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Arkansas Baptist State Convention

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ARKANSAS BAPTIST



Volume 95, Number 19

September 19, 1996

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PRAYER CONVOCATIONS

'Turn our hearts toward God,' Elliff urges Southern Baptists

Urging Southern Baptists to come together and "turn our hearts toward God," Southern Baptist Convention president Tom Elliff recently led a series of eight prayer convocations throughout the nation. The meetings were held at the six SBC-related seminaries as well as the Home Mission Board and Mid-America Seminary, an independent Baptist school in Memphis.

In an invitation mailed to more than 40,000 Baptist leaders, Elliff invited participants to "join our hearts in crying out to God for revival in the land." In addition to Elliff, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church in Del City, Okla., the various programs featured such speakers as Henry Blackaby, HMB director of prayer and spiritual awakening; retired seminary professor T.W. Hunt; and Avery Willis, SBC Foreign Mission Board senior vice president.

Describing the meetings as a "call to the cross," Elliff distributed a letter to convocation participants, expressing concern that "our nation is...poised for the judgment of God."

Emphasizing the need "to beseech the throne of God," Elliff added, "Our prayers are empty unless we first come to the cross and there avail ourselves of its power.... We are meeting to seek Him for a great spiritual awakening in our time, but also to pledge ourselves to the crucified life regardless of His divine disposition toward our nation."

Echoing that theme during the convocations, the SBC president declared that "there's nothing appealing about the message of the cross.... The cross is not a matter of a little inconvenience; the cross is a matter of death.

"The Lord is calling every one of us in this room to the cross," Elliff noted. "For those of us who know Christ, the Lord is calling us not to the cross for salvation, but back to the cross for revival, for awakening.

"The world is sick of dispassionate preachers for whom the ministry is a profession and not a passion," he said. "You will never get beyond the cross until you get on it. He doesn't want stuff on the cross. He wants you on the cross.

"The issue is the cross," Elliff concluded. "It's impossible for us to come back to the cross and not have the world as a concern."

Following a brief prayer time during the convocation at Mid-America Seminary, Willis told participants, "If you haven't settled the matter of being dead to self, then do it. What I have to say has nothing to do with anybody but dead men and women.

"You and I will find the answer in Gethsemane so the cross will be real in our lives," noted Willis, author of the "Master Life" discipleship program. "Once the cross is real in our lives, we can't get away from it."

Following death to self, "God wants to bring resurrection," he continued. "Every great awakening comes out of the grave, beginning with Christ. He doesn't want us to stay on the cross but to go through the cross.

"I pray that we're saying to God, 'I'm holding nothing back,'" Willis urged as he called for a time of small group prayers. "God, in His grace, has made us world ambassadors of the cross," he concluded, "He has committed to us the message of reconciliation because we have been made new creatures through Christ Jesus."

Cover Story



HMB's Lewis to retire 3

Larry Lewis, president of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board since 1987, has announced he will retire Jan. 1. Lewis has accepted a position with Mission America, an interdenominational ministry network.

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HMB president to retire Jan. 1

Larry Lewis accepts new ministry position with Mission America

By Sarah Zimmerman

SCB Home Mission Board

ALPHARETTA, GA (BP)—Larry Lewis is retiring as Home Mission Board president to work with Mission America, a ministry network of 100 denominational and para-denominational evangelical organizations.

After nearly 10 years as president, Lewis will retire Jan. 1, 1997. In his new role with Mission America, he will be a national facilitator for Celebrate Jesus 2000, an HMB initiative that involves praying, sharing the gospel individually and in groups and helping new Christians become disciples.

Lewis, 61, will continue to be paid by the Home Mission Board but will receive "significantly less salary" than his package as president, said Greg Martin, chairman of the HMB board of directors. The agreement was approved by the administrative committee of the HMB directors in their Sept. 10 regular meeting.

"I know of no one more qualified for this than Larry Lewis, qualified both with experience and spiritual vision," said Paul Cedar, chairman of the 2-year-old Mission America movement. "We are truly thrilled at this unexpected and extravagant gift from God."

In addition to evangelical denominations, Mission America is endorsed by such groups as Campus Crusade for Christ and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. The Mission America mission statement is, "The whole Church in the United States taking the whole gospel of Jesus Christ to the whole nation in our generation — and to all the world."

Lewis will work closely with Southern Baptists and other evangelicals in participating Mission America groups. The Celebrate Jesus strategy was introduced May 1 to representatives of 175 Christian organizations and received hearty endorsement across denominational lines. Representatives of five evangelical organizations showed support for the strategy by participating in this year's HMB report to the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting.

"Needless to say, I'm challenged and excited to be part of one of the most extensive evangelistic thrusts in our nation's history," Lewis said.

Lewis' resignation comes less than a year before the Home Mission Board, Brotherhood Commission and Radio and Television Commission are dissolved and combined into one organization, the North American Mission Board.



Larry Lewis (at podium) is accompanied by evangelical leaders during his recent report on Celebrate Jesus 2000 to the Southern Baptist Convention.

"I felt a very definite leadership when I became your president in 1987, but my vision is for the 20th century, not the 21st," Lewis told board members and HMB staff. "I believe the new agency needs a new president with a new vision for a new century."

"Nobody asked me or pressured me to do this or even suggested it to me. It was my recommendation and I am the one who suggested it," Lewis said. "At the same time I have not felt any release from the work of home missions."

'Heroic leadership'

Lewis received a standing ovation from board of directors and HMB staff after making his announcement. Speaking for the HMB staff, J.B. Graham, associate vice president for church extension, thanked Lewis for his "excellent and heroic leadership."

Board members discussed asking Ernest Kelley, HMB executive vice president, to serve as interim president, but official action will not be taken until the December board meeting.

Prior to coming to the Home Mission Board, Lewis was president of Hannibal-LaGrange College in Hannibal, Mo. A graduate of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and Luther Rice Seminary, he formerly was pastor of churches in Ohio, New Jersey and Missouri.

During Lewis' HMB tenure, the number of home missionaries increased from 3,637 in 1986 to 4,857, including 1,277 full-time volunteers. Home missionaries serve in all 50 states, the Caribbean, Canada, Guam and American Samoa.

Under Lewis' direction the HMB staff was reorganized to focus on three primary areas: church starting, ministry and evangelism.

The convention's Bold Mission Thrust goal is to have 50,000 congregations by the year 2000. More than 10,000 Southern Baptist congregations have been started since Lewis became president.

One of the fastest growing areas in ministry is volunteers. Last year more than 70,000 people were home missions volunteers, contributing time valued at \$100 million. Also under Lewis' leadership, the ministry section created an office for alternatives to abortion ministries. Last year the 37 crisis pregnancy centers relating to that office reported 806 professions of faith and 1,823 babies born.

During Lewis' speech to board members, he stressed the need for continued evangelistic efforts in America.

"The United States is one of the world's largest nations with a population exceeding 263 million," he noted. "According to our best estimates, at least 184 million of these are lost."

Throughout his tenure at the HMB, Lewis emphasized the need to saturate communities with the gospel by going door-to-door, perhaps because he made his profession of faith when his Sunday School teacher visited his childhood home.

"It was 50 years ago that I knelt down beside my Sunday School teacher, under an old mulberry tree in the back of our country home, and he led me as I prayed and invited Jesus into my heart," Lewis shared, pausing to wipe away tears as he recounted his profession of faith.

"I would never have imagined I would one day be leader of our Home Mission Board. You have honored me beyond anything I ever imagined or deserved. I will ever be grateful to you and to all Southern Baptists, and especially to our blessed, wonderful Lord who allowed it to be so."

A PASTOR'S HEART



By EMIL TURNER
ABSC Executive Director

It is an attack on God. You cannot attack that which belongs to God without attacking Him. Jesus said to Saul, "Why are you persecuting Me?" For Saul, to attack believers was to attack Jesus. The same thing can be said for attacks on church buildings. To burn a church is an attack on Jesus. The people who set fire to churches may think they are attacking the worshippers. They are not — they instead are attacking Christ Himself.

Our missions department administers a fund that provides \$1,000 for each Southern Baptist church that burns. The source of these funds is the Cooperative Program giving of Arkansas Baptists and the Dixie Jackson Offering. If an African-American church burns, the missions department makes available the same amount of money. The source of this, however, is the "arson offering" that was taken at the Southern Baptist Convention in New Orleans last June.

Join me in praying that the Lord of the church will turn the hearts of those who attack Him. He was able to change the heart of Saul — He can change such hearts in our time, too.

■ Have you read *The Leader of the Future* (Drucker Foundation, 1996)? This is a collection of articles on the subject of leadership. Some essays are great — some are not so great. Chapter 21 is great — it helps us understand the process of moving from vision to accomplishment.

Executive director's schedule:

- Sept. 22 (a.m.) — First Church, Mountain Home.
- Sept. 23 (p.m.) — Discipleship Training Rally, Centennial Association.
- Sept. 25 (p.m.) — Immanuel Church, Little Rock.
- Sept. 26 (a.m.) — Teaching Race Relations in the Home, Baptist Building.
- Sept. 29 (a.m.) — Park Place Church, Hot Springs; (p.m.) — Church Leadership Institute, First Church, Prescott.
- Sept. 30 (noon) — Pastors' Conference, North Pulaski Association; (p.m.) — Christian Ministries Fellowship, OBU.

REX HORNE

President's Perspective



Pray for colleges, students

The impact of our children who are now in college will be felt in our communities and churches for decades to come. This was recently brought home to me in two ways. I endured the experience of having our first child "go off" to college. While I am very proud of my daughter (all my daughters and one son for that matter!), it was difficult to say goodbye in another city rather than another room at home as we had done for 18 years. We have attempted to raise our children to be able to face the different passages in life. I had just not adequately trained myself in swallowing lumps in my throat that seemed to be the size of basketballs!

The second incident was during our recent ordination of deacons at Immanuel. One of the men being ordained shared about an early experience at the University of Arkansas. His roommate had already moved in and was not in the room when Danny arrived. Danny noticed a Bible on his roommate's desk.

Danny, a Christian, was not a Baptist at the time. Through the example of his roommate and discussions over the months, Danny found that the Baptist church more nearly exemplified his convictions related to biblical truths. This decision was greatly influenced because a Baptist young man took his

faith seriously...and took his faith to college.

Arkansas Baptists can be more than proud of our colleges. Ouachita Baptist University is bursting at the seams this fall under the leadership of Dr. Ben Elrod. Williams Baptist College is engaged in a great expansion program under the most capable leadership of Dr. Jerol Swaim. These colleges are worthy of our unwavering support.

Ashley, my daughter, is being encouraged by Christians on campus and Baptist churches in the city of her college. These young people are making a difference today and will lead our work tomorrow. As Danny was concluding his testimony about his roommate at college, some 20 years ago, he told us the name of this Christian roommate. He is now known as Dr. John McCallum, pastor of First Baptist Church of Hot Springs.

Although we can't predict the future, we can rest our faith in the One who said, "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope" (Jer. 29: 11). Would you right now pray for our colleges and our students?

