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Arkansas Baptist State Convention

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ARKANSAS BAPTIST



Volume 93, Number 1

January 13, 1994



BAPTIST MEN'S DAY



JANUARY 23

*Missions
Involvement
through
Serving
in Christ's
Spirit*

Baptists urged to make wills for peace of mind, stewardship

By Keith Hinson
SBC Annuity Board

NASHVILLE, TN (BP)—Clara Smith, an 80-year-old widow, has no will. She lives alone and is in poor health. Though her husband, Bill, died a year ago, Clara is financially comfortable — thanks to years of frugal savings and investment.

Clara and Bill Smith (not their real names) had no children. Since Bill's death, Clara's greatest comfort has come from her local Southern Baptist church and from Bill's niece, Sharon, whose family has always been close.

Clara has told friends that she wants to leave a title of her estate to her church's building fund, with Sharon receiving the rest.

Friends have warned Clara that her wishes won't be followed, unless she has a will. But Clara says her plans are well-known to her family and will surely be honored by those who handle her estate.

Who is right? Not Clara. Unless she makes a will, her local church and niece-in-law, Sharon, will receive nothing.

Plan for the future

According to estate planners and financial advisors, Clara should follow the advice of Southern Baptists' annual January emphasis, which is "Make Your Will Month."

"If you don't have a will, the state's got one for you," said Hollis Johnson, president of the Southern Baptist Foundation, which promotes the special emphasis. "The state's will does not have a provision for charitable causes.

"If an individual had particular Baptist causes — such as a local church, Baptist school, or other ministry — then they won't be able to give through their estate," Johnson said, "unless they make a will."

But it is not just elderly people with lots of savings who need a will.

David Coleman, director of development at the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, said, "Many Southern Baptists are not aware that they can give beyond their lifetime to the causes they loved while they were here on earth, such as Lottie Moon, Annie Armstrong, their local church, and other Baptist causes."

Some Christian wills leave money to a Baptist cause, such as the FMB, which may spend the money immediately upon receiving it for current budgetary needs.

But other wills have a longer lasting impact by placing the money in an endowment fund, where the money is held "in perpetuity." Though the principal is not spent, the interest earned is distributed annually to specified causes.

Endowments managed by the foundations of state Baptist conventions provide money for such diverse causes as children's homes, local church cemetery and building funds, world hunger relief, missions and Baptist schools.

Although Baptist foundations do not themselves write wills for people, most will assist the attorney of someone who wants to leave money to a Baptist cause.

Arkansas Baptists interested in more information about making a Christian will may contact the Arkansas Baptist Foundation at P.O. Box 552, Little Rock, AR 72203; phone 376-0732.

Cover Story



Baptist Men's Day

Focusing on the theme, "Missions Involvement through Serving in Christ's Spirit," Southern Baptists will observe Baptist Men's Day on January 22.

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Youth hear 'True Love Waits' challenge

By Russell N. Dilday

Associate Editor, Arkansas Baptist

A record number of youth filled the Hot Springs Convention Center during Joy Explor Dec. 30-31. Joy Explor, the Arkansas Baptist State Convention's annual Youth Evangelism Conference, featured an emphasis on True Love Waits, a Baptist Sunday School Board program designed to promote sexual abstinence among teens.

More than 4,500 youth and leaders from churches in Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas, Kentucky and Louisiana attended the event. There were 32 professions of faith and 184 rededications and commitments recorded.

Randy Brantley, youth associate for the ABCS evangelism department, said the conference was the highest-attended youth event in Arkansas Baptist history and the number of rededications was higher than normal "because of the subject matter." Participating churches utilized almost 800 free tickets available for unsaved youth in their communities to help reach the high attendance mark.

The program featured youth evangelists Rick Caldwell and Dave Edwards; Christian recording artists Phillips, Craig and Dean; Christian humorist Mark Lowry; and performances by Arkansas Baptist student musicians.

Introducing True Love Waits to the youth, Brantley noted, "Some of you haven't bought into the safe sex lie and you're looking for an alternative."

That alternative, Brantley said later, is "a different approach on sexual purity from what they are taught in school. Sex in marriage is a gift from God and some students are unwrapping the gift before God intended."

Youth at the conference echoed Brantley on the need for abstinence in schools. Donnie Burrow, a high school sophomore from East Side Church in Paragould, related that he hears about sex often. "I play football, and all I hear in the locker room is 'I did somebody' or 'I was with somebody last night.'"

"As a Christian, I get tired of hearing that," Burrow said. He added that after attending Joy Explor, he could "go back and tell my friends that it (premarital sex) is wrong; that it's okay to be pure."

Ambler Gifford, an eighth-grader from First Church, Corning, said sex is a "big problem" at her school. "Lots of people are getting pregnant," she said. "There are not a lot of girls who are virgins."

Preaching from 1 Thessalonians 4, Rick Caldwell told students there are "four things" that define true love:



Mark Lowry entertains and challenges youth attending Joy Explor.

■ A plan. "God has a plan for you," he said about abstinence. "God wants you to have safe, sacred, special sex and to be pure for your spouse. We know the nation's plans: If you are condomized you are safe," said Caldwell. Noting the spread of the HIV virus among heterosexual teens, he said, "God's plan works. Man doesn't."

■ A problem. "You need to learn how to control your body. We've bought the lie that it's okay to do what we feel like doing." He said maturity is needed to control passions. "You're old enough to date when you're old enough to control your passions, not when your passions control you."

■ Pain. "There's a price you pay when you play with sin. And sex outside of marriage comes with a kick, a price."

■ The power. "God has given you the Holy Spirit to help you be holy," he said.

"He can give you the power not only to say 'no,' but 'no more.'"

Using John 6 as his text, Dave Edwards told participants in Friday's session that "some people just don't get it. Some people don't understand there is no way you can stand alone in your town without the power of God."

He listed barriers that keep youth from Christ and from understanding His plan for them.

■ Friends. "It's hard to take a stand for True Love Waits when your friends aren't into that. When do we get to the point when we stop being everybody else's kind of Christian and start being God's kind of Christian?"

■ Dating life. "The biggest consequence of sleeping around," Edwards warned, "is that it hardens your heart."

■ Walk with God. "Only 44 percent of students are not drinking or sleeping around. We've become victims of pressure," he noted. "If our walk with God is so good, why haven't our lives changed?"

■ Problems. Edwards reflected that "our problems become our excuse not to be close to God," but countered that "there's nothing you've done that can shock God. Jesus is enough to handle what you're going through if you trust Him."

Two student testimonies punctuated the conference. Bryce Mitchell, a junior from First Southern Baptist Church in Bryant, told fellow students how Christ had lifted him from drug problems to active witnessing as a Christian. "The moment I got saved, I knew I had to tell everybody I saw. He said, 'Go and tell.'"

Marty Wages, an eighth-grade student from First Church in Forrest City, related how cerebral palsy affected his life and witness. "Some of you have come to Joy Explor thinking God can't use you. I'm living proof you're wrong," he said. "If He can use me, He can use you."

Youth 'dig deep' to share witness

When a few vandals attending Joy Explor sprayed the walls of two floors of the Hot Springs Park Hilton with catsup, Hilton officials saw more than red. They saw commitment.

Most of the other 4,500 Joy Explor participants dug into their pockets, raising more than \$3,100 to compensate the Hilton for the estimated \$1,500 damage done by the vandals.

Randy Brantley, youth associate in the Arkansas Baptist State Convention evangelism department, said conference leaders told Hilton officials

"although we are dealing with the actions of three or four students, it reflects on the other 4,500 participants. By digging into their pockets, the other students told the Hilton, 'We do not approve of what the others did.'"

Concerning the vandalism, Brantley said, "When you're trying to reach a lost community, you run into this. We must take risks like this to reach the modern-day pagan."

Brantley said money left over after settling with the Hilton will be given to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering.

YOU'LL BE GLAD TO KNOW



By DON MOORE
ABCS Executive Director

Time is the greatest friend to God and truth! With the passing of time it becomes evident that God's Word is true and that God is real. Speculation and philosophical conclusions may hold a certain fascination because mankind is always looking for something new and different. This is what makes young adults so vulnerable to New Age teaching, etc. But in time such humanistic contrivances will be proven wrong and once again the Bible will be proven right. While time is passing and truth is being validated, decisions are made, values are formed and actions are taken without the benefit of God's truth. Nothing but tragedy can come from a life lived, even for a few years, without the direction and blessing of God.

Time has proven the destructive nature of all of the sins forbidden in the Bible. Time has proven the virtue and value of all moral behavior called for in the Scripture. Time has served to demonstrate that mankind is not evolving but rather devolving. No one can now doubt the ugly, dark, corrupt heart that lies within man. Deterioration of society serves but to prove the truth of God and His Word.

There ought to be a remnant of people who will continue to believe the Bible however much they may be ridiculed on stage or screen. This remnant ought to make up the front line of prayer warriors who will stay before God until the people of God are revived and awakening breaks in upon society. The conditions before the flood and the tower of Babel were no worse than those of this day. Judgment must come, in fact has come! The question now remains, "Who believes God enough to acknowledge it and to accept His answer for these conditions?"

Money, laws, government remedies, educational remedies, sociological engineering, none of these can meet the need. The problem is the heart of mankind. Only God can change the heart. Until God's people cry out in repentance and desperation for His forgiveness and direction things will remain as they are. Those who believe and care will and therein lies our hope.

VICKI HOAG

Woman's Viewpoint

A new look for '94

It's a new year! A time when we can all start afresh. A time when many of us make New Year's resolutions. We want to do better, lose weight, get out of debt, save money. We determine to be on time for work, spend more time with our children, watch less TV. We have the best intentions, knowing all the time that while we might keep at it for a while, we will eventually slip back into our old habits. What can we do? Who has the answer to this desire of us to change?

In Colossians 3, I found what I think is God's answer to this annual dilemma. As we examine this chapter we begin to see God's resolution for our lives.

First of all God says we must have Jesus as our Savior. He is to be the foundation of this new life we desire. Without the Solid Rock we are doomed to sink fast.

From there God admonishes us to: seek things above, where Christ is; hide ourselves in Christ; die to self; know that we will be revealed with Christ in glory; consider the members of our earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desires and greed; know that God's wrath will come because of these things; put aside anger, wrath, malice, slander and abusive speech; don't lie to one another; lay aside your old self with its evil practices; learn more and more what is right; try to be more and more like Christ; know that you are chosen, set apart and loved by God; put on love; let

Christ rule in your heart; be thankful; teach Christ's words to each other; sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs; sing with thankful hearts to the Lord; do every deed and word in the name of Jesus.

Wives, submit to your husbands for this is the Lord's plan for you; husbands love your wives, not bitter or harsh toward them; children, obey your parents in all things; fathers, don't scold your children to the point of discouragement where they lose heart; slaves (or employees), always obey your masters with sincerity of heart and wanting to please the Lord; put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; forgive others because the Lord has forgiven you; do whatever you do, heartily.

My! How our Heavenly Father desires not just a New Year's resolution for our lives, but He longs for us to grow up in the Lord in order for us to have a New Life's resolution.

What God has laid out before us is not a smorgasbord in which we are to pick and choose what we want, but a plan in which He knows that we can experience the abundant Christ-like life.

Vicki Hoag lives in Heber Springs, where she attends First Baptist Church. She and her husband, Mike, have eight children and one grandchild. She is active in the Woman's Missionary Union of her local church, as well as serving on the state WMU Executive Board.

