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November 16, 1995

Arkansas Baptist State Convention

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ARKANSAS BAPTIST



Volume 94, Number 23

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More than 1,300
messengers attended
the 1995

Arkansas Baptist
State Convention
Oct. 31-Nov. 1 at First
Church, Little Rock.

Officers elected for the coming year
are (left to right) Frank Lady, second
vice president; Rex Horne, president;
and Rich Kincl, first vice president.



Arkansas Baptist messengers adopt \$17.25 million CP budget

Arkansas Baptist messengers adopted a \$17.25 million Cooperative Program budget for 1996, including 41.77 for Southern Baptist CP causes, the same percentage as the current budget. The '96 CP goal is a 3.92 percent increase over the current budget goal of \$16.6 million.

In addition to the national CP portion, the 1996 budget includes 30.12 percent for Arkansas Baptist Executive Board programs, 14.4 percent for Ouachita Baptist University, 4.34 percent for Williams Baptist College, 2.65 percent for Children's Homes and Family Ministries, 2.27 percent for church annuity dues, 1.56 percent for the Arkansas Baptist Foundation, 1.33 percent for the *Arkansas Baptist News* magazine and 0.78 percent each for the ministerial scholarship fund and convention expenses.

In another finance-related action, messengers approved an Executive Board recommendation to allow Williams Baptist College to conduct a two-year fund-raising campaign in Arkansas Baptist churches. The proposal also would permit Ouachita Baptist University to conduct a comparable campaign following Williams' effort.

In addition to two years of direct solicitation by Williams fund raisers, the plan calls for a three-year budget commitment from participating churches. Williams officials said the campaign's financial goals are to raise \$3-5 million, with 60 percent to be used for endowment, 39 percent for capital improvements and 1 percent for fund-raising costs.

Messengers approved a proposal to extend the state convention's current missions partnership with the European Baptist Convention an additional year, moving the completion date to December 1997. They also approved plans to extend a partnership with Iowa Baptists an additional five years, concluding in 2001.

Arkansas Baptists also launched a five-year emphasis on "Arkansas Awakening,"

with the 1996 theme focusing on "Live the Word." Priority projects approved in conjunction with the emphasis include the 1996 State Evangelism Conference, Prayer for Spiritual Awakening Conference, Institute for Christian Discipleship, Spiritual Awakening Worship Workshop, Truth Alive student ministry project and Ministering to Children in Crisis Conference.

Messengers also heard a report that the Executive Board had established a steering committee and three subcommittees "to study and recommend a plan by which the Arkansas Baptist State Convention can most effectively meet the challenges of the 21st century."

In other convention business, only two motions were submitted during miscellaneous business sessions Tuesday afternoon and Wednesday morning.

Paul Sanders, pastor of Geyer Springs First Church in Little Rock, recommended that messengers dedicate the 1995 convention annual in honor of executive director Don Moore. The motion passed unanimously.

During the Wednesday morning session, Moore submitted a committee motion for convention charter and bylaws committee chairman Phil Smith, who was unable to attend the session.

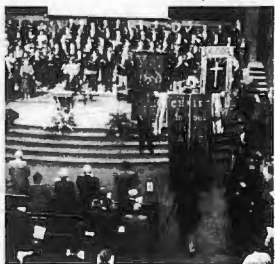
"The charter and bylaws committee recommends the following amendment to the articles of incorporation: 'The president shall also name a chairman, who shall have served at least one year on the committee,'" Moore said.

"Previously," he explained, "it had said just a one-year person, which did not leave any definition as to which year, before, after or whatever, so it is just an attempt to clarify that."

The bylaw change, which passed by a show of hands, must be approved a second time during the 1996 annual meeting to be ratified.

Cover Story

ABN photo / Mills Gil



'Live the Word'

A total of 1,326 registered messengers participated in the 1995 Arkansas Baptist State Convention annual meeting held Oct. 31 - Nov. 1 at First Church, Little Rock. The convention theme focused on "Live the Word," part of a five-year emphasis on spiritual awakening.

