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Arkansas Baptist State Convention

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ARKANSAS BAPTIST



INSIDE
SBC Restructuring:
Point/Counterpoint

Volume 94, Number 11

June 1, 1995

Point — of — Grace

SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL
LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES
Historical Commission, SBC
Nashville, Tennessee



*Point of Grace,
one of today's most popular
contemporary Christian recording groups,
began its music ministry at Arkansas Baptists'
Ouachita Baptist University.*

Ouachita, Williams award degrees to 285 graduates

Ouachita Baptist University and Williams Baptist College held recent commencement ceremonies, with a total of 285 graduates earning degrees from the two Arkansas Baptist institutions.



O u a c h i t a officials awarded degrees to 234 graduates on May 13. Senior class president Allison Gail Walsh of Malvern delivered the invocation. Senior Shawn Kemp of Nashville

read the commencement Scripture. Don Moore, executive director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, delivered the baccalaureate address.

During the school's commencement ceremonies, Moon-Jong Hong and Sok-Ho Na, both of Korea, received honorary doctorate of law and doctorate of business administration degrees, respectively. Ed McDonald of Little Rock and John Ware of Dallas were recognized as distinguished alumni.

Fifty-five students graduated with special academic honors. Ten students who earned summa cum laude honors included Wendy Elizabeth Foster of Little Rock; Stephen Riley Granade of Arkadelphia; Tanya Shea Hicks of Austin; Bashorat Ibragimova of Tashkent, Uzbekistan; Cheryl Renee Johnson of Little Rock; Sarah Elizabeth Moseley of Garland, Texas; Jennifer Ann Steeger of Prescott; Kiri Ker Liang Ten of Singapore; Melissa Carol Whitehead of Little Rock; and Jolene

Cynthia Zook of Rozel, Kansas.

Prior to graduation, the Ouachita faculty selected the Senior Ouachitonian Man and Woman, honoring individuals who best signify exemplary traits in academics, character, involvement in extracurricular activities, leadership and Christian service. Stephen Granade, a senior physics, chemistry and theatre arts major from Arkadelphia, was selected Senior Ouachitonian Man and Wendy Foster, a senior pre-dietetics major from Little Rock, was selected Senior Ouachitonian Woman.



Williams Baptist College awarded bachelor's degrees to 44 graduates during commencement exercises on May 13. Another seven graduates were awarded associate's degrees.

Barbara Martin of Coffeyville, Kan., graduated with highest honors and was awarded her degree summa cum laude.

The commencement speaker was Paul Brown, president emeritus of Hannibal-LaGrange College in Missouri. The baccalaureate sermon was delivered by Dale Thompson, pastor of First Church of Fort Smith, who was honored by Williams as the 1995 Distinguished Baptist Minister.

The college also presented an honorary doctorate of laws to Judge Edward Maddox of Harrisburg. Maddox has served as circuit judge of the Second Judicial District of Arkansas and as municipal judge for Harrisburg and Trumann.

Cover Story

ABN photo / Terriie Henderson



Point of Grace 11

Point of Grace, one of the top vocal groups in contemporary Christian music, has strong Arkansas roots. The four Ouachita Baptist University alumnae recently returned to Arkansas for a pair of sold-out concerts at Park Hill Church, North Little Rock.

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ARKANSAS BAPTIST

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Arkansans aid New Orleans flood victims

Members of the Arkansas Baptist disaster relief child care unit provided care for victims of heavy flooding in the New Orleans area. The recent flooding left hundreds homeless and is blamed for at least six deaths.

The child care unit, operated by members of the Arkansas Baptist disaster relief team, was requested by the American Red Cross to provide child care to victims of the disaster, described as one of the worst floods in the city's history. As of May 24, Arkansas Baptist team members had provided care for 134 children.

The team members joined child care volunteers from three other Baptist state conventions that were expected to assist more than 2,000 families in Covington and New Orleans.

According to Arkansas Baptist State Convention disaster relief director Harry Black, the child care teams supervised the children as their parents were processed for relief funds and insurance needs by the American Red Cross.

The volunteers provided care in two shifts. The first group of seven Arkansas Baptists left for Louisiana May 17 and returned May 24, while a second group of four workers began serving May 24.

Marilyn Warford, a member of Immanuel Church in Little Rock, served as the first team's coordinator. She said the team "amazed" FEMA (Federal Emergency

Management Agency) and other relief workers with their existence.

"FEMA couldn't believe Southern Baptists had trained child care volunteers. They didn't know we existed," she noted. "They asked us questions about our training and about Southern Baptists. When we told them we were leaving on Wednesday, they asked, 'Could you stay through the weekend?'"

'Positive feedback'

Warford said they had "a lot of positive feedback" both from emergency workers and parents. "We kept the kids out of their hair. Emergency workers didn't have kids pulling on the computer cords and parents weren't running after kids."

Black, who served as off-site coordinator, said that "having our folks there allowed the parents to begin putting their lives back together while being assured of quality child care."

Warford said that although the team was prepared to care for children ages birth through five years, "our youngest was a month old and the oldest was 12."

The variety of children was not limited to age, either. "We had hyperactive children, a child with Down's Syndrome and some who didn't want to leave their mothers. The time we cared for them varied from 10 minutes to three hours."

During the days, team members played

with the children, fed them snacks and shared Bible stories. They also provided crafts, books, crayons and toys.

The group was first sent to Covington, but requested a transfer to a needier area. They were assigned to work at the Texas Brotherhood feeding site in New Orleans.

The day spent at Covington was not in vain, Warford explained. While at the site, the group "met a security guard who talked to us and took his break with us."

"We talked about his life and some of the problems he was having," Warford recounted. "One of the ladies, Gloria Norman (of Shiloh Church, Harrisburg), explained the plan of salvation to him."

"He made a profession of faith," she said. "He was a changed man."

In addition to Warford and Norman, other members of the first team included Gloria's husband, David; Bonnie Harris and Dorothy Rapert, both of Pocahontas; Pebble Wallace of Little Rock; and team assistant coordinator Virginia Lederer of Malvern.

Second team members included team coordinator Donna Cheatham and Barbie Booth, both of Russellville, and Bob and Holly Lawrence of Pine Bluff.

According to Black, the teams accomplished three goals: direct assistance to parents and children, building a positive relationship with the American Red Cross and FEMA and experience in the field.

Arkansas teen spearheads relief fund effort

The motivation of an Arkansas teen and the generosity of his church has led to a significant financial gift to assist victims of the Oklahoma bombing disaster.

Karlas Stephens, 13, a member of First Church, Alexander, led efforts in the church to raise more than \$1,600 for victims of the blast that destroyed the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City April 19.

Karlas, along with his Sunday School teacher, Steve Nortier, came up with the fund-raising idea during a Bible study trip following the blast.

Explaining his motivation for raising the money, Karlas noted, "Everything got taken away (from the victims). Their families got messed up, they lost their buildings."

The next Sunday, he approached the church's youth group, then adult Sunday School classes, with the idea. "We set a goal of \$1,500 and raised it in three weeks," he said. "Somebody said the goal should be \$250, but that was too low. We got that in five minutes."

Nortier said that despite his age, Karlas is a leader in the youth group. "Even the high school kids listened to him." He is president of his Sunday School class and recently worked on staff at the Royal Ambassador Congress.

Karlas' fund-raising strategy was simple: "We just went in to the classrooms and said we needed it," he explained.



Karlas Stephens

He added that he was "kinda surprised by the response. Most gave quickly. Two kids gave \$20 apiece. Somebody gave \$250." The response did not surprise pastor Ed Stoddard. "I think right now in the church there is an openness to needs in the community," he said. "It was only natural that as they were alerted to the needs that they responded."

Karlas and Nortier traveled to Oklahoma City May 21 to personally deliver the \$1,655.84 check from the church to the Brotherhood department of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma. The money will be used to assist residents of the Registry Tower Apartments, a low-income housing structure.

Mary Stephens of the Brotherhood department, said the gift was "among one of the largest" given by a single church to be used for relief through the department.

Karlas received the thanks of Oklahoma Brotherhood director Laddy Adams in a small ceremony, along with a lapel pin in honor of his work. "I felt good, but I was nervous," admitted Karlas. "I hadn't done anything that big before."

The trip also included tours of the Oklahoma disaster relief feeding unit, Oklahoma Baptist Boys' Ranch and the bomb site.

Karlas remembered the visit to the bombed Murrah building. It was the day before engineers imploded the building, reducing it to rubble. "There were all kinds of flowers and stuffed animals (at the chain link barricade around the building). It was sad. There were scriptures and notes to those that were lost."

"I wish we could take everybody there and show them," Karlas reflected. "It changes your attitude."

YOU'LL BE GLAD TO KNOW



By DON MOORE
ABCS Executive Director

Do you know any area of life that is not now going through a crisis of one sort or another? Corporations are down-sizing; the military has been down-sizing; baseball has been in turmoil; Congress is in upheaval; and society is being attacked by every conceivable kind of movement. Churches are turbulent. Even the most stable entities of our Southern Baptist Convention life are embroiled in controversy or in painful transitions.

In the "olden days" someone would say "the cream is about to rise." For the younger set, this referred to an experience in farm life, when milk was set aside in a cool area until the cream rose to the top. It could then be skimmed off and churned into butter. The analogy is that in times of crisis the wise and mature surface. I've seen it in churches when a trusted one breaks the silence with a word of counsel that calms the group and helps them think clearly. Denominationally, we are in a time when the cream needs to rise. Cool heads and warm hearts must prevail. "The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." If "we wrestle not against flesh and blood" then our battles need to be fought on spiritual grounds. It is difficult to find a better approach than prayer. The works of the flesh nauseate God, stain the church's image and result in "hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy" (Gal. 5:20).

A common reaction to disagreements today is violence. Domestic, racial, political, moral and spiritual disagreements provoke violent reactions. Is it because we are insecure in our positions or feel that we have to resolve the problem ourselves to our own advantage? I do not know. I do know that we need the "cream to rise."

The Oklahoma disaster provided an opportunity for "the cream to rise." What a blessing to see the concerted actions taken to meet needs there!

In your family, church, community, sphere of influence and conventions, the "cream needs to rise." By God's grace and wisdom you could be that stabilizing influence that your world needs.

ANGIE SCHLEIFF

Woman's viewpoint

Is Mr. Wright wrong?



"Once the present generation of WMU dies, so does the organization—maybe sooner," wrote Steve Wright, associate editor of *Baptists Today*.

Do you agree or disagree with this quote? Before you answer, consider what Woman's Missionary Union does.

