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12-6-1986

December 4, 1986

Arkansas Baptist State Convention

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December 4, 1986

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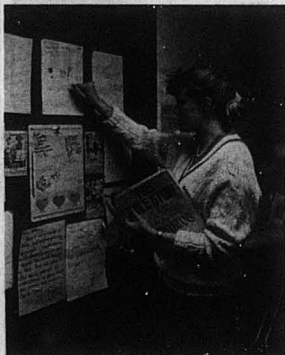


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Don't worry about any thing, but in everything by prayer & supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

I know the plan I have for you and for all who love me. For good and not for evil, says the Lord.

Baptist college students:
'Laborers with Christ on campus'
page 2



ABN photo / Millie Gill

Our country's college campuses are among the most strategic mission fields of the world. Baptist college students truly are "laborers together with Christ" as they seek to win to Christ the next generation of leaders for our country. In December, many Southern Baptist churches will recognize the important ministry of college students on "Student Day at Christmas" (see related article this page).

Celebrate 'Student Day at Christmas'

by George Sims

For many years, Southern Baptist churches have celebrated "Student Day at Christmas" in recognition of their college and university students. This annual emphasis, sponsored by the Baptist Sunday School Board, offers churches an opportunity to hear of the students' college experiences. The resulting awareness of students' needs encourages prayer support within the church family.

Christian students are finding that God has given them gifts for ministry throughout the campus community. Involvement with their peers in the scholastic areas has revealed the struggles of personal lifestyle and life choices that require God's direction. Witnessing opportunities come more easily as students minister to fellow students on the campus.

This year's theme, "Laborers with Christ on Campus," recognized the student's ministry on the campus, the need for home church support and the ministry of Baptist Student Union as an outreach of the church. Churches might choose to use the worship format below in planning for "Student Day at Christmas."

Student Day At Christmas

"Laborers with Christ on Campus"

Suggested worship format

Call to worship (student Choir, instrumental solo by college young adult)

Invocation

Welcome, recognitions, and introductions (pastor and student leader)

Hymn #69 "O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing"

Scripture reading: I Corinthians 3:9

Solo: (student)

Student testimonies: "Laborers with Christ on Campus..."

Student #1: "... through the BSU" —the student shares how BSU has helped him/her and how it has equipped him/her for ministry on campus.

Student #2: "... through my Sunday School" —the student shares what the Sunday School college department has meant to him/her and how it has equipped him/her for ministry on campus.

Student #3: "... through personal discipleship" —a student shares how he/she has grown in the past semester through a disciplined quiet time.

Student #4: "... through involvements" —have a summer missionary or a student involved in a missions program of the church share how the mission experience has made him/her a laborer with Christ on campus.

Hymn #294 "Let Others See Jesus in You" Prayer (pastor or student)

Offering

Special music (college choir or musical components from college group)

Message: "Laborers with Christ on Campus" —use a student who understands the theme to present the message. Contact your local BSU for suggestions on finding students to preach.

Hymn #369 "O Master, Let Me Walk with Thee"

Benediction (student)

(All hymns are taken from the *Baptist Hymnal*, 1975 edition.)

A church-wide reception for all college students could follow the service.

George Sims is associate director of the ABSC Student Department.

In this issue

7 confidence in God

Although Leachville Second Church suffered a devastating blow when their sanctuary was destroyed by fire Nov. 14, Pastor Roger Haney believes God's provision will be adequate to meet their needs.

8-9 faith at work

Three features show Christian faith and love ministering to people in the most difficult of life's circumstances.

Seminary seeks to establish Dillard Memorial

LOUISVILLE, Ky.—The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary is currently inviting contributions from alumni and friends to fund the Badgett Dillard Memorial Chapel in the new Student Center/Family Life Complex planned for the campus.

"Badgett Dillard was a beloved member of the Southern Seminary family, and many have asked for some way to pay tribute to his significant role in the life of this institution," explains President Roy L. Honeycutt. "This chapel will be a fitting memorial."

In designating the chapel as a memorial to Dillard, seminary trustees expressed gratitude for "his 33 years of commitment to the spiritual and professional development of every individual in the community."

Dillard was executive vice-president and vice-president for business affairs of Southern Seminary at the time of his death on March 29 of this year. During his 33 years of

service to Southern Baptists' oldest seminary, he also served as director of administration, executive assistant to the president, director of public relations and in other positions.

The veteran seminary administrator also served the Southern Baptist Convention and Kentucky Baptists in a number of roles. He was a graduate of Berea College and Southern Seminary.

Construction of the \$12-million Student Center/Family Life Complex is projected to begin in the fall of 1988. Funding is currently being sought for the project, with more than half now collected or pledged.

Contributions should be made payable to The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (and clearly designated to the Dillard Memorial Chapel) and sent to: Capital Fund, Southern Seminary, 2825 Lexington Road, Louisville, KY 40280. All gifts are tax deductible.



A lady announced, "The reason I became a Baptist was so I could help in determining what my church would do." At first thought this seemed to be a very superficial reason for becoming a Baptist. Yet, it should be noted that church polity is one of our most distinctive doctrines. We, as Baptists, believe a local church is to be totally free. The congregation, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, is to determine every activity for that local body.

This distinctive doctrine has been one of the mighty forces which God has used as a dynamic in reaching people. A seminary professor said that, in questioning students from non-Baptist backgrounds, the most frequent reason given for joining us was the way we conduct our services and manage our affairs. The same students said their understanding of "Baptist doctrine" came later and they found many reasons to be proud to be Baptists.

If this is true, the importance of our business meetings becomes apparent. But, all too often, unless there is some difficulty or major business decision, we approach the monthly business meeting without too much thought.

"We have many items of business tonight. Let us have a brief word of prayer so we can move quickly into our business," the moderator often will announce.

This familiar statement takes lightly two important considerations. First is the matter of seeking divine guidance. Regardless how routine a meeting may appear, we should never proceed until God's direction has been earnestly sought. Apart from the leading of the Holy Spirit, a church is like a ship without a rudder, hopelessly adrift.

A second consideration is the lack of attention given to the fact that our polity is founded on biblical principles. From time to time, it would be good for some in-depth attention to be given to the New Testament reasons for our church organization.

Of even greater importance than the fact that persons involved in the decision making process of a church are more responsible is the obvious pattern for governing a church in the New Testament. For example, when a disagreement arose over whether Gentiles had to first become Jews before they could be Christians, the matter was brought to the congregation. It was settled by majority consensus.

The democratic process becomes evident from the words that are used in the original Greek text. For example, the word "ordained" in Acts 14:23 really means "elect." The Greek word is *cheirotoneantes* and has as its basic meaning "to vote by stretching out the hand" (*Thayer's Greek Lexicon of the New Testament*, p. 668). We, as Baptists, have many distinctive doctrines

which are of great significance. But few, if any, of our teachings are greater than the autonomy and polity of the local congregation. Simply stated, our polity means that no outside individual or organization can compel a Baptist church to do anything. Encouragement and suggestions can be given, but each church determines its own actions.

Each of us should be aware that the actions and attitudes we exhibit in our local church business meetings are observed by others. Sometimes a major deterrent to church growth can be un-Christian actions in a business meeting. Individuals have used the un-Christian conduct of a few in business meetings as an excuse for becoming inactive. While such excuses are not valid, it behooves us as Christians to reflect Christ in all of our activities.

The Apostle Paul admonished the Corinthians to do everything in "decency and order" (I Cor. 14:40). Far more important than a manual of parliamentary procedure is proper conduct on the part of God's people.

Further, we as Christians should be willing to allow the majority vote of a congregation to determine the church's actions. Seldom is an issue of such nature that an individual is proper in rejecting the majority decision. A group that modern theologians call the Judaizers chose to reject the council at Jerusalem. This group was determined that all gentile Christians be circumcised and keep at least a portion of the law. In order to give emphasis to their teaching, they sought to discredit Paul. As a result, Paul wrote the book of Galatians, clearly stating that there was but one way by which individuals could have a relationship with God, and this was by faith in his Son, Jesus.

