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### May 30, 1996

Arkansas Baptist State Convention

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# ARKANSAS BAPTIST



Volume 95, Number 11

May 30, 1996

SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL  
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"The  
Perfect  
Law  
of  
Liberty"

June 2

Religious Liberty Sunday

# Williams, Ouachita confer 294 degrees during commencement ceremonies

Ouachita Baptist University and Williams Baptist College awarded a total of 294 degrees during recent commencement exercises.

Williams officials awarded associate's degrees to three students and bachelor's degrees to 63 during commencement exercises May 11 at the school's Southernland-Mabee Center, making it the largest class of four-year graduates in the history of the college.



Rex Horne, pastor of Immanuel Church in Little Rock, delivered the commencement address, challenging the "mind, heart and strength" of the graduates.

The baccalaureate sermon was given the preceding evening by Greg Kirksey, pastor of First Church in Benton, who was honored as the college's 1996 Distinguished Baptist Minister.

Williams also awarded an honorary doctor of laws degree to Michael Hurst, who has lectured at the college on several occasions. Hurst is a fellow in modern history and politics at St. John's College of Oxford University.

Jacalyn Fay Hardin, a bachelor of science in education major from Corning, graduated with top honors in her class and was awarded her degree summa cum laude.

Ouachita officials awarded 228 undergraduate degrees during commencement

exercises held May 11 at the Jones Performing Arts Center on campus.

The keynote speaker for commencement activities was Roger Sublett, program director of the Kellogg National Fellowship Program of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation in Battle Creek, Mich.

Emil Turner, executive director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, also spoke to graduates during a baccalaureate service held prior to commencement.

Selected by the OBU faculty as Senior Ouachitanian Woman and Man were Andrea Leagans, a senior music major from Arkadelphia, and Jason Merrick, a senior Benton biology major. Leagans also won the Academic Achiever of the Year award for the Bernice Young Jones School of Fine Arts and Merrick also received the Outstanding Student award in Biology.



Among other award winners at OBU were Shanna Burris, a senior Malvern biology major, who was honored as Overall Academic Achiever of the Year and

Zine Smith, a junior physics/mathematics major from Winthrop, as the Ben Elrod Scholar from the Carl Goodson Honors Program.

Scott Duvall, associate professor of religion, was elected Outstanding Faculty Member of the Year by members of the OBU Student Senate.

## Cover Story



### Religious Liberty Sunday

"But whose looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed" (James 1:25). Southern Baptists will observe Religious Liberty Sunday June 2.

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# ARKANSAS BAPTIST

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# Henry affirms 'hunger' for spiritual renewal

ORLANDO, FL (BP)—Southern Baptist efforts in the past will not be "adequate for the demands of the future," according to SBC president Jim Henry, pastor of First Baptist Church, Orlando, Fla. Henry, who is concluding his second term as SBC president, will preside over the 1996 SBC annual meeting June 11-13 in New Orleans.

"Since the mid '60s and '70s, I think we've let up and I think there's been a deterioration in reaching people," Henry remarked. "We've lost the edge and excitement. We've gotten more concerned about some other things. Soul-winning, discipleship and prayer was lost in the shuffle of some good things.

"I think we got off the road," he added. "I think in recent years there has been a turn to get back on the road. There's a hunger for that."

Despite his concerns, Henry said he believes the SBC as a whole has made progress during the past year. "We've seen an improvement in baptisms and record giving to the Cooperative Program," he pointed out. "Missions offerings set a record and we started the second-highest number of new churches in our history.

"I think as we've been able to devote more time, prayer, resources and energies to God's priorities — rather than our denominational difficulties — we've seen what God can do. The theological struggles had to be dealt with, but now we are able to focus more on soul-winning, missions and church starting."

Noting that "most of the leadership positions in our convention are led by conservatives and boards that are conservative," Henry said he anticipates the SBC will continue its conservative direction.

"I think there's been a real sense of being alert to drifting away from our roots. I hope the coalescing and a consolidating of our effort to do the main thing will help us concentrate on loving Christ, loving each other and loving a lost world. That's where we're healthiest and do the best."

## Involve 'young pastors'

Looking toward the future, Henry emphasized the importance of involving young pastors in denominational life.

"I think some of them have been used to operating independently and don't see any need for the structure and fellowship in it," he said. "They get their inspiration and resources from a wider venue.

"I think as the generation dies off that has been very denominationally oriented, we're going to lose something very special unless the younger generation picks it up



Southern Baptist Convention president Jim Henry cited the need to be more inclusive of young pastors, minorities and women during a recent pre-convention interview.

and sees the value in the denomination. I think we're already getting a little bit into that slide."

While denominational restructuring may "help some," Henry added, "It's a deeper thing than restructuring. A lot of our people do not appreciate our good traditions, our structure or the value of it. They have become independent-minded, thinking, 'I don't need the denomination.'

"They work through other churches or parachurch groups, which I'm not saying is wrong," he noted. "I'm just saying that we're not up to speed as a denomination.... We should remember that the denomination serves the church; the church does not serve the denomination. We need to get back to that."

Henry said a primary area of progress in SBC life is the focus on racial reconciliation. Noting that "response has been good" to passage of the "Resolution on Racial Reconciliation" during last year's SBC annual meeting, he emphasized the need for even greater inclusion of "minorities and placement in the seminaries and our denominational life."

Henry said he has sought to be sensitive to the concerns of both minorities and women in his presidential appointments. "Also, I have asked each committee to be conscious of women and minorities when selecting leaders for boards and agencies in the convention. I told them, 'No quotas, but no barriers either.'"

Explaining that other SBC leaders share his commitment to inclusiveness, Henry added, "I have sensed no discrimination or hints at it from anybody at the state or denominational level about cutting anybody out of the process as far as women and minorities are concerned."

Within the scope of inclusiveness, Henry suggested that conservative nominees from churches that allow designated giving to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship should not automatically be disqualified from serving.

"I think there's a difference between a church putting the CBF in the budget and a member designating," he stated. "I think if the church puts it in the budget, they've made a statement that they're not focused on SBC concerns."

However, he added, "If an individual designates money to the CBF through a church, that can happen anywhere. It could happen in my church...."

"If a church is saying we're CBF — or both American Baptist and Southern Baptist — you're getting a mixed signal," Henry remarked. "They may be wonderful people, but we should be focused in leadership.... In terms of who is going to be in denominational leadership, I believe you have to be committed."

Beyond the issue of CBF, Henry said there are conservatives within the SBC who "maybe don't feel like they would be looked at to serve because they're not in a certain group or clique.... Some of our people just want to know that they have an opportunity to serve."

Looking toward next month's SBC annual meeting, Henry said, "It seems kind of quiet. We've had so many heated and demanding conventions. I think this is going to be a period of reflection, renewal, revival and focusing on where we're going."

"I'm expecting an exciting convention, but I hope with no major divisive issues coming before us — healthy discussion, but nothing that will keep us stirred up."

"It's been a fantastic opportunity and privilege to be SBC president," Henry affirmed. "I pray to God that I've been faithful to Him, to His charge and to His people."

**"We should remember that the denomination serves the church; the church does not serve the denomination."**

—Jim Henry  
SBC president

## A PASTOR'S HEART



By EMIL TURNER  
ABCS Executive Director

During the music service, people began coming to the altar. The preaching had not even started. Some walked. Some ran. The preacher never had the opportunity to preach, yet God's Spirit worked. Thirty-five people were saved.

A young man experienced God in a new way. His new relationship with God convicted him of his need to share Christ. Within weeks, he led eight of his friends to Christ.

Has awakening come to us? Yes. These two events occurred through the ministries of Siloam Springs and Super Summer. Two of the greatest opportunities for impacting lives are right here at home. God is using your Arkansas Baptist State Convention to save lost people and restore backsliders.

This year, Siloam Assembly begins June 17 and goes through August 9. You can sign up any time (providing there is space) prior to your departure for camp by calling 1-800-838-2272, ext. 5129.

Super Summer begins June 16 for students having completed grade nine. The session for those in grades six through eight begins at noon on June 20.

Registrations can be made by calling 1-800-838-2272, ext. 5222. Get in on what God is doing. Send your own young people and provide a scholarship for an unsaved young person.

Have you read *The Meaning of a Man* (Broadman & Holman, 1996)? Ronnie Floyd's new book calls men to biblical living. The book is a great source of ministry. "God can do more through you in a moment than you could ever do on your own in a lifetime."

REX HORNE

## President's Perspective



### Friends and fellowship

Dr. Harold Hicks was pastor of Pulaski Heights Baptist Church in Little Rock for 30 years, 1942-1971. He recently died at the age of 90, leaving behind his wife, sons and daughter, grandchildren and great-grandchildren and a legacy. This man, as his pastor, Dr. Randy Hyde, pointed out, served during a golden time of church growth and cooperation. The second World War ended and people, at least for a while, were attending our churches in record numbers.

I had the privilege of seeing Dr. Hicks at least once a year at the annual Baptist Health Corporation meeting. Because of our names, we usually found our seating assignments next to each other. I discovered Dr. Hicks to be a true gentleman, kind, encouraging and exemplifying a genuine Christian spirit.

One of my heroes in the faith is one of my predecessors, Dr. W.O. Vaught Jr., who served Immanuel Church for 38 years, from 1945-1983. Dr. Vaught went to heaven in December of 1989 before I was called to serve Immanuel in the summer of 1990. Dr. Vaught casts a long shadow of faithful preaching and service to Christ, Immanuel and believers worldwide.

