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Arkansas Baptist State Convention

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ARKANSAS BAPTIST



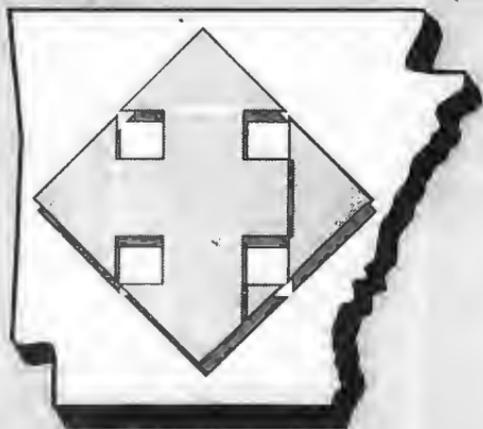
Volume 92, Number 6

March 25, 1993

Share Hope. Start Churches.

"New congregations reach more people for Christ."

-- David Bunch, HMB vice president for strategy development



Celebrate Start-a-Church
Commitment Sunday
March 28, 1993

Need for construction volunteers continues in devastated Florida

"Unless you went and looked you wouldn't believe it," insisted Margaret Gobert, who recently returned from the continuing Baptist disaster relief efforts in Florida.

In the wake of Hurricane Andrew's devastation, she explained, many people are still living in tents or makeshift shacks. "When you drive through a neighborhood, maybe one or two houses have roofs on them and are being worked on," she said. Often, Mrs. Gobert commented, that compares to 15-20 homes standing in a state of disrepair.

"The rubbish is still piled higher than houses."

According to Arkansas Brotherhood director Glendon Grober, who also recently returned from working in Florida, "It is still an absolutely unbelievable situation. The rubbish is still piled higher than houses. It's still a full-scale recovery operation."

Florida Baptists are committed to continuing relief and recovery efforts throughout all of 1993. Arkansas Baptist Men will also continue to help for several more months. Margaret Gobert and her husband, Don, will be serving as Arkansas Baptist Men's Andrew Recovery coordinators for the rest of the year. "The coordination is essential now because of the way we're laying out our work," Grober noted. "We'll be there through the rest of the year."

Volunteers from Arkansas are needed for construction projects for repairing both homes and churches. Florida Baptists have

agreed to help repair 400 to 500 more homes. The primary work being done now is roofing, insulation and drywalls, according to Mrs. Gobert. "Each group of seven to eight individuals will need a knowledgeable carpenter to be the group leader," she explained.

The "Baptist compound," the on-site Florida Baptist Disaster Relief Center in Florida City, acts as a clearinghouse for Baptist volunteers from as far away as New England, Mrs. Gobert said. The compound has had as many as 150 volunteers in one week; most come in church vans and live in tents for a week, using the shower and personal facilities of the nearby Baptist church.

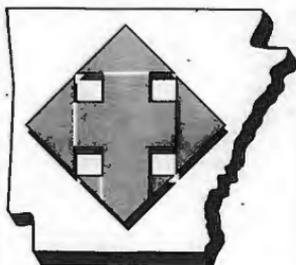
"It's hard to explain the excitement of the volunteers," Mrs. Gobert commented. "They see the devastation and can really be used of God to meet a specific need. Some are young men who take a week off at work and pay their own way to come down here - and then can't wait to come back."

Grober said all Arkansas volunteers need to coordinate their efforts through the Goberts, who will be leaving again on April 15 to assist with relief efforts. "Even RVers need to coordinate through us, because there are only 14 RV slots," Mrs. Gobert said.

The Goberts can be contacted at their home, 237 Windamere Drive, Hot Springs, AR 71913; phone 767-8807 until April 15. After that, they can be reached through the Florida City Baptist Disaster Relief Center, 101 S. Redland Road, Florida City, FL 33034; phone 305-248-7059.

"When you go," Mrs. Gobert emphasized, "your life is changed."

Cover Story



Start a church 5

March 28 is Southern Baptists' annual Start-a-Church Commitment Sunday. According to David Wigger of the Home Mission Board, "Southern Baptists' priority to proclaim the gospel cannot be achieved without churches establishing new congregations."

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SBC president Ed Young calls for balance

By Scott Collins

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

FORT WORTH, TX (BP)—Trustee boards of Southern Baptist agencies "need to be representative" of the denomination and should be balanced, the Southern Baptist Convention president said during a forum with trustees at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, March 10.

In a question-and-answer session with Southwestern trustees, Ed Young, pastor of Second Baptist Church in Houston, said SBC boards should represent the denomination while avoiding extremes in both the left and right wings.

"Those that are in the far right ditch, they're not going to make it. Those in the far left ditch, they're not going to make it," Young said. "Either way, you're in the ditch."

Acknowledging his input of specific names for trustees is limited after he appoints the Committee on Committees, Young said he will nonetheless encourage suggestions from the heads of SBC entities.

Young said his message to those who nominate trustees is, "Okay now troops, you've got to go nominate these from each state, but when you nominate them, tell them we want input from these people (agency leaders) and let them help us to know what would make a difference on our boards." That needs to happen somewhere," Young said. "We've lost that during the years."

"Hopefully through the process we will do our best to have really thoroughgoing, representative Baptist trustees that will speak to all of us," Young said. "Not those in the far left ditch or the far right ditch."

Asked about former SBC president Herschel Hobbs' recent suggestion that Baptist moderates and conservatives come together at the SBC this summer in Houston, Young said that day is past.

Instead, he said, there is an "evolving of the denomination" into more openness. "I would hope and pray that in the appointment process we will be able to say to (Southwestern) president (Russell) Dilday, 'What kind of trustees would make a difference?'"

Young defended his appointment of a task force designed to study various areas of work in the SBC. He said the study groups are not intended to replace the work of agency trustees.

"I just think we need to look at ourselves. It didn't cost the denomination a penny," he said. "Everybody was on their own initiative for it and I tried to appoint



SBC president Ed Young said SBC boards should be balanced, avoiding extremes.

representative committees who would simply look at some broad areas of our denomination.

"We need to rethink and renew our commitment. Bold Mission Thrust is about to retire," Young said. "We haven't had a lot of boldness. We haven't had a lot of missionary thrust the way I would like to see it."

The key to healing

Young said the task force has no authority but is intended to help Baptists "dream about the future. We need to dream the dream of Southern Baptists again."

"That dreaming is the key to healing in the SBC," Young said. "I think that where we're going to have healing is (to) put some kingdom goals up there that we all can buy in."

"I think that is what we must do as a denomination and this is just a part of that vision and that idea and that concept — that we just get on with kingdom stuff and quit all the Mickey Mouse stuff."

Leaving past "denominational baggage" behind will take a "supernatural work of the Lord," Young said. "I think our spirit, our attitude is so vital and important." He added that pejorative terms Baptists use about each other are "devastating."

Other issues Young addressed included:

■ The role of trustees: "Trustees are to deal with policy and overall dreams and programs and be those who implement the vision of the president and leave this

place excited about what's going on here." He said trustees "serve the president" as deacons serve a pastor. "I would hope they'd hold my arms up and love me and support me even when I'm wrong."

Trustees "can't teach in the school. We're not responsible for the curriculum, we're not responsible for the program and how it's carried out. That comes through the president and the administration. The trustees are to be a sounding board for him for what's happening out there."

He added trustees are "trusted with the responsibility of our denomination, with seeing that this institution or any entity that's SBC functions according to the purpose for which it was chartered, the purpose for which we give our funds to support it."

■ Woman's Missionary Union: "They're an autonomous body. They're not connected to (the SBC) in any bylaw-kind of way. They've been an auxiliary."

"Evidently their leadership feels that they need to be ecumenical — that they need to be open to other missionary groups. I personally think that's going to be very, very difficult. I believe that we need an arm that's exclusively ours in SBC life."

■ The Foreign Mission Board presidency: Young said "we're fairly close. I think it will be someone that I believe most everybody will say 'Amen' when the selection comes down. I think we're close and we've just got a little more praying to do."

YOU'LL BE GLAD TO KNOW



By DON MOORE
ABSC Executive Director

I love it! A pastor called and said, "We have a large group of deacons who are moving into the time of life when they are not going to be able to continue as active deacons. We want to do something to honor them. Would you come and speak on a day in the future when we have special services to honor them?"

Of course I will! It is hard to overdo appreciation. If that can be encouraged, I want to do it. As with pastors and everyone else, individually and collectively, deacons have their flaws. In spite of that, they are ordained of God and in most cases mightily used of God to strengthen the hands of the pastor and stabilize the church. Yes! Let's say thank you to our deacons and to others who carry the heavy load of church ministry.

While we are at it, there is another mighty force quietly at work helping each of us. We need to say thanks for it, too. Like the deacons, it is not perfect but it has been a strengthening and stabilizing force. It, too, can be taken for granted, ignored, criticized and neglected. No individual and no church on earth can begin to comprehend what has been made possible by our churches using the Cooperative Program to support mission causes around the world.

The ghettos, the prisons, the hospitals, the orphaned, the hippies, the baby boomers, the college campus, the ethnics, the tribes, the yuppies, the blacks, the military, the refugees, the migrants... on and on we could go. Throughout the earth they have been targeted by God and Southern Baptists to receive the gospel. Those who go there with the message have been supported by the Cooperative Program.

Why not show the Cooperative Program your appreciation or it by celebrating Cooperative Program Day, April 18? To know it is to love it.

WILLIAM H. SUTTON

President's Corner

Fear of change



Does the sure and certain prospect that things are going to change frighten or thrill you?

Psychologists tell us of an abnormal condition manifested by unreasonable fear of impending disaster. But historians tell us of people who have suffered disaster because they failed to recognize and respond to clear signs of danger.

As Christians, we should consider well whether we belong in either group. It is hard not to be shaken by the blitz of adverse changes which have, in such a short time, struck down 50 percent of our families, killed several million unborn babies, addicted millions of our children to drugs and alcohol, weakened our devotion to the church, diluted our spirits of obedience to the Lord, compromised our commitment to holiness and, finally, robbed us of the willingness to love one another. No wonder some have a hopeless feeling of impending disaster.

On the other hand, some have witnessed the same changes and are incredibly unconcerned with what they have seen. Who is right? If the choice is between hysteria and unconcern, then neither can be right and the price of

being wrong is more than we can pay.

In the face of grave danger, God's direction for us is stated in His Word. I Peter 5:8-10 puts it this way: "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings. And the God of Grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered for a while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast."

We are not to panic with fear nor boil with anger. We are to do the job. May God fill us with calm assurance that He is the God of change as well as the God of history. If it pleases Him, He can change our enemies. He can change our friends and He can change us to suit His purposes.

Our opposition to sin must be conducted in a manner that proves our love for the sinner. If we are not doing that now, then let the change begin in us.

Buddy Sutton, a Little Rock attorney and active member of Immanuel Church, Little Rock, is president of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention.

Personal perspectives

"We need to rethink and renew our commitment. Bold Mission Thrust is about to retire. We haven't had a lot of boldness."

—Ed Young, president, Southern Baptist Convention

"Nothing has really changed. We're still Southern Baptists and members of Southern Baptist churches.... We're not trying to set up a competing business."

