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Arkansas Baptist State Convention

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Royal Ambassador Week
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October 17, 1985

Arkansas Baptist
Newsmagazine

On the cover



SBC Brotherhood photo

Like these Royal Ambassadors being led in cabin Bible study by SBC Brotherhood president James H. Smith, Arkansas RAs will be participating in National Royal Ambassador Week Nov. 3-9. Individual churches will focus on RAs during the week, and activities will be culminated with a state-wide RA Fellowship Luncheon, Saturday, Nov. 9, in North Little Rock.

In this issue

8 a 'New Reformation'

A serious study of the 1986 Doctrine Study theme, "The Doctrine of the Laity," would transform many Southern Baptist churches, says Findley B. Edge, author of the material. Arkansas Baptists will have an opportunity to preview the material during the State Evangelism Conference in January.

12 Baptist plans stymied

Three years after the Narkis Street Church in Jerusalem was burned by arsonists, an Israeli regional development commission has blocked the congregations plans to rebuild.

Philpot killed in Mexico City

Southern Baptist representative James Philpot of Mena was shot and killed in his car Oct. 11 in Mexico City by two persons in another car he sideswiped in traffic. Philpot's wife, the former Jurhee Sheffield, was not with him at the time. More information will be available in the Oct. 24 ABN.

Churches report record enrollment

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Southern Baptist Sunday school enrollment apparently has topped 8 million for an all-time record, based on estimates collected during a nationwide reporting telecast.

The Sept. 29 Celebration Sunday reporting telecast on the Baptist Telecommunication Network (BTN) marked the end of a five-year enrollment campaign. During the telecast, state Baptist convention leaders reported the estimated total enrollment for churches in their state.

The telecast included reports from 38 of the 39 state conventions and fellowships with an estimated increase of 115,016 above the 1984 enrollment of 7,857,337.

Additional reports received after the telecast ended include reports from all 39 state conventions and fellowships with an estimated increase of 145,472 for a total enrollment for Southern Baptist churches estimated at 8,002,809. The Southern Baptist Sunday school enrollment was 7,433,405 in 1980 when 8.5 by '85 began, for an estimated five-year gain of 569,404.

The live phone-in telecast was a first for Southern Baptists designed to give an immediate report of the five-year enrollment emphasis. The report was based on churches calling their associational leaders, who in turn called the state Sunday school directors for the live phone-in.

Associational leaders used last year's figures for churches which did not report and state leaders used last year's figures for associations not reporting.

Texas posted the largest numerical gain

National CP receipts \$117,526,691 for year

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—The Southern Baptist Convention closed its books on the 1984-85 fiscal year for the national Cooperative Program Sept. 30 after receiving \$117,526,691 in undesignated contributions to its worldwide programs.

The 1984-85 total was 7.99 percent (\$8,690,959) above 1983-84 contributions while the inflation rate is approximately 3.5 percent, meaning growth in giving has more than doubled the rate of inflation.

September contributions of \$9.75 million from the 37 conventions (covering all 50 states) affiliated with the SBC left income slightly more than \$473,000 below the basic budget goal of \$118 million. No funds were available for \$6.87 million capital needs portion of the budget or the \$5.12 million challenge budget.

The 1983-84 gifts, leveled when inflation dropped to approximately three percent after planners had anticipated a 12 percent inflation rate, fell \$5.7 million below basic budget goals.

Apparently, Southern Baptists in Florida and Oklahoma can lay strong claims to having been the individual leaders in supporting the national programs of the Southern Baptist Convention during the past year.

with an estimated 32,995 increase. Other top numerical estimated increases were Florida, 19,891; Alabama, 14,115; California, 9,080, and Oklahoma, 8,895.

"Although it does not appear we will reach the eight and a half million, we have achieved a significant victory by topping the eight million mark," said Harry Piland, director of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's Sunday school department. The growth marks six years of consecutive increase with four years of record enrollment, Piland said.

"There is a new sense of urgency for Sunday school enrollment we have not had before," he said.

As the 1985 enrollment emphasis ends, Challenge 10/90, a new emphasis to enroll 10 million persons in Bible study by 1990 is beginning.

The goals are not just numbers but are efforts to enroll individuals in Bible study, Piland emphasized during discussion that was a part of the telecast along with the telephone reports from state Sunday school leaders. "Challenge 10/90 is a people challenge not a numbers challenge."

The enrollment emphasis has had a major impact on the Sunday school work in some conventions. For example, the New England convention reported an estimated enrollment that has almost doubled the enrollment of five years ago. Al Riddley, Sunday school director for New England reported an estimated enrollment of 11,943. Churches making up what is now the New England convention had an enrollment of approximately 6,000 in 1980.

By taking the latest available membership figures for the 37 state conventions affiliated with the SBC (for calendar year 1984) and comparing them with final figures for the national SBC fiscal year (Oct. 1, 1984-Sept. 30, 1985) an approximate "per capita" giving figure can be established.

By that procedure, Florida's national CP contributions of \$9,450,519 and membership of 871,113 produces a per capita gift of \$10.85. Likewise, Oklahoma's numbers of \$7,815,188 and 729,879 works out to \$10.71 per member to fund the work of more than 6,000 missionaries in 106 foreign countries and all 50 states, six seminaries and various other boards and agencies.

The SBC-wide figure (based on gifts through the national Cooperative Program of \$117,526,690) is \$8.19.

Obviously the per capita figures are directly influenced by the percentage of income the state conventions share with the national programs. Oklahoma and Florida are the only two conventions which divide income 50-50, though most conventions are moving toward that goal.

Arkansas' total contribution was \$4,399,840, which gives an approximate per capita figure of \$9.85.

Achieving a balanced ministry

The editor's page

J. Everett Sneed



It is not easy for a pastor to achieve a well-balanced ministry. To maintain one's equilibrium among the many tugs and pulls of life is a difficult task and requires rigid self-discipline. There are a number of steps that can assist greatly. Among these are continual contact with God, contact with great minds and contact with people.

It is quite easy for a preacher to succumb to pet hobbies or to follow tangents rather than developing a well-balanced ministry. Balance is, perhaps, the most important ingredient in developing a well-rounded church. Balance can only be achieved through the discipline of time and responsibilities to the ministry and to a proper appraisal of the relative values that seek to claim an individual's time and energy.

The first essential in a preacher's ministry is his contact and fellowship with God through Christ. This is, of course, a basic premise normally taken for granted in the life of a minister. He must be continually seeking renewal of his own spiritual experience by seeking daily to keep alive his relationship with God, who called him into the ministry. There are so many distractions and appeals which, though not evil themselves, tend to draw the preacher away from his spiritual moorings. Unless he is alert to the dangers involved, he may fall victim to the thousand and one projects, activities and appeals which continually grapple for his time and energy and which, without replenishing, will tend to take time from his spiritual renewal.

Contact with God must be maintained through prayer. It is essential for a preacher to be on easy speaking terms with God. He should talk to God about his personal life, his spiritual life, his growth in spiritual things and his spiritual preparation. The preacher's spiritual life will have much to do with the fruitfulness of his ministry.

The preacher's sermons should be born of prayer. When a preacher is tempted to go into the pulpit with a critical spirit, he should go to his knees and ask God to give him a biblically based sermon. Likewise, when a pastor is tempted to go into the pulpit airing the gossip of the community, he should say, "Get behind me, Satan." Sermons that are born of prayer and delivered with love will convict individuals of sin and lead them to Christ as Savior.

Every relationship of the preacher should be in complete harmony with his relationship to God. Likewise, every program conducted by the church also should be born of prayer.

It is essential that a preacher read his Bible with the purpose of letting God speak to his soul. All too often, Bible study is done

for the purpose of preparing messages rather than for allowing God to speak to one's needs.