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



Prayer focus

- Pray that a deep spirit of prayer will develop among Arkansas Baptists for the 1997 Foreign Mission Board appointment service in Little Rock.
- Pray that unsaved people will come to know the Lord as their Savior as a result of participating in the April 8 commissioning service.
- Pray that God will direct the call, selection and appointment of individuals to serve as Southern Baptist foreign missionaries.

'Lord, teach us to pray'

The timeless call for consecrated prayer among Southern Baptists and other Christians has grown to a crescendo in recent days. While ongoing prayer emphases have been a constant part of Baptist history, the urgency of prayer has gained renewed attention as Christians move rapidly toward a new century of ministry.

Prominent examples include the recent series of prayer convocations coordinated by Southern Baptist Convention president Tom Elliff and Arkansas pastor Ronnie Floyd's sermon during the SBC annual meeting calling for prayer and fasting for spiritual awakening.

"Awakenings are born in prayer," Elliff told convocation participants. "But you and I will never pray as long as we're worried about what kind of wrinkles that's putting in our suits, what kind of scuffs that's putting on our shoes and how stupid it looks to be on our face."

Floyd, who is serving as chairman of the SBC Executive Committee, told convention messengers that "God wants to bring a mighty spiritual revival to our churches and to our nation and to us personally before He comes again." He urged Southern Baptists to focus on prayer and fasting during a weeklong emphasis beginning Oct. 27.

In addition to the current calls to prayer by SBC leaders, Christian youth throughout the nation and world will gather this week for the annual "See You at the Pole" student prayer emphasis. The school-focused prayer effort which started a few years ago has grown to include thousands of teenagers beginning each school year with prayer for their campuses, teachers and fellow students.

On the state level, Arkansas Baptists have been actively involved in Bold Mission Prayer Thrust and will once again start the new year with a Day of Prayer for Spiritual Awakening next January 12. Plans also are

Courage aids credibility

When Larry Page, executive director of the Christian Civic Action Committee, sought to pull proposed Amendment 6 from the November ballot, he took courageous action. Since there was a good possibility that a few signatures were illegal, he made the right decision.

It takes courage to make such a decision because many felt so strongly about this issue. Being right is more important than winning an election. Being right gives us credibility for next time.

This is the time for us to affirm Mr. Page

STRAIGHT FROM THE EDITOR



By TRENNIS HENDERSON

under way to launch a statewide prayer strategy to undergird next year's Foreign Mission Board appointment service in Little Rock.

Each of these activities is in addition to annual prayer for home missions, foreign missions and world peace as well as this week's season of prayer for state missions. Local congregations and associations also highlight a variety of prayer emphases throughout the year.

And that's not all. Interdenominational prayer efforts such as "Fasting and Prayer '96" are gaining widespread support. The national event will be held Nov. 14-16 in St. Louis. An International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church is scheduled for Sept. 29, with participants including Baptists, Assemblies of God, Lutherans, Methodists, Presbyterians and numerous other groups.

Why all the renewed attention on prayer? Quite simply, because prayer works. Amid all the struggles and challenges of life in today's society, seeking God's response is the right place to begin.

Numerous Scripture passages highlight the priority of prayer in the life of believers, including James 5:16 which affirms that "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Effectual, fervent and righteous are challenging words to fulfill,

but they offer poignant reminders that Christ-honoring prayer involves more than just pausing to mumble a few words before scurrying back to the demands of daily life.

Regardless of how many days of prayer and weeks of prayer and prayer convocations we schedule, the key is to approach God with honesty, humility and honor. Just as Christ warned against the practice of "hypocrites" who "love to praystanding in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men," Christians today must carefully guard their motives and methods in seeking God's blessings.

Many so-called "prayer meetings" in Baptist life still involve a lot more time talking about prayer than actually taking time to bow before God and seek His guidance in life. Prayer seminars and studies are important, but a primary principle in prayer is personal participation. As the words of 1 Thessalonians 5:17 remind us, Christians are instructed to "pray without ceasing."

As Arkansas Baptists join fellow believers in renewed prayer during the days ahead, we should take time to make certain that our personal prayer life is pleasing to God. The time we spend in prayer should make a positive impact on our personal relationships and daily priorities.

Whether we are praying for spiritual renewal, mission endeavors or world peace, the key is to sincerely seek God's perfect wisdom and will. Even for longtime Christians who have been faithfully praying for decades, there is always something new God can teach His children through the discipline of prayer.

"Lord, teach us to pray," one of Christ's disciples requested in Luke 11:1. As we strive to major on prayer in Baptist life, seeking guidance from the Master Teacher is still the best place to start.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

because of his action rather than criticize him. Thank you, Larry Page, for doing the right thing! Don't let a few vocal critics get you down. Arkansas Baptists, let's tell him that we appreciate his hard work.

Bert Thomas
Searcy, AR

Make lessons matter

What has happened to our Southern Baptist children's literature? I have been teaching children for many years and am dismayed at what we have for literature.

There is rarely any mention of Jesus dying on the cross, the reality of Heaven and the important things. Children in our nation need hope. Most teachers know how to use building blocks and finger paints. Let's get some lessons that talk about what Christianity is about — Jesus!

Dorene Wills
Gravette, AR

Lawsuits derail CCAC campaign to outlaw gambling in Arkansas

Efforts to outlaw gambling in Arkansas may have to be put on hold until 1998, according to Larry Page, executive director of the Christian Civic Action Committee. Page and other CCAC leaders have opted against contesting a pair of lawsuits that challenge the organization's proposed anti-gambling amendment.

"The announcement we are making today causes us a great deal of pain," Page told reporters during a Sept. 6 press conference. "But it is something we must do because it is the right thing to do."

Lawsuits filed by gambling proponents associated with Oaklawn Park and Southland Greyhound Park challenged the way volunteers collected signatures to place the anti-gambling measure on the November ballot.

Although Arkansas Baptists and others succeeded in gaining more than 87,000 signatures to qualify Amendment 6 for the ballot, Page acknowledged that "some of the canvassers of our petitions inadvertently and innocently failed to comply with some of the technical rules regarding the circulation of petitions." He added that "it appears there are enough of these infractions to call into question the validity of a sufficient number of our signatures to have Amendment 6 disqualified from the ballot."

Page explained that typical infractions involved pastors or church members who "simply had the petition passed around various Sunday School classrooms or put on a table in the church foyer...for people to sign" rather than personally witnessing each person sign the petition as required by law.

As a result, the CCAC's Executive Committee adopted a resolution calling for the secretary of state and attorney general "to enter into a consent judgment in the action challenging proposed Amendment 6 in the Supreme Court of Arkansas." The consent judgment, if accepted by the Supreme Court, will have the effect of removing the anti-gambling proposal from the Nov. 5 ballot.

Page said financial limitations as well as "concern for the people in our network" were among factors that led to the CCAC's decision. "The investigative process carried on by the law firms hired by the challengers of Amendment 6 was a painful one for some of our people," he explained.

Despite the anti-gambling setback, Page said CCAC officials remain committed to stopping the expansion of gambling in the state. The group will continue to actively oppose four pro-gambling proposals on

the November ballot which would seek to legalize lotteries, casinos and video poker terminals.

"Stopping the expansion of gambling in Arkansas remains our top priority," Page emphasized. "We've got to count the cost and cut our losses and get on with things."

"We are not going away," he insisted. "We are as committed as ever to stopping the expansion of gambling in our state."

In addition to the recent legal developments, CCAC officials have begun a series of 15 "town hall meetings" to debate the issue of legalized gambling. The first two events were held Sept. 3 in Searcy and Sept. 5 in West Memphis. Additional meetings are scheduled this week in Fayetteville and Harrison with others planned for late September and throughout October.

The inaugural meeting, held on the campus of Harding University in Searcy, attracted an estimated 250 participants, many of them vocally opposed to gambling in the state.

Page and Barry King, the CCAC's gambling campaign coordinator, represented anti-gambling advocates while Joyce Taylor, representing The Committee for Lottery, Charitable Bingo and Raffles, and Video Terminal Games (proposed Amendment 5), was the lone pro-gambling spokesman to participate in the dialogue. She sat on the stage next to three empty chairs which offered a constant reminder that proponents of the other three gambling measures had declined to attend the event.

Highlighting benefits of Amendment 5, Taylor said the measure will be funded entirely by the private sector and will not involve casino gambling. She noted that profits from the plan would be used to help fund education, police enforcement, shelters for battered women and prescription medicine for senior adults.

Page countered that video gambling is as detrimental as casinos. "What is a casino?" he asked. "It is where you bet." He said video gambling would "dot the state" with betting terminals and "cause an inordinate amount of misery to the people of this state."

"I don't view Miss Taylor as my adversary but I do view her opinions as very dangerous," Page added. Describing gambling promoters as "selfish, greedy people who are trying to pull the wool over Arkansas," he encouraged concerned citizens to "stop Amendment 5 and these other greedy power grabs that are being foisted on the people of Arkansas."

Sept. 2 fire burns Harmony Church, Pollard - again

Although Harmony Church in Pollard was razed by fire, the pastor claims the church is still burning. "Harmony Baptist Church is still on fire!" Shelly Elkins exclaimed.

The Sept. 2 fire at Harmony makes it the fifth house of worship burned in the state since July 27, but the first to affect a Southern Baptist congregation during that time.

The Arkansas fires have attracted statewide notoriety because of a rash of arson-related church fires that have claimed churches across the South.

Elkins said the recent blaze was investigated by agents from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, but that the ATF investigators had been "close-mouthed. All they will say is that the cause is undetermined."

The ATF investigation included agents from five states, accelerator-sniffing dogs and an electrical engineer, Elkins added.

While the other church fires came as a shock to their members, Harmony's congregation was especially disappointed: The fire took their uncompleted structure, which was in the process of being rebuilt following a fire that claimed their facility Jan. 31. He said officials had ruled the cause of the January fire as electrical.

Elkins said the night of the latest fire, members who witnessed the blaze showed resolve. "It was like your stomach was knotted up. It's hard to describe the hurt."

"But we looked at one another and said, 'We're not giving up,'" he recalled. "The people are strong and rejoicing and our Sunday School attendance has even gone up."

He also reported a renewal among members of the church, which was among the top 25 churches in the state in baptisms by ratio during the 1994-95 year.

The congregation currently is meeting in the facilities of New Hope Church in Pollard on Sunday afternoons and Tuesday evenings.

Elkins said they were given the go-ahead Sept. 12 by their insurance company to rebuild the facilities. Members already have established a rebuilding fund for the reconstruction.

"We're going to show the ol' devil," Elkins remarked of construction efforts. "We're going to rebuild it bigger."

Hope wins twice

Christian rally at stadium promotes unity, racial reconciliation

By Russell N. Dilday

Associate Editor, Arkansas Baptist

Hope scored two victories the second weekend of September.

The first win occurred when coach Joe Kell's Bobcats rallied from a 20-6 deficit in the fourth quarter of its Friday night high school football match-up against Warren to win the game.

The second happened when about 3,000 area residents returned to Hammons Stadium two nights later to focus on racial reconciliation during the Building Unity community worship service. The praise and worship program, sponsored by 27 churches in Hope, Prescott, Magnolia and Patmos, featured speaker Tony Evans, pastor of Oak Cliff Bible Church in Dallas.

Standing on a stage set up on the field's five-yard line, Evans urged participants "to be salt and light in Hope, Arkansas." Evans is an author, radio personality and popular speaker in the Promise Keepers movement.