As you might know or have imagined, Hicks and Vaught did not agree on every matter of interpretation or methodology. Both men may have enjoyed the dialogue with each other

and even the fact that their views challenged others. C. S. Lewis said our friends are not necessarily people who agree with us; they are people asking the same questions.

These two long-tenured pastors did agree on the fundamentals of our faith and undoubtedly asked some of the same questions. The Lord Jesus was central in preaching and practice. Missions, evangelism and cooperation to reach nations was a shared conviction.

Although Dr. Hicks and Dr. Vaught were uniquely individual, they maintained friendship and fellowship through the years. In fact, they were often seen together on the golf course! They must have valued fellowship and brotherhood very highly.

Arkansas Baptists have a number of committed pastors today, probably around 1,200 on any given day. Most of us could be friends, better friends than we appear to be at times. Pastors, I am attempting to pray for each of you by name this year, as well as your family and church family. I would deeply appreciate and value your prayers.

Perhaps we can learn from our predecessors who shared ministries, friendship, agreement, disagreement and even golf! Today Hicks and Vaught share heaven. We'll join them soon.

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

## Personal perspectives

"To worship is to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God, to feed the mind with the truth of God, to purge the imagination by the beauty of God, to open the heart to the love of God and to devote the will to the purpose of God."

— Albert Holmes, director, institutional and business-industrial chaplaincy, Home Mission Board

"As with everything else, worship begins with Who God is, not with who we are."

— Rex Horne, director, Arkansas Baptist State Convention church wellness ministries department

# Face up to worship

"Let's face it" is a common phrase spoken so quickly and often that its impact is slight. Yet the value of facing a matter forthrightly, especially a critical one, cannot be overstated.

Worship is a crucial concern for churches. Church leaders today are facing choices about the worship life of their congregations. Their decisions will have a profound impact on their church's health and its ability to fulfill the Great Commission in the future.

## Face up...to Scripture

It's a part of human nature to worship. Many times the object of our heart's affection isn't the One who alone is worthy of our praise. The Lord Jesus articulated the esteem due His Father in the greatest commandment: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (Matt. 22:37).

When Jesus encountered the tempter in the wilderness, He spoke directly to the issue: "Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only" (Luke 4:8).

It's important for us to teach people what the Scriptures say about worship. However, it's more important that we teach them about God. As with everything else, worship begins with Who God is, not with who we are.

"God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ..." (II Cor. 5: 19). Why? A.W. Tozer answers: "In order that He might make worshippers out of rebels; in order that He might restore us again to the place of worship we knew when we were first created."

Worship is more a matter of relationship than it is technique or philosophy. True understanding stirs genuine response. We become the "...living sacrifice, holy and pleasing..." mentioned by Paul as he exhorted believers in his letter to the church at Rome.

The essence of biblical worship, whether individual or corporate, is singularly specific — to honor and love God and Him only. We stand in unscriptural territory when we assign any other purpose to worship.

## Face up...to circumstances

On any given Sunday in the time appointed for corporate worship, how many matters call hearts and minds away from the One who should truly be the center of attention?

Worship is the greater priority. Seek effective ways of communicating practical matters so the expressive heart of worship isn't lost in the shuffle.

Even the activity of worship itself can become a barrier. Judson Cornwall calls us

# 1 PERSON'S VIEW



By ROB HEWELL  
Director, ABSC Church Music Ministries

to account: "There are entire congregations who worship praise and praise worship, but who have not yet learned to praise and worship God in Jesus Christ."

All the things we do, he continues, "...have been accepted as worship instead of a means of expressing worship."

Form and style, not Scripture, seem to have received much attention recently when determining what is and isn't appropriate in worship. Bruce Leafblad challenges Christians to look deeper, however, noting that "the current crisis in worship is not a crisis of form, but a crisis of spirituality."

Style and form are valid topics for appraisal when cultivating vitally alive worship. But to the extent that style and form aren't the true measure of the issue, then style and form aren't the true measure of the solution.

Integrity, authenticity and a sense of excellence are more significant matters. Form and style are servants of worship, truth and the mission of the church.

"Some congregations need to be exhorted that it is okay to be joyful, exuberant, even demonstrative in their praise; others need to know that singing 30 minutes of fast tunes and swinging from the lights doesn't necessarily mean God has shown up," writes Michael Green.

Even as believers at our best, we're

easily distracted. Encountering holy, gracious God is eternity's greatest privilege, but the clutter of what presses in on corporate worship in many churches drowns any chance for authenticity.

## Face up!

The experience of the Psalmist is instructive. "He has put a new song in my heart, even a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and hear and put their trust in Him." (Psalm 40:3). David knew he had been touched by God's grace. His response to the Father in worship was a testimony and motivated others to seek God.

Any study of today's culture delivers a clear verdict: People are hungry for genuine spiritual truth. They're increasingly drawn to individuals and groups whose lives are deeply changed by what they believe. Increasingly, they're avoiding institutions — including churches — that don't express significant and legitimate interest in them and their need to know.

The salvation story is a central element in worship for the New Testament church. Worship is our response to God for all that He is and all He has done. When the gospel is fully reflected in worship, it's easily communicated to those outside the faith.

Jesus was very clear as He spoke to His followers: "But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself" (John 12:32). As Christ is faithfully exalted in worship, non-believers who observe will be drawn to Him by the power of His Spirit.

In the face of our imminent move into the 21st century, what will our corporate worship say to our world about our God? Will the vitality of our worship make a difference in their search for truth?

Jesus told the Samaritan woman that His Father seeks those who will worship Him in spirit and truth. Churches that face up and discover a heart for worshipping God in that manner will have a distinct impact in the world.

## Technology, teens give worship a boost

BETHALTO, Ill. (BP)—First Baptist Church here has given its worship services a technological boost, and young teenagers are providing much of the brain power.

The church has installed a \$10,000 computer-driven audio-visual system to display videos, sermon out-lines, music lyrics, announcements and other graphics on a screen above the baptistry.

Associate pastor Ron Woods coordinates the effort, but he has a cadre of computer-savvy teens at his side. On a

recent Sunday morning, 14-year-old Adam Edelen was at the helm, pressing buttons to display the array of worship aids at the appropriate times — including sermon notes while pastor Charles West preached.

It's a rather sophisticated system, but Edelen, an eighth-grader, said it's "very simple" to use. "Just a click of a button" creates all kinds of interesting visual aids. It also provides the teenager, and others in the church, a way for God to "put my talents to use."

## Sutton resigns from SBC Resolutions Committee

Southern Baptist Convention President Jim Henry announced May 23 he has asked one member of the SBC Resolutions Committee to withdraw and another has resigned. William H. "Buddy" Sutton, an attorney and member of Immanuel Church in Little Rock, resigned from the committee May 23.

Henry, in a statement to Baptist Press, said he received word from Morris Chapman, SBC Executive Committee president, that the SBC bylaws allow for 10 members for the Resolutions Committee while Henry had appointed 12.

"In my desire to widen participation in our SBC life, I had enlisted more than the 10 members," Henry, pastor of First Baptist Church, Orlando, Fla., said.

"Therefore I have asked Dr. Ferris Jordan of Louisiana to withdraw, which he has consented to do. Buddy Sutton of Arkansas has resigned from the committee," Henry said. "We appreciate their willingness to serve and will miss wisdom and skill they would have brought to our work."

The Resolutions Committee prepares resolutions for the messengers at the annual meetings to consider. The committee is the subject of Bylaw 22 which states, in part, "the president...shall appoint a Committee on Resolutions to consist of 10 members..."

Herb Hollinger, Southern Baptist Convention vice president for convention press, wrote in a May 23 Baptist Press story that Sutton's appointment had recently drawn criticism.

Hollinger reported that Larry Holly, a physician from Beaumont, Texas, distributed to news media a letter he had written May 21 to Henry asking the president to withdraw Sutton's appointment. Larry Page, head of the Christian Civic Foundation of Arkansas, also was critical of Sutton's appointment in an interview with the Indiana Baptist state convention newspaper.

Sutton, asserted Hollinger in the story, "is a managing partner of a firm which drafted an amendment which is part of a November ballot initiative in Arkansas said to be pro-gambling."

A spokesman for Henry, Hollinger reported, said Henry "did not want to comment on the Sutton matter."

Holly, who never mentioned Sutton by name in the letter, wrote to Henry that he had "discovered" that "you have appointed a man to the Resolutions Committee for the 1996 Southern Baptist Convention who is the managing partner of a law firm which is attempting to legalize pari-mutuel betting in Arkansas, and who is a close personal friend of President Clinton, who

just took executive action to allow partial-birth abortions in this country."

Holly asked Henry in the letter to "please withdraw the invitation for the attorney from Arkansas to serve on the Resolutions Committee."

In a May 23 Associated Baptist Press interview, Holly said Sutton's role in the gambling debate in Arkansas places the SBC in an "untenable position" if he serves on the SBC resolutions committee, which often is asked to take a stand on gambling.

"Sutton is in a compromised position," Holly said. "He cannot have a clear moral voice on gambling if he is profiting, even indirectly, from the gambling issue."

Holly's letter to Henry was sent by electronic mail to 46 colleagues and to all the state Baptist newspapers. Sutton's withdrawal came less than 24 hours later.

Sutton has long been active in Arkansas Baptist life. A past two-term president of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, he served as general chairman of the Citizens Against Legalized Lottery campaign in 1990 and as chairman of the Billy Graham Crusade in 1989. He currently is chairman of the Ouachita Baptist University board.