It is not difficult for a preacher to bring his own preconceived ideas and desires to the Bible when he studies it, either for messages or for a devotional time. When we undertake to make God say what we want him to say, we do great violence to the Word of God.

A second great need for every pastor is to maintain contact with the best thought of the past and present. Though the Bible is our only source of authority and practice, it is essential for a preacher to have his mind stimulated by the thoughts of others. No one individual, no matter how brilliant or how led by the Holy Spirit, has a monopoly on all truth. The ideas, interpretation of Scripture and thoughts of others are essential for a well-balanced and well rounded ministry. No one mind can fathom all truth of divine revelation, nor can all the minds of the human race combined ever exhaust eternal truth.

Reading a wide spectrum of books is absolutely essential for every preacher. He should be careful in his selection of the books he reads. It is easy to waste a great deal of time reading worthless books, even before discovering that they are valueless.

The best books are those that have been written by the great scholars of the past and present. It is essential that a pastor keep up with the best thought of today, as well as that of the past. This includes keeping up with current events through newspapers, good secular news magazines and daily TV newscasts.

Finally, the well-balanced minister must have contact with people. The preacher who holds his people at arm's length cannot minister to them in their needs. Sermons should be prepared to meet the actual needs of the people, and purposeful visitation should be a joy for every minister.

Though preaching should be connected with visitation and the needs of people, it is absolutely essential for a pastor to keep conferences. If a congregation comes to believe a pastor reveals in his messages the things that have been told to him in confidence, the pastor will no longer have opportunity to counsel and meet needs of individuals.

The pastor's job is a difficult one. Contact with God, with great minds and with people must all be kept in careful balance. Members should remember the pressures that confront their pastor and should work with him and pray for him so that he may be able to obtain the needed balance that produces a proper New Testament church.

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One layman's opinion

Daniel R. Grant

100 reasons for attending the convention

As the time draws near for the 132nd annual meeting of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, to be held on the campus of Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia, some may still be trying to decide whether to attend. Several good reasons occur to me in support of a favorable decision on attending, including:

(1) Wayne Ward will be leading the Bible study each session, and he will make the entire trip worthwhile.

(2) Calvin Miller, outstanding preacher and writer who has the amazing gift to express old truths in the fresh language of today, will be speaking at both the Pastor's Conference and the convention.

(3) Nilson Fanini, often called the Billy Graham of South America and pastor of the largest Baptist church in Brazil, will speak at

the Pastor's Conference and the convention.

(4) The music will be truly outstanding, a mountaintop experience in itself.

(5) Every Arkansas Baptist should consider it both an obligation and a privilege to participate in important decision making by the messengers from 1,270 churches as we work and plan together to share the Christian gospel with the entire world.

As my list of reasons grew longer, it occurred to me there are actually 100 additional good reasons, one for each year in Ouachita's Centennial. In case we have failed to get the word to you, Ouachita Baptist University is in its 100th year of service to and with Arkansas Baptists, following its founding on Sept. 6, 1886.

Who would stay away from the 100th birthday party of his mother or father?

Ouachita's birthday party is even more remarkable for Arkansas Baptists; it is the 100th birthday of their child, still growing at the tender age of 100. Following the opening session of the convention on Tuesday evening, Nov. 19, Arkansas Baptists will have the opportunity of joining the Ouachita's Centennial Birthday Celebration. In addition to the fun and festivities, it will be a time of thanksgiving and rededication: thanksgiving for the miracles God has worked at Ouachita through Arkansas Baptist support, and rededication to the cause of Christian education for many more generations of young people.

The Ouachita latching string is out, and your child is expecting you.

Daniel R. Grant is president of Ouachita Baptist University at Arkadelphia.



Woman's viewpoint

Mary Maynard Sneed

Interpreting the Scripture

Whenever sincere Christians unite in a search for effective ways to meet human need, they will find strength and guidance in a serious study of the Bible. Parents whose faith provides the spiritual energy for daily living will teach their children to understand these truths. The church which values Bible study as a vital source in the fulfillment of its mission will drink the spiritual power inherent in God's word.

Parents, teachers and students who are committed to researching the linguistic, literary, historical and theological backgrounds of the Scripture will prepare themselves as workers that need not be ashamed, "rightly dividing the word of truth" (I Tim. 2:15). The biblical message is still relevant to the questions of the human mind and the distresses brought about by the culture in which we live.

But how, we ask, can those of us who are not theologians nor even proficient in biblical languages sort out the truth from among the many conflicting interpretations of our times? Fortunately, a number of com-

mentaries available in the Baptist Book Store and some church libraries are the works of competent biblical scholars who are proficient in Hebrew and Greek.

Every good religious library should contain an ordinary dictionary of modern English, a Bible dictionary, a complete analytical concordance to the Scripture, assorted ancient and modern translations of the Bible and several dependable commentaries. A good study course manual, such as *How to Study the Bible* by Olin T. Binkley, also would aid the serious student.

However, understanding Bible truths does require time and effort. Too many misinterpretations of God's word are the result of shoddy workmanship or of approaching the task with preconceived ideas. Many a false teaching has been put forth by insincere, if normally intelligent, individuals who do no more than reinforce their own preconceived notions by citing two or three prooftexts and ignoring the bulk of the Scripture. For example, by simply pulling a few verses out of context (Isa. 11:12 and 28:16, Job 38:4,7,

Psa. 118:22-23, Zech. 10:4, Matt. 21:42-44, Mark 12:10-11, Luke 20:17-18, Acts 4:10-12, I Pet. 2:1-10 and Rev. 7:1), I can "prove" to you that the earth is square.

The Bible, like other good literature, should be read intelligently, not sampled like a box of assorted sweets by picking and pinching. God spoke first through the mouths of his prophets and finally through the life of his Son to convey a message of eternal significance. It is to the comprehension of that message that all intelligent Bible study is directed.

Finally, the Bible must be interpreted in the light of Jesus Christ, his life and his message, under the direction of the Holy Spirit. We have this confidence, that he will never give us any doctrine which is contrary to the gospel.

Mary Maynard Sneed of North Little Rock is the wife of the editor, a homemaker and the mother of two daughters. She is a member at Park Hill Church.

Don Moore

You'll be glad to know...

... She became something of a legend for her determination to do what others considered impossible for her. When she sought

appointment as a missionary to Nigeria, she was told she was too small to stand up to the rigors of life in Africa. 'God made me, and he knew my size when he called me to be a missionary,' replied the five foot tall woman.

"After 15 years of teaching in Baptist girls' schools in Nigeria, she volunteered to work among the Batonu tribe of eastern Nigeria after the mission was unable to find a man to take the post. When her fellow missionaries questioned her ability to survive, she told them she'd come out when they found a man to work there. She retired at age 70 before that day came.

"She once described her basic task among the Batonu tribe as living 'Christ-like' until people who could not read and learn of Jesus through the Bible could see him in her life. For years, she lived in a trailer, which she pulled with a land-rover, spending most of her time out among the villages. She dispensed aspirins and pills, swabbed sores and taught about Jesus. Later, she lived in a little room built onto one of the churches and cooked outside under a tree.

"After 38 years as a Southern Baptist missionary, she refused to relinquish her commitment to missions when she retired in 1973. She lived simply in a trailer and saved from her pension and honorariums to give repeatedly to missions.

"She continued to give smaller sums, including a charitable gift annuity which was to go to the Foreign Mission Board upon her death. Her most recent gift, in late spring, was designated for overseas schools which train pastors with too little education to attend seminary. In a letter accompanying one of her gifts, she wrote, 'You need not be praising me. I'm trying to do what every Christian should do—putting God first.' "

This blessed report from Baptist Press is about Hattie Gardner, little known on earth, but well known in heaven. She went there Sept. 18. Praise God for giving her a heart of conviction about the lost and giving Southern Baptists the heart to support those willing to go and tell. All of us bear the responsibility to go or send.

