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Arkansas Baptist State Convention

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ARKANSAS BAPTIST



Volume 95, Number 8

April 18, 1996

SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL
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NO GAMBLING!

“If we really believe what we say about gambling... this is the right thing to do and the right time to do it.”



LARRY PAGE, Executive Director, Christian Civic Action Committee

Bombing survivors, families recount year of grief and faith

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)—For the family and friends of the 168 people who died in the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building blast April 19, 1995, and for the victims who survived, life has changed drastically.

"I'm not the same person because I'm not in the same setting anymore," said A.C. Cooper, whose wife, Dana, child care director at the federal building, and son, Christopher, 2, were killed in the bombing. "I don't have a normality I once had, and I still don't have meaning to my life."

"I not only lost my husband, I lost my whole family," said Janet Walker, whose husband, David, was killed. "People think you should go on with your life, but it's not that easy."

"After a year of reflection, I've learned what is important in life," noted Ruth Heald Schwab, who survived the blast but had numerous injuries, including the loss of sight in one eye. "A career or keeping a clean house aren't important. What's important is family, and showing them love."

"I've definitely learned to live for the moment a little bit more," said Carrie Brown, Dana Cooper's sister. "Not so much disregarding consequences, but realizing this is the only chance God gives us, and if we don't do His work the first time around, we're not going to have a chance to do it."

Although their lives have been turned upside down and many still remain in counseling, several survivors and family members said they have depended on their faith to see them through the most difficult year of their lives.

Schwab had been at her desk for four minutes when the bomb exploded. She had 100 stitches in her face and another

100 on her upper torso, in addition to surgery on her eyes.

"I couldn't have made it this year without my faith," she declared. "I don't know how people who don't have faith have made it."

Cooper noted that despite spiritual doubts and questions, "there is no doubt God has had His hand on me all through this. He has given me strength to get up out of bed and go on."

Cooper said he will not observe April 19, 1996, as a day different than any other. "I never used the word anniversary, because to me it signifies something to celebrate," he explained. "I'll celebrate their lives, their birthdays...but I'm not going to celebrate the death date."

Walker emphasized that God is an even greater part of her life now. "I know He is always there to listen and help me through the bad days," she shared. "My faith has grown stronger and bolder. I won't hesitate to let people know that my husband was a Christian and that he is in heaven."

Brown emphasized that "there's no other way to get through this except by God's peace."

"I never prayed for strength for myself, but I always prayed for His peace to fill me, so that I could allow Him to make this into something that would benefit us all instead of becoming so focused on my pain."

Brown said her nephew, Christopher, was her pride and joy. "I adored that child, and when he died, I had a real hard time finding joy in anything," she said tearfully.

"More and more I've been praying not for my joy, because my Christopher is never coming back, but for God's joy to fill my life."

Cover Story

NO GAMBLING!

Anti-gambling plan 6-7

The Christian Civic Action Committee has drafted a proposed constitutional amendment to ban all gambling in Arkansas, including horse racing and dog racing. CCAC leaders are seeking to collect 125,000 signatures to qualify the proposal for the Nov. 5 ballot.

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Planning for the future

Turner shares ministry vision with state convention study committee

By Trennis Henderson

Editor, Arkansas Baptist

Emphasizing the need for state convention leaders to provide "a response-driven organization" to benefit local Baptist churches, Emil Turner challenged members of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention Study Committee to discover creative ways to "do more with less."

Turner, who began serving earlier this year as state convention executive director, stressed the urgency of implementing "approaches and methodologies which impact the churches to help make them more effective." He noted that "one thing that will help is for us to say to pastors: 'What does your church need?'"

The 13-member steering committee and three related subcommittees were established last summer by vote of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention Executive Board. The committee's assignment is "to study and recommend a plan by which the Arkansas Baptist State Convention can most effectively meet the challenges of the 21st century."

Specific topics of study include ministry challenges, organizational mission statements, program assignments and financial support, with subcommittees evaluating the work of the Executive Board staff as well as the state convention's agencies and educational institutions. The two-year study will conclude with a report and recommendations to messengers at the 1997 state convention annual meeting.

Tim Reddin, pastor of Barcelona Road Church in Hot Springs Village, is serving as chairman of the study committee. During an interview following a recent committee meeting, Reddin said, "We are committed to making no change for the sake of change — the only kind of changes we are interested in making are changes to help our churches minister more effectively."

"We don't think anything should be thrown out just because it's old," Reddin added. "We want to continue what meets the needs of churches. We just want to be more innovative in finding ways to help them better."

Noting that "we have churches ministering in a changing environment," the committee chairman pointed out, "It is becoming more and more difficult to mass produce programs that will touch the needs and desires of such a variety of churches."

Echoing the need to "move from a program-driven approach to a response-driven approach," he explained, "We are going to have to make changes necessary



Arkansas Baptist executive director Emil Turner challenges study committee members to help make the state convention "a response-driven organization."

to address changing needs."

During the committee session, Turner shared his vision of reaching lost people for Christ. "If you do your work and it does not result in reaching more people for Christ, God help us when we stand before Him," he told committee members.

Turner candidly reviewed a list of "limiting factors" which must be addressed to help produce more effective ministry among Arkansas Baptists. Among the limiting factors, he said, statistical studies reflect "a steady decline" in key areas of statewide ministry efforts.

He said the ratio of Arkansas Baptist churches to state population has dropped from one church per every 1,621 people in 1970 to a ratio of 1 to 1,784 in 1995. Citing a total of 20 new church starts last year, he said statistics indicate Arkansas Baptists need to begin 112 new churches per year just to maintain the status quo.

Turner also expressed concern that Southern Baptists "can no longer assume allegiance to the state convention or to the Southern Baptist Convention." Even among Arkansas Baptists, he pointed out, "There is no guarantee of the allegiance of our churches to our work."

Coupled with that concern, he added, "Cooperative Program receipts are leveling off and are projected to decline." He said part of the reason for that trend is that younger church members "are not going to fund a state convention simply because their parents and grandparents did."

In light of such concerns, Turner emphasized the need to "understand the

importance of what we're doing." Citing numerous "biblical examples of significant restructuring in the lives of God's people," Turner said each biblical event "was for certain tasks at certain times."

Suggesting that the current task for Arkansas Baptists is to reach more people for Christ, Turner said committee members should "start with a blank sheet of paper" and ask the questions: "What does God want a state convention to do? What is its purpose?"

That should lead to a statement of vision, purpose and values that will help determine "why we're here as a state convention," he continued. He said key objectives should include "thinking in terms of how we will work with people who do not yet know us." He also encouraged committee members to "spiritualize" their task and to "build in flexibility and abandonment" in order to "empower our state convention to stop doing the things that aren't working."

Sharing his personal perspectives about the study committee's assignment, Turner highlighted the need to "prioritize church starts and winning the lost." He also emphasized the importance of church growth and "being a resource to the world" while also being willing for the statewide organization to be "smaller, more interactive and proactive."

In an interview following his report, Turner told the *Arkansas Baptist News* magazine that key goals for state convention ministries include "making an impact on the state in such a way that baptisms and Sunday School enrollment go up."

"That's what I want us to begin to think about," he declared. "There have to be approaches and methodology that we use to impact the churches to help make them more effective."

Turner affirmed that the study committee's work provides an opportunity to analyze and strengthen institutional ties in Arkansas Baptist life. "We can restructure in such a way that we can avoid problems that other state conventions have experienced," he explained. "This is an opportunity for restructuring without crisis."

Turner said a primary goal is for Arkansas Baptists to minister more effectively. "If you're effective, you're making an impact," he noted. "I want us to become more concerned with effectiveness and I believe efficiency will follow....I feel like the steering committee and subcommittees are thinking carefully to seek ways to strengthen the convention and make it more effective."

A PASTOR'S HEART



By EMIL TURNER
ABSC Executive Director

I didn't recognize the name on the return address. I guessed from the handwriting it was an elderly woman — her note confirmed it. She was writing to thank me for a message I had preached years ago. Someone had given her a tape. The sermon dealt with cancer, and she was blessed by the message. I'm sure this has happened to you — someone you don't know has indicated how you've helped them.

The ministry we provide is not dependent upon our knowing we've provided it. It is not even enhanced by knowing we've ministered. Even though we do not see the results, God still works and uses us.

That is one reason it is so important that we faithfully support the Cooperative Program. You probably don't realize that you help lead hundreds of people to Christ each year through the chaplains that our Cooperative Program supports. A few weeks ago, 95 people were led to Christ by our Baptist Student Union Spring break ministry. You may never see the migrant children you help feed through your Cooperative Program gifts. Friends, the commitment of your church to the Cooperative Program has enabled you to touch the lives of those you'll never see. But after all, isn't that what being used by God is all about?

■ Have you read *The New Reformation* by Lyle Schaller (Abingdon Press). Schaller has been helpful to me in each church I've served. This book "predicts the future" of denominations and churches. Southern Baptists will be particularly intrigued (whether we agree or not) by his understanding of Texas Baptists' expansion of cooperative giving. If you want to know if your church can grow into the future, this is a good book.

REX HORNE

President's Perspective



Gambling is a bad bet

Gambling wasn't even listed with "drinking, dancing and smoking," because no Christian I knew while growing up gambled. Sure, there were places in town where gambling occurred. Gambling, however, was not a socially, spiritually, financially or morally accepted practice.

Some words associated with gambling have found their way into our vocabulary. "I bet" is an expression used to mean I imagine... I don't think so... even, I'm certain.

Chambers Dictionary states that gambling is to engage in wild financial speculation: to take great risks for the sake of possible advantage: a transaction depending on chance. There is no "chance" in the fact that most people lose, except the proprietors.

I have listened to the changing vocabulary about gambling. It is seldom called gambling anymore. It is now the gaming industry. No longer are there gambling houses where people are accommodated while they gamble. Now, they are called resorts with famous entertainers and athletes on the venue.

In November our state faces a host of amendments that would proliferate gambling in Arkansas. Twice in recent years the proponents of gambling have been turned back. This year the effort is better organized, worded and on the way to a public vote.

There are two approaches being developed, it appears to me. One is

simply to vote no to all amendments expanding gambling interests. One way amendments pass is that they confuse people about what will really happen. Tax cuts, funds for education and investments in communities are promised. For an "anti-tax" people, gambling must be seen as regressive.

The second approach being developed by the Christian Civic Action Committee is to file its own proposed constitutional amendment. The amendment, if qualified for the ballot and passed, would prohibit all forms of gambling, including the horse and dog racing already present in our state. This is an exciting prospect which is dependent on our efforts to garner signatures to begin the process.

