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Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine, 1985-1989

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December 19, 1985

Arkansas Baptist State Convention

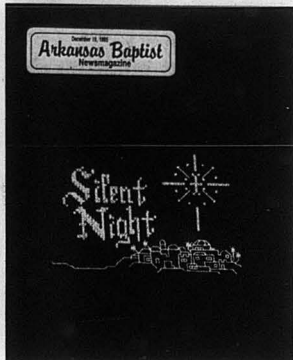
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December 19, 1985

Arkansas Baptist

SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL
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Nashville, Tennessee





Art by Millie Gill

Through the din of world strife and the cries of human beings plagued by tragedy echoes the stillness of a night centuries ago when God sent peace to earth with his Son.

In this issue

8 CP testimony

An Arkansas pastor shares his reasons for supporting the ministry of Southern Baptists through the Cooperative Program, the denomination's program of unified giving to worldwide causes.

13 campaign launched

With the Peace Committee attempting to sort out the convention's conflicts and six months still to go before the SBC annual meeting in Atlanta, Baptist Press reports one campaign for the denomination's presidency already has been launched by supporters of Memphis pastor Adrian Rogers. Rogers denies having made his decision to run.

No Dec. 26 ABN

The ABN will not publish an issue Dec. 26, one of three such weeks each year. As usual, this week's issue features double Sunday School lesson commentaries for Dec. 22 and 29 on pp. 14 and 15.

JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL
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Next month in Arkansas

January 12, Witness Commitment Day. Annual event in local churches, calling for commitment by individuals to personal witnessing. This year's emphasis will launch a plan to train one million Sunday School workers in evangelism.

January 23-24, State Church Media Library Conference, Central Church, North Little Rock. An annual event providing workshops for church media library workers and other church or associational staff. Speakers will be from the Baptist Sunday School Board. The conference is sponsored by the state Church Training Department.

January 25-31, REC Lab at Glorieta Baptist Assembly in New Mexico. This annual SBC event will provide a concentrated week of training in every area of church recreation ministry, focusing on shared ministry. A special transportation package for Arkansas church paid staff members and spouses has been arranged. The Arkansas Church Training Department sponsors the conference, along with the Church Training Department of the Baptist Sunday School Board.

January 26, Baptist Men's Day. An annual focus by the local church on the contributions made by the men of the church to missions, the event is promoted by the Arkansas Brotherhood Department. The event also may be a time to share with the local congregation current and planned mission activities for men and enlist men.

January 27, Baptist Doctrine Preview Study, Immanuel Church, Little Rock. Finley Edge, retired professor at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, will preview his book, "The Doctrine of

the Laity." The book is the 1986 Baptist doctrine study basis, and those who will teach the study in the local church are invited. Registration through the Arkansas Church Training Department is required for materials and meals.

January 27, State Joint Committee for National and Southern Baptist Cooperative Ministries, Central Baptist Hospital cafeteria, Little Rock. One of two meetings each year for selected representatives of four conventions to give direction to cooperative work between Southern and National Baptists in the state.

January 27-28, State Evangelism Conference, Immanuel Church, Little Rock. Annual event to provide evangelism information and inspiration to pastors and laypersons, sponsored by the state Evangelism Department. This year, sessions will be held jointly with National Baptist churches, as is done every five or six years. Arkansas Music Men and Singing Women will provide music from the official choir book for the Good News America revivals.

January 29, Planned Growth in Giving Update, Immanuel Church, Little Rock. First-time event to encourage the use of this SBC program in local churches. Pastors and associational directors of missions will attend. Arkansas' Annuity/Stewardship Department will sponsor the event, which will feature Cecil Ray, national director of PCG, as one of the speakers.

January 29-31, BSU Directors' Workshop, Little Rock. This annual meeting of BSU directors, associates, STS workers and other staff focuses on planning, study and inspiration.

Phelps presidency should get credit

Because paragraphs were mixed up in the article, "Ouachita at 100!", produced by Ouachita Baptist University for the ABN issue of Nov. 14, Ralph Phelps did not get proper credit for the building program undertaken during his presidency.

A subheading "Building program begins" on page 9 of the issue should have been followed immediately by the

sentence "Among the many persons who have helped to shape Ouachita, few have been as effective as Dr. Ralph Phelps . . ."

Had that paragraph been in its proper place, it would have been clear that the next paragraph, noting several major building projects and the change in the status of the school to university, referred to the Phelps years.

If Christ had not come . . .

The editor's page

J. Everett Sneed



The observance of Christmas was originated to commemorate the birth of Christ. The world, the flesh and the devil have tried to take possession of Christmas for their own devious ends. They have succeeded to an alarming degree. Christian people have been drawn into the swirl of commercialization and non-spiritual activities, so that it has become increasingly difficult to present the true spirit of Christmas and to make it a season of worship, praise, prayer and consecration.

On one occasion, our Lord commented, "If I had not come." This conditional statement opens up an abyss so dismal and so foreboding that we shrink from it in utter amazement and horror. Surely, if anything could arouse us from our smug complacency and awaken us in adequate appreciation of our Christmas heritage, these words should, as they echo, "If I had not come!"

If Christ had not come, the loss of the world would be incalculable. The only adequate and comprehensive appraisal of that loss would be to say, "If Christ had not come, all would be lost."

A cursory look around us bespeaks the unthinkable havoc in individual lives, communities and nations which would have occurred if Christ had not come. All personal sins and rebellions, all broths of sin, all community inadequacies and injustices, all national selfishness and crimes, all wholesale murders would be intensified beyond our ability to imagine.

If Christ had not come, we would not have eternal life. John tells us, "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us . . ." (John 1:14). Again the evangel declares, "In him was life . . ." (John 1:4). Thus, the incarnation establishes that Jesus was born both of God and man.

Without the incarnation, man would not have an example of what he should be. In his flesh, Jesus demonstrated exactly how we should live. Peter said, "Even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow in his steps" (I Peter 2:22). Jesus himself instructed his followers, "For I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done unto you" (John 13:15).

Again, without Jesus' coming, we would not have a vivid demonstration of God's love for man. If Christ had not come, Paul could not have declared, "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and you are not your own? Ye have been bought with a price . . ." (I Cor. 6:19-20).

If Christ had not come, we would not have an atoning

sacrifice. There would be no cause for joy, since we could not know God's Son stands in our place and bears our sinful doom. Without Christ's coming, God would not have taken man into an intimate union with himself, and there would be no cause for joy.

The loss of all that we hold dear is graphically portrayed in a simple Christmas story. The story tells of a minister falling into a short sleep in his study on Christmas morning and dreaming of a world into which Christ had not come. In his dream, he found himself looking through his home, but there were no little stockings in the chimney corner, no Christmas bells or wreaths of holly, and no Christ to comfort, gladden and save. He walked out into the streets, but there was no church with its spire pointing to heaven. He came back in and sat down in his library, but every book about the Savior had disappeared.

A ring at the door, and a messenger asked him to visit a poor, dying mother. He hastened with the weeping child, and as he reached the home he sat down and said, "I have something here that will comfort you." He opened his Bible to look for a familiar promise, but his Bible ended with Malachi, and there was no gospel and no promise of hope and salvation. He could only bow his head and weep with her in bitter despair.

Two days afterward, he stood with her beside the casket and conducted the funeral service, but there was no message of consolation, no words of glorious resurrection and no heaven, but only "dust to dust, ashes to ashes." There was only the long, heart-breaking eternal farewell. He realized at length that "Christ had not come," and he burst into tears and bitterly wept in his sorrowful dream.

Suddenly, he awoke with a start, and a great shout of joy and praise burst from his lips as he heard the chimes from his church peal out, "Oh come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant."

Yes, Christ has come, he has lived a sinless life, he has conquered death and he stands at the right hand of God today to atone for our sins. But the question remains what will we do as a result of his coming?

Since Christ came, Christmas should be a time of joy, the joy of being reunited with loved ones, the thrill of exchanging gifts, the excitement of children as they view their new possessions. But our greatest joy should be experienced because Christ, the virgin-born, miracle-working, sinless, atoning, living and someday-returning Christ took upon himself human flesh and came to Bethlehem. As we capture the significance of Christ's coming, we will know the true joy of Christmas.

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One layman's opinion

Daniel R. Grant

Does God hear the whisper?

Without intending to downgrade the memorable qualities of my pastor's sermons, I must say in all honesty there are times when the "children's sermon" is more memorable than the "adults' sermon." It might not be so bad to say that, if it weren't for the fact most of the children's sermons are not given by the pastor; they are usually given by Mrs. Lil Wasson. Even that might not be so bad to say, except it is more often what the children themselves say that is memorable, rather than what Lil Wasson says.

