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Arkansas Baptist State Convention

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ARKANSAS BAPTIST

news magazine

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HAND IN HAND

More than 500 participants took part in the Arkansas Woman's Missionary Union annual meeting held March 21-22 at Park Hill Church in North Little Rock.



International mission efforts reflect growth

Marty Groll

SBC Foreign Mission Board

Eight-foot-tall grass closes around Fred Allen as he turns his four-wheel-drive vehicle off a rocky road in Zambia's Western Province. It's another day of church developer's work for the Southern Baptist foreign missionary, who moved from a career in music ministry three years ago in Lusaka to minister to the gospel-hungry Lozi people.

In three years, Allen has seen 15 Lozi Baptist churches and 10 fellowships started. Invitations to start new groups keep coming from other villages. People are responding in such numbers that Allen and his wife, Joy, buy baptism certificates by the ream. And they haven't had time to complete a survey for the missionaries who will succeed them after they retire later this year.

"People thought I was crazy to start a new work three years from my retirement," Allen recalled. "They asked: 'Do you feel you can do the job of a church developer?' I'm not a theologian or a preacher."

But the Allens, like Foreign Mission Board missionaries in other responsive areas, found that yielding their spirits to God produced better results than relying on technical preparation.

Responsive pockets of people like the Lozi account for continuing growth in Southern Baptist foreign mission efforts. Last year missionaries and local Baptists with whom they worked started 2,367 new churches and baptized 283,674 new Christians. Total membership, based by response on key mission fields, was reported at approximately 4.1 million. The number of churches increased by 2 percent to 39,876.

'Another healthy year'

These figures and others, just released by the Foreign Mission Board in its annual statistical report for 1996, indicate another healthy year for missionary efforts, although not a record-breaking one. The report also indicates a quickly expanding ministry in areas the FMB considers "harvest fields" and "The Last Frontier" — a world region with little access to the gospel.

But the figures — which show that the most productive 25 mission fields accounted for 80 percent of the growth worldwide — reflect changes designed to help missionaries on less productive fields reach new people. Although not a new trend, 66 fields showed no new church starts at all last year.

During a February meeting of the FMB's trustees, president Jerry Rankin proposed a sweeping reorganization of overseas work. The restructuring would seek to capitalize on new growth and determine how to cooperate with God to invigorate work in slower areas, said Avery Willis, the FMB's senior vice president for overseas operations. Trustees plan to act on that proposal during their next two meetings.

Future growth will depend a lot on how in tune missionaries are with where God is moving, Willis said. Where God is apparently moving in north central India, workers are reporting disproportionate growth. After just seven years of work, 387 churches have started among a people group there — 157 new churches and 382 preaching points in the past year alone.

Other statistics from The Last Frontier show several first-ever churches among a number of people groups. In one area of central Asia, after a year and a half of witness and work, seven Buddhist men now meet to study the Bible, forming the nucleus of what will become a church. In a city of northern Africa, five churches of Muslim converts are thriving after the first Southern Baptist couple arrived five years ago.

ARKANSAS BAPTIST

news magazine



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Home missionary Alpha Goombi led prayer sessions during the Arkansas Woman's Missionary annual meeting March 21-22 at Park Hill Church in North Little Rock.

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Executive Board okays restructuring

Trennis Henderson

Editor, Arkansas Baptist

Moving a major step closer to reality, proposed restructuring of the Arkansas Baptist Executive Board staff has gained unanimous approval of the state convention's Executive Board members. A special called meeting of the board was held March 27 in Little Rock to address the issue.

The state convention's current structure study was initiated in 1995 "to study and recommend a plan by which the Arkansas Baptist State Convention can more effectively meet the challenges of the 21st century." A 13-member steering committee, chaired by Tim Reddin, director of missions for Central Association, worked with three nine-member subcommittees to develop recommendations for consideration by convention messengers.

While the committee continues to work on proposals related to the ABCS's statewide agencies and institutions, recommendations concerning the Executive Board staff have now been approved by the Executive Board's operating and program committees as well as the full board. Proposals related to the agencies and institutions are scheduled to be considered during the board's August meeting, with the overall structure study to be addressed by state convention messengers in November.

Proposals approved last week by the full board include a mission statement, vision statement and 29 core values focusing on the topics of the Bible, persons, the church, growth, integrity and staff. The bulk of the proposals center around the assignment of Executive Board ministries, with the staff structure moving from 12 departments to a network of seven ministry-based teams and a central ministry planning team.

Reddin told board members the study has included the four phases of orientation, fact-finding, report development and recommendations. "Our goal throughout this process has been to be inclusive in spirit and in practice, to work in harmony," he explained.

Noting that the committee has sought to determine "what is best and what is workable for Arkansas" while consulting with board members, convention staff and other Arkansas Baptists, Reddin added, "I'm pleased with the high degree of partnership and trust we've been able to maintain throughout this process."

State convention executive director Emil Turner affirmed that "at every level where this proposal has been seen, it has been approved unanimously."

Explaining that the goal of the proposed structure is to "reach the world one church at a time," Turner said the primary focus of the vision statement is impact. "These recommendations propose that we move from activity focus to impact focus," he added, "Impact is more valuable than activity."

"We need to be driven by a sense of making an impact," he emphasized. "We don't need more activities; we need more results."

During Executive Board discussion of the proposals, several questions were raised concerning

the plan to place Woman's Missionary Union-related work in a team named "missions promotion" as well as the proposal to keep missions promotion separate from the missions team which primarily will be involved in hands-on missions efforts.

Acknowledging that "we have not prepared a philosophically perfect organization," Turner added that "the missions promotion team can be a stronger advocate for missions as a separate team." Also noting that "a combined team would be large and more difficult to manage," he pointed out, "This isn't pure, but it's practical."

Choosing to leave the structure proposal intact, board members did vote to rename the missions promotion team as the missions support team and rename the missions team as the missions ministry team in an effort to clarify the two teams' differing roles.

Board members also asked about the impact the new structure will have on the number of staff members. Although the study "was not proposed...as a downsizing measure," Turner said, "I believe this will reduce the staff. If you have seven teams instead of 12 departments, you will need less support staff."

Emphasizing that there are no plans to ask any of the Executive Board's professional staff to resign, he added, "There will be a smaller organizational structure. It is already happening through attrition. We are growing down right now but we are not doing it by forcing people out."

Evaluating the overall goals of the structure study, Turner said, "We will not impose our structure on churches. We will seek to make an impact and respond to churches. We are serving the churches; the churches aren't serving us."

If approved by convention messengers in November, the new structure will begin operating in January 1998, with the goal of completing implementation no later than July 1998.

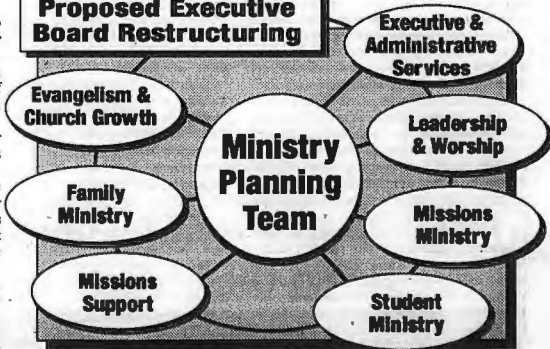
Mission Statement

The Executive Board programs of the ABCS exist to assist individual churches and associations to accomplish their biblical mission.

Vision Statement

We seek to impact individual churches and associations by providing the highest quality people, services and information that will enable our churches to evangelize the lost, start new work, worship God, develop believers and minister to people.

Proposed Executive Board Restructuring



A Pastor's
Heart

Emil Turner

ABCS Executive Director

She mailed the note to encourage a new missionary. She wrote just these words: "How shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent?" (Romans 10:14, 15). She did not sign the note. The wrong person opened the envelope, read the note and thought the message was for him. He tucked the note into his Bible. But

God's word always bears fruit. Within a few days, God used that note to convict the young man who received it "by accident" that he was called to the ministry.

One of my prayers for our churches is that God will raise up men and women and boys and girls to serve with their lives. Join in this prayer. God still calls preachers, church staff and missionaries. May their tribe increase!

■ Have you read *Battle For a Generation* by Ron Hutchcraft? (Moody, 1996). This is a great book for youth workers, especially youth Sunday School teachers. Next to the Bible, it presents one of the clearest pictures of lossness I have ever seen. Pastors, deacons, youth workers — the whole church could profit from this book.

Executive director's schedule:

April 5 (a.m.) Prayer Breakfast, Park Hill, North Little Rock
April 8 (p.m.) FMB Appointment Service
April 13-16 FBC, Walnut Ridge

South Korea, my goal was to read a Bible through for each of our three children and five grandchildren. I have just finished that glorious privilege.

Wonderful hours have been spent praying for that child as I read, underlined and shared verses claimed for them. I marked verses God had used in my life and our lives as a family. I will continue to use these verses in my prayers for them the rest of my life.

I remembered the testimony of Dr. W.O. Vaught. When he was too ill to pray, he shared with us that his grandmother had told him, "I have bottled up prayers for you and when you need them they are there." When he was sick he would just say "Lord, unbottle one of my grandmother's prayers for me."

A marked Bible, bowls or bottles of prayers (Revelation 5:8) are the eternal inheritance that I plan to leave to our children and grandchildren. I expect them to reap the dividend long after the financial assets are gone.

Miss Bertha Smith used to tell me, "Jeanne, only two things last forever — people and the Word of God." This is an eternal investment.

Jeanne Wright is director of Friendship International, a ministry to internationals sponsored by area Baptist churches.

Woman's
Viewpoint

Jeanne Wright

Hebron Church, Little Rock

Sixty-two, sixty-five, retired, Social Security checks, Annuity Board recipients, this year these words took on new meaning. They described us.

We heard the good news that the Arkansas Baptist Foundation will help retired pastors set up trusts. We made an appointment with David Moore and he graciously asked those questions about what we had to leave for our posterity.

As we left his office I thought about the few financial assets we have and wondered about the value our children and grandchildren would place on our things when that day comes. Then I thought of the Bible I will leave each of them.

I heard Mrs. Don Bingham suggest reading the Bible through for each of your children. When we left Little Rock for

quotes

"God comes in response to our humble dependency upon Him and that is most clearly expressed through prayer."

—Bill Elliot,
FMB appointment service
prayer coordinator

"The church has nothing more urgent to do than reach people before their lives turn hard."

—Randy Brantley,
ABCS youth evangelism associate

"The world is waiting for our praying, our giving and our going."

—Kay Roberts,
foreign missions volunteer

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news

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ARKANSAS BAPTIST NEWSMAGAZINE

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Preserve and protect religious freedom

During an editors' tour of the Holy Land last fall, one of the primary goals of Israeli government officials was to discover ways to strengthen American tourism in Israel. Despite their efforts, other government leaders have recently unveiled a proposal that could potentially derail Christian pilgrimages to the Holy Land for years to come.

