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### October 16, 1997

Arkansas Baptist State Convention

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# ARKANSAS BAPTIST

news magazine



## STAND IN THE GAP

A SACRED ASSEMBLY OF MEN

Arkansas Baptists joined hundreds of thousands of men from across the nation Oct. 4 for Promise Keepers "Stand in the Gap" sacred assembly. The six-hour event was held on the National Mall in Washington, D.C.

ARKANSAS BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND ARCHIVES  
MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE

# Marketplace ministers: Day honors bivocationalists

Colleen Banks

Assistant Editor, Arkansas Baptist

**B**IVOCATIONAL, twice blessed or double duty — many churches in Arkansas and throughout the nation are served by pastors who are not fully funded by their congregations. These marketplace ministers hold two jobs — a career and a ministry. With a role as old as the New Testament where Paul was a tentmaker, these bivocational pastors are seldom “part-time.” Churches in the Southern Baptist Convention will observe “Bivocational Celebration Day” Oct. 19.

For 15 years, Terry Songer has served as pastor of Unity Church in Pargould and been a full-time employee of Emerson Electric. When Songer accepted God’s call to preach, he determined not to be a “burden” on a church. He recalled that as a child, church business meetings concentrating on finances, especially compensating the pastor, left a bad taste. “I wanted to minister with no strings attached — bivocational ministry seemed to fit together with my feelings.”

To his congregation’s credit, Songer praises Unity Church for “taking care of me very well financially.” They also celebrate his birthday and his ministry anniversaries. “They are a great group of folks,” he emphasized.

Bivocational minister face numerous challenges, especially time priorities. For many years, Songer had a flexible schedule that allowed him to take off for funerals, hospital visits and other emergencies, and make up the time. Now as a line supervisor, he commented, “I supervise about 60 people and they’ve never had a Christian supervisor. They watch me like a hawk!...The Lord has put me there for a purpose.”

Unity Church was a rural congregation when Songer began as pastor, but now Pargould has taken the area into the city limits and subdivisions are springing up around it. The church has added an educational building and fellowship hall and may expand further. In 1985, the small church had only 32 active members. Currently, attendance runs more than 100 in Sunday School and 130 in worship.

What keeps Songer going, working full-time and taking care of a growing congregation? “This is where the Lord wants me — that’s it,” he declared.

Associations can play a big role in affirming bivocational pastors, according to Bruce Swihart, director of the Arkansas Baptist church leadership support department. “Associational effort is the key to assist bivocational pastors in being effective,” he noted. “The director of missions has an idea of what needs to be done by or for a bivocational church.”

Marvin Peters, director of missions for North Pulaski Association, affirms bivocational ministers by scheduling regular fellowships. The association sponsors a quarterly dinner and invites spouses, just for a time of encouragement.

“Bivocational ministers feel left out and disconnected because of working,” Peters said, particularly when the association was holding most meetings during the workday.

“We started rotating the meetings so that at least some were in the evening or on Saturday morning,” Peters noted. He also has made efforts to include bivocational ministers in associational leadership.

Affirming the efforts of directors of missions and others throughout the state as Southern Baptists observe Bivocational Celebration Day, Swihart noted, “The bivocational minister has an important place in ministry today — most small churches are pastored by a bivocational minister.”

# ARKANSAS BAPTIST

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## Cover Story

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Arkansas Baptists joined hundreds of thousands of men from across the nation Oct. 4 for Promise Keepers' "Stand in the Gap" sacred assembly in Washington, D.C.

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## Time for reconciliation

The time has come to stop preaching forgiveness if we are not going to practice it. Last year I was upset along with many Arkansas Baptists over what I felt were the inappropriate actions of the board of trustees of Ouachita Baptist University. At that time I expressed my displeasure to Dr. Elrod and the board through a personal letter. Following that I attended the Arkansas Baptist Convention. When the issue came up, I voted with the majority on the OBU agreement. Was I happy with the complete agreement? Frankly, no, but neither was almost everyone that voted. Certainly Dr. Turner and the Executive Board did not ask to be put in the position of having to work out such a motion. What the Ouachita board did was wrong and unethical but we forgave them and agreed to changes.

For forgiveness to take place someone has to absorb pain. If I slap you in the face, you can either forgive me or slap me back. At that point I can both ask your forgiveness, and forgive you, or I can slap you back. Someone has to stop the slapping. Last year we extended the olive branch to the OBU trustees and they accepted it. Now the Pharisees among us are still sulking. They are spending their church's monies to publish state newsletters, mass mailing divisive letters, and have held a special meeting. I am not going to waste my church's resources fighting my brothers, bringing more reproach upon our denomination than Ouachita already has. David Miller and Barry King are spending more time and money fighting the church than they did in the recent gambling issue. I know they feel as though they are fighting for the honor of the church but they need to remember, "Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation" (II Cor. 5:18).

**Jack Albritton**  
Lake Village, AR

## OBU agreement opposed

I have just read the pro and con concerning the reconciliation agreement between the state convention and OBU in the Oct. 2 issue of the Newsmagazine. Pastor Elijiff's statement that he would not support this plan for the other agencies reflects the serious flaw in the arguments for this proposal. We have been told this proposal will in no case relinquish the final control of the convention over OBU. If this is true, then why would it not be good also for Williams Baptist College and the other agencies, including the Newsmagazine?

This leads me to ask a question I have asked through another media. If any other agency of the convention had done what OBU did, would there have been the same willingness to work out a similar compromise? I think most of those involved in the debate know the answer to that question. I make this

appeal to Arkansas Baptists, if you would not support this same plan for the other agencies then please do not support it for OBU. What is good for one is good for all. What is bad for the other agencies is bad for OBU. >

**Jimmy A. Millikin**  
West Memphis, AR

## OBU question answered

In a recent issue of *Arkansas Baptist Life*, Jimmy Millikin had an article which asked a question he said "had not been answered." "Why has Ouachita been allowed to ignore the instruction of the convention that all of its agencies revise their charters to include Article VII, Section 5?" The answer has not been concealed. The answer was published in the annual minutes of the 1994 state convention, as well as recorded on audio and video tape. In the interest of honesty and fairness, I would like to convey the facts.

In 1991 Jim Guenther, chief counsel of the Southern Baptist Convention, was asked to study the state convention and agency charters with a view to revising them to establish a stronger tie between the state convention and their agencies and institutions. His work was completed and referred to the Charter and Bylaws Committee. Their recommendation, including the article and section in question, was approved by the convention in 1992 and 1993. In the meantime the Arkansas Legislature adopted the Arkansas Nonprofit Corporation Act of 1993, which was to become effective Jan. 1, 1994.

In a faxed message on March 31, 1994, Guenther alerted the administration to the fact that this new act could impact the charter revision which had been adopted by the convention and the revisions that were being considered by the agencies and institutions. At this point, the *Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine*, the Arkansas Baptist Children's Homes and Family Ministry, and Ouachita had not submitted revisions. Guenther's counsel was, "The new act should be evaluated and the 1991 recommendations we made concerning the corporate status of the convention and the plan we fashioned for clarification of convention-institution relationships should be reconsidered in light of these developments."

It was on the basis of this counsel that the Charter and Bylaws Committee met Oct. 19, 1994, to consider Guenther's suggestion. In addition to the committee, state convention president Ronnie Rogers, ABCS counsel Jim Wallace and the ABCS administration were present. The report and recommendation of this committee was given to the convention Nov. 1, 1994. In his report, chairman Phil Smith said, "You may recall that last year the convention authorized the agencies and institutions of the convention to make revisions in their Articles of Incorporation which was supposed to be presented this year. But because of the passage of the new Arkansas

law some have elected to wait until next year for the complete revision and we have encouraged them either way to do that." The answer to the question is that "the convention upon recommendation of its Charter and Bylaws Committee approved the agencies delaying their action upon their charter revisions."

In deference to Dr. Millikin, a friend of more than 25 years, he did not attend the 1994 convention and was unaware of these additional facts when he wrote the article "A Question Unanswered."

**Don Moore**  
Retired ABCS executive director

## No need to fear change

Although they are not identically parallel, many similarities can be seen in the current discussion relative to trustee selection for Ouachita Baptist University and the discussion some 25 years ago concerning trustee selection for what was then Arkansas Baptist Hospital. In both instances, the continuing relationship with the Arkansas Baptist family was considered paramount. Both then and now, the discussion evoked deep feelings and heated controversy among our people. Both decisions involved some change from the way trustee selection had been done in the past.

In what was not a unanimous decision at the time, the state convention relinquished control of the hospital. The hospital's governing body became a board of director, or corporation, which was composed of all living persons who previously served as trustees elected through the traditional convention nominating process. This group, in turn, was to elect the ongoing trustees. At that time, some people feared the hospital would cease to be a Christian institution. Many felt sure it would lose its Baptist heritage.

Twenty-five years later, it is obvious that these fears were not well-founded. It is mind-boggling to compare the hospital facility which we knew then at 12th and Wolfe Streets in Little Rock with the magnificent facilities we know today in three different cities. If anything, the Baptist identity of these institutions of healing, and their strong focus on Christian values, is even stronger today than it was 25 years ago.

A direct witness to this is the fact that Baptist Health System provided \$324,793 in write-offs and discounts to ministers and church staff in 1996. Through July 1997, the four hospitals have provided \$143,311 in discounts. This totals \$468,104 from January 1996 through July 1997.

Let us not fear change - even slight change! I hope and pray that this year's convention will strongly approve the proposals to implement the reconciliation agreement between the state convention and OBU which we did approve last fall.

**John H. McClannahan**  
Pine Bluff, AR

# Missions attitude

## Growing congregation focuses vision on the future

**Russell H. Dickey**

Associate Editor, Arkansas Baptist

**C**ORNERSTONE FELLOWSHIP is a mission church with an attitude. It is so proud of its attitude, in fact, that it has placed it on a banner that hangs above their storefront sanctuary on Highway 167 near Hensley.

It reads, "A church where your past does not affect your future."

Since March, the mission church and its pastor, Jerry Miller, have preached that attitude to hundreds in the area, located just south of Little Rock, with resulting growth. Starting with 26 initial members in February, the congregation has grown by an additional 78 in the past nine months, including 32 professions of faith and baptisms.

Miller said the attitude expressed both on the banner and inside the worship center reflects an atmosphere of nonjudgmentalism. "We feel we have a program reaching young people and old. There's something for everybody," he said. "The atmosphere we've created with your past does not affect your future" says to folks that God can forgive your past and create a whole new future.

"People like that," he emphasized. "We have so much pharisaic religion in the world. Until we get rid of this judgmental attitude, we won't win people."

Miller said the idea for a mission church in the area had begun following a conversation with Emil Turner, executive director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention.

About the same time, Miller was approached by "four or five families interested in a non-traditional work. We visited and met three times in homes and, after much prayer, decided we would start it."

Although plans had been quickly made for the start of the new work, Miller knew the area well. "In the past, I had pastored Orrin (Missionary) Baptist Church and knew of the fast growth in this area."

With a seed congregation and willingness to lead it, Miller began looking for sponsorship help. Assistance came in the form of Miller's son, Dwayne, pastor of Second Church in El Dorado, whose congregation agreed to help co-sponsor Cornerstone along with Liberty Association.

