

POSTMASTER: Please send address changes to:
THE BAPTIST HERITAGE, 2200 West Michigan Avenue, Pensacola, FL 32526-2379

THE BAPTIST HERITAGE
2200 West Michigan Avenue
Pensacola, Florida 32526-2379

PERIODICALS
POSTAGE
PAID AT
PENSACOLA,
FLORIDA

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

a good place to visit
is
a better place to belong

THE BAPTIST HERITAGE

VOLUME XXVI ISSUE 12

DECEMBER 20, 2002

Ichabod

The Story Of A Candlestick Removed At Christmas

Nevertheless I have *somewhat* against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

Revelation 2:4-5

(Continued on page 3)



this and that

Editor and Staff

Jerald L. Manley Gary Roland
Dorothy Gundersen Jody Wolf

No doctrine is more important to the Christian faith than is the doctrine of the incarnation. That the Word, by Whom all things that are made were made, was made flesh and dwelt among us—that He Himself also took part of the same that He might reconcile us unto the Father by the shedding of His blood as the atonement—is the cornerstone of our faith. Remove the incarnation, and there is no Christianity. This explains the hatred of and the attacks upon the doctrine.

This publication is mailed to you on purpose. Someone who knows you believed that you would profit by receiving and reading it. If you do not agree, we will remove your name from the next possible mailing. We have no desire to intrude or offend.

That the Son of God had a birthday is very important. If the incarnation is just an allegory or a Pauline invention, then we are of all men most miserable. Preachers may quibble over the precise date, quarrel over the proper name, and question all the traditions, but they dare not do so at the expense of forgetting to proclaim that Jesus of Nazareth was born in that stable of Bethlehem's Inn, that the

(Continued on page 19)



this and that

(Continued from page 2)

event was announced by angels, and that the Babe, wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger, was visited by shepherds.

Commemorate the day whenever you like; call it whatever you choose, but remember to find time to rejoice that in the City of David, on a night long ago, was actually born the Saviour, Christ the LORD. The LORD Jesus Christ had a day of birth. God was manifest in the flesh. Hallelujah, what a Saviour.

Thank you, Father for sending Him; thank you, Holy Spirit for bringing Him; thank you, LORD Jesus for coming.

Phone: 850-944-5545
Fax: 850-944-9822
E-mail: JERALD.L.MANLEY@GTE.NET

—Pastor Manley

THE BAPTIST HERITAGE

(428-290)

is published monthly by
THE HERITAGE BAPTIST CHURCH
of PENSACOLA,
2200 West Michigan Avenue,
Pensacola, Florida 32526-2379.
PERIODICALS POSTAGE PAID
AT PENSACOLA, FLORIDA.

THE BAPTIST HERITAGE is sent without charge to the members of the church and, by request, to interested friends of this church. There are no subscription charges and no paid advertisements are accepted.

This is VOLUME XXVI and
ISSUE NUMBER 12 for DECEMBER 20, 2002.

*Ichabod**(Continued from page 17)*

the code word for a compromising collection of contemptuous apostates and unlearned Christians preaching Christ, even while denying Him. "From such turn away"—and do so with great speed and make certain not to "look back."

In a nation where the dimming of the light in so many churches—closed on Sunday nights, plays (drama is their preferred word) substituted for sermons, entertainment instead of worship, illustrations (understand that to mean humor) rather than Scripture, choruses replacing hymns, and a congregation with such a variety of Bibles that congregational reading would sound like Babel—where the organization is run by a CEO rather than a pastor, one can only wonder how much more "falling away" must occur before the Trumpet sounds to call the children of God home and to bring the fearful wrath of the judgment of the Holy God of Heaven on this old world.

Even so, come quickly, LORD Jesus.

—Pastor Jerald Manley

Reprint permission always granted;
acknowledgment appreciated.

*Ichabod**(Continued from page 1)*

I replaced the article written for this issue because my sister, as has always been her pattern, meddled in the matter by sending me the following newspaper account, which upset my 'holiday spirit.'

If you should have high blood pressure, I suggest that you read this article only while being near a telephone and in the presence of someone who can, if needed, call for medical assistance. Of course, if you happen to be a Contemporary [a.k.a. "Progressive" or "Moderate"] 'baptist,' the information in the article will be right up your dark alley.

For generations, the Ashland Avenue Baptist Church of Lexington, Kentucky was a bulwark of the faith. In my youth and during the early years of ministry, I knew Pastor Clarence Walker as a contender for the faith and a defender of Baptist principles. Under his leadership, the church printed some of

(Continued on page 4)

*Ichabod**(Continued from page 3)*

the better Baptist literature available, including millions of copies of "The Trail of Blood," an unequaled, simple, concise history of the awesome price levied against the followers of the LORD Jesus Christ through the centuries. Pastor Walker laid his work upon the foundation of the LORD Jesus Christ and left this life to face the Chief Shepherd, having obtained a good report. For awhile, he was followed in that pulpit by men of similar convictions and principles; but it seems obvious that such is not the circumstances of the religious institution that now occupies both the name and the properties.