You have received letters regarding the involvement of Baptist people. We will have the opportunity to voice and vote our convictions on this matter.

Names can be changed from gambling to gaming industry, from gambling houses to resorts, but the danger still remains.

It is really not a game of chance. It is certain that individuals and families in our communities will be hurt. When members of our communities are hurt, we will all be hurt.

Together we can make a difference, a positive difference.

Rex Horne, pastor of Immanuel Church in Little Rock, is president of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention.

Personal perspectives

"I couldn't have made it this year without my faith. I don't know how people who don't have faith have made it."

—Ruth Schwab, survivor of April 19, 1995, bombing in Oklahoma City

"Since it's obvious that gambling supporters will not cease their greedy power grabs, the only course of action left is to try to make Arkansas a gambling-free zone."

—Larry Page, executive director, Christian Civic Action Committee

'The right thing to do'

The best offense is a good defense, according to a time-tested football adage. Anti-gambling advocates in Arkansas have decided the opposite principle is also true: The best defense is a good offense.

As a result, leaders of the Christian Civic Action Committee have taken the offensive by drafting a proposed constitutional amendment seeking to ban all gambling in the state, including horse racing and dog racing. According to CCAC executive director Larry Page, "If we really believe what we say about gambling and that it applies to all gambling, this is the right thing to do and the right time to do it." He is absolutely correct.

Gambling opponents have repeatedly spent time and money in recent years battling every effort to expand legalized gambling in the state. Despite the success of anti-gambling campaigns, gambling proponents continue to introduce new proposals aimed at separating Arkansans from their money. This year alone, pro-gambling groups are working to qualify seven different gambling amendments for the November ballot. The various plans would permit a statewide lottery, video poker and up to 30 casinos in addition to other gambling options.

It's definitely time for concerned citizens who oppose the evils of gambling to take a stand and insist that enough is enough. The Christian Civic Action Committee is seeking to do exactly that.

In addition to encouraging voters to defeat each of the seven pro-gambling

STRAIGHT FROM THE EDITOR

By TRENNIS HENDERSON



proposals, CCAC officials are focusing primarily on having their anti-gambling amendment placed on the Nov. 5 ballot. To accomplish that goal is a challenging task which will require widespread cooperation among Arkansas Baptists and other opponents of gambling's self-centered, something-for-nothing philosophy.

For an initiative petition to qualify for this year's statewide ballot, supporters must gather the signatures of 71,684 registered voters. CCAC leaders hope to collect the needed signatures by June 28 in order to submit the petitions to the secretary of state by July 5. The CCAC is seeking to recruit thousands of volunteers throughout the state who are willing to gather at least 25 signatures each.

Why bother with such an overwhelming task? Because it's the right thing to do.

Arkansas Baptists have repeatedly gone on record as opponents of gambling. Now is the time to show gambling supporters

how strong our commitment and convictions really are.

Gambling is wrong for a number of reasons — socially, emotionally, spiritually, financially — the list goes on and on. News articles in last weekend's *Arkansas Democrat Gazette* told about the deaths of two robbery victims in a casino in Tunica, Miss. The Ohio couple reportedly were killed by a fellow casino customer who later died in a struggle with a security guard. While news reports noted the murders were the first among Tunica's eight casinos, the incident was the second robbery in a Tunica casino in two days.

While robbery and murder are extreme examples of gambling's negative impact, such violent crimes are not unusual in areas where gambling is rampant. Other tragic results that often accompany gambling include increases in gambling addiction, depression, unemployment and suicide as well as economic woes for area businesses.

Why would anyone vote to support such a destructive, detrimental enterprise? Because gambling advocates often produce slick, well-financed campaigns that tout entertainment, economic benefits and the opportunity to strike it rich.

The fact is that gambling is bad business for Arkansas. If you agree, take time to call the Christian Civic Action Committee at 1-800-655-6883 and volunteer to help outlaw gambling statewide. As Larry Page so accurately declared: "This is the right thing to do and the right time to do it."

Bottom of the barrel?

My heart was saddened as I read the April 4 issue of the *Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine*. On page 16 was an advertisement for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Arkansas' General Assembly to be held at Calvary Baptist Church in Little Rock. What disturbed me was the last paragraph that stated:

"Supporting the mission of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention and its related institutions, as well as preserving historical Baptist principles through new ventures in missions and theological education."

If they were so in line with us, they would not be separated from us. I John 2:19 states, "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for it they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us."

Why should we advertise for a group that is splitting the convention and taking gifts from the Cooperative Program? We



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

need a new policy for such advertisements. Are we so broke that we must reach to the bottom of the barrel to publish a newsmagazine? I trust that we can do better than this by simply doing without such advertisement. What a sad day.

Milton L. Wilson
Pine Bluff, AR

IRS actions questioned

The IRS is harassing (investigating) the Second Baptist Church of Houston, Texas, for possibly violating its non-profit tax exemption. The 22,000-member church is pastored by former SBC president Ed Young. Second Church is alleged to be supporting Republican candidates. Could Second Church be another Mt. Carmel?

Since hypocrisy has become acceptable among tolerant-minded Southern Baptists, let's smell the stench of hypocrisy being exhibited by the IRS's investigation of Second Baptist.

First, it's no big issue. Everyone knows that Second Church is not going to lose their non-profit status! The danger is, what's the IRS doing at the same time to the little Baptist churches which the government are really after?

Second, does this mean the IRS is going to investigate all the churches in which Jessie Jackson preaches? Are we to assume Rev. Jackson does not address politics in his sermons? How about President Clinton speaking in several churches during the presidential campaign of 1992? Is the SBC in danger of losing its non-profit status for inviting presidents George Bush and Ronald Reagan to speak at our conventions?

It's sad that our big brother IRS has nothing more important to do than hassle Christian churches.

Jim Glover
Heber Springs, AR

'A full referendum'

Anti-gambling advocates seek to outlaw all gambling in Arkansas

By Trennis Henderson

Editor, Arkansas Baptist

Anti-gambling advocates have worked diligently in recent years to stop the spread of legalized gambling in Arkansas. Lawsuits, media campaigns and grassroots efforts throughout the state have thwarted attempts to legalize a lottery, casinos and other forms of gambling.

This year, however, gambling supporters are seeking to place up to seven gambling proposals on the November ballot. Leaders of the Christian Civic Action Committee (CCAC), a companion organization of the Arkansas Christian Civic Foundation, have responded by proposing a constitutional amendment which ban all gambling in the state.

The proposed amendment seeks "to prohibit gambling on contests or games of chance or skill, and specifically prohibiting gambling on horse racing and dog racing," according to the initiative petition filed with the attorney general's office.

The seven pro-gambling amendments "would allow 30 casinos, statewide lottery and video poker and wide-open charitable gambling, including electronic gambling devices," explained CCAC executive director Larry Page. He warned that such proposals, if approved, would make Arkansas "the new gambling mecca of North America."

In response, Page explained, "We determined that the best defense is a good offense; we decided to take them head-on."

Emphasizing that gambling proponents have "an insatiable appetite for Arkansas' money," he warned, "They'll never be happy until they have a stranglehold on our state."

Rather than battling each proposal individually, Page explained, "we decided to approach it in a direct way. If we're going to have a referendum on gambling, let's have a full referendum. If we really believe what we say about gambling and that it applies to all gambling, this is the right thing to do and the right time to do it."

NO GAMBLING!

The Christian Civic Action Committee has submitted a proposed constitutional amendment "to prohibit gambling on contests or games of chance or skill and specifically prohibiting gambling on horse racing and dog racing." CCAC leaders are seeking to collect up to 125,000 petition signatures to qualify the proposal for the Nov. 5 ballot. Individuals interested in collecting signatures or helping in other aspects of the campaign may contact:

Christian Civic Action Committee
P.O. Box 193256, Little Rock, AR 72219-3256
Phone: 1-800-655-6883 Fax: 501-568-0451

Barry King, the CCAC's gambling campaign coordinator, noted that the organization's executive committee authorized a study which indicated that approximately 80 percent of CCAC's constituents would actively support the gambling ban proposal.

"We are doing this because the people and churches we represent told us to," Page pointed out. "Since it's obvious that gambling supporters will not cease their greedy power grabs, the only course of action we have left is to try to make Arkansas a gambling-free zone.

"We're not going to stop them simply by defending against their proposals," he added. "A ban on gambling in Arkansas would keep gamblers away for the foreseeable future. They would go where they have more likelihood for success."

Page and King said the greatest initial challenge is collecting enough signatures to place the anti-gambling measure on the November ballot. Each proposed constitutional amendment must include the signatures of 71,684 registered voters to qualify for the ballot. CCAC leaders hope to collect up to 125,000 signatures since as many as 30 percent of signatures

often are disqualified for various reasons.

Campaign leaders are seeking to gather the required signatures by June 28 in order to submit the petitions to the secretary of state by the July 5 deadline. "We're trying to help people understand it has to be a matter of extreme urgency," King noted. "This is going to be our primary focus and objective."

In an effort to collect sufficient signatures, King said the CCAC is encouraging each church in the state to enlist a specified number of volunteers to collect 25 signatures each. He said the goal is to recruit 5,000 people to collect 25 signatures each in order to reach the overall goal of 125,000 signatures.

King said churches with fewer than 150 members are asked to recruit five people to gather signatures; churches with 150-450 members, 10 volunteers; and churches with more than 450 members, 15 volunteers. Names must be gathered on official initiative petition forms provided by the CCAC, with the completed forms returned to the CCAC by the June 28 deadline.

Acknowledging that the effort "is a Herculean task," Page emphasized, "We have to rely on the people in the pew and the pastors in the churches. If it's not comprehensive, it can't be done."

In addition to the volunteer efforts, CCAC leaders would like to collect up to \$2 million to finance the anti-gambling campaign. Noting that would be a tremendous increase over the \$250,000 collected during the group's 1994 anti-gambling drive, Page said, "We concede we may have to operate on less than \$2 million....We'll do the best we can with what we're given.

"The key is participation," he insisted. "We have people who can work and pray and give and if we do that together, we can win."

Individuals interested in additional information about the anti-gambling campaign may contact Page or King at the CCAC office by calling 1-800-655-6883 or 501-568-0448.

Gambling menace creates widespread chaos

By Larry Page

Executive Director, Christian Civic Action Committee

The tragedy described in a recent *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* newspaper article was not unlike so many others that I've read in the past several years. The headline alone spoke volumes: "Police Tie Suicide, Gambling; Woman Lost Savings; 'It Was Her Secret.'" The article went on to describe a 42-year-old married mother of two who had a good home in a nice community. She also was a successful manager of an insurance company.

