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July 11, 1996

Arkansas Baptist State Convention

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ARKANSAS BAPTIST



Volume 95, Number 14

July 11, 1996



*the
fruit
of the
Spirit
is
love,
joy,
peace*
Galatians 5:22

Day of Prayer for World Peace • August 4

SBC resolution generates debate over Jewish evangelism

By Sarah Zimmerman
SBC Home Mission Board

ALPHARETTA, GA (BP)—Southern Baptist efforts to highlight evangelistic work among Jewish people have drawn media interest, criticism from Jews and debate about Christians' role in witnessing to Jews.

Messengers to the recent Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in New Orleans approved a resolution calling Southern Baptists to pray for the salvation of Jewish people and to direct energies and resources toward the proclamation of the gospel to Jewish people.

On June 10 Home Mission Board directors appointed Jim and Kathy Sibley as home missionaries to develop evangelistic ministries among Jews and start churches in predominantly Jewish communities. The HMB's work with Jewish people began in 1921 when Jacob Gartenhouse was appointed a missionary for Jewish evangelism. While the missionary position was suspended in 1989, work among Jewish people has continued through the Southern Baptist Messianic Fellowship and dialogue with Jewish leaders.

The resolution and the Sibleys' appointment created a national stir in the media, beginning with a June 14 article in *The New York Times*. HMB president Larry Lewis has appeared on "ABC World News Tonight" and "CBS This Morning"; Sibley, who served 13 years as a Southern Baptist representative to Israel, was featured on a 30-state, two-hour radio talk show; and numerous radio stations and newspapers have contacted the HMB and the SBC Executive Committee for information.

Jewish leaders referred to the SBC actions as a "great setback" to Christian-Jewish relations, a "spiritual attempt at

genocide" and an act of arrogance.

Southern Baptist spokesmen, however, insist this represents a serious misreading of the resolution's intent.

"Southern Baptists have led the way in championing the unique heritage and contribution of the Jewish community," said SBC president Tom Elliff, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church in Del City, Okla. "In the closing years of this millennium, it would be distressing to me if we fail to adequately share our faith with people for whom we have such love and respect."

Phil Roberts, director of the HMB's interfaith witness department, said the media attention over the SBC resolution and HMB appointment of the Sibleys "has resulted in perhaps the greatest opportunity to highlight the claims of Jesus as the Jewish Messiah in recent history."

While some theologians propose a "dual covenant view" of Jewish evangelism, meaning Jews are saved by keeping the Old Testament law while Gentiles are saved by faith in Christ, Southern Baptists and other evangelical groups emphasize that Jesus Christ is the only means for salvation.

"We have a deep love for the Jewish people, a deep appreciation for Jewish people. In fact, our entire heritage is Jewish," Lewis said on "CBS This Morning." Noting that "it was the Jewish believers who brought the gospel to the Gentiles," Lewis added, "Now we in turn want to share that gospel with not just the Jews, but everybody in the world. This is our command, this is our mandate, and we want to be faithful in doing that."

At least 30 Southern Baptist churches are Messianic congregations, said Russell Begay, the HMB's director of language church extension. The church members are Jews who have professed faith in Christ and continue to observe Jewish customs.

Cover Story



Prayer for World Peace

Southern Baptists will observe their annual Day of Prayer for World Peace on Sunday, Aug. 4. The theme of this year's emphasis is "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace" (Gal. 5:22).

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Arkansas Baptists

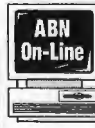
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Volume 95 • Number 14

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Olympic opportunity

Southern Baptist Olympic witnessing tools already getting response

ALPHARETTA, GA (BP)—The Olympic flame has yet to reach Atlanta, but Southern Baptist ministry organizers already are fired up about the results they're seeing.

Producers of witnessing materials for the games predict thousands of Olympic fans in Atlanta and elsewhere could become Christians as a result of sports guides and witnessing pins.

Already 145 response cards from the Olympic pocket guide have been mailed to the Home Mission Board, said Jack Smith of the personal evangelism department. The guides list Olympic winners and records and a six-page explanation of Christianity.

Of those responses, 65 are from people who became Christians after reading the guide. "It's about the easiest witnessing tool I have found to share," Smith said. "Nobody turns them down. It's going to be a keepsake."

An estimated 3.5 million pocket guides have been ordered by churches and Christian groups for witnessing during the Olympics, July 19-Aug. 4.

"We thought we were going to produce a little piece to use in Atlanta," said Toby Frost of the FMB's mass evangelism department. "The pocket guide has been sent to over 200 denominations in over 40 countries."



The guides and witnessing pins were produced for Atlanta International Ministries '96, Southern Baptists' ministry effort during the Olympics and Paralympics. In addition to being used near game venues, AIM '96 staff promote the guide and pin as a bridge for churches everywhere to reach their communities this summer.

"The sky's the limit," Frost said. "The Assembly of God churches in Atlanta are even putting them in all the sports bars.... They have never been refused as they have asked for permission to fill a little box and

a little display up with those."

Smith said his office is prepared for 10,000 mailed-in responses to the guides, "and it could exceed that. I fully expect 30 percent of those to be professions of faith."

HMB marketing director Rick Head said he is excited about the sales. "It means more people are going to have the opportunity to be exposed to the gospel," he noted. In addition to English, the guides are available in Japanese, Chinese, Russian, Spanish, French and Arabic. Inserts also are available in Chinese, Japanese and Korean.

Frost said he initially hoped 100,000 witnessing pins might be given out during the games. Instead, about 300,000 pins already have been ordered. The lapel pins include the "More Than Gold"

slogan and five colored stars that pin traders can use to explain the plan of salvation.

In a related project sponsored by AIM and Georgia Woman's Missionary Union, hundreds of volunteers are working to prepare 1 million Olympic hospitality bags. The colorful plastic bags, each filled with snacks and personal care items such as sunscreen or lip balm, will be distributed to international visitors, providing an additional witnessing opportunity for thousands of missions volunteers who will converge on Atlanta next week.

Missionaries to help meet language needs at '96 Olympics

ATLANTA (BP)—Foreign athletes and world travelers in Atlanta during this summer's Olympics will have the opportunity to meet some Americans who know their customs and language.

Up to 80 Southern Baptist foreign missionaries will participate in evangelistic efforts at the games. The missionaries speak not only common languages such as Spanish and French, but also obscure languages such as Shona, Ndebele, Tagalog and Isithosa. Those languages represent some of the 336 ethnic people groups to whom the Foreign Mission Board relates around the world.

Their ability to fluently speak such a broad array of languages promises to add a dimension to Southern Baptists' presence July 19 through Aug. 25 at the Olympics and Paralympics, said Linda Johnson, who heads up Atlanta International Ministries (AIM).

They will be assigned to such locations as the Stone Mountain area, where tennis and cycling competition is scheduled; the Roswell-Cobb County area, where a major festival will bring in big-name entertainers every night; and the Olympic Green near the downtown Atlanta stadium, where AIM will maintain its own indoor ministry center and five hospitality sites.

They also could be assigned to participate in ministries at

various hotels around the city as AIM organizers evaluate specific cultural needs. Everywhere they serve, the missionaries will be looking for ways to share the gospel of Jesus Christ.

"We'll be looking to them for a big plus—their understanding of the culture, and knowing the people and their language," Johnson said. AIM represents the combined efforts of Southern Baptists' home and foreign mission boards and the Georgia Baptist Convention.

Before forming AIM, a team from the three agencies spent several days in Barcelona, Spain, for the 1992 Olympics. "We went to observe what could potentially become ministry and witness opportunities for the '96 Olympics," said Don Sewell, director of special projects for the Foreign Mission Board's denominational relations office.

Missionaries will be among about 8,000 total volunteers whom AIM will use for outreach. Volunteers will hand out copies of an "Interactive Pocket Guide '96" booklet. It lists world and Olympic records in each event, leaving space to keep records for the 1996 games. Six of its 32 pages are devoted to the evangelistic message titled, "More Than Gold."

A PASTOR'S HEART



By EMIL TURNER
ABCS Executive Director

The room grew quiet. Thoughtful. Finally, one man spoke, then another and another. Each one wanted to be sure I knew his point of view.

I am describing eight meetings with Arkansas pastors. Each pastor in the state was invited to one of eight regional meetings to meet with me and share his views on our work in Arkansas. I met some godly men and I learned some good lessons. Some of the lessons are:

■ *Arkansas pastors desire to see lost people saved.* They respond to evangelism more than to anything else. Thank the Lord. May it always be.

■ *Arkansas pastors are theologically conservative.* Not one indicated there was any doubt about the truthfulness of the Bible. While not all would agree on every interpretation, the best description of us is conservative.

■ *Arkansas pastors agree that changes must occur in our churches, state conventions and the Southern Baptist Convention.* There is no consensus for the status quo.

■ *Arkansas pastors believe the state convention is responsive to their concerns.* Over and over they communicated that the state convention has been both personally concerned and helpful.

■ *Arkansas pastors want to see a more "customized" approach to state convention work.* More emphasis on personal contact than on programs.

■ *Arkansas pastors love the Lord, His Word and His church.* Amen and Amen.

Have you read *Has Democracy Had Its Day*, by Carl F. Henry? (1996, Christian Life Commission).

Dr. Henry's brief book is a good primer on the historical development of democracy. It emphasizes that democracy requires faith to maintain its strength. The book is hard to read — but worth the effort.

KATSY McALISTER

Woman's Viewpoint



Out of the mouth of babes

John and I have been involved in a number of volunteer mission projects in the past 13 years. Serving as one of the project coordinators for the Arkansas Baptist-European Baptist Convention partnership was one experience that was very memorable.

We spent four months in Europe and lived in an apartment in Wiesbaden, Germany, which was upstairs over the former European Baptist Convention office. Up 57 steps.

The 4th and 5th grade Sunday School class at our church asked us to come visit them before we left to go to Germany and share a prayer need so that they could pray for us while we were gone.

We asked them to pray we wouldn't get run over on the Autobahn and also pray John would be able to get up and down all those steps with his bad leg. (He has a prosthesis.)

After being in Germany for about two months we attended an eight-page fax from this Sunday School class. They had been studying about biblical

missionaries Paul and Barnabas. Since we were "their" missionaries, each one wrote us a letter. I would like to share one letter that we considered a keeper:

*Dear John,
We're praying for you. In a way you're sort of like Paul, except:
You haven't been stoned, praise the*

*Lord,
Or shipwrecked, praise the Lord,
Or snake bit, praise the Lord,
Or had to walk a thousand miles, praise the Lord.*

*And if Paul can do all that,
I really hope you can climb the stairs.
Your friend, Daniel*

Out of the mouth of babes comes much wisdom. There is a whole lot more each one of us can give in service to the Lord than what we have already given.