While damaging Israel's tourism industry is not the goal of the plan, the results could be devastating both to the nation of Israel and to thousands of American Christians who desire to visit the land of Jesus' earthly ministry.

Far more crucial than Holy Land vacations, however, is the potential impact on religious freedom in Israel. The problem is a bill introduced in the Israeli Knesset which could make "inducement for religious conversion" punishable by a year in jail. The proposed bill already has been approved 21-7 by a Knesset committee and now faces two readings before Israel's full lawmaking body.

Although sponsors of the bill insist the measure is not targeted specifically against Christian evangelism, they acknowledge it could easily be interpreted that way. Such legislation stands in direct opposition

Straight from the Editor



Trannis Henderson

Editor, Arkansas Baptist

to Israel's endorsement of the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights which supports "freedom of thought, conscience and religion."

How does the possibility of religious restrictions in a nation halfway around the world impact Arkansas Baptists?

Messianic Jewish leader Baruch Maoz has called on Southern Baptists and other denominations in the U.S. to protest the proposed laws. He suggested contacting congressmen and other government leaders in an effort to persuade Knesset members to vote against the plan.

"It is extremely important that as many telephone calls and letters of protest as possible are received at Israeli embassies

and the office of the Israeli prime minister, and that these are received as soon as possible," Maoz declared. "Perhaps the pressure of internal politics will be balanced by wider concerns and the bill will be laid to rest in the dustbin of ill-conceived ideas, where it belongs."

Expressing concern over "the proposed law that would limit freedom of religion in Israel," Arkansas John Anthony, a Southern Baptist representative to Israel, added, "Please inform Baptists of this danger and ask them to pray this will not happen."

The Baptist World Alliance has joined the protest, with BWA general secretary Denton Lotz calling on Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to work to "discourage such precipitous actions which send the message to the world of intolerance and lack of belief in religious freedom for all people."

Hopefully, Israel's lawmakers will see the wisdom of preserving and protecting true religious freedom. What a tragedy it would be to outlaw the spread of the gospel in the very land where Jesus Christ urged His followers to "be my witnesses both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and in Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth."



letters to the editor

'Unsung heroes'

Much has been said in Arkadelphia the past few weeks about "unsung heroes." We think immediately of the men of the Arkansas Baptist Disaster Relief Team who have fed our town and the Baptist women who have provided child care for families hit by the tornado. The spirit of these men and women has been unbelievable and I feel honored to be associated with them as a Southern Baptist and a believer in Jesus Christ.

Yet there is a group of people who have been a part of these ministries in Arkadelphia who will probably never see the faces of those they've helped. So on behalf of my church, First Baptist, I want to thank the wives, husbands and family members of the Arkansas Baptist Men and Women who have served here. You have kept your home going and taken care of your children alone for two weeks. "Thanks" is sometimes such an inadequate word, but prayer is never inadequate, so we are praying that God will especially bless your home and family. God has already done this in one way. He has given

you a spouse whose heart is loyal to you and to God and whose actions mirror Jesus. Thank you for sharing these men and women of God with our community.

Tracy Knight
Arkadelphia, AR

Not just a secretary

In response to a church member's question, the pastor said, "She's just a secretary." However, in her role as "just a secretary," she is expected to be a receptionist, typist, file clerk, bookkeeper, accountant, editor, copy writer, journalist, layout artist, computer analyst, public relations specialist, purchasing agent, wedding consultant, peacemaker, management professional, resident theologian, efficiency expert, equipment authority, caterer, psychic, bouncer, private investigator, supervisor of volunteers, maid, taxi driver and mechanic. Of course, she is to perform all of these tasks with Christian grace and a smile. Let's face it, today's secretary is called on to wear many hats well.

Your secretary could use some sincere

appreciation for the job she does. Words of encouragement are never out of vogue. Let her know that she is an important member of the team. Self esteem and confidence are built through caring relationships.

April 23 is Professional Secretary's Day. Some special recognition and appreciation for your secretary's commitment to the Lord and her dedication to the church are in order.

It would be helpful for you to encourage her to become a member of a professional secretarial organization such as the Association of Arkansas Baptist Secretaries (AABS). The training she can receive will be a valuable help to your church. Secretaries, whether they work for the association, church or denomination, need the opportunity to update and improve their skills.

She may be "just a secretary." But with your encouragement and appreciation, she may perform duties and ministries far beyond what you can imagine.

Bruce Swartz
ABCS Church Leadership Support
Little Rock, AR

WMU members urged to serve 'hand in hand'

MIRRO GUN

Executive Assistant, Arkansas Baptist

Focusing on the theme, "Hand in Hand," more than 500 participants from more than 140 Arkansas Baptist churches gathered March 21-22 for the 108th annual meeting of Arkansas Woman's Missionary Union. State WMU president Barbara Wikman of Fort Smith presided over the meeting held at Park Hill Church in North Little Rock.

Both Wikman and vice president Nadean Bell of Bella Vista were re-elected to another year of service. Clemmie Edwards of Cabot is the newly elected recording secretary.

In other business, a 1997 Dixie Jackson State Missions goal of \$750,000 was adopted and an annual offering of more than \$3,100 was collected to provide magazine subscriptions for foreign missionaries from Arkansas.

Participants also voted to suspend a bylaw concerning the term of office for state WMU president. Donna Fine of Fort Smith, retiring recording secretary, explained that the bylaw specifies that WMU officers shall serve no more than four consecutive one-year terms.

"At this time we do not know how the restructuring that is taking place with the Arkansas Baptist State Convention's Executive Board programs will call for changes related to the work of Arkansas WMU and its bylaws, policies and guidelines," Fine noted. "It may be in the best interest...of Arkansas WMU for the same person who has led us during this time of change to serve another year in the transition time."

Beverly Coad of Fort Worth, Texas, directed music sessions and Peggy Pearson, associate in the ABCS church music ministries department, was accompanist. Special music included a choir from the women's unit of Tucker Prison in Pine Bluff.

John Merritt, a Southern Baptist foreign missionary who is retiring as executive director of the European Baptist Convention, led Bible studies during the annual meeting. Using I Corinthians 3 for the studies, he emphasized that today's Christians should know who they are just as Paul instructed Christians in the church of Corinth to know who they were.

"You must not be followers of men as those immature Christians were," he declared. "Paul had to feed them with



Recording secretary Clemmie Edwards (left) and president Barbara Wikman are among 1997-98 WMU officers. Also serving is vice president Nadean Bell.

milk rather than solid food because they still lived as men of the world rather than co-laborers of God.

"You are God's chosen people, you are the salt of the earth and the light of the world," Merritt continued. "I learned at an early age from a mother who was a Royal Ambassador leader that God loved me and had created me to be His witness."

Merritt noted that his mother's leadership not only led to his serving in Europe for 32 years but to his sister serving in Gaza for 35 years and a cousin in Nigeria for 25 years. "You too are being used and will be used in the future by God as His partners, His field and His building."

"Christ was homeless during His earthly ministry," Merritt noted. "As you study the Bible you will note a building is never mentioned, but rather He held meetings in homes, on the hillside, along the road and even in a lone room, such as where the Last Supper was held.

"Therefore, I challenge you to continue as servants of God, sharing Him not in buildings but in His fields such as those of children, women in prison, policemen, special events and throughout the world which have been obvious at this 108th meeting of Arkansas WMU."

Ongoing "Hand in Hand" missions education with preschoolers, children, youth and adults was emphasized by Laura Savage, adult consultant with national Woman's Missionary Union.

Savage said young children need to be taught about Jesus, His love and the importance of sharing this through missions

around the world. She encouraged the development of a mentoring ministry for both older and young women, Christians and non-Christians.

She stressed that this ministry, if properly implemented, could spread throughout the entire church family as they ministered to all people, including unwed mothers and college students.

"Children are our most precious resource today," Savage said during a presentation about children. "They are the example used by Jesus when He instructed us to become as little children and reminded us to have the unquestioning trust and faith of a child.

"If He could make time for children, can we do less?" she asked. "Those on today's mission fields were ministered to by a special group of missions education leaders who provided them with weekly learning experiences."

Savage also urged participants "to reach out to today's young people who are not afraid to get their hands dirty and put their faith into action. Working hand in hand with youth is an investment in our future."

"Project Help: Child Advocacy," WMU's 1996-97 emphasis, was highlighted in a Celebrate Children segment led by Sandy Wisdom-Martin, an associate in the state convention mission department.

Hannah Bethel, a kindergarten student from First Church, Benton, sang "I Am A Child" preceding the discussion by Martin who explained that this year of special emphasis provides opportunities to help children experience a secure, loving home; adequate health care; positive learning environments; and settings free from hatred and racism.

"Most importantly every child needs the spiritual training to help him or her stand firm under the pressures of life, to know that God loves them and cares for them and has a plan for their life."

Emphasizing that "the Lord wants you to do something," Martin said she will be praying that God will lead each participant in the right direction as they take time to celebrate children.

Involvement in the April 8 Foreign Mission Board appointment service in Little Rock was promoted by ABCS associate executive director Jimmie Sheffield and Baptist Student Union associate Diane Parker.

Give "Em a Hand sessions led by Vickie Lloyd of Fayetteville at the close of each session challenged participants to make a difference in the world. "Our goal must be to see sinners repent," she declared. "As you leave here re-energized, I hope you will be determined to use those hands to reach out and touch - whether it is on your knees in prayer, sharing with others, ministering to others or through giving."

'Laborers together with God'

Ketner affirms WMU members' involvement in missions

"I want to thank you for being 'laborers together with God' and for your faithfulness in missions service," Julia Ketner told WMU members during her WMU Executive Board report.

Ketner, executive director of Arkansas WMU, cited providing food for North Koreans, helping defeat gambling expansion in Arkansas, providing pew Bibles for European Baptist churches, giving a record amount to the three special mission offerings, serving as missions volunteers and serving as mission leaders in churches and associations as examples of "Hand in Hand" participation through WMU.

"In 1996, you responded to the call to provide food for North Korea, not once, but twice," she declared. "Thank you for leading your churches to give nearly 700 boxes of food and more than \$21,000 to help meet the physical needs of many who also have great spiritual needs. Continue to pray that this ministry might be used to open a closed door to the gospel in the communist country."

"You responded generously and gave money that purchased 792 Bibles, exceeding the goal of 600 by 192 for European Baptist Convention churches who on a given Sunday will have as many as 100 nations represented," Ketner said. "Churches in Germany, Russia, the Netherlands, Hungary and Poland have already received their new Bibles.... Thank you for making possible the Word of God for use by EBC churches."

Ketner affirmed WMU members for their personal missions involvement. "Our state Acteens Activator and Women on Mission Enterpriser teams served at the Summer Olympics in Atlanta," she said. "There they ministered to people from 40 nations through evangelistic outreach and hospitality ministries."