First, WMU prays and gives to missions. William Carey, the father of modern missions, said of his need for prayer and financial support, "I'll go down, if you'll hold the ropes." If it weren't for WMU encouraging us to support missionaries, I'm afraid Southern Baptists would "let go."

Second, WMU does missions. Summer feeding projects, Backyard Bible Clubs, hospital and nursing home ministries, clothing distribution, etc. are all a part of doing missions. It's sharing Jesus by serving others.

Third, WMU learns and teaches about missions. Through GAS and Acteens, I received an awareness and knowledge of missions. As a result, as a

college student, my heart was prepared to say "yes" when God called me to go as a spring break missionary to Ecuador.

Fourth, WMU helps women, girls and preschoolers develop spiritually toward a missions lifestyle. Seeing people with an "eternal eye" is a missions-mindset WMU members seek to cultivate into everyday living.

Fifth, WMU participates in the work of the church and the denomination. As an Acteen leader, I help 6th through 12th grade girls find ways to contribute to God's work. Once the girls realize that God can use them, they won't settle for anything less.

Now that you know what WMU does, reread the quote in the first paragraph. Do you agree or disagree?

You may have guessed that I disagree. My viewpoint is that WMU is relevant, vital and very much alive in God's work.

Angie Schlieff is an Acteen leader at Benton First Church. She and her husband, Mark, have two children.

Personal perspectives

"If there are those in the Christian community who continue to bring this matter up, they should be given a deaf ear."

—SBC president Jim Henry, encouraging Christians to stop spreading false rumors linking Procter & Gamble to Satanism

"People are ready to hear songs with blatant, simple, honest Christian lyrics. I think people are ready to get back to the basics."

—Point of Grace member Shelley Phillips

"We felt like we needed to reach into our culture. It was a way to touch people not otherwise touched."

—Master Singers director Rob Hewall, assessing recent concert to prison inmates

Executive search deserves prayerful support

Arkansas Baptists' 10-member search committee for a new state convention executive director faces a challenging task. The seven pastors, two laymen and one director of missions are charged with discovering God's choice to lead Arkansas Baptists into the 21st century.

The search committee, chaired by Billy Kite, director of missions for Ashley County Association, already is off to a positive start in its assigned quest. Committee members began their task by hosting a series of listening sessions to allow pastors, directors of missions, laypeople and Baptist Building staff members to share their input.

The results of those sessions indicate that spiritual preparation and calling are the primary qualifications which Arkansas Baptists expect their future executive director to possess. An individual who is able to relate well to Arkansas Baptist churches of all sizes was also frequently mentioned as an essential skill.

Beyond that, opinions varied about particular qualifications and abilities. Some felt that the new executive should be a native Arkansan while others suggested that a general understanding and appreciation of Arkansas Baptist life is sufficient. Some people indicated that the

STRAIGHT FROM THE EDITOR



By TRENNIS HENDERSON

individual should hold an earned doctorate; others emphasized that ministry experience is more important than extensive education.

Other qualifications that were high on individuals' priority lists ranged from being a visionary leader and a skilled problem-solver to being a good listener and an effective delegator. Cooperative, compassionate, innovative, inclusive, humble and reliable were among other characteristics suggested to the committee.

Following the listening sessions, the search committee met together to develop an executive director profile. The five-

point profile calls for the new executive to possess growing spiritual maturity, proven leadership and visionary skills, a basic degree from a Southern Baptist seminary, substantial ministry experience including pastoral experience, and Southern Baptist Convention and Arkansas churchmanship.

Beyond any man-made qualifications and guidelines, however, the committee must focus primarily on seeking and discerning God's will. Just as the first century church sought out leaders "of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom," the executive director search committee members must do the same, remembering that "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control."

Pray earnestly that God will lead the search committee to His chosen servant who is "full of the Spirit and of wisdom." Christ's ministry through Arkansas Baptists deserves no less.

As the search committee continues its assignment, individuals may submit recommendations to Kite until June 28. The recommendations should be mailed to: Billy Kite, P.O. Box 1184, Crossett, AR 71635.

The pastoreess?

Ronnie Rogers wrote an interesting article which places its finger on a key issue in the Southern Baptist Convention. Significant scriptural support was given to demonstrate how women cannot serve as pastors. All of these scriptures, however, come from 1 Timothy, a letter which was written to a pastor in a specific situation where women were not only uneducated but in no way could be considered as pastors of a church.

Rogers is correct in establishing Scripture as that which must be our final authority. However, we must examine the entire scriptural account and not just a few isolated verses. Galatians 3:28 clearly states that in Christ "there is no male or female." Jesus consistently challenges the prevailing understanding of the role of women. He reaches an entire city in Samaria through the witness of the woman at the well. God uses Sarah, Rebekah, Rahab, Ruth, Naomi, Esther, Mary, Mary Magdalene and Lottie Moon, to name but a few. These women played indispensable roles in the work of God's ministry.

I affirm Rogers for his courage in addressing such a tremendously significant issue as the role of women in the ministry. He makes one very important observation. He admits that many women are capable of ministry but that we must submit



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ourselves to the authority of "God's creative order and His Word." I agree completely with Rogers' statement here. Scripture must be the final authority on such crucial issues as this. The question before us is very simple. Are we going to submit to the authority of a "letter" interpretation of a few verses in one letter written to one particular situation or are we going to submit ourselves to the spirit of the entire Scripture and God's attitude Himself toward women, which is clearly one of inclusion and purpose?

Steve Sullivan
Mabelvale, AR

Holy humor?

During the past few weeks three articles have come across my desk, the sum of which caused me to ask: "Does God have a sense of humor?"

The first article dealt with Al Mohler's refusal to hire any faculty members who believe that a woman can be called to preach. In the second article, Ronnie Rogers stated, in effect, that it is a biblical

impossibility for a woman to be a pastor or deacon in a church. The third article reported that women swept the top three awards in Southern Baptist Theological Seminary's annual preaching competition. The three female winners were selected by an all-male committee.

And I questioned, "This isn't funny, is it God?" to which came the refrain: "Yes, it is!"

It was through a woman, Mary, that God sent the Living Word to humankind. God could have spoken Christ into the world as an adult person. But He chose to use a woman to bring Jesus to us.

It was to the woman at the well that Jesus first announced that He was the Messiah. The woman then went and told others about the Messiah.

It was to a woman, Mary Magdalene, that the risen Savior first appeared. It was she to whom Jesus spoke and said, "Go and tell the disciples that I am risen."

Now, if God can use a woman to bring the Savior to the world, and if Jesus can use a woman to announce that He is the Messiah, and a woman to announce that He has risen, who are these men who say that God cannot call a woman to preach, to pastor, to deacon, to serve.

Does God have a sense of humor? I think He does!

Lane H. Strother
Mountain Home, AR

Restructuring offers SBC 'a God-sized opportunity'

By Ronnie Floyd

Member, SBC Executive Committee's
Program and Structure Study Committee

The Southern Baptist Convention has a God-sized opportunity this June to utilize all the resources God has given us to take the gospel of Jesus Christ across the world. In our 150 years of history, there has never been a greater challenge before us. Over one billion people across the world have never even heard the name of Jesus Christ. God is beginning to bring a mighty spiritual revival to America. The churches of the Southern Baptist Convention must be positioned to be a part of all that God is doing in the world.

Two years ago this June in Houston, Texas, the Southern Baptist Convention referred a motion to the Executive Committee which called for the appointment of a seven-member committee to study the future of our convention, especially our structure and programs.

This committee is composed of one corporation developer, one attorney, one organizational analyst and investments manager for national and international corporations, one seminary president and denominational historian, one church administrator, and two pastors with long tenure.

This diverse and uniquely gifted committee, commissioned by the Executive Committee in response to the motion referred from the Southern Baptist Convention, has accomplished exactly what they were asked to do in 1993.

Change is never easy for anyone or any organization. We realize that this report or any other report will not be embraced by everyone. However, we ask you, as a Southern Baptist, to view it as the framework for our future. It is a structure that is simple and clear. One that can ignite the heart of all who have the passion to take the gospel to the world.

Our committee believes this report is the Lord's will for the future Southern Baptist Convention. Through persevering prayer, in-depth interviews with the leaders of various Southern Baptist agencies and institutions, and many tedious, time-consuming meetings, we bring this report to you. We are convinced that the committee's report will be embraced wholeheartedly by the majority of Southern Baptists. Unfortunately, some have spread misinformation which has generated misunderstanding.

Insight may be needed on several items and I will address some of them for you:



Point Covenant for a New Century

■ **Concerning structure:** The convention will move from 19 to 12 entities upon the adoption of this report in 1995-96. This streamlining will eliminate unnecessary bureaucracy, avoid duplication, and get more money to the mission fields of the world.

■ **Concerning our mission statement:** It clarifies what we've known to be our true mission through the years. It reads, "The Southern Baptist Convention exists to facilitate, extend, and enlarge the Great Commission ministries of Southern Baptist churches, under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, upon the authority of Holy Scripture, and by the empowerment of the Holy Spirit."

■ **Concerning the prominence of the local church:** This report places the local church back in the center of things, rather than the convention's agencies, institutions and state conventions. There is no Southern Baptist Convention without churches. The convention exists to serve the churches. The churches do not exist to serve the convention.

■ **Concerning Women's Missionary Union:** WMU has not been left out of this plan. They chose to remain an auxiliary of this convention. Due to their auxiliary status, they are not accountable to this convention, therefore, we could not assign them responsibilities. The convention does not assign work to the WMU or restrict its work. That decision is made by the WMU. Missions education has not been taken away from WMU. Southern Baptist churches and entities can call upon them for assistance. The International Mission Board and the North American Mission Board will continue providing WMU funding for expenses incurred in the promotion of our two major national

offerings for missions. Dr. Jerry Rankin, president of the Foreign Mission Board, said, "I would anticipate that (the Executive Committee recommendations) would have outstanding potential in increasing the giving toward missions."

■ **Concerning the North American Mission Board:** This board will be composed of the present Home Mission Board, Brotherhood Commission, and Radio and Television Commission. This will help our convention in assisting churches as they penetrate our country with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Through church planting, evangelism, volunteers and communications technology working together, we can make a major impact in America.