—Billy White, moderator, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Arkansas

"I don't think many Baptists believe the denomination ought to dictate to the individual concerning Freemasonry. It's my impression you don't win people to Christ by condemning them."

—Larry Lewis, president, Southern Baptist Home Mission Board

Share hope: Start a church

Start-a-Church Commitment Sunday may be among the most significant dates on Southern Baptists' denominational calendar. Church growth experts emphasize that new works consistently reach a higher percentage of people for Christ than established, often plateaued churches do.

During 1992, for example, Southern Baptists averaged one baptism per 42 members. In Arkansas, the average was one baptism per 39 members. Among new works throughout the nation, the average is one baptism per 11 members.

According to David Wigger, director of resource development for the Home Mission Board's new church extension division, "Southern Baptists' priority to proclaim the gospel cannot be achieved without churches establishing new congregations."

The Home Mission Board currently is promoting the "15,000 Campaign," an effort to start 1,500 new churches per year throughout the decade in order to reach the Bold Mission Thrust goal of having 50,000 Southern Baptist congregations in the United States by the year 2000. In Arkansas, efforts are under way to start 30 new works per year during the state convention's five-year "Building God's Family" emphasis.

In light of such objectives, Start-a-Church Commitment Sunday on March 28 is particularly significant in helping achieve

STRAIGHT FROM THE EDITOR

By TRENNIS HENDERSON



Southern Baptists' long-term ministry goals. This year's emphasis is specifically targeted toward starting new works in multihousing communities and unentered counties. Arkansas Baptists have the opportunity to play key roles in both areas.

In the area of multihousing ministries, local churches can determine ministry needs in nearby apartment complexes and mobile home parks. Statistics reveal that multihousing constitutes more than 35 percent of all housing units in the U.S., yet churches reach only 4 percent of multihousing residents. By contrast, up to 30 percent of residents respond to ministries within their multihousing communities.

Arkansas Baptist churches can respond by targeting a specific multihousing community, developing a relationship with the manager, identifying ministry needs,

enlisting volunteers and scheduling visitation, recreation, Bible studies and other activities.

Establishing new work in counties without a Southern Baptist congregation is not a need in Arkansas. Yet Arkansas Baptists currently are involved in a partnership with the Iowa Southern Baptist Fellowship where 54 of Iowa's 99 counties have no Southern Baptist church.

According to Steve Melvin, director of church extension for Iowa Baptists, their goal is to enter one new county per year in each of the state's eight associations, resulting in 40 new works over the next five years. Arkansas Baptists can participate through mission projects, construction projects and other ministry efforts. "We're looking for long-term commitments—whatever it takes to get churches started in those counties," Melvin emphasized.

What can your church do? Take a few moments this Sunday to reflect on the importance of helping start new works. Determine how your church can help start a new work in Arkansas or Iowa during the coming year, either as a primary sponsor, with the assistance of other churches or as an associational project.

"The crisis need is for new congregations," insists David Bunch, HMB vice president for strategy development. Why? Simply because "new congregations reach more people for Christ."

Gunn's death is a tragedy for all

By Erich Bridges

SBC Foreign Mission Board

The March 10 killing of physician David Gunn is an enormous tragedy for at least three reasons.

First, it is a tragedy for Gunn, his family and those close to him. Shot down in his prime, the divorced father leaves a 22-year-old son and 17-year-old daughter.

Second, it is a tragedy for Michael Griffin, 31, who in a single moment of anger or insanity extinguished a precious human life (the very thing he claimed to be protecting), hurt countless others and ruined his own.

Third and most far-reaching, it is a tragedy for the pro-life movement — a heavy blow in a quick succession of recent setbacks. Gunn's death will be used as a brush to paint the pro-life movement as a gang of violent crazies, and probably as a club to beat it down with new legal action against peaceful pro-life activity.

The tragedy could not have come at a

worse time for responsible and nonviolent pro-lifers — particularly Christian pro-lifers — of which I am one.

Griffin reportedly is associated with a Christian church; the abortion clinic protest at which he killed Gunn reportedly was led by a lay preacher. A society increasingly hostile to Christians who oppose unrestricted abortion will view Griffin's murderous act as another confirmation that anti-abortion activity in all its forms must be crushed.

A new state-by-state assault is being mounted against any abortion restrictions at all despite overwhelming public support for reasonable restrictions. And after being attacked for years as unconcerned about pregnant women in crisis, pro-life workers who operate crisis pregnancy centers now face various campaigns to close down their centers.

Pro-lifers understandably are weary, discouraged, even angry. But it will be fatal to their cause — as fatal as giving up — if they turn to violence or fail to condemn

what Griffin has done and make every effort to ensure it never happens again.

Responsible pro-life groups, Christian and secular, should condemn and are condemning this terrible act in the clearest possible terms. They also should examine their ranks and expel anyone, anywhere, who considers violence a means of stopping abortion. Gunn's death reportedly is the first fatality associated with abortion protest, but it isn't the first act of violence.

There is a place for legal action to protect unborn life. There is a place, in my opinion, for nonviolent civil disobedience — just as there was during the civil rights movement. But there is no place for violence in any form.

Violence is what we are trying to stop. Life is what we are trying to cherish and protect. Look to Martin Luther King Jr. Look to Mother Teresa. Look to Christ. The war against abortion is indeed a war, but it should be fought with love, mercy, acts of compassion and appeals to conscience — not hatred or force.

A missionary's prayer

Five years ago I came back to the States to retire, only to find I had been robbed of my Baptist heritage. Churches I attended or visited no longer made winning souls their primary objective. Rather I found a deep distrust among the brethren. This was particularly true of the pastors whom we are taught by the Bible should shepherd the sheep.

The conventions had become little more than rubber stamps on decisions already made by committees of carefully hand-picked people. No dissenting voice was allowed on the floor. Longtime friends no longer acknowledged each other; it had become "them" and "us." Hard, bitter words came from both sides uttered by prominent denominational leaders, both pastors and laymen.

Shocked by what I have found, seen and heard, I have looked for a man to stand in the gap to help us come together and forgive one another so we could get on with the work of winning a lost world. Alas, I could find no one such as a George Truett, R.G. Lee, C.C. Warren, or countless other giants who have passed on before us.

Over the months and years my heart has grown heavier and breaks a bit each day as I see this once-great convention being destroyed, not from without, but from within.

I pray that God will send us a leader who will feed His sheep, and bring them together again in love by the power of the Holy Spirit. God gave us "a new commandment that you should love one another. Just as I have loved you, so you too should love one another. By this shall all (men) know that you are my disciples, if you love one another (if you keep on showing love among yourselves)" (John 13:34-35 Amplified Bible).

I am asking for a miracle, but then nothing is impossible with God.

Ruth J. Vanderburg
Retired missionary to Indonesia
Little Rock, AR

A ring and a prayer

The phone rang and my heart started pounding, my mouth became dry and my mind went blank. Panic set in as I realized the woman on the phone had an appointment to have an abortion.

On the heels of panic came the calm of the Holy Spirit. God allowed me to extend His hand to a woman in crisis.

Promise House answers calls from young ladies who have scheduled abortion appointments. Calls come in from friends who are desperate to intervene, but don't know what to say or do to make



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

a difference. A concerned family member may call for help to stop an abortion.

Recently, I answered a call from a young woman whose sister was about to have an abortion. I reached out to the confused teenager and she held on to the life line. I did not have magical words, just an alternative when she felt the only choice was abortion.

Promise House is a ministry that supports our belief in the sanctity of life. We do not present empty words; we offer a refuge where people care and provide a nest for nurturing.

I am pleased to say this young lady accepted the opportunity to protect the life of her unborn child. She canceled her abortion appointment. She also found a place of comfort where she will make important decisions about her life.

A success story requires a team effort. At Promise House we rely on Arkansas Baptists to be our voice, to share our story and to give people our phone number.

Jennifer Cloyd
Promise House caseworker
El Dorado, AR

The heart of the matter

A record number of baptisms overseas. New doors opening for the preaching of the gospel. A "Green Alert" to hasten our response to these exciting opportunities. One would think Southern Baptist leaders would lead the way in calling for additional funding to our mission boards in view of such unprecedented challenges. Wrong!

Instead, our SBC Executive Committee is recommending a budget calling for a 1.4 percent decrease in funding to every agency across the board—except for the Christian Life Commission.

Why spare the C.L.C.? Because of the election of Bill Clinton as President. Because of "the significance of our voice in opposition to abortion and homosexual rights." Because, it seems, our leaders believe the pursuit of a social/political agenda is a higher priority than preaching the gospel, planting churches and heeding the Great Commission.

Missions and evangelism have been the focal points of the Cooperative Program. That is why I have advocated increased funding from my church year after year. But now the new leaders of the SBC apparently want to change directions.

I disapprove of abortion. I oppose special rights for homosexuals. But these are side issues. The heart of the matter is the heart. Man is a sinner who needs to be saved. No amount of political posturing is going to bring in Christ's kingdom on earth. Only the proclamation and application of the gospel is going to do that. Meanwhile, our leaders are asking us to cut back on missions to try to reform society through political means. And they want us to use our churches' missions money to do it!

I plan to be in Houston this June to vote against a budget that I believe makes a mockery of Bold Mission Thrust, not to mention the Great Commission. I may be the only one. But for the sake of my church—and my conscience—I'll be there.

Tim Reddin
Hot Springs Village, AR

Missing the point

In their zeal to evangelize (add numbers to the church role, increasing offerings, and baptisms to their resumes, increasing the likelihood of upward career opportunities) many of our Baptist pastors are missing the point about reaching the lost. Behind the closed doors of their studies and in the confines of seminars, seminars and committee meetings, they have become naive to the judgments the lost make upon the church.

Christian laymen out in the work force encounter these judgments every day. "The church should pray more, give more, do more, be more loving, be less hypocritical, etc." In short, they tell us we should be different than they are.

Yes, pastors they will come and watch the Super Bowl with us and, by the way, why not the NBA finals, the World Series, and Wednesday night Razorback games? Why not the Miss America Pageant? But they will leave confused, embittered, cynical and empty because they realize the God they so desperately need is only a half-time God. They will leave still needing a God who is something more than a convenience for our self-gratifying, entertainment-seeking generation.

What is the "message" of the latest thrust to entertain them? That the gospel of Jesus Christ cannot stand on its own, but must depend upon luring and tricking souls into the confines of a church building? There they can endure a 10-minute sermonette or various "The Lord did this for me" testimonies while visions of Dallas Cowboy cheerleaders and beer commercials dance in their heads as they expectantly await the second-half kickoff.

Richard Cox
Hackett, AR

Arkansas churches celebrate resurrection

By Millie Gill

Arkansas Baptist

Choirs, orchestras, cast members and technical crews in Arkansas Baptist churches are busy in rehearsal and construction sessions preparing to communicate the agony of Christ's crucifixion and the glory of His resurrection.

Among the major productions to be presented during the 1993 Easter season are:

"The Victor," to be presented April 3 and 4 at Baring Cross Church in North Little Rock, begins with the resurrection of Lazarus and concludes with Christ's resurrection. "Our 55-voice choir and 37-member drama cast are preparing to bring to life the reality of Christ's suffering because of His great love for us," declared Larry Grayson, minister of music. "We are striving to make this production become so real that those attending will respond to and become committed followers of the 'victor over death.'"