It should be noted that a Baptist church is distinctly different from a democratic political organization, as each of our congregations should be a praying body of Christlike Christians who are seeking to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In its ideal state, a church is a theocracy, that is, completely controlled by God.

Although Southern Baptist churches are independent, there is a need for cooperation with other Baptist churches in order to carry out the Great Commission. Cooperation makes it possible for churches of all sizes to have a part in the work of missionaries around the world. Cooperation, not coercion, is the principle by which Southern Baptist churches serve and fellowship.

Every church business meeting should be a great and victorious experience as we allow the presence of the living Christ to permeate our midst. When this is done, a church business meeting is a time of celebration and victory, not a dry and distasteful experience to be endured.

Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine

Arkansas' third largest publication,
meeting the information needs of Arkansas Baptists

VOLUME 85 NUMBER 46

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Copies by mail 50 cents each.

Deaths of members of Arkansas churches will be reported in brief form when information is received not later than 14 days after the date of death.

Advertising accepted in writing only. Rates on request.

Opinions expressed in signed articles are those of the writer.

Member of the Southern Baptist Press Association.

The Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine (ISSN 0004-1734) is published weekly, except Easter, Independence Day, the first week of October, and Christmas, by the Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine, Inc., Little Rock, AR. Subscription rates are \$6.48 per year (individual), \$5.52 per year (Every Resident Family Plan), \$6.12 per year (Group Plan). Foreign address rates on request. Second class postage paid at Little Rock, AR. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine, P. O. Box 552, Little Rock, AR 72203.

Deceiving ourselves

I am writing about the action by the Trustees of Midwestern Seminary to affirm the teachings of Professor Tempt Sparkman. The Trustees should have gracefully relieved Sparkman of his duties at the seminary. This is the only acceptable solution to this problem.

May I share the following observations:

(1) Sparkman's theology deviates from the Baptist faith and message on salvation and baptism. Sparkman clearly teaches universal salvation and infant baptism in his books: *Being a Disciple*, Broadman Press, 1972; *The Salvation and Nurture of the Child of God*, Judson Press, 1983; *Review and Expositor, Women in Ministry*, Southern Seminary, 1986. Perhaps Editor Sneed would consider writing an analysis of these books so Arkansas Baptists could know for themselves what Sparkman teaches.

(2) President Ferguson defends Sparkman by saying his writings "are susceptible to significant misunderstanding and misinterpretation." Friends, if Sparkman didn't mean what he said, then why in heavens name, didn't he say what he meant? Salvation and baptism are not vague doctrines among Southern Baptists!

(3) Sparkman's writings and his explanations of his writings are clearly two different things. Which are we to believe? How does one write so ambiguously and yet speak so

clearly on the same subject?

(4) What do his students perceive him to be teaching about these doctrines? Does he teach a different theology in the classroom than what he writes in his books?

(5) Even if Sparkman's theology were sound, is he academically competent? If, in three books written over a period of 13 years, he consistently presents the same heretical views, which we are told are "susceptible to significant misunderstanding and misinterpretation," is he academically competent?

(6) The seminary has rejected an opportunity to bring peace to the Southern Baptist Convention. Their affirmation of Sparkman only generates more distrust regarding the theological integrity of the school.

(7) As long as we have professors like Tempt Sparkman, we will never have peace in our convention. We deceive ourselves if we think otherwise.—David Miller, **Heber Springs**

[Editor's note: The proper spelling of the name of the seminary professor in question is Tempt Sparkman.]

What's happening?

What's happening to our church leaders? Well, the leaders of other churches, too. It seems that both the Baptist, the Catholic and Episcopalian, and a few others, "are against

the women having anything to do with the ministry." What seems to be the problem? Whose business is it, if God wills to use the women, "in the proclaiming" of his Word?

Your article, "Women's group 'grieved,'" page 22, in the Nov. 6 issue of the *Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine*, does not "coincide, in a Christian manner," with the second chapter of Acts, verses 13 through 21, we read:

"But others made fun of the believers, saying, 'These people are drunk!'"

"Then Peter stood up with the other eleven apostles and in a loud voice began to speak to the crowd: 'Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, listen to me and let me tell you what this means. These people are not drunk, as you suppose; it is only nine o'clock in the morning. Instead, this is what the prophet Joel spoke about:

" 'This is what I will do in the last days, God says: I will pour out my Spirit on every one. Your sons and daughters will proclaim my message, your young men will see visions, and your old men will have dreams. Yes, even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will proclaim my message.

'I will perform miracles in the sky above and wonders on the earth below. There will be blood, fire, and thick smoke; the sun will be darkened, and the moon will turn red as blood, before the great and glorious Day of



One layman's opinion

Daniel R. Grant

Drilling wells and saving souls

All of my life since early childhood I have heard Christians debate the pros and cons of evangelism versus ministering to human needs. The debate has raged in many forms under many titles or headlines: the "social gospel" versus the "spiritual gospel;" "dog-dog-ism" versus "evangelism;" or even "saving bodies" versus "saving souls."

It seemed to be an accepted fact that a Christian had to choose one camp or the other—that to believe in evangelism was to ignore human needs, and that to believe in social ministry was to ignore evangelism.

Recent reports coming out of the eastern Mono River area in Togo, West Africa, demonstrate dramatically how the social gospel and the spiritual gospel inevitably go hand in hand. A stream of lay volunteers from North Carolina has been flowing in and out of this region since 1984, drilling water wells, building ponds to allow for fish farming and irrigation, and teaching health and nutrition in the villages.

One of the most recent projects is a steel and concrete bridge across the Mono River, allowing residents to eliminate a 75-mile detour required for taking crops to market when the river level is up. More than 50 good water wells have been drilled in the Mono River area.

John Mills, West African area director for the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, reports that the result of this work has been phenomenal. "Missionaries go down the road, and people run to stop them just to say, 'Thank you, thank you, thank you,' for the work missionaries and volunteers are doing."

About 15 churches and 15 other preaching stations have been started in the same area, and 392 people were baptized there in a recent two-month period. In commenting on the tremendous human need existing in West Africa, Mills is quoted in *SBC Focus* saying, "When we minister to them and obviously get nothing out of it ourselves, then

they begin to say 'Hey, why are you doing this?' There is a listening and a hearing of the gospel that doesn't come if you just go out and start preaching."

I am grateful for a world mission strategy of Southern Baptists that does not polarize Christianity into "either/or" camps of drilling wells versus saving souls. It was "both/and" for Lottie Moon as well as for Bill Wallace. The partnership is growing stronger year by year in Bold Mission Thrust. It is "both/and" in the Arkansas linkup with the Amazon area of Brazil. Such dentists as J. D. Patterson and Jimmy Hankins have been walking, working examples of the Christ we preach to the people in villages along the Amazon River.

The Christmas season is an excellent time to renew our commitment to sharing the whole gospel with the whole world.

Daniel R. Grant is president of Ouachita Baptist University

You'll be glad to know...

... We had a fine, fine convention! Besides that, we had excellent auxiliary meetings. Ron Lewis was a powerful resource

person for the Religious Education Association meeting. Marjorie Kelly, a dynamic Christian lady, former foreign missionary, widow, and now wife of Earl Kelly, executive director of the Mississippi Baptist Convention, made a lasting impact on the Ministers' Wives. Then, the Pastors' Conference was filled with good men who brought good messages. What a blessing to those who may have been going through valleys. These extra meetings couldn't have been better, by all reports I have received. However, attendance at the auxiliary meetings was not too good. The Convention spends about \$4,300 for these meetings. We want the most people possible to benefit from them. Plan next year to attend the extra meetings. They really do provide extra help for you and your ministry.



Moore

Had 1,174 messengers registered. This compares to 1,189 in Arkadelphia last year. If every church sent the maximum number it could, there would be 6,311 messengers. This means we run about 23 percent of our potential messengers in attendance. It would be great if we could increase our percentage at this point. Most sessions were well attended. Wednesday afternoon and night were weak due to folk returning home for prayer meeting. We voted to remedy that. Next year the convention will close at noon on Wednesday. To do that, the Convention will begin on Tuesday morning. Every session can and should be filled to capacity next year.