Recalling the coalition of countries formed in 1990 by then-president George Bush to combat "a madman by the name of Saddam Hussein" during the Gulf War, Evans challenged Christians to form a similar coalition to fight racism.

"God has called for Himself an allied coalition made up of black people and white people and red people and yellow people, made up of Baptists and Methodists and Episcopalians...to serve notice on this mad person called the devil that not only can he not take over more territory, he must give up the territory he now lays claim to."

Using football as an illustration, Evans said, "This is a nice huddle tonight where we are all gathered, but Satan has never been scared of a huddle. What he's terrified of is if we break huddle and start scoring touchdowns for the kingdom of God."

Just like the Bobcats during their Friday night game, the town has had to rally from a deficit to address its racial problems. Glen Smith, a member of First Church in Hope and a service steering committee member, said that planners "perceived a racial division in this community and they wanted to do a healing and a bringing together of the community."

"It is not a particular division," Smith said, "but you know it's here. It's typical of the southern United States."

Rally logistics team coordinator Tom Mitchell, pastor of Central (Missionary) Baptist Church in Prescott, agreed. "Southwest Arkansas is historically prejudiced. Racial disunity has been building. No one could better speak to it than Tony



Texas pastor Tony Evans warned that "racism embarrasses the name of Jesus."

Evans. This is his heart and he has been able to do it."

Highlighting "problems" experienced by many Christians in the area of race relations during his sermon, Evans often had participants clapping, standing, cheering and whistling in support of his views.

"Our problem is that Christians don't know how to be Christians," he emphasized. "We know how to gather together on Sunday and worship the same God, but then on Monday we don't recognize we're part of the same family. Until Christians decide to be Christians when we break huddle, we'll never turn anything around."

Churches issued wake-up call

"We may have all come over here on different ships, but we're in the same boat now," he declared. "This city...is waiting for the church of Jesus Christ to wake up and start being the people of God."

Though Christians "are called to be light, there is no place the darkness has been seen more than in the area of racial relationships," he said. "Racism embarrasses the name of Jesus Christ. You have no right to disassociate yourself from a brother or sister because they are another color."

Telling participants that he would meet with Hope community leaders the following day, Evans said, "I'm going to challenge them to build in our area a formal coalition of believers...who will decide as a group of believers that we're going to have an impact for the kingdom of God."

The proof that area Christians have given up racism "is not tonight," he concluded. "The test is tomorrow. Tomorrow, when you bump into each other at work, when you pass each other on the street."

Joann Knapper, a member of Bethesda Full Gospel Baptist Church in McNeil, said the service "was wonderful, a blessing to my soul — the atmosphere, the anointing of God."

The event also attracted Arkansians like Karl Cunningham, who traveled from Mena to attend. "It was an awesome service," he said. "There was a wonderful spirit here that seemed to unite the races. I met several black Christians who have a real desire for a reunification of the races."

Steering committee member Stan Parris, pastor of First Church, Hope, said the idea for the service began when "four pastors, two white and two black, were together praying, burdened for our community, and we felt like God wanted us to do something like this — an event that would bring the body of Christ together."

Those four pastors, including Parris, Calvary Church pastor Scott Neathery, Alvin Hunter of Lonoke Baptist Church and Lawrence Kemp of Garrett Chapel, began plans for a special gathering.

"God initiated this and we're going to come together...to pray that God will let us know what He wants to do next," Parris said. "We hope to see not just a one-night service but a weeklong evangelistic crusade in this same place and using this same preacher."

Smith credited prayer for the event's success. "When we started this, the school was going to allow us to have two little four-by-eight-foot platforms out there," he laughed, gesturing at a large stage with image magnification screen and room for two choirs.

The day after the rally, Evans met with about 150 religious and civil leaders during a prayer breakfast. "He spoke to church and community leaders, the mayor, and city leaders, law enforcement, quorum court," Parris noted. "It was a very good representation of the community."

Evans challenged the leaders to recognize when God "troubled" them. "If God is your problem, then your only solution is God," he insisted.

Parris noted that Evans told the leaders that "the church is the institution already in place to impact a community" and received a standing ovation.

Parris said the steering committee was scheduled to meet Sept. 17 to evaluate the service and to begin praying for guidance about future plans.

Don Moore leads prayer retreats for FMB missionaries in Europe

By Russell N. Dilday
Associate Editor, Arkansas Baptist

Following his retirement earlier this year, former Arkansas Baptist State Convention executive director Don Moore has kept busy speaking and leading conferences. During a recent series of four gatherings for Southern Baptist foreign missionaries in central and eastern Europe, he led approximately 200 missionaries from 26 ministry regions in Bible study and spiritual growth.

Moore, accompanied by his wife, Nita, led morning Bible studies and preached during evening services at the four gatherings. His duties were part of annual retreats held for missionaries by the Foreign Mission Board.

But while leading the conferences, Moore noted that he gained new insights and understanding about Southern Baptist foreign missionaries.

At the CIS Baptist Mission retreat in Moscow, Moore led 52 missionaries from areas of the former Soviet Union, including Almaty, Khabarovsk, Moscow, Tambov, Novosibirsk, Penza, Smolensk, St. Petersburg and Dubna.

He said missions work is still "new" in the Moscow area, with missionaries "few and scattered."

"Many of the missionaries there live with a scarcity of food," he added, noting that when food is available, obtaining it often involves up to four hours of travel by public transportation.

"Work there is suffering because of untrained leaders," he explained, leading missionaries in Moscow "to request 150 new missionaries for next year."

While leading the Western Republics Mission retreat in Zakopane, Poland, Moore discovered that the 40 missionaries from Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine "are very close to each other."

"A number of the missionaries have assignments for theological education," he said, in an effort to respond to the fact that churches are "starting faster than national leaders are being developed to lead them."

He said Keith Byrd, from Batesville, is coordinator of the area's church planting strategies and is seeking to "put in place a very aggressive plan for planting churches."

During the South Europe Mission retreat, held for 45 missionaries from Albania, Croatia, Greece, Slovenia, Macedonia, Serbia and Bulgaria, Moore noted that the mission work in each of the countries

demands different ministry strategies.

In Croatia, missionaries are conducting a monthly TV program and Baptists are focusing on relief efforts in Bosnia. "The Croatia Baptist Union recently voted to help Bosnia establish work there, and, as tough and rough as it has been, every effort is being made to get missionaries into the area," Moore said.

In Greece, he added, "a major struggle for the missionaries is staying in compliance with legal requirements. Visas are an ongoing difficulty and some have to leave the country every 30 days to renew their visas. Their prayer is that the translation of 'Experiencing God' into Greek will soon be completed."

Albania, he said, is "experiencing revival" with Southern Baptists on mission with God in six locations there. "In Fier there are 40 churches with only five pastors," he added.

Moore reported that in Serbia, more than "a quarter million refugees are coming to Baptist churches asking for help. The churches are all full every week, mostly with refugees."

"The missionaries there were just praising God that He'd sustained them...the year and a half they'd been there," he said.



"Despite the many hardships, loneliness and inconveniences...their attitudes were so positive."

— Don Moore
Worship leader,
FMB missionary retreats

While leading the Central Europe Mission retreat in Hungary, which included 61 missionaries from the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia, Moore found that "this mission is on fire for the Lord and the work there."

He said Hungary has the strongest work in "the International Baptist Church that has over 20 nationalities worshipping with them," but in Slovakia, the missionaries "are very isolated and housing conditions are very bad." One missionary expressed a desire for even "junk" mail.

The missionaries in Romania, he added, "speak of filthy conditions around them."

Despite such conditions, however, "large numbers of people have turned to

Christ," he emphasized. "However, there are not enough people to follow up on the ones making decisions so that the converts are not being integrated into churches as would be desirable."

He said Baptist work in Poland "is flourishing. Jimmie Shults and his wife from Pine Bluff provided a printing press for the Polish Baptist Union, so that they are able to produce all of their own literature."

Moore noted that First Church, El Dorado, has worked with the churches in Warsaw and that "First Church in Springdale is planning to buy property and help them develop a megachurch."

Moore also learned much about the personal lives of missionaries in central and eastern Europe.

"One of the interesting, exciting and enjoyable activities at the mission meeting in Hungary was the Lottie Moon auction," he said. "The missionaries bring items with them to the mission meeting that can be auctioned off, with the proceeds going for the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering."

"They come with the money they expect to give to Lottie Moon and buy items they dearly love and find scarce to get in their countries," he explained. "They gave \$5,100 for foreign missions, had a lot of fun and got some items they really wanted."

Moore said he was "amazed at the young ages" of the missionaries he met during the retreats, noting that "most of them are young singles or young couples with small children."

"A large majority of them came from families where there are no Christians," he added. "Most of them testify to the fact that their parents and some grandparents were saved after the missionaries surrendered to the work."

He said that he found their attitudes impressive. "Despite the many hardships, loneliness and inconveniences they encounter there, we never heard any of them speak of any discouragement — their attitudes were so positive and pleasant."

Much of their attitude may be determined by their prayer practices, he reported. "Prayer is a vital part of their lives. Each mission has a strong prayer coordinator who has access to the PrayerNet link with the FMB and they share prayer requests and concerns throughout their missions."

"We realized how significant the birthday calendar prayer list is," he added. "They shared how much they were aware of the prayers of Southern Baptists, especially on their birthdays, and how uplifting this is to them."

"One of our greatest impressions," he said, "was the openness of the missionaries" and their "great joy. Their fellowship and interaction with each other at this annual retreat time was thrilling to us."

'You are Christians on Mission'

Speakers challenge campers at fall rally to share the good news

By Millie Gill

Executive Assistant, Arkansas Baptist

Arkansas Campers on Mission were challenged Sept. 5 during their fall rally to share the good news of Jesus Christ with those they come into contact with each day, whether at a camp site, in their own neighborhood or in a grocery express lane.

The challenge came from Trennis Henderson, editor of the *Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine*. Sharing from John 4:35, he emphasized that "Jesus was not only telling His disciples but He was telling all of us to look on the fields that are white unto harvest, taking advantage of every possible opportunity to tell others about Jesus Christ."

Declaring that working in "fields white unto harvest" does not mean just sharing that message with the "right kind of people," he said it involves reaching out to all people such as the Samaritan woman to whom Jesus witnessed at the well.

"You not only are Campers on Mission but you are Christians on Mission who daily serve God as either a good witness or bad witness, silent or vocal, positive or negative," Henderson added. "Maumelle Park is where you can be God's witnesses this week, witnessing to other campers.... There may be many in the park this weekend longing to hear about Christ."

Recounting a recent mission trip to Romania, Henderson noted, "People there are so eager to hear the message of salvation they will even stop on a busy street corner on the way home from work to ask questions about Christianity and the plan of salvation. Here in our own state and country we are so busy we often don't get involved in sharing the good news and those around us do not want to take the time to listen.

"Can you imagine what it would be like to stand before our Lord and say I meant to make a difference for Christ in those 'fields white unto harvest' but I just never got around to it? As Christians on Mission we must be obedient and take advantage of every possible witnessing opportunity in those fields wherever we are."