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ARKANSAS BAPTIST



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Horne elected state convention president

By Treannis Henderson
Editor, Arkansas Baptist

Emphasizing the need to "keep our eyes focused on the Lord and on those things that can be genuinely seen as Kingdom work," newly elected state convention president Rex Horne said his desire is for Arkansas Baptists to "extend our hearts and hands to brothers and sisters and be willing to work together for the cause of Christ."

Horne, pastor of Immanuel Church in Little Rock, was elected president of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention Nov. 1 by a vote of 482 to 398. He defeated Stephen Davis, pastor of First Church, Russellville, and a trustee of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

In other elections, Rich Kincl, former president of the Arkansas Baptist Executive Board, was elected convention first vice president. He defeated Grant Ethridge, 1995 Arkansas Baptist Pastors' Conference president, by a vote of 369-330. Kincl is pastor of Central Church in Magnolia and Ethridge is pastor of First Church, Lavaca.

Frank Lady, an attorney and member of Central Church, Jonesboro, defeated Sam Whitlow, pastor of Chicot Road Church in Little Rock, for the office of second vice president by a vote of 369-330. Whitlow preached the president's message during the opening session of the convention, substituting for outgoing president Ronnie Rogers who underwent successful quadruple bypass surgery four days prior to the annual meeting and remained hospitalized throughout the convention.

Reflecting on his new responsibility during a post-election interview, Horne said his election "is something I truly did not seek nor expect to take place. I just couldn't get away from the fact that this was something the Lord would have me be open to, whether elected or not....I was surprised and humbled by the vote of the convention. I've always felt a desire to be used of the Lord in whatever way my gifts and convictions would be useful to the convention."

Horne's election was criticized the following day by Barry King in an interview with the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*. King, the gambling campaign coordinator for the Christian Civic Action Committee and a former Arkansas Baptist pastor, said he feared Horne's election would be interpreted as an endorsement of President Bill Clinton's views on abortion and homosexuality. He also labeled Horne as an "institutionalist" and Davis as a "revivalist," adding that "in my opinion, regretfully, the institutionalist prevailed."



Newly elected state convention officers are (left to right) second vice president Frank Lady, president Rex Horne, and first vice president Rich Kincl.

Horne, who is no stranger to controversy over his role as pastor of Clinton's home church, responded, "People were not voting for the president or his policies. They were not only voting for me but also embracing the direction and commitment Immanuel has demonstrated for years."

Affirming that "Arkansas is a conservative state," Horne added, "If they thought I espoused the views of the president" concerning abortion and homosexuality, "I would not have been elected." Messengers, in fact, clearly stated their convictions by adopting resolutions opposing abortion and homosexuality during the same session in which Horne was elected.

"As far as abortion is concerned," Horne pointed out, "I strongly believe and teach not only that life begins at conception but that conception begins in the mind of God as reflected in Jeremiah 1:5. Life is to be protected. Whether the pre-born or the infirmed elderly, life is precious to God and should be to us."

"The Bible is very clear that the homosexual lifestyle is sinful," he added. "It is a very clear-cut issue for me."

Concerning the "institutionalist" label, the new president declared, "If I am accused of being supportive of our churches, Ouachita Baptist University, Williams Baptist College and the agencies of our convention, I would plead guilty. I'm supportive and very proud of what we do together as Arkansas Baptists."

Citing his congregation's baptism statistics as well as its perennial leadership in Cooperative Program support, Horne said, "Our emphasis on evangelism and missions speaks for itself. I believe a person or church can be loyal to our Lord and to our institutions while moving forward to win people to Christ and disciple them."

"Labels really have nothing to do with it," Horne insisted. "I don't have any desire to represent one particular group nor would my desire be to ignore any group.... Our churches are not all alike but that is a strength, not a weakness. Under the Lordship of Christ and the authority of Scripture, we can join together in Kingdom work."

Affirming the convention's emphasis on spiritual awakening, Horne noted, "There could be no greater theme we've adopted than 'Arkansas Awakening,' but I think the awakening will only truly be felt when the Spirit of God moves in individuals. If we can be stirred in our hearts to love one another as God loves us, we can present a united front to the people of Arkansas and the Kingdom will be advanced."