Mrs. Wasson does a dangerous thing during the children's sermon. She lets the children interrupt from time to time to give a running commentary on her message of the morning. And if that is not risky enough, she lets one of the children lead in prayer at the conclusion of her message. She takes

some of the risk out of it by whispering suggestions for the prayer in the ear of the child, while she holds the microphone close to the child's mouth. Usually the congregation (and presumably, God) hear only the spoken prayer of the child and not the whispered "cues" given by Mrs. Wasson.

On one Sunday morning recently, at the conclusion of the children's sermon, Mrs. Wasson whispered to the child who was about to lead the prayer, "Dear God," whereupon the child who was about to lead the prayer whispered very softly, "Dear God." Realizing his mistake, he almost shouted into the microphone, "I mean, Dear God!"

After the laughter of the congregation had subsided, he finished his prayer, and I began to reflect on the difference between the whispered prayer and the spoken or shouted

prayer. I suspect God hears the whispered prayer just as clearly as the spoken prayer and, perhaps, even more clearly.

That led me to consider an even more radical idea: that congregations occasionally might even hear whispered sermons as well or better than shouted sermons. Perhaps most important of all, a still small voice reminded me, in something of a whisper, that God honors above all else the prayer that comes straight from the heart and often bypasses the mouth and lips, never finding its way into human speech.

Yes, I think it will be quite a while before I forget the children's sermon of that particular Sunday morning. I do hope my beloved pastor Lynn Worthen will forgive me.

Daniel R. Grant is president of Ouachita Baptist University.

First Church Highfill among top 25 in awards

NASHVILLE—First Church Highfill, Siloam Springs, was among the top 25 in the Southern Baptist Convention receiving study course awards for 1984-85, according to statistics compiled in the church study course records office of the Baptist Sunday School Board.

Ranking 15th of 25, First Church Highfill received 755 awards.

Othe leading Arkansas churches winning church study course awards included First Church, Ozark, with 548 awards; Levy Church, North Little Rock, 480; and Crystal Hill Church, Little Rock, 478.

Olive Baptist Church, Pensacola, Fla., led all churches in awards with 1,907. Texas led all states in total awards with 71,937, followed closely by Florida with 71,314.

For the year, persons enrolled in the study course system rose 26 percent, an increase from 586,734 to 739,318, according to William Cox, church study course coordinator.

Total study course awards are up for the seventh consecutive year and have more than doubled since 1977-78, following a 19-year decline. This year, 705,380 awards were granted, compared to '77-78 when 300,300 were granted, Cox said.

The number of leadership diplomas reached 31,481 this year, an increase of 22 percent over last year's 25,880 total, he said. Leadership diplomas have multiplied more than 16 times in seven years, Cox added.



Woman's viewpoint

Martha Dewbre

Christmas tradition saturated with joy

Tradition is an unwritten practice passed on through generations. May I share a few of ours with you?

Christmas cards with greetings to and from friends, music from the ridiculous to the sublime ("Rulolph" to the "Messiah"), caroling: all of these are in our family traditions. We've remained faithful to the colors red and green, because we like them best.

Our tree is filled with ancient heart-warming ornaments, many of them with meaning because they were a part of my childhood. There are stockings for everyone and fun foods we look forward to from year to year. Through the years, we've collected manger scenes; my favorite is a miniature I keep in my kitchen window as a year-round reminder of the Spirit of Christmas.

The Week of Prayer for Foreign Missions is really the start of the Christmas season for us. Through this study, the idea of Christmas giving through the family of God around the world causes us to think about the reason for giving.

Christmases from 1974 through 1983 were exciting family times as we celebrated life

because my husband and children's father was with us. Ben experienced the first of numerous heart attacks in November 1974, and he came home from the hospital just before Christmas. This was the beginning of a new way of life for our family: "thanksgiving." As a family, we began to live in new realms of praise and know a joy without human explanation. God's joy has roots in himself; it is unending. It fills and satisfies completely.

Nov. 30, 1983, Ben died. We still miss him greatly, but our Christmases have been joy-filled because he is with our Lord, whom he loved so much.

There are two basic Christmas traditions for our family: keep it simple and personal, remembering that God is with us. He dwells in us, and he lives his life through us. His joy is my strength; I praise his holy name!

Martha Moreland Dewbre is a member of Park Hill Church, North Little Rock, where she is active in mission programs and Sunday School work.

Don Moore

You'll be glad to know...

... You can set the record straight now! Jesus, in the parable of the talents in Matthew 25, left little doubt that a day of reckoning will come in which each of us will have to give an account for what he has done with what God has entrusted to him. His indescribable joy over generous investments that multiply abundantly is clear. He entrusts more kingdom riches to those who have been faithful in the simple and elementary trusts. They move on and up with God.



Moore

Fear and greed are great enemies of a spiritual trustee. The man with one talent doubtless suffered both fear and greed. He couldn't take a chance on losing control over what had been entrusted to him. The truth is, it controlled him rather than him controlling it.

Paul was gravely concerned that saved folk not "walk as the Gentiles walk in greed" (Eph. 4:17), but that is exactly what we do. Fear and greed dictate how most individuals handle their personal finances. No church I know would venture a guess that one-half their members tithe. This glaring disobedience based on fear and greed goes unchallenged from most pulpits and from most Bible teachers. Such indifference exists toward Scripture teachings on accountability for our stewardship that few bat an eye over this travesty on the generosity of God.

The sad fact is that the record indicates our churches are keeping more each year for themselves. Such a poor example on the part of the church will doubtless encourage their members to follow this same poor example. Churches can expect their members to give less if the church is going to give less.

December is a painful month. Because of the Lottie Moon Christmas offering and our extravagant cultural Christmases, we find ourselves in the vise between flesh and spirit, greed and Christian missions. We will have to give account some day! Why not set the record straight right now and begin to be a good steward of all God gives you as individuals and as churches? Finish this year right with God in your giving!

Your Executive Board staff and families join with me and my family in wishing you all the finest Christmas possible.

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

Ouachita offers three January courses

ARKADELPHIA—Ouachita Baptist University will offer three courses during the "Interterm" period between the fall and spring semesters.

"The Interterm at Ouachita is designed to use the free time between semesters as an opportunity for innovative experiences and studies. Travel, self-paced programs and reading in areas not included in standard courses are represented this year," explained Thomas Turner, vice-president for academic affairs at OBU.

Courses will be offered in the areas of political science, physical education and sociology. The tuition will be \$70 per semester hour plus any fees. The University dormitories and cafeteria will not be open for the Interterm courses.

To register for a class, a student should contact the instructor prior to the first meeting of the class. Registration forms and other information are available from Turner's office by writing P.O. Box 3755, Arkadelphia, AR 71923, or by calling (501) 246-4531, ext. 196, Monday through Fridays.

"The Washington Seminar" will be offered Jan. 3-10 in Washington, D.C., as a three-hour, junior level course conducted by Hal Bass, chairman of the Ouachita political science department. The theme of the course this year is "Foreign and Defense

Policy Making." The seminar will include visits with government officials, classes and tours of various attractions in the nation's capitol. This year's students will be meeting with representatives from the Defense Department, the State Department and Congress to learn more about the different roles each organization plays in policy making. The seminar is sponsored annually by the Edward Maddox Public Affairs Center at OBU, which pays for the airfare of the participants. Enrollment is limited.

"Stress Seminar" will be offered Jan. 2-3, 6-10 and 13 as a three-hour, senior level course taught by Tona Wright, assistant professor of physical education, and Jim Dan, instructor of physical education. The course will deal with handling daily stress, stress in athletics and the use of exercise to reduce stress.

"Corrections Seminar" will be a two-hour, senior level course taught by Richard Mills, chairman of the OBU sociology department. The course will be taught Jan. 2-8. It will focus on studies of correctional institutions in the state of Arkansas and inmate life. The class will travel to federal and state penal institutions and to several judiciary seats in Arkansas. There will be an additional fee charged for travel to the sites on the university bus.

Spring registration set at OBU

ARKADELPHIA—Registration for the 1986 spring semester at Ouachita Baptist University will be Tuesday, Jan. 14, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. in Evans Student Center and Lile Hall at OBU, according to Mike Kolb, registrar at Ouachita.

Classes on the Arkadelphia campus will begin on Wednesday, Jan. 15. The last day

to register or add a course is Jan. 28. The last day to drop a course is March 4.