Arkansas Baptist State Convention president Rex Horne, pastor of Immanuel Church of Little Rock, told the campers the following night that he personally senses a renewal among people to become more personally involved in sharing and ministering to others.

Using the anonymous woman and the leper in Mark 14 as examples from the Scripture, Horne asked, "If Jesus were walking here today, could we say we are



Arkansas Campers on Mission elected to serve as 1996-97 officers are (left to right): Bud Rice of Waldron, projects coordinator; Katherine Stevenson of Camden, hospitality chairman; Dorothy Jackson of Jonesboro, secretary-treasurer; Lendol Jackson of Jonesboro, music director; Pete Petty of Little Rock, state COM coordinator; Preston Eddy of Searcy, vice president; and Charles Slender of Little Rock, president.

doing all we can for Him as the woman did or could we say we had ministered to the needs of others as Jesus did even on the way to His crucifixion?

"I believe at this point in time we could not say yes to either," Horne remarked. "We probably would not want to receive the criticism for our deeds that the anonymous woman received because she used the equivalent of a year's wage on the alabaster oil which she poured on Jesus."

Although anyone seeking to serve as Christ's witness may face criticism, Horne emphasized that believers should follow the example of the woman who was praised by Christ for doing all she could for Him enroute to the cross.

Opportunities of service

"There are some opportunities of service which are constant and then there are those that only come around one time," Horne added. "We must be sensitive to the Lord and respond to all opportunities. The person not sensitive to the one-time opportunity will probably not be willing to meet those constant opportunities."

Horne concluded by challenging the Arkansas Campers on Missions to do whatever they could to meet needs in the name of the Lord. "I encourage you to live and so serve as God's servant that as you stand before His throne you will hear Him say, 'Well done' and be rewarded for a successful journey on earth."

The Saturday morning session included a testimony from camper Tom Collier of Newport, a recovering alcoholic who has not consumed any alcohol since 1959. Noting that he first began to drink at the age of 12, he said he took his last drink at age 37. "Even though I accepted Christ as

my Savior at the age of 13," he said, "I became a prodigal son who finally turned my life over to the Lord, letting Him heal me.

"God is the only one who can heal alcoholism which is an allergy to the body and a compulsion to the mind," he continued. "My greatest joy in life now is to be called upon to assist in helping and witnessing to another alcoholic, even if the call comes at 2 a.m."

Collier, a member of First Church of Newport, concluded by challenging other campers to be available at any hour to share God's message of hope with others.

In response to speakers' challenges, the 79 campers attending the rally voted in a Saturday morning business session to do various volunteer mission projects across the state, as well as traveling to the pioneer mission fields of the Dakotas in June 1997 to lead Bible schools, backyard Bible clubs, conduct door-to-door witnessing and lead crusades.

Members also voted to provide funds to assist Arkansas volunteer Evelyn Brown with needs at a school in Keyer, W.Va. In addition, they will assist with funding, as well as providing program personnel and workers for the June 1997 COM rally to be held in Hutchinson, Kan.

Other business included the addition of a projects coordinator to help plan outreach ministries. Bud Rice of Waldron was elected to this new position. Named to the hospitality committee were Doris Thompson, Dolly Spann and Juanita Garrett, all of Little Rock and Orene Eddy of Searcy.

Dates set for 1997 state rallies, both to be held at Maumelle Park, are May 14-17 and Sept. 10-13.

FMB project rushes missionaries to Bosnia

WIESBADEN, GERMANY (BP)—Southern Baptists are responding to long-sought peace in Bosnia by rushing foreign missionaries in to assist the many people responding to the gospel there.

The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board planned to send four couples there this month and two more by November in a response effort dubbed "Project Harvest Bosnia."

Three couples plan to transfer to Bosnia from western Europe. This unusual move comes because of the high response and because a request for career missionaries has gone unfulfilled.

"The window of opportunity is presently open, but we do not know how long the cessation of war will last," said Larry Cox, field associate area director for Europe. "Everything is moving at warp speed, but this is God's timing."

Cox, based in Wiesbaden, Germany, oversees FMB ministry in central Europe, including the former Yugoslavia region.

During the past four years of conflict, Southern Baptists have sent more than \$1.5 million in humanitarian aid through several Baptist-related relief agencies based in Croatia and Serbia. Now, many who met Baptists and responded to the gospel in refugee camps are back living in their homes in Bosnia.

The missionaries will serve six-month terms, with the option of staying longer. Administrators hope during that time career workers will be in place in the region, Cox said.

Kuwaiti official affirms religious freedom

WASHINGTON (BP)—With a Kuwaiti Christian's flight to the United States and a Kuwait government statement supporting religious freedom, human rights advocates are easing back from a battle with the Middle Eastern nation — at least for now.

A coalition led by more than 90 members of the U.S. Senate and House has worked to convince Kuwait's ruling family that the country's constitution must be enforced despite a Muslim court's ruling for the execution of Robert Hussein, who converted to Christianity.

A coalition representative told Baptist Press that many on Capitol Hill appreciate Kuwait's public statement that Kuwaiti citizens will be protected in their right to practice whatever religion they choose. They feel they have accomplished their aim, the representative said.

After more than a month of outcry from the West, the Kuwaiti government finally went public in Hussein's case. Justice Ministry Under-Secretary Salah Yousuf Bin Ali was quoted as saying, "Freedom of worship for all individuals had been mandated and guaranteed by the Kuwaiti constitution." He added that "it is the duty of authorities to provide (Hussein) with protection against any threats."

Bulgaria seeks Baptist help with juveniles

VARNA, BULGARIA (BP)—Bulgarian Baptists hope an invitation to help Varna police with juvenile delinquents could indicate a change in the government's anti-evangelical stance.

A high-ranking police official in Varna, one of the country's larger cities, recently asked Baptist leader and pastor Boshidar Igoff to meet with him.

The official told Igoff he was disappointed in results the police have had in dealing with juvenile delinquents. "We have done everything possible for them, but people don't believe in the government or state structures," he told Igoff. "I think the last hope of these young people is the church."

"You can imagine how strange it was to hear this from the mouth of a communist!" Igoff said.

Although Bulgaria's communist government was overthrown several years ago, disgruntled citizens soon returned communist officials to power. The country has lagged far behind more progressive Eastern European countries in economic gains.

In recent years the government has teamed up with the Bulgarian Orthodox Church and waged a bitter media campaign against Baptists and other evangelicals. It has lumped together Baptists, Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Krishna followers and Eastern religions under the category of "foreign cults."

An opportunity to do serious ministry with juvenile delinquents in Varna could boost evangelical work across the country, Igoff said. Now Bulgarian Baptists, who have 60 congregations and about 100 preaching points, face the challenge of finding someone able to help train them in the practical aspects of working with juvenile delinquents.

Professions of faith at Olympics top 1,600

ALPHARETTA, GA (BP)—Although the Olympic and Paralympic flames have been extinguished in Atlanta, the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board continues to receive response cards from people reached through volunteer ministries.

Of 2,723 cards returned by the end of August, 1,613 people reported making professions of faith and 1,110 people requested more information, said Jack Smith, HMB associate director of personal evangelism. Response cards are from pocket guides which listed Olympic records as well as the plan of salvation.

Response cards from people in other countries are sent to the Foreign Mission Board for follow-up, Smith said. Response cards from U.S. residents are sent to state evangelism directors who forward information to local associations or churches.

Smith said he expects to continue receiving response cards through the end of the year. He praised the hundreds of volunteers who distributed the pocket guides and the Foreign Mission Board staff and state evangelism directors for their cooperation with follow-up.

'Experiencing God' to be aired in Arabic

LARNACA, CYPRUS (BP)—An Arabic-language version of the discipleship program "Experiencing God" is scheduled to be broadcast throughout the Middle East beginning Oct. 28.

The signal will originate from a powerful AM radio station in Cyprus, an island in the Mediterranean Sea. It will be broadcast five days a week in 15-minute segments.

The first-ever broadcast version of the Southern Baptist program was aired over radio waves in Russia in April. Broadcast versions are being developed in 10 languages.

The Foreign Mission Board's development office has already raised funds for developing "Experiencing God" broadcasts in several top priority languages: Arabic, Mandarin Chinese, Russian and Special English for Africa. It has yet to raise funds for Spanish or for Special English for Asia.

A publication of LifeWay Press of the Baptist Sunday School Board, "Experiencing God" was written by Henry Blackaby and Claude King. The broadcast version, which closely follows material presented in the workbook, was adapted for radio in a project coordinated by the Foreign Mission Board.

Campers give \$227,902 to foreign missions

NASHVILLE, TN (BP)—A check for \$227,902.60 will be presented by the Baptist Sunday School Board for foreign missions projects. The money is a gift collected from 41,518 campers and counselors during 1996 Centrifuge and Mission-Fuge camps.

Joe Palmer, manager of the BSSB's Centrifuge/Crosspoint section, presented BSSB president James T. Draper Jr. with the check during chapel services Sept. 6. Draper, in turn, will give the check to the SBC Executive Committee for use by the Foreign Mission Board in a variety of locations and ministries.

A total of 132 weeks of Centrifuge and Mission-Fuge camps were conducted this summer at 15 locations across the United States for young people in the seventh through 12th grade.

Immanuel West breaks new work stereotypes

By Russell N. Dilday

Associate Editor, Arkansas Baptist

A year after its start, a new work created by Immanuel Church in Little Rock to "be different to make a difference" is reaching out to its community in atypical fashion. Immanuel West Church, located on Highway 10 on the western edge of Little Rock, shows that difference in several ways.

Immanuel West's differences are by design. Pastor John Gerlach said that about four years ago, Immanuel had a long-range planning focus "called a growth task force. They asked, 'What do we feel like God wants Immanuel to do?' They were committed to stay where they were, but it's not in a high growth area.

"They decided to start another work in a growing area," he explained, "and began to talk to Pinnacle Baptist Church."

Pinnacle was a small, struggling nine-year-old work in West Little Rock. Following several meetings with Immanuel members, Pinnacle sent a letter to Immanuel to request a merger, with Pinnacle's property to be used for the new church.

Immanuel West's differences are immediately evident when visitors pull into the church's parking lot. There is no traditional sanctuary. Next to a large, white-columned former home that houses the congregation's Bible fellowships is the worship center that members call "the bubble" or "the dome."

The center is, indeed, a large, dome-like structure, which is constructed of a thin plastic material stretched over a rigid frame. More than a tent, the center sports a concrete foundation, air conditioning, restrooms and seating for more than 200.

Gerlach said the structure fit the needs of the growing congregation, which began meeting in the two-car garage of the adjoining home in the summer of 1995.

"We needed something that could go up fast," he recalled. "We were maxing out at 50 to 60 people and we wanted to get into something by spring of 1996."

The dome also meets the church's growth — and financial — needs. "We had no idea how we were going to grow, and you can move it and extend it," he said. "It cost somewhere around 25-30 percent of the cost of a traditional sanctuary."

"Some of the members wanted to build a traditional structure, but it would have been the shoe that determined the size of the foot," the pastor explained. "We wanted a shoe that was disposable, in a way."

Entering the dome for worship highlights another of the congregation's differences — worship style.



Immanuel West church members fellowship together following a recent Sunday morning worship service.