"Through our state chapter of Baptist Nursing Fellowship, volunteers assisted in tornado relief efforts in Van Buren and Fort Smith and just recently in Arkadelphia," she noted. "They ministered to children as parents applied for assistance from the Red Cross. Some BNF members traveled to Romania and Honduras for medical mission projects. Others collected empty film canisters and unused offering envelopes for use in Ghana, West Africa."

Ketner recognized those ministering through the Mississippi River Ministry, at the Hope Migrant Missions Center and the European Baptist Convention and Iowa partnerships. "Thank you for being willing to go, to allow your gifts and skills to be

used by the Father in meeting physical and spiritual needs of people."

Citing "the difference WMU can make in churches and individuals," Ketner said, "I know the difference that WMU members make as they are on mission for God."

Ketner was assisted in emphasizing the value of ongoing missions organizations by Lori McDaniel, who with her husband, Mike, pastor of First Church of Lake City, will be commissioned in Little Rock April 8 to serve as missionaries in Zambia, Africa.

McDaniel said that missions had been important to her, but always seemed to be in a different camp than her. "In fact, I was one of those GAs who never completed her badge work. It was when I married a pastor and felt that it was a sin if I didn't participate in WMU, that I began to hear testimonies that led me to a vision of sharing God with the world."

"Many times I prayed with missionaries with only my head bowed but my heart not bowed but when my sister served as a journeyman in Tanzania God allowed me to see the vital importance of lifting up missionaries around the world in prayer."

She concluded by expressing gratitude to WMU for letting God use their hands through her. "Now I will carry my hands to Zambia to do God's will."

Restructuring update

Describing restructuring as "a word that can bring about all sorts of feelings and thoughts," Ketner noted that "many of you have asked about your WMU staff and their place in the restructuring of the

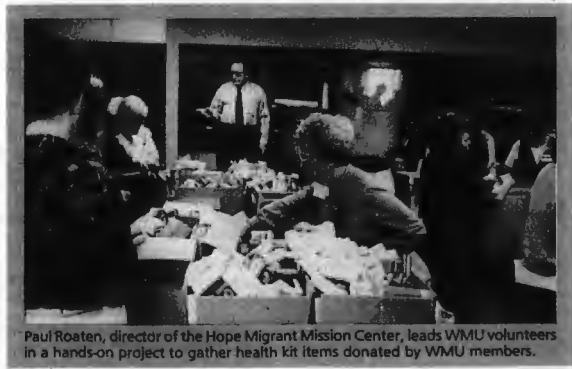
Executive Board programs of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention.

"Some things I know, some things I don't," she acknowledged. "I know that our mission vision continues to grow rather than diminish. Terminology may change, but our purpose for being — missions — will never change. Our response is to the command of Christ to go and tell...to make disciples of all nations."

She added, however, that "I don't know if what we have offered the churches in the past will continue because we will have less staff and possible changes in assignments."

"Arkansas WMU will continue to exist for you are Arkansas WMU — you who week by week, month by month, continue to keep missions alive in your churches. You will continue to be led by those you elect as state officers and the WMU Executive Board. Even though changes will come, know that what you do is of eternal importance. You are God's partner, working with Him, to accomplish His mission here and around the world."

"Women who are called, gifted and empowered will continue to see needs, prepare to meet those needs 'and just do it' until Jesus comes again," she said. "As our permanent watchword says, 'We are laborers together with God.' He is the one who guides and empowers each of us as we serve Him. May we face the future with confidence and determination to enlarge our numbers so we might continue to be the missions force we have been for nearly 109 years."



Paul Roaten, director of the Hope Migrant Mission Center, leads WMU volunteers in a hands-on project to gather health kit items donated by WMU members.

Home, foreign missionaries share needs

Highlights of the 1997 Woman's Missionary Union annual meeting included interviews with home and foreign missionaries and reports from their respective fields of work.

Alpha Goombi, a native American who serves as a Southern Baptist home missionary in an inner-city center in Omaha, Neb., noted that the Nebraska mission center resulted from the vision a Georgia WMU member had after returning home from assisting her church group with a Vacation Bible School in Nebraska.

She challenged WMU members to return home, study Matthew 25:35 and get involved in hands-on mission work. "In my inner-city ministry I need office assistants, people to work in clothing closets, weekend clubs for all ages, van drivers and Sunday School teachers or leaders to help children learn about Jesus on Wednesday evening."

Goombi shared that her first experience with WMU came when her mother-in-law's WMU gave a baby shower when her first son, Kurtis, was to be born. "This shower gave me the desire to do this for the mothers-to-be in my inner-city ministries," she remarked. "This gives me an opportunity to share Christ with them, especially those unwed mothers."

"These showers have resulted in the

children of these mothers being sent to the center where we can share Christ with them," she added.

John and Elizabeth Merritt, who have served as Southern Baptist foreign missionaries through the European Baptist Convention, affirmed the ongoing partnership between European Baptists and Arkansas Baptists. Emphasizing that this is "a very, very strategic time in the history of the European Baptist Convention and in the history of Europe," Merritt added, "We thank you for all that you're doing and all you have done for the partnership."

Noting that the partnership began "just after God tore down a big, long, strong wall," he pointed out, "The time of the partnership, for us, has been a time of building up."

According to Mrs. Merritt, Arkansas Baptists have been a help to European Baptist churches, pastors and convention staff. "We have grown to love you, Arkansas Baptists," she said. "The people who are reached in Europe, you are part of that work."

Curtis and Debic Sergeant, Cooperative Service International representatives, noted that information concerning their mission service is limited because of the area in which they work. They requested prayer for continuing boldness, commit-

ment for believers and additional workers.

He praised WMU members for their gifts to the Cooperative Program and the Little Moon Christmas Offering. "Your gifts and prayer support are the major keys which make our work possible," he said.

"I would like to challenge you to pray for us, for our health and for you to become open to do volunteer missions," his wife added. "It does not have to be a jungle experience. There are so many ways you can become involved in missions, including to become a motivator or to share Christ with those GAs and RAs who do not know Him. You are their role model."

Paul Roaten, director of the Hope Migrant Mission Center, expressed appreciation to WMU members for their contributions to the Dixie Jackson State Missions Offering and the provisions of hygiene articles which aided in ministering to 11,479 migrants during 1996. "Knowing that someone cares makes the migrants so happy," he affirmed.

Roaten explained that moving the Hope ministry later this year to a new center would provide an even better opportunity for ongoing migrant ministry. "Please pray for us and schedule a time to visit the new center for which you have helped provide," he added.

Ministry testimonies affirm personal involvement

Testimonies about "Hand in Hand" efforts of Arkansas Woman's Missionary Union were shared with participants attending the 1997 annual meeting.

Mike Davis, an 11-year veteran with the North Little Rock Police Department and a member of its SWAT team, shared how the police prayer ministry of Women on Mission at Park Hill Church in North Little Rock, has influenced members of the police force, leading some of them who had never been to church before to attend Park Hill.

Davis, a member of the church, noted, "I at first was very skeptical about whether this would be a consistent ministry but for six years these women have ministered to our policemen not only through prayer but through cards, visits, banquets and the placement of 'We love police officers' hearts throughout the department."

Davis, who had a black strip across his badge, explained it was there because two Arkansas policemen had been killed in the line of duty during the past week. "Yes, there is danger in being a police officer," he shared. "I challenge you as you return to begin this life-changing police ministry in the area where you live."

Brenda Hunter of Alma shared her hands-on experiences at the 1996 Olympics as a member of the Arkansas Women on Mission team which ministered in the downtown area of Atlanta.

"Even though I had not had the opportunity to learn of missions as a child or youth, God still opened the doors for me to serve on this mission team," she said. "In the downtown mission site, I assisted in sweeping floors, filling goody sacks, answering the phone, ministering on the street and giving direction in a city I knew nothing about. As I rode the MARTA (subway), I prayed

for hands-on opportunities to share Jesus with those by whom I rode."

Daisy, an inmate from the women's unit at Tucker Prison, shared in her personal testimony how someone sharing the gospel at a county jail had brought her to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ as her Lord and Savior.

"If Christ should return tonight even though I have only served four years of my 60-year term for drugs, I know where I will be," she said. "Four years ago I could not have said that but accepting Christ is not about me anymore; it is about Him. Whether it is in the free world or in a prison, we all serve the same Lord and Savior."

"The things which are now happening at the Tucker unit are very exciting," she continued. "Even though Satan tries to come in, God continues to work in lives there."

Norman and Kay Roberts, who have served as missions volunteers in India, Indonesia and Europe, affirmed the opportunity for others to get involved in volunteer mission work.

"Our story is a story of God's amazing faithfulness and His awesome surprises," Mrs. Roberts shared. "Who would have thought He would make us a place in retirement for global ministry...For his call, His open doors and His enablement, we praise Him."

"I've enjoyed hearing missionaries tell of working in faraway places," Roberts added. "Retirement has given us a special opportunity not only to hear about missions but to experience missions in faraway places."

"The world is waiting for our praying, our giving and our going," Mrs. Roberts noted. "God will honor our faithfulness."

Week of Prayer 'major benefit' for families

Arkansas Baptists will have the opportunity to participate in the Week of Prayer for Strengthening Families emphasis May 4-11, using a special prayer planning guide which Gerald Jackson said can be "a major benefit" to families.

"The week can be a major benefit for families in that families that do not do regular Bible study and worship can use the suggestions for family worship time for beginning something they are not now doing," explained Jackson, an associate in the Arkansas Baptist State Convention discipleship and family ministry department.

"Most Baptist families do not do regular family worship time," he added. "Part of the reason is that people don't know how." He said the guide "is simple and one that any kind of family can pick up on."

The Week of Prayer is a project of the 1997 ABCS emphasis, Strengthen the Family, and uses a three-point objective of calling families to pray, families to pray for one another and churches to pray for families.

Specifically, said Jackson, "the church is encouraged to encourage families to pray together, encourage two families to be prayer partners to pray for each other and schedule a special prayer time during the week when the church will pray for family needs in the church and community."

Among suggestions offered in the planning guide is for each family to meet together at least one time during the week to pray for their family and other families in the church and community, with an agenda for a family prayer time for the week which includes a devotional thought and activity for the participating family.

Other suggestions include step-by-step processes for family partnerships and for church worship as well as a guide for family worship and prayer resources.

To obtain a prayer planning guide, individuals may contact their pastor or associational director of missions.

For more information on planning for the Week of Prayer, contact Jackson toll-free in state at 1-800-838-ABSC or locally in Little Rock at 376-4791, ext. 5160.