Personal perspectives

"When do we get to the point when we stop being everybody else's kind of Christian and start being God's kind of Christian?"

—Dave Edwards, youth evangelist/Joy Explo speaker

"Prayer is not a Christian activity or a religious duty, but a relationship. Prayer is the gateway to daily revival."

—Bruce Leafblad, professor of church music and worship,
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

Prayer is still the answer

Americans' fascination with the supernatural appears to be on the rise, based on recent news and feature coverage throughout the nation. Recent issues of *Time* and *Newsweek* have featured cover stories about angels while a *U.S. News and World Report* cover story posed the question: "Who Was Jesus?"

Perhaps the most intriguing article was a recent *USA Today* emphasis on "The Healing Power of Prayer." Physician Larry Dossey, author of the book, *Healing Words: The Power of Prayer and the Practice of Medicine*, affirms research which indicates prayer is "an important, scientifically verifiable factor in healing."

Describing prayer as "one of the best-kept secrets in medical science," Dossey added, "When people enter a prayerful state of mind, good things happen" to the people for whom they are praying.

While such statements may be news to many in the fields of medicine and science, the power of prayer is a given in the lives of committed Christians. In fact, the impact of prayer often seems to be taken for granted among those whose lives revolve around the local church.

Bumper stickers such as "Prayer is the Answer" and "Prayer Changes Things" are fairly common sights throughout the Bible Belt. A time of prayer generally opens and closes virtually any worship service, meeting or informal get-together involving church members. Whether we take it for granted or not, the fact remains that effective, fervent prayer to God truly does change things.

No respecter of persons

A Gallup poll shows that most Americans believe in God. Another poll shows that 74 percent claim to be born-again Christians. Yet crime increases and morality decreases. Why?

Do we believe that the God of love who gave us Christmas and Easter Resurrection will not exact judgment and justice? We forget that God's servant Moses was not allowed into the Promised Land, how much King David, who knew and loved God, suffered for his sins and why numerous nations were destroyed.

When wisely confronted, David repented...as did Ninevah. God is no respecter of persons...or of nations.

Gwen Carpenter
Magnolia, AR

Accountability to God

As we listen to the TV news, watch various TV programs and read the

STRAIGHT FROM THE EDITOR

By TRENNIS HENDERSON



As we embark on a new year which symbolizes new beginnings, this is an excellent time to reaffirm the power of prayer in the lives of Arkansas Baptists. We ought also to recommit ourselves to greater faithfulness in praying for one another and for the tasks God has placed before us.

Members of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention executive board staff gained vivid reminders about the power, purpose and priority of prayer during last week's annual staff retreat. Bruce Leafblad, professor of church music and worship at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, led a series of Bible studies on such aspects of prayer as adoration, confession, commitment and intercession.

Acknowledging that "prayer is not on the front burner of most churches or individuals' lives," Leafblad pointed out, "We have ceased to become a praying people and have substituted work for prayer."



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

newspapers each day, we are overwhelmed with what seems to us to be a predominant anti-Christian theme. Talk show hosts and TV news shows love to find a scandal concerning a religious organization or group, and jump all over it with coverage. We hear God's name taken in vain on almost every program on TV. We recently heard a grandchild, under 10 years old, taking God's name in vain. Where did he get it? He hears it everywhere, and if everyone else does, why not him?

The one thing we don't hear, though, is a great outcry from Christians. We hear a few here and a few there, but no great voice of protest that the world cannot ignore. The other day we heard a man on

Leafblad emphasized the need for Christians to "find out what God is doing and let your prayer life become a quest to get in on it." Noting that "prayer is not a Christian activity or a religious duty, but a relationship," he added, "Prayer is the gateway to daily revival."

Along with Leafblad's timely insights, another highlight of the retreat was a focused prayer time in which executive board staff members prayed for priority ministry projects facing Arkansas Baptists in the coming year.

The priority of prayer also is being highlighted on the national level with Southern Baptists' current goal of urging local churches to set aside 40 days to pray for President Bill Clinton and the future of our nation. Prayer for spiritual awakening being encouraged by Henry Blackaby, T.W. Hunt and other Southern Baptist prayer warriors also is gaining momentum.

Blackaby recently accepted a joint assignment with the Home Mission Board, Foreign Mission Board and Baptist Sunday School Board to develop a global response to prayer and spiritual awakening. "I can't think of any area more significant...to function together in than prayer and spiritual awakening," he affirmed. "The task is of such a magnitude only a sweeping of God could ever be adequate."

With all the needs and opportunities before us, there is no better time than today to recommit ourselves to concentrated, consecrated prayer. As the waiting world watches, we can confidently demonstrate that prayer is still the answer.

a Christian radio show say that Christians had better get mad over what is going on and speak out now. We heard another person on a Christian radio program say that he thought we were on the doorstep of being in the same condition as Sodom and Gomorrah. How sad. It seems to us that God will probably hold us accountable for what we don't say or do, as well as what we do say and do.

When our children and grandchildren are faced with this anti-Christian message, as they are, and we fail to "do something," we are making a bad mistake. Everywhere we look, from our nations' leaders on down through the lowest form of government and business, we see cheating, lying and about every kind of sin that has ever been thought of, and what do we do? We keep reading, watching and buying, while saying to ourselves, isn't it awful? How sad.

Bryce and Ava Heffley
Rogers, AR

Serving a New Testament church

How often we hear the desire of some to lead and serve in a "New Testament" church. I can relate to that sentiment because it is central to the quest of my ministry life! But seldom do I hear the phrase "New Testament church" without asking myself the question, "Which one is he talking about? The church in Antioch? Ephesus? Rome? Exactly which church does he mean?" Because as every Bible student knows there was no one definitive church in the New Testament but rather a host of congregations. There were the traditionalists of Jerusalem, the mission-minded in Antioch, the generous givers of Philippi, the Bible searchers of Thessalonica, the legalists of Galatia, the libertines of Corinth, and the list goes on and on including even the nauseators of Laodicea!

So which one is the true New Testament church? Of course, you know the biblical answer to that question. They *all* were. Every one of them were New Testament churches! If they are not, then what are they doing in the New Testament? Now, not any one of them was perfect. But every one of them was God's. All were saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. All were on the journey of redemption through sanctification toward their glorious inheritance in Christ. But each was at a different point on the maturity chart. Some were in their infancy—toddlers in the faith, barely knowing how to walk. Others were behaving more like adolescents—fighting and testing the Lord's parental authority through laziness or rebellion. Still others were showing definite signs of spiritual adulthood in their understanding and service.

Diverse settings and methods

But this variety in "New Testament church" extends even beyond the differing levels of spiritual maturity. These New Testament churches were different in geographies, located all across the Roman empire. They spoke different languages and had studied in all different types of educational settings. Where they shared a language, the dialects and accents were identifiably different. And these New Testament churches were planted and growing in many different cultural gardens as well. Some were in governmental and political centers. Others were in places known for their great economic or academic contributions. Still others were growing in rural areas and significant agricultural settings. Beyond this, each

1 PERSON'S VIEW



By BILL WHITE
Former Pastor, Second Church, Little Rock

these were under the shepherding of a variety of different spiritual guides. Even these pastors were each different in their giftedness and leadership style. Is it any wonder we find the New Testament testifying to the use of many different methods in the mission and ministry of its New Testament churches for Christ?

So back to the original question. Does it seem a bit biblically naive to assume there is only one New Testament church? Or for that matter, only one way of doing church? Further, to ask the question, "Which of these churches is the 'true' church?" is not only to ask the wrong question, it is to miss the point entirely. Is not the witness of the New Testament that God the Holy Spirit is at work in this world, in Acts and beyond, even to our day, demonstrating His great creativity, variety and genius? Freely reaching all kinds of people in all kinds of places in all kinds of ways yet bringing all of His offspring to share in common our new life in Christ. Isn't this what communion communicates? That we gather at the communion table as diverse and needy sinners from all over the world God loves, to celebrate our oneness in Jesus Christ by God's grace?

For the past nine and a half years it has been my privilege to serve at one of those New Testament churches. This particular one is located in the inner city of a state capital where it has served for 110 years. No less than five different generational groups comprise the congregation: the baby boomers (those born between 1946 and 1964) are presently the largest in number, the builders (who lived through the Depression and WWII) are the next in size, the busters are third (those born between 1964 and 1981), and the two remaining groups are the pre-builders (our senior seniors who lived through WWI) and the boomlets (offspring of the

boomers). Not only is this congregation different in ages, they are different in ethnicity and national origin. During my pastorate there have been members of Jewish, Asian, Arab, European, African and Latin descent. Many are married couples, but right at half the membership are single. Some of our singles are previously married but now widowed or divorced, some are single parents, some are not yet married and others never intend to marry! Some have lots of education, others a little. Some dress up whenever they come to church and others prefer to come dressed down. Some enjoy a comfortable affluence and others have simple means. Some of our members love country music while others prefer classical, or some flavor in between. Some listen to Rush Limbaugh and others Pat Lynch. Some God created male. Others female. But *all* bear and bring the divine image to our fellowship. And all who are saved by God's grace in Christ come to the same communion table where we share that one item we hold common in all our differences—the gift of salvation in Jesus.

Shared relationship in Christ

From this shared relationship in Christ the church's members move out across the area of the city "Glorifying God by leading Central Arkansas into a personal and growing relationship with Christ" (the church's vision statement). Using a variety of methods including television, radio, drama, multimedia and the entire range of instrumental and vocal music styles, this church has sought to implement the 1st century mission of Christ in ways which people on their way to the 21st century can relate and respond to. As a result the church has experienced net growth for the past nine years welcoming 100 new members into the church family annually. The facility has been completely renovated and the ministry budget has grown from \$400,000 to over \$1 million. Glory to God!

It sounds almost New Testament! But the last thing I would ever dream of doing would be to try to make a sister congregation look, think, act, see things just like we do. We are different and diverse by divine design. It's a part of God's creative genius! And it's also a part of the way He reaches out to those not yet in His family to offer them a welcome they can relate to in their own culture. And do you know what? Then they, too, can experience what it means to be a part of His New Testament church!

'Perform Ministry' conferences offer 'hands-on' training

"Perform Ministry" Training Conferences will be held in 15 locations across the state in February to provide practical, "hands-on" training for ministers and laypeople.

The conferences will train participants "how to do ministry," said Jimmie Sheffield, associate executive director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention. "The conferences will give participants the tools and handles to performing ministry locally."

Sheffield said the conferences will follow two tracks. "There will be special conferences for church pastors and staff and directors of missions. Laypeople will choose and attend one of the four separate emphases sessions."

He said participating pastors or staff members "should bring a minimum of four participants to the conference" to cover each emphasis area. If they do not, it will be difficult for their church to get fully involved in the emphasis, he explained.

Conferences will be held Feb. 21 at First Church, Springdale; First Church, Hardy, First Church, Clinton; First Church, Harrison; and Highland Drive Church, Jonesboro.

Feb. 22 conferences will be held at Matthews Memorial Church, Pine Bluff; Beech Street First Church, Texarkana; First Church, McGehee; First Church, Mena; and Immanuel Church, El Dorado.

Conferences will be held Feb. 24 at East Side Church, Fort Smith; First Church, Forrest City; First Church, Hot Springs; Second Church, Russellville; and Park Hill Church, North Little Rock.