Katharine "Katsy" McAlister is a homemaker. She and her husband, John, live in El Dorado where they are members of First Church.

Personal perspectives

"My major responsibility will be to enable the churches of Arkansas with the resources they bring to us...to have a clear vision of reaching the world."
—Emil Turner, ABCS executive director

"Any individual working on any type of theology degree can accomplish the bulk of studies right here at home."
—Burton Perry, ABCS assistant director for theological education

"We are asking believers in the United States to petition God with prayer and petition the Kuwaiti government for Mr. Hussein's safety."
—Jerry Rankin, Foreign Mission Board president,
responding to a death sentence imposed on Robert Hussein
for converting to Christianity

"If family concerns are to be dismissed and those who raise them are to be marginalized by Disney, I predict that the erosion of trust will only increase."
—Bill Merrill, SBC Executive Committee vice president
for convention relations

Iron out differences

I had a letter drafted for you concerning this business of Buddy Sutton and then received the June 13 edition of the Newsmagazine. Your perspective column stated my opinions much better than my letter.

However something still bothers me: Why did Larry Holly distribute his letter to Jim Henry to the news media, and why did Larry Page have to go to Indiana to criticize Mr. Sutton? The is Baptist business and Arkansas Baptist business respectively. We should be able to iron out our own differences without all the publicity. I wonder if non-Baptists get the idea that all we do is criticize each other.

Edsel E. Richmond
Mena, AR

Facts before friendship

If you can't discredit the message, discredit the messenger. That seems to be the tact of the recent editorial, "Guilt by association is bad business." Mr. Henderson seems to make Larry Holly the issue rather than the apparent conflict that Buddy Sutton's law firm posed for not only himself but the entire Southern Baptist Convention. Forget about who Larry Holly is or what he has done in the past. Did he make a credible point in asking that Buddy Sutton not be on the Resolutions Committee of the SBC?

I know no one in Arkansas that does not personally like Buddy Sutton. That respect should not deter us from looking at the facts of his possibly serving on the Resolutions Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention. It is a fact that the law firm of which he manages does represent those linked with gambling. The recent SBC Resolutions Committee did in fact report out a strong resolution opposing gambling. What if some reporter found out about Buddy Sutton's link to gambling? Would he bother to mention that Buddy personally opposes gambling? Would we not have looked rather foolish as a convention?

Our editor would have done well instead of attacking Dr. Holly's character with veiled references to past stands to have printed his letter on this subject. He could have stated that Dr. Holly blasted the Implementation Task Force with even stronger vigor when they mistakenly did business with a gambling-related company. Many of those folks were his personal friends. That did not however stop him from speaking the truth.

Those who defended Mr. Sutton have, I fear, missed the point in their rush to defend a friend. To dismiss anyone's claim because of past positions, or because they



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

don't live in our state is dangerous and foolish. When will we realize that we cannot be personally opposed to something, but professionally involve ourselves in that which we oppose? That kind of compartmentalization of our lives waters down our witness and effectiveness for the Lord.

Let's look at the facts, not just focus on a friendship.

Mark Brooks
Springdale, AR

Court of public opinion

The attacks by Larry Holly and Larry Page in the May 30 issue of the Newsmagazine reveal a lot more about these people than they do about Buddy Sutton. Buddy Sutton is not on trial in the court of public opinion. They are.

Roy Remont
Hot Springs, AR

Guilt by association

Regarding your June 13 editorial, "Guilt by association is bad business," I would like to make the following response:

1. I disagree with both the spirit and substance of your remarks.

2. I applaud Larry Page and understand his frustration with having to battle the pro-gambling forces, plus the Friday Law Firm for which Mr. Buddy Sutton serves as senior partner. Furthermore, I agree with every statement which you attributed to Mr. Page. May our God be pleased to give us more men with the biblical convictions and moral courage of Larry Page.

3. There is a legitimate principle of guilt by association. If, as senior partner, Mr. Sutton could have used his influence to prohibit his law firm from representing the Oklahoma gambling interest and did not do so, then he is guilty by association — pure and simple! The fact that Mr. Sutton chose rather to simply state his personal views and allow his fellow attorneys "freedom of choice" does not establish his integrity in this matter at all. Mr. Editor, your rationale would also justify Mr. Sutton if his law firm represented an abortion chamber where partial-birth abortions are performed! For that matter, your rationale would justify Mr. Sutton's position if his law firm represented porno shops or a house of prostitution! As long as Mr. Sutton states his personal opposition to gambling,

you don't seem to mind his law firm getting rich from the gambling industry.

Guilt by association? Yes. Ask Lot (Gen. 19). Ask Elimelech (Ruth 1).

David Miller
Heber Springs, AR

The best SBC in years

The Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in New Orleans was the best one that I have attended since my first one back in 1982.

Although convention elections and directions have not always "gone my way," I decided several years ago that, despite our differing opinions, the Cooperative Program is the best way to accomplish the Great Commission. Our recent convention meeting reaffirmed this feeling.

Jim Henry's presidential address should be heard by every Southern Baptist. I was encouraged by the man's strong convictions yet humble and cooperative spirit. I wish that we could have waived the bylaws and elected him to a third term. He's the kind of convention conservative I'd like to thank that I am — not combative or exclusive, but compassionate and inclusive.

The Foreign Mission Board program on Wednesday evening was the most inspiring I have ever seen. I wish that every Southern Baptist could have heard the ensemble from Africa.

I'm glad that I'm a Southern Baptist! I hope that those who have struggled in the past and those who are dividing their mission efforts and dollars at present will unify their support of the Cooperative Program. I know that it's not the only way to do God's work, but it is the best!

Rick Hyde
Malvern, AR

Bravo, Southern Baptists

Congratulations to Southern Baptists for being salt and light by standing up for the money-making giants of Walt Disney, abortion and gambling.

In a letter of June 5 Southern Baptist Convention president Jim Henry and 10 former SBC presidents urged President Clinton to repent of his veto of the Partial-birth Abortion Ban Act, which stops the brutal killing of viable babies about to be born.

Southern Baptists know what it is to contend for the faith. Bible-believers have fought for many years to keep apostasy from taking over their denomination. Jesus called His true disciples children of light. Bravo, Southern Baptists!

Gwen Carpenter
Magnolia, AR

Spiritual victories

Former Arkansas Baptist pastors help impact Romania for Christ

By Trennis Henderson

Editor, Arkansas Baptist

BUCHAREST, ROMANIA — What long-term ministry impact can Arkansas Baptists expect to have in Europe? In addition to the dozens of ministry projects being accomplished through the state convention's four-year missions partnership with the European Baptist Convention, several Arkansas Baptists are serving throughout Europe as career missionaries.

Among Arkansas responding to comparatively new mission opportunities in Eastern Europe are former Arkansas Baptist pastors Mike Kemper and Preston Pearce who are both based in Bucharest, Romania.

Kemper and his wife, Kathy, have served in Romania since early 1994 where he has been pastor of the English-language International Baptist Church in Bucharest. He recently was named administrator of Southern Baptist missions work in central Europe. In his new position, he is responsible for coordinating the work of Southern Baptist missionaries in Romania, Hungary, Poland, and the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

Pearce, former pastor of Fellowship Church in Batesville, began serving last year as associate professor of theology at the Baptist Theological Institute of Bucharest. He and his wife, Karen, are both natives of Norfolk.

Visiting together in the Kempers' apartment a few blocks from the imposing People's Palace, the Southern Baptist missionaries reflected on their work in the midst of continual social and political

change throughout Eastern Europe.

Following the Romanian revolution in 1989 in which former Communist dictator Nicolae Ceausescu was executed, religious freedom has increased greatly throughout the nation, Kemper noted. "Since the revolution, the Romanian Baptist Union has planted about 500 churches," he explained. Despite such rapid growth, however, "there are thousands of villages that don't have any kind of evangelical work and are wide open for someone to come."

"Thousands of villages...don't have any kind of evangelical work and are wide open for someone to come."

— Mike Kemper
FMB missions administrator
for Central Europe

"Evangelizing people is a top priority," Kemper emphasized. "Most of the Orthodox know very little about the Lord." Due to the close ties between the government and the Orthodox religion, "most people think they are right with the Lord because they are Romanian and Orthodox."

In reality, fewer than 2 percent of the nation's 24 million people are considered evangelical Christians. Compounding the challenge for Baptists is the fact that "there's a real deficit of trained leaders." Noting that there are only about 300 seminary-trained pastors in a country with 1,600 Baptist churches, Kemper said most pastors serve three to five churches each with the assistance of lay leaders.

That's where Pearce and other seminary professors can help make a difference. "The best pastors and evangelists in Romania will always be Romanians," Pearce pointed out. "They know the culture and the language." He said his goal is "to equip them for the ministry God has called them to do."

Pearce, who is teaching both Old Testament and New Testament theology this year, said one of his primary objectives is to provide his students with practical insights into Scripture. "I'm there to give these guys something they can take into the pulpit or a Bible study," he said. "One intent I have in every class is to bring the Word to help them in their ministry. Some of them are already pastoring two or three missions."

Despite the "culture shock" of moving from rural Arkansas to Romania's capital city, Pearce affirmed the "joy of being in God's will," adding that "there is a blessing that comes with obedience."

Even in the midst of obedience, however, Pearce and his family must constantly cope with "the vestiges of the communist system."

Noting that decades of communist rule "have left people beaten, wounded and broken," he said there is now "a hunger and acceptance of anything Western." As a result, "Romania is making many wrong choices without a strong moral background. The family is taking a tremendous assault right now with pornography, abuse, divorce and abortion.

"The family under communism held together because it had no choice," Pearce reflected. Amid the nation's rapid political upheaval, "they don't know what to do with their freedom.

"Things are improving but a lot of the old system still hangs on," he continued. "People are still people — the main problem still is sin."

Kemper pointed out that many Romanians "had high hopes for democracy and expected democracy to change everything overnight." Noting that inflation, unemployment and other problems have produced "a lot of frustration" throughout the country, he added, "There are a lot of



Southern Baptist missionary Mike Kemper leads a Sunday afternoon worship service at the English-language International Baptist Church in Bucharest, Romania.

European churches get boost from ABSC volunteers

Arkansas Baptist churches and associations have completed several projects with European sister churches this spring through the missions partnership between the Arkansas Baptist State Convention and the European Baptist Convention.

Mission teams worked on construction crews, led revivals or Experiencing God retreats, conducted Backyard Bible Clubs and Vacation Bible Schools and trained leaders of EBC churches.

From March through June, 14 Arkansas Baptist teams or individuals conducted mission trips in eight European countries.

Among teams traveling to Europe to work as members of construction crews was a group of eleven from Second Church in Conway that also included Faulkner Association director of missions Lee Lawson. The team cleared brush and built a sleeping loft for a Baptist camp near a village two hours north of Bratislava, Slovakia, in late May.