Prayer session to precede FMB appointment service

Arkansas Baptists will call on the Lord in prayer at a special time of prayer prior to the Foreign Mission Board Appointment Service April 8 at the Statehouse Convention Center in downtown Little Rock. The prayer session, to be held in Pope Room C at the convention center, will begin at 6 p.m. and conclude at 6:45.

Bill Elliff, chairman of the appointment service prayer committee, urged all appointment service participants to attend the session. "The importance of the prayer session is relative to the importance of the appointment service. If we recognize how critical it is that God be present at a strategic gathering of 7,000 Arkansas Baptists, if we think it's important that God be present and we are laying our hands on a large number of missionaries who are going out to represent the kingdom and represent us in the coming days, then we need the Lord in that moment."

Elliff, pastor of First Church in Little Rock, will lead the service. "We will walk them through 45 minutes of very directed prayer time."

"Participants don't need to be fearful that they're going to have to come and just

sit in a room and not know what to do," he explained. "I will lead that time in a way that everybody will be involved, everybody will participate and everybody will know what to pray for."

"All of us know that God comes in response to our humble dependency upon Him and that is most clearly expressed through prayer," Elliff noted. "Draw near to me and I will draw near to thee," the Lord says. We think it's important for a large group of people to get on their faces before the Lord and say, 'God, we ask you to come down in power on this moment.'"

He pointed out that although the prayer session "will begin right at 6 p.m., you can come in after that and will not interrupt the program. If you cannot get there at 6:15, still come, but if you can get there at five minutes before 6 and be ready to go, that will be great."

Prayer session participants may leave personal items in chairs in the convention center's main hall prior to the prayer session in order to reserve their places for the service.

Planners said the event is likely to draw more than 7,000 participants to witness the appointment of more than 60 Southern Baptist foreign missionaries.



Practicum to teach participants 'willing to walk' with the Lord

Participants will receive "actual experience" in prayerwalking at the Prayerwalking Practicum: Taking Steps to Touch Your World, to be held May 2-3 at Immanuel Church in Little Rock, said Jimmie Sheffield, associate executive director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention.

"Prayerwalking, in its most basic expression, is simply a follower of Christ who is willing to go out and walk with the Lord through a neighborhood, talking with Him about the people of that area and listening to Him as He talks about those people and His desires for them," explained Sheffield, who noted that he had participated in a large-scale prayerwalk prior to the 1995 Southern Baptist Convention in Atlanta. "We walked through downtown Atlanta, praying for the thousands of people who were rushing everywhere. The experience made me more aware of people and their needs."

Sheffield said the practicum will "give you the actual experience of participating in a prayerwalk and train you to go back to your community and lead others to get involved in prayerwalking."

The practicum program will feature leader Randy Sprinkle, director of International Prayer Strategy for the Foreign Mission Board, and will begin at 7 p.m. Friday and conclude at noon on Saturday.

The cost for the practicum is \$10 per person and includes materials, breaks and a light breakfast.

For more information or to register, contact Sheffield toll-free in state at 1-800-838-ABSC or locally in Little Rock at 376-4791, ext. 5103.

Students 'Breakaway' into revival

Russell N. Dillard

Associate Editor, Arkansas Baptist



"I just can't explain it." That was the phrase I heard on the other end of the phone line when I asked youth and education minister Alex Ennes to describe a revival that began at Cedar Heights Church in North Little Rock and has since spilled over into other area churches and local schools.

"I just can't explain it" — there it was...the phrase. While it wreaks havoc on an interview, it also gave me some comfort and convinced me I needed to write an on-site story. Ennes' response is a typical human confirmation of a genuine movement of God: The mind of man simply can't explain it.

I figured I'd try anyway, so I packed up camera and recorder to attend Breakaway, the host event at Cedar Heights that helped spark the ongoing revival. Breakaway began last October as a weekly Friday night youth meeting, held from 10 p.m. to midnight, and has grown to an average attendance of nearly 300.

"Some of them are our own church members, but they'll come from every denomination in this area," Ennes noted. "Assembly of God, Full Gospel, Methodist, Catholic, Free-will Baptist, we've even had some Mormons come and get saved."

But while salvation experiences are an important part of the Breakaway experience, they were not the initial goal. "One of my goals was to change a campus and our broader goal was to change a school district," he explained. "I came into an initial meeting with a principal and a key vice principal and apologized to them and asked for their forgiveness for the way our church had never been involved....We wanted to repent of the way we had been treating them."

So church members began Breakaway,

giving the event its present format: serving a meal in the fellowship hall then moving to the sanctuary for worship and praise, a message and invitation.

Pastor Charlie Winters said the event's format "grew out of my participation in Super Summer Arkansas. I loved the Joy Explo times, our worship times together. I dreamed of a day when we could equate that in a local church setting. I was willing to do anything I could...because of the impact that I had seen those kinds of services have not just on young people's lives, but the impact it had on my life."

Winters, who operates a light board and counsels students making decisions, then "I step out of the way," emphasized that Breakaway "has not been and is not a budget line item."

"One of the things Alex felt deeply convicted about was that if God was really in it, God would provide for finances supernaturally," he said. Church members donate funds to Breakaway in a treasure chest at the front of the sanctuary "because we think of our youth as treasures."

While adults serve up burgers and participants eat, one thing becomes instantly noticeable: there are kids everywhere. I spent two minutes moving through a 30-foot hallway.

'It's the Spirit of God'

"It's the Spirit of God that motivates them to come," noted Dennis Crain, 16. "A lot of people come for the good music and there's the food. But I believe God is doing it. We didn't do anything but buy some burgers and tell people about it and it keeps getting bigger and bigger. Only God can do that."

Adult member Lynn Whitaker, who serves up food in the kitchen, agreed with Crain. "We're just helping out. It's amazing to see the work God is doing and you just want to be part of it any way you can."

Ennes said the congregation relies on adults like Whitaker to make the program work. "We have 40 to 60 adults doing everything from working the parking lot as security to people in the kitchen. We

had 20 adults who went through CWT (witness training) specifically for Breakaway."

Following the meal, students stream into the sanctuary for worship. The service featured Dr. Nimbus and the Noisemakers, a contemporary Christian band that one participant described as "a cross between Wayne's World and worship and praise."

It immediately becomes clear that they like the worship style. Students crowd the sanctuary platform, clapping and singing along with the band. And it is loud: window-shaking, teeth-jarring loud.

"It's a place where we can come and worship God with all of our friends," said Jennifer Walls, 13. "All the non-Christians can come and have a really good time and see what it's like."

"It's a chance for teenagers to get in touch with God," elaborated Ray Cash, 15, "being able to worship God among friends."

After worship time, participants heard a message from Ennes, who began with some humorous headlines from newspapers. "Iraqi head seeks arms...Eye drops off shelf...Enraged cow injures farmer with ax...Miners refuse to work after death...Squad helps dog bite victim..."

"Within each one of us, we are projecting a headline about who we are," he said. "Some of our friends may look at us and laugh in the same way that we laugh at these headlines, because some of you may be saying, 'I'm a Christian, I go to church.' Are people sitting around debating whether or not you are a Christian?"

Ennes also gave students "two things to get back on track with God:"

■ "You've got to reset your priorities. What's important to you? You spell love L...I...m...e... Are you more concerned with football, basketball, your academic standing, your social standing? You have to spend time with God."

■ "Be grateful to God. Just sit down before God and say, 'God, I don't know much about prayer, but I just want to thank you for sending your Son.'"

Following an invitation, a dozen students came forward with decisions.



While their friends were being counseled, Ennes gave an altar call to the students remaining in the sanctuary. I marveled. More than 40 came forward, many burying their heads on the platform steps in prayer.

Among those praying was Matt Morgan, 14. "I go up to the front to pray to God to ask Him why. I wonder why God has given me the opportunity to see people changed.

"This is an experience that all of us have been blessed with," Morgan noted. "Every Friday night brings tears to my eyes, seeing all the people that love God and are getting saved and if they're already saved, just praising Him."

While stillness reigned during prayer time, the mood changed drastically when those who had come forward with decisions filed back into the sanctuary. Ennes introduced each student and their decision while their friends cheered, whistled and clapped their approval. "Nicky recommitted her life...Matt prayed to receive Christ...Heather recommitted...Jennifer recommitted...Ramsay prayed to receive Christ...Justin recommitted..."

Prayer from the heart

Lee Beard, a member of Indian Hills Church in Little Rock, attended to help the band. He said he was moved by "the response from the kids. They clapped when they introduced everybody. It was obvious from their response that it was from their heart and they were people they had been praying for."

"Everyone that comes through receives a Bible and material with six weeks of quiet time in it," said Ennes. "We've got over 200 that have professed Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior since Oct. 13 and 150 to 200 rededications. We've also had six young people...surrender to ministry."

"School administrators at Oak Grove Junior High and High School have marveled at the impact it's had on their student body and population," he said. "There are at least 100 high school students that meet for prayer every day after lunch and it's had a huge impact on our community and our churches."

"The teachers have told me they are seeing a decrease in class disruption," Ennes remarked. "The Christian movement or revival is happening."

As the kids piled into cars and vans at midnight, as the band loaded its gear and church members cleaned up, I noticed several young people who stayed to clean along with the adults and thought of the maturity a revival brings even to the young.

"It's a thing God told us to do," said Emily Winters, 16. "Even though we come up here at eight or nine o'clock and set up stuff and even though we're here to one in the morning tearing down, we could do none of this without Him."

Brantley issues 'code blue' alert for youth evangelism

Arkansas Baptists are in a "life or death" struggle, said Randy Brantley, "contesting with the Prince of Darkness for the lives of kids in our state and we must fight with the intensity of warriors." The response to this life or death struggle, he added, "should be a code blue response."

"Code blue is the hospital term, for a life-or-death emergency," explained Brantley, youth associate for the Arkansas Baptist State Convention evangelism department. "It is an emergency where everyone drops what he or she is doing to respond."

Indications of a code blue situation can be found statistically, he explained. "Suicide has increased 120 percent among kids ages 10 to 12 in the past 12 years. One out of three have considered suicide. One out of seven have attempted suicide. The homicide rate among 14- to 17-year-olds has increased 165 percent in the last 10 years. Marijuana use has doubled in the last two.

"There is a raging storm in our culture," he emphasized, "and there are dying cries of kids who are trying to face that storm without Jesus. We need rescuers: adults who know Jesus."

Brantley noted that in any life-saving situation, "dying people will not come to the life-saving station to be rescued. Rescuers must leave the safety of the life-saving station to save lives."

The rescue plan, he said, must involve the local church. "The church must be mobilized for battle. If this generation is lost, it is not because Satan is more powerful or has something better to offer. It will be because the church didn't show up for the battle."

He noted that throughout the past several decades, youth have lost their innocence, respect for authority, love and hope. "It is our job to bring them to a Savior who restores lost innocence with His forgiveness, restores lost

authority with His Lordship, restores lost love, with a love relationship and restores lost hope with purpose and a reason to live."

