8901 VOIP, www.gibc.be *Pastor Tim J. Downs*

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As it was told them

By Mike Randall, former editor of the *Baptist Bible Tribune* (1995-2002)

The claims and teachings of Christianity are based on evidences and events that actually occurred. This concept is illustrated in the beautiful story of the birth of Christ. Here are four thoughts from the story of the shepherds found in Luke 2.

1. THE DECLARATION TO THE SHEPHERDS

The glorious appearance of the angel startled and frightened them (Luke 2:9). The angel reassured them and announced Christ's birth. Their announcement tells us much about God and His love.

First, God cares for the lowly person. The shepherds were considered among the lowest social class in the Jewish society. The Talmud Court of the Jews forbade the witness of shepherds. Society didn't think much of shepherds, but God did. Although not allowed as witnesses in a Jewish court, God cared so much for them that he made them witnesses of the wondrous birth of His Son.

If you are a lowly person, be assured by the shepherds that God loves and cares about you, too. Jesus was born for you (Luke 2:11).

Second, God cares for the laboring person. Verse eight says these shepherds were "abiding in the field, keeping watch ... by night." They were on the job. The Lord wanted the working person to know about His Son, so He sent His angels to the laboring shepherds at night. Are you laboring and burdened? God cares for you.

It was to the burdened soul that Jesus said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

Third, God cares for the learned person. Sometimes overlooked about these shepherds is their knowledge of the coming Messiah. They were lowly, but knew all about the Temple and the Scripture, for these shepherds kept the Temple sheep. These were the animals used in sacrifice in Jerusalem, some six miles to the north. They understood the teaching of Scripture regarding offerings, sacrifices, and forgiveness. They knew the promises made of a Savior. They knew that Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem. This was one reason why they responded to the angelic message and came searching. They were not unlearned. They knew the Scripture and God's promises. The declaration to the shepherds shows that God loves the learned as well as the untaught.

2. THE DECISION OF THE SHEPHERDS

In verse 15 we read, "And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us."

This decision was a wonderful example of people acting by

faith in the Word of God. They heard the message and then did something about it. They trusted what God's messengers said was true and went and checked it out. That's what God wants all of us to do. Like the shepherds, the sinner must decide to come to Christ in the lowly position of a guilty sinner because Christ invites the lost sinner to come. Jesus said, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). Again, Christ said, "him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). Have you come to Christ by faith, like the shepherds? If not, do so today.

3. THE DISCOVERY OF THE SHEPHERDS

Verses 16 to 20 tell us that the shepherds came "and found Mary and Joseph and the babe ... as it was told unto them."

Whatever God says about something is exactly the way you will find it. Everything God says is true or will come true. You can depend on it.

First, the discovery was unmistakable. The angels gave such specific information they couldn't miss finding the babe and knowing He was the Messiah. They went to the right town, the right inn, and the right stable. They couldn't miss it. In the same way, God has made His plan of salvation so plain that no one who really wants to know can miss it. "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: No man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). You can't get much plainer than that.

Second, the discovery was unforgettable. Verse 19 says that "Mary kept all these things." She never forgot what happened, but the shepherds didn't either. Let me add this. If you really come to Christ and accept Him as your personal Savior, you will never forget it. The thrill of finding Christ never leaves.

4. THE DELIGHT OF THE SHEPHERDS

Verse 20 speaks of the joy the shepherds experienced after they found Christ, "And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them." Finding Christ filled their souls with joy, because Jesus Christ satisfies.

When the sick came to Him in His earthly ministry, they left well. The blind came and left seeing. The lame came and left walking. The lepers came and left clean. Sinners came and left forgiven. When I came to Him as an 18-year-old sinner, I left forgiven, saved, and satisfied. If you will come to Him for salvation, you will know the delight of the shepherds.

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PRAYER CALENDAR

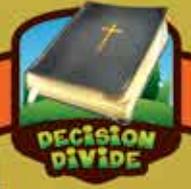
SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	<p>1</p>  <p>MISSIONARY Richard & Ann Konnerup <i>Kenya</i></p>	<p>2</p>  <p>CHAPLAIN Lt. R.T. & Karen Stringer <i>U.S. Army National Guard</i></p>	<p>3</p>  <p>MISSIONARIES Leslie and Donna Garner <i>Mexico</i></p>	<p>4</p>  <p>T.E.A.M. MISSIONARY Kaitlyne Ames-Dixon <i>Guatemala</i></p>	<p>5</p>  <p>MISSIONARY Bob & Sue Phillips <i>Philippines</i></p>	<p>6</p>  <p>MISSIONARY Mark Williams <i>Mexico</i></p>
<p>7</p>  <p>MISSIONARY Russ & Sue Ivison <i>England</i></p>	<p>8</p>  <p>MISSIONARY Paul & Chelli Sudbrock <i>Germany</i></p>	<p>9</p>  <p>MISSIONARY Donald & Patsy Morton <i>Retired</i></p>	<p>10</p>  <p>MISSIONARY Dave & Terri Green <i>Taiwan</i></p>	<p>11</p>  <p>MISSIONARY Jim & Mary Blume <i>Papua, New Guinea</i></p>	<p>12</p>  <p>MISSIONARY JA & Pamela Richards <i>Wales</i></p>	<p>13</p>  <p>Workers in Restricted Countries</p>
<p>14</p>  <p>MISSIONARY Matthew & Adriana Conder <i>Mexico</i></p>	<p>15</p>  <p>MISSIONARY BBFI Mission Office IT Department</p>	<p>16</p>  <p>MISSIONARY Tom & Carole Wallace <i>Ireland</i></p>	<p>17</p>  <p>T.E.A.M. MISSIONARY Brennan & Libby Penner <i>Belgium</i></p>	<p>18</p>  <p>MISSIONARY Brent & Amanda Longenecker <i>Philippines</i></p>	<p>19</p>  <p>MISSIONARY Leonard & Susie Smith <i>Mexico</i></p>	<p>20</p>  <p>MISSIONARY Cliff & Neoma McGhee <i>Ecuador</i></p>
<p>21</p>  <p>MISSIONARY David & Edna Marie Howell <i>Brazil</i></p>	<p>22</p>  <p>MISSIONARY Frank & Karen Auterson <i>Ethiopia</i></p>	<p>23</p>  <p>MISSIONARY Baptist Bible College <i>Springfield, MO</i></p>	<p>24</p>  <p>MISSIONARY Randy & Sherry Rhoton <i>Costa Rica</i></p>	<p>25</p>  <p>MISSIONARY Wilhelm & Sandra Falk <i>Germany</i></p>	<p>26</p>  <p>MISSIONARY Don & Delores Swearingin <i>Mexico</i></p>	<p>27</p>  <p>MISSIONARY Vladimir & Debbie Lukyanov <i>Russia</i></p>
<p>28</p>  <p>Brothers of Cyrene</p>	<p>29</p>  <p>MISSIONARY Jonathan & Roberta Steffy <i>Philippines</i></p>	<p>30</p>  <p>MISSIONARY Bill & Barbara Neel <i>Japan</i></p>	<p>31</p>  <p>MISSIONARY Bob & Verna Griggs <i>Ute Indians</i></p>			

As is the business of tailors to make clothes and cobblers to make shoes, so it is the business of Christians to pray.
Martin Luther



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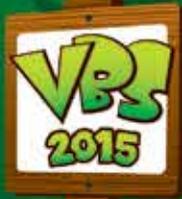
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