The April 3 performance will begin at 7 p.m. with a 6 p.m. presentation April 4.

Ed Lyon, voice professor at Ouachita Baptist University, will portray Christ when Heber Springs First Church music ministry presents "Joy Comes in the Morning" April 11.

"Since the Christian faith is the only one in the world that can share a living Savior rather than a dead prophet, it is imperative that we share this with others," emphasized Morris Ratley, minister of music. "Our combined choirs, assisted by Lyons, will endeavor to do that Easter morning at 10:30."

Joe A. Fitzpatrick, minister of music for Park Hill Church in North Little Rock, will direct "A Greater Little Rock Easter Pageant" March 27-28 at the North Little Rock High School East Campus auditorium.

This life of Christ pageant will feature the Park Hill Church sanctuary choir and a 23-piece orchestra with full biblical drama, sets, costumes and live animals. Performances are at 7 p.m. each evening.

Complimentary tickets are required and can be secured through the church's music ministry office; phone 501-753-3413.

The Northeast Arkansas Passion Play will be presented at Central Church in Jonesboro under the direction of Ric Hunt. Presentations, featuring choirs, an orchestra and a drama cast, will be presented at 7:30 p.m. April 23 and at 5 and 7:30 p.m. April 24 and April 25.

Free tickets are available through the church's music ministry office; phone 501-935-1950.

"The Lamb...Victorious," a living pic-



Rockie Paladino, Joe Blackwell and Conrad Arendt (left to right), members of Baring Cross Church in North Little Rock, construct props to be used for "The Victor," an Easter drama to be presented April 3-4.

tures drama, will be presented by the music ministry of Life Line Church in Little Rock. Performances are at 7:30 p.m. April 2-4. A 4:30 matinee also is planned for April 4.

A full technical crew will assist the 90-member cast and 50-voice choir. Music and drama directors will be Leslie Willis, minister of music, and Peggy Powell.

Immanuel Church in Little Rock music ministry will present the 1993 edition of the "Living Cross" April 3 and 4 at 3 and 6 p.m.

The sanctuary choir will be accompanied by the Immanuel orchestra and assisted by drama and banner ministries in an Easter season presentation of Christ's birth, ministry, trial, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension. Lynn Madden, minister of music, will direct performances.

Complimentary tickets are now available and may be reserved by calling the church's music ministry office; phone 501-374-7464.

Natural Steps Church of Rolane has planned two services for Palm Sunday, April 4.

"Crown Him King" will be sung for residents of Parkway Health Care Center in Little Rock at 3:30 p.m. A 7 p.m. performance of the Easter choral celebration will be at the church. Pastor Harry Black will direct both presentations.

Jacksonville First Church's 18-member cast and 25-member choir will present "The Choice" March 28 at 3 and 6 p.m.

"This dramatic musical is unusual,"

stated David Branton, minister of music. "The love between a Roman centurion and Hannah, a Jewish girl who is a follower of Christ, provides a sub-theme making it somewhat different than the traditional Easter drama."

Branton will serve as choir director and Damille Moore will serve as drama director.

Mount Carmel Church of Cabot music ministry has planned "Jesus...My Beloved Son" as a worship celebration April 7-11. The Wednesday through Saturday performances will begin at 7 p.m. with the Easter service to be presented at 6 p.m.

Chris Bonifant has written the script for this production that begins with the Old Testament prophecies of Christ's coming and concludes with the second coming of Christ. Living pictures, choral music and drama will be used in performances directed by Jerry Miller, minister of music, and Joni Hising, drama director.

Second Church in Jacksonville music ministry will present "Celebrate Easter at the Pageant" with 7:30 p.m. performances April 7-11. Joe Francis, minister of music, will direct the more than 100 participants, with Gigi Sykes serving as pageant coordinator and Sheryl Bollen serving as drama coordinator.

Those attending are requested to bring food donations for the Jacksonville Caring Center. The church is providing child care for preschoolers. Additional information may be obtained by calling the church office at 501-989-2502.

SPRINGDALE FIRST CHURCH

Crusade leads 2,625 to Christ

By Trennis Henderson
 Editor, Arkansas Baptist

SPRINGDALE, AR—It wasn't a typical revival program. And the results weren't typical either.

First Church of Springdale held a recent series of crusade services led by the "Power Team," a Dallas-based group of world-class athletes who combine feats of strength with words of Christian testimony. The results? Overall attendance of more than 32,000 people, a total of 2,625 professions of faith in Jesus Christ and more than 400 converts baptized—so far.

Describing the services as a combination of "children's church and high-energy lay renewal," pastor Ronnie Floyd added, "It's totally different than anything I've ever done before. We were trying to reach people who are unchurched."

Floyd said the key to the revival's success was spiritual preparation. Participants in the church's "Warriors on the Wall" prayer ministry began praying for the services five months prior to the crusade.

"We have 700-plus people praying an hour a week for the ministries of our church," Floyd explained. "Any time day or night, I know people in our church are praying."

Combined with the prayer emphasis, Floyd said, "I really felt led of the Lord to call our church to 40 days of prayer and

fasting." He said an estimated 1,000 people took turns praying and fasting during the 40-day emphasis.

"You abstain from food with a spiritual goal in mind," Floyd noted, adding that participants "were praying for 1,000 people to receive Christ."

The next step in the process was to collect names of unsaved and unchurched individuals. By the time of the crusade, the church had compiled a list of 5,000 prospects. Volunteers prayed for them by name throughout the crusade week.

Floyd said church members also were involved in "cleansing of the temple—ourselves—through the reading of the Word." Basing their actions on John 15:3, participants took turns publicly reading the Bible from Genesis 1 through Revelation 22, concluding the 80-hour effort immediately prior to the start of the crusade.

Once the spiritual preparation was done and the crusade had begun, "God was all over it," Floyd declared. "The first night of the crusade we had over 3,000 people here—not your typical Sunday night crowd. Two hundred people were saved.

"We just sat back and watched God move among us," Floyd added. "We got there because we followed His principles. I call it the God factor in church growth."

As the crusade got under way, the region was blanketed with several inches of snow. But the crowds continued to come.



A "Power Team" member gets the crowd's attention by a display of strength prior to sharing his Christian testimony.

"I think God sent the snow to show that only He could get the glory for this week," Floyd remarked. "We had all kinds of people saved—senior adults to children. It was pretty awesome. It captured the attention of the region."

Acknowledging the Power Team's unique approach to evangelism, Floyd said, "I knew there was something we needed to do to catch the attention of lost people." Pointing to the apostle Paul's example, he added, "Paul said, 'I'll do anything for a hearing for the gospel, but I'll never compromise the essence of the gospel.'"

"You cannot win masses of lost people if masses of lost people are not there," Floyd emphasized. "It's the kind of thing you do to try to reach your city. My people have never been more excited."

In addition to the evangelism emphasis, Floyd said discipleship follow-up efforts began during the crusade with personal contacts being made with each person who registered a decision.

First Church, Springdale, which led the state convention last year with 456 baptisms, has added approximately 600 members by baptism since the new church year began last October.

"It gives us the hope that we really can penetrate the pagan culture in our day. We've just got to be willing to take the risk to do it," Floyd declared. "When the world hears the gospel, the world still gets saved."



Hundreds of people responded to the invitations during the recent "Power Team" crusade held at First Church, Springdale. A total of 2,625 conversions were recorded.

All Scripture is the inspired Word of God

By Herschel H. Hobbs

Special to the Arkansas Baptist



When The Baptist Faith and Message was adopted in 1963, not one question was raised about article one on the Scriptures. But for the last 14 years it has been the center of controversy. The focal point

has not been the interpretation of Scripture but the nature of the Scriptures themselves. So long as a person sees the Bible as the divinely inspired, inerrant word of God, most Southern Baptists allow for differences in interpretation.

In the press conference following his election as president of the convention, a strong conservative was asked to comment on a certain seminary professor's doctrinal view which is contrary to that held by most Southern Baptists. He replied, "He believes in the inerrancy of the Scriptures; the other is a matter of interpretation. I have no problem with that." But The Baptist Faith and Message does make certain declarations regarding the nature of the Scriptures.

Divinely Inspired: II Peter 1:20 reads, "No prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation." "Interpretation" should read "origin." As A. T. Robertson was fond of saying, "No prophet is a self-starter." Instead, "holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."

Some say that which is Scripture is inspired, but that not all the Bible is Scripture. In II Timothy 3:16 Paul says, literally, "Every single part of Scripture is God-breathed." And a God of truth does not breathe error!

Southern Baptists generally hold to either the verbal plenary or the dynamic theory of inspiration. The verbal plenary theory says that every word of Scripture is inspired. But contrary to what many think, those holding to this view do not believe that the Holy Spirit dictated every word with the writers being only automatons. The dynamic theory holds that the Holy Spirit inspired the message and guarded the authors from error, but left them free to choose the exact words, and that each author's work bears the imprint of his own personality. For instance, when Jesus spoke of a camel going through the eye of a needle, Matthew and Mark used the word for a sewing needle; Luke, a physician, used the one for a surgical needle.

The Holy Spirit said "needle"; each writer used the word with which he was familiar.

In the end result there is really no difference. Both schools of thought agree that the Bible is the inspired word of God.

Inerrant: At one point during the present controversy I received a call from the late Dr. Hugh Wamble, professor of church history at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. His students were asking the origin of "truth without any mixture of error." He asked if our committee researched it. I told him that we did not; it was in the New Hampshire Confession of 1833. The 1925 committee borrowed it and ours retained it.

So Dr. Wamble researched it. He found mention of a letter by the English philosopher John Locke. Then he discovered a bound book of his letters. A young preacher had written him asking how to be a successful minister. In a letter dated in September 1702, one year before his death, John Locke wrote, "Preach the Bible! For it has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter." The latter sentence appears in its entirety in article one of The Baptist Faith and Message.

Of course, when we speak of the inerrancy of the Scriptures we are thinking of the original manuscripts. Prior to the invention of the printing press, new copies of Bible manuscripts were copied by hand. The Holy Spirit no more protected copyists from error than He does typesetters. As we do now, suppose someone wrote a word or phrase on the margin of his manuscript copy. A century later a copyist might mistake it for part of the text. So he wrote it in.

A good example of this is found in Matthew 17:21. The reading is "by prayer and fasting" (KJV). "And fasting" is not in the oldest and best manuscripts. It got there through the above process.

Admittedly there are still a few problem passages, especially in the Old Testament. But like so many once problem passages, now solved in favor of the Bible, I am convinced that in God's own time, discoveries in archaeology and/or other areas of learning will favor the inerrancy of the Scriptures.

Even so, ultimately the issue calls for positive faith. The Bible does not seek to prove the existence of God. It assumes that He is. And we believe it. At a convention about 10 years ago someone said, "I have never seen the original manuscripts!" Another replied, "I have never seen Jesus Christ either, but I believe in Him!" I thought he had a good answer.

One word of caution. We must inter-

pret given parts of the Bible in their own milieu. Not all the Bible is prose. Much of it is poetry and/or symbolic. For instance, to me the key to the understanding of Revelation is in its first verse where John says, "He (Jesus Christ)...signified to me." "Signified." This translates a verb meaning to show in signs or symbols. This does not tone down the message. It enhances it. The reality is always greater than the symbol. Heaven is more glorious than Revelation describes it. Hell is more terrible than it describes it. The Holy Spirit exhausts human language in helping us understand God's holy Book.