Among the new officers, Horne is a graduate of Arkansas College (now Lyon College) in Batesville, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. A former pastor of churches in Texas, Oklahoma and Louisiana, he served as chairman of the 1994 Southern Baptist Convention Tellers Committee.

Kincl, who has served in Magnolia since 1987, formerly was pastor of First Church, Berryville. He is a graduate of the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville; Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary; and Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has served as second vice president of the Arkansas Baptist Pastors' Conference and as a board member of the Christian Civic Foundation.

Lady has served as a deacon and teacher at Central Church, Jonesboro, since 1961. A graduate of Baylor University Law School, he also is a former member of the SBC Executive Committee.

Arkansas Baptists honor Moore

Video, resolutions, plaques affirm executive director's leadership

By Russell N. Dilday

Associate Editor, Arkansas Baptist

Arkansas Baptists honored state convention executive director Don Moore during last week's annual meeting in Little Rock. The Tuesday afternoon crowd viewed a video highlighting Moore's ministry as a pastor and executive director and heard a tribute from Arkansas Lt. Governor Mike Huckabee.

The video featured interviews with one of Moore's former church members, his associate executive director, his brother, Trueman, and longtime friend Sam Cathey.

Denny Snow, a member of Grand Avenue Church in Fort Smith, said Moore "has not changed since I knew him 25 years ago. We have laughed together and we have cried together. He is the best preacher I have ever known."

Jimmie Sheffield, ABSC associate executive director, characterized Moore as "caring, a friend and a helper. He has been the number one factor in leading the convention to stay its course."

Cathey, pastor of Graceway Baptist Church in Oklahoma City, said Moore "is privately what you see publicly. He is humble, genuine, committed."

Trueman Moore said his brother has "energy, integrity and charity. That's Don in a nutshell."

Huckabee, a former Baptist pastor, said, "Through the years, Don Moore has been an inspiration for all of us and an example for all of us. Today it is with a great deal of pleasure that I join with you, the other members of the Arkansas Baptist family, to pay tribute to a man who has really lived Jesus before us."

He encouraged Arkansas Baptists to "remember that Brother Don has been an example in so many ways. In the best of times, he showed us grace and compassion. Yet, in some of the difficult and most painful times during the illness and ultimately death of his wife of 38 years, Shirley, he gave us an extraordinary picture of Jesus I'll never forget. Who among us could ever forget it?"

Affirming Moore's new wife, Nita, Huckabee added, "God has given his life a special gift for the completion of his ministry in the person of Nita."

Huckabee reminded participants that Moore was "not being honored for the greatness of Don Moore, but for the greatness of Jesus Christ in him. Anyone who knows Don Moore knows he would be uncomfortable with us praising him, but very comfortable of our praising the



Arkansas Lt. Governor Mike Huckabee presents a gift to retiring Arkansas Baptist State Convention executive director Don Moore and his wife, Nita.

Lord Jesus in him."

He presented Moore with a pen and pencil set on behalf of the convention, and ABSC first vice president Jim McDaniel read a resolution of appreciation for Moore from the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee. The resolution affirmed Moore for "serving with grace, courage and humility in a variety of leadership roles for Southern Baptists, including the Southern Baptist Convention, the Arkansas Baptist Convention, Ouachita Baptist University and Golden Gate Seminary."

"Through the years, Don Moore has been an inspiration for all of us and an example for all of us."

— Mike Huckabee
Arkansas Lt. Governor

Moore responded to the recognition after two standing ovations. "What a special moment for me and for my family," he said, adding, "I would hope that I am a man of God."

When accepting the position of executive director, he said he recalled one specific statement he made. "I knew how

inadequate I was in a thousand ways, but I said, 'There is no excuse for me not being a man of God' and I have wanted to be that, I have striven to be that and I thank God that He has given me the strength for that."

Moore gave special thanks to his mother for her support, calling her "a fighter. She has put enough of that in our genes to have lots of determination also," he added.

"I know that I began being cared for by this mother," he continued. "Through all my life it seems I have been in somebody's arms. I have never pastored a church where I didn't feel loved and pillowed in their arms. I was kept in the love of a wife's arms. I came to this position and all of these years I have been cradled in your arms."