For more information on enrolling at Ouachita for the spring semester, persons should contact Kolb at OBU, P.O. Box 3757, Arkadelphia, AR 71923, or by calling (501) 246-4511, ext. 578, Mondays through Fridays.

Association 'blitzed' by volunteers

FAYETTEVILLE—Churches in the Washington-Madison Association of northwest Arkansas were targets of an intensive strike for volunteer missions carried out Dec. 8 by a team of trained advisors.

Nine volunteers, some of them working in pairs, moved into 20 churches, where they sought to rally members of the congregations to the idea of serving as missions volunteers.

Under the leadership of Maurice Hurley,

Arkansas coordinator for Mission Service Corps, and Paul Dennis, pastor of Sang Avenue Church, Springdale, the consultants shared their own volunteer missions experiences with the churches and encouraged them to consider taking on Mission Service Corps projects.

Mission Service Corps is a Southern Baptist program which recruits self-supporting volunteers to work in full-time mission assignments for at least one year.

Baptists aid victims of Hurricane Kate

WHITBY, North Caicos (BP)—Baptists are helping about 70 families who lost homes in November as Hurricane Kate lashed the Turks and Caicos Islands northeast of Cuba.

Southern Baptist missionaries Ed and Joyce Perimon, who work on the islands, assisted Baptist businessman Lou Hendfeld of North Caicos, who distributed almost 200 food packages. Purchased with \$3,800 in hunger relief funds sent by the Southern Baptist

Foreign Mission Board, the packages helped families in North Caicos, the worst-hit island. The board sent another \$3,200 to buy roofing and other construction materials.

Hurricane Kate, which damaged Cuba extensively, caused relatively little destruction and no deaths in the other Turks and Caicos Islands, Mrs. Perimon said. But the storm hit North Caicos hard, destroying at least 70 homes and knocking down power lines.

by Millie Gill / ABN staff writer

people

James Jones is serving as pastor of Evening Shade Church.

Larry Hileman has resigned as pastor of Bates Church.

Paul Lafayette Elam died Nov. 26 at age 74 in Cox Medical Center in Springfield, Mo. He was a resident of Bruno and had been a member of Bruno Church since 1925. Survivors include two sons, Bill Elam of Yellville and Mike Elam of Bruno; his mother, Ethel Elam of Yellville; four sisters and two grandchildren.

Randy Cox is serving Mineral Springs Central Church as music and youth director. He previously served as a staff member at Calvary Church and First Church, both of Batesville. Cox is a student at Ouachita Baptist University.

Francis McBeth received a honorary citation from Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia National Honorary Music Fraternity in Lubbock, Texas, Nov. 22 in recognition of his achievements and contributions to the cause of music in America. McBeth is chairman of the theory-composition department of the School of Music and composer-in-residence at Ouachita Baptist University.

Doug Moore has resigned as music and youth director at Trumann First Church to join the staff of Newport First Church.

Delphia Lenox Davis died Dec. 1 in Sharp County Nursing Home in Lafferty at age 87. He was a member of Sidney Church where he had served as a deacon, choir director and Sunday School teacher. He was a retired farmer. Survivors include his wife, Ora Love Davis; two daughters, Mildred Croft and Verbyl Caraway, both of Sidney; three brothers; a sister; seven grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren and one great-great-grandchild.

C.A. Johnson of Jonesboro and Tommy Hargrove of Holly Grove were in Memphis Dec. 10 to attend an orientation as new trustees of Memphis Baptist Memorial Health Care System Board of Trustees.

briefly

West Hartford Church in Buckner Association recently observed its 100th anniversary with services led by pastor Ed Riley. Program personalities included Earlene Riley, Bob Garrett, Jimmy Barnes,

Johnnie Darr, associational Director of Missions, J. C. White, Paul White, John Evans and Charles Whedbee.

Sulphur City Church ordained Jack Agnew, Harold Downing and Kenneth Parsley to the deacon ministry Dec. 1. Pastor John Summers gave the charge to both the church and new deacons.

Henderson First Church and other White River Association churches are assisting in meeting the needs of Henderson Church pastor, Donny Thrasher, and his family whose mobile home and personal possessions were destroyed by fire Nov. 30.

El Dorado Second Church gave a reception Dec. 15 to honor pastor Bruce Murphy and his wife, June, in recognition of 15 years of service.

Combs Church is being cleaned and repaired from water and mud damage received when torrential rains recently struck northwest Arkansas.

Center Point Church at Gurdon ordained Ronald Wayne Quilling to the deacon ministry Nov. 24. Pastor Eugene Hughes was moderator.

Springdale First Church is sponsoring a living nativity Dec. 20-21, 7 to 9 p.m.

Farmington First and Fayetteville Immanuel Church are jointly sponsoring a mission in a new area of growth on Highway 62 southwest of Fayetteville.

El Dorado First Church has begun ministering to homebound members through a teleconference Sunday School class taught by John Moore. The class originated with two members and two weeks later had more than 10 participating.

Elkins First Church is presenting a week-long live nativity scene, according to pastor Doyle Downing.

Forest Highlands Church in Little Rock ordained Tom Boyd to the deacon ministry Dec. 18 and will ordain Timothy Jackson to the preaching ministry Dec. 29.

Booneville First Church ordained Don Dunn, Don Murray and Scott Vandevender to the deacon ministry Dec. 8.

Brinkley First Church sponsored a prayer seminar Dec. 6-8. T. W. Hunt was leader.

Little Rock Calvary Church and Jonesboro First Church both hosted dinners Thanksgiving Day as a special ministry to church members and friends.



Higginson First Church observed Thanksgiving Nov. 24 with both a dinner and noteburning service in celebration of a successful seven-month "Owe No Man Campaign," through which \$7,098.17 was given to retire a \$13,500 improvement loan. Noteburning participants included (left to right) pastor Dennis Smith and budget and finance committee members Sonny McDonald, Ed Langford, Ruby Pool, Bob Bradley and Layton Bostic.

Ouachita ranked in national poll

ARKADELPHIA—Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia has been named in an honorable mention status for a poll taken recently of colleges and universities in the south and border states region of the United States, under the heading of smaller comprehensive institutions by *U.S. News and World Report* magazine.

Presidents of the institutions were asked to pick the top five undergraduate schools from a list of those similar to their own school in terms of size, academic offerings

and locations.

Criteria include strength of curriculum, quality of teaching, relationship between faculty and students and the atmosphere for learning.

The national poll was conducted among presidents of 1,138 four-year colleges and universities, with nearly 60 percent of the presidents responding. The results were published in the Nov. 25 edition of the magazine.

missionary notes

Mr. and Mrs. Clyde D. Meador Jr., missionaries to Indonesia, report a change of address (Jalan Pereng 33, Purwokerto, Indonesia). He is a native of Arkadelphia. The former Elaine Grisham, she was born in Lubbock, Texas, and grew up in Albuquerque, N.M. They were appointed by the Foreign Mission Board in 1974.

Mrs. Virginia W. Oliver, missionary to Brazil, reports a change of address (Rt. 5, Box 19, Elizabeth City, N.C. 27909). The former Virginia Winters, she was born in Leslie. She and her late husband were appointed in 1950.

Kyle and Lois Cox, missionaries to Chile, have arrived in the States for furlough (address: c/o First Baptist Church, P.O. Box 36, Russellville, AR 72801).

foreign mission briefs

Burkina Faso women hold first day of prayer

OUAGADOUGOU, Burkina Faso—Baptist women in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, West Africa, held their first Baptist Women's Day of Prayer Nov. 1. More than 150 women from 14 churches gathered to hear the Lottie Moon mission story for the first time and join in prayer for world missions. Arkansas missionaries Kay Cartwright, Sharon Ford and Karen Hodges expressed hope a national Baptist Women's group could be organized out of the event.

Thai Baptists hold first partnership project

CHACHUNGSAO, Thailand—Thailand Baptists' first effort at a partnership evangelism project strengthened Baptist mission work in the Rayong and Chanthaburi areas. With the assistance of a nine-member team from First Church, Fort Smith, Ark., the New Life Church, Chanthaburi, and the Rayong Church conducted personal evangelism campaigns and held revival services during a week-long period at the end of July.

New writer takes over lesson series commentary

Greenwood native Nan Ashcraft begins this week writing the commentary on the International series Sunday School lessons in "Lessons for living."

Ashcraft is married to John Ashcraft, interim pastor of the Hurricane Lake Church at Benton. She and her husband served for 33 years pioneering Southern Baptist work in California. During that time, she served as a member of the board of trustees for the California Baptist Foundation. The Ashcrafts have two children.