However, without her family's knowledge she had for some time been sneaking away to a gambling boat. There she squandered her family's savings, most of which had been earmarked for her children's college education. In desperation over the monster that had gripped her and left her utterly helpless, she descended to her basement and there, alone and with seemingly nowhere to turn, she took her life with a .357 magnum revolver.

The investigating detective put it all into perspective when he reported, "Everything leads us to believe that the cause of death was suicide and that the motive was gambling...The family was shocked. They didn't know. It was her secret."

This sad tale and countless others dealing with suicide, spousal and child abuse, divorce, alcohol and other drug addictions, bankruptcies, foreclosures, the loss of businesses and farms and homes are a stark reminder of something we already know. Gambling devours people, it wrecks lives, families, marriages and homes. And, as if that weren't enough, it creates havoc with the economy and pushes our criminal justice system and correctional institutions beyond their limits.

Why would anyone want to bring activities as destructive as lottery and casino

gambling into a state? The answer is simple — greed. Greed and the irrational and insatiable appetite for money is what drives the gambling interests. They care only about their enrichment and it matters not to them that in the wake of their gambling craze there is left the wounded lives, broken families and devastated businesses.

What, if anything, should the church do about the menace of gambling? After all, there's no prohibition against gambling in the Bible. And, besides, even if there were, the world seems to best tolerate us if we don't start meddling in other people's lives.

'Tell the truth'

When I am asked what we should do, I have a ready answer. We should be about the business of telling the truth and being an advocate and defender of the victims of the vile gambling industry. Are there biblical truths that, when applied to gambling, give us clear direction about how we should respond? Of course, there are—the values conveyed in the Scriptures are quite clear.

The Bible emphasizes the sovereignty of God in the direction of human events; gambling looks to chance and luck. The Bible indicates that man is to work creatively and use his possessions for the good of others, but gambling fosters a something-for-nothing attitude. The Bible calls for careful stewardship; gambling calls for reckless abandon.

The Bible condemns covetousness and materialism, but gambling has both at its heart. And the moral thrust of the Bible is love for God and neighbor, while gambling seeks personal gain and pleasure at another person's loss and pain.

If we take seriously the command to love others as ourselves and if we accept what the Bible has to say about the values that are embraced by gambling and if we are aware of the terribly high price of gambling as it devours people, families

and the economy, then we will not have to dwell long on what we should do.

We need to boldly proclaim God's truth, so that no one can have the slightest doubt about how His people feel about this evil presence in our land. We need to absolutely and resolutely abstain from any participation in or support for the various forms of gambling. We need to be proactive in opposing all pro-gambling measures that come before us and that would expand the gambling operations in our state.

We also should support and work for an absolute ban on all gambling in our state. We now have that opportunity. The Christian Civic Action Committee recently filed a proposed constitutional amendment that, if passed by the voters, would prohibit all gambling. That's right — all gambling.

The challenge of qualifying our amendment for the ballot is daunting, but for God's people who are inspired and motivated and angry about the vicious nature of gambling, it is easily within reach. The key is for all of us to work in concert with a common goal and with dogged determination.

We need several thousand of our church members who will commit to gather at least 25 signatures on petitions. We need to conduct voter registration drives in our churches and communities. We need help with grassroots activities and with a get-out-the-vote emphasis. We need financial resources; a campaign like this is a costly endeavor. Most importantly, we need your prayers. Please don't overlook this critical aspect of our campaign.

If we do these things, we will not be diverted or distracted from our witness. In fact, our witness will be greatly enhanced by this very clear demonstration of what Christ meant in Matthew 5:13-16. As "salt and light," we will glorify our Father in heaven as we care for our neighbors who are at risk from the devastating effects of gambling.

Legalized gambling efforts prompt key questions

NASHVILLE, TN (BP)—"The gambling cartel cannot be allowed to frame the questions of the gambling debate," insists Paul Jones, executive director of the Christian Action Commission of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

Jones offered four questions that should be answered before government-operated gambling, such as lotteries, are allowed into a state.

■ *Is it a function of government to make losers out of its citizens?* State-operated lotteries guarantee that most citizens will become losers, Jones noted. He said that indicates one government agency would be working to hurt citizens while other agencies are working to help them.

■ *Is it a function of government to compete with legitimate*

businesses? State-operated lotteries place the state in competition for the same dollars being spent for goods and services elsewhere, Jones pointed out.

■ *Is it a function of government to advertise that which is known and demonstrated to be addictive?* Jones noted that the American Psychiatric Association lists gambling as a compulsive disorder.

■ *Is it a function of government to conflict with its own consumer protection laws?* Truth in advertising laws would not allow a grocery store to make outrageous claims, such as, "Buy our food and live to be 100!" he emphasized. Yet, lotteries and other gambling ventures promote false hope, advertising that a few dollars can lead to millions.

BSU spring break trips: 'life-changing' ministry

By Colleen Backus
Assistant Editor, Arkansas Baptist

Ninety-five professions of faith in Christ were made during Arkansas Baptist Student Union spring break mission trips, but that number doesn't reflect all the lives changed. "I don't mean to use a cliché, but it was life-changing," noted Jody Smotherman, who participated in a trip to Ecuador. "My wife and I now believe mission work in South America may be in our future."

Smotherman was part of a medical and evangelistic mission trip to Ecuador, one of two trips sponsored by the University of Arkansas Medical Sciences BSU, under the leadership of Diane O'Connell. "We were in the jungle area, working with descendants of the Inca Indians," O'Connell explained. "Most of these extremely small, dark-haired Kichua Indians had never seen a white person, had access to medical care or heard the name of Jesus."

Being on both his first mission trip and first overseas trip, Smotherman noted the need to depend on God. "When we serve God here, it's pretty easy because we're in our comfort zone," he remarked. "But when you're in another country ministering to people who are four and half feet tall, you realize that you have to depend on God for every step. It was unlike anything I had ever seen."

Working with area missionaries Jim and Shirley Tye, O'Connell's group would walk the roads and trails, telling people about Jesus through a translator and inviting them to bring their sick to the clinic. "We're the front edge of the plow," she explained. "We're not going to have 5,000 professions of faith. We love these people through medicine."

"The spiritual leaders in the region are very antagonistic," she continued. "We show the people that we are nothing to be fearful of or to hate and that opens the doors for the missionaries."

Another trip changed students' viewpoints as well as the lives of those they touched. Darrell Cook, assistant BSU director at Arkansas State University, was part of a trip to Jamaica. "We took a dentist and dental hygienist," he said. "Some students would help with the clinic and others provided children's activities."

At each of the three clinic locations, the team would conduct an assembly at a nearby school, where they presented students with a trunk full of school supplies and distributed Bibles.

"The trip had a tremendous impact on our students," he noted. "The contentment

of these people, even with their poverty level, impressed the team. In a place where they have nothing, they would buy Pepsi to honor us as guests."

For ASU sophomore Suzanne Williams, the trip was an eye-opener. "Before we went, I was scared because I didn't know what to expect," she explained. "I was on the drama team, doing school assemblies and revivals."

"These are really poor churches," she emphasized. "It made me see how much I take for granted. One church had bats flying around and it didn't bother them, they were there just for the worship."

"I had no idea what to expect," she noted. "It was a little shocking how poor they were. It broke my heart to leave them."

Ian Cosh, BSU director at Ouachita Baptist University, said a mission trip to inner-city San Antonio helped students realize "there are a lot of hurting people out there and they can make a difference."

Thirty-four students took advantage of a unique opportunity to partner with an elementary school that was attempting to provide spring break day camp activities for the children. The school also is unique in that its student population of K-5 students all live in one housing project. "Our students had to realize that these kids live amid hate and violence," Cosh explained. "We were there to communicate love and give hope."

"We had a good ratio, so we could give much-needed...attention," he added. "These kids have no control over the environment they are in - they have had adult experiences at young ages, watching their peers be brutalized and murdered."

"It was a shocking experience for some of our students," Cosh pointed out. "One kid looked one of our students in the eye and told her, 'I hate you.' She had never had that experience before."

Being role models and seeking to make a difference was also the goal of the group from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. Under the leadership of BSU director Tim Smith, the students went on "Beach Reach '96," an effort to reach college kids as they vacationed. "Free food always appeals to students," Smith explained with



Dental hygiene student Becky Linzy checks the teeth of Indian children during a mission trip to Ecuador sponsored by the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences BSU.

good humor. "So we started with a pancake breakfast every morning and used that to build relationships."

One of the biggest results of the trip, Smith noted, was the practical experience of evangelism that the students can bring with them back to the campus. "That's the shot in the arm they needed," he said.

Other campuses sending BSU teams on mission trips included:

- The University of Arkansas at Fayetteville also participated in Beach Reach at South Padre Island. The group prayed with 16 people to receive Christ.

- Henderson State University took a team to Arlington, Texas, to provide children's ministries in apartment complexes. The group saw 26 salvations.

- The University of Arkansas at Monticello BSU ministered locally by conducting a Vacation Bible School, working in a food pantry and at the Baptist Children's Home and visiting senior adults.

- Southern Arkansas University continued a tradition of Arkansas college students assisting with the Rachel Sims Baptist Center in inner-city New Orleans. In addition to clean-up work and repair in the neighborhood, team members worked at the center with the kids.

- Arkansas Tech University worked in inner-city ministries in Atlanta, Ga. They helped with a food pantry, clothes closet, morning preschool, soup kitchen and led an after-school children's program.

- Westark Community College sent a team to the Pacific Northwest. The students went to Portland, Oregon, and Vancouver, Wash., where they worked on the Northwest Baptist Convention Building site, led worship at two churches and did evangelism and outreach at Clark College.

'Seize the Day'

More than 1,500 youth gather for day of worship and commitment

By Russell N. Dillard

Associate Editor, Arkansas Baptist

Arkansas Baptists' 1996 State Youth Convention challenged more than 1,500 participants to "Seize the Day" during a Good Friday of worship, messages and Christian music April 5 at the Statehouse Convention Center in Little Rock.

The program featured keynote speaker Chuck Register, a professor at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, who urged participants to "seize eternity."

Telling the youth about "a day I'll never forget as long as I live," Register said, "It was the day my son Chip seized the day. In fact, it was the day my son seized eternity by giving his life to Jesus Christ."

Register recalled that Chip asked his mother one night, "Mommy, if I die tonight, would I go to hell?"

