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March 9, 1995

Arkansas Baptist State Convention

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ARKANSAS BAPTIST



Volume 94, Number 5

March 9, 1995

Covenant for a New Century

SBC Executive Committee
members endorse study
committee proposal to
reduce number of national
SBC entities from 19 to 12.

**North American
Mission Board**

*"To evangelize and
comprehensively North America
with the Gospel of Jesus Christ."*

**Major Changes
from Current Structure**

1. New board with broadened and comprehensive responsibility for reaching North America for Christ
2. Heavy Mission Board, District-level Commission, and Health and Rehabilitation Commission consolidated as three major divisions of NAMB
3. Total revenues of three current agencies reduced by 15%
4. Appointment for Canada shared with Foreign Mission Board in North American Mission Board

Other Change
Aligned with responsibility for promotion of Annuity Armory Offering

Mark Brister, chairman of the seven-member SBC study committee, presents his committee's recommendations to SBC Executive Committee members.



Fred Wolfe (right), chairman of the Southern Baptist Executive Committee, answers questions during a press conference Feb. 21 as members of the Program and Structure Study Committee look on. Wolfe appointed the committee in 1993.

PARTNERS IN MISSIONS

'God is at work,' European pastor tells Arkansas church

Emphasizing that God is at work in Belgium, a visiting European Baptist pastor invited members of Park Hill Church in North Little Rock to "come, don't miss what God has in store for you." Paul Beduerftig, pastor of Jurbise International Baptist Church in Belgium, spoke to Park Hill members during their Sunday morning services Feb. 19.

Park Hill has established a partnership with Jurbise as part of the three-year missions partnership between the Arkansas Baptist State Convention and European Baptist Convention. The Jurbise Church is a 120-member congregation that includes natives of the United States, Great Britain, Belgium, Africa and Korea. It is located at SHAPE headquarters, home for the NATO allied command.

Beduerftig, a Foreign Mission Board missionary to Belgium, is currently on furlough with his wife, Jo Ann. His father was a German rocket scientist in the early 1940s who moved to Huntsville, Ala., when Paul was five, where his father worked on America's space program.

'Reintroduce the truth'

Beduerftig told the congregation that Jurbise Church "ministers to Americans and 16 other nations of NATO" and added, "We have been able to reintroduce the truth of God because people such as yourself have given."

"The people of Europe have beautiful churches and cathedrals with stained glass," he explained. "Yet most of them do not have a personal experience or knowledge of God. Throngs of visitors tour the giant cathedrals talking and taking pictures while the priests conduct services."

"We thank you for your partnership with our church," he said. "This will allow you to have an active part in reintroducing the message of Jesus Christ to nations of people who have long forgotten what it is truly like to be saved."

Mrs. Beduerftig shared that she is active in witnessing and in witness training.

She also invited the congregation to participate in partnership activities. "Maybe the Lord of harvest is calling you this morning, for the fields are white unto harvest but the laborers are few."

The Beduerftigs also spoke at a Sunday luncheon held at the church, discussing aspects of the work and church with Park Hill members.

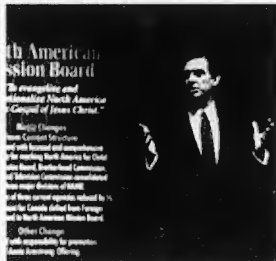
"We've become a very, very active church," he said. "They have become serious about their faith and about studying the Scriptures." He noted that in the past three years, seven men have answered the call to preach.

"They've also become serious about missions," he added. He said the congregation began a new work in Waterloo in 1994, sponsors French and Spanish language works and gave \$8,000 to the 1994 Lottie Moon Foreign Missions Offering.

The couple also answered questions from participants about the church's mission and ministry and asked for help with youth revival plans, educational and Vacation Bible School needs and remodeling of the Jurbise Church facilities.

"We're looking forward to this partnership between the European Baptist Convention and with Arkansas," Beduerftig concluded. "It will be vital, used of the Lord and will be special for the people of Arkansas and the people of Europe."

Cover Story



SBC changes 3, 6-7

A major restructuring of the Southern Baptist Convention, including reducing the number of national SBC entities from 19 to 12, was approved Feb. 21 by the SBC Executive Committee. The proposal will be presented to SBC messengers in June.

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ARKANSAS BAPTIST

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'Covenant for a new century'

Committee proposes massive overhaul of Southern Baptist structure

NASHVILLE, TN (ABP/BP) — The Southern Baptist Convention will reduce its agencies from 19 to 12 in the most massive restructuring of its 150-year history, if the report of a special study committee is approved over the next two years.

The proposal would consolidate the SBC's Home Mission Board, Brotherhood Commission and Radio and Television Commission into a new entity called the North American Mission Board, to be based in Atlanta.

It also would remove from Woman's Missionary Union the SBC assignment to develop women's ministries and raise money for the two mission boards.

The proposal would eliminate the SBC's Education Commission, Stewardship Commission, Historical Commission, the Southern Baptist Foundation and the Commission on the American Baptist Theological Seminary, assigning some of their work to other agencies.

The downsizing will create a more efficient structure for the 21st century and channel "more money, more personnel and more prayer into reaching the world for Christ," Mark Brister told the SBC Executive Committee Feb. 20.

Brister, pastor of Broadmoor Baptist Church in Shreveport, La., is chairman of a program and structure study committee appointed by the Executive Committee chairman 18 months ago. The seven-member committee, which includes Ronnie Floyd, pastor of First Church, Springdale, and Rex Terry, a Fort Smith attorney, was charged with evaluating the entire structure of the SBC's agencies and recommending changes.

The Executive Committee approved the study committee's report Feb. 21 on a 64-3 vote. Most opposition expressed about the report was due not to its content so much as the short time Executive Committee members had to study it.

Executive Committee members and officials with the SBC's 19 current agencies got their first glimpse of the committee's report at the same time Feb. 20. The heads of agencies impacted by the proposed changes received notification from the committee as little as three hours prior to the public meeting.

About 24 hours after the first public presentation of the sweeping report, Executive Committee members were asked to vote on the document. A motion to postpone the vote until September was soundly defeated.

"We urge you strongly to take action tonight and to have this behind us before

we go to the Southern Baptist Convention," Floyd said. "The last thing the SBC needs to see from us is a wavering commitment."

The proposal now moves to the SBC annual meeting in Atlanta next June. The SBC's bylaws require changes of such magnitude to be approved in two consecutive annual sessions, although full implementation is projected to take five years.

Key changes to be enacted in the SBC, if approved by messengers, are:

- The new North American Mission Board, charged with evangelizing North America through three thrusts: church planting; mission technologies and communications; and mission volunteers and missions education.

- Renaming the Foreign Mission Board as the International Mission Board, to modernize the name and to reflect a modern-day shift in mission strategy from national boundaries to people groups.

- Creating a Great Commission Council of seven representatives from each mission board to increase communication and coordinate the sharing of resources.

- Assigning primary responsibility to the two mission boards for promoting the SBC's Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for home missions and for missions education.

That recommendation sparked concern from Delanna O'Brien, executive director of Woman's Missionary Union, the SBC auxiliary which traditionally has focused on those areas in SBC life.

In a dialogue session between the study committee and SBC agency executives, O'Brien voiced concern "that you have stripped us of all of our work, which happens to be ministries to women, missions education and the support and promotion of the offerings we began over 100 years ago."

Brister responded, "We are simply stating that the responsibility will ultimately lie with the North American Mission Board and the International Mission Board for seeing that these funds are raised."

Both FMB president Jerry Rankin and HMB president Larry Lewis in a subsequent news conference voiced commitment to a continued working relationship with WMU.

Other recommendations from the study committee include:

- Dissolving the Stewardship Commission and dividing its assignments

between the Baptist Sunday School Board, which would assist churches in capital fund-raising and stewardship education, and the Executive Committee, which would promote Cooperative Program funding.

- Assigning the work of the Southern Baptist Foundation to the Executive Committee.

- Dissolving the Historical Commission and dividing its ministries between the Council of Seminary Presidents, which would coordinate the SBC archives and library in Nashville, Tenn., and the Sunday School Board, to help churches as they study denominational history.

- Dissolving the Education Commission and the Southern Baptist Commission on the American Baptist Theological Seminary.

- Assigning the Council of Seminary Presidents with coordinating theological education within the SBC. Otherwise, no changes would be made in the six SBC seminaries.

- Renaming the Christian Life Commission as the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, reflecting the agency's expanded religious liberty role.

Arkansas Baptist State Convention executive director Don Moore was among state convention executives who dialogued with study committee members following their report.

Assessing the impact of the proposed changes, Moore told the *Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine*, "I think the time had come when there needed to be a careful look given to the organization structures of the SBC. I am concerned that there was not some sort of acknowledgment of appreciation for the historic work of the WMU...."

"A second concern I have is that during the next two years, there will likely be little aggressive action taken by the agencies most affected by the changes," Moore noted. "This will likely result in a slowdown of much of our work. The consolidation of our work may improve our efficiency, but it may also result in the centralization of power. This is based upon a greatly reduced number of trustees being used to oversee the work."

According to SBC president Jim Henry, "To be sure, there are major changes, but Southern Baptists have been on the cutting edge of innovation for over 150 years of history. It's crucial to our future. If we don't, we will fossilize and become a denominational dinosaur in the sands of time. If we do, we will continue to be spiritual pioneers...."

YOU'LL BE GLAD TO KNOW



By DON MOORE
ABCS Executive Director

If Jesus were here on earth in a physical body as He was during His earthly ministry, what would we find Him doing? I suspect that He would be doing what He did before, being "about my Father's business." But what is His Father's business?

Would He be trying to get a larger church? Would He be seeking to become more powerful in religious politics? Would He spend a lot of time oiling the machinery of church life? How much time do you suppose He would give to matters of civil government? Would image building be of great concern to Him? Would He fill His life with such feverish activity that He would miss fellowship with God? Would He spend a lot of time grieving over the fact that He had not been able to find an easier place of service?

Those who know His life know the answers to all of those questions. We need to ask the hard questions about why what we are doing is often so different from what He did.

He revealed God. He met needs. Both resulted in people turning to God. Those who turned were disciplined. His ultimate goal was, according to Him, "seeking to save that which is lost." If we reveal God and meet all kinds of needs, many will turn to God. Typically we would stop there. He would not. He, or those who followed Him, would be responsible for disciplining those who turned.

There is so much evidence that we are not doing what He would do. We baptized 64,015 over the last five years. Yet, we have only had a net increase of 11,107 in resident church membership. Sunday School enrollment has increased only about 1 percent annually.

My appeal is to make the most of the Here's Hope revivals in an effort to win the lost. But also, to make an all-out effort to conserve the results by intentionally and systematically disciplining those who are won.

Let me leave you with another question. Why should the Lord give us more souls when we have been such poor stewards in caring for those He has given us?

MARYAN WHITLOW

Woman's Viewpoint

Memories



Through the years I have developed the habit of keeping my yearly datebooks. They have become "mini-journals," showing everything from birthdates to weather statistics. Occasionally I just sit and read through them. The 1994 book was interesting.

I saw that in January, my brothers and I shocked our mother by giving her a surprise birthday party for her 72nd birthday. We invited her eight brothers and sisters and their families. It was wonderful to see her so excited and happy.

February was my birthday, and nature gave me two holidays from school by sending an ice storm; for three days and nights we huddled near the fireplace for light and warmth. I also welcomed a new nephew, Matt, born Feb. 25.

April was my husband's birthday, and in May we helped an aunt and uncle celebrate their 55th wedding anniversary. Another school year ended and, as usual, I was filled with many emotions.

June, our fun month, found us having to put our poodle to sleep. Minnie was 13 years old and the perfect pet. We

spent a week in Pensacola before going to Orlando for the Southern Baptist Convention. On June 26 we moved into our new worship center at Harmony... debt free! Ronnie Rogers delivered the dedicatory message.

July was Bible School and August found me once again in school.

September and October were uneventful. November found us facing the sudden death of my mother-in-law, Mrs. John P. Whitlow. She was a powerful influence in my life; the perfect mother-in-law.

December was filled with many pre-Christmas cantata rehearsals, parties, cooking and shopping. We celebrated Christmas with my family in Texarkana, and then after the evening service, we drove to Little Rock to spend some time with my in-laws.