He was the 1991 recipient of the Brooks Hays Memorial Christian Citizenship Award for "exemplary service to the community and state."

Sutton, who has served as a deacon and Sunday School teacher at Immanuel for 35 years, was unavailable for comment prior to press time.

### Sutton 'statesmanship' example

Immanuel pastor Rex Horne defended Sutton and commented that Sutton "is not the issue in this election. His personal example and conduct and conviction is known. Not only for Arkansas Baptists, but for many Christians of other denominations, he is an example of Christian faith and statesmanship."

Horne, who had discussed the resignation with Sutton, said that Sutton resigned "out of respect for Jim Henry and an abiding desire that the SBC progress in its work in harmony."

Horne added that Sutton's record of service for Arkansas Baptists was "exemplary" and that "he is a member of a



William H. "Buddy" Sutton speaks against a state lottery during a press conference in the State Capitol rotunda in 1990. Sutton served as general chairman for the Citizens Against Legalized Lottery anti-gambling campaign.

church that has consistently supported efforts to oppose gambling."

Horne noted that the Immanuel congregation gave more than \$4,000 in 1990 and \$8,500 in 1994 to fight gambling efforts in the state.

"I find it regrettable that anyone would attempt to introduce a man like Buddy Sutton as an issue in gambling when his personal convictions are known by his church, the convention, his partners at the Friday firm and the clients served by the Friday firm. They know where Buddy Sutton stands."

Responding to the content of the Holly letter, Horne said, "That's not worthy of my comment."

Page, who is leading an anti-gambling campaign through the Christian Civic Foundation, was critical of Sutton's role as managing partner of the Friday, Eldredge & Clark firm.

He told the *Arkansas Baptist News-magazine* that he was critical of Sutton's nomination "because we're over here struggling on a shoestring budget with virtually no funds, with novices from me on down doing political work trying to protect this state...and when a guy that I respect as much as I respect Buddy Sutton helps (gambling interests) it both hurts me and discourages me and makes me a little aggravated."

"They've represented Oaklawn (race-track in Hot Springs) from as far back as I can remember and they drafted the (casino, lottery and non-profit gambling) amendment that's being qualified for the ballot."

Page did clarify, however, that "I did not make him an issue in this over the Resolutions Committee. I was asked to verify that he was the managing partner of that firm, that the firm did do that work and I did say so and made a statement to the *Indiana Baptist*."

# Institute focuses on change, diverse ministries

By Millie Gill

Executive Assistant, Arkansas Baptist

"Live The Word," the theme for the 1996 Arkansas Institute for Christian Discipleship, was emphasized by Emil Turner at the May 13-14 event held at Parkway Place Church in Little Rock. Turner, executive director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, named traditionalism, legalism, exclusivism and humanism as four major factors which would keep awakening from occurring in churches across the state.

Preaching from Numbers 11:26-29, he noted that Joshua missed an awakening because he continued to follow traditionalism. "We also have churches in our state who will miss the awakening because they continue to follow 100-year traditions rather than trying new approaches."

Turner illustrated this point by sharing from his own pastoral experience. "More than 100 decisions were made in four meetings when I brought a non-traditional evangelist into a church where I was a pastor," he said. "Reconciliation and restitution also came to this church because of this new evangelistic approach even though one member was displeased because there had been applause in the church....She missed the awakening."

Turner also explained that those who believe that God only works when every "I" is dotted and every "T" is crossed also are not going to experience the movement of God. "Some will spend eternity in hell because of legalism."

He noted that Arkansas church members, who, like Joshua, are unwilling to share leadership positions, will not experience awakening because of exclusivism. "I believe some churches never grow, change or experience the wonders of God because church members are unwilling to share in the leadership roles of the church."

"Awakening is coming," he concluded. "It is already in some churches and it will come to yours if the barriers of traditionalism, legalism, exclusivism and humanism are removed and the power of God is allowed to enter through new and different approaches."

"Meeting Needs, Sharing Christ" workshops, led by Don Atkinson, an editor in the Discipleship and Family Development Division of the Baptist Sunday School Board, further emphasized a need for change. The workshops introduced new materials for a six-session ministry evangelism study based on the ministry evangelism programs of First Church in Leesburg, Fla., East Side Church in Fort Smith and Harmony Church in St. Louis.



Jimmie Sheffield, associate executive director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, leads a review of the six-week study, "In God's Presence" during the Christian Discipleship Institute held May 13-14 at Parkway Place Church in Little Rock.

"I know from personal experience this six-session study can change a church because it has happened at Memorial Baptist Church in Franklin, Tenn., where I am interim pastor," Atkinson said. "Two groups from the church completed the study and, as a result, the whole character of the church is changing. God is blessing a church that has been on decline with additions because people are ministering to others at the point of their needs."

## Watchman ministry highlighted

In "Church Awakening Through a Watchman Prayer Ministry" conferences, Alga Hitchcock, a national prayer leader from First Baptist Church of Altus, Okla., explained that the purpose of a Watchman ministry is to pray for God's intervention in our nation, in world affairs, for missionary efforts by God's people and for local churches.

Hitchcock said Watchmen, as intercessors, are called to commit themselves to a specific time period one or more times a week, praying for an hour, half-hour or quarter-hour according to the church's designated schedule. "They must be accountable for their time to pray or the ministry will become defunct," she added.

Intercessors characteristics named were: A relationship to God, understanding the mind and heart of God, an eager anticipation with gratitude and expectancy, one with a pure heart—no known unforgiven sin, understanding that communication with the Sovereign God pleases Him and know the Father blesses

the intercessor and the persons for whom intercession is made.

The need for all intercessors to be born-again Christians was emphasized by Hitchcock, who said this was the first question that needed to be asked of individuals as they volunteered to serve.

"They also need to be trained to pray in a positive manner...rather than a negative one for phone or written requests," she continued. "In addition, they should do follow-up by writing letters to those individuals for whom they have prayed."

"However, in those letters they should never identify the illness or the treatment for it, they should never offer advice as to what to do nor how to get over a problem," she said. "In the letter just say, 'I am praying for you because I care.'"

A review conference on the six-week discipleship study, "In God's Presence" was led by Jimmie Sheffield, ABSC associate executive director, who said that one comes into the presence of God as Jesus is invited into the heart with a loving relationship and that an effective prayer life begins with relationship.

He named as reasons to pray: spending time with God; identifying with God by becoming like Him and by working together with Him; resisting temptation; finding forgiveness, mercy and grace; learning God's will; offering sacrifices to God; learning authority; and releasing God's power.

"As we come to a right relationship with God through prayer we learn proper authority and God's power is released," Sheffield declared.



# Chaplains as worship leaders

*Authentic, relational worship extends beyond the sanctuary, chaplains told*

By Colleen Backus

Assistant Editor, Arkansas Baptist

"The church is charged to continue in worship," asserted Albert Holmes, director of institutional and business-industrial chaplaincy for the Southern Baptist Home Missions Board's chaplaincy division. He was speaking to more than 70 Arkansas chaplains and their spouses who had gathered at Lake DeGray May 13-14 for their annual retreat and conference.

The emphasis of the conference, according to planner Marion Reynolds, chaplaincy director for the Arkansas Baptist State Convention missions department, was on designing worship to meet the needs of all.

"What is worship?" Holmes asked conference participants. "To worship is to quicken the conscience by the holiness of God, to feed the minds with the truth of God, to purge the imagination by the beauty of God, to open the heart to the love of God and to devote the will to the purpose of God.

"Christian worship can only be experienced," he continued. Holmes said what one experiences in worship includes:

■ **Mystery.** "Worship is both revelation and mystery," Holmes pointed out. "A worshiper experiences the presence of God in revelation and stands in awe of God in the face of mystery. God both reveals and withholds at the same time."

■ **Celebration.** "Worship is essentially the celebration of the acts of God in history," he noted "God's creation, God's providence, God's covenant of redemption, God's redemptive revelation through Jesus Christ in the incarnation, the cross and the resurrection, and the manifestation of God's power through the coming of the Holy Spirit.

■ **Life.** "Worship is not limited to acts of devotion, rites and ceremonies," Holmes explained. "For the Christian, worship is synonymous with life. In its broadest aspect, worship is related to all human action. Every area of life belongs to the kingdom of God; therefore, worship is practicing the presence of God in every experience of life."

■ **Dialogue.** "Worshippers experience God in a conscious dialogue," he emphasized. "Worship is both revelation and response. God takes the initiative in revelation and humankind responds in worship. God is revealed to the worshiper's spirit through the Bible, through persons in the fellowship of believers, through music, through symbols, through human

actions and through God's Spirit. Humankind responds to God through words and music and acts of celebration and dedication."

■ **Offering.** "The purpose of worship is not primarily to receive blessings from God but to make offerings to God," Holmes said. "Worship is primarily the offering of our total selves to God — our intellects, our feelings, our attitudes, and our possessions. Our outward gifts are the result of our inward dedication."

***"When we have  
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— Albert Holmes

Director, Institutional &  
business-industrial chaplaincy  
SBC Home Mission Board

Knowing what healthy worship entails is essential to chaplains, Holmes explained, because they have the opportunity show their compassion while serving as worship leaders. "When we have new people join our community of faith, we don't do enough for them," Holmes noted. "We welcome them and let them be — then we lose them. We must walk with them and talk with them. We have to be authentic."

According to Holmes, the major components of a healthy service are:

■ The service is warm and winsome. "Let the fellowship extend beyond the sanctuary," Holmes pointed out. "Make them glad they came and want to come again next week.

