

# Opinion

## THE PEEPLES REPORT

### Suffer the little children

By Clayburn Peoples

We reached a milestone of sorts in our family last week when Sarah, our youngest daughter, announced during church that she wouldn't be going down for the children's sermon any longer.

That's the way it happens in the house of childhood. The doors to its various rooms close softly and quietly, and often suddenly, and when they do, no power on earth can open them again.

The children's sermon that day, sans Sarah, was great. Brother Brian delivered it himself, and he began by showing the kids a pencil and asked if anyone could break it.

Of course a couple of the boys could. How about two pencils? Again, no problem, but then he held up eight pencils, and of course, nobody could do that, which led to the heart of the message — working together makes us strong.

"Wow," I thought, "we should send that children's sermon to Washington."

But I digress. The children's sermons are good at our church, and Sarah's reason for not taking part any longer has nothing to do with their quality or how interesting they are. And it may not even be a signal that this phase of her childhood is over.

No, when we asked her the other night at supper why she had decided not to take part any longer, she said it was because she didn't like walking all the way down the sanctuary aisle to the chancel rail where the children's sermon takes place.

"I don't like everybody looking at me," she said. "If we didn't sit on the back row," she continued,

looking pointedly at me, "I might still do it. Maybe I still will when I'm acolyting."

Sounds like she's pretty ambivalent about children's sermons, but most people are not. Most churchgoers feel rather strongly about them, whether they're called children's sermons, children's messages, children's chats, or whatever. Some people love them — and let's just say some people don't.

I never heard of them when I was growing up, and I still remember the first one I saw; I was visiting a Southern Baptist Church in Knoxville in 1969 with a friend and was totally charmed when the minister invited all the children in the audience to come to the altar whereupon he spoke to them for about five minutes about the Good Samaritan.

I thought that was cool as a fan and that every church ought to have a children's sermon, and by the end of the 1970s it seemed that most churches did. Today a majority of protestant churches do, and the practice is especially widespread in non-liturgical churches, crossing most, but not all, denominational lines, whether conservative, moderate or progressive.

But even in churches that have children's sermons, the practice is not without controversy. It always has been a contentious subject, ever since the first one was introduced in the late 1800s. One famous minister of that era recommended that, "At every Sunday morning service for 10 minutes out of the 90, let the minister be in direct contact with the souls of the children."

That's right; 10 min-

utes. Out of 90! And you think the squirming and wiggling are bad now.

So the practice isn't new, but it really took off in the 1970s, as more and more churches began to experiment with "creative" models of worship.

But as I said, the children's sermon, while a beloved Sunday morning ritual in many churches, has those who want to do away with it. While almost no one disagrees with the goal of distilling scripture and theology into a short message that keeps children's attention and edifies them, critics say that's not what happens in children's sermons.

"They're not for children and are usually not sermons," says a prominent church leader. Another complains that they have become entertainment and are not taken seriously, often preached at children's expense to provide humorous moments for adults in the audience. "Sort of like an episode," one critic observed, "of 'Kids Say the Darndest Things.'"

Of course adults laugh when they do, and children may or may not know why. That's also problematic.

Proponents, on the other hand, say that children's sermons are important for several reasons. One, if the minister does them, it gives small children the opportunity to view him or her as a real person. Not only that, they say, it helps children to become comfortable with sanctuary worship and reminds adults in the audience who the children in the congregation are and of their corporate responsibility for the souls of those children.

Still, under the best of circumstances, in most churches, children's sermons are a "viewer" event where children are displayed to the congregations and asked questions while nervous parents hold their breaths in fear of what answers might be forthcoming from their little angels' mouths.

Consider this exchange; a volunteer who was doing the children's sermon wanted to stress the importance of sitting quietly in church. "And why," she asked the six or seven children sitting along the chancel rail, "should we be quiet in church?"

"Because people are sleeping," chirped a bright little girl seated at the end of the row.

Not after that they weren't.

### DSCC honors local students

Dr. Kay Patterson, Dyersburg State Community College interim vice president for the college, recognizes students for their scholastic achievements each semester. To be included on the dean's list, a student must complete at least 12 semester hours of college level courses during the semester and earn a grade point average of 3.5 or higher for the semester.

Dyer students making the dean's list for fall 2018 are Emily Cooper, Garrett Doss, Lavonna King, Rebecca Lamb, Terry Newsome, Hannah Sawyers, Shaina Smith and Leigha Whitaker. Madison Baird of Rutherford was also named to the dean's list.

### WRITE US

The Tri-City Reporter encourages letters to the editor. Letters should be 300 words or less. Name and city are published. Address and phone number are required for verification only.