"It is a different type of worship — not better, but different," emphasized member Trudy Smith. "It's more relaxed. Someone who hasn't grown up going to church and doesn't understand all those church words doesn't feel intimidated."

The worship service features a traditional message from pastor Gerlach, but relies on praise songs and a worship team of vocalists, an electronic keyboardist and two guitar players to reach new Christians, young adults and the unchurched.

Worship team member Anne Coppenger called the service style "upbeat and contemporary. We use a lot of Scripture songs — the kind of song that stays with you, that you find yourself humming over and over and repeating."

"It appeals to the less traditional church member and the unchurched," she explained. "The church is a lot more casual than others, but that's something that some people in our society are looking for."

That style was exactly what Steven Young and his wife, Cindy, were looking for when they transplanted from Immanuel's downtown location and began attending Immanuel West. Although Cindy said she was "born and raised" in a traditional Southern Baptist church, Steven had not.

"I was adopted and I was raised Catholic, Seventh Day Adventist, Lutheran, Jewish and then I was heathen, big time," he said. He quickly plugged into the worship as a guitar player on the worship team.

Young's first attraction to the congregation was "the teaching of Christ," he said. "It was the Word of God that brought us here."

"We are focusing on four things," Gerlach said. "Sharing Christ, missions, helping people grow spiritually and helping them find a place of service."

To accomplish that, he said the church uses its praise-style worship, Bible fellow-

ship groups both on Sunday morning at the church and in homes, and a "membership class that's required. We've had people accept Christ in the membership class because they went through it."

Just as Immanuel West's facilities and style are different, so is its structure and relationship to its mother church. While the new congregation resembles a mission and reaches a different group of people than the downtown Immanuel, Gerlach said it is more of an "extension" of its mother congregation. While he is pastor of the new work, he also remains a part of Immanuel's staff.

"It is an extension, but Southern Baptists typically don't do that," he said. "It is a mission, but it isn't."

Gerlach said "the biggest issue" in keeping the extension relationship between the congregations "is finances. Right now, as far as salaries, programs and ministries, we are self-supporting. As far as land and facilities, no."

Crucial to new work survival, he said, are "two elements — financial and leadership. One good thing about this model is that you provide those two things."

Conversely, he added, "Baptists are so independent, it goes against our basic nature not to be on our own."

While Immanuel West may not be a true mission, both pastor and members have adopted a missions mindset.

"I came out (from Immanuel) as a result of 'Experiencing God' and the sense that I needed to be involved in missions," said Coppenger, a veteran of mission trips to Germany and Guatemala. "I feel that this is where God wants me... and have realized that missions is also here in town."

Member Elizabeth Willhoite also came from Immanuel as part of a seed group to help the new work. She said she and her husband "are interested in missions and we felt this was a missions call."

"People want full-blown ministries, but you have to have a missions attitude to be involved here," Gerlach said. "In the membership class, I say that if you're not involved in six months, you ought to leave. You can't hide here."

Gerlach noted that the long-range planning group's "ultimate goal was to have several of these types of locations around. Perhaps a black church would be the second one. That's not in concrete, but still in planning."

"We don't want to recreate what we already had (with Immanuel)," he said. "Immanuel does traditional church great. We decided on a style that was new to everybody."

Staff changes

Roger Gayle Bone began his ministry Sept. 1 as pastor of Westrock Church in Little Rock, coming there from Grand Prairie, Texas, where he was associate pastor of Christ Fellowship Church. He previously has served as a staff member of Second Church of Hot Springs and First Church of Searcy as well as churches in Texas, Florida, Tennessee and Ohio. He is a graduate of Ouachita Baptist University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Eric Lee Taylor began serving Sept. 15 as pastor of Lakeshore Heights Church of Hot Springs, coming there from Memphis where he was associate pastor of Elliston Church. He previously served as a pastor and associate pastor of churches in Missouri and Tennessee. Taylor, a graduate of Union University in Jackson, Tenn., and Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, currently is pursuing his doctor of ministry degree from Mid-America Seminary. He and his wife, Melissa, have one son, Seth Conner.

Larry Dean Sherman joined the staff of Walnut Street Church of Jonesboro Sept. 15 as associate pastor of education and single adults, going there from Life Line Church in Little Rock where he currently is associate pastor of education and evangelism director. He previously was an associate in the Sunday School department of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention. Sherman is a graduate of Ouachita Baptist University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He and his wife, Gwen, have two children, Robby Dean Sherman of Van Buren and Teri Lynn Morton of Hot Springs.

Mike Gilchrist Jr. has accepted the call to become pastor of Hebron Church in Little Rock. He and his wife, Kerry, and their children, Rachel, Michael and Rebecca, recently returned from the West Indies where they had served as Southern Baptist foreign missionaries. He previously was pastor of Matthews Memorial Church in Pine Bluff and Brookside Church in Wills Point, Texas. Gilchrist is a graduate of Dallas Baptist University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Kenneth W. Overton will begin serving Sept. 22 as pastor of First Church of Horseshoe Bend, going there from First Church of Marked Tree where he has served more than four years. While in Marked Tree he has served under the endorsement of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board as volunteer chaplain of the Marked Tree Police Department. Overton



ARKANSAS ALL OVER

By MILLIE GILL

has been pastor of Norman Church, Dallas Avenue Church of Mena, Wilmot Church and Arkansas City Church. He is a graduate of Ouachita Baptist University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He and his wife, Hope, served for three years as Southern Baptist missionaries to Brazil. They have two children, Christina Ruth and Adam Carl.

Scott Goodman joined the staff of Hardin Church in Pine Bluff Sept. 15 as minister of music and youth, coming there from Trinity Church of Blytheville where he had served in the same position for two years. He previously served on the staff of Armored Church and as a summer missionary for the Kansas/Nebraska Convention. He attended both Williams Baptist College and Southeast Missouri State University, Cape Girardeau, Mo.

Harrison Johns has announced his retirement as part-time director of missions for Centennial Association, effective Oct. 31. Johns, who retired from the full-time preaching ministry Dec. 31, 1989, served churches in Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas and Colorado. He also served five years as director of missions for Independence Association. He has served as a member of the executive board for both the Colorado Baptist General Convention and the Arkansas Baptist State Convention. He is a

graduate of Ouachita Baptist University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Johns and his wife, Barbara, are parents of two adult children, Rebecca Johns Williams of Kennesett and Haynes Johns of Cincinnati, Ohio. They have one granddaughter. Johns, who will be available to serve as a supply preacher, an interim pastor or to lead conferences, may be contacted at P.O. Box 290, Harrisburg, AR 72432; phone 501-578-9295.

Carroll Evans will retire Oct. 31 as pastor of First Church of Hughes, following 24 years of ministry. Ordained to the ministry by First Church of Blytheville, he has been pastor of First Church of McCrory, Mount Olive Church of Crossett and First Church of Manila. A graduate of Ouachita Baptist College (now University) and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, he has served as a member of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention Executive Board and the state Baptist Historical Commission. He is married to the former Lucile Belch, also a graduate of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. They have two children, John David Evans and Kathleen Cupples. The couple will move Nov. 2 to West Memphis where they will reside at 112 Louise Street.

Gearl D. Spicer Jr. has resigned from the staff of Geyer Springs First Church in Little Rock where he served as minister of education/church administrator and program coordinator for more than 12 years. He has accepted the call to serve as administrative pastor for First Church of Atlanta, Ga. A native of Fort Smith, Spicer is a graduate of Westark Community College of Fort Smith, Oklahoma Baptist



South Main Church of Crossett dedicated a new worship center Aug. 25 that was designed and built from a master plan developed by the Baptist Sunday School Board. Construction of the 235-seat facility was begun in 1989. It is valued at \$200,000. Bill Runyan served as chairman of the building committee and Jimmie Lewis is pastor. Billy Kite, director of missions for Ashley Association, was the dedication speaker.

University of Shawnee, Okla., and Central State University of Edmond, Okla. He previously served on the staff of First Southern Church of Del City, Okla. He is married to the former Cynthia Kay Moore, who has been serving as organist for Geyer Springs First Church. They have three children, Ashley Dawn, Caleb Andrew and Abbey Gayle.

Dale Bascue has resigned as pastor of Calvary Church of Fort Smith, effective Oct. 13. He has accepted the call to become pastor of United Church of Riverton, Wyo.

Wayne Brown of North Little Rock is serving as interim minister of youth for Pleasant Hill Church of Sardis. He previously served at Levy Church in North Little Rock.

Pat Titsworth of Malvern is serving as interim pastor of Trinity Church of Benton. Titsworth, who retired as pastor of Third Church of Malvern, recently completed two years of service as interim pastor of Twin Lakes Church of Hot Springs.

Rex Newman, who recently resigned as pastor of Shepherd Hill Church of Pine Bluff, following seven years of ministry, is available to serve as a pulpit supply preacher, as an interim pastor or to lead revivals. He may be contacted at 501-535-1639.

Orvind Dangeau is serving as interim pastor of Dove Circle Church of Holiday Island. He is the retired Cooperative Program director for the Tennessee Baptist Convention.

Lendol Jackson of Jonesboro is serving as interim pastor of Weibner Church. He recently retired as pastor of Central Church of Marked Tree.

Church news

Searcy First Church held a reception Sept. 15 for Clay Vire in recognition of 10 years of service as minister of music. Vire is a graduate of Ouachita Baptist University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He and his wife, Karen, have one daughter, Lynley.

Hamburg First Church honored pastor Bobby Pennington and his wife, Sadie, Sept. 15 in recognition of his 10th anniversary of ministry. The couple was presented with a money tree.

Gould First Church celebrated its 74th anniversary with homecoming Aug. 25. Anniversary activities included a morning worship service, potluck luncheon and afternoon musical program. Former pastor Joe Craft was the guest speaker. Al Green is pastor.

Tyler Street Church of Little Rock observed its 48th anniversary Sept. 8 with a special service in which Harold Hightower was named pastor emeritus. Hightower, who served for 30 years as pastor of the congregation, was presented a framed certificate by James W. Hickman, who has been pastor since Hightower's retirement in 1990.

Pines Church in the Pearson community will celebrate its 25th anniversary Sept. 29 beginning at 10 a.m. Activities will include music, testimonies, a fellowship dinner and a message by former interim pastor Jesse Lunsford. All former pastors are to be special guests. The church, organized with 21 members in 1971, first met in homes of members. Two building programs have been completed since the church organized.

Board Camp Church near Mena will begin observing its 135th anniversary Oct. 19 with a 6 to 8 p.m. open house and fellowship. An Oct. 20 celebration will include Sunday School at 10 a.m., worship at 10:45 a.m. and "dinner on the grounds" at noon. Former pastor Vernuel Ridgeway will be the guest speaker. Lynn Chiles is pastor.

Eudora Church will host a 2 to 4 p.m. reception Sept. 29 in honor of Elizabeth Peterson, the church's oldest active resident member, who is moving to Houston, Texas, in November. Peterson, who has made her home in Eudora for 80 years and taught in Eudora schools for 34 years, will complete 57 years of service as a Sunday School teacher on the day of her reception. In more than half a century of Christian service, she has taught beginner, junior, youth and adult women's classes, teaching the Faith Builders Class of adult women for 24 years.