Team leader Dan West said the church camp is an "outreach" project of International Baptist Church in Bratislava, Second Church's partner congregation. "When the communists took over, they turned it into a farm," he said. "We were helping turn it back into a youth camp."

According to West, the group's duties were to clear, build and renovate. "There was about an acre of land that had grown up badly - dense forest and thorn thicket. Second, we added a sleeping loft in the top of the barn."

Earlier that month, West traveled alone to "scout out" the work scene. "We didn't have a clue what we were doing or where," he said. "We thought it would be primarily construction. After looking at the situation, I realized we needed chainsaws and weed eaters more than Skil saws and hammers."

He said the camp will be used beginning this summer. One of the first groups to use the camp will be "a group of orphans from Chernobyl who have never been exposed to any Christian influence."

Recalling the team's experience, West said the hospitality of the Slovaks "is what stuck out in my mind. The people were wonderful. They fed us. If we ate like that at home we'd be roly-poly."

"The mayor would come and eat with us," he said. "The impression with the people there was that Americans throw money at problems. They were impressed that we would come and work. They said that we were 'the hardest-working immigrants they had ever seen.'"

In late April, a team from Park Hill Church in North Little Rock traveled to Jurbise, Belgium to lead a "Solid Rock Cafe" youth revival at International Baptist Church there, resulting in 41 decisions by young people. Park Hill and International are

partners in the EBC-ABSC partnership.

Seventeen young people accepted Christ as their personal Savior, while 24 rededicated their lives to Him. About 160 young people attended the event, according to Jeff and Michelle Muehleisen, Foreign Mission Board International Service Corps workers who serve International Church as youth ministers.

"It was an exciting time and we are thrilled with the results," said Paul Buederftig, pastor of International Church.

The Park Hill team was made up of Christ Stewart, Park Hill junior high youth minister, and Park Hill Sunday School workers Craig and Patrice Brown.

Most of the young people who attended the event are children of military or civilians working with nearby NATO or U.S. military bases. Only 17 of the young people normally attend International, said Muehleisen.

'God Squad' aids children

Teams also conducted Vacation Bible Schools and Backyard Bible Clubs. Audrey Parker, a member of Parkway Place Church in Little Rock, was part of a group of five from Parkway Place and First Church in Dover to conduct a Backyard Bible Club in British military housing in Ceile, Germany, in June.

"We had for the week over 100 children," Parker said. She explained that the group "did basic things" in teaching participants about Jesus.

"The first day was 'Who is God?' and 'What is the Bible?'" she said, adding that many had no Bible knowledge. "Many of the children could not pronounce Jesus."

In the following week, Parker and the group taught the children about creation and sin, the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus, living as a Christian and the Great Commission.

Throughout the week the group presented the plan of salvation, said Parker, who added that they kept lessons "simple. We told them, 'We came because we love you and God sent Jesus because He loves you.'"

The lessons provoked at least one young girl in the class to ask a British intelligence officer who is a member of International Baptist Church in Celle questions about salvation. He led the girl to the Lord that night.

In addition to the children, Parker reported that many parents "brought chairs and blankets and would listen" to lessons taught to the children. As news of the team's effort spread, Parker said the team soon earned the nickname, "the God Squad" among servicemen on the British base.

Romanians who would go back to the way they had it before."

Another constant challenge for missionaries and Romanian Christians is the "struggle and opposition of the Orthodox Church to anything viewed as evangelical work," Kemper explained. He said Orthodox leaders are "becoming more and more aggressive against evangelical witness."

Despite facing such challenges, the former Arkansas pastors are witnessing spiritual victories. "I've baptized about 16 people" into membership of the International Baptist Church, Kemper said. "I baptized the wife of the Sudanese ambassador as well as Romanians and Africans. That's really a blessing and joy."

With members from several nations around the world, "our church is more international than it is American," Kemper added. "Our goal was not to come over and have a church for Americans but to reach the international community and minister to them."

In addition to the international worship services, the Kempers are involved in teaching English to Chinese, using the gospel of Mark as their textbook. "The Chinese know nothing about the Bible or Jesus or God," Mrs. Kemper shared. "The book of Mark is teaching them who Jesus is."

Their ministry also includes a Bible study and English class for Romanian young people as well as working with orphans in

the area. "I think the highlight is discipling the Romanian young people," Mrs. Kemper affirmed. "It has given them a deeper walk with the Lord."

As Kemper moves into his new responsibility as central Europe missions administrator, he said there are numerous ministry opportunities available in the areas of church planting, evangelism and education. "These are critical needs we would love to see Arkansas people fill," he added.

Emphasizing that "a lot of changes have occurred since we came here" two and a half years ago, Kemper concluded, "It definitely is the strong call of the Lord that keeps us here. We're here because we feel like this is where God wants us to be."

Newsmagazine board revises policy manual

Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine board members revised the Newsmagazine's policy manual, approved a 1997 budget of \$584,000 and established a business manager position during a June 27 board meeting at Baptist Medical Center in Little Rock.

Editor's Advisory Committee chairman Lyndon Finney said the policy manual revision was needed "to take the Newsmagazine into the 21st century," noting that the previous policy manual was adopted in 1981.

Board members adopted the 34 policies individually after each was presented by the advisory committee. The manual was adopted as submitted to the board by the Editor's Advisory Committee with only two amendments. The majority of the policies retained the original intent, if not wording, of previous policies.

Newsmagazine editor Trennis Henderson said updating the policy manual "has been a long-term goal" for his administration.

"The primary purpose was to produce a positive, user-friendly document that would be beneficial both to our staff and to the overall ministry of the Newsmagazine," he emphasized. "Although there were few major changes, the policies should help us do an even better job of serving all Arkansas Baptists."

Most of the board's discussion centered on the Newsmagazine's advertising policies. Those policies had recently been questioned by supporters of Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary in Memphis, who also raised concerns about allowing advertising for the annual meetings of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Arkansas.

A previous policy limited advertising for institutions of higher learning to those schools "controlled by a Baptist state convention and/or the Southern Baptist Convention." That excluded Mid-America and any other colleges or seminaries not supported by Cooperative Program funds.

The board adopted what Finney characterized as "a more inclusive" advertising policy, emphasizing that the wording affirms "the doctrine of the priesthood of the believer that inclusiveness is the right way to go."

The new policy states in part that the Newsmagazine "will accept paid advertising from other Baptist entities as well as reputable commercial businesses as space permits. In keeping with the publication's Christian and moral standards, no advertisements will be accepted which promote alcohol, gambling or other activities or products opposed by Arkansas Baptists."

Board member Robin Cook of Magnolia proposed the addition of a clause that would clarify the source of ads run in the Newsmagazine.

The amendment, which was adopted on a 6-3 vote, reads: "In order to avoid creating confusion among Arkansas Baptists, any entity which has the word 'Baptist' in its name, which could mistakenly be perceived as being supported by Cooperative Program funds, will have the following disclaimer printed at the bottom of its ad: 'This entity/school is not supported by Southern Baptist Convention Cooperative Program funds.'"

A related policy utilizes wording from the Newsmagazine's bylaws which give the editor "full freedom with respect to the expression of his opinions, the selection and use of all printed matter and the makeup of the paper" within the guidelines of the Baptist Faith and Message.

The Newsmagazine's policy on letters to the editor highlights a set of 10 guidelines for permissible letters, specifying that they "must reflect the spirit of Christian love," "must deal with issues relevant to Arkansas Baptists and...not deal with personalities" and "must not be libelous or potentially libelous."

Upon recommendation from Budget and Finance Committee chairman Ken Shaddox, pastor of First Church in Fordyce, board members approved a \$584,000 budget for 1997, a 2.5 percent increase over the 1996 budget of \$570,000.

Personnel Committee chairman Greg Kirkscey, pastor of First Church in Benton, recommended upgrading the title and duties of accountant to business manager, effective July 1. Rebecca Hardwick, who was promoted to the new position, has served the Newsmagazine as accountant since June 1994. She previously served Foxwood Country Club in Jacksonville as office manager and Stephens, Inc. in Little Rock as staff accountant.

In addition to managing the Newsmagazine's daily business matters in the areas of accounting, circulation and postal distribution, Hardwick will serve as staff liaison with the Southern Baptist Annuity Board and the U.S. Postal Service.

"I am grateful for the outstanding contributions Becky has made to the Newsmagazine's ministry in the past two years," Henderson noted. "I appreciate the board's confidence in her ability to fulfill this new responsibility."

In other board proceedings, board members heard testimonies from Henderson and Newsmagazine advertising representative Nelle O'Bryan about their involvement in a recent missions trip to Romania.

They were part of a 28-member team of Arkansas and Oklahoma Baptists who traveled to Romania in May to witness, help build a church and perform medical missions in conjunction with Arkansas Baptists' missions partnership with the European Baptist Convention.

Henderson also reported on the success of the 1996 Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine Day of Prayer. He noted that 285 congregations ordered a total of more than 37,000 bookmarks which highlighted the Newsmagazine's statewide ministry. The bookmarks were used by churches as bulletin inserts for this year's day of prayer emphasis May 19.

Letters to the Editor

The following "Letters to the Editor" policy was among 34 policies adopted by the Newsmagazine board during its June 27 meeting.

- Letters must reflect the spirit of Christian love.
- Letters must deal with issues relevant to Arkansas Baptists. They must not deal with personalities.
- Letters must not be libelous or potentially libelous.
- Letters must contain no more than 350 words, preferably typed.
- No letters will be published that are written anonymously or that request the writer's name to be withheld from publication.
- Letters may be published from the same author up to once per quarter, except one reply is allowed to a letter written in response to an author's initial letter.
- Letters should be labeled "Letter to the Editor—For Publication" or verified by phone.
- Letters will not be published which contain known factual errors.
- Preference will be given to letters written by Arkansas Baptists.
- No form letters will be published.

The board approved the full policy with Cook's amendment. The policy also declines all political advertising and "reserves the right to decline to publish other specific advertisements at the discretion of the editor."

Turner 'intro' video available for loan to local churches

A video introducing the executive director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention is available to churches for viewing.

The 12-minute video, "Dr. Emil Turner—An Introduction to the New Executive Director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention," is available for loan from directors of missions or through the office of Jimmie Sheffield, ABSC associate executive director.

"We felt that this would be a great way for people out in the state to get to know Dr. Turner," Sheffield explained. "I would urge every Baptist church in Arkansas to get to know who Dr. Turner is through this video."

The video uses interviews with Turner; his wife, Mary; son, Joel; and former church members to narrate his life, including his childhood in Louisiana, his salvation experience and early ministry. It also offers insight into Turner's philosophy of leadership and theology.