Officers elected—Trustees of Southern Baptist College in Walnut Ridge recently elected officers for 1986. Pictured above is Representative John Miller of Melbourne (far right), who was elected president. Also pictured is Southern College President D. Jack Nicholas (left), shown presenting a plaque of appreciation to outgoing board president John Wright of Little Rock.

National Cooperative Program starts fast

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Just two months into its fiscal year, contributions through the national Cooperative Program of the Southern Baptist Convention are more than \$1.5 million ahead of last year.

November's voluntary contributions to the national SBC programs from the 37 state conventions affiliated with the SBC were \$10,770,854, which pushed the two-month figure to \$19,809,888. That represents an increase of \$1,513,675 (8.27 percent) over the first two months of the 1984-85 fiscal year.

It is the first \$10 million November in Cooperative Program history and is the third highest single month in CP history behind August 1985 (\$10,911,903) and January 1985 (\$10,812,419).

The national Cooperative Program budget is divided among 19 SBC agencies, boards and commissions. This year, 50 percent goes to the Foreign Mission Board in Richmond,

Va.; 19.644 percent goes to the Home Mission Board in Atlanta; the six SBC seminaries receive 20.49 percent, and the Radio and Television Commission in Fort Worth receives 4.177 percent.

The remaining income, less than 5.5 percent, is shared among the convention operating budget, the Annuity Board in Dallas, the Brotherhood Commission in Memphis, Tenn., the Public Affairs Committee in Washington and six Nashville, Tenn.-based agencies.

In order to meet the 1985-86 basic budget requirements of \$120.6 million, income for the present fiscal year must average \$10.05 million per month—an increase of \$3,073,309 (2.604 percent) over 1984-85 income. Income beyond that will be applied first to capital needs which were unfunded in 1983-84 of \$3,340,385, then to capital needs of \$4,500,000 for 1985-86.

Why I promote the Cooperative Program

by Jeff P. Cheatham

For 28 years, I have pastored Southern Baptist churches. My responsibilities have included the editing of the weekly bulletin and newsletter. What I wanted announced, promoted and included was my decision. Those items I did not believe in or fully support were either left out or given a low priority. The same can be said for what was announced from the pulpit. Watching the Cooperative Program has convinced me to promote this program as a vital part of a church's ministry for the following reasons:

1. I believe in the Cooperative Program.

For 60 years, Southern Baptist churches have used this financial avenue as a means of missions, evangelism and religious education. It has proven to be effective, or Southern Baptist churches would have abandoned it long ago. In 1940, 25,000 churches gave \$3.4 million to the Cooperative Program. From October 1984 through July 1985, 35,000 Southern Baptist churches gave \$99.7 million to the Cooperative Program plus \$99.7 million to designated Southern Baptist causes. Arkansas Baptists gave \$3.7 million to the Cooperative Program plus an additional \$3.1 million to designated Southern Baptist causes. This is more than the entire Southern Baptist Convention gave in 1940! This growth in giving says it works! Those who receive the money from the Cooperative Program say it works. Until someone designs a better way to accomplish what the Cooperative Program does, I will continue to believe in it.

2. I am indebted to the Cooperative Program.

My college education was obtained at a university owned and operated by a Baptist state convention which provided the institution with Cooperative Program funds. Since I was a ministerial student, I was given a tuition scholarship from those Cooperative Program moneys. Upon entering Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, I paid a tuition fee of only \$25 per semester because of strong Cooperative Program support. People and churches who never knew me believed in me and my calling to the ministry and were willing to invest in my education and future. In addition, the Cooperative Program also allows me to utilize the expertise of attorneys, architects and educational consultants from our Sunday School Board or my state Baptist convention at a fraction of the cost from the private sector.

3. The Cooperative Program permits each church member to be a part of the Southern Baptist convention total mission effort.

Because of the size of my church, it is impossible for us to adequately financially support some 19 Southern Baptist Convention agencies and the 30 Arkansas Baptist programs without being embarrassed or experiencing pressure to give more money to this or that program. The pooling of our

resources with other Southern Baptist churches creates a partnership between the local church and each agency which receives Cooperative Program funds. We can say "our seminary, university, children's home, etc." with the same pride of ownership as the church that contributes many more dollars to the Cooperative Program than we do. Also, the receiving agency recognizes the importance of the gifts from each Southern Baptist Church.

4. There is an annual accounting of the funds sent to the Cooperative Program.

The state convention and the Southern Baptist Convention annual contain audits from each agency, board, commission or institution which receives Cooperative Program funds. In addition, the boards of trustees of these various organizations receive either a monthly or quarterly financial statement. Nothing is hidden. This creates a sacred trust between the convention and the individual church by declaring that monies sent to the Cooperative Program will be used from an approved budget with proper accounting provided. Do you know of a T.V. evangelist or an organization which uses television or direct mail to appeal for funds that will provide you with a financial statement on how they spend the monies they receive? **Cooperative Program is based upon the biblical principles of missions, evangelism and religious education.**

For 60 years, the Cooperative Program has represented what Southern Baptists believe to be the best way to carry out the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20). When we promote the Home Mission Board, Foreign Mission Board, Ouachita, Southern Baptist Col-

lege, Arkansas Baptist Family and Child Care Services, etc., we are doing more than keeping alive a legacy, name or personality. We are doing what we believe is God's will. The Great Commission extends beyond names, places and organizations. God has provided strong leadership for our convention. These godly men and women have the ability to build and nurture what was entrusted to them. They have taken a place of lesser importance for a greater cause. We do more than promote or advertise someone's pet projects, we are fulfilling our role in the divine drama of redemption.

6. The Cooperative Program provides for an orderly transition for the future.

Military chaplains have a turn-over file which begins the first day on the job. The chaplain knows that someday someone will take his place. I have observed changes in leadership in every Southern Baptist agency, institution, commission, board, etc. The Cooperative Program is strong and in place with all of these changes. The turn-over file is at work. When our fruitful years are harvested, God will bring in others to relieve us, and hopefully we will pass on the Cooperative Program stronger than when it was entrusted to us. The future will then profit from the past.

The Cooperative Program is our main expression of compassion. In I Samuel 12:23, the prophet Samuel declares it would be a sin for him if he did not pray for his people. To me, it would be a sin if I did not pray for and promote the Cooperative Program.

Jeff P. Cheatham is pastor of First Church, England.

ABN photo / Millie Gill

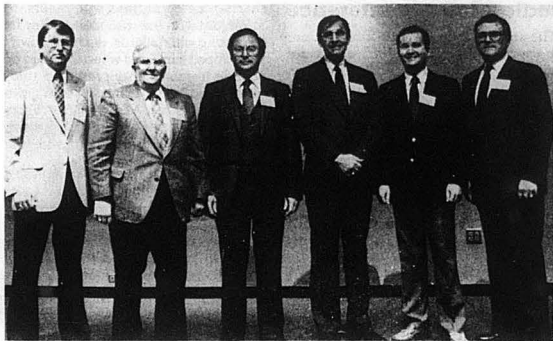


Retirees organization formed—"Retired Religious Workers of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention" was formed at the ABCS annual meeting in Arkadelphia. Elected as officers were (left to right) D.C. McAtee, vice-president; Nadine Bjorkman, secretary; and Dillard Miller, president. The group plans to meet twice annually.

ABSC Executive Board meets to organize, appoint committees

by J. Everett Sneed

ABN photo / J. Everett Sneed



Pictured with Executive Director Don Moore (far right) is the 1986 Executive Committee of the ABSC Executive Board: (left to right) Joe Statton, James Shults, Ferrell Morgan, Jim Adams and Allen Thrasher. Not pictured is Lawson Hatfield.

The Executive Board of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention convened on Dec. 10 at the Baptist Medical System Center, Little Rock. In the annual organizational meeting, the major items of business were the election of committees and the appointment of a "Budget Formula Review Committee," whose purpose will be to make recommendations concerning the allocation of funds.

The nominations for various Executive Board committees were presented by Allen Thrasher, pastor of First Church, Booneville. A nomination of James Vineyard of Fordyce, who recently died with a heart attack, was withdrawn. He will be replaced by the state nominating committee (see committees on Executive Board listed below).

When a vacancy occurs on any board, the state nominating committee nominates an individual to complete the unexpired term. The Executive Board, which serves as the legal trustee of the Convention between annual sessions, elects those nominated for the balance of the unexpired term.