Southside Church of Stuttgart held summer revival services Aug. 11-14 with Don Moore of Little Rock as evangelist. Phillip Powers of Hot Springs directed music. Joel Moody is pastor.

Bryant First Southern Church was led in a Family Life revival Aug. 23-25 by Don Moore of Little Rock. Jim Lagrone is pastor.

Trinity Church of Blytheville held revival services Sept. 14-18 with evangelist Don Womack of Memphis preaching. Calvin Bryant is pastor.

Baring Cross Church of North Little Rock is hosting a ladies conference Oct. 5 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. "Garden of Grace" is the theme for the event which will feature Vickie Lloyd of Fayetteville as inspirational speaker with Marilyn Sternberg and Nita Moore, both of Little Rock, sharing testimonies. Mini-concerts will be presented

by Hand-in-Hand and Nancy Greer. Additional information is available by calling the church office at 501-375-2347.

Hot Springs Second Church is sponsoring a creation seminar Sept. 28 from 9:30 a.m. until noon. Gary Parker, a team member of Answers in Genesis, will lead sessions on "From Evolution to Creation" and "Dinosaurs and the Bible." Chuck McAllister is pastor.

Obituaries

Amos Greer of Paragould died Aug. 31 at age 80. He was a retired Southern Baptist minister, having served Arkansas churches, including Pleasant Valley Church of Paragould, First Church of Pangburn, First Church of Mammoth Spring, Browns Chapel Church of Paragould and First Church of Mountain View. He also had been director of missions for Greene County and Harmony associations. Survivors are his wife, Mable; one son, Jerry Greer of Lynwood, Ill.; one daughter, Linda Gayle Hall of Dermott; two stepdaughters, Mary Lee Wycoff of Paragould and Barbara Jean Ryles of Hot Springs; two brothers; one sister; five grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren; four step-grandchildren; and four step-great-grandchildren. Memorials may be made to St. Bernard's Hospice in Jonesboro.

Alfred Samuel Rodgers, 89, of North Little Rock died Sept. 8. He was a member of Baring Cross Church of North Little Rock. Survivors are his wife, Ruby Mann Rodgers; a daughter, Faye Massery of Little Rock; three grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren.

Jake Shambarger of Arkadelphia died Sept. 7 at age 65. Shambarger, who was a deacon at First Church of Arkadelphia, retired in May as professor of education at Ouachita Baptist University, following 30 years of service. During his tenure at OBU, he served as baseball and assistant basketball coach. A U.S. Army veteran, he was a graduate of Arkansas Tech University and East Texas State University in Commerce. Survivors are his wife, Mary Stombaugh Shambarger; one daughter, Susan Goss of Bentonville; two grandchildren; and one brother.

Ray Howerton of Eureka Springs died Aug. 24 at age 69. He had been a member for 56 years of Rock Springs Church, founded in 1853 by his great-great-grandfather, Alvah Jackson. Survivors are his mother, Pimia Drebenstedt of Eureka Springs; two sons, Glenn and Lynn Howerton, both of Eureka Springs; five grandchildren; one great-grandson; one brother; and one sister.

TRAINING

Church secretaries to focus on personal, professional skills

Two October workshops will focus on developing both the professional and personal skills of Arkansas Baptist church secretaries.

The Arkansas Church and Denominational Secretaries Workshop, set for Oct. 28-29 at Park Hill Church in North Little Rock, will emphasize personal and professional growth, while a sister workshop, also to be held at Park Hill Oct. 29, will focus on "Presenting to God Your Best."

Gayle Paul, a secretary in the Arkansas Baptist State Convention Sunday School department, is the 1994-96 president of the Association of Arkansas Baptist Secretaries. She said the workshops will fill a need for training and fellowship among church secretaries.

"We don't always have the same opportunities for training that other secretaries have," she explained. "It will be a lifeline of sharing and growth - and fellowship - for secretaries. Noting that many secretaries "may feel that no one understands what you do or what you deal with," she said the workshops will give participants "contact with others who know where you are."

The church and denominational secretaries' workshop, sponsored by the ABCS discipleship and family ministry department, will feature Baptist Sunday School Board consultant Donna Gandy leading the conferences, "Desk-Top Style: New Techniques for Promotional Writing and Design" and "Strengthening Relationships: Personal and Professional."

The program will begin at 1 p.m. Monday and conclude at 11:45 a.m. Tuesday. The cost for the workshop is \$5 per person.

The second workshop, sponsored by AABS, combines a luncheon, annual AABS meeting and professional development workshop. The program will feature Teresa Ford, a Beauty-Control image consultant and church secretary for Calvary Church in Hope. Members also will elect 1996-98 AABS officers.

The program will begin at noon Tuesday and conclude at 3:30 p.m. The cost for the AABS workshop is \$6 per person, including the meal.

Paul also urged AABS members to renew their \$10 annual membership dues prior to the workshop.

To register or to request a registration form, contact the ABCS discipleship and family ministry department toll-free in state at 1-800-838-ABSC, or locally in Little Rock at 376-4791, ext. 5160. Registrations should be made prior to Oct. 21.

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Senate votes opposition to homosexual rights

WASHINGTON (BP)—The U.S. Senate has overwhelmingly passed legislation designed to strengthen states' authority to refuse recognition of same-sex marriages but barely defeated an attempt to grant civil rights status in the workplace on the basis of homosexuality.

The Senate adopted the Defense of Marriage Act Sept. 10 by an 85-14 vote. On the same day, senators voted 50-49 to reject the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, sponsored by Sen. Edward Kennedy.

The House of Representatives approved the Defense of Marriage Act in July with a 342-67 vote. President Clinton has said he will sign the measure. The president had endorsed the Employment Non-Discrimination Act last year.

The Defense of Marriage Act says no state shall be required to recognize a homosexual marriage from another state. It also amends federal law to define marriage as "only a legal union between one man and one woman as husband and wife" and to define a spouse as "a person of the opposite sex who is a husband or a wife."

The legislation has been on a fast track since it was introduced in both the House

and Senate in early May in response to an expected Hawaii court ruling which threatens to legalize homosexual marriage in a sweeping way.

In the case which went to trial the same day as the Senate voted, it is expected a Hawaii court will declare homosexual marriage constitutional. If such a union made in Hawaii is legal, it likely would be considered legal in all other states, unless a state is able to show it has a compelling policy opposing such unions.

Traditional view affirmed

While opponents of the legislation charged it is politically motivated and mean-spirited toward homosexuals, supporters said it is a timely response to an attempt to legalize same-sex marriage through the decision of one state. Defenders of the bill also said it reflects the traditional view of marriage and does not prevent a state from granting legal status to homosexual marriages performed in other states.

Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott described the legislation as "a pre-emptive measure to make sure that a handful of judges, in a single state, cannot impose an agenda upon the entire nation." He added

that it was in "response to an attack upon the institution of marriage itself."

Sen. Don Nickles, R-Okla., and Rep. Bob Barr, R-Ga., were the chief sponsors of the legislation.

Will Dodson, director of government relations for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, remarked, "Obviously we are relieved that Congress has passed this legislation....We are relieved not because we have animosity toward homosexuals but because as Christians who care about a stable society we want what is best for society. The sanctioning of homosexual marriages would have caused significant unraveling of our social structure.

"These same principles apply to the Kennedy bill, which was only narrowly defeated," Dodson said. "The vote on this bill shows just how divided we are as a nation over how to address our moral issues."

The proposed measure would have established homosexuality, under the title of sexual orientation, as a classification deserving protection in the same way race, gender and age now have protected status in the workplace.

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Dan Vestal nominated to lead Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

ATLANTA (ABF) — Texas pastor Daniel Vestal will be nominated as coordinator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, a moderate Baptist ministry organization based in Atlanta.

Vestal, 51, is pastor of Tallowood Baptist Church in Houston. His nomination, coming from an 11-member search committee, will be voted on by the Fellowship's 84-member Coordinating Council when the group meets Sept. 26-28, according to search committee chairman Carolyn Crumpler. She said Vestal was the only candidate to receive the unanimous support of the committee.

If elected, Vestal, will become the second chief executive of the 5-year-old Fellowship. He would succeed Cecil Sherman, who retired in July. Vestal confirmed he will accept the job if elected.

"I am responding to the invitation of the search committee with a real compelling sense of inward call from the Lord," he said. "Obviously I await the decision process of the Coordinating Council, but pending their affirmation I anticipate and

look forward to the privilege of being the coordinator."

Members of the Coordinating Council were notified of the committee's choice by mail Sept. 6. Vestal informed his church of the nomination Sept. 8.

If elected, Vestal will move to Atlanta, where he was pastor of Dunwoody Baptist Church before moving to Houston in 1991. A native Texan, he also was pastor of First Baptist Church in Midland, Texas.

Vestal turned down the Fellowship job when it was offered to him in February but asked to be reconsidered at the Fellowship's general assembly at the end of June, Crumpler said.

The committee agreed to talk to Vestal again but first followed through with interviews of several other candidates. When the group returned to Vestal, they were once again unanimous.

Explaining his change of heart, Vestal noted, "It was a process that just took some time for me.... The will of God has always been an unfolding experience for me."

Vestal's election would end a year-long search. At least 42 candidates were recommended, Crumpler said, including seven who were interviewed by the committee.

Although he relinquished his leadership role in the Fellowship in 1991, Vestal was a key figure in the organization's founding.

In the mid-1980s, he was a member of the Southern Baptist Convention Peace Committee, describing himself as a theological conservative who sought reconciliation between moderates and conservatives in the convention. He later was nominated as the moderate candidate for SBC president in 1989 and 1990.

After his second loss, Vestal convened a meeting in Atlanta which led to the establishment of the CBF.

A graduate of Baylor University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Vestal and his wife, Earlene, have three children.



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College students to gather at Crossroads '96

College students from across the state will have the opportunity to meet together for challenge and inspiration at the beginning of the school year at Crossroads '96, an annual Baptist Student Union gathering. The event will be held Oct. 4-5 at Second Baptist Church in Little Rock.

"The purpose of the event is to help students make godly decisions at the significant crossroads of their lives," explained Diane Parker, an associate in the Arkansas Baptist student ministries department.

Program personalities include the Jami Smith Band, Phil Roberts, Rene Rochester and Saleim Kahleh. Smith, a graduate of Oklahoma Baptist University and former music and worship director for the OBU BSU and Centrifuge/Centri-break, will use her musical abilities to inspire the students.

Phil Roberts, director of the interfaith witness department of the Home Mission Board, will be the featured speaker. "He will help us point students to an understanding of what we believe in the midst of a pluralistic world, where there are many diverse influences," explained David James, director of the student ministries department.

Rene Rochester will be featured in the testimony portion of the program. She is involved with the Urban S.E.T. (Strength-



State BSU officers for the 1996-97 school year are (left to right): president, Jody Smotherman, University of Arkansas Medical Sciences; vice presidents, Kristen Tache, Ouachita Baptist University; Kristie Griffin, Arkansas State University; Ryan Clark, Arkansas Technical University; and Kyle Seal, Lyon College.

ening, Educating, Training) ministry and is the women's director of Kid's Across America, a Christian sports camp for inner city youth.