This past summer, I passed along to an assistant Pastor a fifty-year collection of the paper published by Ashland Avenue, along with other similar materials from dozens of other churches, to prepare him, should that task fall on his shoulders, for safeguarding this flock through the observation of the

*(Continued on page 5)**Ichabod**(Continued from page 16)*

honored and served. That god is not the God for Whom generations of Ashland Avenue Baptists built buildings and of Whom they sang praises.

What other possible word is there to describe the group that would build a bar on the pulpit in a place where the Gospel was once faithfully preached, except that of ICH-ABOD? The Glory has departed.

Watch out—this departure from the faith will be coming toward your local *purpose-driven* Baptist churches, floating down the *Willow Creek*, and violating, as it progresses, every promise, it moderately pledges to keep. It is up to you as to whether it receives a welcome or a denunciation. Would to God that the sheep of the flock would learn what it is that they are to fight over, when they are to rise in holy indignation, and how they are to select a shepherd. Sheep do not have backs made for saddles.

Contemporaneous Christianity is merely

(Continued on page 18)

*Ichabod**(Continued from page 15)*

his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.”—“And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth,” and as, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

The god of the play proudly produced by the Ashland Avenue Baptist Church is the god of Broadway and Hollywood, who sends angels to find good deeds. The god of the Trans-Siberian Orchestra's best-selling Christmas Eve and Other Stories is most assuredly not the God of the Bible. Such a god is not the God that Pastor Clarence Walker

*(Continued on page 17)**Ichabod**(Continued from page 4)*

history of other churches. The honored Ashland Avenue Baptist Church, as have too many other ‘once-but-no-longer’ doctrinally sound churches and institutions, has experienced the pathway prophesied by the Apostle Paul for the church at Ephesus.

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Acts 20:28-30

When the Rev. A. Grievous Wolf becomes the shepherd of a Baptist church, it is a sad day indeed.

Read the following newspaper article and

(Continued on page 6)

*Ichabod**(Continued from page 5)*

weep for the fate of Ashland Avenue Baptist Church. The structure remains; the organization continues, but the candlestick is removed. She retains a name, but the nature has altered. She is now Ichabod.

The title is offensive, but it is the one the newspaper chose; therefore, I chose to leave it alone.



O, HOLY OPENING NIGHT
Churches Produce Ambitious
Christmas Pageants
By Frank E. Lockwood, Staff Writer

Forget about Christmas oratorios and cantatas. Ashland Avenue Baptist Church is tackling a new musical genre for the holidays: the rock opera.

Performing the Trans-Siberian Orchestra's

*(Continued on page 7)**Ichabod**(Continued from page 14)*

of the LORD Jesus Christ—and, Bro. Walker often warned against those who would set aside the word of the living God for the concoctions of men. “Trans-Siberian”—what an appropriately frigid name for a production in a church that has lost the fire of God.

“This day,” so slanderously treated by the Trans-Siberian Orchestra's best-selling Christmas Eve and Other Stories and the Ashland Avenue Baptist Church is described by the God of Heaven in the following words: “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord”—“And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins”—“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”—“Of the increase of

(Continued on page 16)

*Ichabod**(Continued from page 13)*

"the one thing that best represents everything good that has been done in the name of this day." This apostate production can only speak of "telling a good story in a different way" and of an impulsive act of social benevolence [apparently funded by thievery] as the "best" representation of the "good that has been done in the name of this day"—the day of the birth of the LORD Jesus Christ. The participants may proclaim that their work is "theologically sound," but, their doing so proclaims their theology to be unsound. Neither the play nor the players are biblically sound—and the Bible is the Judge of any theology, not theologians and, certainly not, thespians.

Another thing, Pastor Clarence Walker never preached a "non-threatening" message in his entire ministry. Every sermon threatened the judgment of God on all who reject the gift of the atonement in the shed blood

*(Continued on page 15)**Ichabod**(Continued from page 6)*

best-selling Christmas Eve and Other Stories is a bold move to attract visitors, undertaken by a congregation that has survived a church split and plummeting attendance in recent years.

"You can't reach out and touch today's society with yesterday's methods. It just doesn't work," says music minister John Wesley Brett.

So the church is putting on its biggest show ever, complete with snow and fog machines, video footage of Lexington from the air, stage lighting, a 15-piece orchestra, a 50-voice choir, three keyboardists and guitarists from an ear-splitting alternative rock band.

In an age where couch potatoes outnumber pew sitters, churches are going to great lengths to attract visitors during the holiday season.

For many people, Christmas and Easter are the only times when they go to church -- or visit a new congregation.