■ The music is dynamic and inspiring. "Make a connection between you and the words," he said. Another thing to

remember in the music, especially in correctional institutions, is that much of the congregation may not be able to read, Holmes noted, so praise choruses or hymns repeated over a period of a couple of months may work better than trying to follow the music in a hymnal.

■ The service has power and movement. "Make sure you are under the leadership of the Holy Spirit," he emphasized. "God's power flowing throughout the worship experience has a direct relationship to the worship leader."

■ The services and sanctuary help the congregation reach people in the community. "Informality and spontaneity helps the congregation develop a sense of ownership," Holmes commented. "The need for flexibility may be greater than what you planned on."

■ The preaching expresses the character of the gospel and the quality of compassion. This does not include compromising the gospel, Holmes noted. "Don't water it down so as not to offend anyone, but instead be caring and feeling.

"The worship leader needs to be informed about the world in which his congregants live," he said, "He may not be able to do it all himself — seek someone to help."

That point was brought out during one of the worship sessions that were provided by chaplains as if they were ministering to their own congregations. John Belken, chaplain at the Arkansas Department of Corrections North Central Unit at Callico Rock, addressed the audience as if they were in prison.

The prison choir performed on videotape and conference participants sang along with inmates while their worship leader, also an inmate, played hymns on the guitar. Belken conducted the service, and gave a testimony to God's power in his own family, but did not appear on the video — he had given the inmate congregation a sense of ownership of their worship service.

"When people come into a service, they begin to develop impressions before they enter the door," Holmes pointed out. "We need to work on being relational.

"Sometimes people in church are in jail as much as those that are in prison. They are in jails of depression and loneliness. Sometimes we close the door too fast — we need to keep the door open."

"In order to help our congregation," Holmes said, "we need to portray a sense of urgency — that what we are doing is critically important."

# Seminaries graduate 23 Arkansans



**CHRISTOPHER BART BARBER**  
Master of Divinity in  
Biblical Languages  
Lake City



**RONALD LESLIE BURKS**  
Doctor of Divinity  
Greenwood



**JOSEPH RAY CATHEY**  
Master of Divinity in  
Biblical Languages  
Hatfield



**DOUGLAS WALTER DIGGS**  
Master of Arts in  
Religious Education  
Little Rock



**MATTHEW DEAN KILGORE**  
Master of Divinity in  
Biblical Languages  
Batesville



**CYNTHIA MARSHALL**  
Master of Arts in  
Family Counseling/  
Religious Education  
Springdale



**HARLEY FISHER D. PETTY**  
Master of Arts in  
Religious Education  
Little Rock



**ROBBY DEAN SHERMAN**  
Master of Arts in  
Religious Education  
Jacksonville



**MATTHEW RAY STEWART JR.**  
Master of Arts in  
Religious Education  
Little Rock

**NO PHOTOS AVAILABLE**

**THOMAS A. DICUS JR.**  
Associate in Religious Education  
Little Rock

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**BRAD ALAN SNEED**  
Master of Arts in Religious Education  
Conway



**DOUGLAS M. BISHOP**  
Master of Music  
Fort Smith



**WAYNE J. CALDWELL**  
Associate of Arts  
El Dorado



**JULIE ANN LAWRENCE**  
Master of Arts in  
Christian Education  
North Little Rock



**MARK S. RAILEY**  
Advanced Master  
of Divinity  
Fort Smith



**KELLY LYNN ROSS**  
Master of Arts in  
Christian Education  
North Little Rock



**RALPH BAKER**  
Master of Religious  
Education/Church  
Music Leadership  
Harrison



**RONALD T. BOLING**  
Master of Divinity  
Jonesboro

**NO PHOTOS AVAILABLE**

**WILLIAM WAYNE WEST**  
Doctor of Ministry  
North Little Rock

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**DAWSON WILLIAMS**  
Doctor of Ministry  
Pine Bluff

---

**EDDY HOWELL**  
Master of Divinity  
Little Rock



**JACKIE FLAKE**  
Master of Divinity  
Fort Smith




**LARRY HERRON**  
Master of Divinity  
Siloam Springs


# Global impact

## BSU summer missionaries serve globally as church starters, evangelists, social ministers




 BSU summer missionaries assigned to North America are: (front row) Lesa McCam, ASU, Kentucky; Joey Rupard, WBC, Kentucky; Hanna Wring, WBC, New Orleans; Desiree Meister, UCA, New Orleans; Josh Hargrove, OBU, New Orleans; Amy Kerstetter, ASU, Washington; Heather Harrison, ASU, Canada; Kelly Mitchell, UCA, New Orleans; and Angel Chism, WBC, New Orleans. (Middle row) Jennifer Lake, UCA, Kentucky; Brandon Stevens, ASU, Kentucky; Radeanna Presley, HSU, Hawaii; Shannon Lawrence, HSU, New Orleans; Tonya Stewart, UCA, New Orleans; Shannon Bettis, WBC, New Orleans; and Gina Musgrave, WCC, New Orleans. (Back row) Janet Grimmer, UAM, Pennsylvania; Tony Newton, UAF, California; Jimmie Glover, WBC, Indiana; Michelle Denzinger, HSU, Maryland; Michael Mallett, ASU, Hawaii; John Mark Rutter, UCA, New Orleans; Matthew Ferguson, UCA, New Orleans; Terry Johnston, ASU, New Orleans; and Scott Stafford, ASU, Arizona.




 Participating in international mission efforts are: Lisa Reynolds, UAMS, Korea; Mark Fink, UCA, Israel; Chris Wright, WBC, Korea; Heather Moon, WBC, Israel; and Rachel Kufko, UAF, Philippines.



 Volunteering for two years of service as Journeymen are Ericka Stuckey, HSU, in China and GyElla Swarigan, OBU, in Brazil.



 Serving as teachers with Cooperative Services International in China are Stephanie Wells, UCA; Alan Johnston, ASU; Jimmy Austin, ASU; Wei Wu, UAF; and Jennifer Baldridge, UCA.

**A**rkanas Baptist Student Union members will be spending their summer breaks traveling across the state and the globe in a variety of ministries as church starters, evangelists and social ministers.

An estimated 108 students will be serving as BSU summer missionaries. Diane Parker, an associate in the Arkansas Baptist State Convention student ministry department, said that figure "is about the same" as previous years participation, "but there are more participants in the short-term projects."

Short-term projects include a team of 11 serving in the hospitality area at the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta, a team working in an inner-city mission in Memphis and a "first," said Parker: "Five

students will be sent to China in a cultural exchange with China.

"They will be working on a campus in Northeast China with Cooperative Services International teachers," she explained. "They will be speaking on campus in classes and practicing conversational English with Chinese students while building personal relationships with students who want to meet Americans."

Long-term projects will include a "SummerServe" team working with youth around the state and conducting DiscipleNow weekends, working in associational camps and at Super Summer and teaching in Vacation Bible Schools, and a team of 12 serving in two inner-city missions in New Orleans, working with children, senior citizens and holding tutoring sessions.



Arkansas SummerServe missionaries are: Marci Allen, ASU; Brett Moore, OBU; Sarah Page, UCA; and Heather Phillips, UCA.



Serving by witnessing and through hospitality at the Olympics this summer in Atlanta will be: (front row) Michelle Dailey, UCA; Stacy Thurber, ATU; Stacy Smyth, ASU; and Ashley Stallings, UAF. (Middle row) Lynn Loyd, UAF; Jimmy Austin, ASU; Jim Brown, UAF; and Alan Johnston, ASU. (Back row) Lynn Ritchey, ASU; Melanie Neal, WBC; and Holly Jackson, ASU.

The ministry team serving in Memphis this year consists of: (front row) Alyson Roy, OBU; Missy Osburn, NWACC; Amy Taylor, UAF; Maranda Crow, WBC; Brittany Highfill, UAF; Brad Chaney, UAF; and Harold Shreve, WBC. (Back row) Stacy Smyth, ASU; Daniel Gray, WCC; Dustin Davis, UAF; Chris Nash, UCA; Amy Hammond, UAM; and Jacob Schimmel, ASU.



Students ministering in Arkansas are: (front) Granville Wynn, WBC, Arkansas Baptist Children's Home; and (back) Carmen Morris, OBU, Emergency Receiving Home; Whitney Wright, ATU, Emergency Receiving Home; Penny Hale, WBC, Lake DeGray; and Janna Richard, ATU, Children's Home.

## Staff changes

**Jamie Staley** has joined the staff of Bingham Road Church in Little Rock as associate pastor and minister of music. A student at Ouachita Baptist University, he is married to the former Patricia Wortham.

**Charles Black** will join the staff of Immanuel Church in Pine Bluff June 16 as minister of media and executive director of TV65. He will come from First Church of Gun Barrel City, Texas, where he has been serving as minister of music. He and his wife, Donna, have two children.

**Billy Davis** has joined the staff of First Church of Ozark as minister of music and senior adults. He previously has served Nettleton Church of Jonesboro, First Church of Brinkley, Philadelphia Church of Jonesboro and Maple Grove Church of Trumann. In addition, he is with the Weston and Davis Music Ministry. Davis is a graduate of Williams Baptist College, Southwest Baptist University and Arkansas State University. He and his wife, Terry, have six children.

**Robert Gregston** will join the staff of First Church of Charleston June 2 as minister of music and youth. He will come there from Aspermont, Texas, where he has served on the staff of First Church. He and his wife, Patti, have three children.