"So I asked him the next day, 'Chip, are you scared that if you died you would go to hell?'"

"He looked up at me with big old eyes and said, 'Dad, why do think I get in bed with you every night?'" he replied. "I thought it was just afad, something that little seven-year-old boys like to do, to crawl in bed with their parents. I didn't realize how significant getting into bed with us every night was."

Register said he led his son to the Lord that afternoon. "He seized the day," Register said. "He seized eternity."

"I was reminded of some very important principles," Register added. "God reminded me that:

■ "Everybody thinks about death and dying. Here was Chip, just a few weeks away from his seventh birthday and the burning of his heart to his mother that night was, 'Mommy, if I die tonight, will I go to hell?'"

■ "Most people who don't know Christ are trusting in something or someone other than Jesus to get them to heaven when they die. Chip was suffering what I call snuggle-up faith. He thought that if he were snuggled up to his dad, he would be okay."

■ "People who don't know Jesus have someone praying that they'll come to know Christ."

"If you don't know Jesus as your Savior, there are people praying that you will," he said. "We want you not to just seize the day but to seize eternity."

Music played a key role in setting the worship tone of the event, with worship sessions led by Christian musician Michael John Clement of Birmingham, Ala.

Contemporary Christian music videos

on projector screens opened each session. Participants also heard music from Called 2B, a trio of students from Williams Baptist College, and The Praise Singers of Ouachita Baptist University.

Several youth came forward with decisions during the worship session and following Register's evening invitation, including Scott Todd, a tenth-grader from First Church in White Hall.

"The music...got you focused on God," said Todd. "Right before we got into worship and the guy got up there to preach, it got you focused on God."

"I went and talked to my youth counselor tonight," he explained. "I know I'm saved, but I just wanted to really be serious. I am serious about it, but anything that God wants, I just want to do it."

Participants also heard a testimony and challenge from Christina Kartsonakis, a freshman at OBU and daughter of Christian musician Dino.

"If you don't know Jesus as your Savior, there are people praying that you will."

— Chuck Register
Keynote speaker
State Youth Convention

He encouraged the youth to take personal responsibility "every day" for their walk with Christ. "How many of you have said, 'I just really want to have fun this week, so I'll rededicate my life next week. Spring break's coming up and this Christianity stuff is really cool. You can have sex and do drugs and stuff and ask for forgiveness?'"

"No," she answered. "That's not the way it works. We might not even live to see tomorrow. There are no guarantees that we can walk out that door today and not be killed."

"It takes...a personal commitment to the Lord every single day," Kartsonakis declared. "We must take authority and must make a commitment to God."

Teens also heard a challenge to follow through on the True Love Waits campaign for sexual abstinence before marriage.

Following a video featuring True Love Waits, the audience heard OBU student Alice Wooten of Crossett give a True Love Waits testimony.

"Don't be ashamed to tell anybody" you have signed the cards, Wooten said, "because this is the most awesome commitment you can make."

"You know how bad peer pressure is and how hard it was when you get to talking about drugs and alcohol and especially sex," she added. "It's really hard to stand up to your friends."

"But what's going to happen with this commitment when you get out of high school?" Wooten asked. "Are you going to forget about your commitment or are you going to make it even stronger?"

She reminded the teenagers that independence from their parents is not a license to forget their commitments. "A lot of times as college students we think, 'Oh, we're independent, so we don't care what we do.' We start drinking, or stay out all night with the guys and say, 'Maybe nobody will know.'"

Despite peer pressure, Wooten said, she continues to honor her True Love Waits commitment because "I didn't want to become one of those statistics they told you about. There will always be one person left because I wasn't going to give in."

Dennis Wills, youth minister for Trinity Church in Benton, said he appreciated the messages and theme of the convention. The focus, he said, was "to make your decision today and not put it off. Look at today. Today's the day — not tomorrow, not yesterday, but look at your life now."

Convention coordinator Bob Holley, director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention discipleship and family ministry department, said that he was "really impressed that the theme found expression in everything said and done."

Speakers Tournament and Youth Bible Drill finals also were held during the day.

Renae McArthur of Shiloh Church in Harrisburg took first place in the Speakers Tournament with her speech, "A Church Is More Than Just a Building." Tara Yarborough of Valley Springs Church earned second place with "Taking a Stand."

Both of the Speakers Tournament winners received scholarships from Williams and Ouachita for their efforts.

Josh Miller of Tumbling Shoals Church took first place in Bible drill competition and Anna Gwatney of Beryl Church in Vilonia took second. Miller will receive a trip to Gloria (N.M.) or Ridgecrest (N.C.) conference centers to participate in a national Bible drill demonstration.

'Hope for Tomorrow' conference highlights children's advocacy

By Millie Gill

Executive Assistant, Arkansas Baptist

"Hope for Tomorrow: Ministering to Children in Crisis," a workshop addressing concerns and celebrating opportunities with children, was held March 29-30 at Geyer Springs First Church in Little Rock.

The conference, sponsored by the Arkansas Baptist State Convention's Brotherhood, church music ministries, discipleship and family ministry, evangelism, missions, Sunday School and Woman's Missionary Union departments, highlighted such issues as child advocacy, abuse, self-esteem and ministry.

Keynote speaker William Young said most of today's children live in stumbling block environments with stumbling block families or in the fast-track environment of do more and do it quickly. "The most important environment for children should be positive and nurturing," he emphasized.

Young, an author, lecturer and children's advocate, said the protective web of home and community to which children once could turn for security and solutions is no longer there. "It is wishful thinking to think we have the safety web needed by children of today."

He noted that instead of close family relationships, many families are merely living under the same roof and in many instances the mother or father is absent. "There are approximately nine million homes in which children under the age of 18 are living with only one parent," he noted, adding that "5 percent of the children under 18 are living in homes headed by a grandparent.

"In addition," Young said, "we have the latch-key children, those who are in after-school child care, children who have gay mothers and fathers, children who live in step-family situations and children born out of wedlock, most to teenage mothers.

"It's a tough world for children because these childhood living situations are creating a generation of children who fear social problems and have economic worries," Young explained.

"The spiritual lives of children are also being affected today because there is a lack of family worship and preparation for worship in the home," he noted. "Though parents should be nurturers of the Christian faith in children, they expect the church to do it. We need to pray for our families."

Sylvia DeLoach, Girls in Action specialist for Woman's Missionary Union, led workshops focusing on child advocacy, WMU's 1997 Project Help social issue.

"Our children of today are living in a

chaotic world," DeLoach said. "We don't have very long to assist these children in the church or community but we have them long enough to salvage them from the chaotic world if we will love them and welcome them as Christ did."

DeLoach said parental drug abuse and hidden problems in the home are among factors leading to child abuse. "The church needs to follow God's leadership in ministering to these children," she urged. "As the church ministers in God's name, the lives of children will be changed."

Recognize abuse symptoms

"We tend to bury our heads in the sand and say that in our Sunday School classes we are not teaching abused children," said Karen Smith. "However, we are and need to pull our heads from the sand and say: 'What are we going to do about it?'"

She emphasized that teachers need to recognize abuse symptoms such as frequent bruises or cuts, cigarette burns and rope burns, behavioral symptoms and inconsistent stories about injuries.

Smith, a Sunday School teacher at First Church of Sherwood, said, "As you recognize symptoms of child abuse you need to intervene for the child by immediately reporting them to the proper authorities. You are taking a risk as you report, but you are helping the child."

"Ministry to the Child in the Family Context" workshop sessions led by Cindy Pitts dealt with how to minister to children in seasons of both joy and grief as well as at the time of salvation.

Pitts, children's minister for First Church of Houston, Texas, said the most important factor in dealing with children experiencing grief is not so much what is

said but the fact that someone is there for them. "Children need people who know they care about them," she noted. "Always be honest and truthful to them, making them understand that death is a natural part of life."

Emphasizing the importance of doing Sunday School well through teaching and outreach, Pitts said the church needs to focus on bringing children to salvation and nurturing their spiritual growth.

"I believe God can save anyone at any age at any place," she noted. "He wants to save them but, because of the progression of development, it is usually between the third and fourth grade when children realize they are of a sinful nature. That is the time you minister to a child, bringing the whole family in to listen as you counsel with him or her."

Pitts encouraged teachers to send letters to parents seeking information about a child's spiritual needs if a commitment to Christ has not been made by fifth or sixth graders. "Do a follow-up on your letter with a telephone contact, making an appointment for either a home or office visit with both parents present," she added.

"There are risks which are sometimes painful when children and their families are ministered to," she acknowledged, "but Christians must be willing to take those risks as Christ did when He came to this earth and gave His life that sinners might be saved."

A "Hope for Tomorrow Celebration" concluded the two-day workshop. The celebration featured drama, Scripture interpretation and children's choirs. Participants were from the host church, First Church of Benton, First Church of Little Rock and First, Sherwood.

The celebration was led by coordinators Peggy Pearson and Janet Williams, worship leader Johnpaul Moccia and choir director Cyndy Hewell.

Young shares 'positive difference' list

Children's advocate William Young cites 10 specific ways a church can help make a positive difference in the lives of children in crisis and their families. Young's checklist, which he shared during the recent "Hope for Tomorrow: Ministering to Children in Crisis" workshop, includes:

- Plan an adult education program to learn about the needs of children.
- Become a "child advocate" and speak up for the needs of children in the congregation and in the community.
- Evaluate how the programs of the congregation meet the needs of today's children and their families.

- Form a partnership with a child care center that serves low-income children.
- House a full-day care center or after-school child care program in the congregation.
- Celebrate children with a special worship service.
- Give special recognition to church members who work with children.
- Open the church facility to local parent education programs.
- Support a network of family child care providers in the congregation.
- Enlist volunteers in programs that serve children.

Centurymen tour includes six Arkansans

By Russell N. Dilday

Associate Editor, Arkansas Baptist

The musical group that NBC News has called "the finest male chorus in America" will perform in three locations in Arkansas in June. The Centurymen, which includes 135 men serving full-time in Southern Baptist ministries, represents 21 states and counts six Arkansans among its members.

The Centurymen will perform June 8 at Woodlands Village Auditorium in Hot Springs Village and June 9 at First Church, Heber Springs, in a morning performance and Central Church, Jonesboro, that evening. The group will be singing the following week at the Southern Baptist Convention and Woman's Missionary Union annual meetings in New Orleans.

Organized in 1969 to provide program music for the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, The Centurymen have recorded 10 albums and appeared all over the world and on nationwide television broadcasts.