An important facet of Cornerstone's attitude is how it conducts church. The congregation meets on Sunday morning and evening and has incorporated an

informal, non-traditional worship style. On Tuesday evenings, teenagers meet at the church for Bible study and fellowship and once a month the church hosts a children's "Miracle Saturday" that resembles an ongoing Backyard Bible Club.

But it is Cornerstone's Wednesday format that sets the congregation apart. "We have five in-home Bible study groups, averaging 50 a week. We focus on three things: prayer, study and fellowship."

He said the church adopted the home cell group approach "because we live in a time now where you are going to have to take the church into the home. Until we can establish God in the home through Bible study and prayer, we are not going to build strong churches or new converts."

### Home cells attract prospects

The home cell approach has attracted prospective members like Mike Bateman, who noted that the cell groups "make you feel welcome. I've felt like a member here since I started."

Miller leads a home cell group for new Christians, guiding them through the book, *Beginning Steps: A Seven-day Growth Guide for New Believers*.

During the study, the conversation showed how the mission is reaching the unsaved. One participant told of a life of drinking and drugs. "I didn't know whether I was coming or going," he said.

Another admitted, "I think I would have been dead and gone to hell. I was close."

Many agreed with the opinion of another participant who said, "I know I'll have everlasting life. I'm letting God take more of the load. And I'm getting along better with my kids and my husband."

Member Steve Presson said that the church made an eternal difference in his life. Baptized in late September, he noted that like many others, the church's witness to him began the day it opened its doors. Following a March 1 tornado that tore through the area, the church held its first services the next day, taking a special offering to help victims.

"We heard there was a new mission started in March," he recalled, "then the



▲ Pastor Jerry Miller (left) talks about cell group Bible studies with visitor Mike Bateman at Cornerstone Fellowship's storefront worship center near Hensley.

tornado hit. Things were topsy turvy and some of the people came from the church and showed their love for us."

Presson's wife, Susie, remembered her first visit to a Cornerstone worship service. "I walked in and it was like I knew them. It wasn't an act. You knew it was genuine and there was a lot of love."

She added that attending the mission has led to her "growth and I'm still growing. The church is my family now. I used to not talk about God and religion. Now I talk about it and don't even know I am."

Member Debbie Scott also cites the mission's atmosphere of love as a reason for her attendance. "There is so much love there. When you walk in, you can feel the Holy Spirit there."

Scott had fallen away from church attendance because she "had a bad experience with a church," she said. "So I turned away from church, but I also turned away from God."

She said that an invitation to a mission revival from Susie Presson led her back to God. "I went with no intentions. I was just going to see. God got a hold of me and I was saved at the revival and was baptized later in a horse trough."

"It has been a great experience," Scott emphasized, "getting closer to God, being closer to Jesus and learning and knowing that I am doing the right thing for myself and my kids."

"The biggest thing is we come here to give honor and glory to God," said Steve Presson. "We're not going to judge anybody....Here we're all sinners and we're all equal."

# Reconciliation vs. retribution

**R**ECONCILIATION — the act of restoring to unity or harmony — is among the most Christ-honoring words in the English language. The ministry of reconciliation is, in fact, the very reason that Jesus Christ came to live among us.

According to II Corinthians 5:19, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." Romans 5:10 proclaims the good news that even "while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son." There is no higher calling among the followers of Christ than to imitate His example of being a reconciler.

In Arkansas Baptist life, reconciliation has been a key issue for the past 12 months. State convention messengers voted last November to approve a reconciliation agreement between the convention and Ouachita Baptist University — with the goal of restoring unity and harmony in a vital Arkansas Baptist ministry partnership.

Unfortunately, several outspoken opponents of the reconciliation process appear more interested in retribution than reconciliation. Rather than focus on the

## Straight from the Editor



Trannis Henderson

Editor, Arkansas Baptist

Nov. 19 vote when the majority of convention messengers made a commitment to move forward in a spirit of cooperation, opponents of the agreement seem obsessed with criticizing the Oct. 10 action by Ouachita trustees to re-establish a self-perpetuating board.

To their credit, Ouachita officials moved beyond the Oct. 10 action and agreed to negotiate a solution with convention leaders. The majority of last year's convention messengers endorsed that solution and put Oct. 10 behind them. According to state convention executive director Emil Turner, the agreement "reconciles brethren who have honest disagreements in a way that edifies the

entire body of Christ."

A few critics have described the reconciliation agreement with OBU as a violation of Baptist polity. Yet a key component of our denominational polity is that we are a democratic body in which the majority rules.

Opponents of the OBU agreement appear willing to circumvent the will of the majority by targeting this year's two-thirds majority vote required for bylaw changes as a loophole to derail the reconciliation agreement. While they certainly have the legal right to take such a stand, the words of Paul come to mind: "All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable."

The fact is, Arkansas Baptists no longer live in an Oct. 10 world and there's no need to penalize OBU based on those actions. The majority of messengers voted last year to live in a post-Nov. 19 world that emphasizes "good faith" reconciliation and cooperation. I gladly stand with the reconciliation committee, Ouachita Baptist University and the majority of Arkansas Baptist messengers for the cause of Christ-honoring reconciliation.

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Letters to the editor are invited. Letters should be typed double-spaced and may not contain more than 350 words. Letters must be signed and marked "for publication." Opinions expressed in signed articles are those of the writer and do not necessarily reflect the editorial position of the Arkansas Baptist.

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## A Pastor's Heart



Emil Turner

ABSC Executive Director

**T**HE BULLY was confident. He had never lost a fight, especially with anyone as small as this. He'd make short work of this puny challenger. You know the story. Goliath had never lost. Yet, David prevailed. Not in his power, but because "the battle is the Lord's" (I Sam. 17:47). David actually beheaded Goliath with the giant's own sword.

Judy Creek faced the giant of cancer. For more than a year she resolutely told this giant that the battle belonged to the Lord. She told the rest of us, too. On smooth stones she carefully lettered "I Samuel 17:47," reminding us that God is the source of grace, strength and victory. Not five stones like David, but 3,500 stones. Her battle cry has inspired more people than we will know. On Sept. 30, 1997, Judy closed ranks with her Goliath. She now enjoys the victory celebration that David enjoyed. The giant of cancer

was certain of victory — but the very disease itself became her doorway to glory. Her husband, Jerry, director of missions for Southwest Association, her children and parents, and all her friends need our prayers. We know she won. She is with the Lord. I have one of the 3,500 smooth stones — it and her memory remind me that the battle is the Lord's.

Thank you for praying. So many of you have prayed that we would sell our house in Louisiana. Last week the sale was final. Thank you for caring enough about us to pray for us. God is gracious to allow us to work with people like you.

Have you read *The Gift of Time* by Pat Raton, Janet Williams and Beverly Wright? (ABSC, 1997). This excellent little book is designed to help parents of preschoolers teach their children about God. Biblical, practical and simple — I wish it had been available to us when our boys were preschoolers. You can get a copy by calling the ABSC Sunday School department (1-800-838-ABSC, ext. 5128).

### Executive director's schedule:

Oct 19 (a.m.) Trinity, Benton  
Oct 20 (p.m.) Deacons' round-table, Concord Association  
Oct 21 (p.m.) Annual Meeting, Caroline Association  
Oct 23-29 European Baptist Convention

# 'Stand in the Gap'

Christian men gather in Washington to pray, repent and worship

**Tromis Henderson**

Editor, Arkansas Baptist

**A**LTHOUGH PRECISE crowd estimates are elusive, Promise Keepers' Oct. 4 "Stand in the Gap" rally was clearly one of the largest public gatherings in American history. Hundreds of thousands of men from throughout the nation as well as representatives from dozens of other countries including China and Russia flooded the National Mall in Washington, D.C., for the massive event.

Perhaps as remarkable as the size of the crowd was the reason for the gathering: a "sacred assembly of men," emphasizing prayer, worship, confession of sin and spiritual reconciliation.

According to PK founder Bill McCartney, former head football coach for the University of Colorado, the goal of the assembly was "to present to the Lord godly men on their knees in humility, then on their feet in unity, reconciled and poised for revival and spiritual awakening."

During a press conference prior to the six-hour event, McCartney told reporters that Christian men "have so much in common as men of God but we have not stood together." Affirming the need to

"make a stronger commitment to the local church," he added, "When we leave out of here, you ought to see more fruit.

"All of our hope is in the living God," McCartney insisted. Noting that "men have been irresponsible" and "have not stood strong for their convictions," he added, "It's going to be a big prayer meeting. We're going to deal with a lot of that sin today, trusting that God is going to forgive us."

Although "we deserve judgment," McCartney said the sacred assembly was designed to encourage "a tremendous resurgence of hope in these men....The thing that connects us is when we are born of the Spirit of God."

As the assembly program began, Christian men from all walks of life stood shoulder-to-shoulder, anticipating the afternoon's events. Participants had arrived by airplane, bus, car, motorcycle — some even walked cross-country — to spend time together in prayer, praise and repentance.

John Thompson, a construction worker from St. Paul, Minn., said he made the trip to Washington "just to bring another voice and heart to pray to the Lord." Comparing prayer to "a little light going up to God," he said the assembly

"will be like a laser going up to God and I want to be part of it."

Noting that "I'm looking for God's help on the narrow trail so I can help others," he added, "I hope what comes out of this is the Lord blessing the healing of this nation."

Dennis Johnson, a retired Air Force officer from Portland, Ore., said he appreciates Promise Keepers' "emphasis on men's responsibility and the call to live up to that."

Citing "the honest confrontation of sins that we all struggle with," Johnson said the gathering offers an opportunity to "help each other out and hold each other accountable rather than push things under the rug."

The call for a national emphasis on prayer and repentance "is a real need," he remarked. Affirming the impact of "gathering with people to pray for revival in our nation," he added, "It's never taken a majority; it requires God's people being obedient."

## A call to worship

The event began with the blowing of the shofar — a ram's horn instrument dating back to Old Testament times. That was followed by a welcome from a group of Native Americans.

The program was divided into three major sections focusing on "An Extraordinary God," "An Extraordinary Response" and "An Extraordinary Hope," with specific topics addressing such areas as prayerlessness, sexual sins, disunity, sectarianism and racism.

Singing such stirring hymns as "How Great Thou Art," "Holy, Holy, Holy" and "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," the packed crowd stood, knelt, joined hands, lay prostrate in prayer, cheered and repeatedly shouted "Amen" at various times throughout the event.

"Brethren, as we gather today, it is under the mercy of God," declared master of ceremonies Jack Hayford, senior pastor of Covenant Church in Pittsburgh. "To stand in the gap means to take a posture of understanding.

"Praise God for the grace that brings us to Christ and the grace that brings us together," Hayford said. "We come not as protesters to profess our rights; we come as sinners before God to confess our wrongs."

According to PK board chairman Phillip Porter, "It is the Lord who calls His people together...for guidance, for

## The Seven Promises of a Promise Keeper

- 1** A PROMISE KEEPER is committed to honoring Jesus Christ through worship, prayer and obedience to God's Word in the power of the Holy Spirit.
- 2** A PROMISE KEEPER is committed to pursuing vital relationships with a few other men, understanding that he needs brothers to help him keep his promises.
- 3** A PROMISE KEEPER is committed to practicing spiritual, moral, physical and sexual purity.
- 4** A PROMISE KEEPER is committed to building strong marriages and families through love, protection and biblical values.
- 5** A PROMISE KEEPER is committed to supporting the mission of his church by honoring and praying for his pastor, and by actively giving his time and resources.
- 6** A PROMISE KEEPER is committed to reaching beyond any racial and denominational barriers to demonstrate the power of biblical unity.
- 7** A PROMISE KEEPER is committed to influencing his world, being obedient to the Great Commandment (see Mark 12:30-31) and the Great Commission (see Matt. 28:19-20).