Despite the bad news, he also offered some good: "Young people are ready for Jesus. They don't know they are ready for Jesus, they just know they are ready for something" and emphasized that personal witnessing to teens by adults is a crucial factor.

"When young people feel an authentic love and hear us openly present Christ," he said, "they will respond to the Savior."



If this generation is lost, it is not because Satan is more powerful or has something better to offer. It will be because the church didn't show up for the battle.

Randy Brantley

Youth associate
ABCS evangelism department

Age is a vital factor in reaching teens, he noted. "The church has nothing more urgent to do than reach people before their lives turn hard. We must reach them while they are young."

He explained there are "five imperatives" for youth workers in reaching lost students. "Focus on Jesus, start with their need, package the gospel attractively, go to

their world and give them love."

Brantley said adults presenting the gospel to teens in the post-Christian era must "begin with what is important to them: relationships." He shared four relational points for gospel presentation:

■ Citing Colossians 1:16, he said, "It is a relationship you're supposed to have."

■ "It is a relationship you don't have" (Isaiah 59:2, Romans 6:23).

■ "It is a relationship you can have" (1 Peter 3:18).

■ Finally, "it's a relationship you must choose" (John 3:16), he concluded, "but there are five things that you can do at this point: reject Him, ignore Him, postpone Him, agree with Him and do nothing or agree with Him and commit themselves to Him."

"They must select the fifth choice," he insisted. "The first four end up at the same place: away from God forever."

people & places

COMPILED BY MILLIE GILL

TRANSITIONS

Billy Hood is pastor of Riverside Church of Donaldson, coming there from Eagle Lake Crossroads Church of Hermitage. He and his wife, Maggie, have two adult daughters, Paula Jeanne Nix and Billie Joe Givens.

Howard Huddle is pastor of Kibler Church. He came there from Kennett, Mo., where he was pastor of Ely Church. Huddle is a graduate of Williams Baptist College and Christian Bible College and Seminary. He and his wife, Sherry, have two children, Aaron and Audrey.

David Barrett is serving as pastor of Gladden Church, coming there from Lakeshore Church of Horseshoe Lake. He previously served other churches in Arkansas, Mississippi and Tennessee. Barrett is a graduate of Mid-America Seminary and the Word of Life Bible Institute in Schroon Lake, N.Y. He and his wife, Susan, have three children, Jennifer Joy, Lindsay Anne and Brandon Christopher.

John Mark Little is bivocational pastor of Shiloh Church of Hamburg. He is a city mail carrier for Crossett. Little and his wife, Vickie, reside in Huttig with their sons, John Blake and Dustin.

Tim Haas is the pastor of Pleasant Lane Church of Crossett. Retired from the U.S. Air Force, Haas currently is employed by Bemis. He and his wife, Karen, have a daughter, Stacey, and two sons, Stephen and Matthew.

Coy Camp has accepted a call to serve as pastor of Whitton Church. He previously was pastor of Claude Road Church in Pine. He also has served other churches in Arkansas, Missouri and Indiana. He and his wife, Ruby, have two sons and two daughters.

Slip Schalk is serving as youth minister for Mount Zion Church, Paragould. He is a senior at Williams Baptist Church.

Gerald Perry has retired as a Southern Baptist pastor, following 43 years in the pastoral ministry. Perry, who retired from First Church of Strong where he had served for eight years, was honored by the church with a "Roast and Toast" on March 22 and with a special worship service March 23. Perry, who is available to serve as a supply preacher, to lead revivals or to serve as a Bible teacher, may be contacted at P.O. Box 367, Strong, AR 71765; phone 870-725-2011.

Billy George West retired April 1 as pastor of Montrose Church. He and his wife, Jean, will make their home at 536 S. Gabbert St., Monticello, AR 71655. West,

who will be available to serve as an interim pastor, supply preacher or to lead revivals, may be contacted at his Monticello address or by calling 870-367-5463.

Leo Hughes, a retired pastor and director of missions for Southwest Association, has accepted a call to serve as pastor of Millwood Church in Ashdown where he has been interim pastor. Hughes, who has served on the Arkansas Baptist State Convention Executive Board, is a graduate of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Robert Black is pastor of Hatton Church of Cove. A native of Oklahoma, he is retired from U.S. military service.

Rusty Hart has accepted the call to serve as full-time minister of music for First Church of Little Rock where he has been serving as music associate since 1994 and as interim minister of music since Jan. 1, 1997. He previously served as a staff member of Crystal Valley and Central churches of North Little Rock and First Church of Gravel Ridge. Hart is a graduate of Ouachita Baptist University. He and his wife, Lori, have three daughters, Laura, Megan and Hannah.

Jack Schoeppey is serving as music director for First Church of Hatfield. A native of Fort Smith, he is retired from North Richland Hills Church of Fort Worth, Texas.

Joe Statton has resigned as minister of administration at Central Church in Magnolia to serve in the same position for First Church of Shreveport, La. Statton, who has served the Magnolia church for 22 years, was previously minister of education there. He also has been a member of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention Executive Board and a trustee of Arkansas Baptist Children's Homes and Family Ministries.

Herb Shreve has announced his retirement from the Christian Motorcyclists Association. A member of Dallas Avenue Church in Mena, he is available for revivals and conferences. Shreve may be contacted at P.O. Box 397, Cove, AR 71937; phone 405-244-7355.

CHURCH LIFE

DeQueen First Church held "March Madness for the Master" revival services that included community-wide involvement and resulted in 110 professions of faith. Ken Freeman and Kelly Godsey were the evangelistic team.

Friendship Church of Springdale will celebrate its 150th anniversary May 18 at

its new location site on Highway 412 East. Former pastor Jack Anglin and pastor Stanton Gram will be the speakers for the 10 a.m. service.

Wolter First Church recently ordained Matt Knight as a deacon. Interim pastor Lendol Jackson preached the ordination message.

MILESTONES

Bob, Bettye and Gregg Frizzell were honored Feb. 9 by England First Church in recognition of their service in the church's music ministry. Bob and Bettye Frizzell have served the church for more than 35 years and their son, Gregg, has been the church pianist for 12 years. Bob was minister of music for 17 years, served as interim minister of music on several occasions and currently is assistant song leader for Sunday worship services. Bettye has served as church organist since 1960. The family was presented with plaques, letters of appreciation, cards from former pastors and a letter from Gov. Mike Huckabee.

Jerry Wilson, minister of music and youth at Batesville First Church, was honored March 16 with a surprise fellowship in recognition of five years of service. The recognition service included a comedy presented by youth of the church.

OBITUARIES

Jack Gullidge of Chandler, Ariz., died Feb. 18 at age 73. A native of Arkansas, he was a retired Southern Baptist minister who had been pastor of churches in Arkansas and Arizona. He also was retired from a 25-year ministry with the Baptist Sunday School Board where he had served as editor of both *Proclaim* and *Mature Living* magazines. He is survived by his wife of 54 years, Shirley; a daughter and two sons; seven grandchildren; three great-grandchildren; and one sister, Emma Zelle G. Manning of Crossett.

Robert L. DeBusk of Heber Springs died March 8 at age 80. He was a member of First Church of Heber Springs. Survivors are his wife, Mary DeBusk; two sons, J.R. DeBusk, pastor of South Side Church of Pine Bluff, and Larry DeBusk of Heber Springs; and six grandchildren.

Ralph R. Ferguson of North Little Rock died March 20 at age 88. His funeral service was held March 24 at First Church of Little Rock where he was a member. He was the retired pastor of Vimy Ridge Immanuel Church. Survivors are his wife, Velma Martin Ferguson; five sons, James and David, both of Bryant, Allan of Little Rock, John and Charles, both of Benton; a half sister; a half brother; 12 grandchildren; and 14 great-grandchildren.

1996 Arkansas Baptist baptism leaders

*Based on 1996 Annual Church Profiles

TOTAL NUMBER OF BAPTISMS

Resident Membership 1-99

Church	Association	Baptisms
Cass, Ozark	CLEAR CREEK	71
Daniel Chapel, Dumas	DELTA	20
Twelve Corners, Garfield	CONCORD	18
Southern Hills, Ft. Smith	NORTHWEST	18
Floyd First, Romance	CALVARY	17
Uniontown	CLEAR CREEK	16
Sims	CADDO RIVER	16
Piney Point, Rogers	NORTHWEST	16
Searcy County, Marshall	NORTH ARKANSAS	15
Life Line, Pleasant Plains	LITTLE RED RIVER	15
Korean, Ft. Smith	CONCORD	15

Resident Membership 100-199

Church	Association	Baptisms
Harmony, Perryville	CONWAY-PERRY	42
Maranatha, Nashville	LITTLE RIVER	34
Arbanna, Mountain View	INDEPENDENCE	31
Gravette First	NORTHWEST	28
Hopewell, Harrison	NORTH ARKANSAS	25
Ft. Smith Hispanic	CONCORD	25
Roberson, Lonoke	CAROLINE	24
Yarbro, Blytheville	MISSISSIPPI COUNTY	24
Faith, Forrest City	TRI-COUNTY	23

Resident Membership 200-399

Church	Association	Baptisms
Southside, Paragould	GREENE COUNTY	96
Pleasant Hill, Cabot	CAROLINE	42
Tuckerman First	BLACK RIVER	38
East Mt. Zion, Clarksville	CLEAR CREEK	38
Greenbrier First	FAULKNER COUNTY	36
Clarksville Second	CLEAR CREEK	36
Amity First	GARLAND COUNTY	35
Valley Springs First	NORTH ARKANSAS	34
Calvary, Monticello	BARTHOLOMEW	30
Salem First	ROCKY BAYOU	30

Resident Membership 400-699

Church	Association	Baptisms
Eastside, Mountain Home	WHITE RIVER	74
Marmaduke First	GREENE COUNTY	64
Charly Southern, Rogers	NORTHWEST	60
Forrest City First	TRI-COUNTY	54
Maple Grove, Trumann	TRINITY	48
Lake City First	MOUNT ZION	40
Mansfield First	BUCKNER	36
Central, Bald Knob	CALVARY	35
Hunstville First	WASHINGTON-MADISON	33

Resident Membership 700-1400

Church	Association	Baptisms
Glorlyard, N. Little Rock	NORTH PULASKI	151
Lavaca First	CONCORD	104
West Memphis Second	TRI-COUNTY	79
East Side, Fort Smith	CONCORD	59
Alma First	CLEAR CREEK	57
Heber Springs First	LITTLE RED RIVER	47
Conway First	FAULKNER COUNTY	46
Watson Chapel, Pine Bluff	HARMONY	45
Haven Heights, Ft. Smith	CONCORD	44
Crossett First	ASHLEY COUNTY	41
Mountain Home First	WHITE RIVER	41