Don Moore is the executive director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention.

October 17, 1985



Moore

Letters to the editor

Not unpardonable

Mark Coppenger's letter of Oct. 3rd to the *Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine* has left me puzzled. Upon re-reading the comments made by John Sullivan of Shreveport, La. which are the remarks which trouble him, I can easily see the answer to the question he poses in his letter.

It is Dr. Sullivan's opinion in those remarks that divorced persons who ask forgiveness for the sin of divorce and remarry are not living in adultery. This is in line with biblical model of the Adulterous Woman (Jn. 8:3-11). Paul also tells us that we are not to divorce our mates and it is better to remain single in the event of divorce. (1 Cor. 7:10-11). This is the biblical ideal.

Almost 80 percent of the divorced will

remarry and choose less than the Christian ideal. We as Christian pastors need to make the best of these less than ideal situations. Need I remind Dr. Coppenger that divorce is not and has never been the unpardonable. sin? Pastors can officiate the wedding of Christians seeking remarriage if the proper spiritual preparation is followed. — Bob Parsley, Prescott

Letters to the editor expressing opinions are invited. Letters should be typed double-space and must be signed by one person, though the name may be withheld on request. Mailing address and phone number of the writer should be included. Letters must not contain more than 350 words and must not defame the character of persons. Letters must be marked "for publication." Only original letters will be considered.

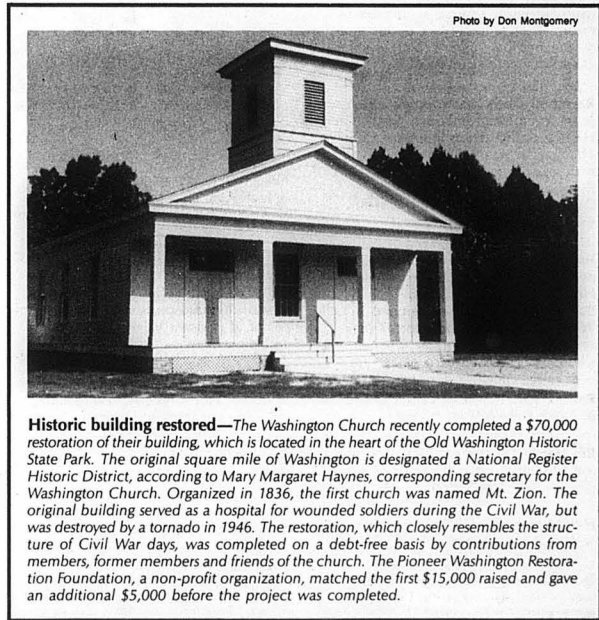


Photo by Don Montgomery

Historic building restored—The Washington Church recently completed a \$70,000 restoration of their building, which is located in the heart of the Old Washington Historic State Park. The original square mile of Washington is designated a National Register Historic District, according to Mary Margaret Haynes, corresponding secretary for the Washington Church. Organized in 1836, the first church was named Mt. Zion. The original building served as a hospital for wounded soldiers during the Civil War, but was destroyed by a tornado in 1946. The restoration, which closely resembles the structure of Civil War days, was completed on a debt-free basis by contributions from members, former members and friends of the church. The Pioneer Washington Restoration Foundation, a non-profit organization, matched the first \$15,000 raised and gave an additional \$5,000 before the project was completed.

Cummins revival brings 125 decisions

The annual revival at Cummins Prison near Grady Sept. 26-29 resulted in 79 professions of faith and 46 rededications, according to Dewie E. Williams, administrator of chaplaincy services for the Arkansas Department of Correction.

Paul Carlin of Texas preached the revival,

and Jim Wright, music minister at First Church, Dumas, led the singing. Cummins' senior chaplain, Herbert Holley, was in charge of the services.

Sixty-seven men from Arkansas and other states worked in personal evangelism during the four-day revival.

by Millie Gill / ABN staff writer

people

Brian Harbour will begin serving Nov. 10 as pastor of Little Rock Immanuel Church. Harbour, a native of Weslaco, Texas, has served as pastor of First Church in Pensacola, Fla., since 1978. He has also served as pastor of Shiloh Terrace Church, Dallas, Texas; Colonial Heights Church, Jackson, Miss. and Woodland Hills Church, Atlanta, Ga. He is a 1966 graduate of Baylor University, graduating magna cum laude. In 1973, he earned a doctor of philosophy degree from Baylor. His wife, Jan, is a native of Kansas City, Mo. They are parents of four children, Jay, Collin, Cara and Marty.

Matt Porter has joined the staff of Harrison Northvale Church as minister of music and youth. He is a graduate of Mountain Home High School and Ouachita Baptist University.

Raymond Davis has accepted a call to serve as pastor of Imboden First Church. He is a graduate of Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary and has served for two years as pastor of Faith Church in Byhalia, Miss. Davis and his wife, Dianne, have four children, Jennifer, Brandy, Steven and Eric.

Jerry Creek recently was commissioned as a chaplain in the U.S. Army Reserve. He is assigned to the 336th Ordnance Battalion, serving troop members in Little Rock, Camden and Jonesboro. Creek serves as pastor of Central Avenue Church in Hot Springs.

Ron M. Paul is serving as music director of North Crossett First Church.

Bill Harris has resigned as pastor of Morton Church to serve as pastor of Antioch Church near Hot Springs.

Harold Hansell is serving as pastor of Mount Hebron Church at Searcy.

Doug Applegate has resigned from the staff of Bald Knob Central Church to serve as pastor of Portia Church and continue his education at Southern Baptist College.

James Kennebrew has resigned as pastor of New Providence Church at Leachville to move to Kennett, Mo.

Randy Johnson has resigned as pastor of Nodena Memorial Church at Wilson following five years of service.



Harbour



Porter



Davis



Creek

Mike Welch has resigned as pastor of Browns Chapel at Manila to serve with Mississippi County Union Rescue Mission.

Jerry Flagg has resigned as pastor of New Harmony Church at Manila.

Dewain Richardson is serving as interim pastor of Pleasant Valley Church at Trumann.

Marion Gramling has resigned as pastor of Mount Zion Church at Paragould following ten years of service.

Anna Beth Crosthwait has resigned as music director at Osceola Calvary Church.

Mary Hunter Wagoner has joined Heifer Project International, an interfaith, non-profit organization dedicated to eliminating world hunger. Wagoner is a member of Park Hill Church in North Little Rock. She is a graduate of the University of Arkansas with a degree in print journalism. She is president-elect of the Arkansas Chapter of the International Association of Business Communicators and is a member of the American and Arkansas Press Women.

Ray Branscum has resigned as interim pastor of Indian Springs Church in Bryant and is residing in Little Rock.

briefly

North Crossett First Church will observe homecoming Oct. 27 with a morning worship service, a noon fellowship meal and an afternoon musical program.

El Dorado Immanuel Church recently recognized its forty-third anniversary by recognizing three members who are former pastors: Clyde Hart, Jay D. Tolleson and Roy B. Hilton. Pastor Tommy Kimball also was recognized.

Magnolia Central Church recently honored Kelly Blewster, recognizing her 60 years of service as a choir member.

Bono First Church ordained H. T. Nutt as a deacon Oct. 6. Leading the ordination were pastor R. W. Goodman, Harold B. Ray, director of missions for Mount Zion Association, Larry Pendegraft and Marvin Emmons.

Old Union Church at Benton held a noteburning service Oct. 6, celebrating payment of an educational building note. Carl M. Overton, director of missions for Central Association, was speaker.