Promise Keepers' "Stand In the Gap" sacred assembly was held Oct. 4 on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. The six-hour event attracted hundreds of thousands of Christian men, including representatives from more than 50 nations.

forgiveness and for help. It is not Promise Keepers who have called you here today; it is Almighty God.

"We've come today with fasting, weeping and mourning," he declared. "It is not political preferences we are concerned with, but biblical principles."

"We have not come to exalt our gender as males; we have come to exalt Jesus Christ," agreed PK president Randy Phillips. "No woman should be threatened by this gathering because the ground is level at the foot of the cross."

With more than 40 speakers sharing briefly during the six-hour program, the event focused more on content than personalities. Among the many well-known speakers were author Max Lucado, Dallas pastor Tony Evans and evangelist James Robison as well as singers Ray Boltz and Steve Green.

Ronnie Floyd, pastor of First Church, Springdale, was among the assembly's featured speakers. Posing the question: "What does it mean to have Jesus as our first love?" Floyd emphasized the need to have "fire in our hearts."

"When we don't pray, it shows we do not depend upon Him as God," Floyd warned. "We need to fall in love with Jesus all over again." The Arkansas pastor

urged the crowd to "go home and win your cities to Jesus Christ."

Crawford Loritts, national director of Legacy Ministries, emphasized that "we are here to underscore the fact that we stand before a holy God." He said when Christian men catch a true glimpse of God, they are confronted with His pre-eminence, purity and power.

Evans highlighted the need for men to "understand biblical leadership, spiritual leadership." Calling the crowd to "recognize the importance of the family," he said, "Many of you have given up too quickly....It takes a lifetime to get a marriage right.

"If you want things to change out here, we need to start in our homes," Evans emphasized. "God says you are spiritually responsible to lead your family....When you come home, you come home to your second job."

Lucado pointed out that "unity is not the work of man, it is the work of the Holy Spirit," adding that "at times we have been part of the wall instead of part of the bridge.

"We have focused on issues that divide us rather than focus on the cross that unites us," he acknowledged. "The world will be one with Christ when we are one in Christ."

Following hours of prayer and worship, McCartney concluded the assembly by addressing the questions: Who are we? Where are we going? How are we going to get there?

"We're the brotherhood of believers," he affirmed. "We're the church, the body of Christ.

"Where are we going? We've been divided and a house divided cannot stand. We are being reunited in diversity without dissension....Every guy must do his part.

"How will we get to where we're going?" he asked. "Every man connected to a church and every church connected to each other....Let no guy go out of here as a Lone Ranger. Go back to your church and give away your time, treasure and talents."

#### State capitol rallies

McCartney announced plans for rallies on the steps of every state capitol on Jan. 1, 2000, with the goals of highlighting vital men's ministry, vital prayer ministry and racial reconciliation. He voiced hope that the simultaneous events will signal that "the giant of racism is dead inside the church of Jesus Christ."

Following a series of regional stadium and arena events throughout 1998 and 1999, McCartney said Promise Keepers will turn its attention to global needs beginning in 2000.

"Brotherhood means interdependence," he concluded. "Interdependence means you value everyone and... depend on everyone. We all need each other."

**Go back to your church and give away your time, treasure and talents.**

**BILL McCARTNEY**  
 Founder,  
 Promise Keepers



# PK assembly impacts participants

Arkansans join 'once-in-a-lifetime pilgrimage' to D.C.

**W**HILE HUNDREDS of Washington-bound Promise Keepers from northwest Arkansas were stranded in Fayetteville due to an apparent shortage of charter planes, countless other Arkansans made their way to the nation's capital. They joined a throng of Christian men who gathered Oct. 4 for PK's "Stand in the Gap" sacred assembly.

Numerous Arkansas Baptists were part of the historic event which attracted an array of men reflecting diverse ages, races, denominations and nationalities.

Among the many groups from the state that traveled to Washington, First Church of Benton coordinated a weekend trip for 20 men. The group, which flew to Washington on Friday afternoon and returned Sunday evening, included participants from Benton, Malvern, Little Rock and other central Arkansas cities as well as Fort Smith.

Greg Kirksey, pastor of First Church, attended his first Promise Keepers event in Dallas two years ago. Describing it as

"one of the top three spiritual experiences of my life," he added, "It was tremendous. You can't keep me away from it now. I love to go."

Emphasizing that his experience with Promise Keepers "has enhanced my whole worship experience," Kirksey noted, "I'm a Promise Keepers advocate. I believe God's hand is on it."

Kirksey said he coordinated the trip to Washington for other pastors and laymen because "one of my greatest joys is to see others experience the Lord in that way." He described "Stand in the Gap" as "a historic moment that could lay the groundwork for spiritual awakening in America."

## Overcoming stereotypes

Among the pastors who traveled with Kirksey was Rick Hyde, pastor of Third Church, Malvern. "I wanted to be part of something that was going to make history," he affirmed. "I hope what really comes out of this is to help us face the issues of racial and sectarian stereotypes and overcome that."

Describing the various prayer times during the assembly as "just awesome," Hyde said the event "showed people that the conservative religious element is not

a lunatic fringe, we're not extremists. We're a group of people who love our families, love our churches, love our Lord and love our country."

Noting that he plans to preach a series of sermons about the seven promises of a Promise Keeper, Hyde explained, "To see what it did in Washington, I'm going to go back and see what it can do at Malvern Third Baptist Church."

Steve Butler, pastor of Highland Heights Church in Benton, cited Promise Keepers' emphasis on "the concept of men coming together and expressing their emotions without being penalized."

Affirming the experience of "that many men coming together in a spirit of worship, brokenness and repentance," Butler noted, "So many men came from so far with great personal sacrifice because of their concern for their relationship to God, to each other and concern for their country."

He said the experience offered a "renewed sense of commitment to our responsibilities to our society as followers of Christ," adding that "the opportunity to impact the country as a whole has been very positive."

## Life-changing experience

David Balok, a supervisor at Alcoa, said his first PK experience in 1996 helped lead him "from a verbal faith to one that comes from the heart," emphasizing that "it made some radical changes in my life."

Reflecting on the recent sacred assembly, Balok shared, "This taught me that I need to follow up with some unresolved issues and the importance of being with other Christian men....I got a lot of education in the last couple of days."

According to David Dawson, an attorney from Benton, the gathering in Washington was "a once-in-a-lifetime pilgrimage not only to benefit me but to benefit our country."

He said the experience offered a reminder of the urgency "to give God proper reverence and respect and to seek to focus my own personal worship on humbling myself before God."

Noting that the event "has the potential of changing the social structure of our nation from the ground up," he said, "If we can go home and live differently, we have the opportunity to influence others in the same way to make a positive impact on our society....Seeing men from every state in the nation on their faces praying - I think God will honor that."

## T-shirts proclaim testimonies

**P**ROMISE KEEPERS officials chose not to sell PK merchandise such as caps and T-shirts in conjunction with "Stand in the Gap," citing a desire to maintain "the solemn nature" of the event. Although a few enterprising folks hawked their own souvenirs along the edge of the crowd, many Promise Keepers participants already sported PK shirts, caps and buttons from previous events.

With hundreds of thousands of Christian men gathered in one place on a warm, sunny day, countless T-shirt slogans popped up everywhere. Among the more memorable ones were:

- "Life is short. Pray hard."
- "Don't be caught dead without Jesus."
- "Not ashamed to call upon His name."
- "Ain't God good!"
- "A choir of millions for an audience of One."
- "Real men pray."
- "Satan is ugly as sin."
- "Jesus bridges the gap."
- "Don't be blessed to be witness."
- "Jesus Christ: The Greatest Promise Keeper."



# Mission Arkansas Tour '97

## Tour participants witness Arkansas Baptist missions firsthand

**Missio** **GI**

Executive Assistant, Arkansas Baptist

**F**OR I WAS an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. (Matt. 25:35-36).

The 19 participants in the Mission Arkansas Tour '97 saw firsthand how Arkansas Baptists are following Christ's instructions to "minister unto others as though ministering to Him" as they give to the Dixie Jackson State Missions Offering. They also saw the need for increasing contributions to the annual offering and for serving as volunteers across the state.

Chaplaincy, language missions and church extension ministry points were visited during the first-time tour sponsored by Woman's Missionary Union and the missions department of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention. Monica Keathley, adult consultant for the state WMU department, and Marion Reynolds, director of state chaplaincy, served as hosts for the Sept. 23-26 event which was held during the State Missions Week of Prayer.

The first stop on the tour, Pine Bluff

Diagnostic Center, focused on the work of chaplain Benny McCracken. He is assigned there by the Arkansas Department of Correction, with his salary funded by the state mission offering. McCracken hosted a brief service in which prison warden Grant Harris; administrator of religious services Herbert Holly; volunteer Maurice Hodges; and Bill, an inmate, shared information.

McCracken provides pastoral care, counseling and worship leadership for the inmates as well as approximately 150 prison staff. He reported an average attendance of about 100 for Sunday worship services.

Harris noted that the diagnostic center, with a current population of 467, houses the most handicapped inmates of any state unit. "I foresee that at some time we will have to build a geriatric unit," he added.

The warden said that because of increased violent crime, there are more incarcerations than at any time since he had been involved in law enforcement. "As a result of this, a 2,650-bed prison will be opened at Newport next year with the current Tucker unit female population being transferred there," he added. "The Tucker unit will then be converted into a mental health treatment facility."

Holly, a member of Watson Chapel Church in Pine Bluff and a former mis-

sionary to Malaysia, said that when he began his duties, the chapel was a sacred place. That no longer seems true today. "Security there has to be as tightly maintained as in any other prison area. In addition, we are facing the problem of cults trying to get inside our prison walls."

Hodges is a layman from Sylvan Hills Church in Camden who has assisted McCracken for eight years. He pointed out that he had become involved in sharing God's Word with those in prison after reading about state missions work through the pages of the *Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine*.

Bill, age 74, who is in prison with two life sentences plus 30 years, is bound to a wheelchair because of health problems. He said McCracken and another chaplain led him to desire the same peace and joy they displayed. "I was meaner than a snake but since Jesus washed my sins away, I am the happiest I have ever been," he declared. "I may never walk the streets as a free man but I am free in my heart and my faith grows stronger each day. How I praise God for the life I now have."

Tucker Prison, the next tour stop, is the only state unit where both men and women are incarcerated. Ruby Swanigan serves there as chaplain.

Inmates Staci and Amy expressed

## Missions leaders highlight urgency of starting new works

**A**CCORDING TO Jim Hausler, Arkansas Baptist language missions associate, the most recent growth in language missions is occurring in the Fort Smith area. With 60 language churches throughout the state, he said Spanish ministry also is active in Clarksville, Strong, Eudora, Ratcliff, Green Forest, Berryville, Springdale, Rogers and Lowell.