There is no cost for the conferences. All sessions will begin at 7 p.m. and conclude at 9 p.m.

"Perform Ministry...in Jesus' Name" is the 1994 ABCS theme. Sheffield said the Perform Ministry theme was adopted "to heighten awareness for the need for ministry, give Arkansas Baptists resources to use in ministry, and give them hands-on training so every church could be involved in ministry."

For more information, contact Sheffield at the Arkansas Baptist State Convention; phone 376-4791, ext. 5103.

Four Arkansas Acteens named to 1993-94 advisory panel

Four Arkansas Baptist Acteens have been selected to serve on the 1993-94 Arkansas Acteens Advisory Panel. The panelists will be available to speak at associational and local church Acteens activities.

During the summer, panelist applications are sent out statewide. Girls who meet the requirements and are interested complete the application and submit it to the state Woman's Missionary Union office. After checking references, the State Acteens Committee selects four panelists and one alternate.

The four panelists will help plan the Acteens Encounter, April 8-9, and have high visibility during that event. They also will speak at the WMU annual meeting, March 18-19.

Angela Lowe, Arkansas Acteens associate, said, "The visibility of the panel helps promote Acteens statewide. When girls see their peers sold on Acteens, it encourages them to strengthen their commitment to the Lord and missions endeavors." This year's panelists include:

■ Vanessa Atterberry of Cabot Second Church. Vanessa is a senior at Cabot High School and is involved in the German Club and the Honor Society. She is a Queen Regent in StudiAct and has been in Acteens for three years.

■ Stephanie Edwards of Lonoke Church. Stephanie is a junior at Lonoke High School and is involved in the National Honor Society and Spanish Club. She is an athletic trainer for the football and basketball teams. She is a Queen with Scepter in StudiAct and has been in Acteens for four years.

■ Melanie Neal of Calvary Church in Harrisburg. Melanie is a senior at Harrisburg High School and is involved in the Student Council, National Honor Society and volleyball team. She is a Service Aid in



Vanessa Atterberry



Stephanie Edwards



Melanie Neal



Holly Tidball

StudiAct and has been in Acteens for six years.

■ Holly Tidball of Immanuel Church in Little Rock. Holly is a junior at Arkansas Baptist High School and is involved in FBLA, Spanish Club and Political Awareness Club. She is a Queen Regent in Service in StudiAct and has been in Acteens for 5 years.

Jackie Hammons of Jacksonville Bayou Meto Church has been selected as an alternate. She is a sophomore at North Pulaski High School.

Acteens is the missions organization of WMU for girls ages 12-17. There are approximately 2,200 girls involved in Acteens in Arkansas.

Moore fund to aid Arkansas students

The Arkansas Baptist Foundation has established a trust fund benefitting Arkansas Baptist students in memory of the late Shirley Moore.

Mrs. Moore was the wife of Arkansas Baptist State Convention executive director Don Moore. She died Nov. 23 following an eight-month battle with cancer.

The fund will be used to provide scholarships for students attending Ouachita Baptist University and Williams Baptist College.

Harry Trulove, president of the Foundation, said the fund was established "because of Shirley's love for college students. It was an opportunity established by Shirley's friends and family to memorialize her by providing scholarships to college students until Jesus comes."

Individuals interested in additional information about the Shirley Moore Fund may contact the Arkansas Baptist Foundation, P.O. Box 552, Little Rock, AR 72203; phone 376-0732.

Arkansas Christmas programs produce life-changing impact

By Millie Gill

Arkansas Baptist

Although the long hours of preparation and rehearsals for Christmas productions presented by Arkansas Baptist churches of all sizes is over, the impact on lives touched by the programs will be never ending.

Mount Pleasant Church of Portland, a church with an average Sunday School attendance of 30, immediately saw the fruits of their labors when more than 435 people came to witness a live outdoor Christmas pageant Dec. 10-12.

The church, located in a rural setting of southern Arkansas, portrayed not only the

performances. "We will be busy contacting each of these families, seeking to involve them in the many ministries of the church," said David Pierce, minister of music. He also noted that guests from 66 different Arkansas cities and towns, as well as nine other states were represented at the 1993 performances.

"The thing that made our 1993 performances special was that we dedicated them to Randy Mooney," Pierce said. Mooney, a 38-year-old deacon who died as a result of an automobile accident just prior to the annual event, had constructed sets for the 1993 pageant. "This year's program had a very special meaning for all

"It is worth both the time and monies to continue this program in an effort to reach the people...."

— Curtis Shatley
Minister of music
Walnut Street Church, Jonesboro

of us because Randy had been such an integral part of the pageant, as well as being so involved in the total ministry of the church," Pierce explained.

Walnut Street Church in Jonesboro recorded 3,000 attendees, two professions of faith and 15 people seeking additional information about the Christian life during its 10th annual live Christmas tree performances.

Curtis Shatley, minister of music, said that although previous years' records revealed larger numbers of public decisions, the church was committed to continuing the program. "We feel that it is worth both the time and monies to continue this program in an effort to reach the peoples of northeast Arkansas," he affirmed.

Members of Calvary Church in Little Rock were elated with their first-time effort of reaching out to the greater Little Rock area with a "Splendor of Christmas" program held at Robinson Auditorium in downtown Little Rock.

Minister of music Jeff Bennett reported that 1,000 people attended the performance which featured contemporary Christian music artists Dick and Mel Tunney. He said two professions of faith already have been confirmed through the program invitation cards.

"Follow-up work is being done on numerous other decision cards," Bennett added. "We are very pleased with our first effort that included not only a message in music, but a message presented from the Scriptures by pastor Walter Draughon."

'Experiencing God' teleconference will include state sites

NASHVILLE, TN (BP)—Satellite technology and biblical principles for knowing and doing the will of God will be paired for a nationwide teleconference sponsored by the Baptist Sunday School Board.

The seven-hour "Experiencing God" teleconference will be broadcast by satellite Saturday, Feb. 12, beginning at 10 a.m. Central Time to at least 145 sites across the country.

Henry Blackaby and Claude King, authors of "Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God," will lead the teleconference. It will be broadcast live from Nashville's Two Rivers Baptist Church.

"As of now, nearly 150 churches and associations have signed contracts to be host sites for the teleconference, but we expect more to sign on before the broadcast time," said Jay Johnston, teleconference coordinator. "We anticipate being able to involve more people less expensively by way of this teleconference than we could through national or regional conferences."

Arkansas Baptist churches and associations scheduled to host the teleconference include First Church, Hope; Barcelona Road Church, Hot Springs Village; Calvary Church, Little Rock; First Church, Mena; Park Hill Church, North Little Rock; Second Church, Russellville; Beech Street First Church, Texarkana; First Church, Van Buren; and Mt. Zion Association.

"There will be time for small-group discussion and prayer throughout the teleconference," Johnson said. He added that participants are expected to bring their own lunches.

A \$25 registration fee includes an "Experiencing God" members book and a three-hole punch notebook. Each viewing site will have "Experiencing God" resources for purchase, he added.

Resources presently include a LIFE course, a leader's guide, a video and audiocassettes.

A similar "Fresh Encounter" teleconference featuring Blackaby will be broadcast on April 23 at many of the same sites, Johnston said.

"Fresh Encounter," also by Blackaby and King, seeks to spearhead national revival by challenging churches to identify and overcome self-defeating habits and renew relationships with God.

ABSC recognized for black Sunday School growth

The Arkansas Baptist State Convention recently was recognized for having the highest percentage increase in Sunday School attendance among black Southern Baptist churches. The award was presented by the Baptist Sunday School Board during December planning meetings in Nashville, Tenn., for state program leaders.

Uniform Church Letters from black ABCS churches recorded an increase in Sunday School attendance of 87.5 percent from 1991 to 1992, said Jay Wells, manager of the BSSB black church development section. Wells said the Sunday Schools recorded a numerical growth from 1602 in 1991 to 302 in 1992.

The 1992 increase was a significant jump above reports from previous years. Wells said the ABCS reported black Sunday School attendance nearly stationary at 155 in 1988, 160 in 1989 and 153 in 1990.

Other state conventions that reported significant increases in black Sunday School attendance included: Northwest Baptist Convention with a 59.4 percent increase; Missouri Baptist Convention with a 57.1 percent increase; and the Baptist Convention of Pennsylvania-South Jersey with a 56.2 percent increase. The Baptist General Convention of Texas showed the largest numerical increase, moving from

8,777 in 1991 to 10,410 in 1992.

Jack Ramsey, an associate in the ABCS missions department, said the increase in Arkansas was due in part to four new black church starts in 1991 and three in 1992. "In 1992, we also invited all black Southern Baptist pastors, staff, lay leaders and their spouses to a black church extension orientation. That helped stimulate interest also," he said.

Donald Crossley is pastor of New Life Bible Fellowship Church in Hot Springs, a black Southern Baptist congregation. The church formed in 1991 with the help of First Church, Hot Springs, and the ABSC.

He said Southern Baptist resources were a help in starting the church. "I appreciate how the Arkansas Baptist convention has helped with resources and training programs," he noted. "They helped us with our building and with hymnals, chairs and tables. They also sent me to Gloria (N.M.) for training at Black Church Week."

He said First Church helped the congregation with insurance and Sunday School literature.

Ramsey said the state convention is "intentionally starting black Southern Baptist churches because we have a mandate from God to reach all people of all races."

"We have not been as effective as we want to be in reaching black communities," he admitted. "But we are now building an organization and have adopted a strategy to reach all groups in Arkansas."

Wells urged Southern Baptists to "start with what you've got" to increase black Sunday School attendance.

"You need to identify African-Americans in Southern Baptist churches and African-American churches in the convention," he emphasized, "then give attention to developing those churches, especially in associations."

He said Southern Baptist churches wishing to reach African-Americans need to "recognize, then focus on the group. If you don't, you won't meet the needs of the group." He said many Southern Baptist churches "do not have an intentionality" in reaching African-Americans.

Wells said inclusion also is important. "When an African-American group feels it belongs and that it's heard, it will have more of a sense of ownership, and ultimately there will be more participation," he explained.

Current ABCS statistics show the convention has 13 predominantly black churches as well as an apartment ministry and Bible study.

Webb to retire as director of continuing education

Citing a need to "change emphases in my life," Lehman Webb has announced his retirement as director of continuing theological education for the Arkansas Baptist State Convention missions department, effective Jan. 31. "My new emphases will include serving my Lord as chaplain for Parkway Village, a Baptist retirement center in Little Rock, and either a supply pastor or interim pastor," Webb noted.

Webb joined the missions department staff in 1977 as director of church extension. He assumed his current position in 1984, leading in an expanded educational program for Arkansas Baptist pastors that includes Boyce Bible School sponsored by Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, seminary extension work, off-campus master's degree courses from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and a doctor of ministries program from Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

"Not many could have accomplished what Webb has with as few resources as he has had to work with," said Jimmy



Lehman Webb (left) receives a plaque from Bob Johnson, dean of Boyce Bible School, at a recent retirement reception.

Barrentine, ABCS missions department director. "He has been glad some news throughout all of these years."

Webb, a graduate of Ouachita Baptist University and Southwestern Seminary, joined the state convention staff following seven years of service with the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board. He was a missionary associate in Singapore where

he served as pastor of an international church. In addition, he has been pastor of four Arkansas Baptist churches: West Helena Church, First Church of Harrison, Second Church of El Dorado and First Church of Hot Springs.