The only real "rubb" in the new schedule is that the Pastors' Conference will have to begin on Monday morning. Keep that in mind and make your plans. Listen, there is something we need badly to do. In fact, we must. The messenger cards are made available through the associational offices in plenty of time for them to be secured and properly signed by the moderator or church clerk. Next year we will expect this to be done properly. We need to practice proper procedures at this point. Let's all work together to see that everything is done decently and in order.

Thank you for a good convention! More will be shared next week.

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

the Lord comes.

'And then, whoever calls out to the Lord for help will be saved.' (Acts 2: 13-21, GNB).

Something sure must be getting ready to happen! I'm with the Apostle, John, standing on the Isle of Patmos, "He who gives his testimony to all this, 'Yes indeed! I am coming!' So be it. Come, Lord Jesus!" (Rev. 22: 20, GNB) —Otis Denny, Norton, Ohio

Baptism and rebaptism

Bill Leonard stated (Nov. 13 ABN): "The pressing issue facing us today is less of what we (Baptists) believe about the Bible and more of what we believe about the process of salvation." Many Baptists seem to feel "it is no longer enough to just believe in Jesus as Savior" but also "in an increasing number of doctrines about Jesus in order for your salvation to be valid." One verification of this, he says, is the relationship between the baptism of children and their rebaptism as adults.

May I make a suggestion as to why there are so many requests for rebaptism? The problem is not the laying on of additional beliefs about Jesus; rather, it is a realization that the experience they had was not a trust in the biblical Jesus. Many pastors and evangelists, too concerned with baptisms reported, have hastened to baptize anyone who comes forward making an inquiry. Later, as these "baptized children" grow into maturity, they

realize that they had never made a commitment to the real Jesus but to an idea. Obviously, many children do make lasting commitments. The lack of belief in the security of the believer that Leonard mentions corresponds with this phenomenon of rebaptisms. How can people feel secure in something that they do not have?

Right experiences and right living come from right beliefs and not the other way around. Though vital, experiential religion is dangerous because people tend to believe whatever they experience to be real. Bible contradicting experiences are false. All the cults are experience-centered. Whether we trust in a Mormon Jesus, a Jehovah's Witness Jesus, an Armstrong Jesus, or a watered-down "Baptist" Jesus, we are still lost. A faith in the biblical Jesus is absolutely essential to salvation.

Obviously, a child does not understand all these theological issues, nor is it necessary. However, if a person has truly trusted Jesus as a child, he/she will believe all the biblical doctrines about Jesus as they are taught and learned. A person who denies the biblical Jesus never has been saved.—Herbert Stout, Mountainburg

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Baptist Nursing Fellowship news

The Arkansas Chapter of Baptist Nursing Fellowship met Oct. 16 at the home of outgoing president Lola Selph. Officers elected for the coming year are as follows: president, Maggi Payne, Arkadelphia; vice-president, Irene Branum, Arkadelphia; and secretary-treasurer, Jimmy Payne, Arkadelphia.

Six members, including all three of the state officers, attended the National Baptist Nursing Fellowship Convention, Nov. 6-9 in Richmond, Va. The meeting, held in conjunction with the Baptist Medical-Dental Fellowship, was attended by a number of missionary health care workers who reported on medical missions work and present needs for field health care workers.

Irene Branum, vice-president, spoke at the annual meeting of the Oklahoma Chapter of Baptist Nursing Fellowship. The meeting was held Nov. 10 in Oklahoma City. Branum has recently completed two years as national

BNF membership chairperson.

The five members of the Arkansas BNF that participated in AMAR partnership mission projects during the year were Jody Moon, Kristie Hagan, Ann Weidman, Jimmy Payne and Maggi Payne.

Members provided professional nursing services at the Arkansas Royal Ambassador Congress.

The Arkansas BNF is sponsored by the Arkansas Woman's Missionary Union.

The membership of the organization has nearly doubled in the past year. The membership consists of registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, and nursing students. All nurses interested in missions are invited to join both the national BNF and the Arkansas BNF. For further details on meetings or membership, please contact Jimmy or Maggi Payne, 217 N. 12th Street, Arkadelphia, AR 71923.

missionary notes

Mrs. Ola D. Barnes, mother of Jim L. Barnes, missionary to Taiwan, died Nov. 8 in Hartford, his hometown. He is married to the former Eda Harris of Alma. Appointed by the Foreign Mission Board in 1981, they may be addressed at P. O. Box 427, Taipei 10099, Taiwan ROC.

Sharon Ford, missionary to Burkina Faso and wife of missionary Stephen Ford, arrived in Little Rock Nov. 23 on a 30-day medical leave for tests on their son, John, age 6. Sharon and John can be contacted through Ron Ford, 6504 Allwood, North Little Rock, AR 72116.

by Millie Gill / ABN staff writer

people

Doyle Summerhill began serving as pastor of Shady Grove Church, Van Buren Nov. 16. As a bi-vocational pastor, he also has served as pastor of Pine Log Church, Barber, for five years. He attended West Ark Community College. He and his wife, Karon, have a daughter, Audrea.

Gary Whitmarsh began serving Nov. 2 as pastor of Rudy Church. He has served as a staff member at Mountainburg First Church. Whitmarsh and his wife, MaDeanne, have two children, NeCole and Anthony.

David Gipson has joined the staff of Van Buren First Church as minister of music and youth. A native of Huntsville, Ala., he is a graduate of Samford University.

Marvin Black has resigned as pastor of Caddo Gap Church to serve as pastor of Murphy Church, Big Fork.

Othel Pearson has been called as pastor of Caddo Gap Church. He previously has served as pastor there.

Charles White is serving as pastor of Liberty Church, Norman.

Gearl Spicer recently completed three years of service as minister of education and administration at Geyer Springs First Church, Little Rock.

Phillip D. Powers joined the staff of Martindale Church in Little Rock Nov. 16 as minister of music and youth. He is a graduate of Ouachita Baptist University and Prairie Grove High School. Powers previously has served churches in Desha, Rogers, Fayetteville, and Benton. He is married to the former Laveta Carleen Corley of Prairie Grove. They have two sons, Christopher Ryan and Matthew Thomas.

Wade D. Tucker has resigned as pastor of South Side Church in Fort Smith, effective Dec. 31. He has accepted a call to serve as pastor of Candlewyck Church in Charlotte, N.C.

Tom Collie of Jacksonville is serving as pastor of New Bethel Church, Conway.

Gary Pridmore of Jackson, Miss., is serving as pastor of Beryl Church, Vilonia.

Rebecca Lewis recently received the Humanitarian Award from Harris County, Texas, where she has served for more than four years as director of chaplaincy

services of the Harris County Jail in Houston. She is the daughter of Bill H. Lewis, director of missions for Harmony Association, Pine Bluff. She is a graduate of Arkansas State University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Ron Fortner is serving as pastor of Happy Hollow Church, Vilonia.

Shirley Moore of Little Rock recently was in Birmingham, Ala., to attend an officers meeting of the Ministers' Wives Conference of the Southern Baptist Convention. She serves as corresponding secretary of the organization, which will hold its annual luncheon meeting June 16 in St. Louis, Mo.

briefly

Park Place Church in Hot Springs recently recognized Pastor Tom Harris for five years of service.

Marked Tree First Church ordained Larry Wray and Lynn Layman to the deacon ministry Nov. 9.

Wooster First Church recently launched a building program with a Together We

Build banquet in a tent belonging to the Arkansas Baptist State Convention Evangelism Department. Pastor J.C. Myers reported the tent was filled to its seating capacity of 142, despite inclement weather conditions. Carl Roebuck is serving as fund raising chairman while Tommy Browning is serving as building committee chairman. Plans are for the congregation to build an auditorium, education building and fellowship hall when funds have been pledged.