He added that a new Native American work is beginning in Van Buren. There also are Laotian works in both Little Rock and Fort Smith and Asian ministry in Hot Springs and Fort Smith.

Hausler requested prayer for the state's deaf ministry. "We need to find a better way to reach out to the 2,000 deaf across our state," he explained. "We also need to pray for Pete Newton as he seeks to launch the Angel Martinez Spanish Seminary in DeQueen."

The language missions associate said interfaith witnessing also is part of his work assignment. He currently is seeking to enlist a group of Arkansas Baptist volunteers to do personal witnessing during the 1998 Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Salt Lake City.

Sharing about his work as ABCS church extension associate, Jack Ramsey said there are currently 61 new Anglo missions, seven churches that are starting new churches and 25 Arkansas associations with some type of new Anglo work.

Ramsey recognized First Church of Springdale as the leading congregation for starting new works, including 57 missions. He pointed out that North Park Church in Van Buren also has five new congregations, Bella Vista Church has begun a new work in the Highlands area, two new works are beginning at Elm Springs and that First Church of Piggott, South Side Church of Pine Bluff and Second Church of Jacksonville are beginning new works.

"My goal is for laypeople to be trained to start new works," Ramsey emphasized. "I have completed a 'myths/truths' evaluation for Anglo churches in Arkansas which shows that every county in Arkansas has fewer people in Protestant churches than they had 10 years ago and that we are not even winning our children."

The church planting evaluation also revealed that in almost every case new churches help cause older churches to grow; less than 7 percent of the last 200 new Arkansas Anglo starts were from church splits; somewhere between 1.5 to 2 percent of the total ABCS budget goes to new church starts; fewer than 3 percent of Southern Baptist churches in the state ever support new Anglo starts; and Arkansas has the smallest death rate of new church starts in the nation.

"No religious family can survive without new birth," Ramsey concluded.

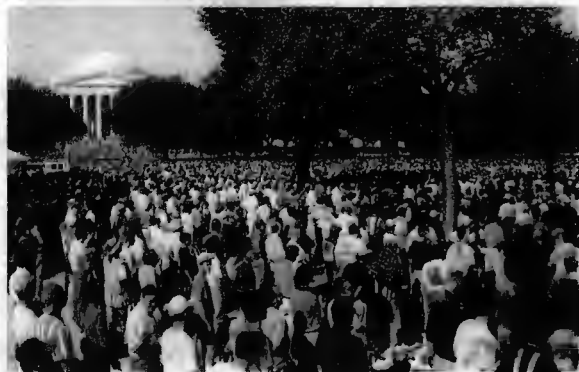
## Taking Ground

Promise Keepers participants as they sing praise choruses together, symbolizing their commitment to Christ.



PROMISE KEEPERS founder Bill McCartney (left) urged Christian men to "respond to needs in extraordinary ways." The multitude of men who gathered for the six-hour PK

event on Washington's National Mall included at least one resourceful man (below left) who wore stilts to help him see above the seemingly endless sea of men. The sacred assembly, which attracted participants from throughout the world, has been described as one of the largest gatherings of any kind in American history.





Monica Keathley, adult consultant for Arkansas Baptist Women's Missionary Union, leads worship at Tucker Prison during the recent Mission Arkansas Tour '97.

gratitude to God for placing them at Tucker so they could hear of His love for them.

According to Staci, "Four years ago I was a drug addict and did not know the bondage I was in until I came to prison and found freedom through Jesus Christ. His Word has quickened my mind, restored my soul, given me freedom and made me whole," she said. "I thank Arkansas Baptists for sending Ruby Swanigan to share the love of God with us."

#### 'The true answer'

Amy explained that in the free world her goal was to destroy herself and others. "I believed in God in the free world but was not obeying Him," she added. "Here I found the true answer and I am sharing it with others on the compound."

Reynolds, speaking from Luke 23 in a chapel worship service, reminded the crowd they were like Barabbas, a prisoner in jail, who was released because Jesus took his place on the cross. "We who are Christians are also indebted to Christ because we too were filthy, dead prisoners looking at a miserable and pitiful death until the shadow of the cross fell into our lives," he declared. "We now can rejoice in the shadow of the cross."

Martha Dewbre, a member of Park Hill Church in North Little Rock, serves as a volunteer at the Tucker Unit. She said it became clear to her at the age of nine that one of the things God wanted her to do was prison ministry. "I began ministering in a small jail at Tyroneza but my first prison visit as a volunteer came about 11 years ago and I have found it so exciting to know that God is in many hearts here."

Dewbre also expressed regret over the limited resources available for state missions work. "However, I am encouraged to know 'we' are 'there' and that we are making a difference."

Dan Clevenger is chaplain at Hot Springs Rehabilitation Center, a one-stop institution where individuals can receive

medical help, physical and occupational therapy or vocational training.

Citing this year's state missions theme, Clevenger remarked, "We are 'Starting Something New' here in that we are involving patients, ages 16 to 60, in general education study, as well as enrolling them in studies at Garland County Community College."

He pointed out that volunteers are assisting with mentoring and transportation for patients with cerebral palsy, gunshot wounds, gang-related injuries, abuse and car wrecks.

Clevenger explained that without the Dixie Jackson Offering there would be no full-time chaplain at the Hot Springs center. "As chaplain I do a lot of one-on-one counseling, trying to show the patient that God's love is the connection that is missing in his life," he emphasized.

In addition to counseling, the chaplain makes hospital visits, ministers to staff members, conducts funeral and memorial services, leads worship services and promotes special emphasis such as the National Day of Prayer, See You at the Pole and Religious Emphasis Week, featuring local pastors and musicians. "The 1996 week resulted in 20 decisions," he added.

"As a representative of God and Arkansas Baptists, I am here to point people to a new life found in Jesus Christ," he affirmed.

Chris Copeland has the opportunity to minister, share the Scripture, serve as a counselor and lead weddings and funerals for the profoundly retarded clients at Booneville Diagnostic Center.

The 238 ambulatory clients at Booneville do contract work, attend local schools, serve on lawn mower crews, weave rugs which are sold at craft fairs and collate and sack parts for toy firms. From this work they each are paid \$15 per month to purchase such items as soft drinks and snacks.

Copeland, who receives no operating

budget, often uses his salary to purchase refreshments for the clients as well as purchasing the props he uses for illustrations in teaching God's Word.

Affirming the impact of the Dixie Jackson Offering, Copeland explained, "If I wasn't here, there would be nothing religious on this campus."

Norma Bailey of Eden Church in Crossett, noted, "I am grateful that we as Arkansas Baptists are still allowed to place chaplains in the state institutions and I was surprised that most of these chaplains have no budget — no money available to pay for materials and supplies needed to perform their jobs effectively."

Visits to the Hope Migrant Mission Center and the Hispanic Mission of Hope First Church offered insight into Arkansas' language missions work.

Paul Roaten has served for six years as the mission center director in Hope. He noted that the center is visited by 22,000 to 25,000 migrants each year.

Each migrant family that registers at the center receives either an English or Spanish Bible with John 3:16 prominently marked. "We share either the evangelical or Catholic version," Roaten pointed out. "I had rather they have a Catholic Bible than no Bible at all."

#### Migrants accept Christ

Roaten said 55 migrants accepted Christ last year as a result of the ministry of the center which will be moving later this year to a new one-acre interstate site.

The current facility has been purchased by First Church of Hope for the Hispanic Baptist mission currently meeting in the church's fellowship hall.

Carlos S. Carvagal is pastor of the mission, which hosted a Wednesday evening dinner and program for mission tour participants. He pointed out that because two countries are working together to spread the gospel, many people are coming to know God.

According to tour participant Nancy Reynolds, a member of First Church of Cabot, "I only hope and pray that our churches, through the leadership of our pastors, will be convicted and united in a statewide effort to give state missions the emphasis and priority it must have if we as Arkansas Baptists are to reach the lost and unchurched in this state."

"Mission Arkansas tour is a must for every Arkansas Baptist!" exclaimed Richard Sager of Berryville. "Since this isn't possible, each church needs to send a representative to see what God is doing with the help of the Dixie Jackson Offering in our state — each of these areas of ministry need to be experienced and we will then realize how vital they all are and pledge to do more!"

# From fear to faith

## Foreign missionary recounts childhood abuse, Children's Home intervention

By Russell H. Dilday

Associate Editor, Arkansas Baptist

**T**WELVE-YEAR-OLD Ron Greenwich stood at the gate of Bottoms Baptist Orphanage (now the Arkansas Baptist Home for Children) in Monticello in 1960, not wanting to enter. Behind him lay a life of fear. What lay in store for him beyond those gates — a life of service to God — was unknown.

Greenwich, now a Southern Baptist international missionary to Brazil, was a resident of the Home from 1960 to 1966. He had been placed there, along with a brother and sister, by their mother to protect them from an abusive stepfather.

"Although I didn't like the idea at first, I later came to understand and appreciate the difficult decision that my mother had to make on our behalf," Greenwich noted. "I had just turned 12 and had lived in a pretty constant state of fear throughout my life. Although feeling loved by our mother, we all knew that our stepfather hated and resented us."

His stepfather, an abusive alcoholic, terrorized the family. "I had seen him beat my mother for years. There were times when he would whip us with a belt...because we were 'stupid and lazy.' Once he beat my sister until she became unconscious and then left her alone in the house. Another time he held a gun to my brother's head after firing it into the wall directly behind him."

During another incident, Greenwich recalled, "He held a knife to my mother's throat. I fled to a neighbor's home for help. The police came and left after things settled down. Afterwards, he held me firmly and glaring into my eyes, he threatened me with death should I ever call the police on him again. I was 10."

"To this day I can still remember how it would suddenly get dark any time he walked into the room," he said. "I know now that this could not have been the case, but in my mind's eye, I saw it happen many times."

"I believe the mental abuse was much more detrimental than the physical abuse," Greenwich added. "When he was home, we never spoke except in fear. Although we spoke among ourselves, we also had a tremendous fear to speak to anyone else."

Despite the abuse suffered at the hand of his stepfather, he said, "we felt the love of our mother, who shared a similar childhood experience. We always knew that she would be there and would provide for us to the best of her ability. It was always necessary for her to work, as our stepfather seldom helped out financially."

Part of his mother's provision for her children was sheltering them from harm at Bottoms Orphanage. "Looking back now, I only regret that Arkansas Baptists didn't come along sooner. Institutional care may not be considered by some as the preferential manner to raise children, but for me it was better than anything that I had ever experienced before."



**“Institutional care may not be considered by some as the preferential manner to raise children, but for me it was better than anything that I had ever experienced before.”**

RON GREENWICH  
Southern Baptist  
missionary to Brazil

That experience, and the kindness of the Arkansas Baptist-supported ministry astonished him. "I was treated like a person of worth. My physical needs were more than adequately met. I was given more food than I could eat. I received new clothes. I had my own bed and closet. I was given responsibilities and an allowance. I had to go to school and I had to do my homework. When I was sick I was taken to the doctor."

"For the first time in my life, I was encouraged to do well in whatever I did," Greenwich recounted. "I became an avid sports fan and participant. Although never a star, I became involved in high school basketball, track and football. I boxed at the Home and played community Little League and Babe Ruth baseball. This interest in sports has stayed with me throughout my adult life."