Highlighting Turner's personal commitment to ministry, he explains during the videotaped interview, "If I could do anything I wanted to do, I would lead people to Christ and teach them the Scriptures."

Concerning his new ministry position, Turner noted that "working for a denomination completely rewrites your life."

"God was very clear in giving me a conviction that I could reach more people for Christ...through the 1,300 churches in Arkansas rather than through one church," he pointed out. "That has always been the driving motivation of my ministry—to reach more people for Christ."

Explaining his leadership perspective, he said, "My major responsibility will be to enable the churches of Arkansas with the resources they bring to us...to have a clear vision of reaching the world."

"Rather than focus on a group of churches, we will focus on individual churches, we will become customized in our work."

"The bottom line," he concluded: "Reach a lost world."

To reserve a copy of the video, individuals may contact their associational director of missions or call Jimmie Sheffield's office toll-free at 1-800-838-ABSC, ext. 5103.

Burton Perry to help promote theological training in Arkansas

Seeking to increase ministry training opportunities in Arkansas, the Arkansas Baptist State Convention has added a part-time staff member to promote theological education in the state.

Burton Perry, who has taught theological education classes in Arkansas since 1993, was named assistant director for theological education effective June 16. He will assist Marion Reynolds, an associate in the ABSC missions department, who directs the education programs.

"We brought Burton on," said missions department director Jimmy Barentine, "because theological education is a high priority for us."

"The way we were doing it," Barentine explained, "with Marion carrying the whole load, we weren't able to give theological education the full attention it merits. We found it impossible without an additional staff member."

Noting that Perry "brings to the job his experiences with theological education in the state," he added, "He did most of his theological education in Arkansas."

"Burton is a student foremost," Barentine said. "He absolutely believes in the importance of education and communicates that well. He will work well with churches because he understands that church-based ministries are what we are training people to serve."

Perry said his duties are "to facilitate, to promote, to support and to recruit for off-campus theological studies conducted in Arkansas by SBC theological institutions."

Perry will promote the four off-campus degree programs currently offered through Southern Baptist institutions. Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary offers a doctor of ministries program, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary conducts master's degree studies in theology and religious education, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary conducts baccalaureate-level studies through Boyce Bible School, and Seminary Extension (a cooperative venture of all six Southern Baptist seminaries) conducts associate degree studies in associations.

"This means that any individual working on any type of theology degree can accomplish the bulk of studies right here at home," Perry said about the variety of degrees offered.

While the seminary extension classes are offered by many associations, Boyce Bible School conducts classes on Friday nights and on Saturdays and Southwestern

and Midwestern classes are held Mondays at the Baptist Building in Little Rock.

Perry said that schedule allows "pastors, bivocational pastors, church workers and laymen to enhance their spiritual knowledge and capabilities without dramatic disruption" in their personal schedules.

Perry, who has served in the bivocational ministry for 45 years, earned a master of religious education degree from Midwestern Seminary in 1993 at the age of 73. He remains the seminary's oldest graduate.

He said he decided to go back to school because of "the challenge of trying to learn more as a consequence of being a pastor. I became aware of the benefits of knowledge."

After retiring from the pastorate in 1982, Perry enrolled in classes at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. He graduated from UALR in 1986, with a bachelor of arts degree in history. He then enrolled in the off-campus theological program in Little Rock, which then was coordinated by Midwestern Seminary.

Following his 1993 graduation from Midwestern, he began teaching at Boyce, where he has taught subjects ranging from pastoral ministries to spiritual formations and a study of the book of Amos.

Noting that his new duties are "a tremendous responsibility," he said his years as a bivocational minister coupled with his education help make him an effective teacher.

"I come from the bivocational ranks and Boyce is full of bivocational ministers," he said. "I have a lifetime of bivocational experience and the latest in Christian education and theological education."

His own bivocational experience and love for the bivocational ministry, he pointed out, led him to accept the position of assistant director. "We have approximately 1,300 Arkansas Baptist churches and about half are led by bivocational pastors. That's the basic element that led me into this situation."

"When I was in seminary studies in Little Rock, I saw what I had missed as a bivocational pastor," he recalled. "I had a limited comprehension" because of a lack of formal education.

Additional information about theological training in Arkansas is available by contacting Perry at 1-800-838-2272, ext. 5249. He noted that the state convention has limited scholarships and Southwestern Seminary has limited student aid available.



Burton Perry

Prayer partnerships link churches, needs

RICHMOND, VA (BP)—Churches across the Southern Baptist Convention have a new Great Commission opportunity—“Prayer Plus” partnerships with people groups around the world that have had little or no access to the gospel.

The Prayer Plus emphasis originated with Randy Sprinkle, director of the Foreign Mission Board's international prayer strategy office. “It came out of my own seeking and praying for a comprehensive prayer strategy to reach these ‘Last Frontier’ peoples,” Sprinkle said.

The Last Frontier takes in more than 2,000 people groups, Sprinkle noted. At last count, 187 of those groups had a population in excess of 1 million. “Our ultimate goal is to link churches with every single one of the Last Frontier people groups,” he explained.

In a Prayer Plus partnership, a church is linked with a specific Last Frontier people group and commits to pray for the opening and evangelizing of that people group.

Congregations can call the International Prayer Strategy Office toll-free at 1-888-462-7729 to receive information about how to enter into a Prayer Plus partnership with a Last Frontier people group.

Church buildings destroyed in Indonesia

SURABAYA, INDONESIA (BP)—Ten church buildings in the city of Surabaya were destroyed and at least one pastor left permanently lame by a mob who attacked during Sunday morning services June 9.

None of the churches destroyed were Baptist. Still, a Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board administrator in Indonesia issued a call for prayer June 12 for Christians and government leaders to act in wisdom.

Police arrested some in the mob of about 1,000 and found a list with about 50 churches they had targeted in Surabaya. It was unclear whether any is related to Southern Baptist work.

At one church, people in the mob rushed the sanctuary, dragged the pastor off the platform and then flooded outside where they began burning motorcycles and other vehicles.

Most of the churches were stoned and violently dismantled. Clay tile roofs typical of the area are easily shattered by rocks and stones, the administrator explained.

Indonesia media, controlled by the government, did not mention the violence, perhaps because publicity could spur incidents in other areas, the spokesman noted.

Officials in the Christian division of Indonesia's Religion Department have suggested that churches not meet for a while unless they have police protection. It remains unclear whether police protection has been offered at the local level.

Fanini cites need for volunteers to Cuba

NEW ORLEANS (BP)—The doors are open in Cuba, and volunteers are needed to share the gospel there, according to Baptist World Alliance president Nilson Fanini.

Fanini, pastor of First Baptist Church of Niteroi in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, said Cuba and other formerly closed nations have opened their doors to Baptists who must respond quickly.

In Eastern Europe, Fanini reported that Croatia, which has been difficult to reach because of the devastations of war, has granted religious freedom to Baptists.

He said the Croatian government considers groups with less than 20,000 members as cults. Baptists there number only 3,000, but after BWA leaders shared with the Croatian president and other leaders, they agreed Baptists should be given religious freedom.

Stressing the urgency of reaching the world for Christ in the next five years, Fanini said countries all over the world are open

to missions and evangelism. “We must go to share the gospel within five years,” he emphasized.

BWA general secretary Denton Lotz said BWA membership encompasses 187 Baptist conventions worldwide with more than 40 million believers.

Missions volunteer dies in Germany accident

BERLIN (ABP) — A Cooperative Baptist Fellowship missions volunteer in Germany died from injuries sustained in an accident June 8.

Helen Brannon of Phoenix, Ariz., apparently lost her balance and fell from a railing of a building near Berlin where she and the other members of a volunteer missions team were housed. She fell 25 feet through a skylight. After being discovered by another volunteer, she was rushed to a nearby hospital where she died several hours later.

Foul play is not suspected, but German authorities conducted a routine investigation because there were no witnesses to the accident.

Her husband, Charles Brannon, recently retired as director of missions for Central Association of Southern Baptists in Phoenix.

The Brannons were with a 10-member team on a short-term assignment in Germany to prepare for an 18-month volunteer construction project. Volunteers will help relocate the German Baptist Seminary from Hamburg to Elstal, just outside of Berlin.

FMB, families seek to reach internationals

RICHMOND, VA (BP)—Nearly 20 million people from foreign countries are living in the United States temporarily, many from countries closed to Baptist missionaries.

In response, the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board has begun an effort to reach internationals temporarily in the U.S. for education, business or other reasons, said Bill Wakefield, FMB vice president of international outreach.

The program is based on matching internationals with “friendship families.” The families are recruited from among retired and former foreign missionaries, missionary kids and others with cross-cultural experience. The “friendship family” helps internationals adjust to their new environment and then befriends them while they are in the United States.

The program is designed for friendship families to meet with their international friends monthly and contact them weekly. They also make themselves available to answer questions or help with problems in adjusting to life in the United States.

Campers on Mission hold 25th annual rally

GREENWOOD, MS (BP)—More than 250 recreational vehicles packing 567 people spent June 18-21 on the parking lot of the civic center at Greenwood, Miss., for the 25th annual National Campers on Mission Rally. The event included 61 Arkansas Campers on Mission.

Participants swapped mission work stories, ate barbecue and catfish, took classes in such diverse subjects as juggling and developing a golf ministry, and fellowshiped with other campers who love to camp and do mission work at the same time.

In a campground setting where people are relaxed and friendly, “there’s hardly a bobble between talking about the natural and supernatural of life,” said speaker John McBride, a director of missions in Shelby County, Tenn., who was one of the people who dreamed up Campers on Mission 25 years ago.

Joel Land, associate director of the Home Mission Board's special ministries department, said the American Bible Society reported to him that Campers on Mission distribute more Scripture than any other group with whom ABS works.

Christians protest Kuwaiti death ruling

RICHMOND, VA (ABP/BF)—Robert Hussein of Kuwait has been convicted of apostasy for converting from Islam to Christianity — an offense that carries a death sentence under Islamic law. Now international pressure is mounting to guarantee Hussein is not executed for his faith.

Hussein is believed to be the first person convicted of apostasy in modern Kuwait, a moderate Muslim country, and his case is considered the first such test of Kuwait's constitutional guarantee of religious liberty. Hussein, 45, currently is in hiding.

Hussein, a contractor who became a Christian during a visit to the United States, made his conversion public in December during a legal battle with his estranged wife. He told local newspapers his wife was divorcing him and preventing him from seeing their two children because he had become a Christian.

Hussein's case is confusing because of the dual justice system in Kuwait. Although apostasy is not a crime in Kuwait's criminal court system, it is in Islamic court. The punishment, according to Islamic law, is forced divorce, loss of property rights and citizenship, and execution.