**Lee Dobson**, who has served since January as interim minister of the adult choir at First Church in Charleston, will continue to serve in that position through September. He and his wife, Sandra, have a daughter.

**Edward Edmondson** is serving as pastor of Pine Grove Church in Sweet Home. A native of Carlisle, he is a graduate of New Orleans Seminary. He previously has served as pastor of Pulaski Association churches, including Ironton, Sunset Lane and Pleasant Grove churches. He and his wife, Mary, are parents of three adult children.

**Kevin Duncan** began serving May 5 as pastor of Grannis Church, coming there from Oak Valley Church of Crescent, Okla. Duncan attended Baptist Bible College in Springfield, Mo., and Oklahoma Baptist University. He and his wife, Donna, are parents of three sons.

**Warren Watkins** began serving May 19 as pastor of Indianhead Lake Church in North Little Rock, coming there from Greenlee Memorial Church, Pine Bluff. He previously served Memorial Church in Blytheville, Cross Roads Church of Dell, Unity Church of Arkadelphia and Morrow Church of Kensett. Watkins is a graduate



## ARKANSAS ALL OVER

By P. M. LITTLE & BILL

of Ouachita Baptist University, Mid-America Seminary and Midwestern Seminary. He is married to the former Karen Bone. They have three children.

**Joe Finrock** resigned May 5 as pastor of First Church of Gentry to become pastor of Oak Street Church in Graham, Texas. Finrock, who has served the Gentry church for 11 years, is a graduate of Southwestern Seminary. He and his wife, Barbara, have three children.

**John Guerra** began May 20 as pastor of First Church of Carlisle, coming there from Pleasant Hill Church of Bauxite. He previously was a staff member of Baring Cross Church of North Little Rock, Park Hill Church of Arkadelphia and Edgemont Park Church of Mesquite, Texas. Guerra is a graduate of Ouachita Baptist University, Southwestern Seminary and Midwestern Seminary. He and his wife, Terry, have three children.

**Robert Carter** will join the staff of First Church in Rogers June 23 as preschool/children's minister, coming there from First Church of Oklahoma City where he served as minister of childhood education. He is a graduate of Oklahoma State Technical Institute in Okmulgee and Southwestern Seminary. Carter is married to the former Catherine Bowles. They have two children.

**Timothy L. (Tim) Reddin** accepted the call to serve as director of missions for Central Association, effective July 1, coming from Barcelona Road Church in Hot Springs Village where he has served since 1980. He previously was pastor of Pines Church of Quitman, assistant pastor of Central Church of Conway and associate pastor of Elmcrest Church of Abilene, Texas. Reddin has served in offices at the associational and state convention levels and has participated in volunteer or partnership mission efforts in the Blackfoot Indian Reservation in Montana, Equatorial Brazil, South Africa, Transkei, Guatemala and Portugal. He is a graduate of Central Baptist College and the University of Central Arkansas, Southwestern Seminary and Midwestern Seminary. He is married to the former Phyllis LeAnn Bearfield. They have three sons.

**Stuart Allen Bell** will begin serving June 1 as pastor of First Church in Searcy, going

there from Forrest Park Church in Pine Bluff. A native of Springdale, he previously served as a staff member of churches in Texas and Oklahoma. Bell is a graduate of John Brown University and Southwestern Seminary. He and his wife, Lisa, have two children.

**Bruce Tippit** was unanimously called May 12 to serve as pastor of First Church in Jonesboro. Tippit will begin his ministry there June 23, going from Fianna Hills Church in Fort Smith, which he has served since its organization as a mission. He previously served churches in Texas and DeQueen. Tippit received his master of divinity and doctor of ministry degrees from Southwestern Seminary. He and his wife, Kathy, have two daughters.

**Heather Roberts** joined the staff of Park Hill Church in Arkadelphia May 19 as minister of youth and education. She is a senior psychology and Christian counseling major at Ouachita Baptist University.

**Ralph Allmon** will retire in June as pastor of First Church of Salem, where he has been serving since 1990. He led the congregation in purchasing property and constructing a new church plant, as well as in a membership growth of 230, 118 by baptism.

## Church news

**Bingham Road Church** of Little Rock held a tent revival April 28-May 3 that resulted in 10 professions of faith, said pastor Bill Hilburn. Larry Beatty of Pine Bluff was the evangelist and Glen Ennes, an associate in the Arkansas Baptist church music ministries department, led worship.

**Refuge Church** held a revival April 26-28 which featured a different speaker for each service. The effort resulted in three professions of faith and six rededications, according to pastor Tommy Jones.

**Caddo River Association** sent a mission team of four pastors - James Black, Marvin Black, Dale Howell and Roy Brooks - and director of missions Ronny Noles to Iowa April 21-24, preaching at churches in Johnston, Gowrie, Fort Dodge, Mason City and Ames.

**Trinity Church** of Alma recently observed its 50th anniversary with a program that featured Doyle Russell, the Trinity Baptist Singers, Danny Dean, Gordon Jennings, Mark Hall, Jeff Musgrave, Clayburn Bratton and Don Bishop.

**Meridian Church** in Crossett recently observed its 130th year of ministry with a homecoming and worship service.

Speakers included Clyde Jones of Pine Bluff and former pastors Dan Webb and Robert Blann, as well as Elizabeth Kelley, widow of former pastor W.D. Kelley. Special music was provided by the Goyne Family and the Sentinels.

**Hot Springs First Church** recently voted to begin two morning worship services, effective July 7, to provide more worship space.

**Salem First Church** dedicated a building May 19 that houses four classrooms, a pastor's study, church office, restrooms, kitchen, foyer, covered entrance and multi-purpose room with a capacity for 250. A noteburning service also was held, celebrating the church being debt free. Ralph Allmon is pastor.

**North Main Church** in Jonesboro deacons and yokefellows have launched a family ministry program. Lowell Tabor is deacon chairman and Tommy Stacy is pastor.

## Ordinations

**Shannon Church** of Pocahontas ordained Bill Blevins as a deacon May 5.

**Runyan First Church** of North Little Rock licensed Darrell W. Brown to the gospel ministry May 12.

**Mena First Church** ordained John Mesko to the deacon ministry May 26.

## Obituaries

**Thomas F. Farris** of Fort Smith died April 28. He was a retired Southern Baptist minister who served as pastor of churches in Arkansas, Missouri and Kansas. Farris was a graduate of Ouachita Baptist University and Midwestern Seminary. His funeral services were held May 1 at Calvary Church in Fort Smith where he was a member. Survivors are his wife, Rose; a daughter, Amy Rose Farris of Russellville; a son, Alex, of Kirkland Air Force Base, N.M.; his mother, Sarah Farris of Fort Smith; a sister and two brothers. Memorials may be made to the Thomas F. Farris Memorial Scholarship Fund at Midwestern Seminary through the Arkansas Baptist Foundation.

**Thomas H. Meharg** of Bald Knob died May 8. A retired minister, he was a member of Central Church in Bald Knob. Survivors are his wife, Ruby; three sons, Gerald Meharg of Searcy, Thomas Meharg of Cabot and Eddie Meharg of Judsonia, pastor of Pleasant Plains Church; three daughters, Linda Stagg of Pleasant Plains, Peggy Wolfe of Searcy and Virginia Bennett of Judsonia; two sisters; 14 grandchildren; and 13 great-grandchildren.

## God 'simplifies' church's business

"It is amazing how God simplifies our decision-making," said Ron Ivie, pastor of Skyland Southern Church in Fox, following a recent church business meeting.

During the Sunday night business session, the congregation was faced with the need to cut some of the many pine trees growing on its property. The group voted to have the trees cut and sold and use the money to re-roof the sanctuary.

"About that time a tornado hit and about 86 trees were blown down," recalled Ivie. "Many of the shingles were blown off the building and the congregation sought shelter at one side of the building."

In the tornado's wake, reported Ivie, no members were injured and "insurance for repair on the roof plus the selling of the trees answered the need of the item of business being discussed."

Ivie said that on May 17, 28 men from North Central Association, above,



assisted the church in roofing the damaged sanctuary. Churches represented included: Angora, Leslie; Bee Branch; First, Clinton; Friendship, Clinton; Immanuel, Clinton; First, Shirley; First, Leslie; Fairfield Bay; Higher Ground, Dennard; and Pleasant Valley, Shirley.

"The entire roof was completed and also each end of the building was covered except the gable ends," he said.

While the men worked, women from the association provided food. Corinth Church in Clinton and Pee Dee Church in Clinton provided lemonade, tea and cold drinks.

## Project nets Home 'months' of work



Two volunteers, above, build a fence at the Arkansas Baptist Home for Children in Monticello during the second annual Nehemiah Project April 20. Almost 100 Baptist Men and youth worked at the Children's Home and Arkansas Baptist Boys Ranch in Harrison.

At the Children's Home, a group of 73 Baptist Men and youth "from as far away as Mena," said Children's Home business manager Larry Toller, "worked on much-needed maintenance projects."

Toller said projects included auto and lawn mower repair and maintenance,

mowing, trimming, painting, pasture work, clearing brush, fence-building and carpentry work. Home staff members indicated that three months of work were completed during the day.

Project coordinator Warren Burleson said that the men had "a great day. It's good to go and do this kind of work in other states and countries, because it's needed. We must work here, in our own back yard, not just because it's needed, but because it's our responsibility."