■ **Concerning state conventions:** The state conventions will continue to determine the amount that goes to the national convention, even though this decision should reflect the heart of each local church. Any recommendations by the committee regarding state conventions assumes bilateral cooperation through cooperative agreements between the North American Mission Board and state conventions. We recommend that the NAMB encourage state conventions with total membership of at least 10 percent of their state's population to fund their own internal mission strategies while continuing to support the national Cooperative Program. Fifty-eight cents of every dollar that an Arkansas Baptist church gives to the Cooperative Program remains in Arkansas to fund our state convention. Personally, I struggle greatly with this when I think of 58 percent of the money staying to be spent on just over 2 million people, most of whom have heard the gospel, rather than sending more of that money to be spent on the 6 billion people in the world who have never had a chance to respond to Jesus. Nationwide, the greater portion of dollars is kept within our own state conventions.

■ **Concerning you:** It is my prayer that you will pray sincerely about God's will in these matters. We know it is His will to take the gospel to the world. A vote for this report is a vote for the advancement of missions in the world. Let's do it for Him and to His glory.

Ronnie Floyd, pastor of First Church, Springdale, is a member of the SBC Executive Committee. He previously was pastor of four churches in Texas. He has been host preacher for the SBC Radio and Television Commission's "Invitation to Life" program. The author of three books, he also serves on the board of regents for Criswell College in Dallas.

Concerns, questions prompt call for additional analysis

By Glenn Hickey

Member, SBC Executive Committee's
Bold Mission Thrust Directions 2000 Task Force

The sweeping changes in SBC structure proposed by the Executive Committee in its "Covenant for a New Century" deserve careful study by every Southern Baptist interested in the future of our denomination. The Program and Structure Study Committee is to be commended for its bold initiative in leading Southern Baptists to think together about what kind of denominational structure will best serve in holding us together and keeping us effective as Great Commission churches in the 21st century. Since our togetherness and our effectiveness are interdependent, any major restructuring plan needs to come from a broad consensus of Southern Baptist life and leadership. It is unfortunate that this factor was not adequately considered in the makeup of the seven-member committee, nor in the very limited time given to the discussion of the report by the Executive Committee. Now it is up to SBC messengers to prayerfully analyze these far-reaching proposals and determine if this is how we want to work together in the 21st century. A number of concerns and unanswered questions need to be addressed before Southern Baptists adopt the "Covenant for a New Century."

■ **Is the trend toward more centralized decision-making by fewer people the Baptist way?** Current structures provide a certain decentralization of power and control that is in keeping with Baptist polity and ecclesiology. The assumption that fewer people can make better decisions is a Presbyterian idea, not a Baptist one. Baptists believe strongly in the Proverb: "In the multitude of counselors there is safety" (Prov. 24:6). Reducing participation and ownership of our denominational processes will inevitably lead to diminishing interest, confidence and support.

■ **What are the financial implications of the proposals?** Will they result in significant resources being redeployed in missions and evangelism, and if so how much? The plan calls for 13 strong SBC states to surrender Home Mission Board assistance for their mission initiatives while continuing to support the Cooperative Program. How can this be done without reductions, either in state missions efforts or SBC Cooperative Program percentages? Does the redefinition of the mission statement for seminaries not allow them



to compete with the 53 SBC-related colleges in their bachelor's degree programs? Do Southern Baptists really want to pay once for a degree program at the state level and then pay for it again in duplicated programs at the SBC level? Southern Baptists need answers to these questions. It's their money. They deserve to know.

■ **Does the relatively small savings realized justify abolishing the Historical Commission and the Education Commission?** These two small agencies each operate on only one-third of one percent of the SBC budget. The recommended reassignments almost assure their eventual demise. Southern Baptists need the Historical Commission. We have a rich and unique heritage which needs to be preserved and communicated to future generations. The Education Commission now plays a significant role in global missions. It works with the Foreign Mission Board and the Association of Baptist Schools and Colleges in highly effective strategies for entering fields closed to missionaries, developing exchange programs between SBC schools and universities in these countries. In China alone, 50 such programs have been established in 20 major cities.

■ **Why should a successful and time-honored plan for promoting our annual mission offerings be abandoned?** The Covenant proposes that the promotion of these offerings be transferred to the respective receiving agencies. Woman's Missionary Union gave birth to the Lottie Moon and Annie Armstrong offerings, leading them to become the largest annual ingathering of funds for missions in all the world. Beginning in 1888 with meager offerings that Baptist women scratched together from egg money, quilting parties and widows'

pensions, the two offerings last year passed the \$2 billion mark. Moreover, in the past 10 years the offerings have grown at a rate almost twice that of Cooperative Program gifts. A great part of this success is due to the very high trust level Southern Baptists have in the present plan and the vast network of dedicated Baptist women who love missions and know how to inform and lead congregations to give generously and sacrificially. If the current plan is not broke, why try to fix it?

■ **Why separate three things in missions that belong together?** The Covenant proposes to split up responsibility for missions giving, mission education, and lay mission involvement between the Sunday School Board, and what are now the Home and Foreign Mission Boards. The Brotherhood Commission would be merged into what is now the Home Mission Board while WMU in its auxiliary status would be left without any specific assignment. Missions giving, missions education, lay mission involvement and prayer for missions are the four pillars upon which the greatest denominational mission program in the world has been built. They belong together in an integrated program. While the missions education program is struggling or nonexistent in many of our churches, it is still true that people who give most generously to missions and the people most likely to respond to the mission call are those who learn about missions through an ongoing program of missions education. Splitting these assignments up and reducing our mission education agencies to a secondary or undefined status will only serve to weaken and cripple the greatest denominational mission enterprise that Christian history has ever known.

SBC messengers should not reject outright the "Covenant for a New Century." Restructuring is needed as we face the unique challenges of a new millennium and the rapidly changing role of denominations in American church life. The proposals, however, should be referred back to the Executive Committee for further study with a requirement that the study committee be expanded to at least 15 persons and include representatives of all major SBC constituencies, including state conventions and local associations. There is still plenty of time to plan for an entire century. Let's do it, but let's do it right.

Glenn Hickey, the recently retired director of missions for Pulaski Baptist Association, served as a Southern Baptist missionary to Brazil from 1964 to 1978. A former trustee of Ouachita Baptist University, he also has served as pastor of Calvary Church, Batesville.

Master'Singers minister to inmates on 'The Rock'

By Russell N. Dilday

Associate Editor, Arkansas Baptist

The evening's events had not gone smoothly on "The Rock" May 18.

The Rock, as inmates call it, is the Arkansas Department of Correction's North Central Unit, a relatively new minimum- to medium-security facility. Members of the Master'Singers music group had arrived at 6:30 p.m. in anticipation of a 7:30 worship service and performance at the unit's chapel.

True to its name, the Rock is in a remote location near Calico Rock on a high caprock summit. John Belken, who serves as the unit's chaplain, said most of the inmates at the unit "are serving relatively short sentences before they go back into society — most of them within two years."

The visiting group waited for inmates to undergo a routine prison-wide "head count" by correctional officers before attending the service. Some participants warmed their brass instruments, while others read through music or visited with one another.

The Master'Singers is a vocal and instrumental performance group comprised of Arkansas Baptist ministers of music and other church staff. They often perform at such statewide gatherings as the Arkansas Baptist State Convention annual meeting.

The prison concert was the second such ministry performance by the Master'Singers. They also performed March 28 at a Pine Bluff unit.

Officers came into the chapel to count inmates who had already arrived, then left. They came, counted and left again. The third time all inmates were ordered to their cells. An inmate was missing.

By 8 p.m. everyone in the unit was "locked down," a tight security restriction that locks all doors in the facility, including the Master'Singers in the chapel.

"This is unusual," commented Belken, a former correctional officer, who has served as chaplain at the unit for more than two years. "This has only happened once before since I have been here and that was an escape," he told the men.

The group continued to wait in the chapel. The chapel facility, like the rest of the unit, is of cinder-block construction



The Master'Singers vocal and instrumental group performed May 18 for inmates at the Arkansas Department of Corrections' North Central Unit at Calico Rock.

and painted a sterile gray-blue. On the walls hang two bright religious banners and a cross. A piano, church pews and a portable baptistry complete the room's furnishings.

"I've heard the inmates refer to the chapel as a refuge," Belken said. "It is a place that they can come that is not a negative environment. The rest of the institution is a negative environment."

"The chapel is my lifeline," agreed inmate Paul Hays. "I go to the chapel to be disciplined, to grow in the Lord and to praise and worship the Lord with other believers."

"This is like the hospital of the unit," he added. "We have many different people with problems and needs that come here."

Hays, who is serving a 10-year sentence for burglary, is known among other inmates as "Paul the Printer" because of his desktop publishing abilities as one of Belken's three clerks. He said he had looked forward to the night's service.

"I have been looking forward to it because there are a lot of lost souls here at the unit that haven't received the Lord," he explained. "And there are guys that will come to this service tonight that will not come to our average chapel services."

"The Lord will be ministering here this evening while they're here to receive entertainment, or for whatever reason they come," he pointed out.

Inmate Robert Kursh, serving a 10-year

sentence for delivery of a controlled substance, said he is "a part" of the chapel. "Chaplain Belken is my pastor. A lot of guys come here to get away from the barracks and get the private time. It is very rewarding, very important."

Rob Hewell, director of the ABCS church music ministries department and the group's leader, called for prayer and told the assembled group he was committed to staying until the inmates were able to attend or when the unit's 10:30 p.m. lights-out rule went into effect.

It was a tough decision for Hewell. Many of the singers had traveled several hours to an afternoon practice session at First Church, Mountain View, and to perform. Most still faced a several-hour-long return drive.

With no dissension, group members continued to wait.

By 9:30 p.m., a correct count was made and inmates slowly filed into the chapel as they were released from their cells. More than 70 of the unit's 400 white-clad inmates soon filled the chapel to capacity.

The group opened the service with a fast-paced brass ensemble and gospel vocal arrangements.

Hewell said the choice of music for the service was targeted to the inmates. The selections "are representative of what we do, but we also picked things that provided a quick bridge to them. Gospel songs do that. They are familiar tunes like 'Down by the River' and 'Jesus Paid It All'."

"We wanted to accomplish a real ministry tonight," he said. "Many of the inmates are Christians and we were able to share a worship service with them."

Chaplain Belken said the group's performance fit into his discipling plan for inmates. "Our desire inside is to reach

PRISON
MINISTRIES
IN ARKANSAS

Last in a five-part series

Young Mother of the Year' Gail Quillen is active Baptist

By Colleen Backus
Assistant Editor, Arkansas Baptist

Gail Quillen wants her kids to remember that she said "yes" as much as possible and "no" only when necessary. With that philosophy and her energetic personality, it's not difficult to understand why she was selected as the 1995 Young Mother representative for the Arkansas Association of American Mothers.