School, which had never been a focal point for Greenwich, grew in importance. "Before living at the home I just thought school was a place children went during the day. As I recall, I never knew homework existed. But at the Home, through daily required study, soon I was making mostly Bs and Cs and discovering that I could succeed in school."

"Eventually," he said, "I was selected by my teachers to represent the school along with a few other 'town kids' at the annual Boy's State Camp Program."

### Love and acceptance

Comfort, care and an education were not all he discovered: he also found love, acceptance and Christ at the Home. "One of the things that I will always remember about my houseparents was the way they looked at me. It was not a look of disgust or pity to which I had become accustomed, but rather a look of respect and expectation."

"I could see in their eyes that they liked me," he said. "With time, I began to see other people in a better light and found it easier to talk with them. I really believe it was through their influence that I accepted Jesus as my Lord and Savior. Of course, the regular church attendance and the required daily quiet time and Bible reading also influenced my decision."

"The six years that I lived at the children's home seemed like ages," he related, "but there were so many positive experiences that I will always look back on and cherish."

At the end of his six-year stay at the Home, he attended Ouachita Baptist University on a Home scholarship, earning degrees in psychology and sociology. He also met his wife, Alana, the daughter of Southern Baptist foreign missionaries to Brazil.

With continued assistance from the Home, he attended Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, "being attracted by their social work program."

After his graduation from seminary, the couple was married. "Alana and I went to work at a children's home in Waco, remaining there for two years until I was invited to return to the Home in Monticello as a caseworker. This was literally a dream come true for me. But, after five years, I felt the desire to further my professional training. We returned to Texas where I completed the master of social work degree at the University of Houston while we both served as houseparents at a group home for teenagers for two years."

After graduation, they visited Alana's parents in Brazil. "During that trip, I first

begin to feel God calling me into missions. We visited a Baptist Friendship House and I fell in love with the work. There are so many extremely poor people in this third world country and I felt a strong desire to help."

Greenwich returned to the United States, supervising two group homes for mentally handicapped adults for the following two years. "It was during this time that I dealt with God's call to missions. As Alana and I talked and as we dealt with the Foreign Mission Board, our church family and other friends and relatives, we were confirmed time and

time again that this was the direction in which God was leading us.

"We have served 13 years in Brazil, directing another Baptist Friendship House," he explained. "It has been wonderfully rewarding and we have seen hundreds of needy people clothed, fed, trained vocationally and spiritually nurtured. God has truly blessed our lives with happiness and joy, part of which has been through our four children.

"Arkansas Baptists, through their prayerful and financial support of the Arkansas Baptist Children's Homes and Family Ministries, have clearly impacted

my life" he noted. "I can only imagine how my life might have been today had it not been for those very special people who invested their own lives in the life of one small and fearful little boy so many years ago. And not just one...there are literally thousands of others out there who have been helped over the years."

Thinking back to that day when the small 12-year-old stood at the gate of the Bottoms Baptist Orphanage, he said, "I truly believe that God has had His hand on my life since I was a little boy, but the first time I felt this was after going to live at the Children's Home."

## Mother expresses thanks for Boys' Ranch ministry

**D**EBORAH (not her real name) recently wrote to the Arkansas Baptist Children's Home and Family Ministries to express her thanks for help the agency provided her family through the ministry of the Arkansas Baptist Boys' Ranch in Harrison.

She said that her son "has always been a follower, afraid to question what others wanted to do, afraid he wouldn't be liked."

"He never liked school and when he got in junior high, he fell in with the wrong crowd and began using drugs and staying out late," she told David Perry, ABCHFM executive director, in the letter.

She added that the family moved to a new town to escape her son's drug use. "It didn't work. He hated his new school and got deeper and deeper into drug use."

Following three months of drug rehabilitation, "things became worse than ever before," she said. "Now our son wasn't just doing drugs, he was stealing to get the money to buy them."

Following her son's court-ordered detention, Deborah first checked him first into the ABCHFM's Emergency Receiving Home in Judsonia, then into the Boys' Ranch.

"The staff at the Ranch have shown him an immeasurable amount of love," she said. "They have encouraged him at school, they have helped him grow both spiritually and emotionally."

She urged Perry to "please continue to give these boys and girls a much of society needs under their wings. We know that our world is worth saving and we are so thankful that you can also see that in them."

## Offering provides counseling, care to thousands in Arkansas

**J**OHAN ROSS, director of development for the Arkansas Baptist Children's Homes and Family Ministries, said the state Baptist agency serves about 3,000 adults and children like Ron Greenwich each year through its care and counseling services, adding that the agency's annual Thanksgiving Offering plays a large role in keeping its ministries operating.

Ross noted that during the past year the Children's Home in Monticello "housed 61 residents while the Boys Ranch in Harrison met the needs of 45 boys and the Promise House (a ministry for unwed mothers) cared for 16 pregnant girls and three others."

The agency's six Emergency Receiving Homes provided short-term care for 342 children and mothers and the ABCHFM's four area offices and seven satellite offices provided 2,500 Christian counseling sessions to Arkansans.

Ross noted that the Thanksgiving Offering, promoted by most Arkansas Baptist congregations each November, is crucial to the ABCHFM's ministry.

"Our overall church goal for 1997 is \$675,000, up from \$600,000 last year, and the Thanksgiving Offering is a big part of that," Ross explained. "We use the money to provide the essentials - food, clothing and shelter - and for our daily operation, unless a church designates it for a specific area."

He noted that churches may highlight

the offering "by the pastor emphasizing it throughout the month and possibly letting one of our staff come and share what the Thanksgiving Offering does."

"They can also place Thanksgiving Offering posters in a conspicuous place, set a church goal and utilize the offering envelopes and bulletin inserts, especially on the Sunday before Thanksgiving," he added, noting that "posters, bulletin inserts and envelopes will be sent to every Arkansas Baptist church."

Ross said the offering's 1997 theme, "Joining Hands, Healing Hearts," is "about Arkansas Baptists joining hands and mending the hearts of the children we serve. Most of them have come from a bad situation - some from abuse, neglect or even abandonment."

Ross told about a recent Emergency Receiving Home resident named Matthew, who "told his houseparent, 'I am really worried because no one ever abuses him many times and had even tried to run over him with a car.'"

"All of that abuse," said Ross, led to a crisis of faith for Matthew. "He told his housemother, 'I just sort of stopped believing in God because my life hurt so bad.'"

"Through the witness of Matthew's houseparents, Matthew resolved his crisis of faith," Ross added, "when he asked them, 'When can I accept Jesus?'"



Arkansas Baptist Children's Homes and Family Ministries



# people & places

COMPILED BY MILLIE GILL

## TRANSITIONS

**James Guthrie** began serving Oct. 12 as pastor of Third Street Church in Arkadelphia where he will work with senior pastor Gary Turner and associate pastor Garland Brackett. He came to Arkadelphia from Gurdon where he had served as pastor of Beech Street Church since 1989. Guthrie is a graduate of Southern Baptist College (now Williams) and Ouachita Baptist University. He and his wife, Reta, have two daughters, Jessica and Jennifer.

**Frank Terry** recently began serving as pastor of Western Hills Church in Fayetteville, a church he served when it was first organized. He also has served Old Missouri Road Church and First Church of Johnson. Terry and his wife, Johnnie, have two children, Mark and Gina.

**David Dodson** is bivocational pastor of College Avenue Church of Springdale. He previously was a member and children's church pastor for Friendship Church of Springdale. Dodson is a police officer in the juvenile division of the Springdale Police Department. He and his wife, Della, have two daughters, Tarsy and Tina Jo.

**Duane S. Smith** is pastor of Second Church of Leachville, coming there from Great Falls Church in Great Falls, Mont. He previously was pastor of Etowah Church and Memorial Church of Blytheville. He also has been a staff member of churches in Arkansas and Montana. Smith is a graduate of Bethany Bible College and Bethany Theological Seminary, both in Dothan, Ala. Smith and his wife, Denise, have a daughter, Stephanie.

**Michael H. Handy** has joined the staff of First Church in Osceola as minister of music, coming there from Locust Grove Church in New Market, Ala. He previously served other churches in Alabama, Florida, Kentucky and Tennessee. Handy is a graduate of Middle Tennessee State University, Murfreesboro, and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He and his wife, LuAnne, have two children, Christopher Michael and Stephen Taylor.

**Samuel James Moore** has joined the staff of First Church of Manila as minister of youth. He and his wife, Amy, moved there from Newport. Moore is a graduate of Williams Baptist College.

**Michael Conaway** has joined the staff of First Church of Augusta as minister of

youth. He is a junior at Williams Baptist College.

**Gary Stewart** recently resigned as pastor of First Church of McRae to move to Wright City, Okla., where he will serve as pastor of First Church. Stewart previously served First Southern Church of Crossroads near Foreman. He and his wife, Cindy, have three children, Chris, Scotty and Brindy.

**Jerry O. Threat** has resigned as pastor of First Church of Plumerville. He is available to serve as a supply preacher or interim pastor. He may be contacted at P.O. Box 492, Morrilton, AR 72110-0492; phone 501-354-9938.

**Billy Edge** recently resigned as pastor of Emmanuel Church of Blytheville to move to Mississippi.

**Jerro Hassell** of North Little Rock is interim pastor of Ironton Church in Little Rock. He is the retired pastor of First Church of Stuttgart.

**Dane Abels** is serving as interim minister of youth at Ironton Church in Little Rock. He is a student at Ouachita Baptist University.

## MILESTONES

**Mitch Tapson** observed his 10th anniversary of service Sept. 21 as pastor of Mount Carmel Church of Cabot when the church honored him and his wife, Linda, with a reception. Deacon chairman George Brown presented the Tapsons with a plaque, love offering and other gifts. Gary Meadows was master of ceremonies for the recognition service with featured entertainment by a drama team and the office staff. The Tapsons have three daughters, Julie, a student at the University of Central Arkansas; Emily, a student at Ouachita Baptist University; and Leslie of Nashville.

**J.C. Smith** was presented with a plaque Sept. 21 by First Church of Stamps in recognition of 50 years of service as a deacon.

**Scott Neathery** was honored Sept. 28 by Calvary Church of Hope for 10 years of ministry as pastor. A "This is Your Life" program, held during the evening worship hour, included surprise appearances by friends and relatives from across Arkansas and Texas. A video, which featured scenes from his childhood to the present, also included a message from Gov. Mike Huckabee. Letters were read from President Bill Clinton and L. B. Jordan, retired director of the Arkansas Baptist church leadership support

department. Neathery was presented with a monetary love gift.

**Larry Pillow** and his wife, Geneva, will be recognized Nov. 2 by Second Church of Conway for his 15 years of service as pastor. The 6:30 p.m. service will be the second event of the church's 75th anniversary observances, which will begin with a 10:45 a.m. service. Pillow was recently honored by the Conway community as one of the 10 most influential people in the county. The Kiwanis also presented him with the Hixson Award in recognition of his service to the club and community.

## CHURCH LIFE

**Hot Springs First Church** will observe homecoming Oct. 19 with activities that will include morning worship at 8:15 and 10:50 a.m., Sunday School at 9:30 and lunch at 11:30. A 1:30 p.m. homecoming service will include recognition of former members, a time of sharing by former pastors and staff members and special music. John McCallum is pastor.