Webb has served as a member of the ABCS Executive Board. He also was chairman of the state convention's nominating committee and served in 1970 as ABCS first vice president. His other leadership responsibilities include service as a trustee of Arkansas Baptist Hospital System, Ouachita Baptist University and Baptist Memorial Hospital in Memphis, Tenn.

Webb and his wife, Virginia, are members of Immanuel Church in Little Rock. They are parents of one daughter, Ginny Blaylock of Jonesboro. They have two grandsons, Brian Blaylock, 20, and Jeremy Blaylock, 16.

Barrentine said Carter Tucker, ABCS director of chaplaincy, will add the continuing theological educational program to his responsibilities.

OBU's missionary-in-residence shares global perspective

By **Alaina Boles**
Ouachita Baptist University

ARKADELPHIA - After 11 years as Southern Baptist missionaries in the Dominican Republic, David DuPree and his family are spending a year at Ouachita Baptist University for a time of personal renewal and strengthening a missions awareness among students and Arkansas Baptists.

DuPree is the university's missionary-in-residence for the 1993-94 academic year. He and his family arrived in Arkadelphia in June and have been very busy ever since.

"We have found the pace to be fast and to our liking," DuPree acknowledged. "The missionary-in-residence program at Ouachita is well known and accepted in the career missions field as a good model."

As a general evangelist and church and home evangelist, DuPree and his wife, Phyllis, worked at beginning the first Baptist church in the Dominican Republic city of La Vega while working with national Baptist leaders to help develop existing churches.

Both DuPree and his wife are natives of Louisiana. He holds degrees from Northwestern State University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. The DuPrees have three sons: Jonathan, 15; Jeffrey, 13; and Jordan, 12.

While in Fort Worth, DuPree served as Baptist Student Union director at Texas Wesleyan College and Tarrant County

Junior College. From 1978 until 1982, he served as associate pastor of Riverside Baptist Church in Miami, Fla.

DuPree applied for the position at Ouachita because of the geographic proximity to his family in Louisiana and because "I felt God wanted me at Ouachita for this year." The position provides an office, a home and utilities and access to a teaching position.

"If my presence helps them to have a better understanding of God, that's important to me."

- David DuPree
Missionary-in-residence, OBU

DuPree said his position at Ouachita is aimed primarily at informing and helping further develop the role of missions in a global community.

"I am a Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board representative to the students to teach them about missions," he said. "I also teach two Bible classes and try to relate to children of missionaries at Ouachita and the campus' international students."

DuPree said other responsibilities at Ouachita are similar to his job in the Dominican Republic.

"I counsel Ouachita students considering missions as a vocation," he said. "I also am available to speak to churches, schools and various other audiences in Arkansas and surrounding states about missions work and opportunities on the field."

The job is a two-way street, DuPree noted. His family ministers to students and the students, university and churches with which he comes in contact minister to them.

"My family has learned to fit in both places," he said. "The Dominican Republic is our home, but we love it here because of the nature of our work with Ouachita and we can be close to our families."

As a general evangelist and pastor in the Dominican Republic, DuPree has witnessed a renewal of interest in Baptist work on the Caribbean island.

"The churches in that country have experienced a rapid growth in the past few years because we have been reaching the younger people," he said. "They are not so traditional as their non-Baptist elders in matters of their faith."

In addition to teaching at Ouachita, DuPree has been busy speaking at churches concerning missions.

"In a month, I've been in 11 churches promoting the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering," he said. "I also traveled to Philadelphia for a world missions conference."

DuPree said he enjoys the interaction with students the most.

"If my presence helps them to have a better understanding of God, that's important to me," he said. "We in the United States have been blessed and we should share the blessings."

Church music workshop highlights ministry needs

Church music leadership will explore new concepts in senior adult music work, youth choirs and keyboard performance at the Church Music Workshop Feb. 17-18 at Ouachita Baptist University.

The workshop, co-sponsored by the Arkansas Baptist State Convention church music ministries department and the OBU school of music, will be held at OBU's Mabee Fine Arts Center.

Glen Ennes, an associate in the ABCS church music ministries department, said the workshop is a biennial joint project of the convention and university to "provide leadership training for ministry needs of Arkansas Baptist churches."

Noting that each of the conference's three emphases is timely, Ennes said, "Many churches are expanding their senior adult ministries through senior adult choirs, and there has been a resurgence of youth music and choirs." He added that the keyboard emphasis will answer the "mid-keyboard phenomena occurring in churches today."

The program will feature clinicians Lyndell Vaught of Fort Worth, Polly Riddle of Liberty, Mo., and Randy Edwards of Shreveport La.

Vaught, associate professor of church music at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, will lead sessions on senior adult choirs. He is the author of *Senior Adult Choir Ministry—Age Is No Excuse*.

Riddle, professor of music and director of keyboard studies at William Jewell College, will lead keyboard sessions. She is the author of five publications for organ and organ methods.

Edwards is editor of *Youth Cue*, a newsletter serving more than 800 youth choir directors of all denominations, and is a leader and innovator in youth choir work.

The cost for the workshop is \$40. Special discounts will be given to staff members of the same church. Other discounts are available for single-day participants. The workshop is open to all music leaders in churches in Arkansas and surrounding states.

The workshop begins at 9 a.m. Thursday. The final session will conclude at noon Friday.

For more information on the workshop or a schedule of fees, contact Ennes at the ABCS church music ministries department, P. O. Box 552, Little Rock, AR 72203; phone 376-4791, ext. 5121; or Steve Garner, chairman of the department of church music at OBU; phone 245-5146. The deadline for registration is Feb. 7.

The sounds of silence

SBC's first deaf foreign missionary hears God's call loud and clear

By Mary E. Spödel

SBC Foreign Mission Board

RICHMOND, VA (BP)—Yvette Aarons heard God's call in the sounds of silence.

Her response made history: On Dec. 7 she became the first deaf person appointed as a career missionary by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board. She'll return to the Caribbean island of Trinidad, where she has ministered to the deaf as a mission volunteer for three years.

"I've found my niche," said Aarons, 34, who has been deaf since birth.

Aarons grew up in Jamaica attending schools that emphasized "oral education," or teaching the deaf to speak and read lips. She learned to sign through her deaf friends.

She became a Christian as a teenager at a hearing church on the island. Later she began attending a deaf church, where she first sensed God's call to missions after meeting some evangelical missionaries.

Aarons moved with her family to New York City when she was 16. Her first exposure to Southern Baptists came when she started attending a Long Island church of the deaf during college. Leslie Bunn, then the church's assistant pastor, became an important mentor for her. He now leads the deaf congregation at Temple Baptist Church in Norfolk, Va.

Bunn, who said he is hard of hearing, has watched Aarons overcome obstacles as she followed the path toward foreign mission service. "Communication is the biggest struggle of any deaf person," Bunn said following Aarons' appointment at Bon Air Baptist Church in Richmond, Va. "But Yvette persevered. And I think the reason she persevered is because she has a very close relationship with the Lord."

Aarons received the bachelor of arts degree from Long Island University in Brooklyn, N.Y., and master of education degree from Western Maryland College in Westminster, where she majored in deaf education.

After completing her education, she taught deaf, mentally retarded and physically handicapped children in New York City for about a year.

With her goal of foreign missions in mind, Aarons moved to Fort Worth, Texas, to attend Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Her first year was tough; she had no interpreter for classes. But she survived by reading lips and borrowing notes from students she enlisted to help her.

"I knew this was where God wanted



Yvette Aarons, the SBC's first deaf foreign missionary, will minister among an estimated 10,000 deaf people in Trinidad.

me. I just stuck with it through thick and thin," said Aarons, speaking through interpreter Becky Walker of Richmond, who interpreted for her during her later seminary years.

More hurdles awaited. When she contacted the Foreign Mission Board about possible service, board officials told her they had no personnel requests for a deaf person to work as a career missionary.

"The board didn't have a policy (against appointing the deaf), but it was seen in practical application as a problem. We didn't know how it would work," said FMB administrator Clark Scanlon, who has led the board in studying deaf ministries around the world. "The main thing was that there was no request."

But Aarons didn't let that stop her. "I said, 'Well, I didn't make myself deaf,'" she recalled.

She kept at it, earning a master's degree in religious education from Southwestern. Then she worked with the deaf for two years as a Mission Service Corps volunteer at Woodhaven Baptist Deaf Church in Houston. She also worked with Deaf Opportunity Outreach (DOOR), an organization that promotes deaf ministries.

Then the Foreign Mission Board offered her an assignment as an International Service Corps volunteer among the deaf in

Trinidad. Aarons spent three years there.

"She's been a wonderful inspiration to the deaf — for them to see a deaf young person who can live on her own, handle her own business affairs and carry herself in a mature Christian manner," said FMB volunteer Lisa Bruce, who worked with Aarons in Trinidad for several months.

Besides sharing her faith and discipling new Christians, Aarons has tried to help Trinidadian deaf people build self-esteem and improve their lives.

"In Trinidad there aren't the equal-opportunity experiences (for the deaf) like here in America," she explained. She helps them "aim to go forward in their lives, instead of staying in the same situation, saying 'I can't.' I went (there) trying to say 'You can.'" During her assignment there, she worked closely with Southern Baptist missionaries Willard and Doris Goforth, who already were ministering to the deaf in Trinidad. The Goforths had no previous experience in deaf ministry, so Aarons helped them improve their signing skills. English is the island's national language, but the deaf there use a Trinidadian sign language different from American Sign Language.

Aarons' appointment is a "major, major step" for the Southern Baptist deaf community, said Carter Bearden Jr., pastor to the deaf at First Baptist Church of Richmond, who interpreted for deaf worshippers attending the Dec. 7 missionary appointment service.

"It's saying to other deaf Southern Baptists that there are opportunities within our own (mission) agencies. It's saying that when God calls, there could be a place for you." He added: "Who better to minister to the deaf than the deaf themselves?"

Foreign Mission Board officials report no other current personnel requests for deaf career missionaries, and they don't anticipate more in the near future.

But working with Aarons showed them the possibilities.

"Yvette showed us she truly felt the calling of the Lord to go," said Dan Broskie, the missionary candidate consultant who guided Aarons through the appointment process. "She didn't feel herself to be a test case. She in no way made herself out to be any kind of martyr."

Did Aarons ever want to give up on answering God's call to missions?

"No, no. Never," she said. "I can say I feel it's right because Jesus is in my life, and He's attached to missions... Maybe sometimes I felt tired, but not defeated."