Another group of 25 men from Arkansas River Valley Association worked the same day at the Boys Ranch. David Perry, Arkansas Baptist Children's Home and Family Ministries executive director, said that group roofed a pole barn, built fence to enlarge a pasture, mowed, cleaned and did repair work.

"They did a great job," he said. "During the day they saved us about 200 man hours of work."

## Baptists celebrate Tanzania hospital start

KIGOMA, Tanzania (BP)—Two days of ceremonies marked the opening of Kigoma Baptist Hospital in Kigoma, Tanzania.

More than 100 Baptists and dozens of other supporters walked through and around the hospital, singing and stopping at various points to pray for the facility's ministry, according to Southern Baptist missionary physician Bill Harrington. More than 300 attended dedication ceremonies and an open house the next day.

In a related matter involving Harrington, one of two lawsuits filed against him by disgruntled former employees has been dismissed as groundless. The second lawsuit remains to be resolved.

The Kigoma facility, unlike traditional mission hospitals, opens with only a \$10,000 subsidy from the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board and plans to generate operating income through a bus service, the hospital restaurant and by manufacturing intravenous fluids for other hospitals in the area.

Missionary physician Susan Smith asked Southern Baptists to pray for the hospital's 25 new staff members and for the witness and ministry opportunities that will arise.

## Volunteers needed for Moscow Project

MEMPHIS, TN (BP)—Southern Baptist volunteers still are being recruited to work with leaders and members of local Baptist churches in the Moscow region during the 1996 Moscow Evangelism Project, June 27-July 10.

The Brotherhood Commission is seeking four teams of four to five volunteers each to serve in four specific target areas of greater Moscow, as outlined by Foreign Mission Board missionaries and local Russian Baptists.

Team members, who do not have to be fluent in Russian, will be using a variety of ministry tools, including street witnessing, home visitation and visits to hospitals, factories, orphanages, prisons and other local government institutions. They also will worship with members of local sponsoring churches and demonstrate the use of "Survival Kit for New Believers" and other follow-up materials.

For more information, contact Wells at the Brotherhood Commission, 1548 Poplar Ave., Memphis, TN 38104 or 1-800-280-1891.

## Last Zambia missionaries receive permits

LUSAKA, Zambia (BP)—After almost three years of difficulty, all Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board missionaries in Zambia have been granted work permits by the government, according to missionary Dan Sowell.

A permit issued in late April for missionaries Ed and Linda Miller was the last in a series of work documents previously refused by the government at the request of leaders of the Baptist Convention of Zambia, who wanted to control missionary assignments in the country. The new permits, however, must be renewed at the end of each year, Sowell said.

The dispute over the permits created uncertainty for missionaries and caused division among Zambian Baptist churches. Earlier this year, a large group of congregations formed a new Baptist convention and offered to partner with Southern Baptist missionaries, opening the door to the permit grantings.

## Missionary dies in Kentucky car wreck

CADIZ, KY (BP)—Daniel R. Hill, a Southern Baptist missionary to Thailand, died May 22, 1996, in an automobile accident near Cadiz, Ky.

Hill, 54, was driving to Indianapolis Wednesday morning to attend a son's graduation from military boot camp when he apparently fell asleep at the wheel, according to state police. His

car left the road and overturned. Hill was thrown from the car and was pronounced dead on arrival at a Paducah, Ky., hospital.

An Atlanta native, Hill served as a church planter and evangelist in Bangkok, Thailand. He and his wife, Delores, were appointed by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board in 1973. He was in the United States for two months of study, according to Clyde Meador, who directs the board's work in southeast Asia.

Delores Hill, a native of Amarillo, Texas, was in Thailand at the time of the accident.

Hill was a graduate of the University of Georgia and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He was completing requirements for a counseling degree at Georgia State University at the time of his death.

His first assignment for the Foreign Mission Board was in evangelism and relief work in Bangladesh, where he directed a vocational rehabilitation center for handicapped men. He transferred to Thailand in 1979, where he worked for five years in Cambodian refugee camps before transferring to Bangkok.

Hill and his wife have four grown children.

## Missionaries seek 'gold' in Brazil

BOA VISTA, RORAIMA, BRAZIL (BP)—Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board missionary Vic Nickerson has struck gold in the remote Brazilian state of Roraima.

It's not the lustrous yellow element that has lured many in the area of gold fields and fertile soil. It's spiritual "nuggets" like Leonarda Souza.

Souza was a seeker. She had worked for Seventh-day Adventists and examined Mormon doctrine. Neither convinced her.

Then one day, as she stood in her kitchen washing dishes, she heard through her windows a message preached in English and translated into Portuguese. "I knew immediately that was the truth," she recalled.

Out on the street, Nickerson, a former Florida pastor, was wondering how effective the street preaching was.

"I wondered if anyone would listen to a message that had to be translated," he said. Volunteers from Texas had come to help with evangelism and church planting.

Nickerson's doubts dissolved when Souza came to the services that night and accepted Jesus Christ. "It's completely changed her life," he said. "Now, her two older children and her husband have become believers."

Many others have turned to Christ in the "mother lode" of seekers found by Nickerson, who works with Brazilian Baptists to open new work in the Kansas-size state bordering Venezuela and Guyana. The population, now 250,000, doubles each decade and land is available for homesteading.

## Baptist divisions continue in South Africa

EAST LONDON, SOUTH AFRICA (BP)—Unity talks between the predominantly white Baptist Union of Southern Africa and the mainly black Baptist Convention of South Africa have broken off, according to a report in Ecumenical News International.

The talks proved futile, "the Baptist convention's general secretary, Desmond Hoffmeister, told ENI, because the Baptist union "is not ready to deal with people of color."

Hoffmeister called off the talks in March but said the convention is ready to resume them when the union "unequivocally demonstrates" its readiness for genuine reconciliation, ENI reported.

ENI also reported that Hoffmeister, in a recent statement, additionally had said negotiations proved fruitless "because of the intransigent and contradictory actions of the union that negate the spirit of reconciliation permeating the South African community."



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### Restructuring task force preparing New Orleans report

NASHVILLE, TN (BP)—The task force coordinating the restructuring of the Southern Baptist Convention met May 14-15 in Nashville to work on its report to the SBC in New Orleans in June, which will include a generalized cost analysis of the restructuring.

The 10-member Implementation Task Force, appointed by the SBC Executive Committee to coordinate the "Covenant for a New Century" restructuring approved by the SBC last year in Atlanta, said the report also will contain an "updated timeline" for the implementation. The Covenant reduces the number of SBC agencies from 19 to 12. A second vote of a revision to SBC Bylaw 15, which lists the agencies by name, will be taken in New Orleans.

The Nashville meeting was the last scheduled full task force meeting before the SBC annual meeting June 11-13 in New Orleans, according to Robert Reccord, task force chairman and pastor of First Baptist Church, Norfolk, Va.

Reccord said the task force report will be given to the Executive Committee at its pre-convention meeting June 8 in New Orleans. Copies of the report will be available for messengers June 9. The report will be presented to the convention June 11 during the Executive Committee report. Motions dealing with legal documents required to accomplish the dissolution and merger of affected SBC entities will follow.

Reccord also said the ITF discussed candidates to serve as "incorporators" for the North American Mission Board, a merger of the present Home Mission Board, Radio and Television Commission and the Brotherhood Commission. Six incorporators already have been nominated by the three agencies.

Reccord said the ITF will nominate an additional seven "incorporators," including the chairman. The names of the 13 "incorporators" and a description of their assignments will be included in the NAMB charter.

The ITF also heard from the task force's subgroups that the SBC agencies scheduled to be dissolved are under way in the process of transition. Most have presented employee severance plans, revised calendars and program adjustments to their boards, Reccord said. The three agencies merging into NAMB have meetings scheduled with ITF members and consultants in May to further discuss the transition processes.

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## Easter pageant sparks revival at Texarkana church

An Easter pageant performance at Trinity Church in Texarkana sparked a revival at the church that resulted in an extension of performances and a total of more than 1,000 decisions, according to pastor Wallace Edgar. Performances of the pageant, "The Book" began April 3 at Trinity on a Wednesday and were scheduled to run Thursday and Friday, with a back-to-back performance to finish the series on Sunday. Public interest, though, caused church leaders to extend the performances, which involved more than 200 Trinity members.

"We got started on Wednesday night and the attendance was so strong and so many asked for tickets and...for a matinee on Saturday," said Edgar. "We did that, but the Sunday attendance was so strong we extended it to the next Monday, then Tuesday...." After 13 performances, the church ended the series with a Sunday evening double performance.

"It was moving," commented Edgar. "The pageant spoke to a lot of folks and the church has been transformed. We estimated an attendance of over 13,000. We have recorded 620 professions of faith and have received calls from throughout the city where people are being baptized. We have baptized over 100 out of it and had 400 rededications. We feel like it was a moving of God."

Edgar said the pageant was "preceded by prayer and fasting by the church for 30 days. We attribute the (decisions and attendance) to prayer and fasting."

He said the musical, written by Fred Gilbert, had only previously been performed in First Baptist Church in Hixon, Tenn., where Gilbert is minister of music. That church recorded 1,000 professions of faith in response to the musical, which features a realistic portrayal of heaven and hell. Gilbert is the brother of Trinity minister of music Chuck Gilbert.

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## WORLD



*Michael and Kathy Kemper*

## Kemper to lead missions work in central Europe

WIESBADEN, Germany — J. Michael Kemper, a native of Arkansas, has been named administrator of Southern Baptist missions work in five central European countries. Effective June 20, Kemper will help administer the work of 59 Southern Baptist foreign missionaries who serve in Romania, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary.