Memories are a beautiful gift from God. Some are sad, some are happy; but they are all from God.

Maryan Whitlow is the wife of Sam Whitlow, pastor of Harmony Church in El Dorado. Maryan teaches fifth grade at Murrell Heights Elementary School in El Dorado.

Personal perspectives

"The people of Europe have beautiful churches and cathedrals with stained glass. Yet most of them do not have a personal experience or knowledge of God."

—Paul Beduorfitg, pastor, Jurvisse International Baptist Church, Belgium

"The agenda of Christ must become the top priority of Arkansas churches if the people of our state are to be reached."

—Bill Steeger, religion department chairman, Ouachita Baptist University

"In order to stay even with where we are now in population growth, we need to start 68 new Southern Baptist churches (in Arkansas) in the next two years."

—Jack Ramsey, ABCS missions department associate

SBC overhaul demands careful analysis

In historic action which promises to shape Southern Baptist ministry and methodology for decades to come, members of the SBC Executive Committee voted Feb. 21 to approve a far-ranging Program and Structure Study Committee report. The seven-member committee was appointed 18 months ago by Executive Committee chairman Fred Wolfe.

Primary proposals call for the number of national SBC entities to be reduced from 19 to 12, including merging the Home Mission Board, Brotherhood Commission and Radio & Television Commission into a new entity called the North American Mission Board.

Among the strengths of the plan is the overall goal of streamlining convention bureaucracy to better serve the churches. "The convention is most fundamentally a fellowship of churches — not a bureaucratic organization," the report's introduction affirms. Committee chairman Mark Brister added, "The convention is here to serve the churches, not the churches the convention." That is as it should be.

Another plus is the commitment to base agency actions on well-defined ministry assignments rather than more traditional program assignments. "The goal is the fulfillment of ministry — not the accomplishment of mere programs," the report states. "The structure should emerge out of the mission — never should the mission be conformed to the structures."

Concerns related to the restructuring plan begin with the make-up of the committee itself. Emphasizing that "even as the nation has expanded, Southern Baptist churches are serving in all 50 states," the report adds that the SBC's demographic shifts "have been matched in impact by the racial, ethnic and cultural diversity which now marks the American people." Yet the study committee is composed of an all-white, all-male

STRAIGHT FROM THE EDITOR

By TRENNIS HENDERSON



membership, with six of the seven men from Old South states.

While Wolfe insisted that the committee was sensitive to cultural and ethnic diversity, sensitivity should have begun during the appointment process to ensure that ethnics, women and non-Southerners had an active voice in helping shape the most dramatic restructuring in SBC history. It's difficult to affirm diversity while bypassing minority involvement in leadership roles.

Other concerns relate to the specific implementation of the widespread proposals. As bold and progressive as the study committee's vision is, the greatest challenge is not recommendation but implementation.

One example is the proposal to expand the Baptist Sunday School Board's responsibilities to include men's and women's ministries, stewardship education and capital fund-raising without providing the BSSB funds to implement those programs. This proposal follows a recent report that the BSSB suffered an \$8.2 million operating deficit last year.

Another recommendation encourages state conventions where the Baptist population in the state is 10 percent or more to fund their own state mission efforts without decreasing contributions to the

national Cooperative Program. That proposal comes at a time when most state conventions are struggling to meet their current budgets. Implementing the plan would cost Arkansas Baptists an additional \$300,000 annually.

The committee also recommends giving the two mission boards responsibility for promoting the annual missions offerings which Woman's Missionary Union founded and has effectively promoted for decades. Due to WMU's decision to remain an auxiliary rather than come under direct control of the SBC, the committee was right to say it could not assign a ministry statement to WMU.

There is a significant difference, however, between assigning additional responsibilities and withdrawing historic responsibilities which WMU has fulfilled exceptionally. During the past century, WMU has faithfully taken the lead in collecting more than \$2 billion for home and foreign missions. Some Southern Baptists may view the committee's proposal as a punitive slap at WMU for choosing to maintain its auxiliary status. If so, expect WMU members to be heard from in the days and months ahead.

Space does not permit a full examination of every detail related to the restructuring plan. Suffice it to say that each Southern Baptist church member concerned about the effectiveness of SBC ministry even beyond our lifetimes should take time to carefully study the impact and implications of the Program and Structure Study Committee report. Nothing will be finalized until SBC messengers have had their say and cast their votes at both the 1995 and 1996 SBC annual meetings.

As the 1995 SBC approaches, make a point to examine the facts, seek God's guidance and become personally involved in helping Southern Baptists prepare for effective ministry in the 21st century.

Southern Baptists — on the cutting edge of innovation

By Jim Henry

President, Southern Baptist Convention

Sensing the growing concern among Southern Baptists, our convention voted nearly two years ago to establish a committee to take a fresh look at our denominational programs and structures.... We needed to see if we could be more effective, efficient and cost conscious in carrying out the Great Commission. With this in mind, the Program and Structure Study Committee, made up of some of our finest folks, went to work prayerfully, professionally and perceptively to bring

these recommendations to our family of faith.

I had the privilege to meet the committee, to hear their hearts and to observe the deep sense of concern with which they approached this important work. They presented their study, answering our questions. I was deeply impressed with what I felt and saw. If we approve these proposals, they will assist us in sharpening our focus; streamlining our institutions; serving our people; supporting our churches, simplifying our structure; stretching our dollars, and in the long run, securing our place as spiritual

leaders in evangelism, missions and church planting.

To be sure, there are major changes, but Southern Baptists have been on the cutting edge of innovation for 150 years of history. It's crucial to our future. If we don't, we will fossilize and become a denominational dinosaur in the sands of time. If we do, we will continue to be spiritual pioneers in the journey of The Way.

I believe it to be in the long-term Kingdom of God interest to support these proposals and encourage you to do the same.

Committee proposes mission, ministry changes

Editor's Note: The following excerpt from the Program and Structure Study Committee's 33-page report details the proposed missions and ministries of the recommended 12 national SBC entities.

International Mission Board

Mission: The International Mission Board exists to assist the churches of the Southern Baptist Convention to be on mission with God in penetrating the unevangelized world outside the United States and Canada with the Gospel and making Christ known among all people.

Ministries:

1. Assist churches by appointing and supporting international missions personnel.
2. Assist churches by evangelizing persons and planting churches in other nations, except Canada
3. Assist churches by meeting human needs and establishing need-based ministries in other nations, except Canada.
4. Assist churches by enlisting mission volunteers and coordinating the work of missions volunteers in other nations, except Canada.

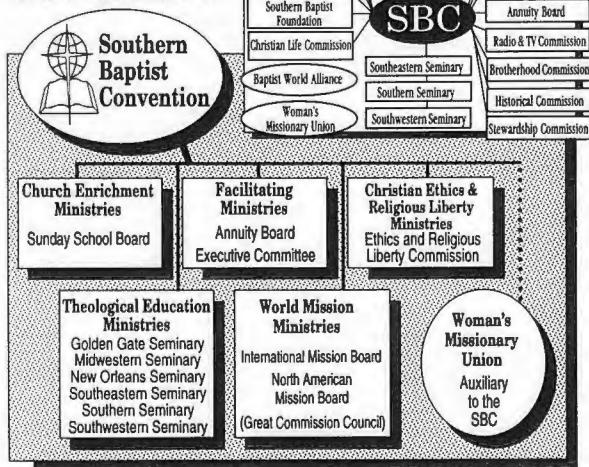
North American Mission Board

Mission: The North American Mission Board exists to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ, start New Testament congregations, and minister to persons in the name of Christ and to assist churches in the United States and Canada in effectively performing these functions.

Ministries:

1. Assist churches by the appointment and support of missionaries in the United States and Canada.
2. Assist churches in the ministry of evangelism.
3. Assist churches in the establishment of new congregations.
4. Assist churches through Christian social ministries.
5. Assist churches through the involvement and coordination of their members in volunteer missions throughout the United States and Canada.
6. Assist churches by involving and educating their members in missions and missions education.
7. Assist churches by communicating the Gospel throughout the United States and Canada through communication technologies.
8. Assist churches by strengthening associations and providing services to associations.
9. Assist churches in relief ministries to victims of disaster.

Proposed Structure



Sunday School Board

Mission: The Sunday School Board exists to assist churches and believers to evangelize the world to Christ, develop believers, and grow churches by being the best provider of relevant, high quality, high value Christian products and services.

Ministries:

1. Assist churches in the development of church ministries.
2. Assist churches in ministries to college and university students.
3. Assist churches with Christian schools and home school ministries.
4. Assist churches in ministries to men and women.
5. Assist churches through the operation of conference centers and camps.
6. Assist churches through the publication of books and Bibles.
7. Assist churches through the operation of Baptist Book Stores.
8. Assist churches in stewardship education.
9. Assist churches through church architecture consultation and services.
10. Assist churches in capital fund raising.

Theological Seminaries

Mission: Southern Baptist Theological Seminaries exist to prepare God-called men and women for vocational service in Baptist churches and in other Christian ministries throughout the world through programs of spiritual development, theological studies, and practical preparation in ministry.

Ministries:

1. Assist churches by programs of pre-baccalaureate and baccalaureate theological education for ministers.
2. Assist churches by programs of masters level theological education for ministers.
3. Assist churches by programs of professional doctoral education for ministers.
4. Assist churches by programs of research doctoral education for ministers and theological educators.
5. Assist churches through the administration of the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives.

Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission

Mission: The Ethics and Religious

Liberty Commission exists to assist the churches by helping them understand the moral demands of the gospel, apply Christian principles to moral and social problems and questions of public policy, and to promote religious liberty in cooperation with the churches and other Southern Baptist entities.

Ministries:

1. Assist churches in applying the moral and ethical teachings of the Bible to the Christian life.
2. Assist churches through the communication and advocacy of moral and ethical concerns in the public arena.
3. Assist churches in the moral witness in local communities.
4. Assist churches and other Southern Baptist entities by promoting religious liberty.

Executive Committee

Mission: The Executive Committee exists to minister to the churches of the Southern Baptist Convention by acting for the Convention ad interim in all matters not otherwise provided for in a manner that encourages the cooperation and confidence of the churches, associations, and state conventions and facilitates maximum support for worldwide missions and ministries.

Ministries:

1. Assist churches through conducting and administering the work of the Convention not otherwise assigned.
2. Assist churches by providing a convention news service.
3. Assist churches by providing a convention public relations service.
4. Assist churches, denominational agencies, and state conventions through estate planning consultation and investment management for funds designated for support of Southern Baptist causes.
5. Assist churches through cooperative giving advancement.

Annuity Board

Mission: The Annuity Board exists to assist the churches and other denominational entities by managing retirement annuity services and providing programs of insurance for ministers and other full-time employees.

Ministries:

1. Assist churches and denominational entities by managing retirement annuities for Southern Baptist ministers and denominational employees.
2. Assist churches and denominational entities by managing insurance services.
3. Assist churches through relief to ministers.

SBC executives pose questions related to proposed changes

NASHVILLE, TN (BP)—A mixture of affirmation and questions were among initial reactions from several Southern Baptist Convention agency executives to recommendations that would restructure the denomination for the 21st century.

One exception was Lynn E. May Jr., executive director of the SBC Historical Commission, which is recommended for dissolution by the Program and Structure Study Committee.

Voicing strong disagreement with the committee's proposal, May said in a prepared statement, "Although the proposal calls for the seminaries to maintain the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, the concerns of history will not have the priority they should have and must have in order to preserve the total history and heritage of Baptists in general and Southern Baptists in particular.

"An even greater concern," May added, "is the proposal's lack of adequate priority being given to the area of communicating the heritage of Southern Baptists."

Among other reactions, Home Mission Board president Larry Lewis noted, "Although I still have a number of questions about the Program and Structure Committee's recommendations, I commend the committee members for their hard work and the sense of mission with which they went about their task." The proposal calls for the HMB to merge with the Radio and Television Commission and Brotherhood Commission.

"It appears the new North American Mission Board would address the areas of work now assigned to the Home Mission Board and certainly has the potential for improved efficiency and effectiveness," Lewis said. "I look forward to understanding better the details and ramifications of the recommendations."