An active member of First Church in Conway, Quillen is concerned with teaching family values and morality skills to her children. That commitment led to her involvement with American Mothers, an organization dedicated to preserving the moral and spiritual heritage of American families.

As a computer technology specialist at Clinton Elementary Magnet Technology School in Sherwood, Quillen sees firsthand what kids are exposed to on a daily basis. In addition to running the school's computer system, she teaches computer skills to fifth and sixth graders and also "teaches the teachers."

Her job enables her to be near her two children, both of whom attend the school. Her son, Reed, is in first grade and her daughter, Emily, attends pre-K. "We get to

ride to school together, have lunch, and ride home together," Quillen explained. The ride between school in Sherwood and home in Conway allows mom and the kids to catch up on each others' day.

Quillen, 28, grew up mainly in Little Rock, with the exception of a few years when her father was transferred to Florida. She grew up and married in Park Hill Church in North Little Rock. Her husband, Brent, is manager of engineering maintenance for a corporation in Conway. They both are graduates of the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville. Gail also is an accomplished pianist and teaches preschool choir at Conway First Church.

Dale Wicker, pastor of Conway First Church, noted that her service and helpfulness always go beyond what is required. "It's an honor to have a person like Gail in our church," he commented. "She reflects the standards of love to our congregation that she shows to her family."

As a part of her state honor, Quillen participated in the recent American Mothers convention at the Waldorf Astoria in New York City. "There were all kinds of parenting classes, and we formed a task force to promote family values," she said.

Quillen noted that she is not concerned with the issue of staying home vs. having a career, but with how much quality time is spent with a child. "I want my kids to do as much as they can, find their talents and what they are good at," she affirmed, "and I want to stay involved in their lives."



Quillen



Helga Mullens of Germany recites a poem during a Friendship International food fair held May 11 at First Church, Little Rock. Friendship International is a ministry sponsored by several churches in the Little Rock area. Church members minister to internationals by providing such classes as English as a Second Language, crafts, GED instruction, citizenship and Bible study. Deena Chacko (right), a native of India, is co-director of the organization. She moderated the group's international program highlighting the countries of Germany, Japan and Spain, which was held in conjunction with the food fair.

these men with the gospel for salvation by Jesus Christ. One way is through music.

"Another desire is to disciple these guys and we have a lot of activities to disciple them," he added, listing other discipling tools such as: showing Christian films on a large-screen television; services on Sunday and throughout the week; outdoor concerts; dulcimer and piano lessons; Prison Fellowship seminars; an inmate choir; Wednesday prayer sessions; and counseling one-on-one with inmates.

During a congregational singing of one of the selections, "Amazing Grace," inmates surprised the group by standing to sing. Some raised their hands in praise. One lifted clinched fists over his head.

"They stand because that's considered the prisoner's national anthem," explained Belkin. "Any time you sing 'Amazing Grace,' they will stand."

"It struck me that they acknowledged who they were and how God touched them in their need," Hewell noted. "They seemed hungry for that kind of contact."

"It was great," inmate Kursh said following the performance. "I thought it was very spiritual."

Inmates also reacted positively to John Dresbach, who played a piano medley of four prisoner requests, which included "Amazing Grace," "When the Roll is Called Up Yonder," "Because He Lives" and "Why Me, Lord?"

Dresbach, organist for Central Church in Jonesboro, serves as the group's organist. He said he hoped the performance and worship service would "bring some joy and encouragement to these guys."

"I've been told that it is hard for a Christian to stand up (for their faith) in prison," he noted. "We also wanted them to know that Christians don't judge them. They've already been judged. We wanted to be encouraging."

Dresbach added that the inmates were not the only ones to benefit from the concert. "This was a benefit for me. It is a good reminder of how blessed I am. There's something sobering about having the door shut behind you. We take everyday life for granted."

Following the service, the group visited with the inmates. Bob Endel, associate pastor for music and youth at Salem Church in Benton, said the time "surprised" him.

"What surprised me was as we introduced ourselves, we told where we were from," he said. "The inmates with connections in our end of the state sought us out. They enjoyed that contact and kinship."

Hewell said the prison concerts were important to the Master Singers because "we felt like we needed to reach into our culture. It was a way to touch people not otherwise touched."

SEMINARY GRADUATES

SOUTHWESTERN



CHARLES BUTLER
Master of Arts in
counseling & religious
education
Jonesboro



BOBBY CRABB
Master of Divinity with
biblical languages
Little Rock



**RICHARD "KENT"
DIXON**
Master of Arts in
religious education
Pine Bluff



**SHANNON N.
HOLLAND**
Master of Arts in
communication
Arkadelphia



**DONNA SMITH
JOINER**
Master of Arts in
communication
Marion



**CHRISTOPHER
LYNCH**
Master of Arts in
religious education
Royal



RON MALONE
Master of Divinity
Monette



BILLY KIM MAXEY
Master of Divinity with
biblical languages
Waldron



**MARGARET
MONEY**
Master of Divinity
Newark



STEVEN MULLEN
Doctor of Philosophy
Dewitt



BONITA MURRAY
Master of Arts in
counseling & religious
education
El Dorado



JEFF NOBLE
Master of Divinity
Little Rock



ELIZABETH PERRY
Master of Arts in
church social services
Strong



RICHARD POPE
Master of Arts in
religious education
Little Rock



**PAUL COOKSON
REED**
Master of Music
DeQueen



GINA RENA RHODES
Master of Arts in
counseling & religious
education
Little Rock



DEBBIE SMITH
Master of Arts in
religious education
Nashville



STEPHEN TIPTON
Master of Divinity with
biblical languages
Mountain Home



SARA TIPTON
Graduate diploma in
religious education
Mountain Home



MICHAEL WHITE
Master of Divinity with
biblical languages
Jonesboro

SOUTHERN

NO PHOTO
AVAILABLE

ROBERT CLINGHAM
Diploma in Christian
Ministry
North Little Rock



HAL DIXON
Master of Divinity
Arkadelphia



SHARON SARTAIN
Master of Divinity in
Christian education
Marion

SOUTHEASTERN



SAMUEL MOORE
Associate of Divinity
Rogers

Point of Grace

Ouachita alums become one of Christian music's top vocal groups

By Trennis Henderson
Editor, Arkansas Baptist

It's official — Point of Grace is one of the hottest vocal groups in the rapidly expanding field of contemporary Christian music.

The group of four young women, named last year's New Artist of the Year during the Gospel Music Association's annual Dove Awards, is no stranger to Arkansas Baptists. The four vocalists, formerly known as Say So, are all alumnae of Ouachita Baptist University. Shelley Phillips is a native of Little Rock and newlywed Terry Jones is a current Little Rock resident.

Point of Grace was back in Arkansas recently to perform a pair of sold-out concerts at Park Hill Church in North Little Rock. Sold-out concerts are becoming commonplace for the group, especially on its current 25-city tour which also includes guest appearances by Phillips, Craig & Dean and soloist Cheri Keaggy.

Point of Grace got its start at Ouachita in 1991 when Oklahoma natives Terry (Lang) Jones, Denise (Masters) Jones and Heather Floyd teamed up with Phillips. Their big break came two years later when they were "discovered" by a Word Records producer during a "Praise in the Rockies" gathering in Colorado.

Point of Grace was offered a recording contract and their debut album generated six consecutive No. 1 hits — the only group in history to produce that many hits on its first album. The group's latest album, "The Whole Truth," already has produced another No. 1 hit with the single, "The Great Divide." Point of Grace sang during last year's Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Orlando, Fla., and is scheduled to perform later this month at the SBC Pastors' Conference in Atlanta.

The *New York Times* has described Point of Grace as "the Supremes of Christian rock." *USA Weekend* magazine has compared them to the secular pop group Wilson Phillips.

How has commercial success and growing fame impacted the group?

"It definitely was great to receive the New Artist of the Year award last year," Phillips noted. "It gave us validity and name recognition.

"We are so excited to be where we're at," she acknowledged, but even with the growing recognition coming their way, "we're still the same old girls."

Although the foursome didn't bring home any Dove Awards this year, they were nominated for four awards, including



Point of Grace - Shelley Phillips, Denise Jones, Heather Floyd and Terry Jones - recently returned to Arkansas for two concerts at Park Hill Church, North Little Rock.

Artist of the Year, Group of the Year, Inspirational Album of the Year and a Song of the Year nomination for the single, "Jesus Will Still Be There."

Affirming the individuals and groups who did win this year, Phillips pointed out, "We're still very much the newest of the new. It was a bittersweet feeling but it was an honor to perform" on the nationally televised awards show. They also performed last year in the popular "Young Messiah Tour," a traveling showcase of Christian recording artists.

'Overnight success' is gradual

Noting that their "overnight success" actually was "a gradual thing," Phillips explained, "It built gradually into what it is day by day." Even so, she said it often feels like "all of a sudden we blinked and we had this ministry."

Phillips said one of the most significant growth experiences for the group has been taking time to catch up with ourselves spiritually. "Amid the hectic pace of recording, promoting, performing and touring, she said group members consciously remind themselves of "the importance of being fresh for the people and realizing it's okay to take time for ourselves."

Emphasizing that each of the group members "definitely comes from strong church backgrounds," Denise Jones said they still realize that "God can be real and be fresh every day."

"Our first record was songs that ministered to us. We picked them because they spoke to our hearts," Phillips noted. She said their second record reflects their spiritual pilgrimage "after we've been through a year and a half of adulthood — it's more evangelistic."

"People are ready to hear songs with blatant, simple, honest Christian lyrics," she said. "I think people are ready to get back to the basics."

Citing the success of "Jesus Will Still Be There," Jones added, "They're just hungry for simple truth.... There are so many people searching for love and God is the answer."

During one of the North Little Rock concerts, Terry Jones told the enthusiastic crowd, "Our prayer this whole year is that we would be one in Christ. That's a message our churches need to hear today too — we are all one in Christ."

"The reason we are here is because Jesus Christ can heal your broken heart. Jesus Christ is always there for you," Denise Jones shared. "Our God's greatest characteristics are His forgiveness and His love and His mercy. He's waiting for you to rest in Him tonight."

Encouraging the audience to join Point of Grace in "celebrating the love of God together," Phillips summed up the group's fast-paced ministry opportunities as she told her hometown supporters, "It's been a crazy ride the last few years...but it's really been a blessing."

Kenya gunmen shoot, rob missionaries

NAIROBI, KENYA (BP)—Jo Scales, a Southern Baptist missionary in Kenya for 25 years, was seriously wounded May 21 by gunmen who used automatic weapons to spray the vehicle she was driving and force the car to stop. The gunmen then robbed her husband, Louie, of cash he was carrying.