SEMINARY GRADUATES

December graduates include 24 Arkansans



JAMES W. DEAN, JR.
Master of Divinity
Crosssett



J. FREDERICK BALL
Doctor of Philosophy
Little Rock



ANGELA OXFORD
Master of Divinity
Fayetteville



LETTITA TUCKER
Master of Arts in
Christian Education
Little Rock

NO PHOTO AVAILABLE

ALEXANDER BROOKHUIS
Master of Divinity
Little Rock

THOMAS MILLER
Diploma in Christian Ministry
Beebe

STEPHEN ST. CLAIR
Master of Church Music
Jonesboro



TERRI BOWLING
Master of Arts in
Religious Education
Blytheville



JOHN CADDY
Master of Arts in
Religious Education
Little Rock



SCOTT DUKE
Master of Divinity with
Biblical Languages
Little Rock



LYLE C. HERN
Master of Divinity with
Biblical Languages
Mountain View



DEBRA L. HOGUE
Masters of Arts in
Religious Education and
Family Counseling
Booneville



MICHAEL HOOKS
Master of Music
El Dorado



DANA LYNN MEREDITH
Master of Arts in
Communication
Hot Springs



ROBN NEIL MURPHY
Master of Arts in
Church Music
Little Rock



DENISE OVERTON
Master of Arts in
Church Social Services
Benton



DWAYNE ALAN OXNER
Master of Arts in
Religious Education
Lesa



MARK S. WEAVER
Masters of Arts in
Religious Education and
Family Counseling
El Dorado



RONALD WEST
Master of Arts in
Missiology
Booneville



DARRYL W. WOODY
Master of Divinity with
Biblical Languages
West Helena

NO PHOTO AVAILABLE

GREGORY S. BURNS
Master of Arts in Religious Education
Searcy

JAMES J. FINDLEY
Master of Divinity
Mountain View

ELLA MARIE McCARROLL
Master of Arts in Religious Education
Little Rock

SARA LYNN WILLIAMS
Master of Arts in Church Social Services
Drasco

Arkansas All Over

MILLIE GILL

Church news

Nettleton Church in Jonesboro is observing 100 years of ministry in 1994 with activities that include a 100-year church pictorial directory and an Oct. 2 centennial event for which Don Moore, executive director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, will be speaker. Tony Weston and Billy Davis will be featured musicians.

Park Hill Church in North Little Rock will host contemporary Christian music recording artist Steve Green in concert Jan. 22 at 7:30 p.m. Additional information may be obtained by calling the church's music ministry office at 753-3413.

Lowell Church's Dec. 19 Christmas musical, featuring the church choir, director David Matthews, Penny Sims and Dana Renfrow, resulted in a record worship attendance of 391. The church's Hickory Creek and Spanish ministries contributed to a total attendance of 467. Gary Thomas is pastor of Lowell Church.

Staff changes

Mike Jones is bivocational pastor of Union Valley Church. He previously was pastor of Bigelow Church. He and his wife, Karen, have two children.

Dennis LaCook is bivocational pastor of Sweet Home Church. He previously served Union Valley Church. LaCook is director of Perry County Day Services Center. He and his wife, Teresa, have a son, Jarrod.

Max Gregory will retire as director of missions for Current Gains Association March 1, following more than four years of service. Gregory, a graduate of Arkansas State University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, also has served as pastor of First Church of Senath, Mo., and as director of missions for the Central Missouri Baptist Mission Board. He and his wife, Patsy, will reside at 512 S. 12th in Paragould; phone 236-3542. They are the parents of two daughters, Lynn Roberson of Owensboro, Ky., and Laura Hofmeister of St. Charles, Mo.

Manuel Villegas has joined the staff of Lowell Church as associate pastor of Hispanic ministries. In addition, he serves as pastor of a Spanish mission.

Randy Magar is serving as pastor of Newark Southern Church near Batesville.

He previously was at Claud Road Church, Pine Bluff.

John S. Ashcraft of Little Rock began serving Jan. 2 as interim pastor of Calvary Church in Benton. Ashcraft, who has served as pastor of Arkansas and California churches, has served as interim pastor of numerous Arkansas churches since his retirement.

Tommy Stringfellow has resigned as youth minister of Calvary Church in Benton. He and his wife, Connie, and their daughter, Alyssa, have moved to Fayetteville where he will continue his studies at the University of Arkansas.

retired secretary of the ABSC Brotherhood department. Survivors include a granddaughter, Susan Bridges Robinson of North Little Rock; a daughter-in-law, Martha Bridges, of Little Rock; a nephew and a niece. Memorials may be made to First Church of Little Rock.

J.W. Edwards of Manila died Dec. 25 at age 63. He was a retired Baptist minister, having served as pastor of First Church, Yelville; Brown's Chapel, Alexander; First Church of Center Hill; and Rowe's Chapel, Caraway. Survivors include two sons, Trent Edwards, minister of music and youth at First Church, Harrisburg, and Whitney Edwards of Paragould; and one grandson, Jonathan Edwards of Harrisburg.

Obituaries

Robert Vernon "Bob" Presley died Nov. 22 in Foley, Ala., at age 58. Presley had served as a former associate pastor and minister of music at First Church of Dumas and as associate pastor of Markham Street Church in Little Rock. Survivors include his wife, Charlotte Presley; two sons, Bob "Bobby" Presley Jr. of San Francisco and Bruce Presley of Monroeville, Ala.; a daughter, Susan Presley Green of Milledgeville, Ga.; a brother; three sisters; and four grandchildren.

Vivian Stone Bridges of Little Rock died Dec. 25, 1993, at age 82. She was the widow of Ben L. Bridges, former executive secretary of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention. She was a member of First Church of Little Rock where she was a member of the Builders Sunday School Class and has been active in Woman's Missionary Union and Bayview. She was a



First Church of Hazen dedicated a 6,400-square-foot fellowship hall and educational building Dec. 5 with 150 members and 43 guests in attendance. The new facility provides space for 10 classrooms, a kitchen, restrooms and a fellowship hall with a seating capacity of approximately 150. Pastor David McCord said the church served as its own contractor and was able to construct the building debt-free. Eddie McCord, recently retired director of missions for Independence Association, was the dedication speaker. Former pastor Hilton Lane also assisted in the service.

Baptist volunteers continue to meet needs in Somalia

By Craig Bird

SBC Foreign Mission Board

MOGADISHU, SOMALIA (BP)—Perhaps someone else would have helped the starving, crippled boy living under the bridge.

But Somalia has thousands of starving, crippled children. So perhaps not.

Perhaps someone else could have reunited an elderly, sick man with his family, separated by civil war, many months and miles. But who can count the families scattered in the nightmare of this African country? So perhaps not.

Perhaps someone else would have dug wells, operated medical clinics and paid for four tons of seed corn so people in one district could plant crops to avoid starvation and death. But many such areas need assistance, and this one is out of the way. So perhaps not.

But because Southern Baptists through the Foreign Mission Board have donated almost \$2 million to help Somalis, and because a handful of anonymous Southern Baptists working with secular aid organizations in Somalia care:

■ Mohammed Hussein, the crippled 12-year-old boy, is no longer starving and can walk without even a stick to support himself.

■ Farah, the elderly man, and his family are together again.

■ In one neglected district of Somalia, the promise of a spectacular corn crop carpets the land, wells are being dug to provide a permanent water supply, and regular medical care is now available.

Perhaps Southern Baptists should forget about Somalia, as so many other Americans would like to do. Perhaps not.

Mohammed either can't remember or won't tell the name of his home village. All he says is: "My mother put me down beside the bath and left me." He doesn't know what happened to his family — just that "there was a lot of fighting."

An uncle took him to a feeding center near Mogadishu and left him, he said. When a Southern Baptist nurse noticed him begging beside the road, his right leg was drawn at a 45-degree angle — and he was severely malnourished. He pulled himself with his arms, dragging his legs behind him.

She brought him to Mogadishu and he began eating lunch with the aid of relief team members. One worker gave him an extra bed and invited him to eat breakfast and supper with the worker's family. The nurse had Southern Baptist missionary



Mohammed Hussein, abandoned by his mother during fighting in Somalia, was aided by a Southern Baptist nurse.

friends in Kenya with a son Mohammed's size, so they clothed him.

Two operations and hours of massage and physical therapy later, Mohammed can walk almost as well as he can grin. He has progressed beyond a walker, then a stick, and now walks unassisted. He limps, but it's not too limiting.

Now well-fed and dressed, Mohammed hobbles around the relief agency compound, hitching an occasional ride. Mostly he follows the electrician, with a 12-year-old's fascination. The electrician will train him as an apprentice — giving him a future after Southern Baptists gave him life.

Farah and his wife and children, meanwhile, joined several other families from their clan fleeing south from Mogadishu in January 1991 to escape the bloodletting sweeping the city. But fighting in the area cut them off for a month. When it let up, Farah's heart problems meant he couldn't travel.

He was left in an almost deserted village, in a hut near a good water supply. For months he survived on his own, scavenging food and buying it when he could. He went three days and nights at one stretch without eating before he saw a man walking on the road with a sack on his back. He was taking dik-diks (a tiny

antelope-like creature) to town to sell. Farah bought two of them and cooked them on the spot.

The next day two girls from another clan passed by and took pity on him. For several weeks they went to a nearby market, bought camel meat and cooked it for him.

He grew strong enough to travel and was eventually reunited with his family for nine months. Then fresh fighting forced them to move again. Farah couldn't risk travel. Rival clans were killing men they caught. But women and children were fairly safe. So they separated again.

Finally Farah met an aid worker in a Mogadishu refugee camp where he was treated for gunshot wounds in both arms. "It was a tribal thing," he explained. "Someone just shot through my hut while I was sleeping."

The aid worker, a Southern Baptist, had met some other Southern Baptists who were working at the massive Somali refugee camp in Mandera, Kenya. Maybe they could find out about his family.

Within days they were located. Soon his wife and children were on a United Nations flight to Mogadishu.

That was six months ago. Today when he gets off work, Farah goes home to his wife, son and two daughters. "Twice evil has separated us and twice God has reunited us," he said. "This last time he used Southern Baptists."

Of course, most Somalis who benefit from Southern Baptist aid aren't so directly involved with individual Southern Baptists. Sometimes they are among 4,000 to 5,000 people lining up to get a daily ration of five pounds of grain paid for by Southern Baptists and distributed by a secular aid agency.

Other times, they are 40 or 50 people in a small village waiting for a Southern Baptist nurse to give them medications purchased with Southern Baptist gifts.

And in a handful of villages, miles from a steady water supply, wells are dug by hand to 90 yards deep. The aid group providing concrete pipe and paying workers in food receives grants from the Foreign Mission Board.

Across the area, the green shoots of a new corn crop bear witness to a widespread result of Southern Baptist concern.

"No one was doing anything for this area. But when the Foreign Mission Board made some money available to our aid organization, we could buy and distribute four tons of seed corn," one aid worker said. "If we get two more good rains these people will be safe from famine for a long time."

Perhaps Southern Baptists can't do much in a country like chaotic Somalia.

Perhaps they can.

Religion grabs headlines in 1993 coverage

By Greg Warner

Associate Baptist Press

(ABP) — Religion made headlines in 1993, with stories both tragic and promising.

World attention focused on two key religion-laden stories in 1993 — the deadly assault April 29 that ended a 51-day standoff between federal agents and members of the Branch Davidian cult in Waco, Texas, and the historic peace plan signed Sept. 13 by perennial combatants Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Both those events had implications for Baptists and others of faith. The Davidian episode raised questions about not only the performance of federal agents, whose raid of the Waco compound sparked the standoff, but how religious cults are defined and how they are treated by the government.

Independent studies showed the government misunderstood the Davidian sect and ignored the advice of experts, contributing to the carnage that left 86 Branch Davidians dead when they set fire to their compound.

The Branch Davidians, led by self-styled messiah David Koresh, were ranked as the top religion story of 1993 in Religious News Service's annual survey of religion writers.

People of all faiths watched with keen interest in September as Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, lifelong enemies, signed a framework for Mideast peace. The plan calls for interim Palestinian self-rule in Gaza and the West Bank town of Jericho.

The event, described by supporters as the first step toward lasting peace in the

region, was called "the opening of a door that cannot be closed" by former President Jimmy Carter. Baptist World Alliance head Denton Lotz likened it to the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Southern Baptists began the year by watching one of their own take up residence in the White House. But longtime Baptist Bill Clinton, who was moved to tears during a pre-inaugural prayer service Jan. 20, soon angered many conservative Southern Baptists by relaxing government policies against abortion and homosexuality in his first days in the White House.