James D. Williams, president of the Brotherhood Commission, based in Memphis, Tenn., said he was completely surprised by the proposed merger with two other SBC agencies. Otherwise, Williams did not protest the report.

"There are a lot of questions yet to be answered," Williams said. "Our trustees have insisted that there be strong linkage between men's ministries and missions education/involvement and I am concerned that the report appears to separate the two. Neither would we want gender-specific missions education to be lost.

"Rest assured," Williams noted, "when the final vote is taken on this recommendation, we will come down on the side of what is best for helping Southern Baptists

carry out the Great Commission."

Jack Johnson, president of the Radio and Television Commission, said the major changes will be painful to affected SBC workers, but added: "I am excited about what I see as a potential for ministry to North America and to the world.

"That doesn't mean all my questions have been answered," he said, but "when I look at the Kingdom, capital K, I'm excited....I think you'll be surprised how well the organization will work if it gets a chance to work."

Dellanna O'Brien, executive director of Woman's Missionary Union, noted in a prepared statement, "In the absence of a clear statement about WMU's proposed involvement in the missions endeavors of the SBC by the (study committee), we are assuming that WMU's role will not change. Our age-level organizations will continue and our support for Southern Baptist missions causes will remain."

The study committee recommended, however, that the SBC's International Mission Board (a proposed new name for the current Foreign Mission Board) and North American Mission Board be assigned primary responsibility for promoting the SBC's home and foreign missions offerings and for organizing missions education in the churches. Those responsibilities traditionally have been key components of WMU's role in SBC life.

Both Lewis and Jerry Rankin, president of the Foreign Mission Board, said no change is anticipated in the two agencies' partnership with WMU in the offerings.

"Home missions," Lewis said, "has had no greater friend through the years than Woman's Missionary Union. They have been the feet and legs of much of what we've done in the raising of the funds that were necessary to sustain and further our work."

James T. Draper Jr., president of the Baptist Sunday School Board, stated, "I believe the Sunday School Board can do what the committee has asked us to do. We will do it enthusiastically and give it our full energies and resources."

New BSSB duties would include stewardship education, capital fundraising, assistance to churches with Christian schools and home school ministries and development of resources for ministries to men and women.

"I applaud the committee's attempt to structure the Southern Baptist Convention for the challenges of the 21st century," Draper said. "I favor the report and support the committee."

'94 Baptist stats reflect new reporting methods

The annual report of Southern Baptist Convention statistics traditionally includes numbers from 10 key ministry areas, accompanied by information on gains and losses from the previous year.

Not so for 1994.

Dramatic changes in the reporting process, separate reporting of churches and missions and changes in data collection and verification made 1994 figures statistically non-comparable with the numbers of previous years, according to Cliff Tharp, supervisor of the strategic information unit at the Baptist Sunday School Board.

Even the name has changed from Uniform Church Letter to Annual Church Profile (ACP).

For 1994, the SBC statistics include only totals for the year. Tallying increases or decreases from 1993 figures would be misleading, he emphasized.

SBC church totals for 1994 include: churches — 39,910; baptisms — 378,463; total church membership — 15,619,912; Sunday School enrollment — 8,263,558; Discipleship Training enrollment — 2,223,955; music ministry enrollment — 1,841,583; Woman's Missionary Union enrollment — 1,104,706; Brotherhood enrollment — 646,028; total tithes, offerings and gifts — \$5,572,451,828;

and mission expenditures — \$815,640,533.

Arkansas Baptist State Convention church totals for 1994 include: churches — 1,328; baptisms — 12,715; total church membership — 508,429; Sunday School

While the number of Southern Baptist churches represents an increase of 1,169 from the 1993 total of 38,741, Tharp strongly advised against any such comparisons. He said the 1994 increase in number of churches includes both new churches and many existing churches that simply have not been counted before.

In another area, the BSSB in past years counted churches differently than they were counted by associations and state conventions. The measure for the BSSB was whether the church had turned in a UCL while associations and state conventions counted churches based on their definition of a church in "friendly cooperation," Tharp said.

As a confusing result, an association, state convention and the BSSB often would have different statistical totals.

"As part of a new partnership, we have agreed with the state that our statistics will be the same as theirs," Tharp said.

"An important result of the changes will be more accurate totals that help churches, associations, state conventions and the SBC have a more valid measure of growth or decreases," he said.

SBC STATISTICS 1994

| CATEGORY | ABSC | SBC |
|----------------------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| Churches | 1,328 | 39,910 |
| Baptisms | 12,715 | 378,463 |
| Total church membership | 508,429 | 15,619,912 |
| Sunday School enrollment | 260,189 | 8,263,558 |
| Discipleship Training enrollment | 74,142 | 2,223,955 |
| Music ministry enrollment | 55,305 | 1,841,583 |
| WMU enrollment | 25,435 | 1,104,706 |
| Brotherhood enrollment | 12,531 | 646,028 |
| Tithes, offerings, special gifts | \$137,470,370 | \$5,572,451,828 |
| Missions expenditures (CP) | \$15,280,831 | \$815,640,533 |

enrollment — 260,189; Discipleship Training enrollment — 74,142; music ministry enrollment — 55,305; Woman's Missionary Union enrollment — 25,435; Brotherhood enrollment — 12,531; and total Cooperative Program giving — \$15,280,831.

Arkansas ranks sixth in growth for Church Study Courses

The 1993-94 church year marked a dramatic increase in Church Study Course awards among Arkansas Baptist churches. The Arkansas Baptist State Convention, which ranked 16th among state conventions for number of awards, ranked sixth in statistical growth, with an increase of 2,557 awards, according to year-end Baptist Sunday School Board figures.

The Church Study Course (CSC) is a Southern Baptist educational system designed to support the training efforts of local churches. The courses also reached a record SBC enrollment of 1,754,916 in 1994. That total is a 5 percent increase over the previous year's 1,674,671, according to BSSB statistics.

Arkansas Baptists recorded a 19.4 percent increase in total awards with 15,760 awards earned. More than 716,000 Southern Baptists earned study course awards during the year. Participants chose from about 600 courses in 24 areas.

Although Arkansas experienced significant growth in CSC participation, only 433 of the 1,387 churches in Arkansas are

active in recognizing CSC awards.

The top-ranking Arkansas Baptist church in total awards was First Church, Horseshoe Bend, with 657 awards.

According to pastor Kevin Stewart, the church "offers three opportunities that expose members to training through Church Study Courses."

The first, he said, is "the Discipleship Training hour. It has proven to be the most effective way to utilize the 'Life' material.

"Second, each year we offer at least two Saturday workshops," he explained. Stewart said the church also offers a variety of courses during the mid-week service. "Last year I taught and coordinated classes using the Winter Bible Study, MasterLife, Covenant Marriage and Fresh Encounter."

In addition to First, Horseshoe Bend, other leading churches offering CSC awards in the state included: Highway Church, North Little Rock with 59; First, Mountain Home with 478; First, Rector with 391; East Side, Paragould with 337; East Side, Mountain Home with 314; and First, Gentry with 309.

First Church, Gentry has made the top ten list each of the past two years.

Don Blackmore, minister of education for First Church, said that "discipleship is an ongoing priority" for the congregation. "We are broadening our discipleship foundation and trying to include more people in leadership development."

He said that the "two most popular courses continue to be Experiencing God and Search for Significance. They meet the needs of people. Experiencing God meets spiritual needs and challenges folks. Search for Significance meets both spiritual and emotional needs."

Bob Holley, director of the ABSC discipleship and family ministry department, agreed. "The Church Study Course system is virtually a library of leadership training resources as well as materials for personal enrichment.

"By using the leadership diploma system," Holley said, "churches can plan their leadership training program around the diploma system. It's like working on a degree plan."

Conference celebrates smaller churches

By Millie Gill

Executive Assistant, Arkansas Baptists

"The agenda of Christ must become the top priority of Arkansas churches if the people of our state are to be reached," declared Bill Steeger during a recent training conference for smaller-membership churches. "Celebrating the Smaller Church Conference: Reach People," was the theme of the two-day event held at Ouachita Baptist University Feb. 24-25.

Steeger, chairman of OBU's department of religion and philosophy which jointly sponsored the conference with the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, affirmed the vital role that smaller-membership churches had played in his personal salvation, as well as his call to the foreign mission field.

"However, I fear our world of today has become so cluttered that Christ is getting so lost in the clutter His story is not being shared with the world that He loves," Steeger said.

'Get Jesus back in focus'

"I challenge you to return to your smaller-membership churches, re-establish your priorities and get Jesus back where He belongs," he urged. "We must get Him back in focus whether it is in the Sunday School class, at a neighbor's door, in a nursing home or in music preparation."

During a conference seminar, Steeger emphasized that intense Bible study and spiritual praying are two "musts" for spiritual renewal. Top priorities for Bible study include a definite time, place and program, he added. "You must not spend time reading books about the Word of God, but actually reading His Word if you are to grow."

He also encouraged participants to use Scripture as a prayer base, applying it to a particular person or need for which one is seeking God's guidance and help. "Bible study and prayer life are merged when this is done," he noted.

Bivocational pastors were led in a time management seminar by Dean Doster, a 13-state regional coordinator for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board. Noting that bivocational pastors are probably the busiest people in the Southern Baptist Convention, he said many more bivocational pastors must be added to the ranks of SBC work if the nation is to be reached for Christ.

Doster emphasized that prioritizing activities into urgent, not urgent, important, not important and trivial will make a profound difference in a minister's life and ministry.



Bill Steeger, chairman of the Ouachita Baptist University religion department, told participants to "get Jesus back in focus" during the "Celebrating the Smaller Membership Church" conference held on the OBU campus Feb. 24-25.

"You are a leader and a manager that God has called to serve Him," he said. "The good manager has people at heart, he builds relationships, establishes and develops purpose or mission and develops long-range planning."

Learn to delegate

"Learn to delegate some of your responsibilities," Doster suggested. "Let your ministry goals include being a vocational employee, preacher/teacher, pastor and community leader. You have to fulfill those goals every week and therefore you don't have to be the best preacher in the convention, but an adequate preacher under God who serves on a seven-day time management schedule."

Hope for the Home conferences, a marriage enrichment leadership training workshop, a Christian sex education workshop and observances of Christian Home Week, Senior Adult Day and Single Adult Day were listed by Gerald Jackson as ways of meeting the needs among smaller-church families.

Jackson, an associate in the ABCS discipleship and family ministry department, noted, "If the church is going to look at meeting family needs, I strongly suggest they look at the denominational calendar and promote these emphases. Resources are provided for these emphases and when they are observed, the entire family gambit has been covered."

ABCS associate executive director Jimmie Sheffield offered conference participants a "Look at the Future," noting that statistical projections indicate a growth in Asian and Hispanic populations,

a decline in young adults and children and slight increases in teenage, single adult and senior adult populations. "These will be the areas in which you need to plan for future ministries," he added.

Sheffield said concerns and opportunities for 1996-2000 include worship, leadership training, social and ethical issues, family issues, racial issues, evangelism, conflict issues, strategy planning issues, ministry, mission support, education, discipleship, more churches, spiritual awakening and financial stewardship issues.

"Based on these needs we developed the following annual emphases," Sheffield said. "Live the Word for 1996; Strengthen the Family in 1997; Build the Church in 1998; Touch the Community in 1999; and Reach the World in 2000."

ABCS department directors also met with pastors, outlining departmental ministries available to meet the needs of smaller-membership churches.

L.B. Jordan, director of the ABCS church leadership support department, said response to the conference reflects the role that smaller churches play in the life of the ABCS. "Smaller-membership churches make up 70 percent of our state work and 50 percent of those are led by dedicated bivocational pastors," Jordan pointed out.

"This conference helped to fulfill the dream of making OBU a resource center for Arkansas Baptists," said OBU president Ben Elrod. "In addition to sending students out in ministry, it is great to see others coming in to equip themselves for service in the local church."

Start-a-Church Commitment Sunday planned for March 26

Start a church on Start-a-Church Commitment Sunday, urged Jack Ramsey, an associate in the Arkansas Baptist State Convention missions department. Start-a-Church Commitment Sunday, set for March 26 across the Southern Baptist Convention, emphasizes the need for new Southern Baptist congregations in local communities.