"I just feel like I have spent my whole life in His arms and the arms of His people," he concluded. "You have been precious and all that you were through those months of pain and hardship and death....No man or woman in this room is a product of prayer more than I am. I must say thanks to you."

Moore received numerous other recognitions during the two-day meeting held Oct. 31 - Nov. 1 at First Church, Little Rock, including a convention resolution expressing "love and appreciation" for his leadership. The resolution affirmed that Moore "has been faithful to preach the Word of God with power and without compromise all across our state."

'The household of faith'

The desire to experience life-changing spiritual awakening appears to be growing among Arkansas Baptists. Numerous conferences, retreats, worship services and other events are focused on earnestly seeking God's blessing of spiritual renewal and revival.

The 1995 Arkansas Baptist State Convention annual meeting was no exception. Convention leaders initiated a five-year emphasis aimed at helping prepare Baptists throughout the state to be receptive and responsive to "Arkansas Awakening."

Of course, as state convention executive director Don Moore pointed out, the most essential key to true spiritual awakening is God's perfect will and timing. "Is there anybody here so spiritually inept that you are counting on anything bringing revival besides God?" Moore asked. "Surely not."

Yet as we await God's timetable, appropriate human responses include anticipation and preparation so that we may be ready and eager to be a part of whatever God has planned. As we move rapidly toward a new century of ministry, Arkansas Baptists must strengthen our commitment to cooperate together for the sake of Christ's Kingdom.

Newly elected state convention president Rex Horne affirmed that goal, emphasizing his desire for Arkansas Baptists to "extend our hearts and hands

STRAIGHT FROM THE EDITOR



By TRENNIS HENDERSON

to brothers and sisters and be willing to work together for the cause of Christ."

That view was echoed in the convention sermon by David Crouch who reminded fellow Christians that "our conduct toward each other should be based on our sweet fellowship with our Lord." As Moore notes in this week's "You'll Be Glad to Know" column, "The future is very bright if we will only trust each other and work together."

Unfortunately, an effort to categorize Horne and others as "institutionalists" rather than "revivalists" surfaced during and after the annual meeting. The facts reveal that Horne's congregation, Immanuel Church in Little Rock, is a leader in evangelism and missions both in Arkansas and nationally. Immanuel has a

strong record of baptisms and has led Arkansas Baptists in Cooperative Program giving for more than three decades.

Among Horne's fellow officers, first vice president Rich Kincl, pastor of Central Church in Magnolia, is known as an enthusiastic personal soul winner. Second vice president Frank Ludy is a dedicated layman who has served as a deacon and teacher at Central Church in Jonesboro for more than 30 years. "Institutionalists" rather than "revivalists"? Hardly!

If Arkansas Baptists are truly committed to "trust each other and work together," we have no need for narrow labels which serve to divide rather than unite. While it is essential to guard our historic Baptist beliefs, we must be careful to avoid drawing battle lines over philosophical differences of opinion.

Galatians 6:10 urges Christians to "do good to all men, especially to those who are of the household of faith." That doesn't leave much room for confusion about appropriate Christian conduct, does it?

One obvious way to help achieve "Arkansas Awakening" is to work together in Christ-honoring harmony to impact our state in His name. If we must use labels to identify fellow Christians, let's strive to label one another as brothers and sisters in Christ who are cherished members of "the household of faith."

'Appreciation for God's blessings'

My 14th state convention as executive director is now history. Once again, the convention officers, committees, our convention staff and the staff of First Baptist Church, Little Rock, combined to put together a smooth-running meeting. It would stagger most of you to know the many details that have to be covered to facilitate an annual convention. We need to not take any of this work for granted. It represents a large number of hours on the part of volunteers as well as double duty on the part of some employees. Each year we seem to become a little more efficient in getting our messengers registered and accommodated. My heartfelt gratitude is extended to all who have had a part.

Needless to say, I was overwhelmed by the thoughtful things done to express appreciation for God's blessings upon us as He has enabled us to work together the past 13 years. Your cooperation, my family's support, and our staff have been used of God to help Arkansas Baptists create an enviable record during very unsettled times. God is to be praised. I am deeply grateful. The one major goal not reached as yet is my hope that we could

YOU'LL BE GLAD TO KNOW



By DON MOORE
ABSC Executive Director

reach 1,500 in total churches. I believe that will be done within the next three years. This was my last convention as executive director, but I will watch eagerly to see the convention move on to greater achievements in the years to come. The future is very bright if we will only trust each other and work together.