**Conway Second Church** will celebrate its 75th anniversary Nov. 2. A 10:45 a.m. morning worship service highlighting the church's ministry will include former minister of music Wallace Ferguson; Emil Turner, executive director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention; and pastor Larry Pillow.

**Keamey Church** of Redfield observed homecoming Oct. 12 with a special morning worship service, potluck dinner and an afternoon music program, featuring Skyward Bound and Sweet Harmony.

**Pea Ridge First Church** observed its 125th anniversary Oct. 12 with a morning worship service, noon meal and a 2 p.m. celebration. Pastor Al Fowler was the worship speaker.

**Pine Bluff First Church** voted recently to adopt Friendship International as a mission. Harmony Association has been the sponsor of this ministry to foreign nationals living in Pine Bluff.

**Batesville First Church** has launched the Encourager Ministry in which adults will link with youth in grades 7-12 to encourage them through prayer, phone calls, visits and correspondence.

## OBITUARIES

**Roy Flurry** of El Dorado died Sept. 19 at age 78. A retired Southern Baptist minister, he had been pastor of Louisiana and Arkansas churches, including Union Church and Caledonia Church, both in El Dorado. Survivors are his wife, Elvia Flurry; a son, Ronald Wayne Flurry; and two daughters, Brenda Gilbert and Barbara McWilliams.



## Gerald Jackson retires following 23 years as discipleship associate

**Jack H. Barnes** of Omaha died Sept. 23. A Southern Baptist pastor, he had served Grubb Springs Church of Harrison, First Church of Omaha, First Church of Highfill and Bear Creek Springs Church of Harrison as well as churches in Louisiana. Survivors are his wife, Nelda Barnes; a son, John Mark Barnes; two brothers; and three sisters.

**Emmer Elizabeth Lee Gustavus** of Perryville died Sept. 28 at age 83. She was a homemaker and a member of First Church of Perryville. Survivors include her husband, Louis Gustavus, a retired Southern Baptist minister; two sons, John Louis Gustavus of Stuttgart and Robert F. Gustavus of Perryville; a daughter, Jenny Lee Hager of Perryville; one brother; seven grandchildren; and four great-grandchildren.

**Howard J. Amey**, 61, of Mountain Home died Sept. 30 in a one-vehicle motorcycle accident near Paragould. He was enroute to join fellow members of the Christian Motorcyclists Association traveling to Washington, D.C. for the Promise Keepers rally. Funeral services were held Oct. 3 at First Church of Mountain Home where he taught a second grade Sunday School class and was co-chairman of both the ushers and Promise Keepers. He also was a U. S. Army veteran. Survivors are his wife, Patricia Amey of Mountain Home; two stepdaughters, Dana Scott of Fayetteville and Sara Tipton of Memphis; one sister; and two step-sons. Memorials may be made to KCMH Christian Radio Station where Amey was an engineer.

**Reber McGhee** of Little Rock, a former resident of Scott, died Oct. 4 at age 88 following a lengthy illness. His funeral services were held Oct. 6 at Toltec Church of Scott where he had been a member and deacon since its organization as well as a Sunday School teacher. He is survived by his wife of 66 years, Gladys Wesson McGhee; a son, Sammy McGhee of North Little Rock; three grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren; two sisters; and two brothers. Memorials may be made to Toltec Church.

### ORDINATIONS

**Humphrey Church** ordained Jimmy Hobbs to the ministry Sept. 7. Hobbs, a longtime member of the church, recently was called as pastor of Aberdeen Church.

**Manfield First Church** ordained Marcus Brown to the gospel ministry Sept. 21. Brown, who is interim pastor of Hon Church in Waldron, is a student at Ouachita Baptist University.

**Conway Second Church** ordained Bret Carroll, Dwain Crane and Dan West as deacons Oct. 5.

**WHEN GERALD JACKSON** surrendered to the ministry, he said he and his wife, Ruby, "felt a distinct call to a training ministry in the foreign mission field." But because of family health problems, his call took him to a training ministry in another mission field: Arkansas.

Jackson will retire Dec. 31 as an associate in the Arkansas Baptist State Convention discipleship and family ministry department after more than 23 years of service. He said God's diversion to another mission field has been no disappointment for him.

"The opportunity to serve Arkansas Baptists provided me the fulfillment for what I understood to be God's call to missions," he noted. "My pilgrimage helped me understand my mission was the work opportunities provided by the discipleship and family ministry department. I will always be grateful to the Executive Board staff and leadership that provided me this rewarding place to serve."

Jackson, a Texas native who was raised in Hope and Kansas City, Mo., earned the bachelor of arts degree from Ouachita Baptist University, and the master of arts degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Following his seminary training, he served as pastor of four Arkansas churches: First Penn Memorial Church in Eureka Springs; Philadelphia Church in Jonesboro; First Church in Ozark; and Harlan Park Church in Conway.

"It was in 1961 that Jackson first became affiliated with what was then the Church Training department, when he was recruited as a Church Training consultant. Training leaders recognized his skills and in 1974, department director Bob Holley asked him to serve full-time as an associate.

While Jackson's duties have included the full scope of discipleship training, his heart has always been as a promoter, supporter and trainer in Baptist family ministry resources, including the popular Fall Festival of Marriages held in Hot Springs.

"There have been a lot of rewards," he emphasized, "including seeing the improvement in discipleship materials, both dated and undated, particularly with the Life resources and support

resources."

Those improved resources, he said, mean that churches "are able to do more in-depth discipleship training in addition to meeting ministry needs through support groups. Churches now have better resource handles."

He also has seen plenty of changes in the way Baptists conduct discipleship training in churches. "The biggest change is the way local churches do their training," he explained. "It used to be an organized meeting at a particular time but, with social changes, it has

become something you do when people can meet and where they can meet."

That change in method has delivered mixed results, he said. "You can do a lot more intensive training, but the negative is that most churches have fewer people active in Discipleship Training."

Jackson voiced a concern he has sensed with discipleship strategies in local churches.

"Church leaders haven't expressed as much leadership in equipping their people," he commented. "Unless a church equips its members to do ministry, it is not doing what a church needs to do. A real disappointment I have had is seeing a minister leave a church and the ministry leaves with him."

He also noted two broader concerns, including "some sense of disappointment with the downsizing of the Sunday School Board which led to the downsizing in emphasis on family ministry" and "that people are buying into spectacular big events when effective training occurs best in small groups."

Responding to Jackson's retirement, ABSO executive director Emil Turner remarked, "To have a faithful employee such as Gerald Jackson for more than 23 years has been a genuine asset to Arkansas Baptists. We will miss his gifts and abilities. He will not be easy to replace."

Following his retirement, Jackson expressed his desire to continue his ministry as an interim pastor and to "be available to assist the convention and local churches as a consultant for discipleship training and marriage enrichment ministries."

The Jacksons, who plan to reside in Little Rock, have two adult children.





## ARKANSAS BAPTISTS

# King hosts rally opposing OBU reconciliation plan

**D**ECLARING that "the Ouachita restoration issue is the most significant issue in the history of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention," Barry King hosted a "Ouachita Restoration Rally" Sept. 30 at the Riverfront Hilton in North Little Rock.

King, pastor of Tumbling Shoals Church near Heber Springs, has been an outspoken opponent of the reconciliation agreement approved last fall by Arkansas Baptist messengers. He and other opponents of the plan have worked for several months to seek to defeat proposed amendments to the state convention's Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws. The amendments, to be voted on next month by state convention messengers, would implement last year's reconciliation agreement between the convention and Ouachita Baptist University.

In an effort to defeat the amendments, King's congregation established an independent paper called *Arkansas Baptist Life* which he serves as editor. In a recent article in the publication, King accused Arkansas Baptist president Rex Horne and Ouachita trustee chairman Buddy Sutton of "nepotism, paternalism and elitism." He said the purpose of the

paper is to share news "from a distinctly conservative perspective."

Despite King's concerns, many other Arkansas Baptists have endorsed the reconciliation proposal and related amendments. In a letter mailed last month to Arkansas Baptist leaders, state convention executive director Emil Turner called the agreement with Ouachita "the most conservative one of its kind in any state convention," adding that it "preserves the interests of our convention more than any other such agreement."

"In this agreement," Turner pointed out, "the Arkansas Baptist State Convention elects all of OBU's trustees and retains the right to amend any Nominating Committee report from the floor of the convention — a right that no other state has maintained."

King told those attending his Sept. 30 rally that Turner's letter "circumvented" the role of the local pastor concerning the Ouachita issue.

Telling the gathering of approximately 100 people that "nothing is better than something," King charged that the reconciliation agreement violates biblical principle and Baptist polity. He said the biblical principle concerns "how to deal

with actions that we believe to be unethical, immoral and sinful." He added that the issue of Baptist polity involves reaching consensus with Ouachita trustees on proposed nominees.

Mark Coppenger, president of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, spoke about "The Future of Christian Higher Education in Arkansas and Beyond." Acknowledging that "there are dangerous folks on the right and the left," Coppenger warned that "there is great danger in the 'calm middle,' for complacency will ruin you."

Noting that "most Southern Baptist schools turn left as weak trustee boards acquiesce, or state conventions, with the power to appoint watchful trustees, give school administrators major input in the selection of their own bosses," he said a greater concern is duly-elected trustees who "steal these institutions from their state conventions."

Affirming that "Southern Baptists love relationships and peace more than doctrine and discipline," Coppenger concluded that "each Christian college must ask itself, 'What are we doing to insure that leftward torque will not wreck us?'"

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## Blankenship serving Mid-South College as BSU director

**D**IXIE BLANKENSHIP began serving Sept. 8 as volunteer Baptist Student Union director at Mid-South Community College in West Memphis. She is a member of Ingram Boulevard Church, where she serves as a Sunday School teacher and church organist. Her pastor, Hubert Jarvis, began the BSU work on the campus last year.

Blankenship and her husband, Lidell, have five adult children and 12 grandchildren. She retired as a bookkeeper from the West Memphis School District.

"The campus population is mainly people from about a 25-mile radius, with a wide range of ages," Blankenship noted. "The thing I'd most like in the BSU is to offer support and guidance for students. I'd like to help them develop their relationship with Christ — to come to a better and deeper understanding of that relationship."

George Sims, an associate in the state convention's student ministries department, voiced confidence that Blankenship "can help students set and achieve their spiritual goals."



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## SBC Cooperative Program giving sets record for fourth year in row

**T**HE SOUTHERN BAPTIST Convention ended its 1996-97 fiscal year with record Cooperative Program gifts of more than \$155 million, surpassing last year's record by nearly \$7 million and the budget by nearly \$10 million, according to Morris H. Chapman, president of the SBC Executive Committee.

For the SBC's fiscal year, Oct. 1 through Sept. 30, the \$155,005,723 total for 1996-97 is 4.6 percent above last year's total of \$148,185,076. The increase is the fourth year in a row the SBC Cooperative Program totals have set a record.

"Southern Baptists continue to demonstrate their love for missions and our cooperative efforts in sending missionaries, planting churches and educating ministers," Chapman said. "This fourth record year in a row is a testimony to the health of our convention and will allow our continued witness to people all over the world of the good news of Jesus Christ."

Another comparison — the fiscal year's gifts compared to the SBC Cooperative Program allocation budget — is even more significant. The budget requirement for 1996-97 was \$145,053,499. The record totals for 1996-97 surpassed the budget by 6.86 percent.