(Continued on page 8)

*Ichabod**(Continued from page 7)*

These days, it takes more than a few bathrobe-clad Wise Men and kids with tinsel-covered halos to attract a crowd.

At Southland Christian Church, the congregation's holiday show -- titled A Simple Christmas -- is expected to attract 15,000 people during its run, which began Wednesday and goes through Saturday. That's even with an admission charge of \$5 for those 7 and older.

Practices began in August. A 100-voice choir will give what the church calls a "non-threatening, high-quality performance."

"We put our best foot forward because we believe it will really reach a lot of people," says Todd Tyler, Southland's programming minister and executive producer of events. "Our Christmas program is kind of a front-door event (for visitors). It's one of those first-step, beginning events."

Other churches also stage elaborate undertakings. At Parkway Baptist Church in Lex-

*(Continued on page 9)**Ichabod**(Continued from page 12)*

"We've done a lot of Christmas programs, but this is going to be totally different," said drummer Alan Moore, an Ashland Avenue member for 10 years. "It's going to be a rockin' evening."



In the newspaper's description of the activity scheduled for the pulpit of this former New Testament Church, now a paltry playroom in the Ichabod Church, there is the detectable stench of paganism, not the fragrance of biblical Christianity. Merriam-Webster defines pagan as "one who has little or no religion and who delights in sensual pleasures and material goods: an irreligious or hedonistic person." I use the word intending that precise definition to be understood.

The play is the story of an angel sent to Earth by "God" on Christmas Eve to find

(Continued on page 14)

*Ichabod**(Continued from page 11)*

church," said Brett.

But participants say the message is well-told and theologically sound.

"It's a beautiful story," said Larry Butler, a member of the chorus.

A former Hyatt Regency bartender, Mitch Kirchner, plays the Good Samaritan.

In the script, the men are drinking whiskey. In reality, his on-stage bar is stocked with empty IBC root beer bottles and Torani Italian syrups.

Kirchner, a church member, says he was impressed with the script the first time he saw it.

"I just felt like it told what is a good story in a different way," Kirchner said. "Maybe it'll touch somebody's heart."

With opening day less than a week away, the stage still had sawdust on it. Two tape measures sat atop the fake fireplace, and a power drill leaned against the bar's wall.

But participants were confident the program would come together.

*(Continued on page 13)**Ichabod**(Continued from page 8)*

ington, for example, the congregation dresses up in Middle Eastern garb and sets up a drive-through mini-Bethlehem, complete with an overbooked inn, a pottery shop, a basket shop, a well, a tax collector's tent, a living Nativity scene, a pen full of barnyard animals and a camel named Zeke. The animals alone cost \$1,500 to rent.

Churches in Louisville [KY] and Evansville, Ind., are staging "living Christmas trees" -- giant tree-shaped metallic structures big enough to hold entire choirs.

And Christ Life Sanctuary in Kettering, Ohio, promises "earth-shaking sound effects" and "explosive pyrotechnics."

But few Christmas programs are more ambitious than Ashland Avenue's, which opened yesterday and runs through Sunday. Brett, a former Lexington TV news personality, has been working on the program since February. He wrote the orchestration for the piece and recruited singers, musicians, set-builders and stage people -- even

(Continued on page 10)

*Ichabod**(Continued from page 9)*

a pilot to fly a cameraman over Lexington's landmarks at night, taking pictures for the play. About 90 people are involved in the production.

As is the case with most church Christmas programs, Brett relies heavily on volunteer talent and donated materials. The total cost for the performance is expected to be less than \$1,000.

Brett, 43, opened the program to non-churchgoers, welcoming anyone who shares his enthusiasm for the music and its message.

The church has recently suffered through a pastor's resignation and has seen its average weekly attendance plunge from 1,000 to about 300.

Brett says he hopes the program will unify the congregation and give it something positive to work on together.

The first Sunday he summoned volunteers, about 90 people showed up. Since then, support for the musical has remained

*(Continued on page 11)**Ichabod**(Continued from page 10)*

strong, despite its unorthodox delivery.

"The church has come together in a great way. We've got a better spirit of unity than we've had in five or six years," says interim pastor LaVerne Butler. "Barring a December blizzard, we expect this to be the largest production ever produced by the church."

Unlike most Christmas stories, this one begins and ends at a tavern.

The play is the story of an angel sent to Earth by God on Christmas Eve to find "the one thing that best represents everything good that has been done in the name of this day."

The angel ends up at a bar and witnesses an act of kindness by an unnamed bartender. The barkeep, a modern-day Good Samaritan, scoops all of the cash out of his till and gives the money to a stranded young stranger -- a latter-day prodigal daughter -- so she can fly home for the holidays.

"The program's controversial in the fact that it's not normally what you'd see at

(Continued on page 12)