Executive Board President Ferrell Morgan appointed the Budget Formula Review Committee. When the present budget formula was adopted in 1981, it was to be reviewed at the end of five years. Those appointed were Jere Mitchell, pastor, First Church, Fayetteville; Jerry Wilson, pastor, Westside Church, El Dorado; Allen Thrasher, pastor, First Church, Booneville; Ben Rowell, pastor, First Church, Rogers; Eugene Ray, pastor, First Church, Marion; Billy Hammonds, pastor, First Church, Helena; and Joe Statton, education director, Central Church, Magnolia.

Program Committee chairman Jim Adams (pastor of First Beech Street Church, Texarkana), reported that one portion of the "assistance for involuntarily terminated pastors and full-time staff members," was not in keeping with the guidelines of the Annuity Board. The paragraph said in part, "If the terminated pastor or staff member had been in the Annuity program... the Arkansas Baptist State Convention will continue to pay the base part for both the church and the Convention."

Adams reported the Annuity Board requires each participant be an employee of a local Baptist church or some entity of the convention's work in order to be a participant in the Annuity program. Therefore, this supplemental benefit did not meet their guidelines.

Little Rock businessman James Gattis, member of the Pulaski Heights Church, Little Rock, suggested the money could be escrowed until the pastor or staff member was re-employed and then paid to the Annuity Board in their behalf. A motion was made to temporarily eliminate this item from the guidelines and to study the possibility of escrowing the money to assist the pastor or staff member. A report is to be made to the

next regular meeting of the Executive Board.

Executive Director Don Moore expressed his appreciation to the churches for helping the state convention reach its budget in November. He said, "We still have a good possibility of reaching the 1985 budget."

He also commented on the assistance provided by the Arkansas Baptist State Convention to churches that had been involved in disasters. He said, "We have assisted every church we have known about, including National Baptist churches, which have had disasters." He listed the churches and associations and gave the amounts that had been given to each congregation. He said, "The budget would not permit us to give a great deal more than had been given in the past."

Newly-elected state convention President Lawson Hatfield spoke briefly on encouraging every Baptist to read a devotional passage of Scripture every day. He said, "Emphasis on Bible reading will be one of the major themes of the 1986 state convention."

The following committees were appointed on the recommendation of the Nominating Committee:

Operating Committee, James Shults, chairman. (1986) Nina Hamilton (Dist. 7), James Shults (Dist. 8), Atherton Hiatt (Dist. 3), (1987) Bill Burnett (Dist. 6), Cary Heard (Dist. 5), John Matthews (Dist. 4), (1988) Jere Mitchell (Dist. 1), Jerry Kirkpatrick (Dist. 2).

Program Committee, Jim Adams, chairman. (1986) Marquita Butler, Alfred Gallant, Klois L. Hargis, J.R. Hull, Doris King, A. Hilton Lane, H.D. McCarty, Robert McDaniel, Al Sparkman, Harold Stephens, Nelson Wilhelm, Tate Woodruff, Delbert Stone.

(1987) Jim Adams, Sardis Bever, S. Mikael

Carrier, Ron Ford, Jim Gardner, Jimmie Garner, M.M. Hill, Thomas Hinson, Ted Houston, Herman McCormick, Steve Patterson, Ted Richardson, Billie Sharp, Bob Stender, Bruce Tippitt, Dan Webb.

(1988) Ronnie Bracken, Russell Burbank, Bob Dailey, Clyde Glazener, Horace Gray, Billy Hammonds, Peggy Jeffries, Carl Kluck, Rich Kincl, Bonnie Margason, Mary Ellen Puckett, Ron Raines, Paul Seal, Joe Thompson, Noble Wiles.

Finance Committee, Joe Statton, chairman. (1986) George Domerese, Don Elliott, Gary Fulton, Curtis Mathis, Dillard Miller, Charles Osborne, Ken Price, Dorothy Ritter, Keith Robbins, Ben Rowell, Gerald Taylor, Dale Thompson, Allen Thrasher, John Wikman.

(1987) Billy Boyd, Winfred Bridges, Dennis Dodson, Charles Fager, James Gattis, Clytee Harness, Milton James, Greg Kirksey, Maxine Murphy, Jerry Muse, Troy Prince, Eugene Ray, John Ross, Paul Sanders, Joe Statton, James Weedman.

(1988) Sid Carswell, Rick Erwin, Nelson Eubank, Randel Everett, Melva Deen Friday, Bill Gunter, Bill Hargis, Ray Meador, Bryan Moery, George O'Neel, Emil Williams, Jerry Wilson.

Nominating Committee, Allen Thrasher, chairman. (1986) Allen Thrasher, Gerald Taylor. (1987) Jim Adams, Dennis Dodson. (1988) Ray Meador.

Christian Life Council, Clyde Glazener, chairman. (1986) Harold Stephens. (1987) Thomas Hinson, Troy Prince, Joe Statton. (1988) Randel Everett, Peggy Jeffries, Clyde Glazener.

J. Everett Sneed is editor of the Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine.

Your state convention at work

Media Library

Media library conference

The annual Church Media Library Conference will be Jan. 23-24, 1986, at Central Church in North Little Rock. Jacquelyn



Jackson

Anderson, Don Carter and Jack Lewis, consultants with the Sunday School Board's Media Library Department, will lead workshops at the conference. Three workshops will be provided: "How to Administer and 'Promote a Church Media Library'" (Lewis), "How to Process Media" (Anderson) and "How to Use Audio Visuals" (Carter). The first two workshops will provide "how to" training for media library staff. The conference on "How to Use Audio Visuals" will provide knowledge and skills in the use of audio visual material in education and promotion.

Conference sessions are scheduled for 9:15-11:45 a.m. and 1:15-4:45 p.m. Thursday and Friday. Each workshop continues for the morning and afternoon sessions and will be repeated the second day. Participants may participate in two workshops, one Thursday and one Friday.

Additional promotional information about the conference will be mailed to every church following Christmas. Contact the Church Training Department, P.O. Box 552, Little Rock, AR 72203, for additional information. — **Gerald Jackson, associate**

Evangelism

Christmas, good news

We bring you greetings from your evangelism staff in the name of the One who gave us our Christmas. Because our Lord shared the good news with us, we are compelled to share the good news with others.



Shell

We join with the angels in sharing the good news, "Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord".

We join with the shepherds who said one to another, "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe

lying in a manger". They then went about sharing the good news with others.

We join with the wise men as they found the young child, Jesus, and fell down and worshipped him,"and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, frankincense, and myrrh." Because God has shared his matchless gift with us, it is our desire to share him with a lost world. Will you join with us? — **Clairence Shell, director**

Missions

Church styles

Churches are different. Even Baptist churches are different from each other.

Churches can be similar in Bible beliefs and doctrines but very different in style.



Tidsworth

Some church members like a church in which the pastor (and staff) makes all the plans and presents them to the church for approval. Other members want to have a part in all the decision making process.

There are major differences about church programming.

Well, not everybody likes a Ford. And there is usually more than one service station in town, sometimes across the street from each other.

I guess we need more churches to reach all people. — **Floyd Tidsworth Jr., church extension director**

Family and Child Care Recognizing you

Thank you, Arkansas Baptists, for your generous response to this year's Mother's Day and Thanksgiving offerings. Gifts are still coming in, and early reports are most encouraging. To those churches and individuals who make monthly contributions or take an offering at another time, we say, "Thank you".

Your offerings are worth much more than money. They represent your partnership with us in caring for needy, neglected and abused children and families. Your gifts mean more than 500 children will be cared for this year from across our state.

Thank you, Arkansas Baptists, for the prayers you send along with your gifts. Thanks especially for the prayers, because you send them all year long. Your prayers undergird us and are part of the spiritual foundation of all we do.

Our child care ministry is an exciting, challenging adventure, and we are delighted to represent you in it. Because of your faith in us, we make a commitment to you and to God to make your child care ministry the best it possibly can be. We pledge to be "No. 1," not for status or recognition, but because God demands it and you expect our best.

Again, thank you for what you have done and what we know you will continue to do for our children in the name of the Lord. — **John A. Ross, director of development**

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Prayer list

Project date: Jan. 5-15, 1986
Group: Jonesboro First Church
Project: evangelism, parsonage construction
Place: Monte Alegre, Para

Project date: Jan. 5-15
Group: Blytheville First Church
Project: evangelism, church construction
Place: Coqueiro, Belem, Para

Project date: Feb. 9-19, 1986
Group: Benton First Church
Project: evangelism, new mission start
Place: Terra Firme, Belem, Para

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Tax measure would restore clergy housing benefits

by Kathy Palen

WASHINGTON (BP)—A new tax reform plan drafted by the House Ways and Means Committee would reinstate a clergy housing policy allowing ministers to claim mortgage interest and real estate tax deductions as well as tax-exempt housing allowances.