Pointing out "three reasons to start new churches in Arkansas," Ramsey noted, "One, we are slowly but surely falling behind in keeping up with population growth with our Southern Baptist churches."

Second, he said, "we are a very diverse-cultured state and we need new congregations for those people. Another area where new churches are needed is in the different socio-economic levels across the state. We need different churches for different people."

Ramsey also noted the need for increased church starts in the state. "In order to stay even with where we are now in population growth, we need to start 68 new Southern Baptist churches in the next two years."

"We are slowly but surely falling behind in keeping up with population growth..."

— Jack Ramsey
ABSC Missions Department

He said the current state average of new work starts "is approximately 18 to 20 Anglo and black churches annually. Language starts are classified separately."

Ramsey emphasized that "there are no size requirements for sponsoring churches." Headed, however, "that about 85 percent of our sponsoring churches run 150 or less in Sunday School."

Harold Gateley, director of missions for Washington-Madison Association, noted that "many churches who have the wherewithal do not sponsor new works."

"Since many larger churches have not been sponsoring new works, we have to be innovative in ways of renting facilities for new starts and getting them resources," he added.

Ramsey listed "six simple steps" for existing congregations to start churches:

- Vision. "Someone has to see a need."
- Preparation. "That is preparing the

church to partner with or sponsor a new congregation."

- Cultivation. "Go into the field where the new church is needed and do work in that community."

- Start an optional Bible study fellowship. "Most of our successful starts begin with a Bible study fellowship first."

- Launch the mission. "This is the day they go public with the new work."

- The final step, he said, is when the new congregation constitutes as a church.

Gateley said directors of missions can be a helpful resource for existing churches that want to start new congregations.

DOMs provide resources

"DOMs make sure people are aware of resources, such as help from the state convention and Home Mission Board," he explained. "I don't turn any of them down. Each association needs to take advantage of every resource available."

Additionally, he said, DOMs can help through providing information. He said associational newsletters and other forms of communication provide "a forum for presenting missions to churches and individuals in churches."

Gateley said his association has had six church starts in the past five years, "but I wish we had many more new starts in this area. We have one church for every 3,500 people. Arkansas has an average of one church for every 1,800 people."

Ramsey also advocated the use of a "Start-a-Church Commitment" resolution available from his office.

He explained that the resolution "simply states that the church will commit to starting a new church without actually having any known area where they are going to start."

He said signing the document is important because "it is a day that is like a simultaneous revival. It is a day where we put a lot of effort using the vision that we already have going."

"It is also important" he said, "because if they will make that commitment on that day, when the area is designated or located, they are ready to go. They've already made the commitment."

He said churches are encouraged to sign such a resolution on Start-a-Church Commitment Sunday. "After signing it, they contact me and I will show them areas of need in their own communities."

Ramsey said copies of the resolution are available by contacting him at the ABSC missions department; phone 501-376-4791, ext. 5149.

Arkansas youth selected for national choir

Seven youth from Arkansas are among 110 high school juniors and seniors from 20 states chosen to participate in a choir to perform this summer in Atlanta, Scotland and England.

Arkansas youth selected for the choir include: Aaron Bowen from First Church of Pine Bluff; Free Calley and Angie Fite from First Church of Benton; Ashley Mitchell from First Church of Malvern; Kandi Morgan from Harmony Church of El Dorado; Sarah Page of South Highland Church of Little Rock; and Rachel Reynolds from First Church of Mountain View.

The Hymnody Heritage Youth Choir has been formed to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Southern Baptist Convention in Augusta, Ga., in 1845.

Each member must memorize 21 pieces of music and raise their own financial support of almost \$2,500 for tour costs and transportation.

Musical/mission experience

The choir is designed to provide a musical/mission experience for Baptist youth, "focusing on Baptist heritage and on music that has made us a great congregational singing denomination," according to tour host Jim Hawkins, a music consultant for the Baptist Sunday School Board.

Requirements for participation in the choir included a taped audition, active membership in a Southern Baptist church and written recommendations from parents and youth leaders.

The choir will sing first for the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention June 20 in the Georgia Dome in Atlanta and for the Southern Baptist Music Conference also in Atlanta during the same week. The choir will leave from Atlanta for Scotland where they will sing a joint concert with the Scottish Baptist Youth Choir. On several occasions in England, the choir will divide into as many as four separate choirs to sing simultaneous programs in Baptist churches in central England and in the London area.

Project Help raises more than 1 million cans

Arkansas Baptists answered the call of a national Woman's Missionary Union ministry project, donating 46,899 canned food items to local food distribution ministries and raising more than \$12,000 for national hunger relief.

"We Can Help" was the first national ministry project sponsored by WMU. It called for church members to contribute a can of food plus 25 cents to help feed the hungry in their communities. While food and money collected by each local church was distributed at its discretion, a national goal of 1 million cans and \$250,000 was established for the project.

Nationally, Southern Baptists contributed a reported 1,023,466 cans of food and more than \$311,000. Of the 28 state WMU offices which have called in a count to WMU, only seven have tagged their report as complete.

Arkansas WMU leaders said they were pleased with the state WMU's participation.

"Although we did not have a statewide goal, we're pleased with the number of cans collected and the number of associations that participated," said Sandy Wisdom-Martin, an associate in the state WMU department. She said 34 of the state's

42 associations reported collection results.

"This is the first time we have ever had something where (statewide) reporting had to be done," said Arkansas WMU executive director Julia Ketner. "I would like to commend all of the associational directors and churches reporting to the associations on their diligence in getting their reports to us."

Wisdom-Martin said she is "just as excited about the money as I am the cans. People have seen this need as more than just picking up a can of beans - the need is broader. There are a lot of other things such as milk, meat and eggs that pantries can give away."

Arkansas associations reporting the highest can collection results include: Pulaski Association with 5,558 cans; Concord with 4,067; Southwest with 3,533; White River with 3,032; Harmony with 2,800; and Washington-Madison with 2,117.

Isabel Loe, WMU director for Southwest Association, said she was "very proud" of her association's can collection totals.

"I felt we could have done more, though," she said. "Only 13 of our 43 churches participated. We could have

easily brought 300 cans per congregation."

Loe said several churches promoted the project in innovative ways. "Some of the smaller churches put a grocery cart out front and filled it with sacks of food. Others did a Saturday luncheon. We had one country church that has 50 in worship. They gave more than 500 cans and \$127."

Associations that were among top money collectors were: Concord Association with \$1,135; Pulaski with \$1,058; White River with \$1,037; Washington-Madison with \$990; and Harmony with \$785.

"We are ecstatic," said Trudy Johnson, WMU special projects coordinator. "When the Project HELP: Hunger Task Force first proposed a national goal of 1 million cans and 25 cents per can, I knew it would take all of our 1.2 million members working together with their pastors and church families to make it a reality; and we did it."

Referring to a researcher's conclusion that "WMU may be not only the missions conscience of the SBC, but also its loving heart," Johnson said. "The response to our first national ministry project demonstrates that WMU members are motivated to action by their loving hearts."

Two couples with Arkansas ties appointed to mission service

Two couples with Arkansas ties were recently appointed to missions service. James E. "Jay" and Kathy Shafto were among 44 people named missionaries by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board Feb. 14 at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

The Shaftos will live in Burkina Faso, where he will start churches. They recently were FMB International Service Corps volunteers in that country, and have been SBC Home Mission Board missionaries.

Born in New Jersey, Shafto lived in Massachusetts while growing up. He is a graduate of the University of Miami in Coral Gables, Fla., and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Born in Eudora, Mrs. Shafto is the former Kathy Hamilton. She is a graduate of Northeast Louisiana University in Monroe

and New Orleans Seminary.

The Shaftos have two children, James and John. The family will go to Rockville, Va., in March for a seven week-orientation before leaving for the field.

Joseph "J.K." and Ruth Minton were appointed in February by the Home Mission Board's executive committee to be home missionaries to Oregon.

Minton, 51, is a native of Little Rock. He will serve as director of missions for the Interstate Association in Tualatin, Ore. Minton is a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has served as pastor of Lazybrook Baptist Church in Houston, Texas, since 1986.

Mrs. Minton will serve in family ad church ministries. The Mintons have four grown children.



Jay and Kathy Shafto



J.K. and Ruth Minton

Missionary news

Thurman and Kathie Braughton, missionaries to the Philippines, are in the States (717 N. Hughes, Little Rock, AR 72205). He lived in Hot Springs while growing up; she is the former Kathleen Blount of Little Rock. They were appointed by the Foreign Mission Board in 1967.

Ted and Brenda Daniels, missionaries to Venezuela, have arrived in Costa Rica for language study (address: Apartado 100, 2350 San Francisco de Dos, San Jose, Costa Rica). He was born in Fordyce. She is the former Brenda Bollen of Missouri. They were appointed in 1994.

Lewis and Nina Gentry, missionaries to the Dominican Republic, have arrived in Costa Rica for language study (address: Apartado 100, 2350 San Francisco de Dios Rios, San Jose, Costa Rica). They are natives of Arkansas. He was born in Nashville and considers Stamps his hometown. The former Nina Coats, she was born in Rison and considers Pine Bluff her hometown. They were appointed in 1994.

Geoffrey and Deborah Hammond, missionaries to Brazil, are in the States (address: 132 Rogers Circle Dr., Springdale, AR). Both consider Dallas, Texas, their hometown. She is the former Deborah Atchison. They were appointed in 1990.

Church news

Henderson First Church recently paid off a mortgage 11 years early due to an anonymous donation. The payment was celebrated with a noteburning ceremony for which Don Moore, executive director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, was the guest speaker. Burning the note were deacons George Campbell and Jay Milhon, pastor Ray Tagger and Moore.

DeWitt First Church held a revival Feb. 5-8 that was led by evangelist William Blackburn of Fort Smith and the Jim Bob Griffin Family of Rusk, Texas, as music evangelists. Pastor Tom Williams reported the effort resulted in 81 professions of faith and 21 other decisions.

Dell First Southern Church is planning a 75th anniversary celebration July 9 with a full day of activities that will include Sunday School at 9:45 a.m., morning worship at 10:30 a.m., a noon meal and a 2 p.m. service. Former pastors Danny Veteto, director of missions for Independence Association, and Harold Sadler, pastor of Alicia Church, will be speakers. Others on the program will be pastor Roland Chappell and Alan Hardin.

Immanuel Church in Little Rock dedicated 31 new world flags Feb. 12 as a memorial to Glendon and Marjorie Grober, recognizing their 31 years of foreign missions service.

Rogers First Church first through sixth grade choirs presented the musical "Go, Go Jonah" March 5. Over 100 individuals participated in the musical which included solos, drama, special sets and lighting. Tim Logan is minister of music.

Lakeshore Drive Church in Little Rock will host the Bionettes Glee Club from Oklahoma Baptist University in concert March 17 at 7 p.m.

Ordinations

Hartford First Church ordained Lee Dobson, minister of music and youth, to the ministry Jan. 8.

Graves Memorial Church in North Little Rock ordained youth minister Marty Collier to the gospel ministry Jan. 15. Collier is a student at Ouachita Baptist University.

South Side Church in Pine Bluff ordained Bill Miller to the deacon ministry Jan. 15.

Marked Tree First Church ordained Alan Wright to the deacon ministry Feb. 12.



ARKANSAS ALL OVER

By MILLIE GILL

Dover Church ordained Thomas David Bond, minister of music and youth, to the gospel ministry Jan. 29.

South Pine Wood Church in Pine Bluff ordained Bobby Miller and David Holcomb as deacons Jan. 29.

Old Missouri Road Church in Springdale ordained Kenneth Richey Sr. to the deacon ministry Feb. 12.

Glenwood First Church ordained Shawn Kemp, minister of youth and outreach, to the gospel ministry Feb. 5. Kemp is a senior at Ouachita Baptist University.

Refuge Church ordained Tracy Smith to the deacon ministry Jan. 8.