He currently serves as pastor of an English language Baptist Church in Bucharest, Romania, where he lives with his wife, the former Kathy Woody. The Kempers will continue to live in Bucharest.

Kemper's new assignment indicates how rapidly Southern Baptist work is expanding in central Europe, said Larry Cox, who announced the job change. Cox directs Southern Baptist work in central Europe, from Greece to the Baltics, for the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board from the board's Europe area office in Wiesbaden. By the end of the year, Cox said, the board expects to have 69 foreign missionaries in Kemper's five-country area.

"Mike Kemper has already demonstrated his leadership talents by serving as the acting mission administrator for six months, and I am excited to have someone like him leading the charge in planting churches in central Europe. Mike's heart is in tune with the missionaries of central Europe and he has an excellent relationship with Baptist union leaders," Cox said.

A graduate of Ouachita Baptist University, Kemper attended Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He served as pastor of churches in Arkansas, Illinois and Tennessee before he and his wife became missionary associates in Romania in 1993. Kemper earlier made mission trips to Romania, France, Africa and Mexico.

May 30, 1996 / Page 17



## UPDATE

Arkansas/Europe Baptist Partnership

**NEEDS:**

- ★ Volunteers to go this fall to Sofia, Bulgaria, to paint a Bulgarian Baptist church.
- ★ Church partners for Baptist churches in Prague, Czech Republic, and Kitzingen, Germany.

Please contact the ABCS Brotherhood Dept., Doane Plummer or Harry Black, at 1-800-638-2272 or 501-376-4791, ext. 5190, for more info.

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## TRAINING

### Music Arkansas camp to feature vocal, instrumental classes

A youth camp with an emphasis on music will be held on the campus of Ouachita Baptist University July 22-26. Music Arkansas, for youth who have completed grades 7-12, will focus on quality relationships among young people, faculty and sponsors, according to Rob Hewell, director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention Church Music Ministries department.

Worship, training, recreation opportunities and performance involving a variety of musical experiences will round out each camper's experience.

The camp will feature creative worship, junior and senior high choirs and a talent show. Classes include instruction in handbells, voice, worship planning, basic discipleship, drama, guitar, sign language, children's choir, keyboard and band. Two class periods will be held each day.

Hewell urged pre-registration for classes to allow camp administration to have appropriate preparation for participants. Campers who do not pre-register for classes will have to accept assignments made the first day of camp. Classes receiving no pre-registration interest will not be offered.

Camp faculty will include Don Moore, retired executive director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention as camp pastor and Ric Hunt, minister of music at Central Church, Jonesboro, as worship leader. Gerald Ware, associate minister of music at First Church in Richardson, Texas, will be the choral director.

The camp faculty is composed of Arkansas church musicians who will encourage young people to discover and express the gifts God has invested in their lives.

"Our camp leadership views Music Arkansas as an investment in young people in the state," commented Hewell. "Music is a significant part of their lives, and we work hard at helping them connect their skill with church life, the kingdom of God and their personal commitments to Christ."

The cost for Music Arkansas is \$95 per campers, \$90 per counselor and \$100 per camper without counselors, for registrations postmarked by June 24. The cost includes all lodging and meals.

Registration for the camps should be made by the church's music leadership. Registration information and a medical release form are included in the State Music Ministry Handbook.

For more information about Music Arkansas, contact Hewell at the ABCS church music ministries department toll-free in state at 1-800-838-ABSC or locally in Little Rock at 376-4791, ext. 5121.

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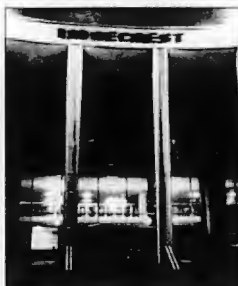
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## TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

### Promise Keepers Pastor's Conference to be held in Little Rock

Repentance and reconciliation will be the focus of "Prelude to a Celebration," the 1996 Promise Keepers Arkansas Pastor's Conference June 7-8 at Immanuel Church in Little Rock.

Ken Palmquist, Arkansas media coordinator for Promise Keepers and a member of Geyer Springs First Church in Little Rock, said the event targets pastors and church staff of all denominations. "The

conference is based on the foundation of Jesus Christ and will focus on His call to unity through repentance and reconciliation," he explained. "This is going to be a terrific time for pastors to network among each other."

The program will feature a multi-denominational, multi-national slate of area speakers, including: Robert Smith, pastor of Word Outreach Christian Center in Little

Rock; Rex Hurne, pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church in Little Rock; Hezekiah Stewart, pastor of Mount Nebo A.M.E. Church in College Station; Alton Garrison, pastor of First Assembly of God Church in North Little Rock; W.T. Keaton, president of Arkansas Baptist College in Little Rock; and Paul Holderfield, pastor of Friendly Chapel Church of the Nazarene in North Little Rock.

Palmquist said the program also will feature a ministry resource center set up at the conference.

The program begins at 6:30 p.m. Friday and concludes at noon on Saturday. There is no cost. For more information, contact Palmquist at 501-835-4301.



Written by Jimmy & Carol Owens

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## Second, Forrest City takes first at RA Congress

The team from Second Church in Forrest City took first place in overall church winners as boys and girls gathered at Ouachita Baptist University April 26-27 for track events, camping, race cars Speak Out, basketball and missions during Royal Ambassador Congress.

Brookside Mission in Conway took second place overall honors while First Church in Amity captured third place at the event, which attracted 874 participants from 50 churches.

Andrew Willis of Second Church in Russellville was the Lad Speak Out winner and Jeff Allison of Second Church in Little Rock took top honors in the Crusader Speak Out. Markham Street Church in Little Rock won the Crusader basketball tournament.

Saturday featured a missions emphasis and track and field events at OBU's Williams field. Recognized as overall Lad division winner was Samuel Urton of Park Hill Church in North Little Rock. Overall Crusader division winners were Tony Jefferson of Brookside Mission and Adam Page of Immanuel Church in Little Rock.

Also recognized at the ceremony were overall grade winners for the following grades: Samuel Urton, first grade; Michael Davis of Second, Forrest City, second grade; Wes Patton of First Church in Glenwood, third grade; Adam Page, fourth grade; Karenanna Hall of Brookside Mission, fifth grade; and Tony Jefferson of Brookside Mission, sixth grade.



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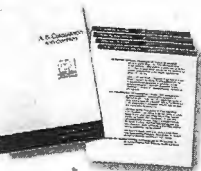
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## TRAINING

### Skills improvement, ministry focus of secretarial seminars

Two seminars designed "to help you sharpen your skills and improve your ministry" will be held for church, associational and denominational secretaries July 8-11 at Park Hill Church in North Little Rock. The Secretaries' Certification Seminars, sponsored by the Arkansas Baptist State Convention Discipleship and family ministries department, will begin at 1 p.m. Monday and conclude at Noon Thursday.

The Basic Certification Seminar and Advanced Certification Seminar will be offered to participants.

The basic seminar, a prerequisite for the advanced seminar, will be taught by Certified Secretary Trainer Glenda Suggs of Mt. Vernon Baptist Church in West Monroe, La. and divided into six sections focusing on the church, the secretary's ministry role, personal development, information management, communication and organization.

The advanced seminar will be taught by Evelyn Gustafson, a Certified Secretary Trainer from Greene County Baptist Association in Springfield, Mo. Gustafson will lead workshops on "Office Management" and "Managing Office Stress."

The office management workshop will review four basic roles Southern Baptist secretaries often are called to fill: office manager, administrative assistant, coordinating secretary and solo secretary. The stress management workshop will focus on stress-relieving techniques and lifestyle.

"I could not have done my job in administration without the training," said Audrey Parker, ABSC administrative secretary to the executive director, who went through the basic seminar. "I did not know much about the convention when I came to work here. What they teach is the basics of what goes on at places such as the Sunday School Board or the Education Commission and how they relate to each other. It was very, very helpful."

The cost for the basic seminar is \$100 per person and \$75 per person for the advanced seminar. Participants must provide their own lodging and meals. Members of the National Association of Southern Baptist Secretaries receive a \$5 discount. Registration information and full payment of the seminar costs must be received by June 17.

To register or for more information, contact the ABSC discipleship and family ministries department toll-free in state at 1-800-838-ABSC or locally in Little Rock at 376-4791, ext. 5160.



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## Convention Uniform

### Welcome to my world

By Gary L. Burney, assistant to the pastor, New Hope Fellowship, Springdale

Basic passage: James 2:1-13

Focal passage: James 2:4-12

Central truth: Christians are to accept others based on their relationship with Christ, not their social standing.

I've heard all the excuses for not accepting people into our fellowship (church):

"They're just not our kind."

"They're welcome if they want to be a part, but they have different interests than we do."

"We don't invite anyone to be a part of our group, we are just a group of folks that have the same interests and we just kind of found each other."

"If we let them in it will ruin our group."

"If we let them in they might rub off on us."

Any of those phrases sound familiar? James apparently heard a few similar excuses or at least observed them put into action.

James tells us three things about having an exclusive attitude toward others.

■ *Our motives are wrong, not right* — We have made our judgment based on evil thoughts. Those thoughts could range from fear of rejection by our peers because we have accepted someone not like us to fear of losing our social or economic status because we have reached out to the unwelcoming (v. 4-6).

■ *Our actions breed pride, create resentment, destroy fellowship, and are just plain sin* (v. 9).