The Tax Reform Act of 1985, which is expected to go to the House floor within days, would amend current tax law by exempting a person receiving a parsonage allowance from being denied a deduction "for interest on a mortgage on, or real property taxes on" his home.

In 1983, the Internal Revenue Service ruled to reverse a 20-year-old policy and disallow mortgage interest and property tax deductions for ministers to the extent the deductions were attributable to a tax-exempt housing allowance. A subsequent IRS ruling delayed the effective date of Rev. Rul. 83-3 from June 1983 until Jan. 1, 1985, for ministers who occupied their residence or had a contract to purchase one by Jan. 1, 1983.

Since that time, Congress twice has

delayed the effective date of the ruling. The latter delay extends through tax year 1986.

The Ways and Means Committee's tax reform package also would make the revocation of 83-3 retroactive, meaning that ministers unable to claim mortgage interest and property tax deductions for tax years 1983 and 1984 may file amended returns.

"We are extremely pleased," commented Darold H. Morgan, president of the Southern Baptist Convention Annuity Board. "Pastors of all denominations are most concerned about this issue. Congress has finally heard us in our appeal for equity with the military." The IRS ruling singled out ministers from a provision that also covered military personnel who receive tax-exempt housing allowances.

Another section of the tax reform proposal would allow churches that elected to claim exemption from paying Social Security taxes for their non-ministerial employees to revoke that election.

A 1983 change in Social Security laws forced churches—as well as all non-profit

organizations—to participate in the nation's retirement system. Under the 1983 Social Security Amendments, churches were responsible for paying the employer's share of Social Security taxes and withholding the employee's portion for all non-ministerial employees.

Congress, however, approved a compromise in 1984 that permitted churches—including conventions, associations, church schools and church-controlled organizations—a one-time election not to participate in Social Security on behalf of their non-ministerial employees. In order to make the election, the church or organization was required to state that it was "opposed for religious reasons" to payment of Social Security taxes.

By law, ministers have and will continue to participate in Social Security as self-employed persons.

Kathy Palen is information assistant for the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs.

Tax reform bill threatens Annuity Board tax exemption

by Stan Haste

WASHINGTON (BP)—A proposed tax reform bill endorsed by the tax-writing House Ways and Means Committee and currently awaiting floor action would strip the Annuity Board of the Southern Baptist Convention and other church pension groups of their federal tax-exempt status.

Annuity Board President Darold H. Morgan, who also is chairman of the multi-denominational Church Alliance—an organization of church pension organizations—declined immediate comment, telling Baptist Press he was trying to sort out circumstances that led to inclusion of the provision stripping tax exemption. Morgan and other church pension board executives were meeting in Indianapolis, Ind., to assess provisions of the bill impacting their organizations and to plan strategy for seeking changes in the measure.

But Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs Executive Director James M. Dunn, expressing concern about the church-state implications of the proposal, warned: "The taxing of church pension boards engaged properly in insuring their ministers and denominational employees is tantamount to taxing the churches themselves.

"This legislative tinkering with time-tested principles of church-state separation flies in the face of the First Amendment and signals an abandonment of the basic American concept that the church should not be required to support the state."

Dunn added: "It is amazing that those producing the tax reform package have demonstrated such incredible insensitivity.

The American people will not stand for it."

The bill's language repeals tax exemption for a non-profit organization if a "substantial part of its activities consists of providing commercial type insurance," adding such insurance "shall be treated as an unrelated trade or business." Specifically exempted from the definition of "commercial-type insurance" is property or casualty insurance provided by churches or conventions or associations of churches.

But the measure specifies further that "annuity contracts shall be treated as providing insurance."

If passed by both houses of Congress and signed into law by President Reagan, groups such as the SBC Annuity Board would lose their tax exemptions Dec. 31, 1985.

Aside from the threat to tax exemption, other provisions in the bill drew swift reaction from Annuity Board officials, including general counsel Gary S. Nash, who was particularly critical of the powerful Ways and Means committee for not holding public hearings before voting out the measure for

action by the full House of Representatives.

Among provisions drawing fire is one that would penalize a participant who designates a portion of his salary as a "catch-up" device for years in which he was able to put little or nothing into a retirement plan. This provision would forbid participants in a regular retirement plan from investing also in Individual Retirement Accounts.

According to Nash, another negative feature of the proposal would reduce contribution limits for amounts that can be contributed to denominational retirement plans.

Yet another would impose what Nash described as "regressive tax penalties" on distributions—or funds withdrawn—from retirement plans before age 59, other than for death, disability or "life-based" annuity payments. The bill would also impose new minimum distribution rules and a 50 percent tax on those retirement funds not withdrawn at the time of eligibility.

Stan Haste is information director for the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs.

Pageant of Peace to include creche

WASHINGTON (BP)—For the second consecutive year, the federally-sponsored Christmas Pageant of Peace will include a nativity scene.

Despite protests from religious and civil liberties groups, the Pageant of Peace board voted Nov. 25 to include a creche in the display, to be erected near the White House.

The board based its decision on a 1984 Supreme Court decision that held government sponsorship of nativity scenes to be constitutional, said Sandra Alley, a National Park Service spokesman. The board considers the inclusion of a creche to be "historically and legally appropriate," Alley explained.

Rogers reportedly selected as candidate for Atlanta SBC

by Greg Warner

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (BP)—Adrian Rogers, whose election as president of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1979 signaled the beginning of a seven-year struggle to control the SBC power structure, apparently again will be the candidate of "conservatives" when the two sides square off in Atlanta in June.

Although Rogers has not declared his candidacy formally, the Memphis, Tenn., pastor reportedly is allowing his name to be used in a campaign to enlist thousands of messengers to the upcoming Southern Baptist Convention. His intention to run was announced in a Dec. 6 meeting of about 200 persons at First Church, Jacksonville.

"Our candidate will be Adrian Rogers," Homer Lindsay Jr., co-pastor of the church, told the group of pastors and leaders. "He has given us the right to use his name. He is seriously praying and seeking God's face. As far as we know, he will be the man to represent us in Atlanta."

Lindsay said he met in Atlanta Dec. 2 with 18 other "conservative" leaders who decided on Rogers' candidacy. Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Church, apparently took part in the meeting, although Lindsay said he was not "at liberty" to name the participants.

Lindsay said "conservatives" already are organizing in support of Rogers in many states, naming Alabama, Arkansas and North Carolina. Lindsay is chairman of the steering committee in Florida, he said, adding, "Our goal is to have 5,000 messengers go to Atlanta from Florida."

Lindsay said the Florida effort began with a recent meeting of 150 persons in Orlando, Fla. He and the other 21 members of the Florida steering committee who divided the state into an equal number of districts, will hold meetings similar to the one in Jackson-

ville, which was by invitation only.

Another member of the Florida steering committee, Harold Hunter, pastor of North Jacksonville Church, told the pastors how to prepare for the Atlanta convention in order to guarantee each of their churches has 10 messengers committed to their candidate.

"I don't want anyone going from my church that I have questions about. If they're going to go, they're going to have to vote like I vote," he said, adding some of them may not be certain "what it is to be led by the Spirit of God, but I'm certain. On this issue there is no doubt."

Lindsay echoed that certainty. "I'm not telling you how to vote," he said, "but if you do what God wants you to do, then we'll vote the same way. He's not going to lead you to do one thing and me another."

Hunter urged the pastors to return to their churches and make a public commitment to the "conservative" effort: "Go public with it and be as political as you need to be."

"Liberals are mean as snakes," Hunter warned. "Anyone who'd deny the Word of God doesn't even know God. If Jesus were

standing here today, he would tell you his word is inerrant, infallible, verbally inspired, plenary, the Word of God. I am absolutely convinced of that."

Jerry Vines, who shares the pulpit of First Church with Lindsay and is on the SBC Peace Committee, recounted the now-familiar charges of liberalism in the denomination. A 50-page paper allegedly documenting liberal beliefs among college and seminary professors and employees of the denomination, was distributed at the meeting.

"There is theological departure from the faith to the point that if it is not faced and dealt with in this denomination we will face the demise of the greatest evangelistic force on the earth," Vines charged.

In addition to the theological differences, Vines said the SBC faces problems of political maneuvering, denominational insensitivity, ethical inconsistency and a loss of spiritual commitment.