Russellville First Church held a deacon ordination service Oct. 13 for Jim Burgess, Jim Dickerson, Greg Nelson and Ed Williams. Pastor Stephen Davis was moderator.

Augusta Grace Church will observe its 20th anniversary Oct. 20 with both morning and afternoon services in which former pastors will be speakers.

Green Meadows Church at Pine Bluff will observe homecoming Oct. 27. J. W. Whitley will be speaker.

Mountain View First Church was in revival Sept. 29-Oct. 6. Victor Gore, pastor of DeQueen First Church, was evangelist. David Tohlen of Batesville West Church directed music. Pastor Richard Overman reported 20 professions of faith, three additions by letter, 18 re-dedications and 15 baptisms.

Hot Springs Grand Avenue Church recently licensed Dwayne Monk, Charles Holmes and Steve Harness to the preaching ministry.

Rector Heights Church in Hot Springs ordained Roy Rhodes to the deacon ministry Oct. 13.

First Church, Heber Springs, celebrates centennial

First Church, Heber Springs, celebrated its centennial on Oct. 6. A number of special guests were present for the celebration, including Don Moore, executive director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention; Ray Robus, mayor of Heber Springs; and five former pastors.

The morning service included a musical presentation by the ladies' handbell choir and the church choir. The centennial message was delivered by Moore, who noted, "Big events in the Bible are always marked by celebrations."

Moore said a centennial should be a time of reflection, a time of rejoicing and a time of rallying. He challenged the congregation to assist Arkansas Baptists in their goal of establishing 2,000 churches by the year 2000. He told the congregation their county had grown from 10,000 to 17,000 in just 14 years. As a result, a part of their future must be to reach more people for Christ in the area, Moore said.

The afternoon service featured reflections by former pastors, recognition of the oldest members and recognition of the member with the longest continual membership in the church. A brief history of the church was presented by Mrs. Charlsie B. Little, who has written a book on the history of the church entitled, *Upon This Rock*.

The history of the town began in 1882, when it was incorporated as Sugar Loaf. At the same time, the post office was charted as Heber. In 1910, the town officially became Heber Springs.

In 1885, the Baptist church was organized with 15 members. A year or so later, two Methodist churches were organized. One was the Methodist-Episcopal and the other was the Methodist-Episcopal Church South.

These three congregations met in the Court House, which was erected during the second year of the history of the county. Each of the congregations had a preaching service once a month and the services were staggered, so there was preaching on three Sundays of each month. Records indicate everyone attended all of these services.

In 1889, the Baptists bought their first lot and erected a 1,040 square foot one-room frame structure. In 1901, they bought an additional lot and erected a parsonage on it. Later, additional lots were purchased to provide the space the church now owns.

By 1915, the membership had outgrown the one-room church building. A new facility was erected that had seven rooms, a pastor's study and a baptistry. Alma Goodwin, who attended the service, was among the first to be baptized in the baptistry in 1916.

In 1926, the church was destroyed by a tornado, and again the services were held in the Court House. The next year, a building was constructed which served the church until 1976, when the congregation moved

text and photos by J. Everett Sneed into its present facility.

The church has experienced significant growth under its present pastor, Jerry A. Kirkpatrick. There have been 230 additions in two and one-half years, and the congregation has paid off the \$450,000 bonded indebtedness. The last payment of \$125,222 was paid on the first of October. The eradication of all indebtedness was a part of the centennial celebration. The 15-year bonded indebtedness was paid off in ten and one-half years.

Kirkpatrick feels the church will continue to experience significant growth. He observed the entire area was growing rapidly and said, "The future of this church is as bright as the promises of the Lord."



Pastor Jerry Kirkpatrick presents a plaque to Mrs. Terria Connell, member with the longest tenure at First Church.



Mr. C.C. Garrett, First's oldest member, is flanked by the families with the youngest children, Mr. and Mrs. David Ratley (left) with their son, James David Wayne, and Mr. and Mrs. Mike Henson (right) with their son, Hadden Michael.



First's pastor Jerry A. Kirkpatrick is pictured with former pastors who participated in First's centennial celebration (left to right): J. Paul Palmer, W.F. Montgomery, Ray Nelson, L.B. Jordan and Dana Whitfield.

Deeper understanding of doctrine would transform churches

by Mark Kelly

A revolution is brewing in Southern Baptist life, Findley Edge believes.

In fact, the revolution he sees amounts to a "New Reformation," as Southern Baptists recover the full meaning of the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer.

Edge, retired professor of religious education at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, authored *The Doctrine of the Laity*, the 1986 Doctrine Study book.

When Martin Luther confronted the Roman Catholic Church and raised a cry against a system which held only priests could dispense God's grace to the people, he set in motion a chain of events that shook 17th century Christendom to its foundations, noted Edge.



DOCTRINE OF THE LAITY

Luther advanced the radical claim that every Christian is a priest and holds the right of direct access to God's grace and forgiveness, he said. An oppressed people, empowered with the Scriptures in their own language, responded eagerly to the call to approach God on their own.

But Luther and the Reformers also declared each Christian is a minister, as well as a priest, Edge added. But, while Southern Baptists have stressed the right of direct access, they have failed to understand and implement the idea of every believer's ministry.

"The magnificent thing I see happening now is our churches are recovering an emphasis on the ministry of every believer," Edge explained. "And it is going to change our churches dramatically.

"Some will say, 'We have always recognized every Christian is to serve God,' he continued. "But our understanding has been tragically shallow and superficial."

Edge sees two weaknesses in Southern Baptists' understanding of the priesthood of the believer. "First, we have tended to feel service is optional for the Christian, that we can choose not to serve God and still be in relationship with him. After all, salvation is by grace and not works. Unfortunately, the large majority of our members have chosen not to serve."

Second, when Southern Baptists have called on people to minister, it has almost always been in relation to the organizations of the church, like teaching Sunday School or working on a committee, Edge said.

"We have tended to feel the only way we

could minister to people is to get them to come to church where we could teach them God's Word and proclaim the message of salvation to them," he explained. "But if they didn't come, by and large, we had nothing for them."

Southern Baptists need to understand how the ministry of God rests in the world, Edge asserted. "If we really understood Jesus' approach to people, we would see he ministered to people wherever they were. His basic ministry was among the people.

"We have trouble getting people to 'visit' and convince others to come to the church," Edge observed. "But Monday through Friday, nine to five, they are visiting with the unchurched already, being good, kind, moral people, but not being ministers."

Southern Baptist training often has been too general, Edge believes. "We have told our laypeople, 'Go out into the world and be a Christian' and assumed they knew what it meant," he said. "But, beyond honesty and doing a good job, we really don't know what it means. And the tragedy is that our pastors don't know how to help our laypeople minister in their daily lives."

Although Southern Baptists have taken upon themselves the challenge of taking the gospel to every person by the turn of the century, Edge believes that will never be accomplished without a clearer understanding of the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer.

A deeper understanding of the ministry of every Christian would have at least three implications for our churches, Edge asserted. First, Southern Baptists would undertake a far more serious teaching program than

presently, he said. "Just in the matter of attendance, only half of our adults are enrolled in Bible study, and only half of them attend," Edge said. "That's just not serious Bible study."

Second, churches would implement a training program which insists that Christian training is essential and imperative—and never optional—for every Christian. "If we are going into the world to minister, we must be equipped to do what God has called us to do," he declared. "The church must become a miniature theological seminary in effect, training people to identify their gifts for ministry, helping them understand how to express them in the world and training them for the task."

Finally, Southern Baptist churches would find their approach to evangelism changed, as well, Edge said. "If we believe a life of ministry is not optional for the Christian, we have to ask ourselves if we are calling people to a relationship with Christ that involves serious training and involvement in ministry," he explained.