The men did not aim at the tires but shot through the doors and windows. Several bullets were deflected by the doors and others punctured the roof and windows on trajectories that indicated they passed within inches of the two missionaries.

Her right leg was shattered by one of the bullets and, according to doctors, she will probably require a bone graft to bridge a one-inch gap in the femur presently held in place by a metal plate. She also was wounded in the left leg and on the right hand.

Mrs. Scales initially was placed in a "high dependency unit" in Nairobi Hospital but was moved to a private room two days following the shooting and was making "slow but steady progress." She is expected to be hospitalized six to eight weeks before the bone graft is attempted.

Olympic ministry reaches beyond Atlanta

ATLANTA (BP)—Ministry to the millions of 1996 Olympic fans doesn't have to be limited to those in Atlanta, said a Southern Baptist Home Mission Board evangelism specialist.

A new "interactive pocket guide" to the Olympics can be used by churches anywhere, said Toby Frost, HMB associate director of mass evangelism. Frost also is chairman of the evangelism committee for Atlanta International Ministries '96, Olympic ministry coordinators sponsored by the Home Mission Board, Georgia Baptist Convention and local Baptist associations.

The 32-page booklet lists world and Olympic records for sporting events from archery to yachting. It includes space to record the 1996 winners as well as a four-page explanation of the plan of salvation.

The four-color guide will be distributed in Atlanta during the Olympics and will be used by Christian groups in at least 40 other countries, Frost said. Churches also can give one to every household in their communities, Frost said. People can use the guide as they watch the Olympics on television.

Each guide includes a tear-out postcard to request more information about Christianity. The postcards will be sent to local churches for follow-up on people who express an interest.

Each guide costs 25 cents with orders of 1,000 or more. The cost decreases with larger orders, with a minimum cost of 11.5 cents per copy. To order interactive pocket guides, call the AIM '96 office at 404-872-0096.

Cox named Europe area associate director

WIESBADEN, GERMANY (BP)—Former missionary and college administrator J. Larry Cox has been named an associate to the area director in Europe for the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

Cox, 46, will be based in Wiesbaden, Germany, with responsibility for missionary work in the North Europe, Central Europe and South Europe missions, which stretch from Scandinavia to the Mediterranean.

Cox most recently served as a strategy coordinator in northern Africa and central Asia for Cooperative Services International, the Southern Baptist aid agency.

He previously was assistant to the president at Mississippi College in Clinton, Miss., where he also taught a global awareness course. Before that he directed the National Fellowship of Baptists in Missions, housed at the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission. Cox came to the national fellowship post after serving as a Southern Baptist missionary in West Africa.

Cox is a graduate of Mississippi College, Southern Baptist

Theological Seminary, Mississippi State University and the University of Mississippi, Oxford. He and his wife, Cheryl, have four children.

Russian leader affirms role of Baptists

MOSCOW (BP)—The chairman of Russia's parliamentary subcommittee on religious groups reportedly has named Baptists among those who should work to help the country achieve spiritual rebirth—and he invited missionaries to help.

Southern Baptists now maintain 53 Foreign Mission Board missionaries in Russia, the first of whom began to arrive about the time communism fell in all of Eastern Europe.

Vitaly Savitsky's statement, quoted in the *Moscow Tribune*, sounded a different note from regularly published remarks by communists and nationalists in parliament who have backed Russian Orthodoxy as the only legitimate Russian religion. These leaders have characterized anything non-Orthodox as foreign and have even threatened to curtail their activities.

Savitsky accused some government officials of using alleged activities of cult groups to portray democracy as a first step toward anarchy, according to the newspaper report. Savitsky condemned foreigners who impose alien ideas on Russians but stressed that groups seeking "to contribute to the country's spiritual rebirth" will always be welcomed to Russia.

Savitsky called on missionaries to "help the Orthodox re-establish churches or train priests, or help the Catholics, that have nothing, regain an official church building, or work with the Baptists that have been in Russia for centuries. That's what's really needed here," he declared.

Baptists in Armenia arrested Easter Sunday

YEREVAN, ARMENIA (ABP)—Members of Yerevan Baptist Church in Armenia were arrested and held several hours following Easter services April 23, according to European Baptist Press Service.

Twenty people in military uniforms arrested the Baptists. Among those arrested was Yuri Avanesian, president of the Baptist Union of Armenia. The Baptists were held several hours in a military office and released.

Few details are known, but the crackdown was carried out by the Armenian military and targeted only Protestant churches, wrote Gregory Komendant, president of the Euro-Asiatic Federation of Evangelical Christians Baptists, and Yuri Apatov, executive secretary of the Baptist Union of Russia, in a letter to European Baptist leaders.

In addition to Baptists, Seventh-Day Adventists and Pentecostals were targeted, they said. Armenian authorities have promised to investigate the incident. It is unclear who gave the order for the arrests. It is also unclear if confiscated church documents and an automobile have been returned.

HMB moving date postponed two weeks

ATLANTA (BP)—Construction delays have postponed the Home Mission Board's move to its new building by two weeks.

The board will close its midtown Atlanta offices Thursday evening, June 9, and re-open Monday morning June 12 in the new building in Alpharetta. Officials originally had planned to move Memorial Day weekend.

The agency's new address will be 4200 North Point Parkway, Alpharetta, GA 30202-4174. After June 12, the board's phone number will be 404-410-6000 until Sept. 1. Afterwards, the area code for Alpharetta will change from 404 to 770.

A dedication ceremony for the building is still scheduled for June 21 at 3 p.m. during the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Atlanta. Self-guided tours of the new facility are scheduled from 1 to 5 p.m.

Church news

Wynne Church held a "Celebration Dedication" service April 21 to dedicate its newly renovated 750-seat worship center. Adrian Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Church in Memphis, was the guest speaker. The service was preceded by a record Sunday School attendance of 561 on April 16. The "Making a Difference" fund-raising campaign provided approximately \$275,000 for renovation expenses. Mark Tolbert is pastor.

Warren First Church dedicated a new activities center May 7. The building features a gymnasium/multi-purpose facility, kitchen and classrooms. Trennis Henderson, editor of the *Arkansas Baptist News* magazine, delivered the dedication message. Other program guests included Lonnie Latham, director of missions for Bartholomew Association; former pastor James Walker, director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention stewardship and annuity department; and Warren mayor Greg Reep. Greg Stanley is pastor.

McJester Church ordained pastor Byron Kennedy to the ministry May 20.

Little Rock First Church will host its second annual Composer's Weekend June 4. Mary McDonald, president of Purlofy Publishing Co., will be featured in the morning worship service at 10:45 a.m. and will be the guest artist at a 6 p.m. concert. For more information, contact the church at 501-227-0010. Tom Bolton is minister of music.

Saintsville Church in North Little Rock is sponsoring a feeding project June 14 as part of the church's ongoing "Operation Blessing" ministry to the homeless. J.T. Talbert is pastor.

Staff changes

Benny R. Thompson began serving June 1 as pastor of First Church in Garfield, coming there from Monroe, La., where he has been pastor of Calvary Baptist Church since 1978. He previously was pastor of churches in Mississippi. Thompson is a graduate of Mississippi State University and Mid-America Seminary. He and his wife, Cindy, have a married son, Ronald M. Thompson.

James W. "Jim" Richards Jr. began serving June 1 as director of missions for Northwest Association, coming there from Baton Rouge, La., where he has been pastor of Southminster Baptist Church since 1988. He previously has been pastor of other



ARKANSAS ALL OVER

By MILLIE GILL

Louisiana churches, including Greenacres in Bastrop, Boeuf River in Rayville and Calvary Church in Crowley. He currently serves as executive committee chairman for trustees of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission. Richards is a graduate of Mid-America Seminary, Northeast Louisiana University in Monroe, La., and Baptist Christian College in Shreveport, La. He and his wife, Wanda June, have three children, Rachel, Rebekah and Nathan.

John McCallum II has accepted the call to become pastor of First Church in Hot Springs, effective June 4. He is a graduate of both the University of Arkansas and Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, receiving his doctor of ministry degree in May. He will come to Little Rock from Greenwood, Mo., where he has been pastor of First Baptist Church since 1982. He has been a staff member of Missouri churches in Branson and Lee's Summit as well as minister of youth for First Church in Fayetteville. McCallum also has served on the adjunct faculty of Midwestern Seminary. He and his wife, Dayna, have two children, Nathan and Kristen.

Frances Usrey joined the staff of First Church in Benton June 1 as children/preschool minister, going there from Calvary Church in Little Rock where she has served since 1990 as minister of childhood education. She previously was Girls in Action/Mission Friends director for Arkansas Baptist Woman's Missionary Union. In addition, she was administrative assistant for TV operations for the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission. Usrey is a graduate of Delta State University in Cleveland, Miss., and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Rodney Reeves is serving as interim pastor of Central Church in Jonesboro where he is a member. Reeves is chairman and associate professor of religion in the department of religion and philosophy at Williams Baptist Church in Walnut Ridge. He has served on the staff of churches in Missouri, Oklahoma and Texas. Reeves is a graduate of Southwest Baptist University in Bolivar, Mo., and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He had completed additional studies at Oxford University. He and his wife, Sheri, have two children, Andrew and Emma.

James Moore has joined the staff of First Church in Newport as minister of youth. He previously served Union Avenue Church in Wynne and Fair Oaks Church. Moore, currently a student at Williams Baptist College, also attended East Arkansas Community College in Forrest City.

David Strawn resigned May 27 from the staff of Second Church in Little Rock where he served as minister of education. He and his wife, Kathy, and their children, Kayla and Stephen, moved to College Station, Texas, where he joined the staff of First Baptist Church as minister of education.

Sara Williams has joined the staff of Beech Street First Church in Texarkana as summer children's assistant. She is a graduate of Ouachita Baptist University.

Jeff Henson has resigned as pastor of New Liberty Church in Marmaduke following two years of service. He and his wife, Jerion, and their daughter, Sarah, reside in Jonesboro.

Matthew Stewart joined the staff of Concord Church of Van Buren June 1 as youth and family life minister. He graduated May 27 from Oklahoma Baptist University in Shawnee, Okla., with a bachelor of religion degree. He has been serving as recreation coordinator for Immanuel Baptist Church in Shawnee. His wife, Jennifer, also is a graduate of OBU.

Jimmy Holmes has joined the staff of First Church in Cedarville as minister of youth. He previously was at First Church of Greenville.

James R. Rice has resigned as pastor of Lee Creek Church where he has served since May 1992.