God was pleased to grace each session with His presence. Every testimony, song, report and message was touched by His anointing. No stronger indication of the prospects for the future can be given than

the manifest presence of God. These were blessed sessions. Once again, we praise Him and thank those who provided leadership. In the absence of president Ronnie Rogers who had just undergone heart surgery, Jim McDaniel and David Uth did a magnificent job of presiding.

The convention launched Arkansas Awakening. The convention's staff, long range planning group and Executive Board believes this to be the most crucial need of the hour. The convention approved the first activities designed to make it possible for God to move in and give an awakening. We encourage every pastor and church family to join in the efforts to seek the face of God for awakening. Every one of us desires to see God reveal Himself in mighty power, reviving His people and using them to reach the multitudes for salvation.

The prayer conference with Henry Blackaby the weekend after the convention was well attended and added to God's activity in preparing us all for revival and awakening. You might as well get ready. He is on His way with it. God is prompting multitudes of people to pray. You will surely make this a priority in your own life.

Resolutions on sanctity of life, constitution prompt discussion

Resolutions on the sanctity of human life and a state constitutional revision generated discussion before being adopted during the final session of last week's Arkansas Baptist State Convention annual meeting. Eight other resolutions ranging from appreciation for executive director Don Moore to affirmation of racial reconciliation also were adopted.

A phrase in the pro-life resolution which noted that abortion "can only be justified if it is absolutely necessary to save the physical life of the mother," drew criticism from John Evans, pastor of Keo Church. Resolutions committee chairman Larry Page, executive director of the Christian Civic Foundation, explained that the rationale for the exception is that "if you allow the mother to die, the child also dies."

Noting that "I'm absolutely in favor of the resolution with the exception of that statement," Evans added, "If we believe God is in control of conception and birth, it is never absolutely necessary to take one human life to perchance save another." Messengers voted against accepting Evans' proposal to delete the exception.

Another portion of the resolution expressed concern that Baptist Health has a policy regarding abortions "that is broader and less restrictive than the sole exception"

of saving the physical life of the mother. Noting that Baptist Health's board of trustees is working on a policy revision, the resolution encouraged the trustees "to make its grounds for permissible abortions identical to those expressed by this convention."

Baptist Health president Russ Harrington explained that "in the last seven years, we have had 14,348 births at Baptist Medical Center and during that time we have had three therapeutic abortions."

"We affirm the sanctity of life in our hospitals every day," Harrington declared. "We are not pro-abortion. We do not do abortion-on-demand. There are those who could perhaps criticize the words of our policy and I hope that's what this is about. I don't think there is room to criticize our practice."

Noting that "we are working on the words of this policy and we have worked in conjunction with the leadership of this convention," Harrington added, "Our practice should be commended, not questioned."

"What's important is the message we send the world," Page responded. "We just want to encourage you lovingly to continue the policy revision process. I want to say thank you to Baptist Health for all they have done."

The resolution concerning a proposed state constitutional revision called for Arkansas Baptists "to become informed about the call for a constitutional convention" and to assess "the implications of the procedure."

Dan Grant, president emeritus of Ouachita Baptist University, encouraged messengers to delete several paragraphs of the resolution which he said "come needlessly close to involving this convention in partisan politics."

Voicing concern about judging "the very complicated issues of the legal procedure for proposing and approving or rejecting a new constitution," Grant said much of the resolution addresses "procedure for constitutional reform that is more philosophical than religious."

Page responded that the resolution committee was "trying to present the salient facts." Messengers affirmed his request to adopt the resolution without any deletions.

Among other resolutions adopted by messengers was a statement denouncing racism as "deplorable sin" and committing to "eradicate racism in all its forms from Southern Baptist life and ministry." Other resolutions opposed gambling, homosexuality, pornography, alcohol and drugs.

Messengers also adopted resolutions affirming the ministry of Don Moore, the presidential leadership of Ronnie Rogers and appreciation to First Church, Little Rock, and others involved in planning and hosting the 1995 state convention.