Van Buren First Church has voted to sponsor a mission at 11th and Pointer Rail in Van Buren. Services began there Nov. 16 in a rented building with Murl Walker serving as mission pastor.

Hamburg First Church honored Pastor and Mrs. Al Ray Taylor Nov. 9 with a church-wide luncheon, recognizing their five years of service to the church. The church is formulating plans for a Baptist Men's organization.

Waldron First Church is sending Pastor Nelson Wilhelm to Nigeria Jan. 19 - Feb. 6, 1987. He will be one of the 30 going with a Jacksonville, Florida-based evangelistic association to Nigeria to lead simultaneous revivals.

ABN photo / J. Everett Sneed



Building dedicated—Calvary Church, Monticello, dedicated a new facility Nov. 23. The new 3,638 square foot facility was erected at a cost of \$98,310. The auditorium will seat 215 people, and the educational facilities have 10 Sunday School rooms, a church office, and a fellowship hall. The dedicatory message was delivered by El Dorado evangelist Robert Blann. The program included an invocation by deacon Chad Russell, Scripture and prayer by deacon Billy Collins, presentation of the building by building committee chairman Kenny Worthington and chairman of deacons Claude Hancock Jr., the act of dedication by deacon James Berry, and the benediction by deacon Sam Maggard. The pastor is Charles Carter.

Leachville Church destroyed, pastor confident of Lord's provision

by Ben Downing

LEACHVILLE—Despite the best efforts of 20 firemen and volunteers from Leachville and Manila, Second Church, Leachville, burned to the ground Nov. 14.

"It's been a mess," said Roger Haney, a native of Fort Smith who has pastored Second Church the past 26 months. "We just dedicated our new auditorium. We had insurance, but it won't ever replace everything. We hope to have it rebuilt within six months. We're just going to trust in the Lord."

Two pumper trucks from the Leachville volunteer fire department and an additional truck from Manila were called in, and firemen battled the flames for over four hours, but they were unable to save the 12,000 square-foot structure located at Fifth and Lange Streets.

Sunday services Nov. 16 were held at the grade school cafeteria, but Wednesday services were held in an empty storefront on Main Street that the church has rented.

"We were lucky this building was empty. We'll be here until the church is built back again. The Mississippi County Union Rescue Mission loaned us these chairs," said Haney. "Folks are optimistic, we had 75 people here helping us to clean up yesterday. The town has been real supportive, even those people who aren't members of our church."

"We had hopes of saving it (the church), but it was further along than we anticipated. We couldn't get hold of it," says Jesse Johnson, the Leachville fire chief. Johnson said the fire was reported at about 8:30 a.m. when a member of the volunteer fire department reported seeing smoke billowing from

the roof. Since much of the structure had a double roof, it was impossible to determine just how the flames were spreading, he said.

Barry Wells, who works in the office at Tri-Star, Inc., a business located just north of the church, said he had smelled smoke when he came to work before 8 a.m., but noted, "There are so many old people who burn leaves early in the morning, I didn't think anything about it. About 8:30 I heard sirens and looked out the window."

Johnson said he thought the fire was almost under control at one point when white smoke began issuing from the building. "That's usually a good sign," he said, noting that white smoke often indicates the presence of steam and doesn't usually occur when combustion is taking place. "But right after that the smoke turned black and the fire got bigger."

Johnson still hasn't pinpointed the cause of the blaze but suspects it may have started around the heater. Haney confirmed the heat had been left on "to keep the pipes from freezing up." Johnson said that luckily an Associated Natural Gas Company employee was in the area and the gas line was shut off when the fire was reported no continuing gas leak contributed to the conflagration. Most of the building was old, said Johnson, and "went up quickly."

Mayor Ralph Wells said the city will make its labor and equipment available to the church at cost whenever possible. "They've been an asset to the community," he said. "We'll do what we can. We knocked down the concrete block wall (left standing after

the fire) because it was broke and leaning, and we thought it might be a hazard to small children playing in the area."

While Sunday and Wednesday services for the congregation, which numbers "200 on a good Sunday," will be held in the storefront, the church's 15 Sunday School classes present a special problem.

"Sunday School classes will be scattered," said Haney. "Some will meet in people's homes, some at the Farmers Market and some will meet at (three small outlying buildings that were undamaged by the fire). We plan to consolidate the adult classes and have them meet here (the storefront)."

Except for the new auditorium, a concrete block addition, the building that housed the church began as Parrish's Blacksmith Shop many years ago. No one could say just how long the building had stood, but one resident recalls the blacksmith shop was standing as early as 1929.

In 1957, Boyington Church, located north of Leachville, was leveled in a fire. The congregation acquired the blacksmith shop and reorganized as Second Church. Now, almost 30 years later, another fire has leveled the congregation's facility. The church has no plans to move to another site, however. A new church building will be built over the ashes of the old.

"There'll be folks helping us. I don't think it's going to be a problem," says Haney. "I know God's going to help us."

Ben Downing writes for the Blytheville Courier News. Reprinted by permission.

Courier News photo



Leachville Second Church was destroyed by fire Nov. 14. Pastor Roger Haney is confident they can rebuild with God's help.

Texas police department chaplain gives kids reasons to live

by Elizabeth Watson

ARLINGTON, Texas (BP)—Harold Elliott had just delivered a death notice to a widow who thought she was still a wife.

It was the 54th suicide response in Elliott's 13-year police chaplain career. But the job still wasn't easy.

Elliott works full-time with the Arlington, Texas, Police Department. He is a graduate of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and had been a Southern Baptist pastor and volunteer chaplain for 22 years. His responsibility now is to minister to citizens and officers in crises—suicide, homicide, accidental death, divorce, stress, and burnout.

Since 1984 Elliott has specialized in teenage suicide prevention.

After responding to three teen suicides within a two-month period, Elliott decided to do something to stop the senseless deaths. He formed Suicide Is Not Painless, Inc., to inform teens and parents about the realities of suicide.

In 1985, Elliott produced the 22-minute film "Suicide Is Not Painless," a docudrama aimed at youth considering suicide. The educational film is designed to be shown in schools and churches.

Nearly half of the suicides in Arlington during Elliott's chaplaincy have involved

teenagers. He attributes this to a "total misconception about tragedy and death" among teenagers.

"This is a generation that has never been tested," Elliott explains, "To most teenagers, trauma is having to watch a black and white television. They just don't know how to cope with real tragedy when it comes along. Many teenagers think tragedy is forever and see death as an escape."

He quotes a 17-year-old boy's suicide note: "We've gone to this other life not knowing what to expect, but whatever happens, it has to be better than this."

"This teenager, like many others, probably picked up a distorted 'eternal-utopia' view of death in church and at funerals," Elliott says.

He believes the solution to teen suicide is teaching youth that life and its problems are temporary. "Commitments to spiritual truths can give them hope," he insists.

"As I was driving to the scene of this last suicide, I was thinking about how many times I've had to do this," Elliott says. "That part has become somewhat ordinary. But having to tell the family about what has just happened is never ordinary at all."

"When I had to deliver the death message today, I was so glad I was the one doing it because I know God called me to this. He gives me grace for the job."

"But that still doesn't take away the lump in my throat as I stand on the doorstep."

Elizabeth Watson is a newswriter at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

SWBTS photo by Rodger Kettering



Harold Elliott, Arlington, Texas, Police Department chaplain, counsels with an officer. He has formed a Suicide Is Not Painless organization to help inform teens and parents about the realities of suicide.

Former repossessor now

FORT WORTH, Texas—Shutting off water to unpaid customers and repossessing cars for a finance company prepared David Freeman for the ministry.

Now the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary student isn't bothered when residents in Fort Worth's Cavile Place neighborhood aim a shotgun at him. And he can stay calm while talking to a man considering suicide.

Before moving to Southwestern, Freeman worked for a credit company. He and his wife also worked with low-income families and as foster parents. Freeman now works for the Tarrant Baptist Association.

He has been knocking on doors to tell Cavile Place residents he wants to help. Of the first 18 homes Freeman visited, 12 respondents said their main need was to know Jesus Christ.