In 1983, the group was invited to China to become the first non-Chinese group to perform at the Radio Beijing Music Hall. The tour was the subject of an NBC News documentary, "China: Other Voices," inspiring NBC representatives to name The Centurymen as "the finest male chorus in America."

China invited the chorus to return in 1988 to create an hour-long television program with the Chinese Broadcast Orchestra. The result was the Emmy Award-winning production, "Walls and Bridges," viewed in more than 500 million Chinese homes.

For members like John Kurtz, being a part of the elite group is the realization of a "dream."

Kurtz, minister of music for First, Heber Springs, said being one of The Centurymen was a dream since 1969, when I was in college and a conducting teacher began telling our conducting class about the new organization.

"I had a dream of being in the ultimate men's group," Kurtz recalled. "I started auditioning after seminary. They were looking for the extreme high tenors or low basses and I'm one of the guys in the middle...and there's a million of us."

He said that the results of his first few auditions "weren't clicking. I'd go in thinking I had done well and it just didn't happen."

"Then, in 1986, I went one more time...with not much preparation," Kurtz said. "I left not anticipating hearing from them, but I said, 'Okay, God, if you want me in this group, you're going to have to do it.' Two weeks later I got my notice."



The Centurymen involves 135 members, including six Arkansas Baptists.

But being accepted into the group created an unanticipated problem. "When I first sang with the group in a concert setting, it was all I could do to get through it," Kurtz said. "It was not just the power of the sound, but you knew these guys were walking what they were singing."

"At the end of the concert I had tears in my eyes," he recalled. "Another guy said, 'Don't worry about it. It took 10 concerts for me to make it through without crying.' I still think of it as being this group that has a sound unmatched by any choral organization in the world."

Fellow member Larry Bradley, minister of music for First Church, Hot Springs, called that sound "the sheer sound of The Centurymen. It's a very resonant men's sound. All of the guys are trained singers. Multiply that close to 100 and it's the kind of sound that fills a concert hall."

The group's music director, Buryl Red, laughed as he acknowledged, "There's a little bit of mystery involved" in producing the chorus' sound.

The secret to harnessing more than 100 voices to create that sound is the group's "commitment to this ministry," explained Red, a Little Rock native now living in New York, who has served as musical director and arranger for The Centurymen since the group's inception. "You have 100 guys who are individuals...and are leaders in their own churches."

"They're willing to come and be a part of a group," he said. "That's no small accomplishment. They come and are willing to have their talents and their voices shaped together as one. That's the difference between 100 soloists and one choir."

Bradley and Joe Fitzpatrick agree that while the group comes together yearly to make music, fellowship is the spark that unites the members.

"Certainly it's the fellowship and interaction with fellow ministers of music," said Fitzpatrick, minister of music at Park Hill Church in North Little Rock. "The strongest motivation for being a part of the group is the camaraderie with a group that has the reputation of The Centurymen."

"With me, it's the fellowship of men across the convention of like mind and spirit," echoed Bradley. "We're not all alike, but we have similarities in the things we're trying to accomplish."

Bradley, Fitzpatrick and Kurtz will join fellow Arkansans Jim Raymick of Barcelona Road Church in Hot Springs Village, John Dresbach of Central Church in Jonesboro and Ken Stogsdill of Central Church in Magnolia for the tour.

Fitzpatrick, like Kurtz, remembered hearing the group "over the years and aspiring to be a part of something like that and the heritage that the group has maintained."

The 27-year ministry of The Centurymen is rooted in its commitment to ministry, said Bradley, one of about 30 charter members still active in the group.

"I think there's a thread through the ministry of The Centurymen...especially for the guys who began as charter members. In some ways we may not contribute as much musically, but I do think there is a sense of commitment and ministry the group has."

That commitment and ministry is "a labor of love" for members, Red explained. "They're contributing not only their time but they or their church is contributing the costs of their participating."

Red said there also is a "personal aspect" to being a member, noting that "this allows them to use their musicianship and their voices in a way beyond what their local ministry provides."

People

James McDaniel recently observed his 25th anniversary as pastor of First Church of Brinkley. The congregation presented he and his wife, Beverly, with a trip to the Holy Land and honored them with an afternoon reception March 24. A special missions emphasis during McDaniel's ministry in Brinkley has focused on the Central American nation of Belize where church members have built three churches, an education building and led Vacation Bible Schools, revivals, family ministry seminars and worked with other churches on two retreat centers. Prior to coming to Brinkley, McDaniel was pastor of First Church of Bay. He also has served Whitton Church of Tryonza and Gilead Church of Tobinsport, Ind. A former president of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention Executive Board, he also has served as a trustee of the Southern Baptist Education Commission. McDaniel is a graduate of Ouachita Baptist University and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. The McDaniels have three children, Joel, Dina and Michael.

Ed and Irma Glover of Smackover celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary March 16. Glover has been pastor of churches in Liberty Association since 1954.

Richard L. Wade will celebrate his 20th year of ministry on the staff of Second Church of Monticello April 18. Wade, who has served as minister of music and youth, was honored with a churchwide reception April 14. His wife, Beenic Carol, was honored for 10 years of service as pianist and director of the young musicians choir. The Wades have a daughter, Ellen, who is a senior at Monticello High School.

Obituaries

Dorsey Wiles Huckabee of Texarkana died March 31 at age 72, following a lengthy illness. A native of Hope, he was a member of Beech Street First Church of Texarkana, was a retired fireman with the Hope Fire Department and was also retired from the Arkansas State Highway Department. Huckabee was the father of Arkansas Lt. Gov. Mike Huckabee, a former president of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention. Other survivors are his wife, Mae Elder Huckabee of Texarkana; a daughter, Patricia Harris of Texarkana; a sister, Joyce Moss of Hope; and five grandchildren. Memorials may be made to KLPJ-TV in Texarkana or to ARK-LA-TEX Home Health and Hospice of Texarkana, Texas.



ARKANSAS ALL OVER

By MILLIE GILL

J.W. Carney of Newport died April 2 at age 66. Carney, who was chief of staff at Harris Hospital in Newport, was a member and deacon of First Church in Newport. He was an ordained Southern Baptist minister who served from 1963 to 1966 as a missionary physician in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh). Carney was a graduate of Ouachita Baptist College (now University), the University of Tennessee Medical School in Memphis and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He is survived by his wife of 43 years, Virginia Holt Carney of Newport; three sons, John Carney of Cabot, Steve Carney of Sikeston, Mo., and Chuck Carney of Fayetteville; a daughter, Elaine Goad of Tyler, Texas; a brother, Clyde L. Carney of Memphis; and six grandchildren. Memorials made be made to the J.W. Carney Memorial Fund at First Church of Newport.

Charles Bolton, age 80, of Little Rock died April 2. A memorial service was held April 4 at First Church of Little Rock where he was a member and his son, Tom Bolton, is minister of music. Bolton was a retired insurance executive. Other survivors are his wife of 62 years, Mildred Inmon Bolton; a daughter, Shelby Breedlove of Selma,

Ala.; a sister, Mary Elanor Bowles of Bartlesville, Okla.; three grandsons; and a great-grandson. Memorials may be made to the music ministry of First Church of Little Rock.

John E. Shelton, a former pastor of First Church of Lewisville, died recently in North Carolina at age 47. His death reportedly was the result of a heart attack which he suffered while driving his automobile. Shelton was serving as pastor of Inwood Church in Raleigh, N.C. He is survived by his wife, Shirley, and three children.

Church news

Beebe First Church recently held revival services that resulted in 55 professions of faith. Ken Freeman of San Antonio, Texas, was evangelist.

Park Hill Church of North Little Rock will host contemporary Christian musicians Michael Card and Wes King in concert April 18 at 7:30 p.m. Additional information is available by calling the church office at 501-753-3413.

Rogers First Church handbell ministry will present a spring concert April 28 at 6 p.m. Featured in the concert will be five handbell and handchime choirs ringing a variety of Christian music.

Siloam Springs First Church will be in revival April 28-May 1. Jon Randles of

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Lubbock, Texas, will be the evangelist and Marc McFarland of Memphis will direct music. Steve Abbott is pastor.

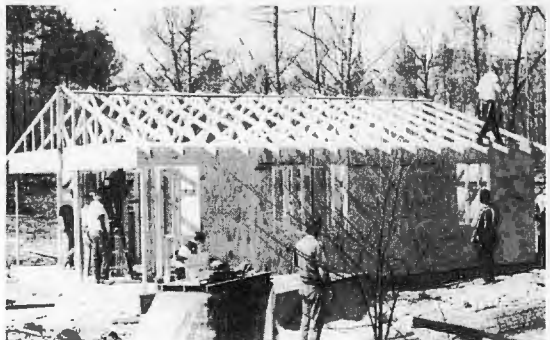
Fairfield Bay Church will hold revival services April 28-May 3 with Don Moore, recently retired executive director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, serving as evangelist. Rob Hewell, director of the ABCS church music ministries, will lead revival music. Ronny Waycaster is pastor.

Staff changes

Gerald Nash Jr. began serving March 17 as pastor of Foothills Church in Mountain View, coming there from First Church of Grubbs. He is a graduate of Williams Baptist College. Nash and his wife, Mary Ann, have two children, Melissa and Gerald III.

Jimmy Don Pinson is pastor of Liberty Church of Buck Range. He previously was pastor of Olive Branch Church of Chillicothe, Mo., and has served as a staff member of Arkansas churches in Benton, Lockesburg and Blevins. Pinson is a graduate of Ouachita Baptist University. He and his wife, Kimberly, have two children, Zachary Blake and Hali Morgan.

Randy Hogan has accepted the call to serve as pastor of First Church of Stuttgart. He will come there from First Church of Waldron where he has served since 1992. He previously was pastor of Concord Chapel of Van Buren and associate pastor of Davis Boulevard Church in North Richland Hills, Texas. Hogan has served



The Brotherhood of Natural Steps Church in Little Rock recently constructed a new home for the mother-in-law of one of their members. The missions project was one of three projects undertaken by Brotherhood members as other volunteers planted shrubs around the sanctuary and prepared an old fire station for use as a crisis closet. Glen McGriff is pastor.

on the Arkansas Baptist State Convention Executive Board and as secretary of the Arkansas Baptist Pastors' Conference. He is a graduate of the University of the Ozarks in Clarksville and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Hogan and his wife, Lisa, have two children, Joshua Randall and Stephen Paul.

George Domeres retired April 7 as pastor of Fair Park Church in Russellville. He

previously was director of missions for Clear Creek Association. Domeres will be available to serve as a supply pastor or as an interim pastor. He may be contacted at 501-890-5168.