The Islamic court that convicted Hussein did not impose the death penalty but reportedly called for the Imam — the supreme Islamic ruler and the only one with power to execute — to carry out a death sentence.

Jaafar al-Mazidi, the presiding judge in the case, acknowledged other Muslims might take the court's guilty verdict as permission to kill Hussein themselves. "That is possible," said Mazidi, but not likely, he added.

The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board has joined a growing protest of the Islamic court's ruling against Hussein.

FMB president Jerry Rankin denounced the ruling as a "miscarriage of justice" and appealed to all "freedom-loving Americans" to voice opposition. "We are asking believers in the United States to petition God with prayer and petition the Kuwaiti government for Mr. Hussein's safety," he said.

Human rights advocates see Hussein's case as precedent-setting in Kuwait and have called on people worldwide to mount a letter-writing campaign to Shaikh Saad Al-Sabah, Kuwait's crown prince and prime minister, and Mohammed Sabah Al-Slim, its ambassador to the United States.

"We find it ironic that the very freedoms American soldiers sought to protect in the Gulf War are being violated through this ruthless act of intimidation by those who most benefited from our involvement in



Robert Hussein, who has been convicted of apostasy for converting to Christianity, currently is in hiding in Kuwait.

the war," Rankin pointed out.

In recent days, a deluge of faxes has churmed into Kuwaiti government offices, signed by members of parliaments in Canada and throughout Europe, and from congressmen in the United States. All are protesting the ruling, saying it violates international standards for individual freedom. Human rights advocates also have asked former President George Bush to discuss the matter with Crown Prince Shalikh Saad, his personal friend.

Maurice Graham, a former Southern Baptist missionary to Kuwait, called on Kuwait to defend freedom of conscience. "The Kuwaiti court needs to support its own constitution," said Graham, who first met Hussein in March.

Although the Kuwaiti constitution permits religious freedom, conversion is another matter. "Those constitutional freedoms stem from Mohammed's teachings," the court said in its verdict. "The constitution respects freedom of religion...but it does not mean a Muslim should be allowed to convert from his religion to another."

Since 1992, the Islamic wing of Parliament in Kuwait has fought for the total adoption of sharia (Muslim law). If he is able to stay alive, Hussein will seek to appeal his case to government courts.

That appeal would test whether Kuwait will apply its constitution over sharia — and protect by law a Muslim who changes religions. It would determine the future of the hundreds, or thousands, of closet Christians in Kuwait, and possibly in other countries.

Nations throughout the world are facing the dilemma of appeasing a growing minority cry from extremist Muslims who reject the Western view of human rights and seek to rule by force. In the extremist Muslim mindset, the government and the practice of Islam are one and the same.

So far, Hussein has been unable to find a lawyer in Kuwait who will dare to take his case. Human rights advocates are asking the government to supply him with one. Meantime, they have secured lawyers outside Kuwait to help him prepare a legal appeal. An initial appeal reportedly was filed on Hussein's behalf June 29 with a hearing for the appeal set for Sept. 15.

"My experience with Kuwaitis is that they are people who really believe in freedom," Graham said. "That's why I feel like if it was left up to the people there, they would choose the right thing to do, human rights. It is not an extreme country. I appeal to Kuwaiti people that they would uphold their own constitution."

Hussein is a lone exception to the pattern in Kuwait that Christians remain quiet about their faith. "He felt God is issuing to him that he couldn't be a silent Christian," Graham said. "He has made it an issue. He wears a cross and carries a Bible. But he feels like it's his right as a Kuwaiti."

Reader Response

Interested individuals may send protests about Kuwait's ruling to:

His Highness
Shalikh Saad Al-Sabah,
Crown Prince and Prime Minister,
The State of Kuwait,
P.O. Box 4,
Safat, Kuwait 13001;
Fax: 965-539-7791; and
Mohammed Sabah Al-Salim,
The State of Kuwait, Chancery,
2940 Tilden St. N.W.,
Washington, D.C. 20008;
Fax: 202-968-0517;
Phone: 202-968-0702.

Staff changes

Clif Springer began his ministry June 24 as pastor of Pleasant Grove Church of Ferndale, coming there from Crestview Church of Memphis. He is a graduate of Ouachita Baptist University and Mid-America Seminary. Springer and his wife, Brenda, are parents of three children.

Jerry Glen Holcomb is pastor of South Side Church in Heber Springs, going there from First Church of Higginson. He previously served Amazing Grace Church of Bentonville, Mount Zion Church of Paragould, Cabin Creek Church of Lamar and Alicia Church. Holcomb, who currently is completing correspondence courses with Luther Rice Seminary, attended Arkansas State University, Williams Baptist College and seminary extension courses in Little Rock. He and his wife, Judy, have two adult daughters and six grandchildren.

Doug Beasley will join the staff of El Dorado Second Church Aug. 1 as associate pastor of music and education administration, coming there from Highland Park Church in Bartlesville, Okla. He previously has served churches in Arkansas, North Carolina and Oklahoma. A native of Fort Smith, Beasley is a graduate of the University of Central Arkansas and is pursuing a master of religious education degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary's off-campus program. He is married to the former Jolene Rankin of Mulberry.

Luke Brewer is serving as a summer youth worker for First Church of Huntsville. Brewer, a member of South Side Church of Pine Bluff, is a student at Ouachita Baptist University.

Clyde Jones began serving July 7 as interim pastor of Forrest Park Church in Pine Bluff. He retired in 1995 as pastor of East Side Church, Pine Bluff.

Roy F. Lewis began serving July 1 as interim pastor of Pleasant Hill Church in Sardis where he served as pastor prior to retirement. He recently completed six months service as interim director of missions for Central Association.

Milton White resigned May 12 as bivocational pastor of Riverside Church of Donaldson. He has been transferred by his company to Great Bend, Kan. White and his wife, Tina, have three children, Amber, M.J. and Megan.

Al Cullum has resigned as pastor of Joiner Church due to health reasons. He is residing in Forrest City and is available to do supply



ARKANSAS ALL OVER

By MILLIE GILL

preaching or lead revivals. Cullum may be contacted at 501-633-5914.

Patrick Hunter has announced his resignation as associate pastor of education and youth at First Church of Jacksonville, effective July 15. Hunter, who has served the Jacksonville Church for more than four years, has accepted the call to join the staff of Friendship Church in Sykesville, Md., as associate pastor of education and church growth. He is a graduate of Baylor University and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Church news

Newport First Church recently honored Cecil Guthrie, who served 27 years as associational missionary in Black River Association. He was honored July 1 by the

Newport congregation where he his wife, Florence, are members. Guthrie, age 85, retired at age 66. During his tenure, nine churches were organized in the association and 4,033 professions of faith in Christ were reported. Guthrie also was responsible for helping lead more than 3,200 migrants to faith in Christ. The Guthries have four children, Sally Dolby, Susan Vogel, Gary Guthrie and Ann Diaz, and six grandchildren.

Riverside Church of Donaldson will celebrate its 40th anniversary July 14 with Sunday School at 10 a.m. and worship at 11 a.m. Clarence Shell, director of the Arkansas Baptist evangelism department, will be the guest speaker. A noon covered-dish luncheon will be served.

Walnut Valley Church in Hot Springs will be in revival July 14-17 with Larry D. White of Owensville as evangelist. Joe Acuss is interim pastor.

Holly Springs Church in Little Rock's Vacation Bible School held June 17-21 resulted in an average attendance of 59 and 14 professions of faith. Johnny Redd was VBS director. Joe Berry is pastor.



Greater Grace Church of Little Rock celebrated its 14th anniversary June 30 with a noburning service, celebrating payment of a \$4,200 property mortgage which the Greater Grace Vision Center will be constructed in the near future. This mortgage, the fourth one retired since its organization in 1982 as a mission of Life Line Church of Little Rock, marks the first time for the church being debt-free. The 290-member congregation, constituted as a church in 1986, has been led by pastor Paul Williams since its beginning. He said the church also had led in the organization of three other black Southern Baptist congregations. C. Dennis Edwards, pastor, and the choir of St. John Church of Little Rock, were guest speaker and musicians for the anniversary celebration. Participating in the noburning ceremony were (left to right) Williams and trustees Charles Jones, Percy Nash and A.C. Wilson.

Highland Hills Church of Texarkana youth recently participated in a mission trip to Los Fresnos, Texas. The church's Vacation Bible School held June 10-14 had an average attendance of 82.

Ordinations

Searcy County Church of Marshall recently ordained Wayne Kelly and Tom Phillips to the gospel ministry.

Riverside Church of Donaldson recently ordained Bobby George to the gospel ministry. George currently is pastor of First Church of Social Hill.

Obituaries

John E. Evans of Waldron died June 8 at age 96. His funeral services were held at First Church of Waldron where he was a member. Evans, a retired Southern Baptist minister, had served for more than 75 years as a pastor, preacher and gospel music singer for churches in Arkansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Tennessee and Texas. Survivors are his wife, Arleta; two daughters, Ophelia Ann Oliver and Nada Lee Currier, both of Waldron; two stepdaughters, Arleta Tyler of Houston and Marilyn King of Conway; three sons, Leon Evans of Huntsville, LaMoine Evans of How, Okla., and John Harold Evans of Waldron; a stepson, James H. Bullock of Las Cruces, N.M.; two sisters; a brother; 23 grandchildren; and 22 great-grandchildren. Memorials may be made to the organ fund of First Church of Waldron.

A.C. Lyles Jr., 81, of Hatfield died June 19 as the result of a stroke. Lyles, who was pastor of Bethel Church in Potter, moved to the Polk County area in 1968 to become pastor of First Church of Hatfield. He also was pastor of First Church of Wickes and Yocana Church and associate pastor of Calvary Church of Mena. He is survived by his wife of 63 years, Billie; two sons, Johnnie Lyles of Belle Plaine, Kan., and Jerry Lyles of Hatfield; one daughter, Billie Faye McDuff of Fort Worth, Texas; one sister; one brother; 16 grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren.

Earl H. Swearingin of Gamall died June 22 at age 76. He was a charter member of Gamall Church where he served as treasurer. Survivors are his wife, Wilma; two sons, Larry Swearingin of San Diego, Calif., and Rick Swearingin of Tacoma, Wash.; four daughters, Nancy Nelson of Webster Groves, Mo., Linda Fusz of Wildwood, Mo., Sharon Seitz of Milwaukee, Wisc., Caryn Railing of Pacific, Mo.; and two sisters. Memorials may be made to the Gamall Church building fund.