Staff changes

Carel G. Norman will begin serving March 15 as director of missions for Little Red River Association. Norman, a graduate of Ouachita Baptist University and Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, has served churches in Van Buren, Gravel Ridge, Glenwood, Hot Springs, Pochontas, Mount Ida and Conway. He currently is a trustee of the Southern Baptist Historical Commission. He also has served as a member of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention Executive Board. Norman and his wife, Barbara, have four adult children and eight grandchildren.

John Douglas Davey became pastor of Chapel Hill Church in DeQueen March 1. He moved there from Winthrop where he was bivocational pastor of Winthrop Church. Davey has completed undergraduate studies in Canada and is a graduate of Faith Seminary in Florida. He has served as director of stewardship for Little River Association and in various other associational leadership roles, including moderator of Calvary Association while serving as pastor of Midway Church at Judsonia. He and his wife, Mary, are certified members of the American Association of Family Counselors and the American Association of Christian Counselors.

Larry D. Sherman joined the staff of Life Line Church in Little Rock March 1 as associate pastor and minister of education

and evangelism. Sherman, who recently resigned as associate in the Sunday School department of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, previously served for six years as a church staff member. In addition, he served as director of the Arkansas Baptist Assembly at Siloam Springs and has led Sunday School enlargement campaigns in Arkansas, Texas and Illinois. Sherman is a graduate of Ouachita Baptist University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He and his wife, Gwen, have two children, Robby and Teri Lynne.

John T. Brock became pastor of Immanuel Church in Pine Bluff March 5, coming there from First Baptist Church in Pearl, Miss. He attended Mississippi College in Clinton, Miss., and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. Brock currently is enrolled in the doctoral program at Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, Miss. He and his wife, Charman, have one daughter, Elizabeth.

Steve Strohl began serving Feb. 14 as minister of music and education for Bella Vista Church, coming there from Pennsylvania Avenue Church in Urbana, Ill. He also has served Mount Vernon Church in Richmond, Va., as minister of music and administration. Strohl is a graduate of Eastern Illinois University in Charleston, and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He and his wife, Sandra, have two children, Jennifer and Luke.

Gary Powell joined the staff of First Church in Forrest City Feb. 1 as minister of music, going there from Sherwood where he served on the staff of Sylvan Hills First Church. He also has served on the staff of First Church in Dierks. Powell is a graduate of Ouachita Baptist University and Mid-America Seminary. He and his wife, Norma, have two children, Emily and Grace.

Joe Jackson will begin serving March 12 as pastor of Midway Church at Melbourne, coming there from Hysham Church in Montana. He is a graduate of Louisiana Tech University in Ruston, La., and Mid-America Seminary. Jackson and his wife, Peggy, have a son, Caleb.

Bill Steeger is interim pastor of Immanuel Church in Pine Bluff. Steeger is chairman of the religion department at Ouachita Baptist University and a former Southern Baptist missionary in Africa.

Scott Gillespie has joined the staff of First Church in Mansfield as minister of music and youth. He previously was on the staff of West Sherman Church in Sherman, Texas. Gillespie and his wife, Gayla, have two daughters, Sarah and Emily.

Bob Sprague is serving as part-time youth minister for First Church in Dardanelle where he is a member. He also works with the Army National Guard. Sprague is a graduate of the University of the Ozarks in Clarksville. He and his wife, Penny, have three sons, Robbie, Joseph and Benjamin.

Jim Black, pastor of Ruddell Hill Church in Batesville, recently joined the staff of White River Medical Center as hospital chaplain. The chaplain position was developed by the hospital with the cooperation of the Batesville Ministerial Alliance. In addition, he serves as a volunteer chaplain for the Batesville Fire Department Medical Service and the Independence County Sheriff's Department. Black, a commissioned deputy, is a graduate of Williams Baptist College and International Bible College and Seminary in Independence, Mo.

Rex Holt resigned Feb. 19 as pastor of Central Church in Jonesboro, following more than 10 years of service. He and his wife, Sherry, and their children, John, Sarah and Rebekah are moving to Ventura, Calif., where he has accepted the call to serve as pastor of Grace Church.

Roy Buckelew is serving as interim pastor of First Church in Pine Bluff. A professor at Ouachita Baptist University, he previously was interim pastor of First Church in Hot Springs.

Bernard Ford, a retired Southern Baptist minister, is now available to serve as an interim pastor or revival leader. He may be contacted at 1013 Mineral Street, Hot Springs, AR 71901; phone 501-623-8125.

People

Jim Clark, interim pastor of First Church in Thornton, is serving as coordinator for a July 16-23 missions trip to Altamira, Para, Brazil that originally was being planned by the late Glendon Grober. Arkansas Baptists are requested to participate in this crusade for which Nilson Fantini will be speaker. Churches or individuals interested may contact Clark at P.O. Box 3052, East Camden, AR 71701; phone 501-574-1842.

Judy Wood, a member of Cross Road Church in Little Rock, received her Master Christian Development Diploma for completing 45 courses and 225 hours of study in the Southern Baptist Church Study Course system. Wood, who serves as Acteens director for both the church and Pulaski Association, was presented the diploma in the Feb. 5 morning worship service by interim pastor L.B. Aitchison.



State missions associate Jack Ramsey (center) joins pastor Don Vuncannon and members of New Hope Church, Jonesboro, in celebrating their noteburning.

Jonesboro church burns note Pastor says he 'can't wait to get in debt again'

By Russell N. Dilday
Associate Editor, Arkansas Baptist

More than 80 members of New Hope Church in Jonesboro celebrated the final payment of a \$15,000 building note and broke ground for a new educational wing Feb. 19. Not bad for a 129-year-old church that had an average attendance of 13 in Sunday School 10 years ago.

The note, borrowed from the Arkansas Baptist State Convention missions department, was paid off early by the congregation. The funds were used to build and furnish the sanctuary. Members also broke ground on a proposed 6,000-square-foot educational addition to house a fellowship hall and classrooms.

"I can't wait to get in debt again," pastor Don Vuncannon told the congregation during the note-burning ceremony. Others agreed. In a previous business meeting, members voted unanimously to build the new educational facility.

Vuncannon, who is a bivocational carpenter, estimated the new building will cost the church between \$75,000 and \$90,000 using all volunteer labor.

Member Betty Cleaves said the new building means "new growth. We can have better fellowship and more room. This is what the Lord wants us to do."

In attitude and growth, New Hope resembles a new work — and in many ways it is. Established as a Missionary Baptist congregation in 1866, the church grew as it served a rural community a few miles from Jonesboro.

After the turn of the century, however, membership steadily declined. When Vuncannon was called as pastor in 1986, there were only 13 members attending Sunday School.

The church has now grown to an average attendance of 71, augmented by new subdivision development on Jonesboro's south side.

Jack Ramsey, an associate in the ABSC missions department, said one of the distinctive characteristics of New Hope's increasing numbers "is that they just decided they were going to grow. The Lord was placing people around them. They stepped out in faith and said, 'We want to take advantage of this.'"

Vuncannon gave credit to God and the attitude of church members for the congregation's growth. "God has blessed," he said. "We have people here totally committed to Christ. They have given their time and their finances sacrificially and we have allowed God to work in our lives."

Church historian Debbie Wilson added that the church "is moving forward all the way. It is our love for the Lord and our love for each other."

Describing the church family as "caring," she added, "That is what keeps us on that upward, forward road. They are not only caring, but their love for the Lord shows through in their lives."

Ramsey said challenges that face the congregation include: "Many of the people building or buying new homes in that area are in a different socioeconomic class and they'll have to do some things innovatively and differently to reach these people."

He added that the church is not "jealous about other Baptist work in the area." The closest Baptist work is South Caraway Baptist Church, about a mile and a half from New Hope. Vuncannon was the person who sought and found the land for South Caraway. He has no territorial problems.®

Nicholsons back in Panama after son's death

CORONADO, PANAMA (BP)—Southern Baptist missionaries Pauline and Glenn Nicholson, whose 14-year-old son, Andrew, died Jan. 28 from killer bee stings in Panama, have returned to their work in Coronado, Panama.

"Continue to pray for us. We're back here with our memories," said Pauline Nicholson in a Feb. 22 phone interview, the day after arriving at the family's home in Coronado.

The Nicholsons spent most of February in their home state of Arkansas, mourning Andrew's death with family and friends. Funeral services were Feb. 3 at Cherry Valley Church.

"We still feel our commitment is to be here in Panama," said Mrs. Nicholson. "The only temptation we had to stay in the States was that our family is there, and their support was wonderful. We needed that. But we also have our mission family (fellow missionaries) here. And they've given us a great deal of support. It's almost like we have two families."

"The one thing I didn't think I could ever stand was to lose a child, but God gives you the strength when you need it," she said. "The support everyone's given us has helped tremendously. So many people have been praying for us. It's been a big comfort."

BWA protests persecution in Bulgaria

WASHINGTON (BP)—In what is another blow to their religious freedom, Baptists in Bulgaria may lose their land and partially constructed church buildings in Sofia because the mayor "has come under pressure" to stop the Baptists.

The Baptist World Alliance has written the president of Bulgaria asking him to intervene in this latest "harassment of our Baptist believers and their building project in Sofia."

The BWA also has alerted U.S. President Bill Clinton and House Speaker Newt Gingrich, both Baptists, and Senate Majority Leader Robert Dole to this latest blow to religious freedom.

In a letter to U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, BWA general secretary Denton Loitz asked him to remind the Bulgarian government of its obligations under the United Nations charter and the Helsinki agreements on religious freedom for all.

The latest issue at hand is a breach of contract between Bulgarian Baptists and the local government. "This is a great disappointment to us and a great blow to religious freedom in Bulgaria," said Bulgarian Baptist president Theo Angelov.

He said the dispute could result in Bulgarian Baptists losing their church, school and orphanage, adding they would not begin to recover the money already spent.

Blasphemy charges dropped in Pakistan case

LAHORE, PAKISTAN (BP)—Two judges dismissed blasphemy charges Feb. 23 against Pakistani Christians Rehmat Masih and his 14-year-old nephew, Salamat Masih. The pair had been sentenced to death by hanging for allegedly blaspheming Islam's Prophet Muhammad.

The death sentence, announced Feb. 9 after a three-day trial in Lahore, Pakistan, touched off an international furor. Human rights groups organized protests that overwhelmed the Pakistani embassy in Washington with phone calls. Christians around the world prayed and took part in the protests.

After the dismissal, Muslim militants in Pakistan flooded streets outside the courthouse, vowing to kill the defendants, lawyers and judges in the case. The two judges who heard the appeal of the death sentence in Lahore High Court ruled there was no evidence against the boy and his uncle.

The two were accused of writing derogatory statements about Muhammad on a wall in Lahore and throwing into a Muslim mosque pieces of paper with insulting words written on them. A third Christian defendant in the case, Manor Masih, was

murdered by Islamic extremists last April 5 as the three left the High Court in Lahore, where they had been granted bail.

Computerized gospel tracts available

ATLANTA (BP)—Looking for a way to witness to high-tech friends? Try giving them the Eternal Life tract on disk.

The booklet is available in the Home Mission Board library of SBCNet, the Southern Baptist on-line computer system. The file name is "Eternal Life Booklet for Windows."

Computer users must have Windows 3.1 or higher and at least a 386 processor to download the program, said Bill Gordon, HMB associate director of interfaith witness.

Gordon added the Eternal Life tract to the computer library in hopes that Christians would copy it to a disk and give the disk to a non-Christian. "Some people who wouldn't look at a tract will run a program on a computer," he said.

Foreign missionary injured by robber

RICHMOND, VA (BP)—Tom Thurman has become the fourth Southern Baptist foreign missionary in a month accosted by robbers on the mission field.

The string of incidents should remind Southern Baptists that 4,000 missionaries around the world are on the front lines of a spiritual warfare and need prayer for their ministries and safety, said Randy Sprinkle, director of the Foreign Mission Board's international prayer strategy office.

Thurman, 61, of Monticello, Miss., was stabbed in the hand Feb. 19 in Dhaka, Bangladesh, in a struggle with a man who demanded his briefcase.

The slight injury required two stitches. Thurman, a 30-year veteran of missions, fulfilled a preaching assignment that evening, his son, Philip Thurman of Jackson, Miss., said.

Thurman, an evangelist, was riding in an open, three-wheel taxi when another taxi pulled alongside and a passenger with a pistol demanded the briefcase. Thurman offered his money but refused to release the briefcase. A struggle ensued.