Saleim Kahleh will also share his testimony at the event. He is a former Muslim who became a Christian during a search for "the truth." He is a graduate of Houston Baptist University, where he currently is coordinator of student affairs.

Crossroads '96 will start at 7:30 p.m.

Friday with a "Celebration" session and continue Saturday morning at 9:00 a.m.

The cost of the event is \$4 per person and a nursery is provided at the church. Lodging is at the Holiday Inn City Center in downtown Little Rock; phone 501-376-2071.

For more information, contact the ABSC student ministries department statewide at 1-800-838-ABSC or locally at 376-3791, ext. 5142.

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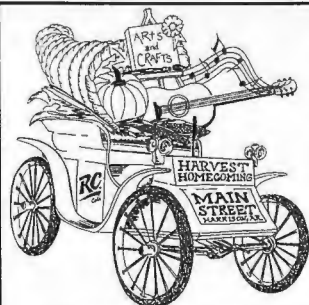
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Motor coach tour ministry starts this month in Branson

BRANSON, MO (BP)—Each Sunday morning finds Jean and Lee Grady boarding a motor coach in Branson, Mo., with a one-way ticket, God's Word. The Gradys, coordinators of Motor Coach Ministry, share this ticket with people visiting the tourist area in motor coach tour groups.

Motor Coach Ministry is operated through Mountain Country Ministries, an outreach provided by Baptists in southwest Missouri's Christian, Stone and Taney counties. The Gradys are Mission Service Corps volunteers, assigned by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board. Grady was a pastor in Texas before moving to Missouri.

About 12,000 motor coaches roll into Branson each year. Of the thousands of people riding them, 95 percent are senior adults. Their destination is a seemingly endless string of country music shows, malls and attractions that have made the Ozark city a popular vacation spot.

With all of the activities available, however, some tour line operators have found there is something missing from their tours. Dick Berry of Heartland Tours, based in Springfield, Ill., discovered many of his tour members wanted to be a part of church on Sunday mornings.

He was directed to Dick Wakefield, director of missions for Tri County Association in Highlandville. They came up with the idea of chapel on the coach — a 25-minute non-denominational devotion time aboard the tour bus. Wakefield and his wife, Mary, began leading the devotional services. Interested tour members boarded the coach 25 minutes before departure, while those not wishing to participate waited outside.

Wakefield soon saw the possibility of expanding the ministry, but he needed someone else to lead it. Meanwhile, Grady had retired and he and his wife had moved to Missouri. Wakefield approached the Gradys and they accepted the challenge.

A year and a half later, the Gradys have trained 45 men and women to serve in Motor Coach Ministry.

"We had said that we would try to start the ministry next April," Wakefield noted. "God has kind of changed our mind." The first official Motor Coach Ministry assignment began this month with a tour group from Ohio.

Plans call for the ministry to operate during April and May of each year, and then from September through December, peak months for motor coach tours. Wakefield explained. "Our goal is to be on 2,000 coaches. If that goal is reached, the ministry will be able to touch about 50,000 lives."

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SBC HOUSING

Housing form for Dallas SBC meeting now available

NASHVILLE, TN (BP)—The housing form for the 1997 Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Dallas June 17-19 is now available, according to convention manager Jack Wilkerson, vice president for business and finance for the SBC Executive Committee.

The form, to be used by messengers to request room reservations at hotels in Dallas, is available from the state Baptist convention office or the SBC Executive Committee office in Nashville, and is

included in the current issue of *SBC Life*.

Reservations will be made on a "first-come, first-served" basis until all hotel rooms in the housing block are taken. All requests are being handled by the Dallas Convention and Visitors Bureau through their computerized housing system.

Forms must be postmarked on or after Oct. 1, 1996, Wilkerson said. No reservations will be processed prior to that date.

Reservations may be made by calling the Dallas Housing Bureau at 1-800-792-

1029 or faxing the housing form to 214-712-1981 beginning Oct. 1.

The 1997 annual meeting will be held at the Dallas Convention Center, also the location of the SBC Pastors' Conference. The Woman's Missionary Union annual meeting will be held in the convention center's Arena. The SBC Convention Hotel is the Hyatt Registry.

There are 11 hotels in the downtown area in the housing block and 15 in the Market Center area, Wilkerson said.

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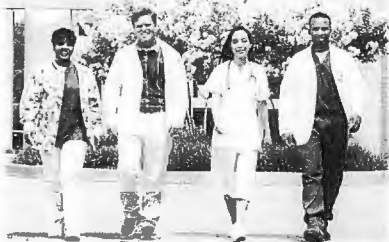
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Seeking applicants — Church in St. Louis County, Missouri, is seeking applicants for full-time pastor. Membership of 400, Sunday School attendance avg. 100. Anyone interested in position, and experiencing God's leading, please send letter and resume to: Pastor Search Committee, 1745 Craig Road, St. Louis, MO 63146.

Minister of youth — There are almost 10,000 young people in our area of the city. Most of them attend no church on a regular basis. Most are probably lost without Jesus Christ. Could you be the youth pastor God would use to reach these kids? If interested, send resume and vision statement to: Calvary Baptist Church, 9333 Linwood Ave., Shreveport, LA 71106; 318-687-4920.

Accepting resumes — Full-time pastor. Send to: Claud Road Baptist Church, Search Committee, 1621 Claud Road, Pine Bluff, AR 71602.

Wanted — Part-time youth director. Send resume to: Calvary Baptist Church, 319 Hwy 4 East, Camden, AR 71701.

Full-time music/youth minister — needs to be experienced. Send resume to Calvary Baptist Church, 1801 Chickasawba, Blytheville, AR 72315. Attention: Pastor.

Wanted — Minister of music and youth. Excellent compensation. Send resumes to: 144 Crain City Rd., El Dorado, AR 71730.

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Classified ads must be submitted in writing to the ABN office no less than 10 days prior to the date of publication desired. A check or money order in the proper amount, figured at 90 cents per word, must be included. Multiple insertions of the same ad must be paid for in advance. Classified ads shall be restricted to church-related subject matter. The ABN reserves the right to reject any ad because of unsuitable subject matter.

Senior Adult Music Festivals offer fellowship, inspiration

Senior Adult Music Festivals scheduled in three locations in November will provide participants a "fun morning outing for music, fellowship and inspiration," said festival coordinator Glen Ennes.

Ennes, an associate in the Arkansas Baptist State Convention church music ministries department, said the festivals, set for Nov. 7 at First Church in Arkadelphia and at Arkansas Baptist Assembly near Siloam Springs and Nov. 8 at First Church in Newport, will offer a variety of options for participants.

"It's a day of Share-a-Song and congregational singing," said Ennes. "Any type of music participation is permissible.

Encouraging senior adult groups throughout the state to take an active role in the three festivals, Ennes noted that churches "can participate by bringing anything from ukulele bands to choirs, soloists, ensembles...or even cowbell choirs."

He added that entries by groups or individuals for the music festivals "may be

serious or lighthearted." The festivals also will feature hymn singing.

Ennes said the music festivals, which all begin at 9:30 a.m. and conclude at 11:45 a.m., offer "a convenient schedule for participating senior adults to have a nice outing for the day."

Festival registration for each event will begin at 9 a.m. with coffee.

The cost for the festivals is \$2 per person prior to the Oct. 14 registration deadline and \$3 per person after Oct. 14.

Choirs and ensembles have a performance time limit of 10 minutes and soloists may perform up to five minutes.

To register a group, send the registration form included in the *Church Music Ministries Handbook* to the ABSC church music ministries department, P.O. Box 552, Little Rock, AR 72203.

For more information on the festivals or to request a registration form, contact Ennes toll-free in state at 1-800-858-ABSC or locally in Little Rock at 376-4791, ext. 5121.

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Family Bible

Living by faith

By Jim Lagrone, pastor,
First Southern Church, Bryant
Basic passage: Habakkuk 2-3
Focal passage: Habakkuk 2:4, 3:11-19
Central truth: Habakkuk tells us the
righteous will live by faith.

Habakkuk asked the same question that believers have asked for centuries, "Why do bad things happen to good people?" However, he then went one step further and questioned God about why He would use a wicked instrument, the Chaldeans, to punish His own people. He suggested to God that a wicked Judah was more righteous than a wicked Chaldea. God reminded the prophet that it was He who was in control of the affairs of men – not Habakkuk!

Habakkuk questioned the direction of God. The prophet was rejecting the coming wrath of God upon his people. He understood that they had fallen away. He understood that they had turned their backs on God. But why would a holy God use such evil to bring about the judgment that was necessary?

We still live in a world today where evil seems to win for a season. This is all tied to the ultimate goals and accomplishment of God's will in our world.

Habakkuk then sees the direction of God. The second chapter begins with the prophet willing to stand his watch and see what God will do. Too many times we refuse to wait on God. We want our answers right now, packaged in the way we want to receive them. God is under no requirement to act according to our time schedule. God reminded him that the righteous live by faith. When events seem to conflict and things are hard to understand, the believer is to trust God for His ultimate victory. The just do live by faith, no matter the circumstances.

Habakkuk followed the direction of God. The concluding verses of chapter 3 reveal and express true faith of one in fellowship with God. The true believer rests in the Lord no matter what storms come. You must be encouraged and wait. God is never in a hurry but always on time. Despite the disappointments and hardships, the prophet vowed to praise God! There is nothing on this earth, even the lack of the fruit of nature, that should keep the believer from faithfully rejoicing in the Lord.

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Life and Work

Called to perseverance

By Jere D. Mitchell, pastor,
First Church, Fayetteville
Basic passage: Hebrews 12:1-3, 7,
10-13; 13:14-16
Focal passage: Hebrews 12:1-3, 7,
10-13; 13:14-16
Central truth: Christians are called to
be faithful to God in their walk
with Christ and service to God.

When I was in high school we had a guy who ran the mile for our track team. At one meet, he ran off the track after the third lap and sat down on a bench. Our coach ran over to where the student was and inquired about his injury. The student replied that he was not hurt, but tired.

You can relate that to the Christian life. There are times you get tired. A life of service to God and others can lead to tiredness. Discouragement can come. People don't understand what you are doing or why you are so serious about your service to God. This can lead to people dropping out of church, stopping ministry, or stopping serving.

The writer of Hebrews knew these Christians needed an encouraging boost. His first word was one of instruction concerning things that hinder. There can be many things that hinder your walk with Christ. In the parable of the sower and the seed, Jesus talked about "the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches." It is easy to get caught up in the things of the world. You must constantly re-evaluate how you spend your time or money to see if they are helping you or hurting you in your walk with Christ.

The second word the writer gave was one of encouragement. We are not alone in this battle. Jesus Christ our Lord has been through great adversity and has overcome. You can too. Focus on Him.

It is not easy to persevere, but it is essential. One of the great things about the fellowship of a local church is that you are reminded that you are not alone. There are others who are experiencing difficult times. Share them with your brothers and sisters in Christ and let them encourage you. Then you can encourage others when they are discouraged.

Finally, the lesson deals with offering sacrifices to God. Some of you thought that offering sacrifices went out with the Old Testament. Wrong! Your sacrifice now is one of praise and thanksgiving to a kind and loving heavenly Father. Your acts of service to God and others are also sacrifices.