A group of Arkansas Baptist volunteers recently worked on the framing of the new Baptist Student Union building located on the campus of Henderson State University in Arkadelphia. Volunteers from churches in Arkansas, Alabama, Mississippi and Texas joined with Central Association and the Arkansas Baptist State Convention Brotherhood department in salvaging the old building, clean-up, decking, framing, painting and roofing. ABSC student ministry department associate George Sims reported that "individual volunteers...also are helping with this project, doing everything from framing to painting to landscaping." According to Sims, the use of volunteers will save about \$160,000, or 40 percent, of the projected \$425,000 cost for the building, which he said he and project workers hope is "ready to occupy when school begins in late August."

Volunteer/Part-Time Music Leader Workshop also open to choir members

It's not a new Volunteer/Part-Time Music Leader Workshop, said Glen Ennes, "but it is different."

Ennes, an associate in the Arkansas Baptist State Convention church music ministries department, said the one-day training retreat at Williams Baptist College Aug. 24 will not only include sessions for volunteer or part-time leaders and accompanists, but also for small-membership church choir members.

"This year we are offering a unique setting at the workshop," he explained. "We will involve choir members during the morning sessions with classes designed especially for them, either 'Voice' or 'Music Fundamentals'."

"In the afternoon, choir members will serve as a lab choir for directors," he continued. "Choir members will become better equipped to serve as they learn more about music this way."

Ennes said participating volunteer or

part-time directors will work with WBC music department chairman Bob Magee "as they choose to direct a lab choir or to observe the teaching sessions without directing."

"Either way, they will gain much knowledge that will help with their local church choir," he added.

Ennes noted that accompanist sessions "will be similar to past years, with separate piano and organ sessions."

Accompanist sessions will be led by Lajuana Terrell, pianist for Central Church in Jonesboro, and John Dresbach, Central's organist.

The cost for the workshop is \$4 per person and includes lunch.

For additional information or to request a registration form, contact Ennes at the ABSC church music ministries department toll-free in state at 1-800-838-ABSC, or locally in Little Rock at 376-4791, ext. 5121.

Eisner quote, Internet appeal challenge SBC's Disney action

NASHVILLE, TN (BP)—Michael Eisner, chairman and CEO of the Walt Disney Company, in his first quoted reaction to Southern Baptists' threatened boycott, said: "We think they're a very small group of the Southern Baptists that took a very extreme position, which we think is foolish. They seem to have been off on a tangent this year."

Eisner was quoted June 24 in a *Los Angeles Daily News* article. Southern Baptist Convention messengers adopted a resolution targeting Disney during its June 11-13 annual meeting in New Orleans because the company's "moral leadership has been eroded," according to the SBC resolution.

Eisner's comments were challenged by Bill Merrell, vice president for convention relations for the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee.

"Traditional family values are neither, as Mr. Eisner suggests, a 'tangent' or an 'extreme,'" Merrell responded in a prepared statement. "Disney Company has been the trusted friend of families for decades. But that well-earned trust and the carefully nurtured image as a trustworthy provider of family entertainment is at risk.

"If family concerns are to be dismissed and those who raise them are to be marginalized by Disney," Merrell added, "I predict that the erosion of trust will only increase."

In a related development, Internet solicitation of support from homosexual activists for the Walt Disney Company has made its way from a Disney vice president's office across the country.

The electronic e-mail message, which originated June 13 in the office of Reid Cline, Disney vice president for studio operations, states: "If anyone wants to write to Disney to support them in light of the Southern Baptist Convention's condemnation yesterday, you may write to: Michael Eisner, c/o S. Buena Vista St., Burbank, CA 91521-1010, (818) 560-2431."

The e-mail is signed by a secretary in Cline's office at Disney, Brad Bergman, with the Internet address reading: "brad_bergman@studio.disney.com."

"We don't have any comment" was the response of a Disney spokesman after the corporate communications office there received a faxed copy of the e-mail appeal and a response by Merrell.

Merrell described the action as "yet another sad reflection of the state of Disney — that a Disney vice president's office must turn to the homosexual Internet crowd to solicit support for the company's drift away from family values and its buckling to the homosexual-activist agenda," adding that "actions like these continue to damage the Disney name in the minds and hearts of countless Americans."

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Rankin retraces
Lottie Moon's
steps in new book

RICHMOND, VA (BP)—Jerry Rankin wanted to gain a deeper understanding of the life and influence of Lottie Moon, Southern Baptists' most famous missionary.

So last year the Foreign Mission Board president and his wife, Bobby, followed Moon's historic footsteps — all the way from her Virginia birthplace to China, where she spent four decades spreading the gospel until her death in 1912.

Rankin finished the journey convinced that no other Virginian — including George Washington and Thomas Jefferson — "has had such a global impact. Her influence is not limited to this nation or even this world. It has eternal significance."

How did he reach such a conclusion? Rankin makes his case in a new book, *A Journey of Faith and Sacrifice: Retracing the Steps of Lottie Moon*. He describes today's rapidly growing Chinese church, nurtured in its infancy by Moon and other missionaries and tempered by the storms of the communist era. He also examines the opportunities and challenges facing Christians and missionaries worldwide as the 21st century approaches.

The book is a record in words and photographs of Rankin's trek and the insights it produced about the work of Moon — a tiny woman who defied enormous odds to go alone to China in 1873 as an unmarried female missionary, who challenged a fledgling denomination to build one of the largest mission efforts in church history, and who continues to inspire it today.

Recently released by New Hope, the publishing arm of the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union, the book was unveiled during the recent Southern Baptist Convention and WMU annual meetings in New Orleans.

Collaborating with Rankin was award-winning FMB photographer Don Rutledge, who has covered missions in scores of countries. Rutledge produced more than 60 full-color portraits of "Lottie Moon country" in the United States and China for the hardback, coffee-table book. WMU executive director Dellanna O'Brien wrote the book's foreword.

In his introduction, Rankin relates his personal fascination since boyhood with the legendary missionary.

Reflecting on his own experiences as a missionary to Indonesia and global perspective as FMB president, Rankin views Moon's life in the context of the past century of Southern Baptist missions and the next century's challenges.

Education Commission takes steps toward agency's dissolution

PIPESTEM, WV (BP)—Trustees of the Southern Baptist Education Commission took steps June 23-24 to implement the actions of the Southern Baptist Convention abolishing the 81-year-old agency by June 1997.

The annual trustee meeting may be the last plenary session of the governing board of the agency which relates to the Southern Baptist seminaries, colleges, universities and schools.

The dissolution process, according to the trustee action, will include four items:

- Flexibility in dates while protecting the personnel as a first priority.

- Through a grant of unused funds, assist the startup of a new dimension of the work of the Association of Southern Baptist Colleges and Schools (ASBCS) as it seeks to fill the vacuum created by the elimination of the Education Commission.

- Negotiate a continuation of the trust fund which supplements doctoral and post-doctoral studies by faculty at Baptist schools.

- Rebate any unused funds to the Implementation Task Force for the costs incurred in the restructuring process.

There was some hope expressed that as much as \$150,000 to \$200,000 could be given to the ASBCS to "jumpstart" the new project. If the commission continues its work through June 1997, however, an estimated \$65,000 would remain in unused reserves.

Representatives of the colleges in the ASBCS met in conjunction with the Education Commission's annual meeting. The ASBCS has a transition committee of its own to consider what actions should be taken. Current officers of the association were asked to serve for another year, including ASBCS president Ben Elrod, president of Ouachita Baptist University.

CANCELLATION

Baptist Youth Day, scheduled for Saturday, Sept. 7, has been canceled due to the closing of Magic Springs Amusement Park. We regret that Baptist Youth Day will not be rescheduled this year.

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BSSB division reorganizes to aid restructuring

By Charles Willis

Baptist Sunday School Board

NASHVILLE, TN (BP)—The Baptist Sunday School Board's church leadership services division has announced a reorganization to incorporate assignments from the Southern Baptist Convention as part of the "Covenant for a New Century."

Two new departments will assimilate stewardship education, church history and heritage education, capital fund-raising and assisting churches with Christian school and home school ministries, according to division director Mike Miller. At the same time, an existing department will be eliminated, merging its program assignments with those of the new components.

The church services department, which included the church media library program and church architecture services, will

merge with the new Christian schools and media services department and the church stewardship and architectural services department.

Mancil Ezell, who was director of the church services department, will continue as associate director of the division and will direct the Christian schools and media services department. Church history and heritage education will be assumed by the church media program.

Dennis Conniff, who directed the church media library program, will lead the church stewardship and architectural services department, including church architecture services, Together We Build (capital fund-raising) and church stewardship services. Davis Byrd will continue to lead church architecture services.

David Tiller, a 15-year employee of the board, will become director for the church

media program. He has been training coordinator for the board's national chain of bookstores since 1993 and earlier was a trainer in the board's corporate human resources department.

Miller said the announcement of staffing for Christian schools, home schooling, weekday early education, capital fund-raising and church stewardship services will be made later this year.

The division reorganization follows a leadership change announced earlier in the month for the church recreation program. Tommy Yessick, who has led the church recreation program since 1992, assumed leadership of wellness services for LeaderCare, the board's strategy to assist ministers in personal development. Yessick, whose background includes formal training and experience in wellness, proposed the expansion of recreation ministry into the LeaderCare strategy to educate pastors and other ministers in the value of wellness issues.

John Garner, who has been field service projects coordinator for church recreation since 1990, has become church recreation program director. Garner also will direct the work of contract consultants across the nation.

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CBF members reject effort to establish new convention

RICHMOND, VA (ABP) — The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship rejected an attempt to formally sever ties with the Southern Baptist Convention during the organization's annual general assembly June 27-29 in Richmond, Va.

Fellowship members voted overwhelmingly against a motion by Bill Montgomery of San Antonio, Texas, that the CBF "declare ourselves to be a new convention."

Montgomery said he was tired of people who say privately that they support the Fellowship but don't want to be identified publicly with the group.

"I want us to come out of the closet and quit being a secret society," he declared. "I want us to stand up and be counted. I want us to get out of the trenches and charge. I want us to quit being so hesitant and timid about what we already are."

But in a lengthy discussion during the meeting, several people said while most Fellowship members feel alienated in the SBC, it is too soon to talk of forming a new convention.

A split would unnecessarily divide congregations that have members on both sides of the dispute between the Fellowship and SBC leaders and would divert the CBF from its primary focus of missions and ministry, speakers said.

Bill Sherman, pastor of Woodmont Baptist Church in Nashville, Tenn., urged Fellowship leaders to "let churches decide under God how they will relate and leave it there."

Registration for the three-day event was 3,815. The meeting was larger than last year's meeting in Fort Worth but smaller than crowds as large as 6,000 at previous meetings.

Fellowship coordinator Cecil Sherman's retirement became effective at the close of the three-day meeting. In his final report as CBF coordinator, Sherman urged the Fellowship to "trust the next generation" of leaders.

A search committee had hoped to introduce Sherman's successor at the general assembly, but the search is taking longer than planned, said committee chairman Carolyn Crumpler. The CBF's Coordinating Council did hire retired Atlanta banker Tommy Boland to serve as interim coordinator. Boland, 61, is expected to serve until Dec. 31.