Troy Sharp is serving as pastor of Ridgecrest Church in Blytheville. He and his wife, Dee Dec, moved there from Mulberry where he had been pastor of Vine Prairie Church.

Charles Calhoun is pastor of Northside Church in Star City. Calhoun has served as supply pastor of River Road and Kearney churches of Redfield, Bethel Church of Gould and Oak Grove Church of Pine Bluff. He currently is enrolled in Boyce Bible School's Little Rock Center and is a graduate of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. Calhoun and his wife, Eddie, have been members of the Oak Grove Church.

Brian Powell has resigned as pastor of Rock Creek Church in Mansfield. Powell and his wife, Sheila, and their children, Aimee and Andrew, will move to Louisville, Ky., where he will enroll in Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Leadership Profile for ABCS Nominating Committee

Members of the Nominating Committee for the 1995 Arkansas Baptist State Convention want Arkansas Baptists to submit names of persons to that committee to consider when they bring the convention nominations for state committees and boards.

This recommendation will not insure nomination, but the committee will consider each recommendation. The committee will not contact any person recommended until they approve the nominations. The Nominating Committee will hold its first meeting August 3-4 and needs all recommendations no later than June 30.

Members of the committee include: Barry King, Chairman; Dennis Dodson, Bill Bowen, Wallace Williams, Delton Beall, Van Harness, Bill Hatfield, Lou Sorrells, and C.B. Thompson.

June 30 is the deadline for recommendations.

Nominee _____ Layperson Minister Age _____ Occupation _____
Address _____ City _____ Zip _____ Phone _____
Member of what church? _____ Association _____

Current leadership responsibilities

Professional _____
Civic _____
Church _____
Association _____
State or SBC Boards _____

Past leadership experience (within last five years)

State or SBC Boards _____
Association _____
Local Church _____

Personal

This person's greatest contribution, based on his or her past record, knowledge, and experience, should be in the area of: _____

Is this person currently active in a local church? Yes No _____

Is this person able to be away from family and work for at least one or two days, three times a year? Yes No

Give the name and phone number of at least one person, other than his or her pastor or Director of Missions, who knows of the nominee's involvement in Baptist life. _____

On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rank this person's understanding of and commitment to the way Southern Baptists work together? (Circle) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Check the board, committee or commission on which you believe this person could best serve.

Boards of Trustees

- Executive Board
- Baptist Memorial Health Care System, inc.
Memphis, TN
- Children's Homes and Family Ministries
- Foundation
- Ouachita Baptist University
- Williams Baptist College
- Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine

Committees and Commissions

- History Commission
- BSU Advisory Committee
- Constitution and Bylaws Committee
- Convention Program Committee

MAIL THIS FORM TO:
Barry King, Chairman
c/o Executive Director's Office
P.O. Box 552
Little Rock, AR 72203

Signed _____
(Name of person making this recommendation)

Address _____ City _____ Zip _____ Phone _____

Henry joins effort to squelch false rumors

(ABP) — They're back, like ragweed in the summer.

Perennial rumors linking Procter & Gamble to Satanism and alleging that Madalyn Murray O'Hair has petitioned the Federal Communications Committee to take religious programming off the airwaves are false. Always have been. Still are.

Perpetuators of these kinds of rumors provide "perfect nourishment for those who live by fear instead of faith," according to Phil Strickland, director of the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission.

Procter & Gamble recently issued an informational packet noting the return of a "completely ridiculous and false story" that the company's president appeared on

a talk show to discuss his organization's ties to Satanism.

The informational packet includes letters from Southern Baptist Convention president Jim Henry, evangelist Jerry Falwell, a representative of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and other religious leaders noting that the rumor is untrue and urging everyone to ignore those who spread the lies.

"If there are those in the Christian community who continue to bring this matter up, they should be given a deaf ear," Henry stated.

Christians who continue to spread rumors without checking their veracity are "irresponsible," Strickland said. "We must not be irresponsible carriers of that which is not true."

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Nominations Executive Director

Nominations for the position of Executive Director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention may be mailed only to the Search Committee Chairman, Billy Kite at P.O. Box 1184, Crossett, AR 71635. Please enclose a cover letter with the resumé of the person being recommended. Nominations will be received through **Wednesday, June 28, 1995.**



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FMB officials delay trademark request on Lottie Moon offering

RICHMOND, VA (ABP/BP) — Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board officials have announced they will delay an application to trademark the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering until after discussions with Woman's Missionary Union — the offering's traditional promoters.

WMU leaders said they were "surprised and disappointed" when they recently learned of the trademark application, filed 10 months ago by the FMB. In a May 18 statement, FMB president Jerry Rankin said the board was "deeply sorrowed and regrets that we have offended the WMU, which fills such a strategic role as a partner in missions education and promotion."

Rankin said he and WMU executive director Dellanna O'Brien will meet at the "earliest opportunity" to discuss the matter.

The Lottie Moon offering provides nearly half of the funds for the FMB's overseas efforts. It is sponsored jointly by the FMB, national WMU and the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission.

Rankin reiterated his intention to maintain FMB-WMU ties, stating, "We are excited about what the future holds for both the WMU and the Foreign Mission Board as we work together to lead Southern

Baptists to be on mission with God."

The FMB's application for a trademark was initially called into question by Virginia WMU's executive board May 13. The FMB trademark application with the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office was initiated in July 1994 and, beginning May 26, was to begin a 30-day public review period.

The application to trademark the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering "was a responsible business decision" first suggested by legal counsel in 1990, Rankin said in a May 18 statement released to news media, "and there was no intention of offending or neglecting the Woman's Missionary Union."

He noted that the 1990 legal opinion — which WMU has never disputed — cited the FMB as the unquestioned beneficiary of the offering's receipts. But he added that legal counsel "advised us of our vulnerability with regard to such a large source of funds without any legal registration of the offering that would clearly identify the Foreign Mission Board as the beneficiary.

"Because the leaders of the WMU had been contacted and have not questioned the legal identification of the Lottie Moon

Christmas Offering with the Foreign Mission Board, it did not occur to us to consult with them further. We regret that oversight and insensitivity to their historic identification with the offering and would not want to proceed without further consultation with them."

O'Brien said she was "pleased with this action."

"When a Christian brother asks for forgiveness, you give it," she said. "The details will have to be worked out later. This is the first step toward a fuller understanding of this unfortunate incident."

O'Brien called the offering a "symbol of the commitment of WMU to the sharing of the gospel around the world. To remove that representation from us is like removing something of our heart."

Rankin said earlier that the application for trademark status has nothing to do with the board's relationship with WMU but is intended only to protect the name from unauthorized use.

The Lottie Moon offering was started by WMU in 1888. WMU decided how to spend the money until 1956, when the auxiliary's leaders announced they would take only an advisory role in determining expenditures, with final approval by the Foreign Mission Board. WMU leaders also determined at that time to change it to a churchwide offering and invite men also to contribute.



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SBC Book of Reports available on SBCNet

NASHVILLE, TN (BP)—The 1995 Southern Baptist Convention Book of Reports, which includes reports from all the denomination's agencies and proposed items of business, is now available on SBCNet, the convention's data communications network.

The Book of Reports, 263 pages in book form, is available to subscribers to SBCNet in the Library Section, General Ministry B Forum, SBC 95, according to Ernest Mosley, executive vice president of the SBC Executive Committee. Other information available to SBCNet users includes ABN On-Line, a computerized version of major articles published in each issue of the *Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine*. The Arkansas articles are available in the Publications Library of the A Forum.

Messengers to the SBC annual meeting may purchase a copy of the Book of Reports for \$5 at the time of registration. Mosley said the importance of the document's availability on SBCNet is to provide Southern Baptists an opportunity to read the book prior to the annual meeting in Atlanta, June 20-22.

SBCNet, a private communications forum on CompuServe, also provides, without extra charge, the software to read the document, which is in Adobe Acrobat page format. The "Adobe Acrobat Reader 2.0," for both Windows and Macintosh formats, is found in the Library Section, General Ministry A Forum, in the Computer

Resolutions Committee invites input

NASHVILLE, TN (BP)—The 1995 Resolutions Committee for the Southern Baptist Convention has issued a call for preliminary copies of any resolutions messengers intend to introduce during the June 20-22 annual meeting in Atlanta.

Committee chairman Charles Carter, pastor of Shades Mountain Baptist Church, Birmingham, Ala., noted that messengers still must formally introduce their proposed resolutions during the convention's business sessions.

But the committee welcomes

preview copies, Carter said, adding, "We will circulate them among the committee members in anticipation of our meeting in Atlanta."

During the convention, the Resolutions Committee will recommend specific resolutions for adoption to messengers at the SBC in the Georgia Dome.

Preliminary copies of proposed resolutions may be mailed to Convention Relations, SBC Executive Committee, 901 Commerce St., Nashville, TN 37203, or faxed to 615-742-8919.

Support section, according to network coordinator David Haywood of the Baptist Sunday School Board.

SBCNet recently expanded, Haywood said, to three forums, adding more message and library areas. The expanded format allows offering of the Book of Reports, a relatively large data file. SBCNet now has two ministry forums, A and B, plus a forum for state Baptist conventions. The network has nearly 5,000 subscribers, Haywood said.

The network may be accessed by using a computer, modem and a membership kit distributed free by the Sunday School Board. Kits, which provide user access to service of CompuServe and SBCNet, contain software, account information and a monetary credit toward initial charges.

They are available in DOS, Macintosh and Windows versions.

The cost of SBCNet and CompuServe are at economical, flat monthly rates. A monthly charge of \$7.95 is made for unlimited use of SBCNet. This feature enables users to read and download files and participate in the on-line conferences without per-minute charges.

The CompuServe monthly flat rate is \$9.95 and provides SBCNet access and unlimited use of more than 120 basic CompuServe services, including a limited time each month on the Internet. People who are already members of CompuServe may join SBCNet by simply typing "GO SBCNet" at any CompuServe prompt.

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Harmony Association leaders oppose CBF

By Trennis Henderson

Editor, Arkansas Baptist

Declaring that "we will not endorse, encourage or support any CBF activity in Harmony Baptist Association," members of the association's executive board have voted to take a firm stand against activities of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

Eddie Harrison Jr., pastor of Dollarway Church in Pine Bluff, introduced the motion which also reaffirmed commitment to the Cooperative Program and support for the Southern Baptist Convention.

Describing himself as "a very strong Southern Baptist, a very strong conservative," Harrison told the *Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine*, "What prompted this for me is the actions of the CBF. Since the CBF is so well-organized, I see them as a different denomination - I don't see them as Southern Baptists any longer.