Resident Membership 1500-up

Church	Association	Baptisms
Springdale First	WASH.-MADISON	565
Hot Springs Second	CENTRAL	167
Nettleton, Jonesboro	MOUNT ZION	160
Trinity, Texarkana	SOUTHWEST	159
Fort Smith First	CONCORD	131
Immanuel, Rogers	NORTHWEST	98
Central, Jonesboro	MOUNT ZION	88
Rogers First	NORTHWEST	79
Cabot First	CAROLINE	78
West Memphis First	TRI-COUNTY	68

RATIO OF MEMBERS TO BAPTISMS

Resident Membership 1-99

Church	Association	Bapt. Ratio
Cass, Ozark	CLEAR CREEK	71 0.92
Second Hispanic, Clarksville	CLEAR CREEK	7 1.29
Sims	CADDO RIVER	16 1.50
Korean, Ft. Smith	CONCORD	15 2.00
Southern Hills, Ft. Smith	CONCORD	18 2.11
Searcy County, Marshall	NORTH ARK.	15 2.33
Primera Iglesia, Arkadelphia	RED RIVER	5 2.40
Floyd First, Romance	CALVARY	17 2.53
Spadra, Clarksville	CLEAR CREEK	10 2.70
Lakeshore Estates, Marion	TRI-COUNTY	9 2.89

Resident Membership 100-199

Church	Association	Bapt. Ratio
Maranatha, Nashville	LITTLE RIVER	34 4.06
Harmony, Perryville	CONWAY-PERRY	42 4.07
Faith, Forrest City	TRI-COUNTY	23 4.43
Hopewell, Harrison	NORTH ARK.	25 4.60
MISS. COUNTY	MISS. COUNTY	24 4.96
CONCORD	CONCORD	25 5.04
Arbanna, Mtn. View	INDEPENDENCE	31 5.35
Gravette First	NORTHWEST	28 5.54
Roberson, Lonoke	CAROLINE	24 5.54
Pleasant Valley, Shirley	NO. CENTRAL	19 5.74

Resident Membership 200-399

Church	Association	Bapt. Ratio
Southside, Paragould	GREENE	96 2.67
Highlands, Little Rock	PULASKI	24 8.42
Pleasant Hill, Cabot	CAROLINE	42 8.55
New Hope, Greenwood	CONCORD	22 9.14
Immanuel, West Memphis	TRI-COUNTY	27 9.33
Tuckerman First	BLACK RIVER	38 9.55
Valley Springs First	NORTH ARK.	34 10.15
Clarksville Second	CLEAR CREEK	36 10.17
East Mt. Zion, Clarksville	CLEAR CREEK	38 10.21
Amity First	GARLAND	35 10.23

Resident Membership 400-699

Church	Association	Bapt. Ratio
Eastside, Mountain Home	WHITE RIVER	74 8.82
Marmaduke First	GREENE	64 9.47
Maple Grove, Trumann	TRINITY	48 10.00
Charly Southern, Rogers	NORTHWEST	60 11.22
Lake City First	MOUNT ZION	40 11.73
Central, Bald Knob	CALVARY	35 12.03
Forrest City First	TRI-COUNTY	54 12.04
Hunstville First	WASH.-MADISON	33 12.48
Charleston First	CONCORD	32 12.88
Wooster First	FAULKNER	32 13.47

Resident Membership 700-1400

Church	Association	Bapt. Ratio
Glorlyard, N. Little Rock	NO. PULASKI	151 4.97
West Memphis Second	TRI-COUNTY	79 10.56
Lavaca First	CONCORD	104 11.14
Alma First	CLEAR CREEK	57 12.84
Heber Springs First	LT. RED RIVER	47 18.30
Mountain Home First	WHITE RIVER	41 18.88
Hopewell First	SOUTHWEST	35 20.31
Clinton First	NO. CENTRAL	37 20.78
Nashville First	LITTLE RIVER	34 21.15
Lowell First	NORTHWEST	32 22.91

Resident Membership 1500-up

Church	Association	Bapt. Ratio
Nettleton, Jonesboro	MOUNT ZION	160 9.46
Hot Springs Second	CENTRAL	165 12.91
Trinity, Texarkana	SOUTHWEST	159 13.53
Springdale First	WASH.-MADISON	565 16.20
Cabot First	CAROLINE	78 20.72
West Memphis First	TRI-COUNTY	68 22.07
Port Smith First	CONCORD	131 23.12
Bryant First Southern	PULASKI	62 24.31
Central, Jonesboro	MOUNT ZION	88 24.33
Immanuel, Rogers	NORTHWEST	98 25.00

A regional First Place Conference, to be held April 11-12 at First Church in Mountain Home, will offer a regimen of physical and spiritual fitness to participants. Planner Letha Mahan noted that the conference is "open to anyone who is interested in health and fitness. First Place was created as a Christ-centered weight control program emphasizing balance in four areas: physical, mental, emotional and spiritual." The program will feature seminars and keynote speaker Bobby Boyles, pastor of Eagle Heights Baptist Church in Oklahoma City, Okla. Mahan noted that since First Church began its First Place ministry in 1994 with 30 people, "we've consistently held the 12-week sessions, sometimes having as many as 80 people in six groups." Mahan reported that as a result of the church's First Place ministry, "We've seen people saved, families mended and countless prayers answered." The cost for the conference is \$55 and includes materials and three meals. For more information, contact Mahan at 501-425-3121.

A Disciple's PrayerLife Conference will be held at Eagle Heights Church in Harrison May 4-7. The conference, which will feature T.W. Hunt, will be offered free of charge to anyone wishing to attend. Hunt, author of *Disciple's PrayerLife* and a consultant for the Baptist Sunday School Board, also is author of *In God's Presence, The Baptist Doctrine of Prayer* and the popular discipleship study, *The Mind of Christ*. The only cost is for materials. For more information about the conference or to register, contact the Eagle Heights office at 501-741-5148.

Point of Grace and Wayne Watson, contemporary Christian musicians, will perform in an April-16 concert benefitting Arkadelphia-area tornado victims. Proceeds from the concert, to be held at the Sturgis Physical Education Center Arena on the Ouchita Baptist University campus, will go to the disaster relief fund through OBU's Center for the Family and Community. Point of Grace and Wayne Watson each are multiple Dove Award-winners and share a combined 30 top 10 Christian singles. Tickets for the concert, which will begin at 8 p.m., are \$15 per person and may be purchased at the student activities office at OBU, the Citizens Bank Marketplace branch or Piggy Wiggly in Arkadelphia, or the Little Rock Baptist Book Store. All four Point of Grace members, Heather Floyd, Denise Jones, Terry Jones and Shelley Phillips Breen, are OBU alumnae.

TRAINING UPDATE

It's Time to Tell, said Dean Finley, youth evangelism consultant for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board. Finley encouraged churches to observe the national Time to Tell emphasis April 7-13. He noted that Time to Tell "is that effort which encourages youth and college students to set a deadline for witnessing to their friends. The question needs to be, 'If you don't plan to tell them about Jesus in April, then when?'" Finley acknowledged that Time to Tell can be a good follow-up to other youth emphases. "For several years we have had the largest group of young people ever gather for See You at the Pole...and this February we carried True Love Waits to the campus. Now is the time for youth to lift their voices in giving witness to our source of hope."

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CHILDREN

Mother's Day Offering offers way to honor mothers, Ross notes

When John Ross recalls the stories of children helped by the ministries of the Arkansas Baptist Children's Homes and Family Ministries, he often thinks of Tyler.

"Tyler looks like a little cherub in the long T-shirt he uses for sleeping," said Ross, director of planned giving for the Arkansas Baptist agency. "He was so afraid of the dark when he came to us and often awoke screaming in the night. Tyler had never had anyone to hold him in their arms, tell him that Jesus lived in his room and assure him that no bad things were there."

Ross said that after Tyler was placed in an ABCHFM ministry, Tyler's houseparents "held him close and tucked him in. Tyler would stretch his chubby little arms wide and say, 'I love you with my whole heart.'"

Ross reported that Tyler "is now sleeping peacefully through the night, feeling the security of knowing someone cares and will protect him."

Tyler is among the nearly 500 children who lived in ABCHFM facilities and approximately 1,900 referrals from area offices last year whose mothers or other family members are unable to care adequately for them.

Ross noted that giving each year to the Mother's Day Offering for the Arkansas Baptist Children's Homes and Family Ministries is a "wonderful way to honor the contributions of mothers."

The Mother's Day Offering is among direct gifts, combined with Cooperative Program gifts, that make up 50 percent of the ABCHFM's \$1.3 million annual budget.

For more information on how your church can observe the Mother's Day Offering, contact Ross at the ABCHFM toll-free in state at 1-800-838-2272 or locally in Little Rock at 376-4791, ext. 5167.



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Proposed prayer amendment faces mixed reviews

WASHINGTON (ABP/BP)—Despite a disagreement among religious conservatives over the proper way to amend the U.S. Constitution, Rep. Ernest Istook, R-Okla., has announced plans to introduce an amendment defending religious practices, including school prayer.

The Religious Freedom Amendment, which will be introduced after Congress returns from its Easter recess, is similar to Istook's proposal last Congress. The key difference is the addition of a phrase prohibiting government from denying a "benefit" on account of religion. Opponents of the plan say that phrase would open the door to vouchers for religious schools and tax money for churches.

The Istook proposal reads: "The right to pray or acknowledge religious belief, heritage or tradition on public property, including public schools, shall not be infringed. The government shall not compel joining in prayer, initiate or compose

school prayers, discriminate against or deny a benefit on account of religion."

At a March 24 press conference with groups such as the Christian Coalition, Focus on the Family and Concerned Women for America, Istook said the new amendment "is the only way we can end 30 years of court decisions that turned First Amendment rights upside down."

A coalition of over 50 organizations,

including the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, the National Council of Churches and Americans United for Separation of Church and State, called the Istook amendment unnecessary, unwise and harmful to religion.

Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission officials, who affirm that a constitutional amendment is needed, insist that Istook's proposal is not the right one.



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O'Connell resigns BSU position

Diane O'Connell, Baptist Student Union director at Little Rock's University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences since 1988, has resigned effective April 30.

Voicing concern over "a problem that has recently confronted me that I cannot seem to get around," O'Connell said she was recently asked by Arkansas Baptist State Convention executive director Emil Turner to share her personal testimony at a statewide pastors' retreat.

Noting that "I am not able to do this," O'Connell added, "No one can know how very difficult it has been to open my heart and share the most horrendous and personal experiences of my life to the public these past 21 years." Emphasizing that "I just can't share so intimate a review of my life without the Spirit empowering me," she said, "I have to go with God, even at the risk of being seen as insubordinate."

Following O'Connell's decision not to share her testimony at the retreat, Turner reportedly assigned her to participate in a three-session Bible study on authority with Turner and state BSU department director David James. Although she agreed to participate in the study, she also opted to resign her BSU position.