■ *There is a cure* — "Remember the Lord of Glory." When we really gather around the presence of the living Lord we lose sight of people's status. All people need the Lord. If we conduct ourselves according to the law of liberty, we will remember that. In Christ, all are set free. In Christ, all are equal. In Christ all are free to worship (v. 12).

When we accept or reject people according to their social standing and not their relationship with Christ, we do a great disservice not only to them but to ourselves. We deprive ourselves of finding out how great a difference Christ can really make in people. Try getting out of your world into the world of someone not like you, you may find out that you like it!

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## Life and Work

### Love — God's way

By Suzanne Dilday, member, First Church, Benton  
Basic passage: Romans 12:9-21  
Focal passage: Romans 12:9-12, 15, 20  
Central truth: We can always win.

Sometimes I would like to work for the IRS. They are the ultimate in unflinching earthly authority. People challenge the legal system and frequently get their way, but no one messes with the IRS. They always win.

As crazy as it sounds, sometimes I wish I could be like that. You see, this week I made the unpleasant discovery that someone lied to me and got away with it. I was hurt, naturally, but mostly I was mad. It really burned me up to be taken advantage of. If I worked for the IRS, I wouldn't be fooled. I would always win.

In Romans, Paul wrote of love—what it should be, who should receive it, when it should be given. Most of his words are as sweet and easy to digest as a Valentine's Day card, but some of them stick going down. For example, some of his easy teachings said that love should be without hypocrisy (v. 9) and brotherly (v. 10). It should be happy, persistent and giving (vv. 11-12). This love should be shown to fellow Christians and saints continuously.

But Paul continued with some words I find hard to swallow. Not only should love be all those things, but love is also letting go. Paul said to let go of injustices done to us, wrongs committed against us. "Never pay back evil for evil to anyone" (v. 17) and "never take your own vengeance" (v. 19). What's more, this love should extend not only to saints but to enemies! Bless people, he said, who curse us and be extra kind to them (vv. 15, 20).

With no offense intended, the IRS isn't known for its compassion. By the same token, it isn't one of America's best-loved institutions. Respected and feared, perhaps, but not loved. Maybe there's an underlying truth found in these Scriptures. If we love the way God wants us to, we will inevitably suffer injustice and probably be duped occasionally. But that doesn't necessarily mean we are fooled. By loving the way God says we should, we open ourselves up to be loved in return.

I've heard it said that love conquers all. Paul said we can "overcome evil with good" (v. 21). We can beat evil, not at its own game, but with a different set of rules. That way, even though we may not all work for the IRS, we can always win.

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## Bible Book

### A call to repentance

By Bill Steeger, chairman, Department of Religion, Ouachita Baptist University  
Basic passage: Joel 1:1-2:17  
Focal passage: Joel 2:12-17  
Central truth: Repentance is a change of attitude and life

As missionaries in Africa, we witnessed the struggle of small farmers against invading locusts on several occasions. Countries like Ethiopia lacked the resources to combat such a menace.

To our surprise, even technologically advanced societies were no match for the armies of insects. Locust swarms swept down upon South African farms. Nightly TV weather reports were followed by "locust reports." Swarms were miles wide and tens of miles long. Radar tracked their movements. Military aircraft chemically bombed their perimeters but dared not get too close. The world famous "Blue Train" was forced to adjust schedules and affix scrapers to the front of the engines to remove the locust debris from the tracks.

Joel painted the LORD's message as an invading locust plague. Society is crippled, all work is handicapped, destruction is imminent. Priests and lay people alike are held accountable for empty religion that is no more than ritual, bringing no change in the lives of men and women.

The focal passage calls for a "solemn assembly" (v. 15). This is a time of repentance, not another worship service. Verses 12-13 give clear instruction for such a time of genuine change.

■ *"Turn ye even to me"* — There is no other cure! God alone provides the answer for our individual and social problems.

■ *"With all your heart"* — Heart is not an emotional term in Scripture (those words are *bowels* and *reins*) but refers to mind and attitude. Joel is challenging us to think, to reason, to focus all our attention upon God's answer for man's sin.

■ *"With fasting...weeping...and mourning"* — a threefold call that emphasizes completeness and actions involving physical acts, mental processes and emotional content of lives.

■ *"Render your heart and not your garments"* — is a call to abandon empty ritualistic acts of religion. Repentance must impact our minds, attitudes and lives — a broken heart!

■ *"Turn to the LORD your God"* — a challenge to point our hearts toward home.

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## Convention Uniform

### Practical faith

By Gary L. Burney, assistant to the pastor, New Hope Fellowship, Springdale

Basic passage: James 2:14-26; 5:7-20

Focal passage: James 2:14-20

Central truth: Faith requires action. Faith without action isn't true faith.

How many times have we listened as someone told us about the difficult times through which they were going. We listened intently (maybe) and when they were through, we said, "I'll be praying for you." Then, we went our way. Maybe we remembered to pray for them, maybe we didn't.

Sound familiar? Apparently, the people James wrote to in this epistle were doing the same thing. That's why he addressed the concept of practical faith in these verses. Three truths stand out:

■ *Faith without action has no benefit* (vv. 14-16). Faith is beneficial. The kind of faith that reaches out to others in time of distress is a saving kind of faith. Don't be confused by thinking that James is saying we are saved by what we do. He isn't saying that. He said that the kind of faith that is proved in action is the kind of faith that saves. That kind of faith benefits two people: the person with faith and the person on whom faith is practiced.

■ *Faith without action is dead* (v. 17). James said that faith without action is "...dead, being alone." What a concept! Faith by itself is dead, useless, helpless, corrupt. Faith that does not act is as worthless as a corpse. That's strong language, but language the church needs to hear. When the church fails to exercise its faith through action to help those in need, those in need fail to see Jesus in us!

■ *Faith is proved by what we do, not by what we say* (vv. 18-20). James said, in essence, "Put up or shut up." "Put your money where your mouth is." The church would benefit greatly if we would quit talking about how great our faith is and prove it by our actions.

Practical faith requires something of us — action.

## Life and Work

### Following the rules

By Suzanne Dilday, member, First Church, Benton

Basic passage: Romans 13:1-7

Focal passage: Romans 13:1-5

Central truth: Government has a good side.

A favorite book that I occasionally assign my English students to read is *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding. It's a short, simply-written novel that a grade-school student could read, yet it deals with some adult issues. It asks the questions, "Is man basically good or bad?" and "Are rules and laws really necessary?" In the novel, a group of schoolboys shipwrecked on an island with no adults attempt to establish civilized order to survive. Quickly, the darker side of human nature grips these innocent children and order turns to chaos, resulting in violence and murder. Golding's underlying message is that because of man's natural tendency for evil, government is necessary to preserve life.

Paul seemed to express some of the same ideas in Romans. He wrote to an audience that questioned Roman rule and he defended its authority: "Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God" (v. 1). To rebel against the Romans, the government, was to rebel against God (v. 2). Paul sounded like a mother speaking to her child when he told them that if they don't do anything wrong, they have nothing to fear from the law (v. 3-4). The government, according to Paul, isn't there to frighten people into being good, but to protect people from evil and, therefore, is a necessity for civilization (vv. 3, 5).

One of the issues raised in Golding's novel was settled in the Garden of Eden. Humans will do the wrong thing because it comes naturally to them. There must be restrictions.

Another issue, that of citizens questioning the right of government to govern, is not a dead issue. How many anti-government groups have we seen making the news in the last five years?

It is interesting that Paul doesn't say which types of government are good enough to obey and which aren't. The Roman rule existing in his day was much more controlling of its citizens than the democracy we live under. If obeying the Romans was pleasing to God, how much easier it is for us to please God as law-abiding Americans today.

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## Bible Book

### God's restoring presence

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

Basic passage: Joel 2:18-3:21

Focal passage: Joel 2:18-32

Central truth: Restoration comes with God's presence.

How will we ever get these bills paid? I'll have to look for a another job to supplement our income! Sound familiar? Many of us fall into such a trap. The answer rarely is solved by pouring more money into the front end of our needs. The real answer comes when we can "restore the years the locusts have eaten" and stop whatever is eating up our resources.

The last half of Joel deals with this wonderful promise. The second half of chapter 2 is a response to the people's prayer. It forms a promise of God's salvation and restoration. The last chapter contains prophecies against the nations. Four major promises dominate our focal passage:

■ *The blessing* (v. 19). The LORD becomes "jealous for His land" (v. 18), a term often used to describe God's saving zeal for His people. A blessing begins in verse 19 describing the abundance that the LORD wants to pour out on His people and the promised deliverance from the armies of locusts threatened earlier.

■ *The restoration* (v. 25). The agricultural crisis outlined in verses 1:16-20, is reversed. God leads His people from disaster to blessing. Each item listed is a clear restoration of the outline of disaster discussed earlier. The LORD's promise to "restore to you the years that the locusts have eaten" represents one of the greatest gifts of God to us, a chance to rise from the ashes of our sin to new life in Him.

■ *The presence* (v. 27). The "promise of the presence" is the distinguishing characteristic of the people of God. His presence brings abundant blessings. He is in the "midst" of His people and is extremely personal — "the LORD your God." His people will never be ashamed or caught unprepared for life's difficulties and trials. They live in His presence.

■ *The Spirit* (v. 28). In the past, God's Spirit was poured out only upon special individuals (prophets, priests and kings). Now His Spirit would be poured out upon all His people. All divisions of society would be broken and made one. No longer male, female, young, old, slave or free — but one — gifted with the prophetic ministry of "prophecy, dreams and visions."

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