These little things I have cited do not in any sense affect God's message to us. So read it, believe it and thank God for His wonderful Book!

Judgment: The Bible reveals "the principles by which God judges us." You may ignore the Bible now. But you will meet it at God's judgment bar. Furthermore, it is "the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds and religious opinions should be tried." We should judge other things by the Bible, not the Bible by other standards.

For instance, natural science relies upon cause and effect. So it cannot act by faith. If you begin now and go back by effect and cause, ultimately you come to an effect for which there is no natural cause. It is there that religion takes the leap of faith, something science cannot do.

Criterion: "The criterion by which the Bible is to be interpreted is Jesus Christ." Other than rephrasing certain truths found in the 1925 statement, the above quoted sentence is the only addition the 1963 committee added to this article.

I have heard only one critical remark about this. It was made by a leading conservative. Frankly, I was amazed by it. Jesus Christ is the final, full and complete revelation of God. The Bible is the written word about the Living Word.

Many years ago I preached through the Bible. It required 12 years. Someone asked if I alternated between the Old and New Testaments. I said, "No, I began with Genesis 1:1 and went straight through Revelation." He asked if that did not keep me out of the New Testament a long time. I said, "No, I wound up in the New Testament in every sermon."

Why not? For the New Testament is the fulfillment of the Old. The New Testament is the flower of which the Old Testament is the bud. Incidentally my people said that they learned more Bible during that time than in the rest of their lives put together. And I did also!

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'First Place' helps churches affirm fitness

By Colleen Backus

Arkansas Baptist

"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31).

While Christians are aware of teachings related to the physical body being a temple of the Holy Spirit, keeping that body in "temple shape" often is a difficult road. A program that started in 1979 at First Baptist Church of Houston has recently been embraced by the Baptist Sunday School Board, and is now available through the board's Discipleship Training division. "First Place" is based on the concept of abundant living through being in good condition spiritually, physically, mentally and emotionally.

The First Place program has nine areas of fitness. They are: attendance, prayer, Scripture reading, memory verse, Bible study, "live-it," fact sheets, phone calls and exercise.

Long before the First Place program went national through the BSSB, a Little Rock church was involved as a part of the pilot program that came from Houston. Jerry Johnson, who started First Place at Little Rock First Church seven years ago, was the church's Christian Family Life administrator with a life-long interest in



Bible study is a primary aspect of Southern Baptists' First Place health program.

fitness. Even though he had been conducting fitness programs in various churches since 1969, First Place provided him new ideas. "I personally practiced personal fitness for 19 years, but paid no attention to nutrition because I didn't have a weight problem," he explained.

That's where Rachel Jacks came in. A nutritionist, she first worked as a volunteer in the program and now is the part-time nutrition consultant for the church's Christian Family Life Ministry. "The amount of accountability people have to their physicians concerning their diet is not enough to encourage lifestyle changes," Jacks said. "We found that group support was very successful."

The original class of eight to 10 participants soon blossomed and at one point the church was providing nine classes. Volunteers staff the classes and "really make the program work," Jacks said.

After making a commitment to the program, participants are instructed for three weeks on diet and exercise only. After that, a 12-week semester of Bible study and emphasis areas — exercise, nutrition and behavior modification and motivation — reinforce the biblical mandates concerning treatment of the physical body.

Careful evaluation of individual dietary and fitness needs is a primary concern of First Place as done at Little Rock First Church, Johnson explained. After an evaluation with Mrs. Jacks, he takes the information and, using a formula developed by a physiologist, develops a specific plan for each individual. The program will not allow a person to eat below his or her "basal metabolic rate" — in other words, starvation dieting is not allowed. The nutritional basis for the First Place program is the diabetic exchange program in use at many hospitals throughout the country.

"The rewards are great, but so are the

frustrations," Johnson said, cautioning that First Place has a dropout rate of 60 percent. "But if you have 40 percent success, it's so much higher than the national average of weight-loss programs." He noted that many former First Place participants who have moved away have then started the program in other locations, including as far away as South Korea.

A recent entry into the First Place program is Sylvan Hills First Church in North Little Rock. Pastor Don Moseley and his wife, Margaret, both had a "personal need" for the program, having battled weight problems for all of their adult lives. The church launched the program in late January with 44 participants.

Mrs. Moseley, who instructs the class, previously joined a nationally known weight loss program, but felt like something was missing. "I also needed a spiritual side," she said. When she became aware of First Place, she looked over the materials carefully, and found that "it was really well-rounded; proper diet and spirituality." Affirming the success of the program at Sylvan Hills, she said participants already have lost a total of 312 pounds.

Pastor Moseley is enthused about the program. "The program is wonderful. It's balanced nutrition — you're not starving."

The church uses part of its regular Wednesday night "prayer and share" session to provide time for the program. Each participant weighs in while reciting a weekly memory verse. Bible study, a fact sheet and a prayer journal are daily commitments to the program. The Bible study is "very to the point about obedience," Moseley added.

First Place can be adapted for any size church and requires no special facilities. The goal of the program is to allow Christians to live healthier, happier, more abundant lives, with God as their top priority.



Nutritionist Rachel Jacks weighs a First Place participant during a recent class at Little Rock First Church.

Cooper encourages ministers to 'glorify God' through fitness

FORT WORTH, TX (BP)—The internationally known founder of the aerobics movement recently challenged students at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary to "glorify God with your bodies."

Kenneth Cooper, founder and president of the Cooper Aerobics Center in Dallas, asked students during a chapel service at the Fort Worth, Texas, school to commit to some form of aerobic exercise in light of evidence of high levels of stress among ministers.

Cooper cited a 1991 Southern Baptist Convention report that placed ministers below average in physical fitness, with heart attacks being the leading cause of death among males and cancer the leading cause among females. He revealed statistics showing that people who do some type of weekly aerobic exercise increased longevity by two and a half years.

"If I could get everyone here today, all ages, to dedicate 30 minutes three times a week to some type of sustained physical activity, it could improve the quantity, I assure you, as well as the quality of your lives," said Cooper, who is chairman of Southwestern's Advisory Council.

According to Cooper, studies show that the average minister works 56 hours a week, while only 16 percent have memberships in health clubs.

"Of professional groups, pastors are the most deconditioned people I see," he said.

In a survey of hospital costs for Southern Baptist ministers, Cooper found that psychosis was the leading expenditure with \$1.6 million spent in 1991. Maternity costs were second and heart bypass surgeries were third. Cooper's study showed that twice as much was spent for psychosis than for heart surgery.

"God hath not given us a spirit of fear but of power and love and of sound mind," Cooper said. "That's what we're teaching and preaching, but are we practicing it?"

The study also showed the top two prescription drugs used by ministers were for high blood pressure and stomach ulcers.

"Since when is a bleeding ulcer a sign of spirituality?" he asked. "When will we learn that efficiency is enhanced not by what we accomplish but by what we delegate or relinquish?"



Kenneth Cooper, founder of the Cooper Aerobics Clinic in Dallas, urged ministers to practice what they preach by making physical fitness a priority in order to lead more healthy, productive lives.

Fitness is vital to faith, expert insists

By Terri Lackey

Baptist Sunday School Board

NASHVILLE, TN (BP)—Christians who take seriously the creed of striving to be more like Jesus should hit the streets in their walking shoes and tone up their bodies, a Southern Baptist nutritionist said.

"Why should Christians become fit physically?" Dick Coucy asked a group of about 150 in Nashville attending the national launch of a Christian health care program.

"Because Jesus was fit," said Coucy, a nutrition expert, author and professor of health, physical education and recreation at Baylor University in Waco, Texas.

Jesus didn't hop in His car and drive to the nearest temple to spread the word, Coucy said.

"He walked. The Bible describes how He walked over 50 miles once from sunup to sundown. Another time He walked 120 miles in three days. Guys, He was walking about a 14-minute mile. I want you to get out there tomorrow and try a few of those."

Coucy was guest speaker at the recent national launch of "First Place: A Christ-Centered Health Program." Billed as a spiritually based education program to teach participants to eat right, exercise and get enough rest, First Place is a joint venture between the Baptist Sunday School Board and First Baptist Church of Houston.

The 13-week fitness course includes Bible study, Scripture

memorization, prayer sessions, exercise guidelines and a sensible eating plan allowing participants to successfully lose up to two pounds a week.

"Jesus was not only physically fit, He was mentally fit," Coucy said. "At age 12, He amazed a priest with His knowledge. We must learn to develop mentally, too."

"If you don't go home and read, study and learn, you're not going to be like Jesus," Coucy added.

Americans, Christians especially, are in a physical slump, Coucy indicated.

"Nearly 40 percent of all Americans are overweight," he said, adding that 62 percent of ministers who died last year died as a result of heart attacks.

Other facts Coucy cited about the health of Americans included:

- The U.S. leads the world in the number of cases of hypertension, cancer and heart attacks.

- Research reports say 30-60 percent of all cancer may be attributed to improper nutrition.

- 80 percent of Americans suffer from lower back pain, which is a result of inadequate exercise.

Coucy advised the First Place participants to "stay in shape. Develop your cardiovascular fitness, develop flexibility, keep your body fat down and develop good body composition."

Coucy said one is never too young or too old to exercise. "The only reason you don't eat right or exercise," he said, "is because you're lazy."

Arkansas All Over

MILLIE GILL

ABN photo / MILLIE GILL

Staff changes

Robert E. Wiggins Sr. began serving Feb. 28 as pastor of First Church of Alexander, coming there from Memphis. He is a graduate of Mississippi College in Clinton, Miss., and Trinity Theological Seminary of Newburg, Ind. Wiggins and his wife, Carolyn, have three children, Robert Jr., Bill and Deborah.

Tom Doty is serving as interim pastor of East Side Church in Osceola, having served the congregation as supply pastor since October.

David Rouse began serving March 21 as pastor of First Church, Winslow. He and his wife, Karen, and their twins, Rebecca and Jacob, came there from Gregory Church of Inola, Okla.

Stephen P. Spurgin will begin serving April 4 as pastor of West Church in Batesville. He will come to Batesville from Cambridge, Ohio, where he has been pastor of Trinity Church. Spurgin also has served in church staff positions in Arkansas, Missouri and Texas. He is a graduate of Jefferson College in Hillsboro, Mo., and attended Missouri Baptist College and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Spurgin is married to the former Carla Lee Hall. They have two children, Stephanie Lee and Sarah Ann. He is the son of Clyde and Hilda Spurgin of Piggott.

Ernest King is serving as pastor of Parks Church in Buckner Association. He moved there from Crossett where he was a member of Magnolia Church.

Phillip Dunn has accepted the call to join the staff of First Church of Perryville as minister of music and youth. He has been serving for eight years as minister of music and youth at First Church of Smackover. Dunn and his wife, Vickie, have two teenage children, Chris and Kort.

Aaron Harvie has joined the staff of First Church of Warren as youth/children's ministry intern. He is a sophomore at Ouachita Baptist University, majoring in religion and history.

James Whitlock is serving as pastor of Memorial Church, Hot Springs. He recently resigned as pastor of Cabin Creek Church, Lamar.