When a truck driver intervened, the attacker stabbed at Thurman with a knife and fled. Thurman was injured when he raised his hand in self-defense. The incident occurred about a half mile from the Southern Baptist mission guest house near Dhaka.

Zambia judge orders Baptists to work it out

LUSAKA, ZAMBIA (BP)—A judge has ordered Southern Baptist missionaries and Zambian Baptist leaders to resolve their two-year-old dispute over missionary work permits on their own.

The dispute, which was scheduled for trial in mid-November and has been postponed several times, is an internal church matter and should never have been brought to court, the judge told representatives of the two sides in a February hearing.

After hearing statements from missionary and convention leaders and asking several questions, the judge ordered the parties to resolve their dispute amicably. He also directed that temporary permits be issued until a resolution is reached, according to missionary Bonita Wilson, acting administrator of the Southern Baptist mission organization in Zambia.

The case concerns the refusal of Zambian immigration officials to renew work permits or issue new ones to Southern Baptist missionaries in the African country without the approval of the Baptist Convention of Zambia.

The convention's executive committee asked for authority to approve all work permit renewals for missionaries, although the Southern Baptist mission organization is an older and separate entity. The government immigration office agreed. The mission organization protested the decision and filed a lawsuit.

Truett dean Robert Sloan elected new Baylor president

WACO, TX (ABP/BP) — Baylor University has chosen Robert B. Sloan, the dean of its new seminary, as the university's next president.

Sloan, 46, was elected by Baylor's board of regents Feb. 24. He will succeed Herbert Reynolds, who will retire and become Baylor's chancellor June 1.

Sloan's election culminates a tumultuous 18-month search for Reynolds' successor. Last November regents were poised to elect Samford University president Thomas Cortis to the post but voted down the recommendation of their search committee.

Regents' chairman Gale Galloway said a strong consensus developed for Sloan, who reportedly was not a candidate in the earlier search, and the board was united in his selection.

Sloan is well-known to Texas Baptists and Baylor graduates. A native of Coleman, Texas, he holds a bachelor's degree from Baylor and taught theology at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary before helping launch Baylor's George W. Truett Theological Seminary.

Sloan also earned a master of divinity degree from Princeton Theological Seminary and doctorate in theology from the University of Basel, Switzerland.

Sloan will be the 12th president of the 12,000-student, 150-year-old school.

"It's the kind of job I think you don't choose," he told the *Dallas Morning News*. "Somehow, in the providence of God, it chooses you."

In accepting the presidency, Sloan said he was committing himself "to the historic mission of Baylor, pledging to continue our pursuit of academic excellence within the traditions of a Christian worldview and the great principles of our Baptist heritage."

He has served on the Baylor faculty since 1983. In addition to his duties as seminary dean, he also holds the George W. Truett Chair in Evangelism.

"I am an academic who preaches," Sloan said. "Yes, I am an ordained Baptist minister, but I've spent the last 16 years of my life in higher education. I have, I think, a well-established record of research in publishing. I've spent the bulk of my time in teaching and academic work."

Colson: Culture war being lost

WAKE FOREST, NC (ABP) — Christians should not lose hope, even though they are losing a war "for the heart and soul of western culture," Charles Colson declared.

"We have lost the battle for truth," Colson said at an annual seminar sponsored by the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission. The meeting was held Feb. 27-March 1 on the campus of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

"We are losing the battle for truth in the pews of America faster than we are losing it in CBS and in the homes of the cultural elite," said Colson, founder of Prison Fellowship. He cited a recent study in which 62 percent of evangelicals said there is no such thing as absolute truth, up 10 percent from three years earlier. With the rise of post-modernism in the last three decades, the idea that "all ideas are relative" has "become the dominant ethos in American life," he said. Consequences of the "death of truth in American life," Colson said, include intensified battles for religious freedom, including violence aimed at abortion clinics, and epidemic crime.

Rising crime rates signal a "moral collapse" in America that will only worsen as more children of the baby boom generation enter their teens, the demographic group most prone to commit crimes.

Studies show that people are so afraid of crime they would sacrifice rights like

protection from unreasonable searches to make America's streets safer, Colson said. "When crime becomes so great, people simply say, 'Take my liberties; give me order,' just exactly as the German people said it in the 1930s and welcomed Adolph Hitler, because it was a friendly fascism."

Despite causes for alarm, Colson said an "amazing thing" is happening. "The polls are suddenly showing that people are really concerned and something isn't right," he said. "I think they even know there isn't a political solution."

Colson said polls indicate a "moral yearning," with people "clamoring for some sort of spiritual answer" to problems.

Those answers are going to come not from the White House but "from the people of God who are the people of truth, who present to this culture a defense of truth," he said.

Colson urged churches to respond by equipping members to go to neighbors "with a cultural apologetic," he added. "In today's world where truth is in retreat, we have to be able to defend truth."

"There is a culture war that is a battle for truth for the heart and soul of Western culture," Colson said. "Don't give up. Yeah, it's going bad. It's going against us. But in every single human heart there is a desperate yearning for truth, and they're only going to get it from us."

Louisiana pastor fired due to dispute over evangelical/Catholic document

THE RIOT, LA (BP) — A year after two Southern Baptist Convention leaders signed an affirmation of evangelical-Roman Catholic relations, the issue has erupted in a small Louisiana community.

So far, the dispute has encompassed:

■ A public confrontation of Home Mission Board president Larry Lewis by the pastor and several members of Bayou DuLarge Baptist Mission Church, Theriot, La., urging Lewis to repent of signing the widely publicized document, "Catholics and Evangelicals Together."

■ The subsequent firing of the pastor, Jerry Moser, a Southern Baptist home missionary, by the mission's sponsoring church, Christ Baptist in nearby Houma.

■ The intention of Moser and the 100-member mission he has led 11 years for him to continue as their pastor.

"I plan to continue to be missionary pastor on Bayou DuLarge; not as an act of rebellion but as an act of obedience to the Lord who called me to be here," Moser said Feb. 28.

He said the document "hurts our

witness...in an area that's 98 percent Roman Catholic and Episcopalian."

Moser received a termination notice from Christ Baptist Feb. 23 after a public confrontation with Lewis at a missions rally Feb. 10, sponsored by the local Baptist association — and held at the mission church's newly completed auditorium.

The termination letter from Christ Baptist's pastor H. Lynn Fontenot said the church in a Feb. 22 business meeting had approved the unanimous recommendation of its missions committee for Moser's resignation as Bayou DuLarge's pastor. "The underlying reason for this action," Fontenot wrote, "is your continued insubordination" to the authority of Christ Baptist as the mission's sponsor.

"We maintained control of the meeting and gave permission to no others to speak but Dr. Lewis, four of our men, and myself," Moser acknowledged. "We are not proud about what we did; we are sad that it had to be done. We are convinced that biblically defending the faith sometimes supersedes what man considers proper."

Mississippi River Ministry efforts growing

By David Winfrey
SBC Home Missions Board

MEMPHIS, TN (BP)—While Southern Baptist missions work continues to grow along the Mississippi River, leaders of a seven-state concentrated effort say their greatest challenge continues to be discovering needs and developing ministries.

"If that doesn't happen, this project is dead," said Tom Ratcliff, director of missions for the Missouri Baptist Convention and a member of the Mississippi River Ministry steering committee.

"Unless we develop projects for the utilization of volunteers, then we will continue basically doing what we've always done, which is little or nothing."

Started in August 1992, the MRM focuses attention on 143 counties in states along the river. A catalogue of mission projects currently lists 52 programs in the region, much of which is characterized by meager living conditions.

"We've got a Third World country right here in America," explained Don Mabry, Louisiana director of missions, referring to the region. "Poverty is absolutely consuming those neighborhoods. Many of these areas are in danger of all services disappearing."

Ratcliff agreed. "I'm seeing things that are worse than anything I saw on the foreign mission field."

MRM leaders hope to encourage the development of redemptive Christian ministries that both help people and spread the gospel. "If we can deliver the gospel into some of these communities it will empower the people to solve the social problems," Mabry said.

Leaders are touting "needs assessment surveys" as an effective way to develop the most essential ministries in a community.

MRM coordinator Tommy Goode calls such surveys "spiritual quests." During the surveys, church members visit such

local leaders as police and teachers to ask what needs are not being met. "We're really listening for the Spirit of God to tell us what He wants us to do," Goode said.

"People want to minister. They don't know how or where," he said. "With needs assessment surveys, we get the how and where within two days in their hands."

The surveys accomplish three things leaders seek to achieve through Mississippi River Ministry:

- Help local laity to see their communities' needs.

- Motivate participants to get involved.

- Identify potential volunteers and ministry leaders.

"Something happens in that local group that changes the way they look at their community," Goode said.

'How can we help?'

Jere Phillips said he has encountered two attitudes from people surveyed.

"One segment said, 'Are you serious?'" said Tennessee's director of missions. "The second was such a glad reception. We had a juvenile court judge break down in tears when two people went to his chambers and said, 'How can we help?'"

The number of helpers through MRM missions projects last year grew, particularly with the help of World Changers, a Brotherhood Commission missions program for home construction and renovation. About 1,200 volunteers participated in five World Changers

programs in the region.

MRM assistant coordinator Andrea Ramage said participation is growing.

"I know that '94 was an exciting year," said Ramage, a US-2 missionary with the Home Mission Board. "There were more project requests and projects completed. It was encouraging to find out that when you say 'Mississippi River Ministry,' they know what that is now."

"We have a lot of people who came last year who are coming back this year," she said. "Some of them have been involved in World Changers and they go home and their youth group wants to come back."

In addition to recruiting outside volunteers, Mabry said MRM ministry projects are opening the eyes of people to the needs in their own states.

"The river ministry has been a vehicle for a new awareness of unreached people within our own state," he said.

Such local participation is vital to some communities, Ratcliff said. "If we don't get churches to buy in locally, it will not work in some areas."

The effort has also helped bring racial healing to some areas as exclusively Anglo associations consider starting African-American churches, Phillips added. "This five years ago would have been completely unheard of."

Information about the Mississippi River Ministry is available from coordinator Tommy Goode at the Arkansas Baptist Convention; phone 501-376-4791.

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TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

'95 Acteens Encounter features missionaries, ministry challenge

"Will U B the 1?" will be the question asked of participants at the 1995 Acteens Encounter March 31-April 1 at Park Hill Church in North Little Rock. The encounter, for girls in grades six through 12, will feature missionaries, an Activator commissioning ceremony, a ministry challenge and StudAct recognition.

Angela Lowe, an associate in the Arkansas Baptist State Convention Woman's Missionary Union department, said the theme will emphasize the call to Christian service. "Will U B the 1?" is the question every Christian is asked," Lowe said. "Will you be the one to answer the call to missions service? Will you be the one to witness across the street to a neighbor?"

Lowe said this year's encounter includes a ministry challenge for all participants. She asked that girls and their leaders bring the following items to be used in local ministries:

- Sixth-eighth graders - a plastic comb, three crayons, wrapped sucker and toothbrush in a ziplock bag.
- Ninth-10th graders - 12-ounce jars of peanut butter.
- 11th-12th graders - 16-ounce cans of chili.
- Leaders - 16-ounce cans of pork and beans.

She said the items will be sorted and distributed by participating 11th-grade girls

during a "Just for Juniors" mission activity.

The program, which begins with a pizza party at 6 p.m. Friday and concludes at 1 p.m. Saturday, will feature three missionary speakers. Debbie Moore, a missionary to Liberia, will represent foreign missions; Mildred McWhorter, retired director of three Houston, Texas-area care ministries, will represent home missions; and Andrea Ramage, a US-2 home missionary, will represent state missions.

Also included in the program is a recognition time for girls who have reached Queen status in StudAct. Lowe reminded participating Queens to bring their crowns, scepters, pins and medallions, as well as a dress or skirt for the recognition ceremony.

The cost for Acteens Encounter is \$11 per person. Participants are responsible for making their own reservations. For more information, contact Angela Lowe at the state WMU department; phone 501-376-4791, ext. 5137.