"We have a group of people among us, our 'ministers,' for whom this involvement is not optional," Edge continued. "That should be true for all of us. God calls us to minister when he calls us to be his people.

"Here's the depth of the problem," he concluded. "Are our people willing to accept such a serious responsibility? People have come for salvation, forgiveness of sin and eternal life in heaven, but have they come to be disciples?"

Mark Kelly is a staff writer with the Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine.

Arkansas preview of doctrine study scheduled

Southern Baptists are coming to a new awareness of the role of the laypeople as gifted ministers in the church, believes Bob Holley, director of Church Training for the Arkansas Baptist State Convention.

"We are discovering anew the meaning of Ephesians 4," Holley said. "Pastors and teachers are given to the church in order to equip all God's people for ministry. Pastors and staff members must be equippers preparing people for ministry, rather than persons who are doing the ministry of the church themselves."

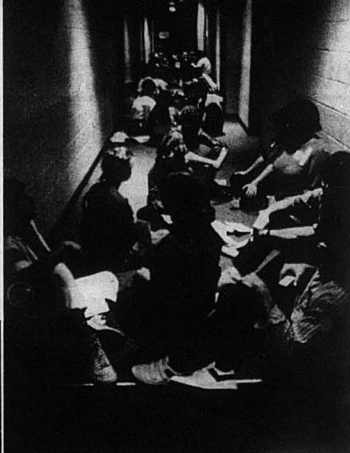
Holley believes the church that understands laypeople have special gifts and calling to minister will have to equip those people to function as ministers. "We will have to teach them how to discover their spiritual gifts, how to develop them and how to channel them and use them," he said.

Holley quoted Southern Baptist educator Ernest White: "Most Christians have more

gifts than they realize. Many gift-rich churches live in poverty."

Suggested dates for the 1986 Doctrine Study are April 22-26, Holley noted. Arkansas Baptists will have an opportunity to preview the 1986 study book, *The Doctrine of the Laity*, on Jan. 27. The author of the study, Findley Edge, retired professor of religious education at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, will address the doctrine of the laity between the afternoon and evening sessions of the State Evangelism Conference at Immanuel Church, Little Rock. Edge also will address the evangelism conference on Tuesday morning, Jan. 28.

Suggested age group books for the doctrine study emphasis are: youth, *Youth: Hearers and Doers*, by Morton Rose; older children, *Christians Can Help*, by M. Howington; and younger children, *I Can Help*, by Kay Turner.



Photos by George Sims

Students overflow meeting place

College students from more than 25 campuses set a new record for attendance at Arkansas' BSU convention Oct. 4-6. Students were challenged to consider needs of the world and their own commitment as events were focused on the theme "Jesus said, 'Follow me.'" The convention, sponsored by Arkansas' Student Department, was held on the campus of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock.

Students heard reports from their 1984 summer missionaries and voted to appoint 52 workers in 1986, budgeting \$43,250, most of which the students will donate. Fellowship groups crowded every corner and hallway of the UALR Student Union building. Several decisions were registered at the closing invitation, but even more were reported from the late night campus prayer groups as students responded to the theme's challenge.

Your state convention at work

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Walker

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for pre-existing conditions for 24 months, but if they do not receive treatment for those conditions during the first 12 months, coverage will begin at that point. Ailments occurring after admission into the medical plan will be covered beginning Jan. 1, 1986.

Current participants will have waivers removed and denied dependents can be added during open enrollment. Those participating in life insurance may also upgrade from Schedules 5 and 50. Dependent life insurance is increased from \$2,000 to \$4,000 for spouses in Schedules 50 and 100.

All participants in the health plan from Jan. 1 through Nov. 30, 1986, will not be billed for the December 1986 health premium.

Pastors have received brochures on the open enrollment. You may direct questions to your state annuity representative at 376-4791 in Little Rock or call the Annuity Board. —James A. Walker, director

Christian Life Council What type holic?

There are now an estimated 20 million Americans who are alcoholic or are on the verge of becoming an alcoholic. Every consumer of beverages



Parker

containing ethyl alcohol is a potential alcoholic.

If ethyl alcohol use is not a problem in your life, what kind of "holic" are you now or have you been? In I Corinthians 6:9-11, Paul listed many other "holics": "Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate (by perversion), homosexuals, thieves, covetous, revilers and swindlers." After naming them, he added: "and such were some of you, but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God."

Among other type "holics" who can be

delivered by the Lord are gossips, the critical spirited, cheaters, liars, the proud, jealous, those who envy and provokers of strife and factions. There is also the workaholic who has no time except to make money and seek success, often neglecting his family and church.

Pity and pray for the alcoholic and his family, but don't forget the other "holics" and the misery they cause. They need deliverance by the Lord Jesus! — Bob Parker, director

Missions

New work strategy

Proverbs 4:26 says "Plan carefully what you do, and whatever you do will turn out right." I believe God can give us vision of what should be done ahead of time.



Tidsworth

direction.

Directors of missions, pastors, missions committees, state staff and new work consultants have considered, adjusted and approved the plans. The Church Extension Advisory Council has given its final recommendation to strategy for 1986-1990.

We will share more details with you later. Meantime, hold up new work in your prayers. — Floyd Tidsworth Jr., church extension director

Evangelism GNA rally

The Association Good News America Rally is an inspirational time to launch preparation for the simultaneous revivals.



Shell

During the rally, church revival committee chairmen will be trained and Christians will be challenged with a message on Good News America. The Association Good News America Rally should be in January or February 1986. This should be nine or 10 weeks prior to the simultaneous revivals. All other associational events should give priority to this rally. This will give the local churches time to prepare for the revivals.

Constant communication should be maintained between the general chairman and the pastors. The rally is one of the absolute musts in preparing churches to reap the maximum benefits of the revivals.

The inspirational program should be well planned with a dynamic speaker who will give strong emphasis to evangelism. The speaker may be a strong evangelistic pastor, state leader or vocational evangelist.

The associational music director should plan a very special music program. A strong choir should be enlisted and capable special music people sought out.

The general chairman should preside at the rally in a very enthusiastic and prayerful way. This rally should be a great boost to motivate the churches toward simultaneous revivals. — Clarence Shell, director

Family and Child Care God's precious blessings

"It's beginning to look a lot like Thanksgiving Offering time." It's nearing the time of year when Arkansas Baptists express, in a wonderful way, their concern for the needs of hurting children and their families. "They Count On Us" is the theme for our Thanksgiving Offering this year. We believe that our Lord wants us to reach out in Christian love to provide for the children who count on us for help.

Several years ago, I received a letter from an elderly lady with two dimes scotch taped to her letter for the Thanksgiving Offering. Lovingly, she referred to her gift as a "widow's mite, but with God's precious blessings attached to it".

How thankful we are for the caring spirit of Arkansas Baptists who undergird our ministry to children with prayerful concern and financial resources. Out of such deep concern, you give. Last year, 1,051 of our 1,266 churches contributed to our child care ministry. We are grateful for this support and involvement that enables us to reach out and minister "unto the least of these."

It is our prayer that "God's precious blessings" will be attached to every gift that we receive and upon every act of ministry that we provide. Her letter concluded: "God bless each child and each adult that cares for and teaches God's way to the children". God bless you, too, Miss "G", for sharing with us out of what you have. — Johnny G. Biggs, executive director



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Arkansas natives appointed for service by HMB

ATLANTA—Four natives of Arkansas were appointed missionaries for service in Indiana, Iowa and Kansas by the directors of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board during their September meeting in Atlanta.