Larry White is serving as pastor of Owensville Church, coming there from Greenbrier Church in Alvarado, Texas. He is a



Arkansas Baptist directors of missions elected officers for 1992-93 at their annual retreat March 3-5 at DeGray Lodge near Arkadelphia. Jeff Cheatham of Russellville (center), DOM for Arkansas River Valley Association, is the newly elected president. Serving with him will be president-elect Jack Bledsoe of Fordyce (left), DOM for Carey Association, and secretary-treasurer Marvin Reynolds of Blytheville, DOM for Mississippi County Association.

graduate of Ouachita Baptist University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. White has served as a summer missionary in South Africa, as well as serving as a church staff member in Arkansas and Texas. He and his wife, Carla, are parents of two daughters, Haley and Hannah.

Jerry S. Hogan began serving March 8 as pastor of Harlan Park Church in Conway. He is a graduate of Baylor University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Hogan is a former pastor of Baring Cross Church in North Little Rock. He and his wife, Linda, recently returned from four years of foreign mission service in Ecuador. They are parents of two adult daughters, Julie Ann Moore and Janie Purvis.

Paul Holt is serving as pastor of First Church in Ward. He formerly was pastor of First Church in Sparkman.

Jesse Cowling, who recently retired as minister of education at First Church in Rosenberg, Texas, is residing in Mineral Springs. He is available for interim educational consultation service. Cowling previously has served as a staff member for Central Church in Magnolia and Baring Cross Church in North Little Rock. He may

be contacted by writing P.O. Box 237, Mineral Springs, AR 71851; phone 501-287-7141.

Mike McDaniel is serving as pastor of First Church in Lake City. He is a graduate of Southwest Baptist University in Bolivar, Mo., and has attended Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary. McDaniel also has served as pastor of a church in Morrisville, Mo.

Doug Pierce has joined the staff of Providence Church, Jonesboro, as minister of music and youth. He previously was a member of Nettieton Church, Jonesboro.

Obituary

Nolan Finney of Little Rock died March 5 at age 83. He was the father of Lyndon Finney of Little Rock, a former member of the *Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine* board of directors. Other survivors include his wife, Louise Finney of Little Rock; a daughter, Gail Finney of Oxford, Miss.; two brothers; four sisters; and three grandchildren. Finney, a retired letter carrier, was a member of Immanuel Church in Little Rock.

Church news

Clarendon First Church recently held a revival that resulted in 21 professions of faith, three additions by statement, three additions by letter and 12 baptisms. Walter K. Ayers was evangelist. Doug Grubbs is pastor.

Ridgeway Church of Nashville dedicated a new auditorium March 21. The auditorium, with a seating capacity of 300 and featuring a new piano and organ, was constructed to replace an auditorium destroyed by fire in February of 1992. Men of the church constructed a sound/filming room that is located above the foyer and overlooks the auditorium. Don Jones, director of missions for Little River Association, was speaker for the dedication service moderated by pastor Marty J. Polston.

Valley Ridge Mission has been launched in the Jonesboro area as a cooperative effort of Central and Nettleton churches of Jonesboro. The Arkansas Baptist State Convention has provided a mobile chapel on a three-acre site on Lawson Road just east of Valley View School. Terry Lawson, a lay minister, and his wife, Patsy, are coordinating this new work. The Lawsons have three children.

Newton County Church has been launched in the Mount Judea area of North Arkansas Association. Rodney Stromlund is serving as pastor of the new work, a mission of Eagle Heights Church in Harrison.

Leonard Street Church in Hot Springs recently adopted a statement opposing President Bill Clinton's actions related to abortion and homosexual rights. The statement, which was adopted unanimously, affirmed "our faith and belief that human life begins at the moment of conception (and) that such life is sacred." It also noted that "the Bible teaches that homosexual behavior is unnatural, perverted and destructive." Members also pledged to pray for President Clinton, Congress and state and local leaders.

Ordinations

Atkins First Church ordained Bill Thomason to the gospel ministry Feb. 7.

Calvary Church of Dardanelle ordained Steve Garner to the deacon ministry Feb. 14.

Delaware Church ordained Van Anderson and Jeff Smith to the deacon ministry Feb. 14.

Van Buren First Church ordained Tim Akins to the deacon ministry Jan. 17.

Vine Prairie Church of Mulberry ordained George Bowles and Ivan Dillard to the deacon ministry Jan. 17.

Hillside Church of Camden ordained Thomas Cantrell and Jerry Bethea to the deacon ministry Feb. 28.

Cotter First Church recently ordained Sneed Noe Collins and Marshal Berg to the deacon ministry.

Temple Church of Fort Smith ordained David Engles and Herman Vaughn to the deacon ministry Feb. 21.

Central Church of Hot Springs ordained Mason Searcy to the deacon ministry Jan. 24.

East Side Church of Paragould licensed Jason Noel to the gospel ministry Feb. 21. Noel is a student at Arkansas State University in Jonesboro.

Arkansas' Pantoja accepts Annuity Board ethnic post

Elias D. Pantoja, the language missions associate in the Arkansas Baptist State Convention missions department since 1990, will become manager of special groups for the Southern Baptist Annuity Board effective April 15.

Working in the Annuity Board's member services division, Pantoja will spearhead a new emphasis on segmented marketing and ministry.

Frank Schwall, senior vice president for member services, said, "We are delighted to have a man of Elias' special skills and commitment to give singular attention to an expanding area of our work."

"Pantoja, who is fluent in Spanish, will add a helpful dimension to our work with Hispanics," said Schwall, "but he will also assist in identifying other target groups and develop strategies to serve them."

Paul W. Powell, president of the Annuity Board, said, "Language and cultural segmentation characterizes the fastest growing population in Southern Baptist life. We want the Annuity Board to position itself properly to serve special needs of special people. Seminars, bivocational ministers, African-Americans and nearly 100 language groups are just some of the special groups who will benefit from our new commitment."

According to Pantoja, "As I reflect on language missions in Arkansas, I have seen progress made in looking at the total ethnic population as Arkansas Baptists seek to reach out to diverse

groups in the state." He added that 28 new language works have been started in the state in the past three years.

Looking to the future, Pantoja noted, "I'm excited by the challenge of going into a newly created position to target ethnic/language churches in the area of retirement. A large portion of our pastors are not in the program either because they can't afford it or are unaware of the program."

Jimmy Barrentine, director of the ABCS missions department, pointed out, "To say Elias' background is rich is probably to say too little. He grew up the son of migrant workers and was a migrant worker himself...He is bilingual and truly multicultural. He can move back and forth among several diverse cultures."

Affirming Pantoja's "unique contributions" to Arkansas Baptist ministry, Barrentine added, "Elias has been a special gift from God sent to us to gain a vision of what could be. Elias has set a new standard for us."

Despite the personal sense of loss, "I think he's the right choice for the Annuity Board," Barrentine said. "I don't know anybody better qualified to do what the Annuity Board is asking him to do."

Prior to service in Arkansas, Pantoja served in language and ethnic ministries in the Missouri Baptist Convention and in the student ministry department of the Baptist Sunday School Board. From 1977-83 he was a Home Mission Board multi-ethnic catalytic missionary to Shelby (Tenn.) Association. He also is a former Texas pastor.

Pantoja is a graduate of Dallas Baptist University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He and his wife, Martha, and their children, E.J. and Maria, are members of First Church, Benton.



Pantoja

Moderate Arkansas Fellowship officially forms, elects leaders

By Trennis Henderson

Editor, Arkansas Baptist

The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Arkansas was officially established March 5 as approximately 100 participants gathered in Little Rock to adopt a constitution and bylaws.

According to Billy White, who was elected moderator of the group, "This obviously has been a long time coming. There have been little fellowships of concern about the entire takeover process in the Southern Baptist Convention for several years."

The state fellowship grew out of a more informal group known as the Arkansas Fellowship of Concerned Southern Baptists. The new organization will relate directly to the national Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, a moderate group formed two years ago in response to conservative control of the SBC.

"This is an official identification with the values that we share, including the central value of freedom," explained White, pastor of Second Church, Little Rock. "There is a need for us to sound the voice of freedom to remind us of the values that identify us as Southern Baptists."

'Our only claim is Christ'

According to the preamble to the state fellowship's constitution, "As followers of Jesus Christ, we are free and faithful baptized believers....We recognize that all believers are priests unto God, able to know and do the will of God. Believers therefore are free to interpret and apply the Scriptures as they believe the Holy Spirit directs, and not according to ecclesiastical creeds or man-made documents."

The preamble goes on to affirm local church autonomy, voluntary cooperation, soul freedom, equality among believers and separation of church and state. "Our only purpose is God's will, our understanding of which is constantly growing," the preamble continues. "Our only claim is Christ. Our only power is His love."

The constitution states that the purpose of the fellowship "is to enable the people of God to carry out the Great Commission under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, in a fellowship where every Christian exercises God's gifts and calling."

"Nothing has really changed," remarked White, who also is a member of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention Executive Board. "We're still Southern Baptists and members of Southern Baptist churches.... It's still a fellowship. It's not a denomina-

tion or convention. We're not trying to set up a competing business."

Concerning relationships on the state level, White added, "My personal goals are that we stay involved. We are Arkansas Baptists. As far as I know, there is no intention or desire to be anything but that."

Emphasizing that fellowship members have not felt excluded on the state level, White said the group's actions are in response to "national-level concerns."

In addition to adopting a constitution and bylaws and electing White as moderator, participants elected Judith Strother of Mountain Home as moderator-elect and Bo Barnes of Little Rock as secretary/treasurer. They also elected an 18-member coordinating council from eight cities across the state.

The program included two sessions which featured a report from Grayson Tension, who served as interim missions coordinator for the national CBF, and a keynote address by national CBF coordinator Cecil Sherman.

Affirming the CBF's "holistic approach" to missions, Tension noted, "We are a global missions group. I trust the future will take us to all areas of the world where people have not heard the gospel of Jesus Christ....Missions begins where you are and doesn't stop until that message has circled the globe. This is our purpose."

Describing the nature of Scripture, Sherman said the Bible "is the objective unit of measure of God's voice in all time." Noting that the key question answered by the Bible is "how can I know God?" Sherman said, "It is set up to answer the big question. That is why we are the people who stay in touch with Scripture."

"In these days, there are those who would relieve you of the burden of interpretation. They will do it for you," Sherman cautioned. "They also would steal from us our birthright." Affirming the importance of "Baptists acting like Baptists," he said biblical interpretation "is a process devised by Baptists out of great pain."

White said his personal involvement in the fellowship activities "is an expression of my following Christ. I see it as an expression of how I understand the gospel I was raised with and was converted by and that is still at work in my life."

Encouraging participants to attend the national CBF general assembly May 13-15 in Birmingham, Ala., White concluded, "We want people to know there is a place for them where they can come and be themselves without leaving the Southern Baptist family."

Valley Springs First Church damaged by arson

VALLEY SPRINGS, AR—The facilities of First Church, Valley Springs, were heavily damaged by arson in a Feb. 18 blaze. Two volunteer firemen have pleaded guilty to setting the fire and have been sentenced to five years in prison.