John McBee is serving as part-time music director for First Church of Dumas. He and his wife, Melissa, live in Monticello where he is self-employed and a student at the University of Arkansas of Monticello.

Rick Smith has resigned as minister of education and outreach for Second Church in Russellville to enter the field of television advertising.

Barry Crane has resigned as part-time minister of youth for Second Church in Russellville.

Bobby Loyd will serve as interim music director through July for Second Church in Russellville. He will then enter Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Tom Perkins resigned March 31 as minister to youth and children at Pyatt Church. He and his wife, Ellen, and their children, Judi and Adam, are residing in Bergman.

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CHURCH MUSIC MINISTRIES

Ordinations

Farmington First Church ordained Bill Moore and Larry Samples to the deacon ministry March 24.

Hoxie First Church recently ordained Max Rose to the deacon ministry and Richard White to the gospel ministry.

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

'Share Christ's Love' is focus of '96 Sunday School Convention

The 1996 state Sunday School Convention at Geyer Springs First Church will urge participants to "Share Christ's Love" Sept. 20-21.

Milton Redeker, director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention Sunday School department, said that the Friday evening session "will begin with a Sunday School rally in the church's main auditorium and will feature keynote speaker Cliff Jenkins and a mass choir made up of smaller-membership churches."

Jenkins, pastor of New Hope Fellowship

in Springdale and a church growth consultant, "will bring a challenge to churches to learn what it takes to grow regardless of their location," Redeker explained.

Following the rally, participants will break into workshops by interests, officers or age groups. "Age groups will meet in sessions with Sunday School consultants, while general officers will meet in one of 11 conferences which will emphasize the needs of the church today and how to establish relationships in Sunday School classes," Redeker said.

Saturday participants may choose any three offered sessions, he added. "They can make up their own schedule to meet their needs and the needs of their church's Sunday School."

There is no cost and no child care for the convention. Redeker asked participants to bring a Bible, notepad, "a bended knee and a prayerful attitude."

For more information, contact the ABSC Sunday School department toll-free in state at 1-800-838-ABSC, ext. 5128 or locally in Little Rock at 376-4791.

Discipleship institute to study awakening, 'Live the Word' theme

Arkansas Baptists' Institute for Christian Discipleship will focus on the theme, "Live the Word Through Daily Discipleship" as participants meet at Parkway Place Church in Little Rock May 13-14.

Bob Holley, director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention discipleship and family ministry department, said the event "will undergird Arkansas Awakening, the ABSC emphasis for 1996-2000."

The institute's five sessions "will offer a combination of worship services and training workshops," Holley explained. "The Monday afternoon, Monday night and Tuesday night sessions will be general sessions with music and messages focusing on 'Arkansas Awakening: Live the Word.'"

The evening programs, which are free and open to anyone, will feature the Baptist Sunday School Board's Don Atkinson, author of *Meeting Needs: Sharing Christ*; Wallace Williams, director of spiritual life at Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham, Ala.; and ABSC executive director Emil Turner.

Workshops will be offered during day sessions and "are designed to...relate to personal spiritual growth, prayer ministry and equipping the church for ministry," said Holley. Topics will include "Meeting Needs: Sharing Christ," "When God Speaks," "In God's Presence," "Experiencing God," leadership, prayer, "Serving God: Discovering Your Spiritual Gifts," planning prayer ministries and "The Mind of Christ." Sessions will begin at 1:30 p.m. and 7 p.m. on Monday and at 8:30 a.m., 1 p.m. and 7 p.m. on Tuesday.

The cost for the institute is \$10 per person. There is no cost for those attending night sessions only. Materials related to all of the workshops will be available at the Baptist Book Store exhibit at the church.

For more information or to register, contact the discipleship and family ministry department toll-free in state at 1-800-838-ABSC, ext. 5160 or locally at 376-4791.

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Three longtime OBU professors announce '96 retirement plans

Three Ouachita Baptist University faculty members have announced their retirement from full-time teaching at the end of the 1995-96 academic year. The school's board of trustees has conferred special academic designations on each of the three men who have served a combined total of 118 years at OBU.

W. Francis McBeth was named distinguished university professor, Jake Shambarger was named professor emeritus of education and Bill Vining was named

professor emeritus of physical education. The three faculty members will be honored with a public reception May 1 at 3:30 p.m.

McBeth, chairman of the department of music theory/composition, joined the faculty in 1957. Shambarger, a faculty member since 1966, is a professor of education. He also served as OBU's baseball coach in 1965-73. Vining joined the faculty in 1954. He has served as athletic director, men's basketball coach and associate professor of physical education.

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NAMB 'incorporators' plan affirmed by agencies

DALLAS (BP)—A process for bringing the North American Mission Board into legal and organizational existence has gained the endorsement of the presidents and trustee leaders of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, Brotherhood Commission and Radio and Television Commission.

The process, which involves the use of "incorporators" in the establishment of the NAMB, was presented to the agency leaders in a meeting with the Implementation Task Force. The 10-member ITF was appointed last fall by the SBC Executive Committee to assist the various SBC agencies in the transition required by the convention's restructuring.

The proposal is expected to be voted on during the SBC annual meeting in New Orleans, June 11-13. Provided the SBC approves amendments to SBC Bylaw 15 for the second time, the recommendation will be one of several presented as part of the transition plan for restructuring.

The recommendation calls for 13 incorporators to include two people each nominated by the HMB, RTVC and Brotherhood Commission; six at-large members from the SBC to be nominated by the ITF; and a chairman to be nominated by the ITF from among its members. The at-large members could be anyone in the SBC but participants agreed that no more than two of the incorporators would come from any of the three agencies or the Executive Committee.

Leaders from the three agencies agreed to ask their respective boards to nominate two of their current trustees, who are eligible to be elected to the initial NAMB trustee board, to be among the incorporators. The NAMB charter calls for those trustees currently serving on the Brotherhood Commission, RTVC and HMB whose second term expires in the years 1998 through 2001 to be elected to the initial NAMB trustee board.

Among the more significant duties of the incorporators will be to conduct a search for the first NAMB president and nominate trustee officers of the board. The ITF intends to ask the incorporators to be prepared to offer a presidential nominee to the NAMB trustees at their organizational meeting at the end of the SBC annual meeting in 1997.

The recommendation also will instruct the incorporators to perform all necessary legal duties to incorporate the NAMB. Additional responsibilities will include suggesting bylaws, resolutions and other documents, prepared under the direction of the ITF.

ITF chairman Bob Reccord emphasized, "It is important to remember that the final

decision on the election of a president for NAMB resides with its board of trustees."

RTVC president Jack Johnson said, "It appears to me that this is the best possible solution to a very complicated and important demand."

HMB president Larry Lewis noted that "the proposal of the ITF to create a committee of Incorporators with equitable

representation of each agency and the SBC Executive Committee is the best approach to the transition. I affirm the proposal and pledge my full cooperation."

James D. Williams, Brotherhood Commission president, said the proposal "addresses basic issues of leadership and structure in a timely manner that is fair" for the existing agencies.

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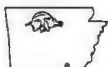
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SBC leaders regret consultant's tie with Texas lottery

NASHVILLE, TN (BP/ABF)—Southern Baptist Convention officials have learned that the consulting firm hired by the SBC Executive Committee to aid in convention restructuring also has professional ties to the state lottery in Texas.

"We regret that there is the connection, however minimal, between Coopers & Lybrand and the lottery, and we regret that we did not know about it when the contract was signed," said David Hankins, Executive Committee vice president for convention policy and staff liaison with the Implementation Task Force.

Coopers & Lybrand, a large international firm hired last month by the Executive Committee at a cost of \$495,000 to provide assistance during SBC restructuring, was the auditor for the Texas lottery from 1992-94. The firm currently attests the accuracy of lottery drawings.

Hankins declined to speculate about whether it would be possible or desirable for the Executive Committee to get out of the contract with Coopers & Lybrand.

When informed of the matter, SBC Executive Committee chairman Morris H. Chapman, responded, "In no way do we excuse, justify or defend any business relationship with the lottery. The Executive Committee and Southern Baptists remain staunchly opposed to all forms of gambling, illegal or legal.

"Although we anticipate the same outstanding performance they have given other Baptist clients, it is still disappointing to learn of their association with the lottery. Neither the Executive Committee nor the ITF would make any decision intentionally which would support or appear to support gambling interests."

In another gambling-related development, some Southern Baptists who reserved rooms in New Orleans for the SBC annual meeting got a shock when they received confirmation or cancellation form notices with an advertisement for a casino on the back from the New Orleans housing bureau.

Jack Wilkerson, convention manager and vice president for business and finance for the SBC Executive Committee, said he understands the concern of people who received the forms — which also have an advertisement for the airport shuttle.

Noting, however, that it is a pre-printed form used by the New Orleans housing bureau, Wilkerson said, "It simply was whether we wanted to have a custom-printed form, without the casino advertising, and pay a thousand additional Cooperative Program dollars to do so."



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Paragould Challenger teams win top honors at sports tournament

Two Paragould churches dominated the high school basketball division during the 1996 Arkansas Challenger Tournament of Sports held March 22-23 at three Little Rock-area churches, while a Fort Smith church's team captured the junior high finals.

East Side Church in Paragould took first place in first bracket competition of the high school finals, held at Park Hill Church in North Little Rock. First Church, Cabot, finished in second place. First Church in Clinton took sportsmanship honors in first bracket play.

Southside Church in Paragould was victorious in high school second bracket competition held at First Church, Little Rock, with the Eagle Heights Church team earning both second place and sportsmanship trophies.

Junior high school competition results saw the first team from Grand Avenue Church, Fort Smith, taking top honors. Immanuel Church in Little Rock took second place and First Church, Judsonia, received the sportsmanship award. The junior high bracket finals were held at Immanuel, Little Rock.

Andy Jerry of First Church, Mansfield, won first place in the senior high Speak Out tournament and fellow church member Jackson Dunn won the junior high Speak Out competition. A videotape of Jerry's oral essay for the Speak Out will be sent to the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission for judging, with the national winner presenting his speech during a Brotherhood meeting held in conjunction with the 1996 Southern Baptist Convention in New Orleans.

The 265 tournament participants and their leaders also attended a Friday night missions program led by George Siler of the Brotherhood Commission's World Changers division.

Event planner Mark Overman, minister of activities at Park Hill Church, noted that Siler "did a tremendous job to challenge the kids spiritually to grow and mature in Christ." He used a sports analogy to challenge the youth "to do a workout, add discipling, then pay the price to live their lives for Him."