When Freeman began helping people in the area, "the informal network identified me as a helper," he said.

Now Freeman and student Ron Oliver have started a Baptist church in the neighborhood where shootings averaged

Prison chaplain shares good news with inmates

by Billy Dugger

HMB photo by Billy Dugger

GULFPORT, Miss. (BP)—Perry Hilton goes behind bars to share his good news.

"A friend asked me in early 1984 if I would be interested in conducting a jail ministry," remembers Hilton, a volunteer chaplain. "I prayed about it, asking God to direct me if this were his will."

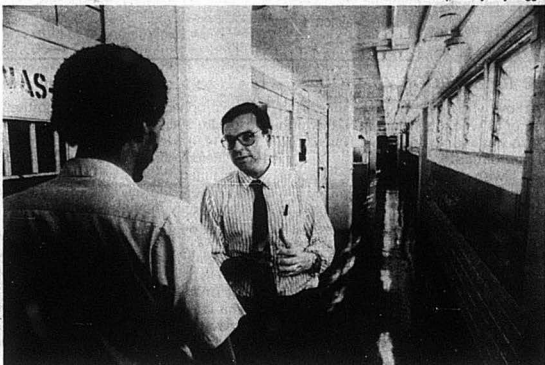
"At first I just listened to the prisoners," he recalls. "They asked who I was, what I wanted, why I was coming to the jail. Things were fairly stilted for a while, but I kept going, walking up and down the rows of cells, introducing myself to prisoners, learning their names. Then the distance between us began to disappear. I gave them Bibles and study materials, and most of the men became friendly."

Soon Hilton was asking prisoners about their knowledge of the Bible, what they understood about God's plan for their lives—if they understood what it meant to have a personal relationship with Jesus.

What Hilton did not do was act judgmentally. "I've talked with, prayed with and for murderers, rapists, drug addicts and thieves, but I have never condemned any of them," he says. "That's not the way Jesus ministered. He showed love and compassion."

In two years, Hilton has seen changes in the lives of prisoners. One who became a Christian now witnesses to new inmates who share his cell. Another Christian prisoner, now released, has a steady job on the Gulf Coast.

There are times Hilton unexpectedly drops in at the jail. "It's easy to see the impact the



Volunteer chaplain Perry Hilton goes behind bars to share his good news. The Gulfport, Miss., resident has worked with prisoners since 1984. In those two years, he has seen prisoners not only claim their salvation, but also witness to each other.

Word of God is having," he says, "when I see them studying their Bibles and pouring over study materials. Others tell me this prisoner or that prisoner is praying daily and witnessing."

Hilton's jail ministry extends beyond the bars that separate prisoners from society. On occasion, he meets with families of jailed men, helping them cope with having a family member in jail.

"Most people are not concerned about prisoners until a member of their family gets locked up," he explains. "Then they realize the prisoners do have needs. Sometimes they give me money to buy Bibles or stationery or postage stamps."

Hilton realizes the legal system is imperfect, but he still is moved when efforts to mete out justice fail. A heavy case load keeps some prisoners waiting months for arraignment hearings. In other instances, prisoners are found innocent, but have spent months behind bars.

Hilton realizes prisons have a useful place in maintaining an orderly society. He has learned to cull the "cons," the pitiful stories of prisoners who blame everyone but themselves for where they are and what they have done. Many of these prisoners, he finds, spend all their time reading law books and looking for loopholes to get out of jail.

On the other hand, "the prisoners who have accepted Christ and have taken responsibility for what they have done are trying to make the most of their situations," he says.

His advice to people who would start a jail ministry is simple: Pray and seek God's leadership, talk to the jail chaplain and offer services, seek training that might be available and encourage others to get involved.

"Seeing what the Lord is able to do in the lives of people is exciting," Hilton says. "I am compelled to keep going, and I know God is giving me the desire to work with prisoners. I'll do this as long as I can."

Billy Dugger is supervisor of employee communications, Mississippi Power Company, Gulfport.

claims souls instead of cars

by Scott Collins

two a night. After 18 months, shootings have dropped to an average of two a month.

The area was so rough that local police would not go into it with fewer than four officers. Seventy-five percent of the residents live below poverty level. Sixty percent of the residents in Cavile Place Apartments are single mothers. The median family income is \$6,281.

In July, neighborhood residents hosted an appreciation dinner for police and city officials. Such progress has been based on a personal touch to Freeman's ministry. "I've always felt we need to help people physically and then meet their spiritual needs," he said.

For example, a woman came to Freeman for help paying her rent. He assisted her with the material need and then addressed her spiritual poverty. Later she told him, "I found help to problems I didn't even know I had."

Freeman developed a strategy for assessing the needs of the community, a concept he applied from a seminary class.

And through the Tarant Association's Urban Allies program Freeman has combined classroom experience with "street"

experience.

Oliver agrees being pastor of the Cavile church has given him valuable experience. He has also involved four other seminary students in the work.

The church, which receives help from Sagamore Hill Baptist Church, recently received its first three adult members. Average attendance is 35-40.

Oliver retired from the military in 1975 after 21 years and went to work for Federal Electric Corp. as an engineer before coming to Southwestern in 1985.

He has involved an engineer from General Dynamics, George Abrams, who tutors neighborhood children in mathematics.

These practical efforts have built a bridge between the Cavile community and the gospel which Oliver and Freeman have found as important as their classwork.

Seminary training alone will not reach the people, Oliver said. "The only thing they respond to is when you pass their exam."

Scott Collins is a newswriter at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.



Woman's viewpoint

Mary Maynard Sneed

The incarnation of God

To those who lived in his own time, as to those of us who are living today, the birth of Jesus was and is good news. This was no ordinary birth.

This Jewish child came to be the Savior of his people. His own mother recognized him as God her Savior (Luke 1:47). Angels in heaven proclaimed him "a Savior which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11). His mission was to the entire world. In acknowledging his own mission as that of the proclamation of the gospel, it is this incarnation of God which Paul calls "the gospel."

The good news of the birth of our Lord was proclaimed hundreds of years before his time. It was not merely a historical event, but one which was accurately predicted and highly anticipated. It was an event of supernatural importance.

Not only was his birth and its place foretold, but also his death, his resurrection and his coming again. As an adult Jesus made claims about himself that were true to

those prophecies. He told his apostles "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9). He claimed preexistence as he said "Before Abraham was I am" (John 8:58). He claimed he was with God the Father before the world was created: "And now O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory I had with thee before the world was" (John 17:5). He predicted His own death and promised to rise again to meet His disciples on a hill in Galilee (Mark 8:31, Luke 9:22, Matthew 26:32).

This child which was born in Bethlehem was God's own Son. Jesus did not become the Son of God by being born in Bethlehem. He was always God's Son. It is said of Him in John 1:18: "... the only begotten Son, which in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." The Word has always been in the bosom of the Father as the Son. His incarnation was to reveal to us the character and essence of God. The purpose of his coming was that through his life, death and

resurrection, he would offer salvation.

The Holy Spirit was active in the incarnation and the resurrection. In Luke 1:35, it was the Holy Spirit who was to come upon Mary and the power of the Highest "... the Spirit of holiness" spoken of in Romans 1:4 actually means the Holy Spirit. It means a holiness that is inherent and not acquired. God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are inherently holy due to their essential nature of deity. All three personalities of the Godhead were responsible for the incarnation and the resurrection. No one can be saved unless the Holy Spirit convicts of sin, righteousness, judgement, and the truth about Christ (John 16:8, 13-14). Jesus saves him (Acts 4:8-12) and the Father accepts him (John 1:12, Eph. 2:18, Luke 5:11-32).

Mary Maynard Sneed is the wife of the editor and the mother of two daughters. She is an active member of Park Hill Church in North Little Rock.

Church brings ministry 'out of the closet'

ALBIA, Iowa (BP)—It's called Helping Hands. And while it may be just an old building on a side street off the town square in Albia, Iowa, helping hands it is.