"As the result of exceeding the budget by nearly \$10 million, our two mission boards will receive an additional \$3.6 million more than called for in the regular budget," Chapman noted. "This is an amazing story reflecting the heartbeat of Southern Baptists, their love for missions."

Designated gifts also set a record, topping last year's designated gifts by 2.24 percent. The 1996-97 designated gifts total \$141,547,992 compared to last

year's \$138,446,505. The 1996-97 designated gifts also set a record for the fourth straight year. Designated contributions include the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions, the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for home missions, world hunger and special gifts.

Adding the record CP and designated gifts for the 1996-97 year, Southern Baptists gave nearly \$300 million through regular channels for the SBC's missions and education efforts.

Since the budget goal was surpassed for the year, the allocation of the overage will be distributed according to an SBC-approved method. One-half of the \$10 million will be distributed according to the present Cooperative Program allocation budget formula. As examples, it

means the International Mission Board will receive 50 percent of \$5 million, or approximately \$2.5 million in additional CP funds over the budget; the North American Mission Board's portion of the overage will be approximately \$1.14 million, its 22.79 percent share.

Another \$5 million will be distributed according to the SBC capital needs budget, which is scheduled over a 10-year period.

The SBC Cooperative Program total includes receipts from individuals, churches, state conventions and fellowships. State conventions and state fellowship offices channeled 98.33 percent of the totals while individuals and churches sending CP funds directly to the SBC Executive Committee accounted for 1.67 percent of the total receipts. A record number of state conventions, 33 of 38, channeled more gifts through the national CP than the previous year.

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# Mt. Zion reprimands church over 'alien immersion'

**Tronna Henderson**

Editor, Arkansas Baptist

**CITING CONCERNS** over the issue of "alien immersion," members of Mt. Zion Association's board of directors have voted to place Highland Drive Church of Jonesboro on probation for one year.

The recommendation, adopted on a secret-ballot vote of 36-5, states that the association will "not recognize Highland Drive Baptist Church messengers or board members for one year beginning Oct. 20, 1997," the scheduled date of the association's annual meeting.

Noting that "this time will allow Highland Drive Baptist Church time to further study the issue concerning alien immersion and the effects their policy has on their brotherhood," the action specifies that "Highland Drive Church's membership status in the association shall remain unaffected."

The association's concern dates back to guidelines for receiving new members adopted in March by Highland Drive Church. That document states that "any person who has been saved [by grace, through faith in Christ alone], and has received 'believer's baptism' [water baptism, by immersion, after salvation, as a testimony (symbol) of salvation] may be presented as a candidate for membership upon their statement of those facts."

Larry Ballenger, a member of Highland Drive Church, is chairman of the

association's credentials committee. He disagreed with the church's March decision and recommended that associational leaders take action in response to the policy.

According to Highland Drive pastor Johnny Hutchison, "As far as the action" of the associational board, "we're disappointed. We feel that our proposal is still very much within the boundaries of Southern Baptist Convention life.

"We feel like there's a great diversity in Southern Baptist life on this issue," he pointed out. "We didn't anticipate this being a problem."

## Debate over definitions

Noting that "everyone has their own definition" of alien immersion, Ballenger said Mt. Zion Association stands in agreement with the Arkansas Baptist State Convention Articles of Incorporation which affirm the Baptist Faith and Message doctrinal statement adopted by Southern Baptist messengers in 1963.

While the Baptist Faith and Message specifies that "Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit," the state convention's Articles of Incorporation add that the SBC statement "shall not be interpreted as to permit open communion and/or alien immersion."

Opponents of Highland Drive's membership policy also cited a report adopted in 1980 by state convention messengers. That report on alien immersion and open

communion defines alien immersion as "that immersion for baptism performed or administered by a group whose doctrinal position concerning salvation and the church is foreign to the teachings of the New Testament."

Neither the Baptist Faith and Message nor the 1980 Arkansas Baptist report specify that scriptural baptism is limited only to Baptists. Ballenger emphasized, however, that he believes the traditional limitation to churches of "like faith and order" means "if you don't believe in the security of the believer, you don't have like faith. That narrows it down quite a bit."

By contrast, he said, Highland Drive's action "opens it up wide open....I think we're being very lenient to give them a year to study it."

Associational director of missions Harold Ray said his "deepest concern was to handle it in a very Christian way—not judgmental, but redemptive." He said he does not expect the issue to be voted on at the Oct. 20 meeting unless Highland Drive members attempt to be seated as messengers.

Although "I feel we're where we need to be policy-wise," Hutchison affirmed that his congregation "respects the autonomy of the association to make this decision" and does not plan to seek to seat any messengers at the associational meeting.


Emphasizing that "we're not upset with anybody" over the issue, Hutchison noted, "It was a very positive meeting but there was obviously a clear difference of opinion about how this issue will be decided in the association.

"I hope some dialogue could be done with the association," he added. "Our desire and intention is to stay in fellowship with the convention.... We just want to do what God is leading us to do."

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**Director of Missions** — Needed for new association in mid-delta of Mississippi. Resumes are being accepted until December 31, 1997. People skills and self-starting a must. This association will consist of 40 churches and missions. Please respond to: Chairman, DOM search committee, 2172 Hwy 446, Skene, MS 38730.

**Receiving resumes** — Grand Avenue Baptist Church, Hot Springs, is receiving resumes for a full-time minister of music/youth. 624 Convention Blvd., Hot Springs, AR 71901.

**Seeking** — Memorial Baptist Church of Columbia, Missouri, is seeking a full-time minister of education. Qualifications include five years experience as a full-time minister of education and a masters of religious education. Resumes may be mailed to Dr. Bob Webb, Memorial Baptist Church, 1534 Paris Rd., Columbia, MO 65201.

**Accepting resumes** — for full-time music/education minister. Send to First Baptist Church, 501 N. Main, Fordyce, AR 71742.

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## Campers on Mission gather for fall rally

**N**ATHAN GARRETT of Little Rock was elected as the 1997-98 president of Arkansas Campers on Mission. A total of 91 COM members attended the fall rally held Sept. 4-7 at Maumelle Park.

Also serving are Edmund Stevenson of Camden, vice president; Dorothy Jackson of Jonesboro, secretary/treasurer; Lendol Jackson of Jonesboro, song leader; Bud Rice of Waldron, mission project coordinator; and Thelma Rice of Waldron, hospitality committee chairman. Assisting Rice will be Marie Lookingbill of Springdale, Lois Schilders of Crossett, Mary Jane Offenbacher of Springdale and Margaret Smith of Hot Springs.

President Charles Stender of Little Rock moderated the recent meeting. Featured speakers included Emil Turner, executive director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention; David Napier, associate pastor of administration for Immanuel Church in Little Rock; and COM members Clayburn Bratton of Fort Smith and Pete Petty of Little Rock.

The program also included members' reports on summer mission trips to North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri and Georgia as well as Arkadelphia, El Dorado and Eureka Springs. Rallies in 1998 will be held May 14-16 and Sept. 17-20, both at Maumelle Park.

## missionary notes

**Truman and Carol Chatman**, missionaries to Peru, are on the field (address: Apartado 137, Cajamarca, Peru). He is a native of Missouri. The former Carol Hill of Arkansas, she was born in Walnut Ridge and considers Imboden her hometown. They were appointed by the International Mission Board in 1984.

**Don and Angie Finley**, missionaries to Brazil, are in the States (address: 102 Floyd Ct., Nicholasville, KY 40356). He is a native of Missouri. The former Angie Coston of Arkansas, she was born in Clarksville and considers Hot Springs her hometown. They were appointed in 1988.

**Carlos and Shannon Ichter**, Baptist representatives to Germany, are on the field (address: An den drei Steinen 27, 41352 Korschbroich, Germany). The son of retired Southern Baptist missionaries, he considers El Dorado his hometown. The former Shannon Bowen, she also considers El Dorado her hometown. They were appointed in 1995.

**Orville and Edith Jenkins**, missionaries to Kenya, are in the States (address: 858 Sayles Blvd., Abilene, TX 79605). He grew up in Texas. She is the former Edith McSwain of Ethel. They were appointed in 1975.

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Daniel 9:3-6, 18-23**Central truth:**  
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**D**o you ever feel that you are unworthy of receiving God's answer to your prayers? Of course, none of us are worthy. Even Daniel could not plead worthiness. So he prayed in Daniel chapter 9 for God to respond out of grace. And that is exactly the basis on which we can expect God to answer our prayers!

God had told Jeremiah that Judah would serve the king of Babylon for 70 years. That time period had now passed and the Medes and Persians had seized power over Babylon. Daniel could have spread the good news that liberty was at hand or started organizing for the trip home.

Instead, Daniel's first priority was prayer. Not a shout of praise or a happy psalm of thanksgiving, or a prayer for wisdom. Instead, it was a prayer of confession for the sins of his nation.

He acknowledged God's greatness, stating that he knew God could do anything that He wants and that He is always dependable. Yet Israel had sinned and rebelled against God. Thus Daniel could not make a case that the captive

people deserved to be free. He pleaded that the Lord would look with favor on the temple that now lay desolate in a destroyed Jerusalem.

While Daniel was still praying, Gabriel, appearing as a man, came to Daniel and gave him the vision of how Jerusalem and the temple would be restored.

God is not in the business of playing phone tag. When Daniel offered his prayer of intercession for his people, God heard his prayer and replied to him through the angel Gabriel.

When we come to God with a heart of repentance, confessing our sins before Him, He will be faithful and supply His strength for us to resist Satan. It's a wonderful truth in a discouraging world that every man on earth can choose. Too easily we excuse ourselves by saying, "Everybody sins. We just can't help it." But we can help it, and we must. God will always provide the way of escape, but we must provide the will and determination to overcome Satan's strongholds and traps.

**F**or someone who has lived in the hills, moving to the Arkansas flatlands provides something of an education in agriculture. The rich, level ground in the Delta is ideal for growing row crops.

Drive down a Delta highway and you realize quickly that farmers are not created equal. Some fields are in picture perfect rows of weed-free lush green crops, while others are tinted yellow and full of weeds. Neither is the result of chance. Effort, or the lack of it, has played a big role.

That is the message Paul writes in II Corinthians 9. He tells the Corinthian church that if it is serious about spreading the gospel, it is going to have to make some sacrifices. Fittingly, he uses the analogy of a farmer.

The upshot is that a halfhearted effort is not worthy of the Kingdom of God, and it also will do little to advance the cause of Christ. Just as a poorly tended field will return a small yield, an insignificant sacrifice will have little impact on a lost world.

Paul also implies that the gift has an impact on the giver. The message in II Corinthians 9:8 and again in verse 10 is that God's blessings more than make up for the material wealth we may sacrifice in His name.

Does this mean that sacrifices we make toward the ministry will automatically net greater financial reward for us? Absolutely not. The wisdom of God loving a cheerful giver in verse 7 tells us what our motivation should be. We give because we love the Lord and want to further His kingdom. We then trust in His providence.

Naturally, there is a practical side to Paul's teaching here. Those who would labor for Christ as their life's work need support and resources. The same is true today, whether it be staff in our churches or missionaries on the field.

These people are laboring for the cause of Christ, working toward a bountiful harvest of lost souls. This is also our cause, and we have a responsibility to sacrifice, to make certain that what we reap reflects well on what we sow.