Art Dunham, 29, formerly of Newport, was appointed to serve in Morse Lake Reservoir, Ind., as church planter apprentice; Michael Gordon, 27, of Fort Smith, was appointed as church planter apprentice in Iowa; and Max and Ann Griffin were appointed Christian social ministry missionaries in Wichita, Kan.

Dunham is currently apartment minister and student intern for the Blue River-Kansas City Association, Kansas City, Mo. In Morse Lake Reservoir, he and his wife Jenny will be assigned to start new churches under the Home Mission Board's church planter apprentice program, a two-year assignment for seminary graduates who work under an experienced supervisor to start new churches.

A graduate of Ouachita's Baptist University and Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Dunham served as volunteer chaplain for the Lawrence County Jail and Craighead County Jail.

He is married to the former Jenny Evans of San Jose, Calif. The Dunhams have one child, Christina, 2.

Gordon, 27, has been bivocational pastor



Dunham



Gordon



Max and Ann Griffin

of Cherry Hill Church, Cherry Hill, for the last year. He is a graduate of Arkansas Tech University and Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City. He was a PRAXIS team member in Independence, Mo., and served as a HMB US-2 missionary to Vancouver, Wash., from 1980 to 1982. In 1978 was a HMB summer missionary in Washington state and British Columbia, Canada.

The son of Mr. and Mrs. Dale Gordon of Fort Smith, he is married to the former LuAnn Patton of Tupelo, Miss.

A graduate of Arkansas Polytechnic University, Griffin also received the master of religious education degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Ann Griffin, of Helena, was appointed for

church and family work by the board. She is a graduate of Angelina Junior College, Lufkin, Texas also attended College of the Ozarks and Arkansas Polytechnic University.

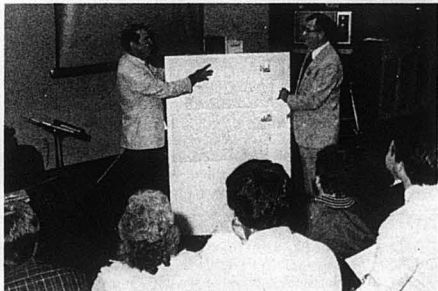
The Griffins have two children, Sherri Denise, 19, and Christy Ann, 15.

Photo by Glen Ennes



A gift of music—Lois Shaw, an employee of the Baptist Building, and her pastor, C.D. Edwards of St. John's Missionary Baptist Church in Little Rock, receive a load of hymnals—given to replace ones which were destroyed in a fire—from Ervin Keathley, state music secretary for the Arkansas Baptist State Convention. St. John's was one of three Little Rock church buildings destroyed or damaged by fire in recent weeks. The hymnals had been given to the ABSC Music Department by Levy Church, North Little Rock, after that congregation purchased new books. Keathley noted the gift to St. John's exhausted his department's supply of used hymnals and called on churches to donate unused hymnals to restock the inventory. Keathley also said he would help churches locate hymnals needed for a mission point or new work.

Photo by Glen Ennes



Musicians on Mission—Harry Taylor, state music secretary for the Kansas/Nebraska Convention of Southern Baptists, details for Arkansas musicians meeting at Baring Cross Church, North Little Rock, the 1986 Musicians on Mission workshop and mission venture to be held April 17-19 in Wichita, Kan. The workshop will provide training for church musicians in those areas. The workshop will include a commissioning service for musicians and pastors working in short-term mission projects in Kansas and Nebraska immediately following the workshop. The Arkansas Music Men and Singing Women will present a theme interpretation during the workshop's opening session. Musicians and pastors interested in helping with leadership training and revivals connected with the workshop should contact the ABSC Music Department by Nov. 1.

Israeli commission counters plan to replace burned church

JERUSALEM (BP)—Three years after the Narkis Street Baptist Church was destroyed by arsonists, the congregation has learned its rebuilding plans have been rejected by a regional development commission.

However, the commission reportedly will allow a 60-seat worship center—equivalent to the one gutted Oct. 7, 1982—and other improvements at the site.

The 300-member congregation had been seeking permission to build an up-to-date facility with a 400-seat auditorium, several Sunday school rooms and office space.

According to a statement issued by the church's pastor, Robert Lindsey, "Members of the district planning commission have privately reported that after a stormy session three members voted to grant the approval

as requested (by the congregation) and six others voted to deny it."

Formal notice of the commission's decision has not been received, said Lindsey, a Southern Baptist representative to Israel since 1944.

"We have to accept and forgive those who voted against the church's (rebuilding) plans," Brad Young, a Southern Baptist living in Israel, exhorted fellow church members in an Oct. 5 service. Referring to the arsonists, he said, "We have to love the people who persecute us."

The church's proposed replacement of its former chapel, which was built in 1933, would have cost \$1 million. Already, \$500,000 has been contributed by groups, congregations and individuals in numerous

countries, including the United States.

Lindsey said the congregation hired a well-known Jerusalem architect, Zev Baran, to draw up rebuilding plans. Approval from the city of Jerusalem came last fall and "most of the officials were extremely helpful," the pastor said. But the plans have been bogged down in the regional development commission since November 1984.

Slowing down the process has been opposition from Y'ad L'achim, a conservative Jewish organization antagonistic toward Christianity. Prior to a commission hearing earlier this year, Y'ad L'achim organized a protest in front of the church Jan. 23, promoting it with posters throughout Jerusalem. About 100 people, including women, children and teen-agers, participated.

Foreign board approves \$406,500 for Mexico rebuilding project

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)—The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board earmarked \$406,500 Oct. 3 to buy equipment and feed 3,000 Mexicans while they are trained to help dig Mexico City out from under the wreckage of two earthquakes.

More than half of the money will pay for nine big compressor jackhammers, plus smaller equipment such as blowtorches and power saws for cutting metal. The rest will finance up to three weeks of food each for 3,000 jobless Mexicans as they are trained to use the equipment.

An additional \$200,000 may be allocated for more compressor jackhammers in a second phase of the project if the overall effort succeeds.

As unofficial earthquake death tolls topped 7,000 at the beginning of October, an estimated 1,400 buildings in Mexico City lay in various stages of ruin. Many of the buildings housed businesses and government offices, and as many as 30,000 families lost work, according to Don Turner, FMB

human needs consultant.

Mexican Baptist businessman Raul Castellanos, an executive in the Aristos hotel and construction group, has offered to provide training for the 3,000 workers, followed by employment with Aristos, other construction companies and the government.

First Church of Mexico City, in the heart of one of the worst-hit areas, will likely be the training site. The church owns two adjacent lots with facilities big enough to house the training project, which will include on-the-job experience in the ravaged city. In addition to general demolition, the trainees will learn general repair, maintenance, mechanics and construction work in concrete, asphalt and steel.

The Aristos group is willing to train the 3,000 men in return for their labor during training and use of the equipment, Turner said. He added the skills would help them find employment long after the cleanup is completed.

Aristos has agreed to buy the compressor

jackhammers after the training period at the market price for used machinery, enabling the Foreign Mission Board to recover at least half of the retail expenditure. Those funds will in turn be funneled by Southern Baptist representatives and Mexican Baptists into additional relief-related projects.

Reinforcements have arrived to relieve the original team of 13 Texas Baptist men who arrived in Mexico City Sept. 26 with a portable field kitchen. Texas Baptists have also sent 80 Spanish-speaking counselors to aid people suffering emotional trauma from the horrors of the earthquakes.

In Richmond, Foreign Mission Board staffers reported receipt of more than \$14,000 in Mexico relief contributions from Southern Baptists by Oct. 2. A great deal more money, they reported, is "in the pipeline" as it moves from individual churches through state Baptist conventions. The board is also sending \$10,000 contributed by the Baptist World Alliance for use by Mexican Baptists in earthquake relief.