"To me, this is simply an issue regarding the sharing of my testimony, not one of authority," O'Connell said following her resignation. "I don't feel insubordinate....If I'm perceived as insubordinate and a hindrance to the Arkansas Baptist State

Convention, then I must let my Father move me to a place where He can use me. I plan to do this in peace.

"I don't want to create a fuss or have people take sides," she added. "I just want people to understand this is a tragedy and not anything I would ever want to happen."



O'Connell

Responding to her resignation, Turner said, "We accepted her resignation with deep regret. Diane has had a productive ministry for the Lord among Arkansas Baptists that will be sorely missed."

"Diane O'Connell is a hard worker who has a deep passion for God and a desire for others to know Him personally and intimately," agreed James. "The Lord has His hand on her and will bless her wherever she goes."

Prior to serving at UAMS, O'Connell was BSU associate director at the University of Central Arkansas in Conway. She is a graduate of UCA and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

During her years at UAMS, the BSU ministry has seen dozens of students led to faith in Christ as well as hundreds of conversions during BSU mission trips, including 120 professions of faith during a recent trip to Ecuador.



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Proposed law threatens Christian witness in Israel

Mike Creswell

SBC Foreign Mission Board

Christian witnessing could become a crime punishable by a year in jail if a bill now being considered by the Israeli government becomes law.

Christians in Israel are alarmed by the law's vague wording, which they say could even be used to ban Bibles. And they say it could stifle the growth of Messianic Jews, those who have accepted Jesus Christ as the Messiah.

The bill, 5757-1996, would alter Israel's penal code to prohibit "inducement for religious conversion" and sets a one-year jail term for "whoever possesses contrary to the law or prints or imports tracts or publishes things in which there is an inducement for religious conversion."

Further, the law would authorize the government to confiscate "any tract or advertisement in which there is inducement to religious conversion." An explanation accompanying the law notes that "the state of Israel, in the framework of the existing laws, is opposed to any missionary seduction to convert religion, and is even more severe regarding the seduction of minors to convert religion."

Messianic Jewish leaders in Israel say the law proposal has come in response to mass mailings of evangelistic booklets called "The Peace" to a million households in Israel by U.S. television evangelist Morris Cerullo in late 1996.

The mass mailings were roundly criticized in Israel and some copies were

burned in front of the Knesset, or parliament building. "This is not the first time that (Cerullo) has advertised the Messiah in this way, and as usual, those who clean up after him are the Messianic Jews living here," said one believer.

"He produced a big backlash. He did not consult with anyone in Israel as far as I know," said David Groseclose, a Southern Baptist worker based in Haifa who oversees Southern Baptist work in Israel.

Personal evangelism vulnerable

The proposed law, however, could be applied to personal evangelism, and not just mass mailings, observers noted.

Messianic Jewish members now number up to 6,000, meeting in some three dozen congregations across Israel. Growth has been consistent in recent years.

The new bill was approved in its first reading by a vote of 21 to 7 and now must be approved in two more readings in Israel's Knesset to become law. A poll of lawmakers found that 78 of 120 will support the bill but opposition is mounting.

A delegation from the United Christian Council in Israel, representing most evangelical Christian groups in the country, met March 17 for an hour with Knesset member Nissim Zvili, secretary of the Labor Party, who co-sponsored the bill with Moshe Gafni of the Torah Judaism Party.

Zvili agreed the bill is poorly written and needs work. He told the delegation the law was not intended to outlaw the Bible or Christians, but agreed the law could be interpreted that way. But Zvili

said he is definitely against mass efforts to convert people.

Despite assurances the bill is not a broadside against Christians in Israel, many Messianic believers are concerned it could be just that once passed.

"If made law, such legislation would make illegal almost every evangelistic activity in Israel, and in essence, seriously affect the continued vitality and effectiveness of believers in Israel," Yossi Ovadia and Garry Delinger, two Messianic Jewish leaders, warned in a letter to congregations and home groups across Israel.

They point out Israel has no Bill of Rights as does the United States, so legislation affecting basic human rights can be adopted more easily than in America. But they say Israel has signed the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which affirms "freedom of thought, conscience and religion."

Zvili, however, expressed a different view of democracy. Asked about the proposal, he replied, "Of course we want a democracy. But even in a democracy you can't have people changing their religion."

Messianic leader Baruch Maoz called on Southern Baptists and other church groups in America to protest the proposed Israeli law in hopes of swaying Knesset members to vote against the bill.

"It is extremely important that as many telephone calls and letters of protest as possible are received at Israeli embassies and the office of the Israeli prime minister, and that these are received as soon as possible," Maoz said.

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SBC '97

SBC child care registration opens

DALLAS (BP)—Registration for on-site child care for preschool children of out-of-town messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting, June 17-19, in Dallas, is now being accepted.

A registration form is available by writing to SBC Preschool Child Care, c/o First Baptist Church, 1707 San Jacinto Place, Dallas, TX 75201, attention: Pat Gilbert. Included with the form will be sessions available and medical forms.

Child care fees will be \$8 per session. Each registration form must be accompanied by a non-refundable deposit of 50 percent of the anticipated cost.

Parents are advised to register promptly; registration will be on a first-come, first-served basis. Preschool child care will be held in the Dallas Convention Center, the site of the annual meeting.

missionary notes

David and Janene Ford, missionaries to Venezuela, have arrived on the field to begin their first term of service (address: Apartado 80920, Edo. Miranda, Caracas, Venezuela). He is a native of Missouri. The former Janene Wilson, she was born in West Helena.

Donald and Erma Nightow, missionaries to Brazil, are in the field (address: Caixa Postal #312, 38412-970 Uberlandia, M.G. Brazil). He lived in Mansfield. She is the former Erna Hawkins of Missouri. They were appointed in 1973.

Ken and Lygia Lovelace, missionaries to Portugal, have arrived on the field to begin their first term of service (address: Av. Bombeiros Voluntarios, No. 42-11F, 1495 Alges, Portugal). A native of Arkansas, he was born in Pine Bluff and considers White Hall his hometown. She is the former Lygia Groom of Texas.

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Publications secretary—with excellent typing and editing skills needed. Will support the pastor and minister of music as secretary. PageMaker 5.0 and WordPerfect 6.1 knowledge a plus. Please send resume to Ross Burton, Calvary Baptist Church, 1901 N. Pierce St., Little Rock, AR 72207.

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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 80 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.

Volunteers needed for Crossover

ALPHARETTA, GA (BP)—Volunteers for Crossover Dallas should sign up by May 1, said organizers of the evangelism thrust to precede this year's Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting.

"We're trying to recruit as many volunteers from as many places as will come," said Don Smith of the Home Mission Board evangelism staff. People who do not meet the May 1 deadline can participate, but early registration gives leaders time to match volunteers' interests with local church needs, Smith said.

The Dallas Baptist Association estimates more than 1 million people who do not know Christ live in the Dallas metroplex. To target the residents, Crossover Dallas will include block parties, door-to-door

witnessing teams and street evangelism venues. Each activity is designed to present the gospel and discover prospects for local churches.

Crossover began in 1989 as a pre-convention evangelism thrust. Crossover New Orleans in 1996 resulted in 2,476 professions of faith in Christ and one new church start.

Southern Baptists can participate as individuals, a group from one church or a group from several churches, Smith said.

Most Crossover Dallas events will take place Saturday, June 14, with volunteer training on Friday, June 13. To register, call the Dallas Baptist Association at 214-324-2803 or write, attention Jana Young, 8001 East RL Thornton, Dallas, TX 75228.

church services directory

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Family Bible

Suffering in a sinful world

By Grant Ethridge, pastor,
First Church, Lavaca

Basic passage:
Revelation 2:8-17

Focal passage:
Revelation 2:8-10, 13-14, 16

Central truth:
We must both be willing to die and live for the faith.

Life and Work

You are not alone

By Randy Magar, pastor,
Newark Southern Church

Basic passage:
John 14:15-31; 15:26-27

Focal passage:
John 14:16-18, 25-26;
15:26-27

Central truth:
The presence of Christ abides in us and with us through the Holy Spirit.

Explore the Bible

The redemptive plan of God

By Katsy McAlistair, member,
First Church, El Dorado

Basic passage:
Genesis 11:27-12:3; 15; 17

Focal passage:
Genesis 12:1-3

Central truth:
Our reconciliation and fellowship with God is based on our response of trust and faith.

Verses 8-11 of Revelation 2 are the shortest of the seven letters to the churches. Smyrna was a church that suffered. Here is a message if you are suffering and if not, this will help prepare you for when you will suffer.

The Lord wrote this letter and said He is the first and the last. He is there before we suffer and He will be there when our suffering is over. When we do not understand why we suffer, we can take comfort in His sovereignty. Aren't you glad He did not say "who was alive but now is dead." God says, "I know." He knows everything that happens to us.

Christians suffer mentally and emotionally because of peer pressure from the world. Sometimes we suffer financially. They had no money on earth for their faithfulness to Christ, but they had plenty of treasure in Heaven. Christians are not here to be healthy and wealthy, but are here to

glorify God.

They even suffered persecution physically. But Jesus said, "Do not fear." We have no reason to fear man as long as we have the Lord's approval.

Pergamos did not have the Lord's approval because they compromised. Although they did not deny the faith, they were tolerant. The church today is still in danger of tolerance. Don't be so open-minded that your brain rack falls out! Believers cannot be friends with the world and friends with God.

Pergamos literally means married. You cannot be married to two people at the same time. Christians are the bride of Christ and should not court or be married to the world. Are you keeping yourself pure? Will one small compromise hurt? Christ warned them to repent or He would fight against them. The good news is for those who do repent, He will reward.

Today we look at the role of the Holy Spirit in the disciples lives, your life. Here He is called "paraclete," a Greek transliteration meaning "called alongside to help." He is the promised presence of whom Christ spoke when He said, "I will not leave you comfortless."

■ *The Spirit as Your Helper* (vv. 16-18). The emphasis here is on presence. Jesus calls the Holy Spirit another "comforter" (KJV), "counselor" (NIV), "helper" (NAS). The word "another" can mean of a different kind, or of the same kind; the latter is intended. This implies that Jesus is our first "paraclete." This means that the presence promised is not a different kind, but the very same presence in a new kind of way.

The Spirit of God is not different from the Son of God, they are both God. The Spirit after the resurrection would make His abode in the life of the disciples. You, too, are not abandoned, He is with you, yes even Jesus (Heb. 13:5).

■ *The Spirit as Your Teacher* (vv. 25-26). Many things the apostles did not understand concerning the doctrines of Jesus. These were not made clear until the promised Spirit came. The best evidence

of the fulfillment of this promise is the completion of the New Testament, a mature apostolic witness of Christ.