Four Young Musicians festivals scheduled throughout Arkansas

Children in grades four through six can participate in a mass choir, receive adjudication and learn new anthems during the State Young Musicians Festivals scheduled for April 22 in four area locations.

The festivals, all beginning at 8:45 a.m. and concluding at 1:45 p.m., will be held at Immanuel Church in Rogers; First Church in Conway; First Church in El

Dorado; and East Side Church in Paragould. Peggy Pearson, an associate in the Arkansas Baptist State Convention church music ministries department, said the festivals are designed "to help children have a worship experience and learn about worship. It also gives them an opportunity to sing for adjudication, to hear other choirs and to learn about performance.

"We want them, however, to go beyond performance and learn the purpose is for worship," she added.

Pearson said participants have the choice of participating by singing for adjudication, for judges' comments only or for participation in the mass choir only. She said participating choirs must learn the anthems "The Whole World is Singing" (#593 Baptist Hymnal 1991), "Sing Alleluia" (Choristers Guild, GGA415) and "In My Heart" (Genevox 4566-60/Young Musicians 195) prior to the festivals.

The cost for the festivals is \$3 per choir member before March 27 and \$4 per choir member after that date. Pearson urged participants to bring a sack lunch.

At least one sponsor must accompany each 10 participants. Pearson encouraged parents and choir teachers to serve as sponsors.

Dress is casual. Pearson said T-shirts and jeans will be appropriate, even during adjudication.

For more information about the Young Musicians Festivals, consult the 1995 State Music Ministry Handbook or contact Pearson at the ABSC church music ministries department; phone 501-376-4791, ext. 5121.

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Conference impacts single adult ministry

A divorced man thought he finally had his life together but realized that he still had a long way to go. Where did he discover these deeper needs? At the Single Adult Conference sponsored by the Arkansas Baptist State Convention discipleship and family ministry department Feb. 17-18 at Second Church in Little Rock.

"The conference succeeded on three levels," said Gerald Jackson, associate in the Discipleship and Family Ministry department. "It provided quality leadership for churches looking for help in single adult ministry, it impacted the lives of single adults where they live and it provided fellowship for single adults from across the state." Attendance totaled about 150 participants, ranging from college-age to senior adults, Jackson noted.

"Our justification for the conference is the leadership track. Diane Swaim, who

provided leadership training, is such an expert in the area," Jackson continued. "I'm concerned about churches being able to meet needs of singles who are really searching.

"We're trying to approach single adults as a ministry as opposed to just a Sunday School department," he explained.

Affirming the leadership track was Marisha Roberts, minister to singles for Searcy First Church. "I enjoyed it because I'm new to singles ministry," she commented. "I was impressed by the opportunity to hear and talk to Diane Swaim — someone who has really been there.

"It was a good resource; I found out what I'm supposed to be doing and the main things to address," Roberts pointed out. "The conference has even greater potential if more people would use it."

The theme, "Outrageous Joy" was

explored by conference artist Alan Lee Walden. "Walden performed a Comedy Club on Friday night and was very well received," Jackson noted. Walden, who is a musician and comedian, also provided music throughout the conference.

"The joy of being 'me' in Christ" was presented by Eddie Simpson, pastor of Sheridan First Church, who shared his personal experience of identifying with singles in times of crisis. Ray Higgins, pastor of Little Rock Second Church, explained the joy of relationships in Christ. He spoke about the different components of human life — mental, emotional, spiritual and sexual — as all being good because "God made us this way."

In addition to the leadership track and worship portions of the conference, there were workshops for single adults on various topics from Christian sexuality to making peace with your past.

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ARKANSAS BAPTISTS

Golden Age Evangelism Conference set for April

Arkansas Baptists' 1995 Golden Age Evangelism Conference will offer fun, inspiration and witnessing training for senior adults April 6-7 at the Gem of the Ozarks Music Theater in Eureka Springs.

The conference, sponsored by the Arkansas Baptist State Convention evangelism department, will feature speakers, congregational music, a participant entertainment time and a country music and comedy show.

Paul McClung, an associate in the evangelism department, emphasized that a witness training session also will be held during the conference. He said the training session, "Senior Adults Reaching Senior Adults," will "try to encourage senior adults to pray for and witness to lost senior adults."

McClung noted that Arkansas has a

senior adult population of 400,000 and that "the Home Mission Board estimates that 60 percent of them have no church affiliation. That is a high unevangelized population."

The conference will feature keynote speaker Jack Stanton, director of the International Institute of Evangelism at Southwest Baptist University in Bolivar, Mo., and Bob Woolley, retired director of the Missouri Baptist Convention church music department.

In addition to regular conference sessions, participants also may attend a Thursday night country music and comedy show, the Donnie Sneed and Friends Show, at the Gem of the Ozarks Theater.

The cost for the conference is \$9 per person. Participants are responsible for securing their own lodging. Reservations may be made directly with nearby hotels, including: Days Inn (253-8863); Kings Hiway Inn (253-7311); Comfort Inn (253-5241); Swiss Village Inn (253-9541); Land of Nod (253-6262); Swiss Holiday (800-528-1234); Ozarka Lodge (800-321-8992); and 1876 Inn (800-643-3030).

The deadline for reservations is March 21. For more information or to register, contact McClung at the ABCS evangelism department, P.O. Box 552, Little Rock, AR 72203; phone 501-376-4791, ext. 5132.

MK prayer calendar

Missionary kids attending college in Arkansas with birthdays in March:

■ March 7 - Lantz Smith, OBU Box 4040, Arkadelphia, AR 71998-0001; sophomore from Guatemala.

■ March 8 - Ann Browning, OBU Box 3070, Arkadelphia, AR 71998-0001; freshman from Jordan.

■ March 15 - Corey Gilbert, OBU Box 4356, Arkadelphia, AR 71998-0001; sophomore from Chile.

■ March 18 - Andrea Leagans, OBU Box 4215, Arkadelphia, AR 71998-0001; junior from Colombia.

■ March 27 - Jason Greenwich, OBU Box 3817, Arkadelphia, AR 71998-0001; sophomore from South Brazil.

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Arkansas Baptist Nursing Fellowship will be holding a training session for child care workers in Disaster Relief on Saturday, April 8, at the First Baptist Church in Pochontas from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Our Marjorie Grober Disaster Relief Child Care Unit teams work with the Arkansas Baptist Men and their mobile feeding units on disaster sites. If you like working with children and would be willing to work with a response team, please contact the Brotherhood office at 501-376-4791, ext. 5158 for more information.

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Williams Baptist College

Baseball begin Hayes era—Williams Baptist College ushered in the Eagles baseball season Feb. 20 under the leadership of new coach Charles "Gabby Hayes." Hayes, a native of Black Rock, played with the New York Yankees organization in the 1960s.

Starting with the opening game against Christian Brothers University, Hayes hoped to gain experience for the freshman talent he has recruited from the region. "We have, potentially, some of the best players in the country," Hayes said.

Distinguished alumni—Lendol and Dorothy Jackson of Jonesboro have been recognized as the 1995 Distinguished Alumni at WBC. The Jacksons, who graduated from Williams in 1955, were presented the honor by WBC president Gary Huckabay.

Jackson filled several positions at the college in the past, including director of financial aid and men's basketball coach.

Mrs. Jackson worked at the college for 25 years, most of it as vice president for student development. She retired last year. They are active in Campers on Mission and Central Church in Marked Tree, where Jackson is pastor.

Ouachita Baptist University

Educator receives leadership award—Carolyn Chambliss, chairman of OBU's division of education, recently was awarded a distinguished leadership award by the Arkansas Academy for Leadership Training and School-based Management in Fayetteville. The award was presented at the conclusion of the Academy's week-long Strategic Leadership Institute held recently at the Tyson, Inc. Management Development Center in Russellville.

OBU hosts storytelling festival—Ouachita will host its second annual Storytelling Festival on April 7-8 in Arkadelphia. The event will include various workshop as well as several performances

by three featured tellers. The event is open to the general public. For more information, contact Jeff Pounders, assistant professor of sociology; phone 501-245-5514.

Cone-Buttoms Hall dedication—Cone-Buttoms Hall, the oldest building at OBU, was dedicated into new service at a ceremony on March 9. Originally dedicated in 1923 as a women's dormitory, the hall will now serve as the new administration building. More than \$2.5 million was raised for the renovation of Cone-Buttoms.

As part of the ceremony, the Earl and Ina Reed Peoples conference room also was dedicated. The third-floor room was made possible by Earl Peoples of Little Rock in honor of his grandparents.

Translation services offered—OBU uses its resources from around the world to offer translation services to Arkansas businesses. The university hosts students from 32 countries, but the primary demand for the service has come in the translation of Chinese and Japanese documents.

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Accepting resumes—for part-time youth minister. Send resumes to Personnel Committee, Bella Vista Baptist Church, 50 E. Lancashire Blvd., Bella Vista, AR 72714.

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Position open—for full-time youth/minister. Send resume to Search Committee, Calvary Baptist Church, P.O. Box 825, Osceola, AR 72370.

Classified ads must be submitted in writing to the ABN office no less than 10 days prior to the date of publication desired. A check or money order in the proper amount, figured at 30 cents per word, must be included. Multiple insertions of the same ad must be paid for in advance. Classified ads shall be restricted to church-related subject matter. The ABN reserves the right to reject any ad because of unsuitable subject matter. Classified ads will be inserted on a space-available basis. No endorsement by the ABN is implied.

For a listing, call Nelle O'Bryan at 376-4791, ext. 5155

Convention Uniform

Overcoming discontent

By Rich L. Kincl, pastor,
Central Church, Magnolia

Basic passage: I Corinthians 10:1-17
Focal passage: I Corinthians 10:1-4,
6a, 13

Central truth: Spiritual discontent grows out of pride and leads us into temptation.

When a Christian becomes overconfident and self-satisfied with his spiritual condition, he is in danger. The Corinthian believers felt so secure in their Christian lives they thought they had "arrived."

Most active church members today are well-taught and presumably mature. Note Paul's warning in verse 12: "Let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall."

Overconfident living leads to complacency and ultimately discontent in one's spiritual life. It also usually precedes a spiritual fall.

■ *Remember the source of your privileges (vv. 1-4).*

Paul reminds the children of Israel of their past blessings. God had liberated them from Egypt, identified them with His chosen leader, Moses, provided for them physical sustenance and spiritual sustenance through the pre-incarnate Christ.

Let us always remember that everything we have comes as a blessing from God. "Every good and every perfect gift comes from above" (James 1:17). Acknowledging God as the giver will keep us dependent on Him.

■ *Pride will cause you to fall (v. 6a ff).*

Paul used the sins of the Israelites to remind the Corinthians of their own. He mentions four: idolatry, sexual immorality, tempting God and complaining. Are these in our society and the church today? Abusing our freedom causes us to fall into temptation and then into sin.

■ *God will provide the way out (v. 13).*

Often where we think we are strongest and most dependable we are the weakest. The Bible is filled with examples of overconfidence which led to spiritual discontent and, ultimately, spiritual failure.

Christians who become self-confident become less dependent on God's Word and Spirit and grow careless in their living. As carelessness increases, openness to temptation increases and resistance to sin decreases. Be on your guard when you think your spiritual life is the strongest.

Life and Work

Ultimate loyalty, love

By Kenneth W. Overton, pastor,
First Church, Marked Tree

Basic passage: Mark 12:13-44
Focal passage: Mark 12:28-34
Central truth: Love God with all your being.

This teacher of the law was interested in the debate between Jesus and others, including Sadducees and Pharisees. When he noticed that Jesus was giving good answers, he wanted an answer to a question of his own. This was a candid inquiry and Jesus answered it in kindness. There was no animosity in the teacher's question nor in Jesus' answer.

This question of what was the greatest commandment was often debated among religious leaders. With 613 commandments, there was great interest to know which was the greatest.

Jesus gave the greatest commandment as a culmination of the first four of the Ten Commandments. He then gave the second greatest as a culmination of the final six. No other is greater than these two.

Other nations may worship many gods, but there is only one God. The answer of Jesus not only emphasizes that God was Israel's Lord, but that He was the only Lord. Our love cannot be divided between gods because there is no more than one.

Jesus named the total being of man in his love of God. With heart, soul, mind and strength, man is to love God.