Helping Hands is a cooperative community food and clothing ministry open to anyone in need. First Baptist Church and Trinity United Methodist Church are joint sponsors. "Originally our church had a clothes closet for about 15 years," says Lonney Hulsey, pastor of First Church. "And Trinity United Methodist had a food pantry. Together we decided it was time to make it a community thing."

Both churches had cooperated for some time. The food pantry and the clothes closet seemed to fit together like two hands. And they sensed a need to get their ministries out of the closet, out of the pantry, out of the church and into the community.

"People wouldn't come, whatever the reason," explains Hulsey. "We needed to get into neutral territory, into community ministry, not just church, not just communi-

ty, but all working together.

This summer, 26 families—96 people—in August and 14 families—43 people—in June, looked to Helping Hands for food. Fifteen to 20 people a day stopped by for clothing.

"And that's our slow period," says Byrle McCombs, coordinator at Helping Hands and a member at Trinity Methodist. "We'll have more people this winter."

The community is solidly behind the project. Helping Hands used to depend on selling newspapers at \$25 a ton for support. But now support comes through donations from individuals, civic organizations and area churches. A recent radio telethon netted \$4,800. Kness Manufacturing donates the building and pays the utilities.

"We need to meet people's physical needs before they're awake to their spiritual needs," insists Hulsey. "Jesus didn't always get converts, but he always ministered to the needs of people."

New lesson writer begins

Ken Overton, pastor of the Arkansas City Church, begins this week writing commentaries on the Convention Uniform series lessons in "Lessons for living."

Overton, an Arkansas native, has pastored the Arkansas City Church since 1984. Prior to that, he served churches in Warren, Norman, Mena, and Wilmot.

He is a graduate of Ouachita Baptist University, Arkadelphia, and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas.



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'Very best Baptists' sought by SBC President Rogers

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)—Southern Baptist Convention President Adrian Rogers has issued a call for recommendations of the "very best Baptists" to serve on committees at the 1987 annual meeting.

In an open letter issued through Baptist Press, Rogers said: "The important task of choosing the nominees for the 1987 Committee on Committees, Resolutions Committee, Credentials Committee and Tellers Committee is under way.

"It is my desire to choose the very best Southern Baptists for these positions. This will be accomplished most effectively with your prayerful support and personal recommendations under the guidance of the Holy Spirit."

During a September meeting with editors of Baptist state newspapers, Rogers said: "I do not intend to make appointments that are overtly political. I'm going to try to make appointments from those that I consider to be the best Southern Baptists."

At that meeting he said the "Baptist Faith

and Message" statement, especially its section on the Scriptures, will be central for his appointments. He said: "If he doesn't believe that, I wouldn't appoint him. I would make appointments from people who hold that kind of theological perspective, and so obviously, that would exclude some people, but it would not exclude people on a political basis. It would exclude them on a theological basis, and theology is only one issue. I want to appoint people who would be the best Baptists, not only theologically, but cooperatively and intellectually and spiritually."

He added he would not appoint persons to the Committee on Committees who, although believing as he does, would appoint to the Committee on Boards people who believe differently. "I don't see that as political," he said. "I see that as consistent."

In his Open Letter, Rogers asked persons who wish to nominate persons for appointment to the committees to provide him with specific information.

Name, address, home and business telephone numbers, church name and address, and whether the person nominated is a pastor or a layman should be included.

He also asked recommendations include information on how long the nominee has been in the state and church, the size of the church, the amount the church gave to the Cooperative Program in the last associational year and what percentage of the total church budget that amount represented.

He also asked that the number of baptisms of the church be included, as well as information on other pertinent matters such as the basic convictions of the nominee.

Rogers encouraged persons to submit the recommendations to him in an envelope marked, "SBC Committee Recommendations," and mailed to Bellevue Baptist Church, 70 N. Bellevue Blvd., Memphis, TN 38104. He asked that the recommendations be submitted by Feb. 1, 1987.

Dan Martin is news editor for Baptist Press.

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Feb. 9, 1987

For more information, write:
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Florida conservatives, moderates lay down arms

PENSACOLA, Fla. (BP)—Groups on both sides of Florida Baptists' theological/political battle have disbanded.

Both the fundamental-conservative steering committee, headed by Homer Lindsay Jr., and Florida Baptists for Cooperation, the moderate-conservative group, met during the recent Florida Baptist State Convention in Pensacola.

The fundamental-conservative group voted to disband in a late-night meeting Nov. 11, the second day of the state convention. The moderate-conservative group, which had met earlier in the week, reached its decision Nov. 13.

Lindsay, pastor of First Church of Jacksonville, cited two factors in his group's decision: the peace plan offered last month by the

presidents of the six SBC seminaries and the repeated request of the SBC Peace Committee to abstain from political tactics.

"We need to pray for the seminary presidents," Lindsay told the 26 men who gathered at the Pensacola Hilton Hotel. He praised the statement as an indication the presidents believe the Bible.

Lindsay said the SBC now can get "back to where it should be." When it happens, he said, no seminary students will be led by their professors "to doubt the Word of God. This would be pleasing to God. This is what we want. Nothing else."

Lindsay said the struggle to return the SBC to its conservative roots is not over. "We need to stay in it until it is pushed through to total victory," he said.


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SP-86

Study group has 'healthy confrontation' with BJCPA

by Dan Martin

WASHINGTON (BP)—A meeting between a nine-member Southern Baptist Convention fact-finding group and the staff of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs was a "healthy confrontation," the study committee chairman said.

"We had our confrontation," said Gary F. Young, chairman of the special committee appointed by the SBC Executive Committee in September to study the relationship between the convention and the BJCPA, an organization of nine Baptist bodies in the United States and Canada.

The committee was appointed in response to a motion introduced in the 1986 annual meeting of the SBC which called for the SBC to withdraw from the BJCPA and to establish "an exclusive Southern Baptist presence" in the nation's capital.

The two-day meeting Nov. 20-21 featured an unscheduled appearance by a U.S. senator, six religious groups who maintain Washington offices, as well as sharp questioning of the BJCPA staff on positions, leadership style, affiliations and published writings.

It also included a briefing on the work of the BJCPA—which ranges from lobbying, to education, publication, research, working with governmental officials and involvement in lawsuits, primarily at the Supreme Court level, which relate to First Amendment, religious liberty and separation of church and state. Briefing the committee were James M. Dunn, executive director, and Oliver S. (Buzz) Thomas, general counsel and director of research services.

Young said the "confrontation was painful, but all confrontations are painful for me." He added he considers the confrontation on issues "healthy" because "it was the first time that participants in the issues were able to sit and talk about the matters that divide us."

He said the two-day meeting was "not intended to evaluate personnel. I felt it was a time to bring people who had various opinions together with the personnel (of the BJCPA) to see if we could answer some questions and clear up some of the difficulties. It was obvious after our first meeting (in October) that we were never going to be able

to deal with the program of the Baptist Joint Committee until we had talked with them to try to clarify matters."

Young added that while "forgiveness and healing are now in the process," it "does not mean the matter is already solved. But it does mean I think solutions are possible."

Previously, Young said he believes "adjustments" may be necessary if the SBC is to maintain its relationship with the Baptist Joint Committee. "I choose the word 'adjustments,' very carefully," he said. "I don't think after all of the fact-finding we would recommend the status quo. We may recommend ways to help the Baptist Joint Committee, to enhance the effectiveness of the Baptist Joint Committee. Those are adjustments.

"Adjustments don't necessarily mean that I think they are doing something wrong. 'Adjustments' may mean they are doing things right, and we need to enhance that."

The two-day meeting featured an appearance by U.S. Sen. Mark Hatfield, R-Ore., who told committee members that in his relationship with the staff of the BJCPA he "felt ministered unto and not just lobbied."

Hatfield, who grew up as a Conservative Baptist, is a member of Georgetown Church, dualy aligned with the SBC and with American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A.

He cited the Baptist Joint Committee and the Christian Legal Society for their assistance in the passage of Equal Access legislation, which allows secondary schoolchildren equal opportunity for religious activities as they have for other extracurricular activities.