Southern Baptist relief units feed 30,000 daily in Mexico City

DALLAS (BP)—Baptists from Texas, Oklahoma, Mississippi and Louisiana are operating field kitchens capable of serving about 30,000 meals a day to earthquake victims in Mexico City.

Thirteen Texas Baptist volunteers began serving hungry victims of the earthquake in the Tepito neighborhood of Mexico City on Sept. 26 at a rate of 2,000 meals per hour for the first four hours. Meals were served from the disaster relief unit, an 18-wheel tractor trailer rig with portable field kitchen.

Four days later, the Texas disaster relief team was joined by Louisiana, Oklahoma and Mississippi disaster relief units. The Louisiana unit is set up at Centro de Carranza, the Oklahoma unit is four blocks from the Texas unit at the "Sal" Sancho's Center at El

Centro Morales, and the Mississippi unit is in Oceania. The Texas unit was expected to move Oct. 3.

From a command post at the Texas disaster relief unit, the volunteers are directing feeding operations and training local Mexican Baptists in field kitchen feeding techniques, said Robert E. Dixon, Texas Baptist Emergency Task Force coordinator. A ration store of stockpiled food is being set up, and soon disaster victims in some areas will be able to cook their own food.

"The next step after putting food on plates is giving people pots and pans and teaching them how to cook," said Dixon. "This aids them in a stable recovery."

Eighty bilingual Texas Baptist pastors and deacons are being assigned to the four

disaster relief units, acting both as counselors and interpreters.

"In an effort to minister in a holistic way to the earthquake victims, our volunteers will seek to offer spiritual and emotional counsel, as well as meeting immediate physical needs," said Charles P. McLaughlin, chairman of the Texas Disaster Relief Committee. More than 2,000 professions of faith have been recorded as a result of the feeding and counseling ministry. At least four new churches will have been established when the disaster relief crews leave, Dixon said.

To enhance communication during the relief effort, the Texas mobile unit has been granted the use of a reciprocal HAM radio license, one of the first issued in Mexico. The call letters are XE1NBN.

BJCPA opposes removal of charitable deductions

WASHINGTON (BP)—Acting as congressional debate heats up over President Reagan's tax reform package, the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs went on record Oct. 7 opposing a provision that would remove deductibility for contributions made to charities by taxpayers who do not itemize deductions.

Responding to an urgent appeal from Executive Director James M. Dunn, the BJCPA executive committee adopted a resolution supporting continuation of income tax deductions for all taxpayers who give to charities and opposing "any tax law change that would abolish such incentives for charitable giving."

Current law allows taxpayers who itemize their deductions to deduct up to one-half their adjusted gross income for gifts to charitable organizations, including churches. Taxpayers who file the so-called "short form" and do not itemize deductions will be permitted to deduct 50 percent of their gifts to charities for tax year 1985 and 100 percent in 1986. But the provision for non-itemizers expires after 1986.

In a related action, the 12-member committee—which meets semi-annually and acts for the full, 44-member BJCPA between the latter's annual meetings—instructed its

staff to develop an "apology" for charitable tax exemption to counter the notion set forth in recent Supreme Court decisions that such exemption amounts to governmental subsidy. The staff was asked to present its findings at the next meeting of the full BJCPA in March 1986.

The executive committee also authorized a study of BJCPA representation from its eight constituent bodies. BJCPA Chairman Wes Forsline, an American Baptist pastor from Minneapolis, named Lloyd Elder, president of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, William Cober, an American Baptist executive, and John Binder, executive secretary of the North American Baptist Conference, to study the structure of the full committee. The study panel is expected to recommend streamlining representation to reflect more accurately the relative numerical strength of and financial contribu-

tions by member bodies.

Action establishing the John W. Baker Memorial Law Library followed announcement that Mary Baker, widow of the late BJCPA general counsel, and her four sons have donated Baker's collection of legal volumes to the agency he served for 15 years before his death last January.

Newly elected general counsel Oliver S. (Buzz) Thomas will seek donations in the form of additional volumes from other Baptist attorneys across the nation. The agency also will use memorial funds honoring Baker to expand the specialized, church-state collection.

Executive committee members—including Southern Baptists Elder, Harold C. Bennett and Carolyn Weatherford—also adopted a \$575,600 budget for the fiscal year that began Oct. 1, 1985, including \$418,900 from the SBC Cooperative Program.

Hard financial issues face churches, architects

SAN ANTONIO, Texas (BP)—Southern Baptist churches and their architects must face the hard financial issues early in the planning process of a building program, says Gwenn McCormick.

"Not many churches have completed adequate financial planning by the time they select an architect," said McCormick, director of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's church architecture department. "Indeed, some of the early discussions with the architect may leave the impression that money is no object, the church can build anything it wants to build."

McCormick outlined five financial principles related to indebtedness: (1) Building investments should not take precedence over missions, program and ministry needs. (2) Long-term indebtedness must not siphon off resources needed for personnel. (3) A church should not plan to pay for a new building with anticipated income from pro-

jected growth. (4) Churches must have a good capital fund-raising program or must gear up to increase giving to a higher level. (5) Total indebtedness must be kept within the range of 25 to 35 percent of undesignated income, with location, growth rate, local economy, stewardship of members and commitment used as guidelines.

Generally, it is best for a church to limit its long-term debt to 15 years," McCormick said. Acknowledging "there may be some situations where this must be stretched to 20 years," he said churches should never take 25 years to repay a building debt. The difference in monthly payments between 20- and 25-year mortgages is minimal, he said. "In a 25-year loan, the equivalent of payments for the last seven years goes to the increased interest compared to a 15-year loan. It is difficult to justify extending a loan for 10 more years if seven of those years the payments are for interest alone."

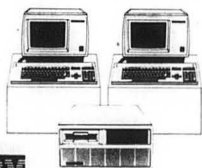
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To make it as easy as possible for you and your family to sign up for this excellent protection plan, we're having a special enrollment period from October 1-November 30.

You'll find that life rates have been reduced up to 30% for some age groups. Also, if you're enrolled in the plan from January to November next year, you won't be billed for your December medical premium—which means you get 1 month's medical insurance absolutely free!

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International

Conflict with culture

by William H. Elder III, Pulaski Heights Church, Little Rock

Basic passage: 1 Corinthians 8:1 to 11:1

Focal passage: 1 Corinthians 10:6-14, 31-11:1

Central truth: Christians must be alert to evil influences and seek to overcome them.

Throughout the Bible, we see what happens when the community of faith, whether that be the cult in the Old Testament or the church in the New Testament, becomes a mirror image of the surrounding culture. God's message is diluted and substantially changed. Consequently, God's mission is threatened. That's because we live in a fallen world where sin and evil are alive and well and competing for souls.

Where the gospel is enculturated and made palatable and pleasing to the world, it may succeed as a human cause, but its genuineness and spiritual power are grossly undermined. This was happening at Corinth, and it happens far too frequently and easily today. God said and still says through Paul, "Look out. You cannot be the true church and simply reflect your culture."

There's another approach that has been and sometimes still is tried. Recognizing that the world has evil involved in it, the church washes its hands of the whole thing. It cuts itself off from the world in order to stay pure and unspotted. That's a serious mistake too.

The world is not all evil, not by a long shot. God's not finished with it yet. God's not removed from it. He's working in it. His call is not for disengagement from the world. It's still the world he loved so much he sent his only Son to die for it. If cutting ourselves off from the world were called for, it would relegate the gospel to sheer irrelevancy. That is totally antithetical to our relevant gospel. "You can't be the true church and simply reject your culture."

What then is the right relationship between church and culture? It's not reflecting, nor rejecting, it's reforming. It's one of transforming involvement. It's one of shaping the world to fit God's intentions for it. It's challenging the evil and facilitating the goodness within.