**Life and Work  
Be sharers**By Brett Cooper,  
director of public relations,  
Williams Baptist College**Basic passage:**  
II Corinthians 8-9**Focal passage:**  
II Corinthians 8:6-15**Central truth:**  
God expects Christians to  
give cheerfully and He  
rewards with His blessings.

**H**ave you ever been faced with a critical decision? Throughout the different stages of our lifetime we are confronted by choices. The kinds of decisions we make today affect the shape of our tomorrow. We should understand that Abram and Lot faced an important decision that would greatly affect their future.

Both Abram and Lot were nomadic shepherds. They had prospered under the hand and leadership of God. Neither one had settled down in Canaan and built houses or cities. Their lifestyle involved living out of tents and then moving where their flocks and herds could be fed.

A problem arose as both Abram and Lot tried to care for their flocks. Because of their prosperity the land was not capable of supporting them both (Gen. 13:6). Consequently, the herdsmen of Abram and Lot argued over the shortage of pasture land and water. A time of decision was inevitable. The manner in which Abram handled this situation is noteworthy. The conduct he modeled can serve to teach us a

valuable lesson about selfishness.

Abram took the initiative to settle the disagreement. He called for an end to the strife between his herdsmen and Lot's herdsmen. Since Abram was the head of the family, he could have dictated how the conflict would be resolved. But Abram showed a real desire for peace and goodwill (13:8-9). The solution to the problem included going different directions. Unselfishly, Abram asked Lot to choose whatever section of land he wished and Abram agreed to take what was left.

Lot chose the fertile area of the Jordan River valley. His choice seems to indicate little concern for Abram. Lot's selfishness seems apparent. Abram took the land that was not chosen. As the patriarch went to Canaan, he trusted God to guide and direct him. God reaffirmed His promise to bless and prosper Abram (13:15).

Selfishness is a part of life in our day and time. Dare to be different, reach out and share unselfishly with someone around you today!

**Explore the Bible  
Unselfish living**By Ken Shaddox, pastor,  
First Church, Fordyce**Basic passage:**  
Genesis 13:14**Focal passage:**  
Genesis 13:5-18**Central truth:**  
Great benefits are derived  
from an unselfish attitude  
and spirit.

The people of Israel came home from Babylon just as the prophets had predicted. Eagerly they began to rebuild the temple, but the difficulties were many and discouraging. The work was slow and stopped altogether. Then God sent two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, to stir up the people and lead them to finish the temple.

After 20 years, in the sixth year of King Darius' reign, the temple was completed and it came time for the dedication. Surely, it was a time of gratitude and celebration for once again there was a suitable place on earth to honor God.

The Eiffel Tower was the tallest structure in the world at the time it was built. When the tower was proposed, French writers, artists and intellectuals denounced the project as "useless and monstrous," predicting it would collapse within 20 years. But the common people were captivated by the idea. The tower was completed in 1889, commemorating the 100th anniversary of the French Revolution. When the tower opened to the public on May 15, there was a

great celebration that included everyone from French peasants to world potentates.

The project to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem had its naysayers also. Many tried to oppose the temple's construction. But when it was completed, the celebration included both local Jews and those who had returned from far-off Babylon.

Sacrifice and rejoicing are the appropriate responses of Christians everywhere to the fact that we have gained our freedom through Christ. Sin has been conquered, we have been "brought back home," and the temple of God has been rebuilt in the lives of all who follow Christ. In every land, Christians from all walks of life celebrate what God has done.

This lesson's message should be unmistakably clear. Putting it in the words of Paul, "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." Whatever your challenge may be, learn from this example to "hang in there."

My three children are grown and gone from home. Now, the telephone has become an important link in our lives (no e-mail yet). Sometimes their calls are to share what is happening, or to ask advice, or to ask for help, or just to chat. Most of these needs could be met by a person in closer proximity to them, so why do they really call home? Could there be a desire for our loving relationship not to fade into memory but to remain current and vibrant?

As God's child, why do I need to "phone home" to my Heavenly Father? One reason is because God says I am special to Him. In verse 6, the psalmist reminds me that the Creator of the universe is not too busy to listen to me anymore than a good parent who always finds time to listen to his child. He also reassures me, in verse 7, that God can be trusted with the feelings of my heart.

Another reason I need to call God is because God wants to spend time with me. God has exciting plans and is in the process of accom-

plishing great things. The only way for me to be a part of it with God is if I ask Him to let me participate. Paul describes this process to the Colossians as asking God to "open a door."

A third reason to "phone home" is the practical advice God has for me. As Paul emphasizes in I Thessalonians, God wants me to be "joyful," "pray continually" and "give thanks." During the quiet time together, God encourages me and defines who (and whose) I am. He reminds me that behavior, not feelings, will make me ready to listen and serve.

On difficult days, this fourth reason to call can be the one that seems the most important of all. God wants to support and strengthen me. According to I Peter, I need to realize that I do not have the strength to handle all the anxieties of my life.

Who enjoys the phone calls the most: parent or child? Who enjoys prayer time the most: Heavenly Father or His child? I don't know, but I do know that I am "phoning home" more often.

Trusting God is demanding. As humans we are more prone to believe in something as real if we can observe it with one of our five senses. If we can't see it, taste it, touch it, feel it or hear it, we often refuse to believe it. Sometimes we challenge what another has proposed as real or true by saying, "Prove it to me!"

Abram is identified as a man of faith. In fact he is often called the "father of the faithful." In the New Testament record, both Paul and James used the life of Abram as an example of one who was a pioneer in acting by faith (Rom. 4:3, 20-24; James 2:21-24). Yet in Genesis 15 we find a fearful Abram in need of encouragement as he faced an uncertain future. God sometimes has to come to us and reassure us that He is our shield. When we face difficult situations, we need once again to hear the resounding promise that God is present to defend and help us (Psalms 3:1-3; 33:20; 119:114).

In Genesis 15 there is a dialogue between Abram and God. Abram was concerned about

what would take place in the future. He had no son. The stigma of not having an heir was no doubt frustrating and even left him somewhat skeptical (Gen. 15:3). In the midst of this life setting, God came to Abram and told him that he would indeed have a son, "The word of the Lord came to him: This man will not be your heir but a son coming from your own body will be your heir" (Gen. 15:4). Using the night sky with its countless stars, God reinforced the fact to Abram that his descendants would also be many (Gen. 15:5). Such a vivid object lesson as the star-studded sky must have been helpful in assuring Abram that God's way was best.

Abram responded to God in faith (Gen. 15:6). Faith is essential in a relationship with God. His faith was not built upon feelings or emotions. In a time of limited understanding, this great patriarch openly, consciously decided to trust God and to take Him at His word. God counted such faith as righteousness. Believing God's way is seldom easy but it is always best!

## Family Bible Celebrate the achievements

By Randy Maxwell, pastor,  
Mount Olive Church, Crossett

### Basic passage:

Ezra 6

### Focal passage:

Ezra 6:14-22

### Central truth:

Just as God changed the attitude of the king of Assyria, He can change the hearts of leaders today.

## Life and Work Why should I phone home?

By Marilyn Dusek, member,  
First Church, Benton

### Basic passage:

Psalms 28:1-9; Colossians  
4:2-4; I Thessalonians  
5:16-18; I Peter 5:6-7

### Focal passage:

Psalms 28:1-9; Colossians  
4:2-4; I Thessalonians  
5:16-18; I Peter 5:6-7

### Central truth:

God cares about His children and wants them to pray to Him.

## Explore the Bible Believing His way is best

By Ken Shaddox, pastor,  
First Church, Fordyce

### Basic passage:

Genesis 15-16

### Focal passage:

Genesis 15:1-6

### Central truth:

Trusting God to provide is an essential lesson in a life of faith.



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**House adopts partial birth abortion bill**  
WASHINGTON (BP)—A ban on partial birth abortions once again has passed the House of Representatives overwhelmingly and once again will go to President Clinton for an expected veto.

The House adopted the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act, 296-132, gaining one more vote Oct. 8 than in March. A second House vote this year was required when the Senate adopted a slightly amended version of the bill in May.

President Clinton has promised to veto the bill for the second consecutive year. He will have 10 days to veto the legislation after it arrives on his desk.

In its May vote, the Senate passed the bill 64-36 but fell three votes short of the two-thirds majority needed to override a veto. The House again easily achieved a two-thirds advantage. An attempt to override a Clinton veto is not expected to be attempted until next year. The delay in an override effort will provide supporters additional time to gain votes in the Senate.

### Dismissed from gift annuities lawsuit

NASHVILLE, TN (BP)—The Southern Baptist Convention has been dismissed from a gift annuities lawsuit filed in a Texas federal court more than two years ago, according to Morris H. Chapman, president of the SBC Executive Committee. Attorneys for the plaintiff, Boyd Riccio, agreed to dismiss the SBC after meeting with Chapman. The court entered an order dismissing all claims against the SBC on Sept. 22.

"The face-to-face meeting with Mr. Riccio and his attorneys gave us an opportunity to tell them personally what we had written in court documents filed since the beginning of this case," Chapman said. "The SBC simply has not engaged in the type of transactions which are at issue in this suit. Mr. Riccio and his attorneys listened to us and agreed. The SBC did not make any payment of any kind to the plaintiff in order to be dismissed from the suit."

### Southern Seminary librarian fired over letter to Elliff

LOUISVILLE, KY (ABF)—The longtime reference librarian at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary was fired Sept. 26, apparently because he wrote a personal letter questioning statements made in a chapel address by Southern Baptist Convention president Tom Elliff.

Paul Debusman, a 35-year employee of the seminary, was 10 months from retirement. He received one month's severance and was immediately dismissed.

Elliff spoke in chapel at Southern Sept. 16, as part of the seminary's Pastor Appreciation Day. Debusman said Elliff indicated he would not have been invited to speak in chapel under previous moderate administrations. That prompted the librarian to write Elliff a letter in which he attempted to correct what he perceived as historical inaccuracies in Elliff's comments.

Debusman said seminary administrators told him his actions had been "harmful" to the seminary. He said he was shocked that his writing a personal letter to Elliff would be construed as bringing harm to the seminary. "The ironic thing to me is I was attempting to be conciliatory," he added.

Seminary president Al Mohler declined to comment publicly about the firing.

### Fifteen advertisers drop ABC's 'Nothing Sacred'

NASHVILLE, TN (BP)—While the tenor of the controversial ABC show "Nothing Sacred" hasn't softened much in the first few weeks of the TV season, its advertising lineup has changed week to week under heavy pressure from groups dissatisfied with its slant on the Catholic priesthood.

The Disney-owned ABC-TV network premiered the show set in an inner-city parish to a chorus of complaints led by the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights. To date, 15 national advertisers have pulled their sponsorship from the show, under heat from the religious coalition, which has criticized it as "appalling" and "a political statement against the Catholic Church."

Honda and Chrysler-Plymouth became the 14th and 15th companies to drop sponsorship of the Thursday prime-time show in announcements issued Oct. 3. The first 13 corporations to turn from the show were Iauza, Weight Watchers, K-Mart, Benckiser, DuPont, Red Lobster, Ocean Spray, Sears, AT&T, Glaxo, Wellcome, Ponderosa, Dunkin' Donuts and Liquid Gold.

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