According to pastor Carl Garvin, "We're really unsure of motives other than these individuals like to fight fires and put them out and get a pat on the back." The two men, Richard Thomas and Roger Johnston, also have pleaded guilty to setting fire to two barns and a vacant house.

Members of the Valley Springs congregation currently are meeting at 8 a.m. for Sunday School and 9 a.m. for morning worship at Evangel Assembly of God Church and are using the facilities of Valley Springs Methodist Church on Sunday and Wednesday evenings.

Expressing appreciation for the positive community response as well as offers of assistance from area Baptist churches, Garvin noted, "We really wanted to keep our church family in the community."

Garvin said the church's worship center and two-story educational building will have to be rebuilt, "basically keeping the shell and gutting it from there." He said initial damage estimates total about \$215,000.

"We're hoping that within a matter of weeks we will be back into our worship center as a stripped-out, bare walls, makeshift facility so that we can be back at our home site."

Future plans include building a new worship center and converting the existing facility into additional educational space.

Emphasizing that "we had a very close church family but this has drawn us even closer together," Garvin reported that "attendance has gone up even with the early morning services."

The overall experience has produced "a very positive impact," he said. "It has given our church an opportunity to show good Christian steadfastness and determination."

L.B. Atchison, director of missions for North Arkansas Association, agreed that the congregation's "faith has been tested and they're really doing great."

CLC seminar calls Christians to involvement

By Louis Moore

SBC Christian Life Commission

NASHVILLE, TN (BP)—Speaker after speaker at the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission's annual seminar on medical ethics emphasized the tardiness of Christians in the issues of medical ethics and called for Southern Baptists specifically to become engaged in the debate.

"The Christian community has lost precious time in responding to bioethical issues and must catch up," said Nigel M. de S. Cameron of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Ill. "We must prepare ourselves and our communities for a different understanding of the fundamental questions of life."

Thomas Harris, who chairs the department of biomedical engineering at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, said, "I fear evangelical and conservative Christianity is not coming to grips with these issues, particularly within higher education."

Francis Collins, who led the team which in 1989 identified the gene causing cystic fibrosis and recently was appointed head of the U.S. government's multi-billion-dollar Human Genome Project, said, "It is not sufficient to take a stand against something without understanding what that something is."

He said science and the church "don't have a pretty history," though he personally believes they are "wonderfully compatible." Collins said Christians must be prepared to face the ethical and moral issues which will surround genetic breakthroughs in the treatment of cystic fibrosis, breast cancer, Lou Gehrig's disease and thousands of other genetic disorders.

Franklin Payne of the Medical College of Georgia, said, "Medical costs are out of control because morality is out of control. Health without morality is impossible."

Payne said health and morality are interrelated, making the spread of ravaging diseases such as AIDS inevitable without a transformation of public health policy in the United States.

Timothy George, dean of Samford University's Beeson Divinity School, said the SBC lingered for years without a clear "prophetic response to the holocaust of abortion on demand" because of the "erosion of doctrinal substance" in the denomination and "the failure to think through theologically the great issues of our issue."

Issues discussed during the three-day meeting ranged from when life begins to genetic research to complicated intensive-care units to euthanasia.



Life Issues Institute president J. C. Willke addresses the SBC Christian Life Commission's annual seminar on crises in medical ethics. The program drew 523 registrants.

Texas physician Joe S. McIlhenny Jr. noted that two sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) existed in 1960 but today these number between 20 and 25.

More than 12 million people are infected each year with STDs, he said.

Louisiana State University obstetrics and gynecology department head Thomas Elkins said Americans must place limitations on how information from prenatal testing is used when it involves the lives of unborn babies.

'We must... draw some lines'

"We must be able to draw some lines somewhere in the sand and say, 'Past this point we will go no further.'"

Dianne N. Irving, assistant professor of philosophy and bioethics at DeSales School of Theology in Washington, said the question of "personhood" is central to all issues in ethics and bioethics.

"In the context of philosophy, how one defines a human being or a human person determines what ethical choices one should make," she said. "The issue concerns not only that of abortion, but so many other bioethical issues which are interrelated with it, especially those at the beginning and the end of life."

Irving said her own theology and understanding of bioethics has led her to conclude that "every human being is a human person from fertilization on."

During his talk, International Right to Life Federation president John Willke launched salvos against the new abortive

pill, RU-486, and called for continued Southern Baptist opposition to the drug. "RU-486 kills a developing human, after his or her heart has begun to beat," Willke said. The pill is not designed to prevent pregnancy, he said. "The biologically correct word is 'kill,'" when describing what RU-486 is designed to do, he said.

Carol Everett, who once co-owned two abortion clinics, said her abortion counselors were actually trained telemarketers selling a product. "Abortion is not about rights or choices, or even about rape or incest. Abortion is about money," Everett said.

Ohio Department of Health deputy director Gary Crum said health care in the 1990s will pose difficult questions that will require morally responsible answers. Noting the encroachment of euthanasia on U.S. society, Crum said many public libraries and even school libraries stock Derek Humphry's book, *The Final Exit*. "It will tell you how to kill yourself by using mixtures of drugs you may have at home," Crum said.

SBC Christian Life Commission executive director Richard Land said Christians are the "last line of defense against a rapid descent into an evil abyss of barbarism" toward human life in the United States.

"If we fail to insist that our society be one in which it is always wrong to do certain things to a human being, then we are bound to live in a society in which virtually anything can, and will, be done to human beings," he said.

Rogers opposes use of 'voodoo quotations'

By Herb Hollinger

Baptist Press

MEMPHIS, TN (BP)—Adrian Rogers, former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, deplored Foreign Mission Board staff speaking on his behalf in a recent Associated Baptist Press story.

Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in suburban Memphis, Tenn., said he was asked if the group, attending a meeting nearby, could come by the church for a visit.

"It was a private conversation among friends," Rogers said. He said the "voodoo quotations" — other people quoting what he said — were unethical, and the least they could have done was to call him to ask permission to quote him.

However, Rogers told Baptist Press, the "conversation with friends" did include an affirmation of Woman's Missionary Union, dismay at the new approach by the national WMU to broaden its work beyond SBC entities and his conviction that if WMU no longer wants to be an auxiliary to the SBC but operate like a parachurch organization, it should no longer have a representative on the SBC Executive Committee or the Inter-Agency Council.

"I want to affirm what the WMU has done" in its 105-year relationship with the SBC, Rogers said, "in helping raise funds for the missionaries and for promoting mission education."

Rogers said men in the SBC were wrong

in 1888 to exclude women, which led to the WMU organizing as an auxiliary. It is not that women have been wrong in leading out in missions in Baptist churches, Rogers said, but that men have not taken an interest in missions like they should.

"We need to put male leadership back where it belongs," Rogers said, in supporting, promoting and leading out in missions. When men take their rightful place in supporting missions then women and children also will be involved, he said.

"Look at the SBC annual meeting time — when the pastors are in one place having a meeting and the WMU is at another having its meeting," Rogers remarked. "It's a shame."

On the other hand, Rogers said he is dismayed at the "new tack, the new approach" voted by the national WMU in January. He said he would rather have the WMU continue to fully support Southern Baptist missions causes.

"If they (the WMU) are no longer going to be an auxiliary to the SBC, and the SBC has no control over them like other SBC entities, then they have become a parachurch organization," Rogers said.

Annuity Board announces no hike in mid-year rates

DALLAS (BP)—Breaking with the national health-care trend, the Southern Baptist Annuity Board will have no mid-year rate increase in the Church and Seminarian Comprehensive Medical plans. There also was no rate increase in January.

"We are thrilled to share this good news with our participants," said Joel Mathis, an Annuity Board senior vice president and head of the insurance division.

"This is the first time since 1987 there has been no rate increase in the Church and Seminarian plans for an entire year," he said, noting that U.S. medical costs continue to increase about 20 percent annually.

In other action, trustees elected William "Lonnie" Willis, a member of Calvary Church, Little Rock, to a second one-year term as trustee chairman.

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Workshop offers creative ministry options

By Colleen Backus

Arkansas Baptist

Be it clowning or campfires, participants in the recreation and ministries workshop, "Whateveritakes 2," discovered innovative ways to reach others for Christ. Held at Park Hill Church in North Little Rock, March 5-6, the workshop drew 265 people and according to one participant, Betty Goodson of McGehee First Church, "We're on fire about what to do."

The workshop was a joint effort of Bill Falkner, of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention Discipleship Training department, and Pete Petty, ABSC missions department. Numerous workshop conferences focused on sports, recreation basics, age group ministries, missions involvement, health and fitness, creative ministries such as puppets, clowning and mime, and camping. The workshop also featured a creative worship service directed by Wanda Pierce, from Malvern First Church, with music by Jim Mumms from Pulaski Heights Church in Little Rock. The program concluded with a campfire service.

"The skits in the worship service really allowed us to see ourselves," Mrs. Goodson said. "They pointed out that often, especially in family life center activities, when Christians are just trying to 'put in their time, waiting for it to be over,' that the unsaved are often watching."

Mrs. Goodson, and her husband, Larry, who coordinate the use of McGehee First

Church's Family Life Center, found the conferences exciting and put some of the ideas she learned to immediate use. "Our family life center was only being used four nights a week," she explained. With the implementation of a morning walkers program, and a children's after school program, she finds the uses just beginning. As a result of the workshop on family relationships, Mrs. Goodson said, the church is planning a day where families of children can come on a Saturday and have a "kids only" day with their children. "Our main objective is outreach," she explained, "Many of these families are unchurched."

"My cup just isn't big enough to carry all I learned," Goodson related. "I can't wait till next year."

Billy Kilmer, minister of education from East End Church, led the campfire workshop, hike/bike/canoe/camping and teen recreation this year. His interest in the conference grew following a unique experience after participating in last year's conference. After attending all of the clowning sessions a year ago, Kilmer "clowned" at a local shopping center to



"There are no mistakes in face painting," June Chandler said. "You are painting on the best of God's creation."

generate interest in an upcoming revival. One young man seemed especially interested, and Kilmer made a special effort to follow-up the contact made through clowning. During the revival, the young man made a profession of faith — and two weeks later died of leukemia.

Affirming the conference's positive impact on participants, Kilmer noted, "I'd encourage anybody to attend." He has expanded his creative ministries to include illusions, and also uses a banjo, guitar and fake beard to "clown around" in presenting gospel music.

Conference co-sponsor Bill Falknersaid, "It is exciting to see a vision realized. When we began the conference this year, we based it on the good response we had last year and expanded the number of courses."

What about the name: Whateveritakes? According to Falkner, it came out of a US-2 missionary's comment last year — "We need to do whatever it takes to present the gospel of Christ."

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HMB trustees vote to approve report on Masons

By Martin King
SBC Home Mission Board

ATLANTA (BP)—Masons and anti-Masons have expressed support for a report approved by Home Mission Board directors which concludes many teachings of Freemasonry are not compatible with Christianity and Southern Baptist doctrine while others are compatible.

The report recommends to the Southern Baptist Convention that "consistent with our denomination's deep convictions regarding the priesthood of the believer and the autonomy of the local church, membership in the Masonic Order be a matter of personal conscience."

Passed March 17 with one dissenting vote, the report also exhorts Southern Baptists to "prayerfully and carefully evaluate Freemasonry in light of the Lordship of Christ, the teachings of the Scripture, and the findings of this report as led by the Holy Spirit."