"It's an issue that just keeps coming up," Harrison added. "My purpose is a preventive measure as an association. We're trying to head off a problem before we have it."

CBF, SBC leaders notified

The full text of Harrison's motion stated: "I move that we notify the national and state leaders of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and the Southern Baptist Convention that we will not endorse, encourage or support any CBF activity in Harmony Baptist Association; that we reaffirm our commitment to the Cooperative Program and our support for the Southern Baptist Convention, and, that a copy of this motion be sent to the *Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine* and Baptist Press."

CBF was established nationally in 1990 by moderate Southern Baptists displeased with the current leadership and direction of the SBC. The state CBF chapter recently held its third annual general assembly in Little Rock, with approximately 160 participants.

National CBF leaders have repeatedly insisted the organization is not a separate denomination. "We are committed not to become a denomination," Bill Bruster told Arkansas CBF participants in April. "We were formed Baptist, we remain Baptist and I hope we never form a new denomination." Bruster serves as the national CBF's western coordinator.

Dianne Swaim, moderator of Arkansas CBF, noted that the association's action "saddens me but does not surprise me. We don't ask them to endorse, encourage or support the CBF as an association but we would ask that they not actively discourage support among individual church members.

"I respect their freedom to take this action," Swaim said. She added, however, that CBF supporters "are Baptists and we're not at war. More than anything, my hope is that all Arkansas Baptists can understand we're not at war."

Acknowledging that the association's executive board "can't speak for all the

churches or individual churches," Harmony Association director of missions Ed Smith said the action "is just strictly the board doing it."

"It doesn't say a local church or an individual can't support CBF," Harrison agreed, "but as an association we've got to let folks know where we stand."

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Study advocates rebuilding a culture of marriage

NEW YORK (ABP) — America's most important domestic challenge is rebuilding a "culture of marriage," according to a new study, "Marriage in America: A Report to the Nation."

"The divorce revolution — the steady displacement of a marriage culture by a culture of divorce and unwed parenthood — has failed," the report says.

The study calls for re-establishing a culture where child well-being is the top priority and the relationship between husband

and wife is characterized by mutual and equal regard.

The report was released by the Council on Families in America, an organization of academics, public-policy experts and family advocates sponsored by the Institute for American Values.

It notes that non-marital births increased from 5.3 percent in 1960 to more than 30 percent today while the poverty rate for children has increased from 15 percent to 22 percent and the teen suicide rate tripled.

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BWA president sees tragedy, hope during visit to Rwanda

By Wendy Ryan
Baptist World Alliance

KIGALI, RWANDA (BP)—Baptist World Alliance president Knud Wumpelmann recently completed the first visit to Rwanda by a BWA leader since the start of civil war a year ago among rival Tutsis and Hutus. Wumpelmann reported that Baptists in Rwanda told him: "We are not discouraged. There is hope. We have many needs, but we trust the Lord."

Amid reports of continuing violence in Rwanda, Wumpelmann said he met pastors who are living out their trust in the Lord.

"I was especially happy to meet one pastor I had known," said Wumpelmann. "Though retired, he took over the responsibility for a church when his successor fled to Zaire."

With so many of the pastors and leaders of the French-speaking Union of Baptist Churches in Rwanda out of the country, new leaders have been chosen by those who are in Rwanda—a situation that calls for prayer and much understanding, Wumpelmann said.

Wumpelmann met with Samweli Rugamba, the new general secretary of the union, who lost his father, mother, four brothers and a sister in the massacres.

Rugamba said there are about 31,000 Baptists in the union in 10 districts. He reported the union office in Butare is badly damaged and in need of repair. Their eight cars have disappeared and their 13 primary schools, handicraft school, two secondary schools and three health centers have either been destroyed, damaged or robbed. Their bank account is almost empty.

The Rwandan Baptist leaders were especially thankful for the three Southern Baptist missionaries who have returned to minister among them. Stan and Marlene Lee and Martha Colwell have returned to Kigali to resume ministries suspended by last year's bloodshed.

As Rwandan Baptists look toward future ministry, primary needs are to re-establish the union office, develop evangelism, restart their educational and health programs and get transportation for pastors and evangelists, Wumpelmann reported.

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Church secretary needed — First Baptist Church of Maumelle is needing a financial/church secretary. The position will be 30-35 hours per week. Qualifications include secretarial, financial, and computer skills as well as a sweet Christian spirit. Call 851-3547 for further information, or pick up an application at 120 Millwood Circle, Maumelle, during business hours.

Positions open — Part-time singles director, full-time minister of music, full-time minister of recreation/youth. Direct resumes to Sylvan Hills First Baptist church, 9008 Sylvan Hills Hwy, North Little Rock, AR 72120.

Youth/college minister — Harlan Park Baptist in Conway is receiving resumes for a part-time youth/college minister. Tremendous potential in one of the fastest growing cities in Arkansas. Please send resumes to Harlan Park Baptist Church, 1895 Hwy 286 West, Conway, AR 72032, attention Jerry Hogan.

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Noble named BSU director at UA Monticello

Little Rock native Jeff Noble has been named director of the Baptist Student Union at the University of Arkansas at Monticello. Noble, who graduated from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in May, begins his duties June 1.

David James, director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention student ministry department, said Noble's "creativity" made him the top candidate for the position.

"Jeff will bring a creativity to the BSU not just at Monticello, but statewide," James noted. "His people skills and energy level will allow him to adapt quickly to the Monticello ministry."

"What intrigued me most about Jeff was his being out in the workaday world and his involvement in singles ministry," he added.

Noble, a graduate of Ouachita Baptist University, also comes from First Baptist Church in Garland, Texas, where he served as minister of single adults. He has served as a youth minister for other churches in Texas, Arkadelphia and Crossett.

He also was a unit coordinator at Happy Hill Farm Academy, a residential treatment facility for children and teens in Granbury, Texas, and as activities director for the Methodist Children's Home in Little Rock.

Noble considers both Immanuel Church in Little Rock and Riverside Church in Maumelle as home churches.

James said Noble's experience will give him credibility in his new position, although he had not planned to serve in student ministries.

"I met Jeff as we were interviewing a

Southwestern last year, and through a series of events, Jeff sensed he needed to look at student work as a career," James said. "During that time I related with his heart, background, vision and creativity."

"I told David I had no student experience," Noble said. "He said it was 'one of the reasons we want to look at you.'"

"We're real excited about the challenge," Noble said. "We're also real interested in working through the students to establish and create some new Christians."

Noble added that one of his goals is to "establish an equipping ministry to train college students to be ministers. They've been in a youth ministry so long, they probably have had things done for them. They must make the transition from trainees to trainers."

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Geyer Springs Church, Little Rock
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What were the sources of Elijah's power? Before you monotonously predict "it was prayer and faith," let me remind you that it was, well, uh, "prayer and faith." But not just any old kind of prayer and faith: He possessed two character qualities that made all the difference. They ignite prayer and faith into powerful elements in a believer's life.

■ **Courage.** Though Elijah was "the most wanted" in all of Israel because he had caused a drought of Ethiopian proportions, he possessed lion-sized courage to personally confront Ahab with the word of God for his rebellion (v. 18). Where did he get the courage? We find it in verse 1. Simply put: God told him to go and do it. Elijah was totally convinced of God's power, which created the courage to obey.

The Grand Canyon-sized hole in the hearts of many believers that keeps them from standing up, risking all or trying is a lack of courage! It is courage that gives one a lion's heart to risk the unbelievable, to try the unthinkable. It propels faith and prayer into a higher orbit.

■ **Confidence.** Look at his confidence at Mount Carmel (vv. 21-40). The contest was 450 against one. But one is enough when he trusts in the Lord. He allowed the prophets of Baal to try first. Why not? He was confident that nothing would happen. At his turn, he poured water over the sacrifice three times. Why? Total confidence. Then he prayed that God would prove Himself...and God sent fire! How God longs for us to stake our lives on His reputation.

The twin fires that ignited faith and prayer out of the mundane and into the extraordinary are the qualities of courage and confidence.

This lesson treatment is based on the International Bible Lesson for Christian Teaching, Uniform Series. Copyright International Council of Education. Used by permission.

Life and Work

Paul's defense

By Wilbur Herring, pastor emeritus,
Central Church, Jonesboro
Basic passage: Acts 21:27-23:10
Focal passage: Acts 21:1-21
Central truth: How to present your
message.

We learn so much in our study of the life of Paul. Not only was he divinely inspired to speak these words in the passage before us, but the Holy Spirit had Paul's brilliant mind in which to work. Note the orderly and pungent presentation as Paul spoke to this crowd. It is a lesson in public speaking, teaching and preaching.

■ **His opening statement** (vv. 1-2). He addressed them as "Men, brethren and fathers," which was an endearing term as well as a term of respect. He spoke in the language they understood. This approach gave them a listening ear.

What a contrast we witnessed when a nationally known evangelist spoke at our Rotary Club. He began by saying, "You have your ideas about evangelists, but I have my opinion of Rotarians." He lost his audience right there.

In my law school days, a classmate was citing a case using larger words than most of us had ever heard. The professor told him, "I have had a great deal of education and I didn't understand a word you said. If you don't learn how to speak the language of the people you will lose every case you have before a jury."

■ **His identification with the people** (vv. 3-5). Immediately Paul identified himself as being a strict Jew, having had the privilege of sitting at the feet of the famous Dr. Gamaliel. Paul was zealous before God "as yet are this day." He admitted persecuting the people of "this way," binding them and placing both men and women in prisons. He followed them as far as Damascus. It is good to let your listeners know that at one time you were where they are today.

■ **His personal experiences** (vv. 6-21). The major portion of his presentation was relating his personal experience with Jesus. Paul told his personal experiences with the Lord many times. As a matter of fact, one's personal experiences make the best part of teaching or preaching. Paul told of his conversion experience, his call to full-time ministry and the Lord's leadership of where and to whom he was to preach. People want firsthand experiences, not something you've heard or read in a book.

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Bible Book

Are you ready?

By Greg Stanley, pastor,
First Church, Warren
Basic passage: Mark 13:1-37
Focal passage: Mark 13:1-37
Central truth: We must be alert and
prepared for the Lord's return.

Regarding our Lord's return, Bible students and teachers have tended to go to one of two extremes. Either they have overemphasized the doctrine, some going to the point of predicting events and setting dates. Or, in overreacting to such extremism, others have avoided almost any study of this doctrine.

Mark 13 records one of the longest single passages of Jesus' teaching concerning His return. He focused on signs preceding His coming and the need of disciples to always be ready. Events preceding and climaxing Jesus' return include:

■ **Uproar in international events** (vv. 3-8). Charismatic and deceptive demagogues will present themselves as God's answer amid such world crises as ongoing warfare and natural disasters.