In other business, the Fellowship adopted a \$14.1 million budget to be used for global missions, Baptist principles, church resources and administration.

The general assembly also featured the appointment of 41 new missionaries for the 5-year-old organization, bringing the Fellowship's total missionary force to 139.

In a keynote address, University of Chicago church historian Martin Marty noted, "Denomination more and more is going to have to acquire the image of the extended family."

"Whatever you call yourselves, I think something of this is emerging," Marty told CBF members. "Families live by sentiment and affection centered about the single issue that Jesus is the Risen Lord."

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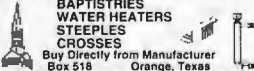
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Include missions in retirement plans, Burton urges senior adults

RIDGECREST, NC (BP)—Today's Southern Baptist senior adults could be the greatest volunteer missions force the denomination has ever had — except for one problem. Too many people are failing to prepare adequately for retirement.

Some lack a clear vision of what they want to accomplish in their later years, noted Jim Burton, director of men's ministries at the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission. He said some have not prepared financially to have the resources for such things as volunteer mission service. Others have not made adequate spiritual preparation.

Burton led a conference, "Retirement by Design with Missions in Mind," during Jericho: A Southern Baptist Missions Festival, June 29-July 5 at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Conference Center. Seminar content will be offered later this year in an eight-hour format through the Brotherhood Commission and state convention Brotherhood departments.

Senior adults' primary assets for mission service are a lifetime of experience and more available time, Burton said.

Many retirees inherit about 2,350 hours

of free time per year that they formerly spent working at their careers, he noted. "Are you going to be constructive with your free time or let it control you?" Burton asked.

To evaluate the structure of their lives and their use of time, he urged seniors to fill out a schedule showing what they do during waking hours for one week.

"If you don't have enough structure, you may find yourself wasting time," Burton said. "Map it out and you may find you're not prepared for retirement in terms of having a vision for what God can do in your life."

Burton urged persons planning for retirement to learn all they can about volunteer missions opportunities such as Mission Service Corps for home missions and International Service Corps for foreign missions. Other options include Tent Makers, Campers on Mission, serving as adult sponsors for World Changers, working on construction projects through state convention groups and opportunities through Baptist vocational fellowships for educators, medical personnel, persons involved in creative arts and many others.

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ATS ends probation early for Southwestern Seminary

FORT WORTH, TX (ABP/BP)—A two-year probation imposed on Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary has been lifted seven months early, according to the accrediting commission of the Association of Theological Schools (ATS). The seminary was placed on probation in January 1995 following the dismissal of former president Russell Dilday who was fired in March 1994 by the seminary board of trustees.

In a June 14 letter to seminary president Ken Hemphill, ATS associate director Daniel Aleshire said the accrediting commission voted that Southwestern "be removed from probation and its accreditation be reaffirmed."

ATS placed the seminary on probation — its most serious sanction short of withdrawing accreditation — because of trustee actions related to Dilday's firing.

While trustees had the right to fire Dilday, the accrediting agency found, they failed to follow school policies in evaluating the president's performance and the election and promotion of faculty. Trustees also failed to consider all the school's constituents in their actions, and to preserve the school's integrity and academic freedom from inappropriate interference, the probation finding said.

While not as serious as withdrawal of accreditation, probation can hinder a school's ability to attract students and financial support.

Full-time enrollment was estimated at 2,805 for the 1995-96 academic year, according to a report at the recent Southern Baptist Convention, 8 percent under the 3,034 enrolled in 1993-94.

Four criteria were involved in the commission's latest decision, Aleshire said, noting that Southwestern must report to the commission by April 15, 1997, about the status concerning each area.

The criteria are that the board of trustees "demonstrates that it continues consistently to make decisions about personnel...according to formally adopted criteria and procedures"; "continues to demonstrate that it is paying attention to its own...development"; faculty and

students "can continue to attest...that their freedom of inquiry" is assured within the seminary's "confessional boundaries"; and the seminary must "demonstrate continued development of its newly instituted procedures...in the direction of health maintenance for the institution."

Hemphill affirmed the decision to release the seminary from probation. "We feel progress has been made in dispelling a lot of doubt, suspicion and misunderstanding that existed."

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NATION

Louisiana College: Four professors sue conservative critics

PINEVILLE, LA (ABP) — Four Louisiana College professors have sued a group of conservative critics for what they claim are defamatory statements meant to harm their professional and moral reputations.

The lawsuit was filed by professors Carlton Winbery, Fred Downing, James Heath and Connie Douglas, all faculty members at the Baptist college in Pineville, La. The suit names Leon Hyatt of Pineville and others involved in the publication of a packet of 21 letters distributed early last summer. The college itself is not involved in the suit.

The professors allege the "Louisiana Baptist conservative resurgence" distributed letters that "contain defamatory and derogatory information and statements which seek to harm the professional and moral reputation of the plaintiffs."

Louisiana Baptist Convention president Michael Claunch denied those charges. Although not named in the suit, Claunch said conservatives in Louisiana had tried repeatedly to resolve their grievances with the faculty to no avail.

The lawsuit notes that the charges contained in the letters were distributed even though Hyatt said in an accompanying cover letter that he could not guarantee the accuracy of every detail.

The charges against the professors are "absolutely and patently false," the suit alleges, adding that the charges "attack the basic moral character of a minister of God and professor of religion, wrongfully offering up these plaintiffs for public ridicule based upon the political agenda of those who may disagree with them on finer points of theology."

The suit was filed June 10 with the Ninth Judicial District Court in Alexandria and requests a jury trial. Vic Sooter, attorney for the professors, said the decision to file the suit came after months of efforts to resolve the issue through other means.

Hyatt said the suit "is very regrettable." He declined comment on details of the allegations, saying he was in the process of securing counsel and had been "strongly urged" not to make public statements.

Hyatt is chairman of a group of Louisiana Baptists formed for the purpose of calling the state Baptist convention "back to its biblical and moral roots."

As part of a campaign to recruit supporters, the group prepared and distributed the packet of letters citing past and recent concerns with Louisiana College, the only college affiliated with the Louisiana Baptist Convention.

Convention Uniform

The Lord is good

By Gary L. Burney,
assistant to the pastor,
New Hope Fellowship, Springdale
Basic passage: Psalm 34
Focal passage: Psalm 34:8-14
Central truth: Happiness comes to
the believer as a result of trusting
God.

The Christian life has many basic truths, principles for Christian living that have a pronounced effect on our lives and the lives of those we encounter each day. Some of these truths we take for granted and even forget, but they are still there and are working. David knew this and expresses it in the 34th Psalm. He gives us some simple yet basic principles for happiness.

■ *The Lord is good* (v. 8). Not a complex truth, yet profound. God is good, not bad. God is good and everything that proceeds from God is good. God wants to provide good things for His children, but so often we get in the way of God's blessing by failing to trust Him and trust the principle that God is good.

■ *Happy is the man who trusts Him* (v. 8). Jesus said "blessed (happy) are those who seek after righteousness." We get it backwards. We say, "Blessed are those who seek after happiness." So we look for happiness in all the wrong places and discover, as did Solomon, that our pursuit of happiness is empty (vanity).

■ *There is no lack to those that fear Him* (v. 9). This brings us to the bottom line. We seek after things and find our pursuit brings us disappointment and unhappiness. David was convinced that God would provide good things for those who fear Him.

The question is, how do we fear God? Keep our tongues from evil (v. 13). Depart from evil and do good (v. 14). Pretty simple, really. Watch what we say and what we do. What we say and what we do expresses who we really fear (respect), God or ourselves.

One of the most profound, yet simple truths of the Christian life is that happiness is found through trusting God and not ourselves.

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Life and Work

Wisdom in speech

By Jerre D. Mitchell, pastor,
First Church, Fayetteville
Basic passage: Proverbs 18:21; 21:23;
4:24; 18:6; 20:19; 24:28; 12:25;
16:24; 15:1-2, 4, 28
Focal passage Proverbs 15:2, 12, 25;
16:24; 20:19; 15:1, 28; 24:28; 21:23;
4:24
Central truth: The Christian's speech
should be helpful.

James points out in his letter that the tongue is a very significant part of one's body (vv. 3:1-12). Several of the Proverbs deal with the tongue or use of the tongue. Words can help or hurt; they can heal or wound; they can encourage or destroy.

■ *Helpful speech* – Words can be used to teach (v. 15:2). The first place I think of teaching is in the home. Gently, confidently teaching others is taught in the Scripture. It is a given in the Christian home. It is not easy. There are many barriers, but it can and should be done.

Speech can be used to encourage others (vv. 12:25, 16:24). People are anxious about many things. Sometimes there is no one to encourage or to comfort. Christians are to help bear one another's burdens, but one word of caution – don't become known for your many words.

■ *Hurtful speech* – Gossip is a destructive use of words (v. 20:19). Church people can be just as guilty of gossip as non-church people. It is even disguised as "concern." Be very careful what you say about someone else.

Words spoken in anger are hurtful (vv. 15:1, 28). Verbal abuse of children or a spouse is destructive. Why people will say things to their children or spouse they would never speak to anyone else I will never know, but they will. At great price.

Words used to deceive or lie are hurtful (v. 24:28). God knows this and knows the destructive force false words carry. That is why He prohibited them in one of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:16).

■ *So, what do you do?* Discipline your tongue (v. 21:23). The word *discipline* does not always carry with it the idea of punishment. Sometimes it means control. Control your mouth. Put your brain in gear before you open your mouth. Guard your mouth.

The second things is to "put away" lies, deceitful, hurtful words (v. 4:24). Don't even think about using them. They hurt others and damage your testimony for the Lord.

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Bible Book

God's throne, the lamb

By Rodney Reeves, pastor,
Central Church, Jonesboro
Basic passage: Revelation 4:1-5:14
Focal passage: Revelation 5:13-14
Central truth: God is in control.

After the resurrected Messiah dictated the letter for seven churches on earth, John saw the doorway to heaven, and heard an invitation to enter (v. 4:1). His journey was "in the Spirit," having left the terrestrial world. In his first vision of heaven, he sees the throne of God.

The splendor of the King's throne defies description. John relates what he saw around the throne. The aura of the "one sitting on the throne" is compared to precious stones – Jasper, sardis, emerald (v. 4:3). Lightning and thunder appear as God's insignia of sovereignty (v. 4:5). The King's court includes coreyents (24 elders), incense (seven lamps), attendants (four cherubim, vv. 4:4-7). The Holy Spirit (seven Spirits), the praise of the attendants, and the prayers of the saints (Incense, v. 5:8) fill the throne room. Honor and praise never end in the presence of the Eternal One (vv. 4:8-10). He is worthy of such superlative adoration for He is the Creator and Sustainer of His Kingdom (v. 4:11).