At last year's SBC meeting, the HMB was directed to bring "a report with recommendation" on Freemasonry to this year's meeting in Houston June 15-17.

Lewis expressed strong support for the report during his address to the board, encouraging directors to support it. Following approval, he said, "I don't think many Baptists believe the denomination ought to dictate to the individual concerning Freemasonry. It's my impression you don't win people to Christ by condemning them."

Board chairman Ron Phillips agreed with Lewis that the report should not have a condemning nature. "We didn't want our report to close the door of witness to

Freemasonry study available from HMB

ATLANTA (BP)—Although Freemasonry introduces its members to pagan beliefs, insufficient evidence exists to support critics' claims that the organization is satanic or opposes the Christian church, according to a study by the Home Mission Board's interfaith witness department.

The department, ordered to study Freemasonry by messengers to last year's Southern Baptist Convention, suggests Southern Baptists' Masonic membership "be left with the judgment of the individual."

"There is no agreement among Southern Baptists whether Christians can, or should, be Masons," the study

states. "Many fine conservative, Bible-believing, soul-winning men can be found on both sides of the issue."

The lengthy study, which includes topics ranging from Masonic rituals to the history of anti-Masonic movements, is separate from the HMB trustees' seven-page report ratified during their March 17 meeting.

The trustees' report will be presented at the Southern Baptist Convention's annual meeting in Houston, June 15-17. The interfaith witness department's study will not be presented to convention messengers but is available for \$6 from HMB customer services, phone 1-800-634-2462.

Freemasons who may not know Jesus Christ."

Phillips, a pastor from Hixson, Tenn., said the report is "fair, balanced and Baptist. It's my prayer that Southern Baptists will pass it overwhelmingly."

That view was shared by a leading critic of Freemasonry, Texas physician James "Larry" Holly. Within minutes of the board's adjournment, Holly released a statement supporting the report's recommendation.

Holly expressed appreciation to those involved in the recommendation including Lewis, Gary Leazer, former interfaith witness department director, and Bill Gordon, an interfaith witness missionary. All three were criticized by Holly during the process.

Holly said his hope is the recommendation "will be overwhelmingly approved" by the SBC and "that Southern Baptists can move on." While Holly's second book has been prepared in anticipation of the SBC convention in Houston, he said he plans to spend no more effort on the matter.

Fred Kleinknecht, head of the Scottish Rite of Freemasonry, Southern Jurisdiction, commended the board for recogniz-

ing Masonic membership as a matter of personal conscience.

"While I disagree strongly with several points critical of Freemasonry in the report, I compliment the Home Mission Board for its intent to report evenhandedly on Freemasonry," Kleinknecht said.

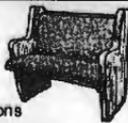
The report commends the Masonic Order for "its many charitable...and benevolent endeavors." The report acknowledges "many outstanding Christians and Southern Baptists now are, and in the past have been, active, loyal Masons."

The report also recognizes "that many tenets and teachings of some Grand Lodges could be considered compatible with, and even supportive of, Christian faith and practice" and quotes eight Masonic works which affirm the Bible and Jesus Christ.

About one-third of the report cites instances where Freemasonry is not compatible with Christianity and Southern Baptist doctrine. Illustrations include the use of offensive concepts, titles and terms; use of archaic, offensive rituals and "bloody oaths"; "implications that salvation may be attained by one's good works"; the heresy of universalism; and refusal of most lodges to admit African-Americans.

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Volunteers needed by WMU for Houston mission projects

By Susan Doyle

SBC Women's Missionary Union

HOUSTON (BP)—Carlos is one of seven children. For him, Christmas means only one gift — if it has been a good year for his parents. He doesn't always have the essentials. Treats are out of the question.

The long, hot days of June will find Carlos wandering the streets while his parents work.

But Southern Baptists have a chance to make a difference in his life and in the lives of thousands like him, according to June Whitlow, associate executive director of national Woman's Missionary Union.

"If you can play with children, paint buildings, sort food and clothing, style hair, make fudge, tell Bible stories or talk with people, Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union urgently needs your help," Whitlow said.

WMU is responding to needs which have been identified by Southern Baptists in Houston by sponsoring several mission projects June 7-11. The mission projects precede WMU's annual meeting, to be held at First Baptist Church in Houston June 13-14.

"Any woman or man who is willing to give any amount of time — from one to five days — to help meet these needs will make a world of difference in the lives of some people who do not know Jesus," Whitlow said.

Volunteers are needed for projects in four Baptist centers and in an apartment ministry. Any amount of time that can be devoted to the projects will be greatly appreciated, Whitlow said.

Southern Baptists can help in one of four Baptist centers by painting buildings, by sorting and sacking food for people who attend Bible studies at the center and by sorting and hanging up clothing to be given away.

Volunteers are asked to bring their own paint brushes, wire brushes and scrapers. Paint will be provided.

Fairs are planned at all of the centers for children in the neighborhoods surrounding those centers. People are needed to direct games, provide clowning, make balloon sculptures, teach crafts, give puppet shows and tell Bible stories.

As a special treat for the children, some volunteers will demonstrate how butter is made in a churn and will teach them how to make fudge and hand-cranked ice cream.

For the fair, volunteers are asked to bring with them anything they will need, such as balloons, clown costumes, ice cream machines and ice cream ingredients.

Volunteers willing to participate in the projects must register by April 15. For information, call 205 991-4016. Packets of information, including specific project assignments, will be mailed to volunteers by mid-May.

Wanted — Youth and activities director. Mountain Springs Baptist Church, located on Hwy. 5, 6 miles from Cabot. Send resume to Rt. 4 Box 193C, Cabot AR 72023; phone 843-4289.

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WMU sends video to reassure missionaries

By Susan Doyle

SBC Woman's Missionary Union

BIRMINGHAM, AL (BP)—Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union has sent a video message to missionaries appointed by the Foreign Mission Board reassuring them of continued support.

"We come to you today to say that we are still in the business of being your support system," said Dellanna O'Brien, national WMU executive director. "We want to give you assurance of our loyalty."

A copy of the 10-minute video was sent to all mission stations from which Southern Baptist foreign missionaries work.

The WMU videotape follows by less than two weeks a videotape which was sent to foreign missionaries by FMB trustees. The FMB videotape was of a two-hour dialogue between the trustees and national WMU leaders concerning recent WMU executive board decisions. Much of the debate focused on WMU's decision which will allow the organization to consider providing mission materials to all Southern Baptist groups involved in missions at the request of those groups.

"We share with (FMB trustees) the desire that you know all of the factors with which we're dealing right now, and we encourage you to watch that video," O'Brien said. "But we're also aware that by viewing that videotape, you may have more questions and concerns than you had before you watched it."

Missionary support unchanged

In her video message, O'Brien outlined how WMU's support of missionaries will not change because of the recent WMU board action.

"For almost 105 years, WMU has served as that organization that has provided prayer support for you," she said. "That has not changed."

"We also want to say that for those 105 years, we have supported the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering as well as the Cooperative Program to provide resources for your work. That has not changed."

WMU has told missionaries' stories through its magazines so others can know of their challenges, successes and prayer requests, she said. "That has not changed."

"We have reared up generations of young people to fill your places when you find it necessary to retire," she said. "That has not changed."

Some people are saying WMU is becoming a part-time organization, O'Brien said. "We want to say clearly — that is not true. We will be for you all what we have been in the past."

There has always been a great deal of diversity within the Southern Baptist Convention, O'Brien said. "But today, it's playing itself out in a rather unique and different way. We're finding different coalitions and fellowships joining together based around some common concern or sense of alienation."

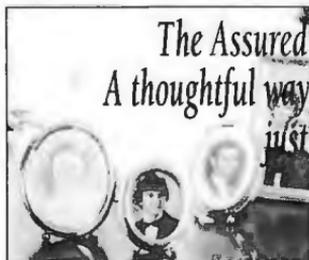
Predictions of future trends suggest there will only be further splintering, not only within the Southern Baptist Convention but in other groups as well, O'Brien said.

Such fragmentation is pulling the SBC apart as a denomination, she said.

"WMU would like to be the umbrella that will pull all Southern Baptists back together again in the missions cause and effort," she said.

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Unclean feet or hearts?

By Floyd Lewis, pastor, First Church, El Dorado

Basic passage: John 13:1-20

Focal passage: John 13:12-15

Central truth: If we follow Jesus we must live a life of service.

Have you ever washed someone's feet? I did once in college. I remember it clearly.

I belonged to a Bible study with about 20 students. On this particular evening our leader taught on John 13 and I noticed that he had a basin filled with water and a towel near his feet. When he concluded, he said that tonight we would follow Christ's example and wash the feet of the person on our right.

I remember looking around at the startled looks on others' faces. The people began to take off their shoes and socks. I looked to my right and wouldn't you know it, there sat the one person I was having problems with. As I washed his feet, I learned an unwanted lesson in humility.

The disciples also resisted some of the lessons Jesus wanted to teach them. Before their last Passover together Jesus decided to teach on the subject of greatness in the Kingdom. He would not lecture. He would model. He would act out a simple but powerful drama right before His disciples' eyes.

Jesus poured water into a basin and began to wash His disciples' feet. His disciples were stunned. Foot washing was such a lowly task that Jewish rabbis said a student should offer to do anything but wash his teacher's feet.

Notice that nowhere in this passage do any of the disciples offer to wash Jesus' feet. Perhaps envy and jealousy prevented such an action. Not long before, these men had been arguing about who the greatest in the Kingdom was. As Jesus washed their feet, He rebuked this attempt at self promotion.

After He finished, Jesus, the master teacher, asked a question, "Do you know what I have done to you?" (John 13:12). It's not hard to imagine that they did not understand. Jesus explained further, "For I gave you an example that you should do as I did to you" (John 13:15).

The lessons for us are clear. (1) We cannot follow Jesus and escape serving one another. (2) Envy and jealousy are obstacles to service. (3) Serving one another fleshes out the love that Jesus said would mark His followers (John 13:35).

Life and Work

Approaching death

By David Moore, pastor, Immanuel Church, Pine Bluff

Basic passage: Genesis 49:33-50:26

Focal passage: Genesis 49:33-50:1, 12-21, 24-26

Central truth: The death of a loved one represents a significant moment for ministry in our lives.

In our concluding lesson on Abraham, Jacob and Joseph, we focus on the end of life. In this book of beginnings, we find significant truths about endings.

After Jacob's death, Joseph's brothers begin to question Joseph's attitude toward them. After all, they had viciously abused him. They had sold him into slavery and lied about his death. Now that Jacob was gone, what would Joseph do to them?

Joseph has often been called a "type" of Christ. He illustrates the grace and compassion that is Christ-like when he responds to their plea for forgiveness.

It is significant that these matters were settled in connection with the death of Jacob. Jacob had given a final charge to his sons before he passed from this life.

It has been an honor for me to be with families when the final charge is given. A loved one is dying and is trying to communicate the last reminders to the family.

However, the situation was much more intense when it was my own father. His passing was a critical moment in my life, and I still remember the words he spoke in his last hours.