■ **Uphaval in the religious world** (vv. 9-14). Persecution of believers will increase. It comes from secular governments, religious bodies, one's own family and society at large. A resulting blessing will be worldwide, Spirit-empowered witness.

■ **Unsurpassed tribulation** (vv. 14-25). As previously prophesied in the Old Testament, a time of great evil and suffering will engulf the earth. False messiahs will seek to deceive believers. Cosmic disturbances will wrack the physical universe.

■ **Unveiled glory** (vv. 26-27). The visible, bodily return of the risen, glorified Jesus will bring down the curtain on the final act of this cosmic drama. He will return "in power and glory" to gather His people and establish His Kingdom.

■ **Unquestioned preparedness** (vv. 28-37). Jesus concluded with repeated words of warning: "Learn this lesson...Be on guard! Be alert!...Keep watch... 'Watch!' Throughout His prophetic message! The Lord stressed the necessity of believers prepared for His coming.

In light of Jesus' emphasis on this topic, we should apply ourselves to its study. When we see signs in our world which foretell His coming, we should be ever alert and watchful. In view of the reality and certainty of His return, we must be busy obediently serving our Master as we prepare to meet Him.

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Convention Uniform

Sold-out to sin

By David Welch, associate pastor,
Geyer Springs Church, Little Rock
Basic passage: I Kings 21
Focal passage: I Kings 21:20-26
Central truth: "Selling out" to sin is a condition which subtly deceives and ultimately destroys.

Sin runs a dangerous business. It is a two-bit, back street loan shark. He promises to help, but his interest rates swell your debt to impossibility. He sends his collectors to break your kneecaps, unless you are willing to take out extension loans at twice the rate. No rocket scientist needed here to realize that soon you will lose all you own; you are going to face major disfigurement and will be completely owned by a guy in a plaid coat named "Slick" Something. You have sold yourself to him.

Sin at work — it slowly draws you into its deadly grasp until it controls you. Ahab is a pathetic example of one "sold out" to sin. The phrase "sold yourself to do evil" is repeated as Ahab's core problem (vv. 20, 25). It may be ours as well.

You are sold-out to sin when your appetites are your god. Ahab desperately wanted Naboth's vineyard only for its convenient location. His childish and pathetic reaction to being rebuffed is full proof that he was ruled completely by what he "wanted" (v. 4). Ours is a culture ruled by the desires of the flesh, but what about you personally? Do the appetites of our flesh usually win the battle for your will? If so, then your flesh reigns as lord and master.

You are sold out to sin when your closest influences are ungodly. The major influence in Ahab's life was Jezebel, the most wicked woman in the Old Testament. Ahab allowed her to totally dominate him (vv. 7, 15). Evaluate the major influences for decision-making in your life. Who are they? Are they from the Lord, or are they ruled by the world, the flesh and the devil?

You are sold out to sin when you blindly allow sin to run out its natural course. Ahab never stopped Jezebel's deadly plan, though he could have. He simply allowed lust to conceive and give birth to sin and when sin was accomplished, it brought forth death (James 1:15). He and Jezebel died the most ignoble of deaths. Scavenger dogs ate her body in the streets (I Kings 9:33-36); they licked the blood from his mortal wounds out of his chariot (v. 22:38). Do not buy any of sin's deception — sin will ultimately own you and destroy you.

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Life and Work

In times of storms

By Wilbur Herring, pastor emeritus,
Central Church, Jonesboro
Basic passage: Acts 27:1-28:10
Focal passage: Acts 27:21-44
Central truth: Storms will occur on life's sea.

Life has been compared to a voyage on a great sea. There are times of calm when there is peace and tranquility. There are other times when there are storms causing great peril to life and property.

The record of Paul's experience of the terrible storm at sea on his voyage to Rome has definite lessons for us today.

■ According to author Richard E. Day, the person whose mission is not yet completed is both invulnerable and indestructible. He came to this conclusion after gathering data for 1,000 biographies. Paul's mission to Rome was not completed; he was indestructible. Is your mission in life yet to be completed?

■ It pays to listen to God's man on God's mission. Paul warned the captain of the ship that the voyage should not be made at that time. Even though he was not a seaman, Paul was given wisdom from God. The man called of God to be our pastor should be seriously heard when he speaks in a meeting or from the pulpit. God gives His undershepherd insight and knowledge not possessed by other officers or members of the church. Pastors should not abuse or misuse the "wisdom given of God." It should be remembered that he is not "one of the boys," but that he is a man "sent from God" to pilot the church through treacherous times.

■ Some of you are in the midst of the stormiest days of your life. Commit your safety and the safety of your loved ones to God. Lift the anchors (tight ropes of tension). Cut the cords to the dinghies offering perilous ways of escape. Trust the Captain of your ship to guide you and yours safely through. Commit yourself and your family to the God of the winds and the waves. The Lord, the Captain of your soul, will take you safely to shore. Just stay aboard and have faith in Him.

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Bible Book

Peter on trial

By Greg Stanley, pastor,
First Church, Warren
Basic passage: Mark 14:1-72
Focal passage: Mark 14:17-72
Central truth: Jesus can turn failures into growth experiences if we submit to Him.

Mark 14 records the trial of Jesus. Another man was on trial that night. Simon Peter, leader among the apostles, found his devotion to his Lord put to the test.

Trial and difficulty are often the true test of our faith. When "the squeeze is on," whatever is inside is what comes out. We'd say Peter failed in his hour of testing, but his experience helped form the "rock" of Pentecost and the early church.

■ **Peter boasting** (vv. 17-31). Peter's slide into failure began with his contradiction of Jesus' warning (vv. 27-31). His was a hollow, prideful boast of undying loyalty. Others agreed. Ignoring the Lord's warning, depending instead upon our own spiritual resources, sets us up for failure.

■ **Peter bewildered** (vv. 32-40). From his position of confidence and certainty, Peter for once found himself at a loss for words. After ignoring Jesus' warning, Peter also failed to heed His command to "stay here and keep watch." Jesus' pointed rebuke to Peter seemed to say, "Simon, you are going to die with me, yet you can't even stay awake one hour and pray?"

Prideful self-confidence often "lulls us to sleep" spiritually and sets us up for disobedience and failure. How often do we trumpet the great deeds we "will do" for the Lord while neglecting even simple, clear acts of obedience and devotion?

■ **Peter branded** (vv. 53-54; 66-71). In Jesus' most trying hour, when Peter could have lent support and strength, he instead denied even knowing Jesus. Yet he could not escape recognition by many as one of the Twelve. Failure was complete.

The question for believers is not whether or not we will be witnesses for Jesus. The only question is what kind of witnesses: faithful or not, positive or negative, vocal or silent?

■ **Peter broken** (v. 72). The cock's crow was an instant reminder of the fulfillment of Jesus' warning. Peter's life and future as a disciple seemed at an end.

Aren't we glad to serve the "God of the second chance?" Peter's stubborn pride and self-will were shattered. Jesus could mold him into a strong, usable tool. He'll do the same for us.

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NEWS DIGEST

Seminary students to complete degree program in Africa

WAKE FOREST, NC (BP)—In an historic service at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, nine students began a journey down a road never before traveled—completing their seminary studies on the foreign mission field.

The students are enrolled in the seminary's master of divinity in church planting degree program. The nine students, having finished at least two years of their graduate theological studies, will complete their degrees over the next two years in Nairobi, Kenya, while working with missionaries in starting new churches in the east African nation. The degree program is a unique arrangement between the Wake Forest, N.C., seminary and the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

New Orleans Seminary dedicates new Georgia campus

NEW ORLEANS (BP)—New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary officially dedicated its new North Georgia Campus May 15.

Located in Decatur, the 6.5-acre property and 50,000-square-foot buildings are a gift from the members of Columbia Drive Baptist Church. Church members voted Sept. 11, 1994, to give their property and facilities to New Orleans Seminary. Two days later, seminary trustees voted unanimously to accept the gift. Renovations and equipment expenditures on the part of New Orleans Seminary now make the value of the property approximately \$5 million.

Also dedicated was the Nelson Price Communication Center, which houses the state-of-the-art compressed interactive video (CIV) equipment. Through the use of multiple cameras, microphones and large-screen monitors, students at the North Georgia Campus can interact with professors and classmates on the main campus. New Orleans is the first SBC seminary to implement CIV technology.

Annuity Board avoids medical rate hike for third year

DALLAS (BP)—The Southern Baptist Annuity Board will not increase rates for its Personal Security, Catastrophic and Seminarian Comprehensive Medical Plans, according to Joel Mathis, senior vice president of the agency's insurance services division. The announcement marks the third year there has been no rate increase for the three medical programs.

"While health care costs continue to escalate nationwide, we have worked hard with Prudential, Baptist hospitals and our people to hold costs in line for another year," Mathis said. "We can now enter our fourth year without a rate hike."

Four Methodist groups to consider possible merger

NEW YORK (ABP)—Leaders from four Methodist denominations in the United States have agreed to propose a commission to explore a possible merger of their churches.

The merger of the 8.7 million-member United Methodist Church with the smaller African Methodist Episcopal Church, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church and the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church would create an organization of more than 14 million members in 50,000 congregations. The Southern Baptist Convention, the largest non-Catholic denomination in the U.S., currently claims 15.6 million members in 39,910 churches.

More than 50 bishops from the four Methodist denominations reached what one bishop called a "historic vote" toward unity during recent meetings in Austin, Texas, according to Ecumenical News International.

Three of the four denominations agreed to consider the proposal in general conferences this year. The fourth will consider it in 1998. Any merger proposal would probably not take effect before 2002.

Court overturns ruling against Christian Science church

ST. PAUL, MN (ABP)—A Minnesota appeals court has overturned a \$9.15 million judgment against St. Paul's First Church of Christ, Scientist, in the death of an 11-year-old boy whose mother relied on prayer instead of medical care to treat his diabetes.

The Minnesota Court of Appeals ruled in a 2-1 decision that the church does not have to pay Ian Lundman's father either the \$9 million in punitive damages or the \$150,000 in compensatory damages levied by a trial court.

In a 2-1 decision, the appeals court ruled that spiritual healing is protected by the U.S. Constitution and that the church did not act in "deliberate disregard" of Ian's rights.

The court left standing, however, \$1.5 million in compensatory damages against the boy's mother and stepfather, Kathleen and William McKown, and the two Christian Science practitioners they hired to provide spiritual treatment.