Clinton signed executive orders Jan. 22 that repealed a ban on abortion counseling at federally funded family planning clinics, lifted a ban on medical research using tissue from aborted fetuses, reinstated the right of overseas U.S. military hospitals to perform some abortions, and ordered a re-evaluation of the ban on importation of the abortion pill RU-486. He later eased the government's ban on homosexuals in the military and appointed gays and lesbians to government offices.

Clinton later opened dialogue with a broad range of religious leaders, hosting liberal, mainline and conservative Protestants at the White House and traveling to Denver to meet with the Pope.

Southern Baptist Convention leaders said in August they were "snubbed" by not being invited to the White House gatherings. Clinton later met with SBC president Ed Young and SBC Executive Committee president Morris Chapman, with Young later affirming that "there is a heart there — a spiritual cross-pull — in the heart of our president."

Messengers to the annual Southern

Baptist Convention in June adopted a resolution to "separate" the convention from Clinton's social agenda, most notably his gay-rights and abortion policies.

The national debate over abortion took on a more somber tone in March when a pro-life protester shot and killed Pensacola, Fla., abortion doctor David Gunn. While a few anti-abortionists justified the shooting, most tried to distance the pro-life movement from such extreme tactics.

Southern Baptists made national headlines in September when a Home Mission Board study, which offered a county-by-county estimate of the number of people bound for heaven or hell, drew the attention of secular reporters. A story that appeared in Birmingham, Ala., said 46 percent of Alabama residents are hell-bound, prompting articles by the Associated Press and others and leading HMB administrators to respond to charges of denominational arrogance.

Headlines of a more favorable nature followed the Baptist Sunday School Board's campaign called True Love Waits, a program to encourage youth and young adults to abstain from sex until marriage. The campaign attracted a blitz of media attention and an offer from Roman Catholics to join in the abstinence effort.

Arguably one of the year's most far-reaching public-policy events was passage of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, a legislative antidote to the Supreme Court's 1990 abandonment of the strict standard against government intrusion into religious practices. Baptist church-state attorney Oliver Thomas of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, who helped write the legislation, led the religious coalition that pushed for passage.

Declining income leads to HMB hiring freeze

ATLANTA (BP)—Decreased gifts to the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board from its two major income sources in 1993 has caused the agency to implement a temporary hiring freeze and conduct a study which may lead to "minimal" downsizing.

According to unaudited figures, the 1993 Annie Armstrong Easter Offering totaled \$36.3 million, compared to \$37.6 million the previous year — a 3.5 percent decrease. Cooperative Program receipts at the HMB were \$676,000 less than the projected budget for the year. The special Easter offering comprises 47 percent of the mission board's income, while the Cooperative Program accounts for another 35 percent.

Larry Lewis, Home Mission Board president, said although the special offering decrease is disappointing, it is not a surprise.

"The 1992 Easter Offering was a record, nearly a 7 percent increase over the previous year. In these uncertain financial times, we knew it would be difficult to maintain that kind of increase, so we budgeted for an offering of \$36 million." The final total is 1 percent over the budgeted amount and thus,

according to Lewis, will not immediately impact work on the mission field.

"However, we are concerned about potential budget shortfalls from all income sources for this year and next, 1994 and '95. In fact, I have asked our management staff to study our organization with the possibility of some minimal downsizing toward the end of this year or next," Lewis explained.

Lewis said he has implemented a hiring freeze at the agency for the first three months of the year, anticipating the internal study to be complete by spring.

"This action should not be seen as an extreme measure. We are simply not filling vacant positions in Atlanta until we have a better feeling for 1995 income projections. It's simply prudent management," he said.

A number of SBC entities implemented staff reductions and reorganizations last year including the Baptist Sunday School Board, Foreign Mission Board, Stewardship Commission and several state conventions.

Jury rules in favor of Illinois Baptists

JOLIET, IL (BP)—A Will County jury has returned a verdict in favor of the Illinois Baptist State Association in a lawsuit that arose out of a 1990 explosion at the IBSA disaster relief unit set up in tornado-damaged Crest Hill.

Scott Sharp, a propane company employee who was refilling the relief unit's tank and was burned in the explosion, alleged in his suit against the IBSA that agents of the association were guilty of "willful and wanton misconduct."

The jury's decision, in effect, indicated Sharp was more responsible for the explosion than were Baptist volunteers working at the site. Therefore, Sharp was awarded no compensation for damages.

Although Sharp did not seek a specific amount of damages in his suit, his attorney, Thomas Naughton, suggested to the jury a figure of \$943,347 including specific amounts of \$149,700 in medical expenses and \$42,647 in lost wages as well as \$350,000 for "disability and dismemberment" and \$400,000 for "pain and suffering."

Pastor replaced on Oklahoma committee

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)—Gary Cook, pastor of First Baptist Church in Lawton and a former vice president at the Baptist Sunday School Board has been replaced on the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma's strategic planning committee.

Committee chairman David Willets said he replaced Cook because of Cook's recent public involvement with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. The committee is charged with the task of developing a strategic plan to guide future work of the convention.

Willets said he had selected Cook to serve on the committee because of Cook's expertise in management and planning and because he could also represent those who feel disenfranchised by the conservative resurgence. However, at the time Willets asked Cook to serve on the committee, Cook had not been identified in any public support of the CBF or its Oklahoma affiliate.

"If Gary had told me of his forthcoming involvement in the CBF, I would not have enlisted him. So I was disappointed to see that kind of involvement," Willets said.

In November, Cook served as moderator of one of the discussion groups at the state CBF meeting, introduced Cecil Sherman, CBF national head, at a meeting in a Lawton hotel and agreed to serve on the state CBF coordinating committee.

Cook disagreed with being taken off the planning committee. "I regret this has happened," Cook said. "Committee members talked in their first meeting about how healing needs to take place and how we need to reach out and build some bridges."

"It is grievous to me that I can grow up and be nurtured in my own state by everything Oklahoma Baptists stand for...and now find myself unacceptable to serve Oklahoma Baptists," he added.

Virginia panel to study cooperation in state

RICHMOND, VA (BP)—The president of the Baptist General Association of Virginia has created a committee he hopes will help Virginia Baptists with varying theological viewpoints work together in cooperative ministries.

Ron Crawford, who also is chairman of Virginia Baptists' general board, announced his 20-member "Presidential Council on Cooperation" during the board's fall meeting in November.

"The purpose of the council will be to foster trust among the leaders of significant Virginia Baptist coalitions," he said. "These people (on the council) will explore ways to enhance cooperation, trust and mutual respect in Virginia Baptist life."

Co-chairing the council will be two well-known Virginia pastors: moderate Neal Jones of Columbia Baptist Church in Falls Church and conservative Tommy Taylor of London Bridge Baptist Church in Virginia Beach.

Other members will be five moderates, five conservatives and five non-aligned persons. In addition, ex officio members will include Crawford; Reginald McDonough, BGAV executive director; and Nat Kellum, BGAV treasurer.

"The council will explore concerns to see if we can balance divergent needs within a clustered community of faith," Crawford said. "The point is not to bring us to the same place, but to explore methods of cooperation, given our different places."

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GLORIETA
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Russian pastor earns seminary doctorate

By Susan Simko

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

FORT WORTH, TX (BP)—When communism released its grip on Russia's churches, believers there were finally allowed to tell their neighbors about Jesus Christ. Russian pastors could plan evangelistic campaigns and new congregations could be started.

But there was a problem. After more than 70 years of isolation, most Russian Christians didn't know how to get started.

That crisis led Sergei Nicolaev, senior pastor of the Temple of the Gospel Church in St. Petersburg, to pursue a doctor of ministry degree at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, where he studied how the first-century church spread the gospel. Nicolaev graduated in December as the first Russian Baptist to earn a doctorate from the seminary.

"What I was studying in the different spheres of the pastoral ministry — anthropology, church growth, missions — it gave me valuable knowledge on how to do the things much easier and more effectively," Nicolaev said. "Here is the New Testament model, which you just have to understand, realize and just put into the ground and it works."

Nicolaev planted the model in Russian soil. Every three months during his studies at Southwestern, he flew home to lead seminars for Russian church leaders, teaching them the New Testament

evangelism tactics he was learning at Southwestern.

"The goal was to train this group of people to see new possibilities in the light of the New Testament similarities," he noted. "We tried to crystalize our own Russian model for evangelization using biblical resources and the experience of Western Christianity, especially Southern Baptists."

Then the Russian leaders fanned out through their cities to apply the new tactics. The result: 30 new Russian churches in one year.

Dynamically growing churches

"Those churches are not just started, they are dynamically growing, and it is because we just tried to open up the pastors and leaders to some very basics of the New Testament church — the involvement of laypeople in ministry, education and discipleship," Nicolaev said. "When people realize it, they are crazy for the Lord."

Nicolaev found more than useful theories at Southwestern. He found faculty members who nurtured him, he said. He counts Earl Martin, former professor of missions and world religions, as one of his closest friends and encouragers.

Associate dean Jimmie Nelson also helped Nicolaev. Nelson lectured about family priority in the midst of ministry. Nicolaev recognized himself and other Russian pastors in Nelson's words.

"In Russia during all those years, ministry for the ministers was the No. 1 priority," Nicolaev said. "We never knew what tomorrow held. Will I be arrested and sent to Siberia or will a coup take over the government? The ministry took 98 percent of ourselves."

Many neglected family relationships crumbled, and Russian pastors were too afraid to acknowledge it, Nicolaev said. But Nelson's lecture forced Nicolaev to face the problem in his own family, and he began to make his four sons a priority.

"I found the only way to win the boys was to leave the pastoral robes at the church," he said. "If they don't see me as their friend, they won't see me as their minister."

Watching from the balcony of Travis Avenue Baptist Church during commencement was Nicolaev's mother, Tamara Nicolaev, who flew from St. Petersburg to attend graduation.

Nicolaev said his mother, grandmother and about 100 other women have taken part in a secret prayer meeting each Friday since 1951.

"They prayed for their children, for the church and for a return to freedom," he said.

Nicolaev said a revival is beginning to occur in Russia along with the new freedoms. "When I started the Temple of the Gospel Church three years ago, we had 29 people," he said. "Now we have 1,700."

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Registration fee: \$20. To pre-register, contact: Tommy Goode, Missions Department, ABSC, P.O. Box 552, Little Rock, AR 72203; phone 501-376-4791, ext. 5150.

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Response to gospel is strong in area of Mexican uprising

By Mary E. Speidel
SBC Foreign Mission Board

TUXTLA GUTIERREZ, MEXICO (BP)—Mexico's first armed conflict since the 1970s occurred in one of the country's most responsive areas to the gospel, according to reports from a Southern Baptist representative there.

Indian rebels retreated into the mountains of Mexico's Chiapas state Jan. 4 after a three-day uprising that killed nearly 100 people. Guerrillas of the self-proclaimed Zapatista National Liberation Army had seized abandoned San Cristobal de las Casas and at least three other towns in the area.

The insurgency started shortly after the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) became official in Mexico on New Year's Day. The rebels protested the agreement, denounced the vast disparity between Chiapas' rich and poor and alleged human rights abuses against the region's poverty-stricken Indian peasants.