Music focuses on 'Seeking His Face'

Arkansas Baptists were invited to sense the majesty and glory of God as they responded to the "Seeking His Face" inspirational segment of the state convention's Tuesday evening session. The musical emphasis featured the 110-voice choir of Arkansas Master Singers and Singing Women.

Rob Hewell, director of church music ministries for the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, and Jean Pilcher, minister of music for Parkway Place Church in Little Rock, directed the presentation prior to the evening message by Arkansas Baptist executive director Don Moore.

"Lord Here Am I," a congregational hymn of response, led up to a dramatic climax that included a parade of worship banners provided by First Church, Little Rock; Levy Church of North Little Rock; First Church of Gravel Ridge; and First Church of Benton.

Mini-concerts which opened each session included a keyboard ensemble, featuring coordinator Peggy Pearson, an associate in the ABCS church music department; Jo Ann Lott, department secretary;

Kathy Cooper of Second Church in Little Rock; and Lori Hart and Veda Smith, both of First Church in Little Rock.

The Master Singers Instrumentalists opened the Tuesday afternoon session and harpist Martha Rosenbaum of First Church in Little Rock provided the evening pre-session music. Little Rock First Church's handbell choir, directed by minister of music Tom Bolton, played several selections as messengers gathered for the closing session on Wednesday morning.

Performing during convention sessions were the adult ensemble from First Church of Nashville; soloist Allison Hunt of Central Church in Jonesboro; and Vickie Oliver of Lakeside Church in Hot Springs.

Hewell, who directed the convention's congregational singing, said music for the convention was chosen to emphasize the convention session themes which focused on spiritual awakening.

"I would like to feel the music had an impact on messengers by helping them to keep a focus on those things which are important to bringing a spiritual awakening to our state," he added.



A parade of worship banners highlighted "Seeking His Face," a spiritual awakening emphasis held Oct. 31.

European, Iowa partnerships share positive results

Leaders of Arkansas Baptists' two missions partnerships shared positive accounts during back-to-back reports in the opening session of last week's Arkansas Baptist State Convention. The ABSC is involved in partnerships with the European Baptist Convention and the Baptist Convention of Iowa.

The reports preceded a pair of motions brought to convention messengers from the ABSC Executive Board that both partnerships be extended. Messengers voted to extend the partnership with European Baptists one year, through 1997, and the partnership with Iowa five years, through 2001.

Harry Black, director of the ABSC Brotherhood department, said that the European partnership "is the most exciting in that as we minister to the international community and American military, we are literally carrying the gospel of Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth."

He reported that "in the two years of the partnership, 47 partners have been linked. More than 250 Arkansans have participated in 77 projects utilizing their talents and gifts.

"The partnership," he concluded, "has been infinitely successful as God has moved."

'Harmonious relationship'

Jimmy Barrentine, director of the ABSC missions department, introduced Wyndell Jones, "the final director of the Iowa Southern Baptist Fellowship and now the executive director of the Baptist Convention of Iowa" which was officially established three weeks ago.

Describing current Baptist work in Iowa, Jones said, "We yet have 43 counties in Iowa that do not have a Southern Baptist work, but 16 counties have been entered in the last five years.

"There are many places in the state where God is working," he affirmed. "I'd like to challenge some of you who are retired to come and serve as interim pastors. If I had 15 retired pastors or directors of missions come stay for six months, it would be unbelievable to see what they could do to see churches grow."

Jones requested a positive vote for the proposed extension of the partnership "because it is such a beautiful, harmonious relationship. Thank you for the splendid work you are doing. Many people will know the Lord because of your work."

'LIVE THE WORD'

Theme interpretations stress need for spiritual awakening

By Russell N. Dilday
Associate Editor, Arkansas Baptist

"Arkansas Awakening: Live the Word" was the focus of four spiritual awakening challenges shared during last week's state convention annual meeting.

Participants heard testimonies of revival from laymen John Moore of Immanuel Church in El Dorado and Bryce Mitchell of First Southern Church in Bryant, as well as pastors Chuck McAlister of Second Church in Hot Springs and Bill Elliff of First Church in Little Rock.