The Holy Spirit taught these men and through inspiration they penned these words. Without His role as teacher there would not, could not have been any inscriptured word from God. He still teaches us, through illumination. As you experience the word and have one of those, "Ah, Ha! moments," and the light comes on, that's the Holy Spirit teaching you the truth.

■ *The Spirit as Your Advocate* (15:26-27). A courtroom term, "advocate," the Spirit's work will be to defend or present the case of Jesus to the world. He will testify of Christ, not Himself. This witness will not be accomplished apart from us, who are Jesus' disciples. Could verse 27 be an anticipation of Acts 1:8? Yes! We are empowered to be witnesses of Christ and the Spirit will be our advocate in this endeavor.

The Spirit was promised to strengthen us. The very presence of Christ lives in you through the Holy Spirit. Indeed, you are not alone.

In chapters 1-11 the writer of Genesis focuses on the creation of the world, with attention upon mankind in general as there was no covenant nation. In this lesson, the writer draws the focus in upon one nation and a specific line of Hebrew people, Abram and his descendants.

Abram's family was nomadic. They had lived in a polytheistic society in Ur and Haran. It was at Haran that God spoke to Abram and told him to move...unto a land that I will shew thee (Gen. 12:10), which was Canaan. Abram made this step to monotheism. Obeying God and making a move was his first act of trusting obedience and great faith. He would be leaving his kinsmen and his tribe. Family heritage was a person's identity and security in the ancient east, so it would be difficult to make a new beginning.

Covenants were not something new; God had made a covenant with Noah, but this covenant with Abram had a new dimension. He was seeking a faithful servant to start a nation of people through

whom he could do a redemptive work.

God promised Abram that his name would be great, his descendants blessed, and that he would possess a homeland. This would be his compensation for the lost identity and heritage of his fathers which he had given up when he moved to Canaan. In our greater passage, in chapter 15, we see Abraham and his wife in their old age. They are in their promised homeland and are childless. God again assures Abraham that he will be the father of many nations and will be blessed with many children for his faithful obedience.

God reveals himself to us through the life of Abraham and others with whom he establishes a personal relationship. Abram rejected the many gods of Ur and Haran and accepted the one true God. In much the same way the redemptive process begins with us when we reject the world and move towards the Lord. God is the initiator of the redemption process but we must respond, as did Abraham, in faith and trusting obedience.

LESSONS FOR LIVING

After reading verse 19, Thyatira seems like a church that has it all together. The church had made tremendous progress and growth. However, they were tolerant of an evil person. Just as the Lord said to them, He says to us personally, "I know." Christ will judge you according to all He knows about you and the Lord knows everything.

How many in the '90s could boast of their works? Love? Service? Faith? Or patience? Their progress did not cause Jesus to overlook their problem. A dentist never says there are so many good teeth, we are going to ignore the bad ones.

Who was Jezebel? She was the wife of Ahab, known for opposing the servant of God. She is the personification of idolatry and immorality. Christian families today must not tolerate what God has said He hates. While sin is rebuked, the faithful saints are rewarded.

We need to examine our lives to make sure our

idol is not some Hollywood star or movie star. Our eyes should be on the Morning Star, the light of the world, Jesus Christ. What a word to those who boast of their sun god.

Every letter ends with a promise to those who overcome. How can the Christian family overcome and experience victory in a world of idolatry and immorality? By trusting and obeying, we will receive the promises of God.

Thyatira was a small place. Don't think for a moment that you are insignificant. Rural America is being tempted and tested just like the metropolitan areas. Every family can encounter big problems. As you come upon "Jezebels" with a world view, make sure you are not deceived. Hold on to the truth and be found faithful!

For believers the Spirit is our advocate, but to the world He is a prosecutor. He is to bring to light the truth concerning Jesus Christ. Putting the world on trial He will convince and convict!

■ *He will prosecute in regard to sin (v. 9).* "Because men do not believe in me..." (NIV). The most often used word for sin in John is unbelief. Its usage does not deny the existence of Jesus, but rather refutes the revelation of Jesus as the Son of God and God, the Son. It is sin not to believe in Jesus (1 John 4:2-3).

By what means does the Holy Spirit execute His case? By the witness of the church, by the proclamation of the word, and by the witness of all disciples, including us.

■ *He will prosecute in regard to righteousness (v. 10).* "Because I am going to the Father..." The crucifixion of Jesus was a travesty of justice, the guiltless died for the guilty. Jesus was executed as unrighteous. Condemned as a common criminal, as a messianic pretender, a blasphemer, the Holy Spirit will re-try the case of Christ before the world. Through His exaltation of going to the Father, He will be vindicated, proven righteous.

In this unit of study we have seen that God is a God of action and He uses many things to carry out His plans. He uses history, nature and everyday occurrences. God also uses mankind. Our broader passage is the story of a man of faith who God used. The children of Israel were slaves in Egypt and their cries were heard by God. God chose Moses to lead His people out of slavery. God initiated the contact with Moses in a very personal way; He called him by name.

Moses was called to go back to Egypt where he was a wanted man. (He did not know that the pharaoh who called for his execution was dead.) Moses' response was: "Who am I?" His answer shows that he was assessing his abilities and counting the cost.

In the same way God sought Moses, He seeks us and personally calls to us and reveals Himself to us. Are we, like Moses, willing to follow the Lord even if it could mean death? Are we willing to follow Him even if we feel we have no talents or abilities?

We should not seek our vindication in this world. As you may face injustice for your own faith it is to be expected, Jesus guaranteed it (Matt. 5:10-11). In the other world we too will be declared righteous.

■ *He will prosecute in regard to judgment (v. 11).* "Because the prince of this world now stands condemned." At the place of the skull there was a confrontation of cosmic proportions. Apparently, it seems Satan had won, that he had judged Christ. Wrong answer!

The cross should never be seen in total isolation, but beheld through the eyes of the resurrection. A systematic theology professor I had said of this passage, "The cross is not a defeat that the resurrection reversed, but the cross is a victory that the resurrection revealed. The victory is ours (1 Cor. 15:54-57). It is here in all actuality that Satan is condemned.

The Holy Spirit will convince and convict all men. There will be many converted, as such as should be saved, to eternal life. The others? Condemned, for they still will not believe, because they are condemned already (John 3:18).

God did not try to reassure Moses by giving him praises, pats on the back or telling him that it was an easy job and anyone could do it. He merely said, "I will be with you." When God called His servant Moses He assured him that He would equip him for service, and support him in his service. He will do the same for you and me.

Gwen Williams, a home missionary in New Orleans, sings a very moving song about God using "Ordinary People." Like Moses, most of us feel like ordinary people. Many are born with a talent (or numerous talents) and we all have at least one gift. God can use these in service to Him.

Perhaps we should look at the needs around us or check the Home and Foreign Mission Board volunteer needs list. There is someplace that your gifts and talents can be used. God has a people who need to be led out of Egypt and we can have a part.

Family Bible

When the devil goes to church

By Grant Elhridge, pastor,
First Church, Lavaca

Basic passage:

Revelation 2:18-29

Focal passage:

Revelation 2:19-20, 23, 25-29

Central truth:

Christians must stand against immorality and idolatry today.

Life and Work

The Spirit as prosecutor

By Randy Magar, pastor,
Newark Southern Church

Basic passage:

John 16:5-15

Focal passage:

John 16:7-11

Central truth:

The Holy Spirit's role in the world is to convince and convict men concerning truth.

Explore the Bible

A life transformed

By Katsy McAlester, member,
First Church, El Dorado

Basic passage:

Exodus 1:1-6:9

Focal passage:

Exodus 3:1-12

Central truth:

God can use ordinary men to do His work.

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Ban on partial-birth abortions clears House of Representatives

WASHINGTON (ABP)—The U.S. House of Representatives has voted overwhelmingly to outlaw a controversial late-term abortion procedure except in cases where no other procedure would save the woman's life.

The House voted 295-136 to support the measure which would subject doctors who perform the procedure to fines and up to two years in prison. The procedure, termed "partial-birth abortion," involves partially delivering an intact fetus through the birth canal before killing it.

President Clinton vetoed a similar bill last year because it did not allow exceptions in cases that pose a serious health consequence to the mother. The current bill allows an exception only in cases where the mother's life is endangered and when "no other medical procedure would suffice."

Support for the ban received a boost recently when Ron Fitzsimmons, executive director of the National Coalition of Abortion Providers, admitted he lied last year when he claimed the procedure was used rarely and only on women whose lives were in danger or whose fetuses were damaged.

The Partial Birth Abortion Ban Act of 1997 awaits Senate action. Last year, the House voted to override Clinton's veto of the ban, but the Senate failed to get the two-thirds necessary to override.

NAMB positions set for new structure

NASHVILLE, TN (BP)—All 350 positions in the new North American Mission Board have been identified, including an administrative group of 16 people led by the president, according to Implementation Task Force officials.

No names are attached to the slots yet since the process is continuing of terminating some employees and recommending others from the three merged agencies — Home Mission Board, Radio and Television Commission and Brotherhood Commission.

"This process which began some weeks ago will accelerate as the June 19 merger date approaches," said David Hankins, vice president for convention policy for the SBC Executive Committee and chairman of the NAMB Transition Communications Committee. "TF has approved the process which allows current management to give notice of termination to various employees who will not have a job in NAMB. Approximately 150 employees from the three affected agencies will be terminated, retire or seek employment elsewhere."

Two RTVC vice presidents announce June 19 retirement

FORT WORTH, TX (BP)—Bob Thornton and Ed Malone, vice presidents of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, have announced their retirement effective June 19 when the RTVC will merge with the Brotherhood Commission and Home Mission Board to form the North American Mission Board.

Thornton, 64, is vice president of television services and Malone, 58, is vice president of radio services.

Thornton, who has been at the RTVC more than 27 years, plans to continue writing and producing on a freelance basis. He has been responsible for development and production of the RTVC-produced programs "Home Life," "COPE" and "Country Crossroads."

Malone, who has been at the RTVC more than 31 years, said he will be working on other radio and television projects in the Dallas/Fort Worth area. He has been responsible for the inception and development of the RTVC's "MasterControl," "Powerline," "Country Crossroads" and "On Track" radio programs.

Former Arkansan elected president of Mid-America

MEMPHIS, TN (BP)—Michael R. Spradlin has been elected as the second president of Mid-America Seminary, succeeding B. Gray Allison, the school's founding president, who has announced his retirement effective June 30. Spradlin was unanimously elected president by Mid-America's trustees.

Spradlin, 35, who becomes seminary president July 1, has been director since 1994 of Mid-America's Northeast Branch in Schenectady, N.Y., the independent Baptist seminary's lone extension center. A former assistant pastor of First Church, Hughes, he is a graduate of Ouachita Baptist University and Mid-America. A native of Ohio, he grew up in Little Rock.

NEWS DIGEST