Overman also reported that judges chose their candidate selections for members of the All-Star Team for a basketball/missions trip to Venezuela. He said that candidates have been contacted and have "about two weeks to pray and make decisions" about participating in the summer missions trip to Maracaibo, Venezuela.

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Baptist disaster relief preparation offers volunteers hands-on training

Arkansas Baptist men and women will meet June 1 at Immanuel Church in Little Rock to train for a Christian response to disasters during the state Disaster Relief Training.

Ronnie O'Neal, disaster relief director for the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, said this year's program will feature a new format. "We are going to do a summary

training using the new disaster relief manual, the official training piece in basic disaster relief training," he explained.

The program will begin at 9 a.m. and conclude at 3 p.m. O'Neal said the schedule will feature two sessions: "an overview and training through the manual, *Involving Southern Baptists in Disaster Relief*, from 9 a.m. to noon and hands-on training in the

areas of mass feeding, chain saw/clean-up and child care from 1-3 p.m."

ABSC Brotherhood department director Harry Black said a noon meal will be served to participants, prepared in the ABSC's Disaster Relief Unit 1, a 48-foot tractor-trailer rig.

The unit, which also will serve as the training unit for the day, is a mass feeding unit. Black said the unit is designed to "feed up to 15,000 hot meals a day when fully equipped and with an experienced crew."

Black said the need for training in disaster relief is crucial. "About three years ago, we had five natural disasters that Southern Baptists responded to and Arkansas Baptists were a part of that."

"These last two years, natural disasters were more sporadic and localized so that Arkansas volunteers were not called out," he continued. "Like they say, 'Out of sight, out of mind,' so there has not been as much attention to relief. But we know this is a ministry that will be needed."

ABSC disaster relief units, which include child care, mass feeding and clean-up crews, currently involve 269 people.

The cost for the training is \$5 per person and includes a training manual and lunch.

For more information about the training or how to involve a local church in disaster relief, contact O'Neal or Black at the ABSC Brotherhood office toll-free at 1-800-838-ABSC, or locally in Little Rock at 376-4791, ext. 5158.

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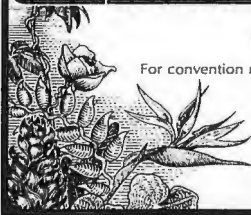
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Baptist missionaries to Liberia flee compound

By Marty Croll

SBC Foreign Mission Board

MONROVIA, LIBERIA (BP)—Eight of 10 Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board missionaries who had been holed up in a compound on the outskirts of Monrovia joined a high-speed U.S. Embassy convoy to a secured airfield April 11.

They spent the night safely at the airfield, planning to evacuate by U.S. military helicopter. Their evacuation was to route them through Freetown, Sierra Leone, a 90-minute flight, and then to Dakar, Senegal. Mission officials have reserved tickets for them from Dakar to Lome, Togo, where they will stay in a Baptist conference center.

Missionaries loaded their own cars with luggage, food and water, then followed embassy security officers along the bypass, dodging sniper fire, "sometimes going 90 miles per hour," a U.S. Embassy official said.

Southern Baptist missionaries Edward and Fran Laughridge chose to stay at the compound. The others agreed Laughridge would handle administrative affairs of mission work in their absence.

The missionaries had remained on their compound during intense street battles that broke out April 6 between groups fighting for control of a coalition government. Armed men tried to break into the compound at least once. Missionaries have been in touch with mission leaders in Abidjan, Ivory by phone and with the embassy by two-way radio.

Mission leaders in Abidjan dispatched an urgent message April 11 to the United States, asking Southern Baptists for "earnest prayer" for the missionaries and the people of Liberia.

In a phone call to Abidjan, mission administrator Bradley Brown said he and his wife, Carolyn, were "more than ready to go." The Browns are longtime FMB missionaries to Liberia and have stayed through some of the most frightening times there, but said they could make no impact under current conditions.

Activity by splinter groups of armed hooligans has grown more intense in the streets around the missionaries' concrete-

walled compound. After relative calm between opposing factions April 10, chaos evolved into dangerous anarchy. Food, water and medicine were scarce.

Awaiting airlift with the missionaries were more than 130 other people. The helicopters carry 30 to 35 people per load, the embassy official said.

FMB policy leaves the decision of whether to evacuate to the discretion of each missionary. Southern Baptist missionaries often are among the last to leave besieged areas because of ties with friends who live there and the openness to Jesus Christ they sense among people in the midst of uncertainty and conflict.

The six-year civil war in Liberia has forced missionaries to move into the capital city, more stable in recent years than outlying areas. At one point an attempt by a missionary couple to move back outside the city failed when it proved unsafe. In Monrovia, missionaries have worked to meet human needs, and fought to keep a seminary going.

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Clinton vetoes D and X abortion ban

WASHINGTON (BP)—President Bill Clinton kept his promise to veto legislation which would prohibit a gruesome, late-term abortion procedure.

Clinton vetoed the Partial-birth Abortion Ban Act April 10 although the bill received overwhelming approval in the House of Representatives, including the support of 72 Democrats. While the House may be able to achieve a two-thirds majority in an override attempt, such an effort appears doomed in the Senate, where the bill passed by only 10 votes.

The president "showed that he believes that abortion should receive the absolute protection of the law — at any stage of pregnancy, for any reason and using any method," responded Rep. Charles Canady, R-Fla., chief sponsor of the bill.

The bill allows the use of partial-birth abortion, also known as dilation and extraction, only when the life of the mother is endangered. In announcing his veto, Clinton criticized members of Congress for not including an exception he proposed which would allow the procedure to "avert serious adverse health consequences" to the mother.


"This is not about the pro-choice/pro-life debate," Clinton insisted. "I understand the desire to eliminate the use of a procedure that appears inhumane. But to eliminate it without taking into consideration the rare and tragic circumstances in which its use may be necessary would be even more inhumane."

Citing Supreme Court decisions, supporters of the bill said an exception for the health of the mother would have rendered the legislation meaningless.

Richard Land, executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, said Clinton's "often-repeated excuse of the need for an exception for the mother's health is a discredited catch-all loophole which has been demonstrated to include any reason the mother so desires."

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Convention Uniform

The True Vine

By William H. Sutton, attorney,
member, Immanuel Church,
Little Rock

Basic passage: John 15:4

Focal passage: John 15:4

Central truth: The fruit confirms the branch of the true vine.

In the hours just before His death, Jesus separated from the crowds and spent precious time close to His disciples. During that brief span, He calmly pulled back the veil on concepts of staggering importance. He would die, be resurrected, the Holy Spirit (the helper they did not know) would come and He would be granted kingdom authority (John 14).

A major purpose of this quiet talk with the disciples was to reveal to them their role in a world about to be changed forever.

To relate to something profound in an understandable way, He used the example of the vine. There must be absolute fidelity from the vine to the branches to the fruit.

Jesus described Himself as the True Vine. God the Father is the vinedresser (John 15:1). The followers of Jesus are the branches. The Father will judge the branches with an uncomplicated test. Do they bear fruit? If not, they will be discarded and burned (vv. 2, 6). Branches that bear fruit will be pruned and cared for by the vinedresser (God) so that they may grow more fruit (v. 2). It should be noticed that branches do not judge branches. Only God judges followers of Jesus.

The heart of the lesson is that branches can do nothing unless they abide in the vine (v. 4). The DNA of the branch existed in the vine before the branch was formed. The vine provides constant food, growth, fruit and life for the branch. On its own, the branch simply dries and becomes a problem for disposal.

Jesus then accentuated the condition of His disciples who are clean because of the words He has spoken to them (v. 3). For those who abide in Him, whatever their ask will be granted (v. 7), their fruit will glorify the Father (v. 8), they will abide in His love (v. 10), have His joy (v. 11) and, by His commandment, have the love of one another (v. 17).

Life and Work

Less is more

By Suzanne Dilday, member,
First Church, Benton

Basic passage: 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

Focal passage: 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12

Central truth: Lead "simple" lives.

Growing up in a north Dallas suburb, I was surrounded by a fast-paced material world of import cars, shopping centers and oversized homes. Ambition and success meant money. After marrying, I moved from that 70-mile-an-hour lifestyle to Missouri, where no one travels as fast as the speed limit. For a long time in my new home, I missed the glass and concrete of Dallas and was amazed by the lack of emphasis on "getting ahead." Gradually, my perspective shifted. Now that I live in mid-Arkansas, I don't think I would ever want to go back to the material world I grew up in: My definition of ambition and success have changed.

Among instructions to the Thessalonian believers to live pure lives and love one another, Paul gave these early "suburban" Christians something to think about regarding success. In verse 11, he encouraged them to "make it your ambition to lead a quiet life." What a concept! Today, we are instructed from all sides to behave extravagantly, to "live large." Rarely does anyone say a worthy goal is a quiet life. Today, a quiet life is equated with an unproductive life. Yet, Paul speaks as much to us as he does to those early Christians and says this is the way to be successful and "not be in need" (v. 12).

He also advised the Thessalonians to "attend to your own business" (v. 11). It seems Paul discovered the source of dissatisfaction. Usually when I'm anxious to spend, to do or to have, it's because I've compared myself to someone else. My own "business," rather than another's, should determine my actions. That's why the Bible is full of instruction on the subject, beginning with the tenth commandment regarding covetousness and culminating with Jesus' teachings. In Matthew 6:25, Jesus asked a thoughtful question: "Is not life more than food and the body than clothing? Isn't life more than the goods we seek? All the things we need will be provided when we seek first His Kingdom and righteousness (Matt. 6: 33).

I've heard that there are only two ways to be completely satisfied: Acquire more or desire less. It may not be easier to desire less, but it sure does make life simpler!

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Bible Book

God's hidden treasure

By Bill Steeger, chairman,
department of religion,
Ouachita Baptist University
Basic passage: Zephaniah 1:1-3:20
Focal passage: Zephaniah 3:17
Central truth: God enjoys loving His people.

Judah felt invincible the last decades of her life. Israel, the Northern Kingdom, fell to Assyria but Judah, with God's temple, was spared. Arrogance and self-righteousness prevailed.

Zephaniah opens with the greatest picture of God's wrath in the Old Testament and closes with the most moving picture of His love. In the midst of scenes of the Day of the LORD, Zephaniah pleads for his people to return to the LORD. In seeking God they may become "Zephaniah" (*hidden by Jehovah*, v. 2:30) — God's treasure.