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Bible Book

Seventh vision of the end

By Rodney Reeves, pastor,
Central Church, Jonesboro
Basic passage: Revelation 21:1-22:1
Focal passage: Revelation 21:5-8
Central truth: Old things pass away,
everything becomes new.

Since Christ has overcome the enemy and God has judged evil, the final scene of the end depicts life without the curse of sin (v. 22:3). John sees a new heaven and earth with no sea (no chaos, Gen. 1:2). Paradise is depicted as a new Jerusalem, an adorned bride, a tabernacle of God and God's reigning presence among His people (vv. 21:2-5). The seventh vision combines all of these images into one, mixing the metaphors of a holy city, the bride of Christ, the throne of God, and the tabernacle of His presence. The holy city is like a bride adorned with every valuable gem (vv. 9-21). God's throne will ensure a holy presence that requires no temple to preserve His glory (vv. 22-27). The city of the faithful is His bride, the throne of God is the tabernacle of His glorious presence.

When "it is done" (vv. 5-6), when God makes everything new, old things are no more. Notice how the final reward is described in terms of what will not be present: death, tears, thirst, temple, sun, night, closed doors, uncleanness, curse, no end to His reign (vv. 21:4, 6, 22, 23, 25, 27; 22:3, 5). In the end, we will realize what we should have known all along: God is all that we need (vv. 21:7, 22, 23; 22:5). Ultimately, heaven is the presence of God (v. 21:3), the faithful will finally see His face (v. 22:4).

Sprinkled throughout the vision of the new heaven and earth are beatitudes and warnings. Only those who remain faithful witnesses will share in the reward (v. 21:7). Those who keep the "words of the prophecy" (vv. 22:7, 9), keeping their garments clean (vv. 11-14), will live as children of the King (vv. 21:7; 22:4), enjoying eternal life (v. 14). Even though the gates of the city are always open (vv. 21:25), outsiders will never be allowed to enter the presence of God (v. 27). And who are the ones who do not overcome, who are not allowed into heaven? Cowards, unbelievers, murderers, sorcerers, idolaters, liars – those whose names are not found in the Lamb's scroll of life, for "their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone" (vv. 21:8, 27; 22:11, 15). He who has ears to hear, let him hear (vv. 22:17).

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Family Bible

The time of wrath

By Jim Lagrone, pastor,
First Southern Church, Bryant
Basic passage: Jeremiah 5
Focal passage: Jeremiah 5:1-17
Central truth: God's judgment falls on unrepentant people.

Jeremiah was one of God's greatest prophets. He was unrelenting in speaking the truth as God revealed to him. Chapter 5 finds the people of Jerusalem living in sin and unrepentant of that sin. They had gotten so far from God that they were unaware that they were even risking the wrath of God.

Jeremiah searched for righteous people. In a scene similar to Abraham's prayer, Jeremiah began to search for those whose lives still honored the God who created them. If he could only find one person who dealt honestly with the truth, then God would spare the city. The prophet found no one, rich or poor, who still was practicing the truth of God. When leaders fail to follow God, it is only a matter of time until the rest of the population begins to reflect their leadership.

Jeremiah shared with them that God offered repentance to the people. Verse 3 clearly states that God gave them the opportunity to turn. He punished, crushed and struck them, but their hearts had turned to stone. This is a frightening position to find oneself in! Drifting away from God is serious — but to drift so far that one cannot even hear a call for repentance is even more serious.

Jeremiah then revealed the reason for God's punishment. Israel, Judah and the prophets were unfaithful to God. Sin had become so rampant that Jeremiah gave us a picture of a society totally out of control. Of course, God does not have to justify His actions to us. He is just and it is we who have to adjust to Him. But God does not leave people in the dark about why punishment is coming. He told them just as He will reveal it to us today. God did His best to get the people to repent. But they, like us, are responsible for the choices that they made. Since we are responsible, we must be aware of the consequences.

Life and Work

Have you been inducted?

By Darrell Cook, associate director,
Baptist Student Union,
Arkansas State University
Basic passage: Exodus 19:1-6,
Hebrews 2:7-13, 9:15, 1 Peter 2:9-10
Focal passage: Exodus 19:5-6,
1 Peter 2:9-10
Central truth: Believers are a royal priesthood.

Okay, raise your right hand and repeat after me. Really, go ahead and raise your right hand. That's better. Now repeat after me, "I promise to serve faithfully as a priest. I will walk in gratitude to God for the privileges and in submission to God for the responsibilities of my office." Congratulations and welcome to your new profession!

I admit it may seem silly to have "priest induction ceremonies" for new believers, but discipleship should follow evangelism closely and what better way to disciple than to teach someone about their "new occupation." It is a powerful thing to see someone enter into new life in Christ and begin to unravel both the privilege and the responsibility of the priesthood.

The privileges are clear. "Once you were not a people, but now you are a people of God" (v. 10). Being in the priesthood provides a sense of belonging and connection. "Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy" (v. 10). Being in the priesthood provides forgiveness from God, bought with His own blood. You have moved "out of darkness and into his wonderful light" (v. 9). Being in the priesthood provides us truth that we never before had the light to see.

The responsibilities of the priesthood are evident in God's words for the Israelites at Mount Sinai, just prior to the speaking of the Ten Commandments. In Exodus 19:5 God says, "Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession." He continued, "...you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (v. 6).

To be a "kingdom of priests" and covenant people, the Israelites' part of the covenant was to walk in simple obedience. God's part of the covenant was to hold them as a "treasured possession." Then, as now, this kind of intimacy does not indicate that God cares only for His priests, but that He holds us close so that we can be on the front lines of His missionary agenda, calling others to embrace the responsibilities and privileges of the priesthood.

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Explore the Bible

Presenting the King

By Bob Harper, pastor,
First Church, White Hall
Basic passage: Matthew 1-2
Focal passage: Matthew 1:18-25,
2:9-11
Central truth: Christ's purpose is to establish His kingdom: the reign of heaven in the hearts of men.

The past Olympic events presented our world with a lot of new heroes. Matthew chapters 1-2 introduces the greatest hero of all time, Jesus Christ, the one and only King of Kings. From Matthew's account of the genealogy of Jesus through the family's return to Nazareth we begin to see the contrast between the earthly reign of King Herod and the eternal reign of Jesus. It's easy to see that God's kingdom is quite different from our earthly versions.

The virgin birth of Jesus is instant proof that the establishment of this kingdom is going to be unique. The faith and confidence of Joseph and Mary to the message from God point out the truth of "God being with us." This kingdom is His. We are invited to be part of it. Mary and Joseph recognized that Jesus is and always will be the central focus of the kingdom of God.

Earthly kingdoms not based on Jesus are always threatened by His kingdom. Herod's was no different. The interest of the Magi in finding Jesus "disturbed" Herod. This disturbance occurs in all of our lives when Jesus is not allowed to be king. Herod lived the remainder of his life in frustration and bewilderment because he did not accept God's kingdom coming into the world.

The prophetic Scriptures are fulfilled as Joseph and Mary take their new King and flee to Egypt for safety. This presentation of Jesus as the King fulfills the promises given by God years earlier. The return to Nazareth continues that process.

The highlight of chapter 2 is the visit of the Magi. Note the joy they felt as they followed the star. Imagine how they were anticipating their visit with the new King. Can you imagine the discussion between Mary and Joseph over the significance of the gifts the Magi brought? It makes us wonder how we react to the presentation of Jesus to us as King: overjoyed or disturbed? God hopes that we would realize that He is here with us to save His people from their sins.

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Baptist volunteers continue Hurricane Fran relief work

MEMPHIS, TN (BP)—Southern Baptist disaster relief units were continuing feeding operations in mid-September after Hurricane Fran's 115 mph North Carolina landfall Sept. 5, which killed at least 25 people and caused more than \$1 billion in damages.

As of Sept. 12, a total of 263,514 meals had been served, according to the Brotherhood Commission, which coordinates Southern Baptists' multi-state disaster response.

Southern Baptist disaster relief units from North Carolina, South Carolina, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Ohio and Virginia provided meals for rescue and cleanup workers in a three-state area. North Carolina officials estimated that relief units were serving an average of 50,000 meals a day.

Meanwhile, portable kitchens operated by Brotherhood units in Texas and Alabama were on standby Sept. 13 for relief after Hurricane Hortense hit Puerto Rico, which was heavily damaged by that storm's 120 mph winds.

Cleanup continued at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., which was hit by wind and rain as Fran traveled inland. Preliminary estimates set damage to the campus at \$1 million.

Arson fund disbursement to states exceeds \$470,000

NASHVILLE, TN (BP)—Ohio became the 15th state convention to receive funds from the Southern Baptist Convention's "Arson Fund" with the distribution of an additional \$177,198 Sept. 5, bringing the total to nearly \$471,000.

The "Arson Fund" assists African-American churches victimized by arsonists. Like the initial distribution July 3 of \$246,712 to 12 state conventions and \$50,000 on Aug. 2 to 14 conventions, the Sept. 5 distribution is based on a formula developed by the Inter-Agency Council's Racial Reconciliation Task Force.

More than 87 African-American churches, most in the Southeast, have burned in the last 18 months, primarily as the result of arsonists. SBC officials said the formula of distribution is based on an in-hand count of arson-related African-American church fires in the state as a percentage of the total number of churches impacted nationally.

In addition to the monies, Southern Baptist construction crews are volunteering to rebuild the burned churches. At least four state Baptist conventions have sent crews to churches in need and the SBC Brotherhood Commission is attempting to contact each of the fire-damaged congregations to assess the level of need.

Both sides in zoning dispute seek court ruling on RFRA

WASHINGTON (ABP)—In an unusual twist, both sides in a zoning dispute involving a Texas Roman Catholic parish want the U.S. Supreme Court to resolve the constitutionality of a 1993 law Congress passed to enhance religious liberty.

As expected, city officials in Boerne, Texas, have asked the high court to reverse a federal appeals court panel's unanimous decision that Congress acted within its authority when it passed the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. Citing the act, the judges said city officials were wrong to deny a building permit to expand St. Peter Church, which lies in a historic district created by the city.

But in an unusual step, lawyers for Archbishop P.F. Flores of San Antonio, owner of the property of St. Peter Church, have also asked the high court to accept the case to settle unanswered questions about the constitutionality of RFRA.

RFRA restored a long-standing legal test that required government to show a "compelling" reason to restrict religious practice. Religious groups asked Congress to enact the law after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in 1990 that government no longer needed a compelling reason to justify laws and policies that burdened religious practice.

Bivocational pastor wins suit over work on Sunday

BOWLING GREEN, KY (BP)—Western Kentucky University has been ordered to pay \$5,000 in damages plus back pay to a bivocational minister who was fired from the university's staff when he refused to work on Sundays.

The Kentucky Commission on Human Rights ruled in favor of Alfred Cook, a former plumber for the university who also serves as pastor of two rural Baptist congregations. The commission further ordered the university to reinstate Cook's employment.

Cook claimed he was fired from the maintenance crew after his schedule was changed to include Sunday work, which he refused to do.

The university maintained Cook's problem could have been worked out in time, if he had been willing to work some on Sundays. Later, the university also suggested Cook could have swapped out his Sunday work schedule with other maintenance employees. Cook said since he believes no one should work on Sundays, he could not ask another employee to take his Sunday work.

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