Southern Baptist representative Charles Collins last visited the area in early December to train Baptists who represent some of Mexico's indigenous people.

"I saw nothing at that time that would indicate any unrest. It was very calm and quiet," Collins said during a telephone interview.

But then, and in an earlier trip to the area, he observed "tremendous excitement

about and interest in the gospel" among indigenous people there.

"It's probably one of the best-growing areas in the country as far as (spiritual) decisions are concerned," Collins said. "There's a tremendous response to the gospel among these people."

Baptists have grown so rapidly in Chiapas during the past four years a second association had to be added, said Larry Gay, chairman of the organization of Southern Baptist representatives in Mexico. Both associations already have doubled in number of churches, he said.

While the Collinses now are the only Southern Baptist workers in the state, at least one couple is being sought to fill another assignment there, Gay said.

Since their arrival from Guatemala in September the Collinses have sought the best way to invest themselves in the region. So far they've found a big need for leadership training among indigenous people who have become Christians.

During a recent leave of absence, Collins, a former pastor, completed paramedic training. Mrs. Collins finished a degree in nursing.

"I'm 51, which means I only have about 14 more years to go here," he said. "That isn't very long as far as investing one's life in an area. I want to use these 14 years to really accomplish something that's important. I'm asking the Lord to show me what's really important to Him."

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Festival of Evangelists slated for Jan. 24

Arkansas Baptists' second annual Festival of Evangelists will be held January 24 at Immanuel Church, Little Rock.

The festival, held in conjunction with the 1994 Arkansas Baptist Evangelism Conference, will feature a "Celebration of Praise," special music and preaching.

Tom Cox, an evangelist from Mountainburg and president of the organization of Arkansas Baptist evangelists, invited all Arkansas Baptists to participate in the event.

Clarence Shell, director of the ABSC evangelism department, said the festival will be beneficial for pastors in the state. "Pastors should attend the festival to become personally acquainted with the evangelists and the gospel message they share," he noted.

The program will feature messages from Arkansas evangelists Shelby Bittle of Jacksonville and Jack Hazlewood of Little Rock. Also speaking will be Tom McEachin, associate director for the Home Mission Board's mass evangelism department.

Special music will be provided by the Lisemby Family of New Edinburg, the

Brown Family of Gurdon and Tom and Kay Cox.

There is no cost for the festival, which will begin with the "Celebration of Praise" at 9:45 a.m. and conclude at 11:45 a.m.

Shell said a dinner meeting sponsored by the ABSC evangelism department and the Home Mission Board will be held at 5 p.m. for vocational evangelists. It will feature business and the election of officers for the coming year. Ronnie Mayes, pastor of Beebe First Church, will be the featured speaker.

For more information, or reservations for vocational evangelists, contact Clarence Shell at the ABSC evangelism department; phone 376-4791, ext. 5132.

Acteens Convention registration opens

BIRMINGHAM, AL (BP)—Registration opened Jan. 1 for the National Acteens Convention to be held in Birmingham, Ala., June 21-24.

Acteens, the missions organization for girls in grades seven through 12, is sponsored by Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union. NAC is held once every

five years for Acteens members who have completed the seventh grade, as well as adult leaders. This is the first time the convention has been held in Birmingham, site of the WMU national office. More than 16,000 teens and their leaders are expected to attend NAC.

Registration will continue until June 3 on a first-come, first-served basis. Only those who register in advance will be allowed to participate in NAC activities.

"Heart of the Journey" will be the theme of the meeting. Included in the six general sessions will be a commitment service, a commissioning service, Christian performing artists, interviews with missionaries and multi-media presentations.

Each Acteen attending NAC is asked to bring a teddy bear or a pair of inexpensive canvas shoes to give away. These will be collected at NAC and given to home missionaries to use in their ministries across the country.

NAC registration forms are available in the January issue of *Accent*, the magazine for Acteens members. Forms also can be obtained from state WMU offices.

A registration fee of \$60 per person must accompany all registration forms. The fee includes entrance to all NAC sessions, a registration packet and an official NAC T-shirt. The fee does not include travel, housing, meals, insurance or incidentals.

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Director of missions—Carey Baptist Association is seeking resumes for the position of director of missions. Interested parties mail resumes to James Grafton, P.O. Box 126, Thornton, AR 71766.

Organist Needed—South Highland Baptist Church, L.R. Call 225-3991.

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Hosea proclaims wonders of God's love

By M. Pierce Matheny, Jr.
Professor of Old Testament and Hebrew
Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

Hosea is Southern Baptists' "Winter Bible Study" book for 1994.

Hosea is a book about God's "wounded" love.

Hosea married Gomer to act out God's judgment word against Israel.

Hosea was commanded to have children by Gomer and to give them symbolic names.

Hosea was ordered by God to marry a "woman of harlotries," that is, an immoral woman.

Hosea's marriage is the most difficult problem of interpretation in the book.

Hosea's wife may or may not have yet become immoral at the time of the marriage. (I believe that she had.)

Hosea may or may not have known Gomer was immoral at the time of the marriage. (I believe that he knew.)

Hosea is commanded to experience in his relationship to Gomer what God had experienced in His relationship to Israel.

Hosea's wife betrays their covenant of marriage, and becomes an adulteress.

Hosea is commanded to act out God's redemptive love for Israel by redeeming his erring bride.

Hosea preaches the judgment message of Israel's unfaithfulness to God out of this bitter experience.

Hosea also preaches hope for the future redemption of Israel, just as he has bought back and disciplined his adulterous wife.

Hosea says God will lure Israel into the desert for a "second honeymoon."

Hosea proclaims a new betrothal of Israel to Yahweh with all the covenant virtues as bridal gifts.

Hosea announces a new universal covenant of peace and fertility built on the grace of God.

Hosea said this could only happen for Israel after the discipline of judgment in exile.

Hosea focused on the religious leaders for having led the people astray.

Hosea condemned the apostasy of Israel to the Baal religion, with its drunkenness and immorality.

Hosea refused to accuse the women of their misconduct while excusing the men for theirs.

Hosea revealed that the Lord rejected Israel's worship as superficial.

Hosea preached the need for a real repentance going beyond such superficiality.

Hosea rejected Israel's kings as not chosen by God.

Hosea condemned their worship of the golden calf of Bethel, and predicted its destruction.

Hosea derided their trust in foreign alliances as basic betrayals of their loyalty to God.

Hosea was accounted as a fool and a madman by Israel for such preaching.

Hosea saw God as a loving Father, having to punish His rebellious son, but unwilling to finally destroy him.

Hosea saw Israel as a "Jacob," unwilling to learn the consequences of his tricky behavior.

Hosea said Ephraim as a nation was as good as dead and buried.

Hosea yet preached hope for a real repentance and healing through the forgiving love of God.

Hosea held out the hope for a restored Israel dwelling beneath God's shadow in a renewed "garden" of divine fruitfulness and beauty.

Hosea is a fascinating book about a prophet who experienced and proclaimed the surpassing wonders of God's love.

Matheny is the author of the Seminary Extension Department's *Study Guide for Hosea: God's Wounded Love*.


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FOREIGN MISSIONS

Answered prayer amazes missionary who asked it

By Craig Bird
SBC Foreign Missions Board

ZAMBAREJA, MOZAMBIQUE (BP)—Southern Baptist missionary Ed Moses prayed for something that seemed almost impossible.

The answer taught him once again the power of prayer.

The story began with Anal Anna, a refugee woman, and her four children who became Christians in 1992 through the efforts of Chambuta Baptist Church at the Chambuta refugee camp in Zimbabwe.

When years of civil war ended in Mozambique, her home country, she went back to her remote village — not long after she was baptized.

As the family struggled to rebuild their home, clear fields, plant crops — and dodge land mines scattered along the roads — they told others about Jesus.

Within months they had 21 new believers and sent word back to Zimbabwe for someone to come baptize them.

When missionary Ed Moses arrived, he found that none of the 26 Christians in Zambareja could read or write. How could anyone be trained in the isolated African village when no one was literate? he asked. How could they teach and preach without reading?

Back home, Moses and others quickly wrote to Christians throughout Zimbabwe and the United States asking people to pray for "one literate leader for the church in Zambareja."

Still, the chances of that happening seemed remote. So the Foreign Mission Board missionary took a hand-cranked tape recorder, teaching tapes and pictures on his next trip to the village.

But when he arrived, a man named Manuel Zhiwawo introduced himself — in English. He could read and write, was a Christian and wanted to join the church.

Zhiwawo had completed five study courses by mail from the Zimbabwe Bible Way Correspondence School, while living in Zimbabwe and had become a Christian during that study.

"Ask and you shall receive," Moses said.

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Convention Uniform

Facing up to God

By Lonnie W. Latham, DOM,
Bartholomew Association
Basic passage: Luke 9:51-10:12
Focal passage: Luke 9:51-10:12
Central truth: Obedience pleases
God.

Notice the word "face" which appears in 9:51, 52, 53, and 10:1. Luke unfolds how determined Jesus was to face up to His Father's will. Facing up to God always challenges the faithful. Jacob's night of wrestling resulted in his naming the spot Phaniel, "for I have seen God face to face and my life is preserved" (Gen. 32:30). Isaiah's spiritual transformation came from "his eyes hav[ing] seen the King, the Lord of hosts" (Isa. 6:5). How did Jesus see the Father? He saw the Father's face in His personal acts of obedience. Love wooed Him to look into His Father's face. That confrontation compelled Him to "steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51). Obedience was the only way He could continually see His Father. Disobedience always breaks eye contact, fellowship and power.

Acts of obedience are often accompanied by obstacles. Three are described here. The Samaritans of vv. 51-56 rebelled at His decision to leave them for Jerusalem. Their reaction was so severe that James and John wanted to call down retributive fire. But the disobedience and attitudes of others did not move Jesus from His destiny to save all men, even the rebellious (v. 56). Second, notice the compulsive man of vv. 57-59. Without counting the cost and making the commitment, no one can be a productive disciple.

Third, as harsh as vv. 59-62 seem, all personal responsibilities must be submissive to the perfect will of our Father.

Facing up to God's call and facing obstacles equips us to face the future (vv. 10:1-12). We are all being sent out before the face of the Lord as His witnesses. Truly, we must help others see the past and the future. In the past we see the face of our suffering Savior and victorious, risen Lord. In the future we see the face of our coming King. One day we will all look into the face of our Lord. I pray that all of us will see joy in His eyes as we stand there before Him, and hear Him say, "Enter in, thou good and faithful servant. Well done."

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Life and Work

Force or farce?

By Martin Babb, minister of education/
youth, Pulaski Heights Church,
Little Rock
Basic passage: Luke 7:18-25
Focal passage: Luke 7:18-25
Central truth: Doubting? Go ahead.
God can handle it.

Most of us have had the opportunity to experience doubt in one form or another. For some it occurs every election year or whenever Congress is in session. Doubt also happens within the framework of Christianity, but as we see from John the Baptist in today's lesson, that is not always bad. In dealing with doubt, I believe there are four important statements from this passage in Luke:

(1) Confront your doubt. John was in prison (Luke 3:20) and sent two of his disciples to find out if Jesus was the Messiah (vv. 19-20). John was probably upset because he was in jail and Jesus was not exactly setting the world on fire like John had expected. He had his doubts and went straight to the source.

(2) Accept the outcome. Jesus answers their questions with both actions (v. 21) and words (vv. 22-23). His answer was positive and an encouragement to John and his ministry. Whatever doubt is in a given situation we must be prepared to accept the answer when we confront God.