Greg Warner is associate editor of the Florida Baptist Witness.

Rogers confirms candidacy request

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)—Adrian Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Church, Memphis, Tenn., has confirmed a Dec. 2 meeting in Atlanta with conservative leaders who asked him to be a candidate for the presidency of the Southern Baptist Convention in 1986.

Rogers was elected SBC president in 1979, but declined nomination in 1980 for a second one-year term because of pressing church and personal responsibilities.

"I certainly have not decided to run and certainly have not encouraged anybody to

support me as SBC president," Rogers told the *Tennessee Baptist and Reflector* Dec. 9. "I am praying about it," he added.

Emphasizing he has not given anyone permission to nominate him at this point, Rogers stressed he is not seeking the SBC presidency, as he did not seek it in 1979.

Rogers said it was a "tremendously difficult decision," noting that Bellevue Baptist Church is "in the midst of a tremendous program of relocating the church" from the downtown area to a tract in west Memphis.

Crowders file lawsuit in Georgia federal court

by Dan Martin

ATLANTA (BP)—A Birmingham, Ala., couple and a retired Navy chief from Windsor, Mo., filed suit Dec. 5 against the Southern Baptist Convention and its Executive Committee in federal district court in Atlanta.

The suit, filed by Robert S. Crowder and his wife, Julia, and Henry C. Cooper, claims the plaintiffs were "irreparably harmed" by rulings and events at the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Dallas, June 12, 1985, concerning election of the SBC Committee on Boards, Commissions and Standing Committees.

The suit seeks to have the election of the SBC Committee on Boards declared illegal and to prevent the 52 persons elected at the Dallas convention from serving. It also asked "relief... to prevent the defendants from violating the legal rights of the plaintiffs" during the 1986 annual meeting in Atlanta.

The petition claims SBC President Charles

F. Stanley, pastor of First Baptist Church of Atlanta, made "erroneous rulings" which "violated the rights" of the plaintiffs and "deprived" them "of the opportunity... to vote" on matters related to election of the Committee on Boards.

The suit seeks the court to declare:

—Bylaw 16 "permits any registered messenger to propose amendments to the report of the Committee on Committees from the floor... to nominate any individual or a slate of individuals and have the amendment voted on..."

—Bylaw 32 "reserves to the convention the right to amend the body of any report..."

—Bylaw 35 "requires that all propositions, decisions and choices, including appeals on points or questions of order or any other challenges to parliamentary rulings, shall be decided by a majority vote of the registered

messengers present and voting... and that the chair is bound by and required to obey the decisions of a majority of the messengers..."

—the actions of Stanley in the controversial rulings and proceedings "were and are invalid..."

—the election of members of the Committee on Boards "was illegal and further declaring members purportedly elected... are without authority to serve in that capacity."

The suit seeks to permanently enjoin "the defendants (and their respective officers, Executive Committee members, employees or agents) from violating the declaratory judgments" or "permitting the members of the Committee on Boards... who were illegally elected at the Dallas Convention to continue to serve."

Dan Martin is news editor for Baptist Press.

International

Responding to good news

by James McDaniel, First Church, Brinkley

Basic passage: Matthew 2

Focal passage: Matthews 2:1-12

Central truth: Proper response to the good news of Jesus' birth includes sincere worship and generous giving.

The message of Christmas is that God loves us. He loved us so much he was willing to leave the palaces of heaven and enter the human race for our salvation. He still loves us, and it is only in adhering to his call of repentance and faith that we are to find the ultimate meaning of our existence.

He was born in a barn, confining himself to poverty, danger and exile. He was put in a position without power and privilege. His birth was passed over by most of the world's elite.

There were some wise men who gave attention to his birth. They visited him, and their visit was made memorable by their gifts. The love God raised in their hearts dictated the bringing of gifts; his worth required them.

It is to be noted they brought gifts individually. If the personal element is removed from gift giving, the pleasure is lost. The Name that is above every name seeks persons.

It's also to be noted the gifts were costly. David said years earlier, "I'll not offer to the Lord that which cost me nothing." These gifts were obtained with forethought. They were not something picked up along the roadside as they made their way to Bethlehem, nor were they trinkets of little value.

The gifts were also symbolic. The gold was of value gained at great toil. Frankincense was a fragrant odor used for sacrifice. Myrrh is a precious gift derived at the cost of suffering and sorrow. As we consider the value of their gifts, what about our own? Are we bringing gold or trinkets to support the Lord's church and promote the ongoing of the gospel? Are our gifts the result of a sacrificed life, or do we just bring the Lord our leftovers?

Finally, note the wise men came not to see or to talk, but to reverence. Man's purpose in life is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.

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Life and Work

Solving the sin problem

by Bradley A. Rogge, Brookwood First Church, Little Rock

Basic passage: Isaiah 11:1-9; Matthew 1:18-2:23

Focal passage: Isaiah 11:1-4; Matthew 1:20-25

Central truth: Jesus is the only answer to the world's sin problem.

A few years ago, I awoke with great excitement. The reason was I had been waiting for years to preach on Christmas Sunday. My excitement was quickly dashed as I realized that for the past three days ice had covered the ground. As I looked out my window, I realized my chance to preach on Christmas morning would have to wait. As my wife and I discussed the turn of events, we began to realize the meaning of Christmas is something we should center on each day, not just Sunday, even Christmas Sunday.

Jesus came to fulfill the hope of the prophets of the Old Testament. The world needed a Savior. The world still needs a Savior. This was the purpose of God when he sent salvation to man through Christ.

In recent times, it has seemed people have tried to destroy the concept of the virgin birth, which is the foundation of our faith. Here is a point to consider. When a child is conceived, its blood type is determined by the father, not the mother. If Jesus was not born of a virgin, then he would have had a man's blood. Man's blood on the cross would save no one. Jesus' blood was the Father's blood. Only divine blood could bring salvation.

Christ's mission was to save the world from sin, and this is still his mission. Christmas is a great time of the year. A time of family gatherings, of exchanging gifts and, most important of all, it is a time of remembering Christ is still in the business of bringing the good news to men.

This Christmas, experience the presence of God in a deeper way. Spend time with God. Invite him to your gift opening; seat him at your dinner table and thank him for all he has done for you.

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Bible Book

The birth of the Savior

by Jim Byrum, Toltec Church, Scott

Basic passage: Matthew 1:18 to 2:12

Focal passage: Matthew 1:22-23; 2:1-12

Central truth: The wonderful Savior is born.

Jesus is wonderful.

Jesus is wonderful because of who he is. The angel told Joseph to call his name Jesus, "Jehovah Saves," because he would save his people from their sins. He is God Almighty, Jehovah God, the One who was and is and is to come.

Jesus was virgin-born. God was his Father and Mary, a poor Jewish maiden, was his mother. After the Holy Spirit moved miraculously upon Mary, she began to carry the Lord Jesus in her body. On that first Christmas morning so long ago, Jesus was born in a stable in Bethlehem and laid in a manger because there was no room in the inn. The stable was a fitting place for Jesus to be born, because he was the Lamb of God.

Jesus is Immanuel, "God with us." No one ever has existed who is like Jesus. He is God-man, truly God, undiminished deity. He is also perfect humanity.

Jesus is King, God and Savior. The gifts of the wisemen—gold, frankincense and myrrh—were fitting for each office.

Jesus is wonderful because of what he has done. The angel told Joseph he would save his people from their sins. How has he done that?

He became the perfect sacrifice. He never had an impure desire. His hands never touched forbidden things nor did his feet walk in forbidden places. He was sinlessly perfect, the spotless Lamb without blemish.

Jesus died on the cross, which is the greatest expression of God's love. Jesus' blood was shed for us, providing a covering for our sins. The full price of our redemption was paid, and the holiness of God was completely satisfied.

Jesus is wonderful because of what he has planned. He is coming again, not as a baby born in a stable, but as the King of glory. He is coming for his bride, the church; then he is coming to set up his millennial kingdom. After these things, we who have been washed in his blood shall live with him forever in a new and wonderful world.

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International

Doing God's will

by Nan Ashcraft, Hurricane Lake Church, Benton

Basic passage: Matthew 13; Mark 12:28-34

Focal passage: Matthew 13:31-33,44-46; Mark 12:28-34

Central truth: Citizens of the kingdom of heaven strive to do the will of God by loving God and neighbor.

Jesus sat on the seashore with multitudes gathered about him. He taught them exclusively in parables of the coming and nature of the kingdom of God. This was central in his ethical teachings.