Also appearing before the committee were representatives of the American Baptist Churches, Seventh Day Adventists, United Methodists, National Council of Churches, National Association of Evangelicals and Christian Legal Society, all of whom maintain offices in Washington and who told how their offices are organized and of their contact with the BJCPA on various issues.

The meeting also featured sharp questioning of BJCPA staffers over the joint committee's opposition to the School Prayer Amendment, the leadership style of Executive Director Dunn, as well as Dunn's former association with the controversial People For

The American Way and the writing of Associate Executive Director Stan Hasty.

At one point, the meeting also featured pleas for peace and reconciliation.

"The times out of which these things came were highly emotionalized times of polarization," said Darrell Robinson, vice chairman of the SBC Executive Committee and pastor of Dauphin Way Church of Mobile, Ala.

"I think it is apparent, at least to me, that generally the press has been biased against the Judge (Houston appeals court judge Paul Pressler) and the movement which he is identified with. But I see moderation and a change and a coming together like we haven't had before. I think we are growing through it," Robinson said.

"I wish that we could move on from this with reconciliation and forgiveness. I know it is hard to forgive. . . . it is hard to forgive when we are mistreated or when one we love is mistreated. But the Word tells me that God has forgiven me and he gave his Son. It wasn't easy for Jesus to forgive us on that cross, but he has done it.

"God forgets. I have a hard time forgetting, but I find that if I'll forgive, it grows less and less vivid in my mind and heart as I go on, not treasuring it and not going over and over it. So I wish we could practice this forgiveness and leave behind these things," Robinson added.

Southern Baptists who wish to comment on the work of the Baptist Joint Committee may do so in an open meeting in Nashville, Tenn., Jan. 20, 1987, sponsored by the special study committee chaired by Young.

Young said a block of time from 1 to 9 p.m. has been set aside to hear from people who wish to have input in the committee's ultimate decision.

He said people who wish to appear must notify him in writing by Jan. 5. He can be addressed at First Southern Baptist Church, 3100 W. Camelback Rd., Phoenix, AR 85017.

Other committee members are James Yates, Yazoo City, Miss.; Carolyn Miller, Huntsville, Ala.; Frank Lady, Jonesboro, Ark.; Frank Ingraham, Nashville, Tenn.; David Maddox, Fullerton, Calif.; and James Jones, Campbellsville, Ky.

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Discipleship leaders emerging within convention

DALLAS (BP)—Discipleship is the answer to Southern Baptists' hunger for spiritual growth, according to Larry Roberts, minister of evangelism/discipleship at First Church, Nashville, Tenn.

Roberts is a rare breed, one of a small but growing number of full-time ministers of discipleship in Southern Baptist churches.

He was one of 50 "discipleship coordinators" who recently attended the Institute of Christian Discipleship at First Church, Garland, Texas, to discuss how to improve discipleship ministries in their churches.

The discipleship emphasis is growing "out of a grassroots level of frustration to get on with what needs to be done," Roberts said, noting people are "dissatisfied with their own level of spiritual growth and want to get into something that will help them with their problems and meet needs."

John Kramp, associate pastor for discipleship ministries at First Church, Garland, said, "People are beginning to say, 'I have a Christian life, and I am responsible for it.'"

Southern Baptist laypersons no longer are willing "to sit back and rely on someone else to do the work. Laypersons are realizing they must help do it," Roberts said.

Kramp added he believes the trend in discipleship is due to "God doing something supernatural in awakening which is evidenced by spiritual hunger."

Roberts agreed and said the stirrings not only are being experienced by Christians in the United States but by Christians throughout the world in countries such as Japan, Korea and nations in Africa. "In our world with barriers such as culture, language and denominations, God is speaking and beginning his movement," he noted.

Roberts and Kramp both believe the trend of discipleship will change the local church. Roberts said churches must begin reassessing where they are and where they are headed. "Churches will have to take a new look at who is to do ministry and the role of the pastor, other staff members and the congregation," he said.

After this is done, Kramp said, there will be a "fundamental change in how churches measure effectiveness. It will be as important for churches to look at themselves to see if their members are growing as it is to look at how many new members there are."

With this movement toward discipleship, Roberts said the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board "has been responsive to the groundswell and is moving rapidly to meet these needs."

MasterLife was one of the board's early discipleship tools. More than 150,000 people worldwide have been certified to lead MasterLife. It has been translated into 42 languages and has been presented in all 50

states and in more than 100 foreign nations.

With the church members wanting discipleship tools and with the Sunday School Board responding to those needs, Roberts and Kramp both said, the church will have to respond with people who can interpret and lead congregations in this direction.

Discipleship begins with evangelism and continues through spiritual growth, said Kramp. Because of this, many "discipleship ministers will have heavy evangelistic responsibilities."

Roberts also said he believes a discipleship approach will help a church grow: "Churches now work on the basis of addition. Discipleship works on . . . multiplication."

Another effect of discipleship, Kramp pointed out, is the calling out of more people. "When discipleship is biblical," he said, "more persons become Christians, more effective leaders are discovered, more persons volunteer for ministry and more missionaries are called out."

During the meeting, the ministers organized the Association of Ministers and Coordinators of Discipleship (AMCD). Elected officers were Roberts, president; Kramp, vice-president; and Edward Thiele, associate professor of discipleship, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, secretary-treasurer.

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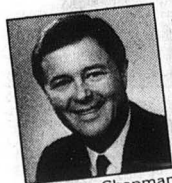
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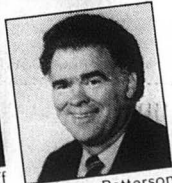
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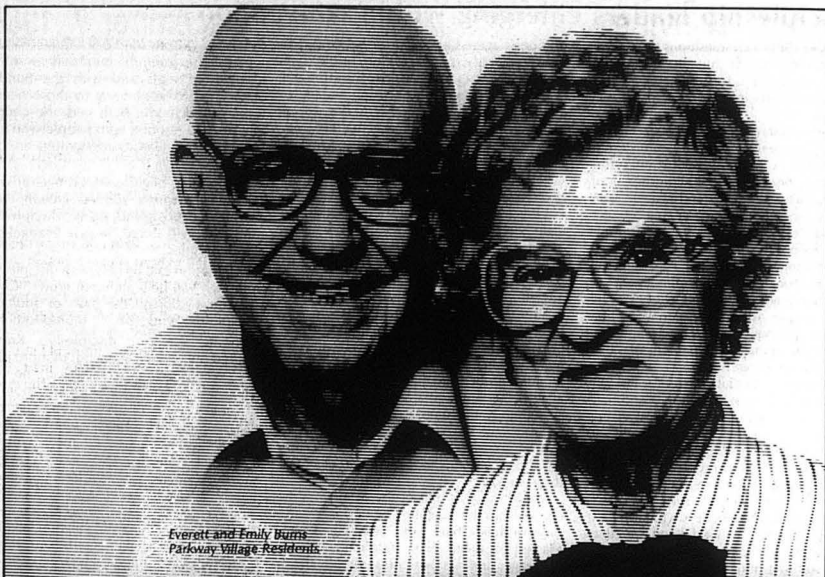


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Convention Uniform

A new community

by Kenneth W. Overton, Arkansas City Church

Basic passage: Acts 2; 4:32-35

Focal passage: Acts 2:38-47; 4:32-35

Central truth: The cross has the power to change lives.

Whenever a family moves to a new town there usually are mixed feelings of excitement, anticipation, and apprehension. The family will become a part of a community that is new to them. What could they add to it that would make it a better community?

When Peter stood and preached the message of repentance and salvation, a new community was born; the community of Christians. Everyone was included in Peter's invitation. All enter this community the same, by the cross of Christ. The effect of the cross is one of repentance. But there is more.

The Christians at Jerusalem knew also the effect of the cross on the church. Learning became a regular part of their church life, along with praying, worshipping, and fellowship. There was reverence (healthy fear), miracles, happiness, and sharing. They were liked by other people.

And most of all they were growing. A church that really experiences the effect of the cross will be a growing church.