Have you ever swelled with pride as that daughter performed at her piano recital, or that son caught that difficult pass? The saving LORD rejoices in His people in much the same way (v. 3:17).

■ *He will rejoice over thee with joy:* Like a father rooting for his son from the 50-yard line, God bursts into excitement and joy over you, His returning people. This is the "John 3:16" of the Old Testament. God is in our midst mighty (literally like a warrior) to save. His is a joy and love of action! He goes to battle for us. Zephaniah bursts out: "He will save!"

■ *He will rest in His love:* Like a couple once torn apart but now reconciled, the vocal excitement of rejoicing turns to silence. "Rest" (literally *be still*) describes the awesome expression of contentment, satisfaction and joy that no words can describe. A mother's tearful silence at her son's baptism or a father's trembling but silent lips at his daughter's wedding are only glimpses of this expression of love no words can explain. Perhaps the silence of Jesus during His trial may reflect His contentment in doing His Father's will.

■ *He will joy over thee with singing:* The silence of this love affair is finally broken with singing (literally *shout of joy*). The action of "joy over thee" (or *rejoicing*) is literally "spin around" with joy. God gets excited about you! His love is an action word. He "so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son." No wonder there is rejoicing in heaven over each sinner who returns home to the Father's love (Luke 15:7).

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Convention Uniform

Finding true happiness

By William H. Sutton, attorney;
member, Immanuel Church,
Little Rock

Basic passage: Matthew 5:1-12

Focal passage: Matthew 5:11

Central truth: The good life is not found in the expected places.

One of my heroes is Alvin York, the Tennessee farmer portrayed by Gary Cooper in the Academy Award-winning movie, *Sergeant York*. Drafted into the army in World War I, he vowed he would not fight, but through study sessions and prayer, York experienced a change of conviction. He finished the war as America's most highly decorated soldier.

When he returned to the U.S., the New York Stock Exchange suspended trading while he was carried across the floor in tribute. He was besieged by large corporations and publishing houses seeking endorsements and book offers. He rejected all of them with eloquent dignity: "This uniform ain't for sale." York spent the rest of his life quietly farming, raising a family and teaching Sunday School.

Early in his ministry, Jesus drew large, admiring crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan (Matt. 4:25). Many were disappointed as He preached the Sermon on the Mount. It was not what they wanted nor expected.

Driven by the world, most were seeking ways to become rich, powerful and popular. Such people, it was commonly believed, had found favor with God. Jesus dismantled such beliefs by describing opposite types as those favored by God. The poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers and the persecuted were those named by Jesus as "blessed" (vv. 3-10).

Jesus saved the last "blessed" for the best. Those who are persecuted because of Him have a great reward in heaven (v. 11).

After Jesus chose the humble road for Himself and His followers, many deserted Him. They missed the point that it was this humble obedience that caused God to exalt the name of Jesus above every other name (Phil. 2:5-11).

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Life and Work

He will return!

By Suzanne Dilday, member,
First Church, Benton

Basic passage: 1 Thessalonians

4:13-18, 5:1-2, 8-11

Focal passage: 1 Thessalonians

4:13-18, 5:8-11

Central truth: Some things are certain.

I'm almost nine months pregnant, and one of the hardest parts hasn't been sleepless nights, tired feet or writing Sunday School lessons. The hardest part is waiting. Knowing that I will soon have a child but not knowing when is nerve-racking. Due dates are meaningless and predictions are futile. The only thing certain is that my son will come when the timing is right. In preparation for the event, we've bought diapers, assembled furniture and even installed a baby seat in the car.

Paul prepared to close his first letter to the Thessalonians by talking about the Lord's return. He described in glorious terms how believers who have died will meet Jesus first and those who are alive will join Him next. "And thus we shall always be with the Lord" (vv. 4:15-17). Paul urged them to "comfort one another with those words" (v. 18). It's just as much a comfort to us in the vicious world we sometimes encounter to know we won't be forgotten. To always be with the Lord away from evil and hatred and hurt is a thought that can get you through any day.

With the Lord's return, the hardest part is waiting. Just as surely as "birth pangs upon a woman with child" (v. 5:3), the day of the Lord will come. We just don't know when. We've heard wacky predictions from people claiming to know the exact date of Christ's return, as well as sober-minded suggestions of general times, but the truth is, it can't be predicted. The one thing we can count on is that it is a certainty. Rather than dwelling on the "due date," there are preparations to be made.

It would be silly for me to postpone buying diapers and bottles just because I don't know when I'll need them. Unexpectedly like a "thief in the night," this child would catch me unprepared. Paul advised his readers to get ready for Christ's coming. We are to have faith and love, always holding to the "hope of salvation" (v. 5:8).

It's possible that by the time you read this I will have given birth and it's equally possible that by that same time the Lord will have returned. Either way, I'm ready!

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Bible Book

Promise of the presence

By Bill Steeger, chairman,
Department of Religion,
Ouachita Baptist University

Basic passage: Haggai 1:1-2:23

Focal passage: Haggai 2:4-9

Central truth: God's promised presence brings peace.

In 536 B.C., returning exiles planted their dreams along with vineyards in the new Israel. Temple foundations were laid in hope, but the struggle to rebuild homes and farms soon robbed the fledgling nation of zeal. The temple project was abandoned.

Haggai delivered a powerful message in 520 B.C., reviving enthusiasm for rebuilding God's house. His messages turned the tide. He moved his people back to God's work. Our focal passage outlines major themes in Haggai and encourages believers today.

"For I am with you" (v. 4): The "promise of the presence" sustains the people of God. Believers can accomplish the task, defeat the enemy, face hardship and trials, overcome the pain of rejection and loss and resist temptation because He is with us.

From the calling of Abraham, God has given and kept this promise. Isaac, Jacob and Joseph heard the echo of those powerful words. As Moses stood before the burning bush, God's words of enabling were: "I will be with thee" (Ex. 3:12). Joshua and Samuel received the same promise to face difficult times.

David learned the lesson early: "Ye, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me..." (Psa. 23:6). Jeremiah was a trembling youth, doubting his usefulness, when God's reply sustained him: "Don't be afraid... I am with thee..." (Jer. 1:8). Haggai joins the list of saints confident in God's promised presence: "I am with thee..." (v. 4, see also 1:13).

The presence was ultimately expressed in Jesus. Verses 5-9 look to that future. "The desire of all nations shall come" (v. 7) is the promise of the coming Messiah. After shaking the nations, the Messiah "will fill this house with glory..." (v. 7) and "...in this place give peace" (v. 9). Jesus still shakes kingdoms, redeems men, fills emptiness with His glory, and brings peace.

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The *Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine* offers subscription plans at three rates:

■ **The Every Resident Family Plan** offers churches a premium rate when they send the Newsmagazine to all their resident households. Resident families are calculated to be at least one-fourth of the church's Sunday School enrollment. Churches who send only to members who request a subscription do not qualify for this lower rate of \$6.36 per year for each subscription.

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Homosexual marriage efforts prompt 'wake-up call'

WASHINGTON (BP)—Colorado Gov. Roy Romer has become the first governor to veto a bill which would have prohibited same-sex marriages. The same day, March 25, San Francisco mayor Willie Brown officiated at a "wedding" for 175 homosexual couples on the first day of the city's same-sex marriage ordinance.

March 25 "was a wake-up call," warned Robert Knight, director of cultural studies at the Family Research Council in Washington, "but it was only the latest in a series of events that show how seriously the homosexual rights movement takes this issue. None of this is definitive, because people all over America are waking up to the threat and are responding."

In a case going to trial this summer, a Hawaii court is expected to declare homosexual marriage constitutional. The Hawaii case has prompted action in several other states. South Dakota, Utah and Idaho have enacted laws either denying recognition to such out-of-state marriages or limiting marriage to a union between a man and a woman. A similar bill is awaiting the governor's signature in Georgia. Legislators in about two dozen other states have attempted or are considering such legislation.

St. Louis pastors protest subpoenas of church records

ST. LOUIS (BP)—Seven Baptist pastors in St. Louis have demanded in a letter to mayor Freeman Bosley Jr. that the city of St. Louis stop issuing subpoenas of church records to prove residency of city employees. St. Louis requires city employees to reside in the city; Bosley last year ordered a crackdown on enforcement of the rule.

In a letter protesting the subpoenas, the pastors said the city's action is being interpreted by concerned Baptists as "a serious breach of First Amendment rights."

"The adoption of the First Amendment, Baptists have always been at the forefront of protecting this cherished right," they wrote. The pastors asked that the records be immediately returned to their respective churches with a note of apology.

Pat Washington, Bosley's spokesman, said the city will continue to request all records necessary to prove residency. "When people stoop to try to dupe the city and be fraudulent in their representation of their residence, we have to use whatever measures we have available to us under the law, and subpoenaing church records is such a measure," Washington said.

Long-time BWA leader Robert Denny dies at age 81

ORLANDO, FL (BP)—Robert S. Denny, general secretary of the Baptist World Alliance from 1968-80, died April 5 in Orlando, Fla. Denny, 81, had suffered for the past two years from Alzheimer's disease.

He held his first BWA position in 1950 when he became chairman of the BWA youth committee. In 1956 he was elected BWA associate secretary for youth work and was named BWA general secretary 12 years later.

Denny is remembered for played a significant role in defending religious freedom during the communist totalitarianism of Eastern Europe. "He will be remembered as a...determined BWA general secretary in bringing Baptists together around the world," noted current BWA general secretary Denton Lotz.

FamilyNet & ACTS to air annual Dove Awards ceremony

FORT WORTH, TX (BP)—The 27th Annual Dove Awards will be telecast live April 25 from 8-10 p.m. by FamilyNet, the broadcast television service of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission and on the Faith & Values Channel as a presentation of the ACTS Network.

ACTS and FamilyNet also have scheduled a pre-show special to feature backstage interviews and music video clips from many of the artists nominated for Dove Awards. It will air at 7 p.m.

Dad the Family Shepherd ministry names new president

LITTLE ROCK (BP)—The board of Dad the Family Shepherd has named Jim Neal president of the Little Rock-based ministry.

Dad the Family Shepherd is a 12-year-old ministry for training men as fathers through live and video seminars and small-group studies. More than 88,000 men have attended DFS conferences throughout the nation and abroad.

The ministry also has worked in cooperation with the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission since 1994, when the SBC agency adopted the Dad the Family Shepherd conference as part of its *Men's Ministries Journey* curriculum.

Neal comes to DFS after seven years as senior vice president of Youth for Christ/USA. Previously, he held various leadership positions at World Vision from 1974-88.

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