Love for God is expressed in loving others. It is a divine, unselfish, outgoing love expressed to our neighbor. No Christian today should misunderstand that neighbor means everybody. Clearly, Jesus is saying that to love God and to love fellow human beings is more important than other commands man creates.

The teacher was pleased with the answer. He understood its importance. He expressed it in terms of the commands being more important than even the burnt offerings and sacrifices. This man obviously preferred an internal relationship with God rather than an external worship of God. He was on the verge of becoming a follower of Jesus.

Jesus received this man well. The teacher was intelligent. He had an alert and responsive mind and his spirit was open to the truth. Jesus realized that he was close to the kingdom of God. One thing is clear - there is no difference between loving God and wholeheartedly following Him.

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Bible Book

When in doubt, obey!

By Stan Parris, pastor,
First Church, Hope

Basic passage: Jeremiah 37:1-45:5
Focal passage: Jeremiah 37:1-40:6;
42:1-44:30

Central truth: We cannot refuse God's solutions and expect God's blessings.

■ *Jeremiah 37:1-38:28*—It appeared that Zedekiah would continue to refuse God's solution to his circumstances. Three times heasked for Jeremiah's counsel and prayers (vv. 37:3; 37:13; 38:14). Three times the prophet's response was the same (vv. 37:10; 37:17; 38:17-18). It was obvious that Jeremiah would not sacrifice his calling, convictions or the message of God. Note that Jeremiah was beaten, cast into prison and placed in a cistern where, except for God's intervention, he would have suffocated or starved. Yet it was Zedekiah who was in deep distress (vv. 38:19-20). We cannot refuse God's solutions and expect God's blessings.

■ *Jeremiah 39:1-40:6*—The fate of three men, Zedekiah (vv. 39:3-8), Ebed-melech (vv. 39:15-18) and Jeremiah (vv. 40:1-6) were brought out in this passage. The end results of disobedience and faithfulness were seen in the lives of Zedekiah and Ebed-melech. Jeremiah gave the freedom to choose a life of comfort in Babylon or the harsh life of remaining in devastated Judah. The prophet learned that peace is a combination of being where God has placed you and faithfully proclaiming the message God has given you.

■ *Jeremiah 42:1-43:7*—The remnant in Judah asked Jeremiah to seek God's guidance and promised to obey the Lord's voice (vv. 42:1-6). The prophet received a clear message and emphasized its certainty with the repetition of "thus says the Lord" (vv. 42:19, 15, 18). God's message was to remain in Judah (vv. 42:9-22), but refusing to receive God's message, they instead decided to flee. When we respond in fear instead of faith, we sacrifice God's security and protection.

■ *Jeremiah 44* contains Jeremiah's last recorded message. It, too, was unheeded. He made it clear that the remnant in Judah, just like the exiles in Babylon, will be disciplined because: they served other gods (v. 3); they did not turn from wickedness (v. 5); they refused to "listen to the Lord" (v. 16); and they would not obey the voice of the Lord (v. 23). Obedience is always the best solution.

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Convention Uniform

When suffering comes

By Rich L. Kirsch, pastor,
Central Church, Magnolia
Basic passage: II Corinthians 12-13
Focal passage: I Corinthians 12:7-9
Central truth: God can use suffering in our lives to make us more like Christ.

Fourteen years before Paul wrote his second letter to the church at Corinth, God honored him by taking him to heaven. Imagine! What if you went to heaven and came back? What a story you could tell!

Paul kept quiet about his experience and during those years he was buffeted by his "thorn in the flesh." Can't you imagine his friends whispering, "I wonder what sin he committed to deserve that!" Such bad theology still exists in our churches today.

The Lord knows how to balance our lives. When suffering comes — and it is sure to come — what should we do?

■ *We don't understand human suffering (v. 7).*

Sometimes we suffer because we are human. Our bodies change as we grow older, and we are susceptible to the normal problems of life.

We suffer because we are foolish and disobedient to the Lord. God is full of grace and forgiveness but we usually reap what we sow.

God allows the painful experiences of life to mold and shape us. He may use suffering as a tool to build godly character. He used the "thorn in his flesh" to keep Paul from sinning. Would you have a problem with pride if you had been to heaven?

■ *We choose how we deal with our suffering (v. 8).*

When God permits suffering to come into our lives, we can become bitter and blame God. We can give up and quit. Some grit their teeth and put on a brave front. But these lead to defeat and despair.

Paul prayed for deliverance. Is that wrong? No. But be careful that you do not judge yourself (or others) by God's response or lack of response, especially in physical healing or deliverance.

■ *God's grace will see us through (v. 9).*

God gave Paul an answer to his prayer. The tense of the verb in verse 9 is important: "And He (God) has once-for-all said to me." God gave Paul a message for life. Paul encourages us today with the words God gave him.

Life and Work

Vigilance and service

By Kenneth W. Overton, pastor,
First Church, Marked Tree
Basic passage: Mark 13:1-37
Focal passage: Mark 13:32-37
Central truth: All Christians are His servants on duty.

It is easily questioned about why the Son did not know when the end of the age will come. This is reserved to God's providence. It is a prerogative of God and not any others.

Let me illustrate it from the traditions of the Jewish people. After a man was engaged to his bride, he returned to his father's home to build a room for the couple to live. As the son worked, the father kept an eye on the craftsmanship of the room. If it was not built well, the father had the prerogative to change it. The father was to see that the bride entered a room worthy of a new wife. When the room was ready, the son married his bride and brought her to their newly built home.

Jesus said that He was going to prepare us a place and that He would return for us (John 14:2-3). Now He says in this passage, "Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when the time will come" (Mark 13:33, NIV). To be ready is applicable to Christians of every age. These are present tense imperative statements to be constantly on guard, constantly alert. This is confident and expectant hope of Christ's return.

The time is not to be spent just watching. It is not a time to be stopping the work but rather the contrary: Be busy with your assigned task. We do not know the time of His return and we are not supposed to know. But being ignorant of the time is no excuse for unpreparedness nor stopping the work.

The return of the Lord (of the house) was a matter of vast importance. The affairs of His kingdom were entrusted to us as His servants. We need to be faithful to our post, our place of responsibility. Being inattentive at your post, neglecting your duty or unpreparedness for His coming is a grave mistake. The opposite of alertness is sleeping. We are warned against relaxation in our spiritual alertness.

It was a proper command to be on watch and alert. This applies to all. The return of the Son is uncertain to us but not to God the Father. The time has been appointed. It is a warning to those three disciples, to the 12 disciples, to Christians of the past and Christians of all times. Be ready for the return of the Christ.

Bible Book

God of all nations

By Stan Parris, pastor,
First Church, Hope
Basic passage: Jeremiah 46:1-52:34
Focal passage: Jeremiah 46:1-52:34
Central truth: God is always working out His divine purposes.

This third section of Jeremiah deals with prophecies concerning nations that affected Jewish history. God commissioned Jeremiah to speak not only to Israel, but to "the nations" (vv. 1-5; 25:15-29). A common message in these oracles is that God is Lord over every nation and is working out His divine purpose.

■ *Prophecies concerning Egypt* (vv. 46:1-28) — Egypt was presented as a picture of pride (vv. 5-9) that turned to panic (vv. 11-12). The fate of Egypt was symbolized by the nickname given to Pharaoh in verse 17. However, the future of Israel was told in verses 27-28; instead of destruction, there would be deliverance.

■ *Prophecies concerning the Philistines* (vv. 47:1-7) — The "sword of the Lord" (vv. 6-7) symbolized God's judgment and could not rest until His purpose was fulfilled. Many times our concern is for the "sword" to go away quickly rather than for God's purposes to be accomplished.

■ *Prophecies concerning Moab* (vv. 48:1-47) — Verse 7 made it clear that Moab's downfall occurred because she trusted in material things rather than God. Verses 11-17 imply that this trust caused complacency. Verses 29-39 point out that Moab's pride was also a cause of judgment.

■ *Prophecies concerning Babylon* (vv. 50:1-51:64) — Chapter 50 contains six collections of prophecies against this nation. Verses 50:11-16, 50:21-28, 50:28-32 and 50:35-46 reveal that God's judgments are the consequences of our actions. The other two (vv. 50:17-20; 50:33-34) are reminders of God's mercy, a focus on His forgiveness and the fact that God would redeem His people. Chapter 51 contains nine passages that repeat the thought that Babylon is doomed.

God may use evil nations as instruments to fulfill His purposes. But in the end the destroyer will be destroyed if he has not followed God (vv. 51:15-23). Even mighty Babylon must submit to God's judgment.

Chapter 52 serves as a historical postscript and as a reminder of the prophet's certainty that his prophecies were from the Lord and, therefore, that events would prove the word of the Lord to be true. And they did!

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NEWS DIGEST

Baptist leaders oppose surgeon general's nomination

NASHVILLE, TN (BP)—Announcing "vigorous opposition" to the nomination of Henry Foster as surgeon general, Richard Land, executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, said he "did not come to this decision lightly or without deep regret."

Flanked in a Feb. 22 news conference by SBC president Jim Henry and Executive Committee president Morris Chapman, Land declared, "Any doctor who is willing to deny the Hippocratic Oath and extinguish human life, rather than protect it, is an individual whose moral vision for America is fatally flawed."

Henry said, "I regret having to oppose this nomination. I have met with President Clinton in the recent past during which time I have communicated the opposition of Southern Baptists to abortion."

Henry said Foster "deserves to be heard" but said "close scrutiny" by the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee should lead "the full Senate to reject his nomination."

High court to examine Colorado's gay-rights measure

WASHINGTON (ABP)—The U.S. Supreme Court agreed Feb. 21 to decide whether states can bar local governments from protecting the civil rights of homosexuals.

At issue is a state constitutional amendment in Colorado that would bar the state or local governments from assigning protected status to persons of "homosexual, lesbian, or bisexual orientation." Colorado voters approved the amendment in 1992. But the Colorado Supreme Court struck down the measure after homosexuals and the cities of Denver, Boulder and Aspen challenged it.

So far legal challenges have prevented implementation of the amendment, which would repeal anti-discrimination ordinances in Denver, Boulder, Aspen, Telluride and Crested Butte and prevent enactment of similar ordinances in the future. The Supreme Court is expected to hear the case during its next term, which begins in October.

Baptist Peace Fellowship welcomes gays and lesbians

MEMPHIS, TN (BP)—The board of the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America, meeting in Fort Worth Feb. 9-11, declared the organization a welcoming place for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered persons.

The BPFNA, founded in 1984, is a network linking Baptists involved in justice and peace issues throughout North America. Its board of directors is composed of members affiliated with seven Baptist conventions and five racial/ethnic groups in Canada, the United States, Puerto Rico and Mexico. The organization has no official sponsorship of any convention.

In its Feb. 17 news release, the directors said they "welcome into the (BPFNA) all persons who desire to be peacemakers and workers for justice. Specifically, we welcome gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered persons and pledge ourselves to work with them for the personal security and full equality of all persons whose sexual orientation has caused them to suffer persecution and alienation."

NOBTS search committee seeks recommendations

NEW ORLEANS (BP)—Recommendations for president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary will be accepted until March 15, according to the seminary's presidential search committee.

All recommendations should be sent in writing to Morris L. Anderson, First Baptist Church, P.O. Box 98, Pigeon Forge, TN 37868-0098. Anderson is chairman of the search committee.

The new president will succeed Landrum P. Leavell II, who retired Dec. 31, 1994. Leavell, 68, has agreed to remain as interim president until a successor is chosen. He has been NOBTS president since 1975. The seminary's board of trustees will hold its semiannual meeting on the New Orleans campus March 14-16.

RTVC names Doug Dillard as senior consultant

FORT WORTH, TX (BP)—Doug Dillard has been named a senior consultant for the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission. Dillard had been vice president of external relations for the RTVC since 1991.

"Though Doug could have retired this year," said RTVC president Jack Johnson, "we've asked him to stay on as a consultant to help us in the area of denominational relations. He has some unique abilities and is well-known throughout the Southern Baptist Convention."

Dillard said he sees his new role as being a goodwill ambassador, speaking on behalf of the RTVC, and serving as an RTVC liaison to SBC agencies and institutions.