**CHILI COOK-OFF WINNERS** – Gibson County Young Farmers & Ranchers hosted a chili cook-off last week at the Yorkville Community Center to collect canned goods and raise money for food pantries across the county. Judges chose David Zarecor (not pictured) of Milan as the third place winner, Farm Bureau Insurance, represented by Cindy Crenshaw (center) and Penny Poole (right), as second place and Scott's Pizza & Kitchen (not pictured) in Trenton as first place. The People's Choice Award went to Yorkville Cumberland Presbyterian Church, represented by Tammy Zarecor (left). Nearly 20 teams entered chili in the competition. Admission was canned goods and allowed hungry guests to sample the chili and/or choose a bowl of their favorite. (Photos by Crystal Burns)



**TABLE WINNERS** – Awarded for best tables at the Gibson County Young Farmers & Ranchers' chili cook-off last week were (from left) Libby Wickersham, Greater Gibson County Area Chamber of Commerce, third place; Tammy Zarecor, Yorkville Cumberland Presbyterian Church, second place; and Tonya Stafford, McGriff Insurance Services, third place.

## County recognized...

(Continued from page 1)

reliability in government. This is quite an accomplishment."

What is the significance of a "clean audit," and how does it benefit local residents?

"It means a lot to me and the taxpayers of Gibson Co.," said Commissioner Mike Longmire of Humboldt, county budget chair. "It proves that we are doing exactly what we say, in making sure department heads follow correct procedures, and the money is being spent appropriately."

"Secondly, it prides me in the decision we made to hire Greg Pillow as our finance director," said Longmire. "Greg is doing a great job for the county, and we are proud to have him. I believe the residents of Gibson Co. should be proud to know that we are in compliance with the state, and our purchasing and spending policies are followed correctly and accurately."

How is Gibson Co. able to distinguish itself for fiscal management, when 87 counties in Tennessee are cited for findings by state auditors?

"I think this goes back to a strong finance director and his ability to follow through with the checks and balances of our county's funding," said Longmire. "Everything is recorded and documented as it should be. I'm also proud of our Budget Committee and the commitment they give, when working to prepare an upcoming budget,

that both the county government can operate on and the county taxpayer can feel confident that their money is spent adequately and correctly in our county."

Mayor Tom Wither- spoon said county leaders strive for efficiency.

"To sum up in one word how we manage to do this is 'teamwork,'" he said. "We consider our annual clean audits a point of pride for the entire county. When the County Commission had the good sense to hire Greg Pillow as director of finance four years ago, we agreed upon a set of goals. At the top of that list was efficiency in government. The results of our audits indicate we are hitting these marks. I congratulate all our department heads and staff for achieving back-to-back clean audits."

Pillow said the state recognition is an honor for all county employees and residents.

"Gibson County's clean audit for two years in a row shows the dedication of the employees of Gibson Co. to make right decisions and to follow the policies, procedures and laws of the county, state, and federal government," said Pillow. "The tone is set by the County Commission, and it filters to all county departments. This is an honor for all Gibson Co. employees and Gibson Co. citizens. Our goal is to achieve this honor every year, and it takes continuous improvement to reach that goal."

## Jackson State names honor rolls

The Office of Admissions and Records at Jackson State Community College released the honor roll and dean's list for the fall 2018 semester.

Honor roll is reserved for students who are enrolled for 12 or more hours of college-level work and who complete a semester's work with a quality point

average between 3.00 and 3.49. Dean's list is reserved for students who are enrolled for 12 or more hours of college-level work and who complete a semester's work with a quality point average between 3.50 and 4.00.

Local students named to the dean's list are Chelsey Lynn Chappell of Ruther-

ford, Devin Lane Edwards of Rutherford, Macy Lee-ann Muirhead of Kenton and Danecia Charelle Riding of Dyer.

Local students named to the honor roll are Tanya Shae Burkett of Dyer, Brooklyn Erin McCollum of Rutherford, Allison Dunn Pitcher of Rutherford and Kansas Danielle Reid of Rutherford.

## FEATURE YOUR BUNDLE OF JOY IN OUR BABIES OF 2018!

Deadline: Feb. 8, 12 p.m.

Entry Fee: \$15

Photos will run in color.

Baby's Name:	_____
Birthday:	_____
Parent or Parents:	_____
Town:	_____

(Must have been born in 2018)

Please send photo/info to The Tri-City Reporter, P.O. Box 266, Dyer, TN 38382, stop by our office at 111 E. First St. in Trenton, or email [crystal@trentongazette.com](mailto:crystal@trentongazette.com). You can also use our dropbox in the lobby of Food Rite in Dyer. For more information, call 692-3506.

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THE TRI-CITY REPORTER

Tri-City Reporter (USPS 638880) is published weekly by Gibson County Publishing, 111 E First St., Trenton, TN 38382. Periodicals Postage Paid at Trenton, TN and at additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send Change of Addresses to Tri-City Reporter, PO Box 266, Dyer, TN 38330.



Published each Tuesday by Gibson County Publishing 111 E. First St., Trenton, TN 38382 Phone 731.692.3506 Fax: 731.692.4844