In the next scene, John weeps when no one is able to effect the will of God on earth (open the sealed scroll, vv. 5:1-4). The Lion of David (King of Israel), the Sacrificial Lamb (Crucified Lord) takes the scroll from the right hand of the King, for only He has "overcome" (carries out the will of God, vv. 5:5-7). Empowered by the Holy Spirit (seven horns, eyes, Spirits, v. 5:6), the Lamb prepares to break the seals, which causes the attendants to worship the Redeemer, who purchased with His blood a people from every walk of life (vv. 5:8-9). With His sacrifice, He made them a kingdom of priests to God who will reign on earth (v. 5:10). Worship is now directed to both the Lamb and the Enthroned One. Both are worthy to be praised, not only by the heavenly host but by "every created thing" in heaven, on the earth (the living), and under the earth and in the sea (the dead, vv. 5:12-14).

Although the churches seemed to be "losing the battle" on earth, the heavenly vision of the Almighty King was meant to remind them that God was still in control. His kingdom that was established on earth as it is in heaven because the Lamb of God has overcome.

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Convention Uniform

The wonders of God

By Gary L. Burney, assistant to the pastor, New Hope Fellowship, Springdale
 Basic passage: Psalm 139
 Focal passage: Psalm 139
 Central truth: What happens to a believer when he takes time to think about the wonders of God?

Four wonders of God:

■ *The wonder of God's knowledge — Omniscience.* What does God know about us? He knows what we do (v. 2). He knows what we think (v. 2). He knows where we go (v. 3). He knows what we say (v. 4). He knows what we need (v. 5).

■ *The wonder of God's presence — Omnipresence (vv. 7-12).* We know this concept, but do we really understand it? God is everywhere. Have we really come to grips with this or is it something we know, but haven't really applied to our lives? Acknowledging God's presence is the first step to receiving God's guidance.

■ *The wonder of God's power — Omnipotence (vv. 13-18).* We have our being because of the power of God. He created us. We are "fearfully and wonderfully made." We are protected by the power of God. He watches over us, and we are precious to Him.

■ *The wonder of God's judgment (vv. 19-24).* It's sometimes difficult to reconcile God's love and God's judgment. God provided a means of reconciliation for all men, yet many refuse God's love and provision and hate God! It's hard to imagine. God's judgment is on those that hate Him.

As we have considered the wonders of God, it has been humbling to remember that God knows everything there is to know about us. He created us, protects us and has provided a means through which we can experience His great love for us.

It's tragic to realize that there are multitudes that have rejected God's love and that are under God's judgment. Yet, our commission is to share the love of God to those who hate Him (Matt. 28:19, 20). Isn't God wonderful?

Life and Work

Wisdom for the home

By Jere D. Mitchell, pastor, First Church, Fayetteville
 Basic passage: Proverbs 17:1, 6; 6:32; 12:4; 20:7; 31:10-11, 28; 4:3-4; 29:17
 Focal passage: Proverbs 6:32; 31:11; 31:28; 4:3-4; 22:6; 29:17; 31:28
 Central truth: Parents and children find great instruction in God's Word for their roles in the home.

A major area in which churches need to extend help is in the area of the home. It is also an area in which people are willing to accept help. The best help and the most valid help comes from the Word of God.

These verses speak of the husband's and the wife's responsibilities to each other and to their children. They also speak of the children's responsibilities.

■ *Husbands and Wives.* The first responsibility is faithfulness (v. 6:32). God's original plan was one man for one woman. It really is a good plan. In fact, it is still His plan. The difficulty is that men and women for a variety of reasons, none valid, choose to be unfaithful to their mate. This lack of fidelity is disobedience to God and destructive to the home.

Second, trust each other (v. 31:11). Trust is tied very closely to fidelity. Husbands and wives should also trust each other's judgment and wisdom.

Third, encourage each other (v. 31:28). Spouses should look for and find ways to brag on each other. It is amazing what this can do for a relationship. If you really want to score some points, brag on your spouse to someone else in his or her presence.

Fourth, train your children (vv. 4:3-4; 29:17). Many parents neglect their God-given responsibility of properly teaching their children the things of God. Sunday School, Christian schools or grandparents cannot replace or fulfill the role of the parents in this area. Parents not only teach by what they say, but what they are and what they do.

■ *Children (v. 4:4).* Parents need to teach their children from the Word of God that the parent has a charge from God to train them and that the child has the responsibility to listen and to learn. The word from the Lord is that children are to obey their parents, not parents obey their children. It may be easier to do the latter, but it is certainly not God's plan, nor wise.

Another responsibility is to encourage your parents (v. 31:28). Kids, if you really want to shock your parents, tell them what a great parent you think they are.

Bible Book

The Lamb breaks seals

By Rodney Reeves, pastor, Central Church, Jonesboro
 Basic passage: Revelation 6:1-7:17
 Focal passage: Revelation 7:15-17
 Central truth: The people of God will overcome.

The Lamb effects the will of God on earth when He breaks the sealed scroll. After He breaks each of the first four seals, four horses are loosed. The white horse symbolizes imperial domination (v. 6:2). The red horse is anarchy (v. 6:4). The black horse is famine and the pale horse is named "Death" (vv. 6:5-8). Jesus predicted the same catastrophes (wars, violence, famine, death) would precede "the end" (Mark 13). These destructive forces were summoned by divine decree only after the Lamb had broken the seals. Like the edict of a king, God's judgment is sure.

After the final seal is broken by the Lamb, John sees Christian martyrs as sacrifices beneath the altar (vv. 6:9-10). Evidently, they have waited a long time to see God avenge their untimely deaths. In response, these martyrs are given white robes (reign with Christ, v. 3:5) and told to rest until the time of persecution is over (v. 6:11). There are two more seals, seven trumpets and seven bowls of God's judgment to come. The sixth broken seal introduces three visions — the end of the world (vv. 6:12-17), the sealing of the 144,000 (vv. 7:1-8) and the heavenly multitude (vv. 7:9-17).

Cataclysmic signs (sun eclipsed, stars fall, sky divided, mountains crumble) accompany the advent of the "great day" of God's wrath (v. 6:12-17). These end-of-the-world catastrophes, however, do not bring immediate death — either to the enemies of God (v. 6:15) or His "bond-servants" (v. 7:3). God protects His chosen by angels who hold back destructive forces (vv. 7:1-2) and by the seal that marks His slaves (v. 3). The "sons of Israel" are not literally from the 12 tribes since the list does not include Dan or Ephraim. Furthermore, Jews have already been identified as the "synagogue of Satan" (vv. 2:9; 3:9), not as God's servants. These servants on earth are spiritual "sons of Israel" (Christians). The vision of the multitude in heaven are Christians ("in the blood of the Lamb") of "every nation" (v. 7:9), who have overcome the "great tribulation" (v. 7:14). For the faithful, God's presence will be a tabernacle of protection where there will be no more suffering (vv. 7:15-16).

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Twelve states receive SBC 'Arson Fund' disbursement

NASHVILLE, TN (BP)—Twelve state conventions have received \$246,712 from the Southern Baptist Convention's "Arson Fund" to assist African-American churches victimized by arson, according to the SBC Executive Committee's business and finance office.

The disbursement of funds, primarily from the offering taken at the SBC annual meeting in New Orleans June 11-13, followed instructions of the Inter-Agency Council's Racial Reconciliation Task Force which formulated the percentage allotment to the 12 states. The offering taken at the New Orleans meeting, at the request of outgoing SBC president Jim Henry, raised \$282,000 in pledges and cash gifts.

More than 40 primarily African-American churches in the Southeast have burned in the past 18 months, many as the result of arson. Donations to the SBC "Arson Fund" may be sent directly to Baptist state convention offices or the SBC Executive Committee, 901 Commerce St., Nashville, TN 37203.

Poll cites nation's growing religious conservatism

WASHINGTON (BP)—A rising tide of religious conservatism is reported in polling released June 26 by The Pew Research Center for the People & the Press.

"The conservatism of white evangelical Protestants is clearly the most powerful religious force in politics today," the Pew Center stated in a six-page summary of its survey, "The Diminishing Divide... American Churches, American Politics."

"In 1965 the Gallup Poll found that Americans by a margin of 53 percent to 40 percent thought that churches should keep out of political matters, and only 22 percent thought it was ever right for clergy to discuss political candidates or issues from the pulpit," the study noted. "In 1996 the balance of opinion has changed — by a 54 percent to 43 percent margin, the public thinks the churches should express their views on day-to-day political issues, rather than staying out of politics. And 29 percent now favor outright politicking from the pulpit."

Palau crusade pioneers multifaceted thrust in Chicago

CHICAGO (BP)—Testing a potential new model for evangelism in urban America, international evangelist Luis Palau conducted an extended, multifaceted approach to mass evangelism in the nation's third-largest city.

Palau and members of his evangelistic team and other evangelists shared the gospel with 129,000 people at 75 events throughout greater Chicago from the first of April through Memorial Day. More than 9,460 made public commitments to Jesus Christ.

The effort included about 55 "affinity group" events ranging from children's and youth rallies to Hispanic and Asian rallies as well as women's luncheons, men's breakfasts and parenting seminars. Palau also presented the gospel through 27 one-hour television programs on four Chicago stations.

Pro-life Democrats lobby for inclusive party stand

WASHINGTON (BP)—A group of pro-life Democrats met June 12 with Democratic National Committee chairman Donald Fowler to lobby for a more lenient stance in the party's abortion platform.

"We have anywhere from 35 to 50 pro-life Democrats in Congress," noted U.S. Rep. Glenn Poshard, of Cartersville, Ill. "We have spoken to leadership for some time about the fact that there are millions of pro-life Democrats in this country and our platform does not acknowledge that, and it should."

Southern Baptist Convention messenger adopted a resolution last month calling on "the Republican National Convention to maintain its strong pro-life platform and the Democratic National Convention and all other national parties to adopt a strong pro-life platform."

Warren dismissed as editor of *Home Life* magazine

NASHVILLE, TN (BP)—Charlie Warren, editor of the Baptist Sunday School Board's *Home Life* magazine since January 1988, will leave the position July 31 as the board pursues new leadership and direction for the family publication, according to Gary Hauk, director of the discipleship and family magazine department.

"*Home Life* has touched hundreds of thousands of lives during my eight years as the editor," Warren noted. "I am grateful that God chose to use me in such a high-impact ministry. I am confident He will guide me to my next opportunity to serve Him."

Before joining the board, Warren served as associate editor of the *Baptist & Reflector*, the state Baptist paper of Tennessee. He previously was an associate editor at the Brotherhood Commission and senior editor at the Foreign Mission Board.