The church at Jerusalem was honestly fulfilling the best of who they perceived themselves to be; followers of Christ. There is a direct connection between receiving our salvation and acting on his Word.

The church could do no less than as they understood what a repentant sinner should. They became ministers to each other, sharing all they had. Their sense of responsibility called for helping everyone in need. Their commitment to the cause of Christ was marked by sharing, giving, witnessing, and enjoying the favor of God.

We live in a Christian community of believers other than Jerusalem but that doesn't mean that we cannot experience the same joy in Christ that they did. The same joy they had can be ours if we each answer this question: What can I do to add to the community of Christians where I live that would make it a better community?

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Life and Work

Limiting national pride

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

Basic passage: Genesis 10:1 to 11:23

Focal passage: Genesis 11:1-9

Central truth: God frustrates the attempts of nations to replace him as the ruler of the world.

At 7:55 on Sunday morning, Dec. 7, 1945 the sky was blackened with smoke and fire caused by the first wave of Japanese bombers. One hour later another wave of bombers dropped their deadly load on Pearl Harbor. Sixteen ships, 188 airplanes, and 3,435 lives were lost.

In Europe, Hitler's Germany was in control of Europe and pushing toward Russia. The world was on its knees before an evil alliance. But the world had forgotten one thing. Not the might of the United States but the world forgot the Will of God.

Contrary to what most people believe, God is still in control and no government or nation can exist without permission of God.

Is it wrong to have a strong nation? Of course not. God allowed Israel to become a world power; but sinful disobedience and selfish ambition caused her downfall. Any nation that becomes selfish and disobedient will face the power of God.

In our text it was not the building of the city that caused the problem between the people and God, but the people's attitudes. The people thought they knew more than God and that they could be as great as God.

God proved them wrong. God as Father had to punish his disobedient people and scatter them, as well as confuse the language of mankind.

God wants unity. But unity must be based on Godly principles. Man needs to unite to rid our world of poverty, ignorance, and hunger.

Will God continue to bless nations where rich get richer while the poor get poorer? Will God bless nations whose governments oppress people who deserve to be free? Will God bless nations who spend huge amounts of money to build instruments of death and destruction; and spend comparatively little to feed the thousands who are starving?

The church needs to set the example and use its power to spread the universal message that could unite mankind. God loves you and the church loves you. Now love ye one another.

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Bible Book

True light and true freedom

by Robert A. Parker, ABSC Christian Life Council director

Basic passage: John 8:12-16, 28-36, 56-58

Focal passage: John 8:12

Central truth: True light and true freedom can only come to us through Jesus Christ.

In order for man to have real light and real freedom, he must have Jesus Christ in his heart. Jesus must be personal Savior from sin and absolute Lord of all.

The more one comes to know of Jesus, the more true light he has for daily living. The more one comes to know of Jesus, the more real freedom he will have in a world full of bondage.

Those physically blind, but who have Jesus, have light not possessed by those having 20/20 vision. Those who are spiritually blind need to be led to real light and sight found only in Jesus.

Many people, even those most moral, are enslaved because of sin. Unbelief more than any other sin keeps one from being truly free or liberated.

One serving life imprisonment or even on "death row" is free if Jesus has come into his heart by grace through faith. Penalty for crime or crimes committed is demanded by society, but freedom from the bondage of sin comes as trust in Christ prevails.

There are those who, in the sight of men, appear free but who are actually in greatest bondage. Jesus plainly declared himself as being the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Only truth can set man spiritually free. This truth is personified in our living Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Be much in prayer as the Christmas season approaches that many beginning with only light in our own families will find light and freedom soon.

One only needs to read Old Testament prophetic writings to note that man, through the centuries has opposed God's will. This is especially noted in the penetrating Book of Jeremiah.

The ancient Jews, before Jesus came, were slow to accept God's revealed truth. Jews, during the earthly ministry of Jesus, also, opposed the Messiah as he demonstrated God's love. It's no wonder that continued opposition confronts the plain revelation of God in Christ as the Messiah. We must pray for the convicting power of the Holy Spirit to open the eyes of the lost that they might see Jesus as he really is, the Divine Son of God.

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Introducing them to God's love, Cimmerman helps disabled and their families cope

by Ken Camp

DALLAS (BP)—When Philip Cimmerman was born nearly four years ago with cerebral palsy, mental retardation and epilepsy, his parents struggled alone, asking God, "Why?"

Today John and Nelda Cimmerman continue their spiritual journey, but now it is alongside other parents like themselves as they wrestle together with questions that defy easy answers and share insights they have learned on their pilgrimage.

Since October 1985, Cimmerman has been minister to disabled persons and their families at Meadowbrook Church in Irving, Texas. Although the position is part-time, Cimmerman considers himself on call 24-hours-a-day. His ministry is directed to educable mentally retarded persons, the physically handicapped and families of the mentally or physically disabled.

"Most of the people we work with have no spiritual background. A lot of the families tried to go to other churches with their disabled children and were told, 'We don't want you here,'" says Cimmerman. He explains some churches feel uncomfortable around the disabled and their families. They don't know what to say to the parents and consider themselves unprepared to teach the children.

Goals of the Meadowbrook ministry are to provide physical surroundings compatible to the needs of disabled persons; to provide spiritual training and special programs for the mentally retarded and physically disabled; to provide transportation to church activities; to visit the handicapped in their homes and provide a 24-hour, on-call service to handicapped persons in need; to provide counseling for parents of children with special needs; and to offer a self-help support group for families of the handicapped.

The ministry's goals grew out of Cimmerman's own experiences and the needs he and his wife felt after their son, Philip, was born. Although Cimmerman was a former youth director and seminary student and was a member of Meadowbrook Church, accepting his son's birth defects did not come easy.

"I think everybody in that situation asks questions. I'm thankful that I had the spiritual resources to find the answers, but it really took time," he says. "It was such a shock. My first response was to try to hold my feelings in, to keep them from my wife, but that just made me more deeply discouraged and depressed.

"It was especially hard because Philip was so susceptible to infection that the doctors wanted him kept in total isolation for the first year, and we couldn't go to church," he adds. In addition to Philip's other problems, he was born prematurely, his lungs were not fully developed and he spent a prolonged time on a heart monitor.

Although members of Meadowbrook ministered as much as they could, the couple had no one to talk to who really understood what it was like to have a child born with serious disabilities. The family support group the Cimmermans lead at Meadowbrook seeks to provide for others what they could not find in their own time of need.

"Mostly, we teach coping skills. There is a lot of anger and frustration the parents feel. Getting that out in the open, talking about it with other people who really understand, makes a difference," says Cimmerman. "These couples look at their friends whose children are making rapid progress. But no matter what they do, their own children make such slow progress. They do all they can, but they know it won't help. Their child will still be retarded."

The Cimmermans help parents deal with the anger many of them feel toward God. Currently, they are leading a study titled, "Why Bad Things Happen to Good People." Seven couples representing several denominations are in the study and support group.

In addition to working with the families of disabled persons, Cimmerman also directs the programs at Meadowbrook for those who are disabled themselves.

Programs for disabled children at Meadowbrook Church have evolved out of perceived needs rather than professional design, Cimmerman explains: "As parents, we often see things differently than a trained professional would. We're not professionals. My only training in working with the disabled has been my experiences as a parent."

Sunday school classes for the disabled are an example of a constantly developing ministry at Meadowbrook. Although classes sometimes have had to be combined, three classes for the disabled are scheduled to meet during the Sunday school hour each week. The most elementary class works on sensory stimulation for those with severe mental or physical disabilities. A second class is for persons whose mental disabilities are on a preschool level, and a third class is for persons functioning on a grade school level or above.

The teaching emphasis is on very basic concepts such as 'the love of God.

"Only God knows for sure, but probably most of our students will never come to the age of accountability" for their spiritual condition, Cimmerman says. "We just try to introduce them to God and His love. They have such poor self-images. We try to teach them God doesn't make junk, and he doesn't make mistakes. He is in control, and there is a purpose behind things."