How can we pull off this kind of creative, balancing engagement with the world? The truth is, we can't. But God can through us if we are willing to let him. That happens when we let him lead us in everything. "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31).

This lesson treatment is based on the International Bible Lesson for Christian Teaching, Uniform Series. Copyright International Council of Education. Used by permission.

Life and Work

Praising God

by Erwin L. McDonald, ABN editor emeritus, North Little Rock

Basic passage: Exodus 14:1 to 15:21

Focal passage: Exodus 14:29 to 15:21:11-13, 17-18

Central truth: Praise is the natural expression of the joy of God's people.

Today's lesson takes us back to God's deliverance of Israel through the miraculous parting of the waters of the Red Sea.

(1) Seeing great work (Ex. 14:29-31)
Although the waters parted at the raising of Moses' hand, permitting the Israelites to escape from the advancing Egyptian army, every one recognized the deliverance was from God. When the Egyptian soldiers, with their chariots and horses, were swept away by the enfolding waters, the Israelites suddenly realized God had freed them. And as they saw God's hand in their deliverance, they feared (revered) him and believed him. Now it was easy to praise God.

(2) Free at last (Ex. 15:1-2)

The gratitude of the Israelites is expressed enthusiastically in two hymns in Exodus 15, the song of Moses (vv. 1-18) and the son of Miriam (v. 21). The redemption (salvation) experienced here was military and physical, but it was a symbol of our far greater deliverance from sin's bondage.

(3) God leads his people (Ex. 15:11-13)
God, the only true deity, is contrasted with the false gods worshiped by the Egyptians. Verses 11-12 declare the nature of God. None of the false gods were like him, "glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders." He was guiding his people, through the leadership of Moses and a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.

God leads in the lives of those he redeems, "in mercy" or with "steadfast love" (v. 13 RSV). As redeemer he brings his purpose to pass in the lives of those redeemed.

(4) God's reign forever (Ex. 15:17-18)
Verses 18 is one of the high-water marks of the Old Testament. The idea expressed here inspired the writer of Revelation, centuries later, who enlarged upon it in Revelation 11:15. The assurance that God reigns for ever and ever undergirds the great and sustaining hope of Christians.

Applying the lesson: Write a paragraph about what God has done for you. This will involve what we were like before Christ came into your life and what a difference his presence makes. Look for opportunities to share this with others.

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Bible Book

False prophets condemned

by Carroll Evans, First Church, Hughes

Basic passage: Ezekiel 12:1 to 15:8

Focal passage: Ezekiel 12:22-28; 13:3-6; 9-10a

Central truth: Ezekiel's message indicates that rejecting God's truth and falsely claiming to speak for God will be judged.

In the face of continuing unbelief and stubborn rebellion, Ezekiel prepares to enact another symbolic pantomime. In putting together the bare necessities, fleeing in the night and breaking through the mud brick wall, Ezekiel was playing the part of King Zedekiah ("the prince"). This prophecy proved accurate to the last detail. It was as God said it would be, very soon (12:1-28).

False prophets were a continual threat to the genuine God-called prophets. They constantly undermined Ezekiel's work by telling the people what they wanted to hear and claiming God's authority for their false message of hope. They were like a coat of whitewash on a crumbling wall, unable to stop it from falling (13:10-16). God had predicted the fall of the nation; what God says always happens.

Assisting the false prophets were prophetesses, practicing magic charms and holding the hapless people in their thrall. Magic, whether real or pretended, has no power against the living God (13:17-23). He will both destroy these practitioners of the occult arts and save their helpless victims.

The word "soul" is frequently used in Chapter 13. It is important to note that the word refers to the whole person, not to some immaterial part of man. The idea of disembodied spirits was totally foreign to the Jewish mind until the coming of Greek influence in the fourth century before Christ.

Chapter 14 continues to emphasize God's claim to a unique place in the hearts of his people. Everyone who denies his right to be the sovereign Lord, worshipping other "gods" alongside him, is destined for destruction. Even the presence of a few godly men among them would no longer be any insurance against coming judgment. Not even a Noah or a Job could save anyone but himself.

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Stress demands skills in coping, relaxing

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—In today's hurried, complex world of constant demands, every person experiences stress and must learn to cope with it or suffer physical, mental, emotional and spiritual problems as a result.

Joe Richardson, personnel counselor at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board and author of a new church training equipping center module, *The Christian and Stress*, said Christians may actually increase their stress levels by placing unrealistic expectations on themselves.

As examples, Richardson cited the minister who believes he is not doing God's will unless his church membership doubles and parents who try to build a healthy home life and also be at church every time the doors open.

"We make rules for ourselves we can't possibly fulfill," said Richardson.

Another way Christians increase their stress is by feeling guilt because they believe if they were really living according to God's will, they would have no stress.

"Stress is the body's response to any demand made on it," Richardson emphasized. "In stressful situations, the body perceives that some kind of threat exists. The body says, 'fight or run' and gears up for that. The result is stress."

For example, Richardson cited the description of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane shortly before his arrest when his perspiration was likened to drops of blood. "That is a picture of someone experiencing intense stress," he noted.

While the negative effects of stress are most often highlighted, stress is also necessary and good in some circumstances,

Richardson said. For example, exercise places stress on the body that is healthy. Also, a person may be able to be more productive at work under certain kinds of stress.

However, the negative results of stress may include forgetfulness, inability to concentrate, procrastination, insomnia, anger, lethargy, panic or fear, illness, anxiety, loss or increase in appetite and depression.

Ironically, Richardson said he experienced a lot of personal stress while writing the module on stress. "It was incredibly difficult to come up with ideas. I could not concentrate.

"I've not been able to see a lot of differences between Christians and non-Christians in their abilities to deal with stress," said Richardson, noting the increasing death rate due to heart attacks among Baptist pastors.

He said learning practical ways to deal with stress can be a significant study for a church group. "The church is a perfectly legitimate place to develop the skills to cope with all of life," said Richardson.

Exercise, diet, sleep, relaxation techniques and learning to set realistic goals are all important in learning to deal with stress, according to Richardson.

He said he hopes persons who study the module on stress will decide "they aren't helpless victims of stress. There are specific things to be done."

However, he cautioned, "don't try to do everything at once. People should not approach stress management with the attitude, 'I'm no good unless I change everything now.' Instead, they should decide, 'I'm going to work on this and feel good about myself.'"

Historian supports the Cooperative Program

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — In an interpretive article in the fall issue of *Baptist Heritage Update*, a noted author and Baptist historian addresses objections to the Southern Baptist Convention's main channel of financial support, the Cooperative Program.

Robert A. Baker, professor emeritus at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, lists three criticisms presented by objectors to the Cooperative Program.

In his article, Baker says although some are not pleased with the ministries of the Cooperative Program, the majority of Southern Baptists are. He compares the convention's financial program to the budget of a church. A church could not operate if members "designate their gifts to the church to exclude things they may not like, such as youth work or perhaps the pastor's salary."

The history of the financial programs of the

Southern Baptist Convention prior to the 1925 adoption of the Cooperative Program has shown that missionary societies and benevolences cannot survive on designated funding only, Baker says.

The contributions of the Cooperative Program have been many, including saving the Southern Baptist Convention from bankruptcy in the 1920's.

"It has given Southern Baptists a consistent convention-type financial structure. It has been the lifeline of missions and other benevolences. It has brought a new unity to Southern Baptists by coordinating all autonomous bodies in a program to forward the work of Christ," Baker says.

Baptist Heritage Update is a quarterly newsletter published by the Historical Commission, SBC, and distributed to members of the Southern Baptist Historical Society.

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