(3) Learn from the experience. John's messengers departed (v. 24) and Jesus began speaking to the people concerning John (vv. 24-26). He tells them that John was the one appointed to prepare the way for the Messiah. Whenever we come away from a confrontation with God, we have a renewed strength that should keep us going when times are rough.

(4) Live in faith. Jesus affirms John as the chosen one (v. 27) and calls him the greatest of all the prophets (v. 28). Rather than condemn John for his doubt, Jesus affirms him. Too many times we are afraid that doubt will reduce our faith. On the contrary, as we see from John's example, when handled properly it can strengthen our faith.

Please understand from this lesson that God is a personal God in an all too often impersonal world. He cares about us and wants us to be honest with Him. And that is where we have the problem. It is not that our doubt is too big...it is that our faith is too small.

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Bible Book

Jesus' ministry of change

By Don Carter, pastor, First Church,
Eureka Springs
Basic Passage: John 2:1-25
Focal passage: John 2:1-25
Central truth: Jesus' ministry
brought social, physical and
spiritual change.

Many of us have had trouble understanding the wedding in Cana. Jesus was an invited guest. But why was He there? His mother decided that Jesus must have been there to meet a particular social and physical need, the wine was running low.

Jesus was there to initiate His ministry. The miracle was not just a social appeasement. It had to be in line with the cross to be worthy. The words of Jesus indicate at least three things for us to consider.

First, calling His mother "woman" was not necessarily a cruel thing. He was establishing for her a new frame of reference. He was no longer just her son but also needed to be her savior.

Second, Jesus was ensuring that Mary understood that any actions or miracles must be in keeping with God's will for His life. Just to keep a party going was not sufficient reason to perform a miracle.

Third, Jesus was signaling the beginning of His earthly ministry. He was making sure that His mother and disciples were prepared for what was about to happen. They must start seeing Him as the Son of God, not Mary's little boy.

Have you ever put yourself in the sandals of the servant? He was told by Jesus, an invited guest, to take water to his boss, the master of the banquet, and suggest that it was wine. Would you? He did and the master thought it was the best wine yet.

When we trust Jesus, even when we don't understand what He is up to, we will see the glory of God. Christ began His ministry by revealing more of His Father to His mother and disciples.

The clearing of the temple in Jerusalem was another clear message that things were changing. Jesus was appalled that His Father's house had become a common marketplace. Jesus' personal ministry was to turn eyes toward the Father.

As Jesus began His ministry, things began to change. He brings us all to a place where we must change and follow Him.

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Convention Uniform

Relationships with sinners

By Lonnie W. Latham, DOM,
Bartholomew Association
Basic passage: Luke 15
Focal passage: Luke 15
Central truth: Christ commissioned
Christians to reach out to sinners.

A lady came to Dr. D.L. Moody and indignantly said, "Do you mean to say to me that I must come to Christ the same way as this dirty drunkard?"

Dr. Moody responded, "No, I did not say that, but Christ did."

The greatest sin of all is to assume that our personal sinfulness is somehow less incriminating than the sins of others. In order to minimize our sins, we concentrate on theirs. If they can be placed in a category, we can separate ourselves from them. Sin always separates and divides us.

Jesus, however, would not accept this type of divided society. Making no distinction, He remained accessible to everyone.

Luke 15 affirms His affiliation with sinners. The religious community was appalled by His unacceptable associations. "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them" (Luke 15:2). They had been led to believe that association with sinners would contaminate them. We say it differently but we still believe it: Lay down with dogs. Get up with fleas.

But Jesus associated with them without becoming contaminated. He was with the worst of sinners, but He never sinned. Although He associated with the dogs, He didn't get fleas. The reason? He loved them. He wanted to save them. People you love, you want to be around. People you love, you want to see saved. Relational evangelism worked then and it still can work today.

This type of association results in kingdom growth and heavenly joy. How wonderful to have 99 saved. How tragic to have even one lost. Take a risk. Go after that one you know is lost. Don't stop until you bring him home. Make an angel sing. Lead a friend home to Jesus.

Life and Work

Thankless vs. thankful

By Martin Babb, minister of education/
youth, Pulaski Heights Church,
Little Rock
Basic passage: Luke 7:36-50
Focal passage: Luke 7:36-39, 44-50
Central truth: A thankful heart is a
sign that God is working.

It should not take any of us very long to find something in our life for which we are thankful. In our story today we learn about gratitude from a woman who was not exactly at the top of the social/economic ladder. But isn't that the way it is most of the time? The people with the least are the most grateful.

(1) Gratitude should be expressed openly. Jesus goes to the house of a Pharisee to eat (v. 36) and a woman enters the room with some ointment (v. 37) and begins to cry and wash Jesus' feet (v. 38). She was a sinful woman who obviously knew of the forgiving power of Christ and wanted to express her gratitude. Her action was a supreme sign of complete devotion.

(2) Expressions of gratitude can be misinterpreted. This act would be difficult for us to understand but the Pharisees should have known (v. 39). He was more concerned with her past than he was her future. One thing about Jesus—He always looked beyond the surface and saw the potential.

(3) Forgiveness is a key motivation. Jesus took the time to explain to Simon everything he did not do that he should have done as a gracious host (vv. 44-46). Simon was not as concerned about his own sin as he was hers. She had been forgiven much and her appreciation was overflowing.

(4) The basis for gratitude is God's grace. Jesus affirms that her sins have already been forgiven (v. 48), the others question His authority (v. 49) and He tells her to go in peace (v. 50). It seems that the Pharisees spent a lot of energy questioning Jesus' authority and precious little working on their forgiveness. We deserve nothing, but because of God's grace we can have forgiveness of sins.

God, through Jesus, has provided the only avenue to eternal life. Is that not something for which we should be extremely grateful? If we as Christians do not thank God, who will? I realize that He is not in it for the thanks, but sometimes I wonder if being God isn't a thankless job.

Bible Book

You must be born again

Don Carter, pastor, First Church,
Eureka Springs
Basic Passage: John 3:1-36
Focal passage: John 3:1-36
Central truth: Salvation comes when
we trust Jesus for the grace He gives
so freely.

Nicodemus had some serious paradigms to shift. As a Pharisee, he was accustomed to thinking of religion in well-defined terms. After meeting Jesus, everything was brand new—like being born again. How can that happen?

What can we learn?

1) Expect the unexpected. When dealing with what God is doing, we must remember that God does not think like we think. He already knows what He is doing. He never flies by the seat of His pants. We must abide in Him to understand what He expects of us.

2) Let the Holy Spirit be our guide. We need only one Spirit to guide us—the Spirit of God. Jesus told Nicodemus that we must be born of the Spirit. The Spirit must permeate all that we are and everything we do.

3) We don't have to perish. Because of God's great love for us, He gave His One and Only Son, for whoever believes in Him will never perish, but have life everlasting. What a promise to hold on to. What a promise to let go of and give to others. Christ came not to condemn but to save.

4) The light changes everything. As I watched the leaves change color this fall, I noticed that the amount of sunshine after the rain helped to change the color of the leaves. I'm sure there's a scientific explanation. Who cares? The colors are what's important. Jesus said that those who do evil hate the light for it shows all their sin. Stay in the Light and keep away from sin. Enjoy the colors of the Light.

5) Where we stand is our testimony. John knew that he came to prepare the way for the Messiah. His classic testimony is one that we all should remember daily. "He must increase and I must decrease." What is your testimony? Is Christ increasing because of you? Or are you blocking the view to Jesus?

Nicodemus allowed Christ to attack what he knew about "religion" and challenge him to think about God the Father. John's testimony was God-given. Jesus must increase.

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NEWS DIGEST

Iranian man facing execution for his Christian faith

BRUSSELS, BELGIUM (BP)—As Christians everywhere celebrated Jesus' birth, a Christian man in Iran already imprisoned for almost nine years faced possible death because of his faith.

Christians inside Iran have feared the worst following Mehdi Dibaj's Dec. 3 trial, during which he refused to renounce Christianity and presented a strong testimony to his faith in Christ.

Once a nominal Muslim, Dibaj became a Christian years ago. He has served as an evangelist and also helped translate the New Testament into Farsi, the main language of Iran. He was arrested and charged with apostasy from Islam.

"I am a Christian, a sinner who believes Jesus has died for my sins on the cross and who by His resurrection and victory over death, has made me righteous in the presence of the holy God," Dibaj told the court.

Iranian Christians fear for Dibaj's life because Iranian law was changed in 1993 to prescribe death for Muslims who openly declare they are Christians. They have called for believers to pray for Dibaj.

New law in Mongolia could limit Christian activities

HONG KONG (BP)—A new law passed by the Mongolian Parliament could confine Christian activities inside churches, require churches to register with the government and ban religious activities in state-owned buildings or schools.

The law reportedly takes effect Feb. 1 in the once-isolated Asian nation surrounded by Russia and China. It also will give the state final say over the location of churches and number of church workers and bar foreigners from engaging in religious activity.

The legislation acknowledges the right of Mongolians to believe in any religion they choose. But it recognizes Buddhism alone as essential to Mongolia's long history and heritage and decrees Buddhism "shall be given its rightful place."

Islam and Shamanism also receive special exemptions. Other religious activity judged to be against Mongolian "customs and tradition" can be forbidden.

International Baptist academy to relocate in 1994

BUDAPEST, HUNGARY (BP)—The International Baptist Lay Academy will relocate to the city of Szeged, Hungary, a city just outside Budapest, at the end of 1994.

Szegedzentmiklos Baptist Church has agreed to house the school in a lease agreement that runs from 1995-97, according to Southern Baptist missionary Errol Simmons, academy director. The lay academy has met since its founding in 1990 in facilities of the Hungarian Baptist Theological Academy, but that lease expires at the end of 1994.

In 1998 European Baptist leaders plan for the academy to become part of a new theological education center to be developed in Prague, Czech Republic. The academy is backed by the European Baptist Federation and the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board and was founded to provide theological education to Eastern European Baptists.

SBC Cooperative Program gifts up during December

NASHVILLE, TN (BP)—Southern Baptist Convention Cooperative Program receipts for December were up 14.56 percent over the same month a year ago which also helped the first quarter of the fiscal year to show an increase, according to Morris H. Chapman, president and chief executive officer of the SBC Executive Committee.

The CP gifts for December 1993 totaled \$12,495,334 compared to December 1992 of \$10,906,778. The year-to-date figure, the first quarter of the 1993-94 fiscal year, shows \$34,367,885 compared to the same period of 1992-93 of \$33,471,798, a 2.68 percent increase. However, for the year to date, total gifts are \$190,798 short of the budget requirement for the first quarter.

Bennett, retired Southern Seminary provost, dies

LOUISVILLE, KY (BP)—G. Willis Bennett, retired provost at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, died Jan. 5 of an apparent heart attack.

Bennett, 74, joined the seminary faculty in 1959 as an associate professor of Christian ethics. He was named the William Walker Brookes professor of church and community in 1969, a position he held until 1990.

Prior to becoming provost in 1987, Bennett served as dean of the school of theology, director of graduate studies, director of advanced professional studies and director of field education. He retired as provost in 1991 but continued to teach at the seminary as a senior professor of church and community.

Bennett, a graduate of the University of Louisville and Southern Seminary, is survived by his wife, Carolline, three daughters and six grandchildren.