The parables of the mustard seed and the leaven seem to be teaching a single truth. As a parable always involves comparison, these parables compare the seeming weak and unpromising beginnings of the kingdom of God with the universal results. These beginnings were in the person of Jesus Christ, and the parables illustrate the transforming and quiet workings of an inner power.

The parables of the hidden treasure and the costly pearl also seem to be paired in meaning. Two truths found in the parables are: (1) The kingdom of God is of infinite worth. Its value is recognized as worthy of surrendering all else in order to possess. (2) Great joy and privilege come to those who follow Jesus. Possessing this treasure is worth all else. The joy comes when the response is surrender in commitment and obedience.

Jesus is revealing the good news that was hidden. Those who heard responsibly understood that the reign of God was a present reality, and that they were called to repentance and decision.

Jesus taught not only the advent of the kingdom, but also how believers are to live within it. When the scribe inquired of Jesus which commandment was first of all, he was explicit in his bold answer: "Hear, O Israel, The Lord our God is one Lord, and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Mark 13:29-31). These love commandments are basic in our struggle to do God's will.

Through examining the implications of these teachings, we find practical help for day to day living. Do we need to re-examine personal ethics in applying the commandments to live in loving relationships.

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Life and Work

A new covenant

by Bradley A. Rogge, Brookwood First Church, Little Rock

Basic passage: Jeremiah 31:1 to 32:44

Focal passage: Jeremiah 31:31-34; 32:37-40

Central truth: When God's people turn away from him, God provides ways for a renewed relationship with them.

Isn't God marvelous? Not only does he seek us out for salvation, but he seeks us out when we backslide.

In verses 31-33 of our text, we see God promises a new way to restore his people to him. That new way is through the Son of God, Jesus the Christ. When we receive Christ, we find he has written his law within us. Even though man left God, God refused to accept that decision because of his great love for us.

God wants his people to desire a personal relationship with him. He wants to be our God and he wants us to be his people. It was for this reason Jesus came.

It is not God's will that any man perish. It is God's ultimate goal that all men accept his Son. This is the concept behind Bold Mission Thrust. It is our task as Southern Baptists to see that the world hears the message of God. We then leave salvation to him who has allowed us to spread his Word.

Wrath is not God's final word. His final word is forgiveness. God will gather us in as a shepherd gathers in his sheep. He will protect his sheep from Satan and his lies.


If you do not know Jesus as your Savior, will you right now discover God's love for you? Will you right now repent and believe in God's transforming power?

If you have experienced God's love but have grown insensitive, will you right now confess your sin in your life and renew your commitment to God?

Can you think of a better New Year's resolution than to resolve to follow Christ?

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Psychology For Christian Life



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Bible Book

Suffering and victory

by Jim Byrum, Toltec Church, Scott

Basic passage: Daniel 9:1 to 12:13

Focal passage: Daniel 9:24-27; 12:1-4

Central truth: God is moving this world into its final hour.

These are exciting times. God is moving this world to its final hour. The world is choosing up sides for the final conflict, and most people do not know the outcome has already been determined.

Daniel 9 outlines both the psychological movements of God and the actual history of the world from the time of Daniel to the end. Daniel sees six things God will bring to completion before the end.

(1) God will "finish the transgression." In mercy and love, God will one day bring back the Jews into fellowship with him. They were broken off because of unbelief, but that is temporary. God has not forgotten his people.

(2) God will "make an end of sins." He will take away sin and bring all sinners to final judgment. Men will not continue to live in defiance of God's laws forever. The unbelieving multitudes will stand before the throne and be judged from the things which are in the books, according to their deeds.

(3) God will "seal up sins." The anti-christ, the false prophet, Satan, demon spirits and all sinners who reject Jesus will be thrown into Hell to live forever. "And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. . . . And if anyone's name was not found written in the Book of Life, he was thrown into the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:10-15).

(4) God will "bring in everlasting righteousness." One day, righteousness will fill the earth as waters fill the sea. Death will be feared no longer, war will end forever and peace will prevail from pole to pole.

(5) God will "seal up the vision and prophecy." Just as God has promised in his Word, so shall it be. God does not lie. His promises are sure. The smallest one shall certainly come to pass.

(6) God will "anoint the most holy." When time shall be no more; when Satan, demons, and all unbelievers have been thrown into Hell; when the new heaven and the new earth have come down from God; and when the new Jerusalem is in place, Jehovah Jesus will reign on the throne forever and ever.

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Eula Mae Henderson, missions leader, dies

DALLAS (BP)—Eula Mae Henderson, 70, a Texas Baptist mission leader for more than three decades, died Dec. 5 at her home in Garland, Texas, following a lengthy illness.

Services were Dec. 6 at First Church, Dallas, where pastor W.A. Criswell officiated. Charles McLaughlin, director of the state missions commissions of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, brought the message. She had been a worship leader in an elementary Sunday school department at First Church, Dallas, for more than 30 years.

Miss Henderson was executive director-treasurer of Texas Woman's Missionary Union from 1947-80 after being young people's secretary for Texas WMU in 1946.

During her 34 years of denominational work, she was instrumental in expanding mission work in Texas, especially among Hispanics. She helped launch the Rio Grande River Ministry, which has involved

hundreds of Texas Baptist churches and thousands of volunteers in sharing talents and faith with people along the Rio Grande (the border between Texas and Mexico).

During her tenure, the state mission offering grew from \$109,000 in 1947 to almost \$2.2 million in 1980.

The Oklahoma native attended Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and received honorary doctor's degrees from Wayland Baptist University in Plainview, Texas (1956), and Mary-Hardin Baylor, Belton, Texas (1970). In 1984, she received the Texas Baptist Elder Statesman Award for distinguished service.

Miss Henderson requested memorial gifts be made to the Mary Hill Davis State Stations Offering or the Eula Mae Henderson State Missions Memorial Fund through the Woman's Missionary Union or the BGCT treasurer, 511 N. Akard, Dallas, 75201.

Robert Lee sets 1986 retirement date

ALEXANDRIA, La. (BP)—Robert L. Lee, executive director of the Louisiana Baptist Convention since 1956, has announced his retirement effective Dec. 1, 1986. He was assistant executive secretary of the convention 1953-56.

Lee said he was "gratefully consenting" to a request last year from the convention's executive board that he continue in office "for at least two years."

When Lee was elected to the office at age 41, he was the youngest of Baptist state executive secretaries in the Southern Baptist Convention. Now, he is the eldest of executive directors presently in office and is serving the longest tenure of any of them.

When Lee became a staff member of the executive board in 1953 there were 1,123

churches with a total membership of 323,158. Today there are more than 1,410 churches with a total membership of more than 570,000.

Lee was 70 years old in October. He was reared in Mobile, Ala., and had a career as an insurance executive in Mississippi before entering the Baptist ministry. He was pastor of churches in Mississippi and Louisiana before joining the LBC staff.

He is a graduate of Mississippi College and the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary where he earned the doctor of theology degree in 1951.

Lee recently led in establishing Mission 90, a program to raise \$10 million to organize 250 new churches and missions throughout the state by 1990.

Crowd almost doubles goal; lost child found

YEKEPA, Liberia (BP)—Tensions following the recent coup attempt in Liberia didn't prevent members of Mt. Nimba Church from almost doubling their attendance goal for the Sunday they dedicated their new sanctuary.

Church leaders knew out-of-town guests would hesitate to come because of the attempted coup the previous week, but church leaders decided to continue with the dedication and set an attendance goal for Sunday school of 460. Average Sunday school attendance was 330.

More than 840 people came for Sunday school and still more came for the worship service and dedication, said Earl Williams, the Southern Baptist missionary who is pastor of the church. The crowd included at least 300 small children, he said.

As Williams and his family prepared to leave, a frantic mother arrived looking for her child. She had sent her three-year-old to church with his five-year-old brother. Neither child had ever been to the church

before. The older boy went home after Sunday school, leaving his brother. But the three-year-old was no longer at church.

Williams took the mother to the police to report the missing child and found the boy already there. But the police and soldiers informed the mother she would be jailed for not watching her child better.

The men ignored all pleas to release her until Williams said, "You know, when Jesus was a little boy, he got lost from his parents while going to church, and they did not put Mary or Joseph in jail." Everyone's attitude changed quickly, Williams said, and one of the soldiers said, "Reverend, you need to pray for us." The police and soldiers allowed the mother and child to leave with him.

As they left, Williams couldn't pass up the chance to speak to the mother. "Maybe God let this happen to speak to you about coming to church yourself with your children," he said. "I am here in Liberia today because I had a mother who took me to church."

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