Joseph was very respectful of his father and tried to carry out his father's wishes concerning burial matters. There was a final word of reconciliation between Joseph and his brothers, which concludes with a powerful reminder that God can use even evil for His purposes in our lives.

Death is a traumatic time in all our lives, but Christians have a powerful opportunity for witness and for ministry. The passing of a loved one can be a time of change for family members, reconciliation between family members and salvation for lost family members.

If you have never lost a close family member, do not overlook the powerful opportunity to care for those who do.

Bible Book

Israel's message and call

By Woodrow W. Dishongh, HMB/ABSC chaplain, Little Rock

Basic passage: Isaiah 1:1-6:13

Focal passage: Isaiah 1:16-20; 6:1-9, 11

Central truth: God judges those who rebel against Him and calls messengers to deliver His message.

Isaiah's ministry covered a period of almost 60 years and spanned the reign of four kings. His message was basically for Judah, however it concerned the Northern Kingdom as well. Isaiah's vision assures us that our Father is observing us. The listing of Judah's sins compares well with present-day America.

Here is a definite call for repentance. "Come let us reason together" is literally examine your moral character and conduct along with the Father. We are the sinners and God is the one against whom the sin has been committed. "If ye be willing" is closely related to "come let us reason together." God invites us into conference and He will forgive to the fullest on condition of future obedience.

"If you" puts the emphasis on our decision. God did not intend for man to sin, but man chose to disobey. Uzziah had profaned the temple. Jotham, whose character was respectable, succeeded his father. It is appropriate that the prophet be given a vision of the Triune God in the year that the disobedient king was removed and a king honoring God succeeded him. Isaiah saw the Lord.

Isaiah saw the holiness and majesty of the Lord. He saw himself as a penitent man who is pardoned of his sin and now consecrated to the service of a magnificent God. He said, "I am a man of unclean lips relating to a people of unclean lips." He felt the call; he "heard the voice of God." It was a personal call that brought surrender to the demands of God.

Literally, Isaiah said seed me anywhere, on any kind of errand and at any time in any capacity. He was ready to go. The one question was, "How long?" The answer was until nothing but the mere "life germ" of the nation was all that remained. Isaiah was sustained by the assurance that the nation would not utterly perish. The "holy seed" would be the stump in the land. Today the church is full of imperfections. As true prophets let us look at all calamities with an assured calmness for the "holy seed" which constitutes the true church will not be injured by these incidents.

Convention Uniform

Called by Jesus

By Floyd Lewis, pastor, First Church, El Dorado

Basic passage: John 20:1-18

Focal passage: John 20:8-18

Central truth: An encounter with the risen Christ is the key to change.

Are you the same person you were 10, 20 or 30 years ago? Probably not. I surely am not. One of the catalysts for change in my own life has been other people. Key people have made an impact on my life.

Simon Peter, John and Mary Magdalene were all changed by their relationship with Jesus, both before and after the resurrection. In John 20:1-18 we find these three coming to the tomb of Jesus. Each reacted differently to what was found.

Upon hearing from Mary that Jesus' body had disappeared from the tomb, Peter and John (referred to as "the other disciple whom Jesus loved" v. 2) ran to the tomb. Simon Peter arrived second but went right into the tomb. Peter was never short on action. He saw the grave clothes, but no evidence of Jesus' body. Apparently he didn't know what to think. His thinking would not be changed until later.

John entered the tomb after Peter. He saw the same evidence, the same grave clothes, but his initial reaction was different. He saw and "believed" (v. 8). As a result John became a forerunner of those called blessed by Jesus in verse 29: "Blessed are they who did not see and yet believed."

Mary Magdalene was the first to find that the tomb had been opened. Her thoughts about what had happened to Jesus' body changed quite a bit in a few hours. At first she concluded that His body had been stolen (v. 2) and this is what she reported to Peter and John.

All three went to the tomb. After Peter and John left, Mary stood near the tomb and wept. Jesus then appeared to her and spoke to her. When He called her name Mary recognized Him, and grabbed hold of Him. Jesus responded, "Stop clinging to me" (v. 17). He knew she preferred tangible evidence, but soon she would have to learn to live by faith.

Because of her personal encounter with the risen Christ, Mary now ran to the disciples with a new message, "I have seen the Lord."

Likewise, today our lives and perspective can be changed by a personal encounter with the risen Christ.

Life and Work

Experiencing Christ

By David Moore, pastor, Immanuel Church, Pine Bluff

Basic passage: Luke 24:36-47;

Acts 1:3-8

Focal passage: Luke 24:36-39;

Acts 1:3, 6-8

Central truth: Experiencing the risen Lord results in a witness.

This Easter our attention turns to "the rest of the story," as Paul Harvey likes to say. Usually we focus on the bodily resurrection of Christ, but this lesson focuses on our response to the risen Christ.

In Luke the disciples were encouraged to see, to touch and to verify the authenticity of the risen Lord. There needed to be no doubt in their minds that this was no dream or illusion. Jesus had risen indeed.

Luke continues to record in Acts that our Lord presented Himself to others and convinced them as well with validation of His resurrection. He wanted them to know for sure that God had triumphed over death so that He could commission them to go and share the Good News all over the world. Jesus was concerned about seeing His disciples respond to the call for witness.

Baptists today are also called to bear witness of Jesus. Too often we have become a silent people. In our success, we have forgotten the response we must make to the risen Christ. Have we grown more concerned about our buildings and our budgets than about sharing the gospel with a lost world?

Today I stopped at our police department to file a report. While there, I had a chance to visit with some of the accused brethren. I talked to one fellow who was dirty and shabbily dressed. He had a distinct odor about him.

I tried to share Christ with him. I must admit that it took some courage to do so. In the midst of our conversation, I was quite surprised to discover that he was an undercover narcotics officer.

As you encounter the risen Lord this Easter, remember to respond to His command to be a witness. You might be surprised too as you discover new people who need the Lord.

Our experience with Easter should lead us to respond to the commission of our Lord to go into all the world as His witnesses. We can bear witness of His resurrection power.

Bible Book

Jesus has risen

By W.W. Dishongh, ABSC/HMB chaplain, Little Rock

Basic passage: Matthew 27:62-28:20

Focal passage: Matthew 28:1-10, 16-20

Central truth: Resurrection gives hope and the Commission enables followers to carry out His will in their lives.

He is risen! What glorious news. What magnificent assurance. As the Sabbath ends and the first day of the week dawns, we see the two Marys making their way to the tomb, hopefully to anoint Jesus' body. Mark's Gospel informs us that they questioned who might roll the stone away for them. The Father had taken care of that. He had allowed the earthquake. The stone was moved and the angel of the Lord sat on it. It is significant that these two women who had been at the cross and at the tomb would be the first to know the joy of the resurrection. The angel's message, "Be not afraid," emphasizes allowing God to take away the fear of those unexpected situations that come to us.

The tomb was visible and they could see that He was not there, however the angel's message assures that He is risen even as He had said. The command was to "go tell." They went and met the Lord and worshipped Him. Here is the urgency to believe that what He had said was true and the urgency to share that message with the world. "Go tell" is the first command that comes to a person who has personally discovered the wonder of Jesus.

Note the time lapse between Matthew 28:10 and 28:16. The disciples went where Jesus had directed them to go. Here they saw Him, although some doubted. Jesus spoke and assured them of His power. This Jesus, their master, had power on earth and in heaven. In His dying He had conquered death.

Jesus commissioned them, just as the angel commissioned the women, to "Go tell." Go to all the world, baptize in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit but above everything bring people to Jesus. This was a big responsibility to go to all the world, yet Jesus not only commanded, but gave a promise. With the great task, they were to have the greatest presence in all the world for He promised, "Lo I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Yes, even as Paul said later, "I can do all things through Christ." Praise the Lord He is alive, we are commissioned and people are being saved.

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

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Billy Graham meets with pope, preaches in Germany

ESSEN, GERMANY (BGEA)—Evangelist Billy Graham and Pope John Paul II met recently at the Vatican and discussed the situation of the Christian faith in the former Soviet Union and other parts of the world. It was the third time the two have met.

"I'm always impressed by the pope's warmth and friendship, as well as his knowledge of what is happening in the world," Graham said of the meeting. "He showed a special interest in our meeting in Essen, Germany, which will be telecast throughout Europe and to a number of cities in the former Soviet Union."

Those meetings, called ProChrist '93, were transmitted to more than 300 locations in 250 cities throughout Germany, as well as an additional 50 venues in Austria and German-speaking Switzerland. The crusade, held March 17-21, was interpreted in 42 languages to more than 1,000 additional locations in 57 countries and territories throughout Europe.

Eighteen AIDS patients accept Christ in Buenos Aires

BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA (FMB)—An entire ward of male AIDS patients recently accepted Christ as Savior when Esteban Cardozo, an Argentine seminary student, visited a hospital at the request of a patient's mother. He shared his faith with the patient, who prayed to accept Christ.

As Cardozo was leaving, a patient in the next bed asked the student to pray with him. He also accepted Christ. In the course of Cardozo's stay, all 18 men in the ward became Christians, said Southern Baptist missionary Stanley Clark, rector at the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Buenos Aires, where Cardozo is a student.

The incident occurred after a patient's mother called "Telemigo," or "telephone friend," which operates in several Latin American countries. It was created by John Magyar, Southern Baptist media missionary in Colombia.

Court won't review ruling against Louisiana abortion law

WASHINGTON (ABP) — Louisiana has lost its bid to criminalize most abortions. Without comment, the U.S. Supreme Court declined March 8 to review an appeals-court decision striking down Louisiana's comprehensive abortion ban enacted in 1991.

The law criminalized the termination of a pregnancy except to save the life of the unborn child or mother, or in cases of rape or incest that were properly reported to law enforcement officials.

The refusal to review the lower ruling is consistent with the high court's stance of allowing states to place some restrictions on abortion but not to criminalize it or place an undue burden on a woman's right to an abortion.

According to the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, the Louisiana law "is clearly unconstitutional" under the standard set by the Supreme Court in *Planned Parenthood vs. Casey*.

Education Commission seeks applications for director

NASHVILLE, TN (BP)—A search committee of the Southern Baptist Education Commission has announced it will receive applications through April 8 for executive director of the agency which relates to 71 Southern Baptist seminaries, colleges, universities, Bible colleges and academies.

Arthur L. Walker Jr., executive director of the commission since 1978, announced in January he will retire Sept. 1.

The committee encourages Southern Baptists to send their recommendations along with a detailed resume to Dr. Jerry Henry, chairman, Search Committee, 901 Commerce St., Suite 600, Nashville, TN 37203-3623.

'Holman Bible Dictionary' makes best-sellers list

NASHVILLE, TN (BP)—The *Holman Bible Dictionary* was the fourth best-selling Christian reference book in the United States in 1992, moving up three places from the previous year's ranking.

The dictionary was included in *Bookstore Journal's* "Reference Premier 100" — a list of best-selling Christian reference books for 1992. The list is compiled annually based on actual sales figures submitted by publishers.

Published by the Baptist Sunday School Board's Holman Bible Publishers, the 1,486-page book was released in 1991 and offers more than 600 color illustrations, maps, charts and articles by almost 300 contributors.

Three other Holman products made this year's listing: *Smith's Bible Dictionary*, *Pronouncing Bible Names* and *The Holman Concise Bible Atlas*.

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