Moore, a surgeon, said during the Tuesday morning session that reading the Bible has led to a deepening relationship with God and his wife.

"If what we preach and teach is not lived out in our lives, we are truly hypocrites and should either quit teaching or quit preaching or ask God to change our lives," he said.

He related that his "spirituality is a process that continues until this day. For the last several years, God has put on my heart that I must wash my beautiful wife with the Word."

He said he began to do that when "we began reading through Proverbs, then Psalms, then all of the Old Testament. Then we read through the New Testament."

As a result, he noted, "We have seen God do things in my life and her life as a result of our faithfulness.

"The greatest sermon you will ever preach is your relationship with your wife," he declared. "May God make us men after His own heart and cause us to obey Him."

Mitchell said Tuesday afternoon that through an outreach program of First Southern Church in Bryant, he was saved and gave up abusing drugs. He said that selling drugs "didn't make me happy. I was searching for something.

"To escape the pain of my father threatening to kill my mother," he said, "I turned to drugs every day. After huffing gas and smoking marijuana...I realized I was dying.

"There are people in Arkansas and all over this country who feel the same way I did," he said. Five days later, though, he said he heard that First Southern was giving away free pizza during a youth event.

"God used (youth communicator) Rick Stanley to speak to my heart," Mitchell said. "I walked in desiring free pizza and walked out desiring God.

"The only good thing I have in me is Jesus," he said. "By sharing my story I hope that God will give us a burden to go."

McAlister recounted how his congregation "broke out in a revival where 70 people were saved and a broken marriage was healed."

He said that although he shared the event as evidence of spiritual awakening, "it needs to be deeper than the experiences we've seen."

Using Joshua 5 as his text, McAlister said, "God prepared His people for spiritual awakening" but that "God's people had experienced renewal, but not revival.

"Before the people of God can be moved from renewal to revival, God had to touch the heart of a man," he said. "God had to do a work in Joshua's heart to move him from renewal to revival."

Recounting Joshua's meeting with Jesus, McAlister said, "He asked the question: 'Are you for us or our adversaries?' I like the answer Jesus gave: 'I'm not on anybody's side...I've come to take over.'

"God did a work in Joshua's heart and had to do the same work in my heart to tell me that it's not enough to be renewed."

McAlister said Joshua's second question was, "What does my Lord say to His servant?" That's what we ought to be asking Jesus. What has to happen for that to occur? You have to lay your pride in the dust.

"Pastors, I say to you with a broken heart that if we do not get on our faces before God, we will not experience revival," he concluded. "Men of God, it's not only time that we rise up, but it is time that we fall down."

Revival in the home

During the Wednesday morning session, Elliff led convention participants in prayer for revival in the home. "The first application of revival is always in our home," he said. "Who I am is who I am when the shades are pulled and the doors are closed. Everything else is just a facade.

"If revival comes, it's going to come first in our families," Elliff continued. "If we want to prepare for revival, we must prepare first in our relationships with our wife, our children, our brothers and sisters.

"Think personally with me about your life, your family and your home," he said. After reading selected passages from the Bible, he asked, "Wives, are you subject to your husband in everything? Husbands, do you love your wife, give to your wife, sacrifice for your wife, provide and protect for your wife in the same way Jesus sacrificed for you?"

He urged participants to "ask the Lord to bring revival into your home...in a life-altering encounter with Jesus Christ."

'Seeking the face of God'

By Don Moore

Executive Director, Arkansas Baptist State Convention

There is a hunger not only in the hearts of believers for God to move in new and special ways in bringing revival to His church and awakening to our communities and to our country, but there is an unusual moving in the hearts of the unsaved.

Just as I was on my knees a few moments ago I was reminded of a passage of Scripture which says, "The children are come to the birth and there isn't strength." This was a statement that was made through the prophet to indicate that God had prepared people for making decisions for Him, but the people of God were not prepared and were not in shape to give birth to that which God had conceived.

I have an awful fear in my heart that the things God is preparing to do in our communities, in our churches and in our world are on the verge of being delivered. The children are coming to the birth and the church may not be ready to give deliverance in the birth. That's why I feel it's so important that we deal with the subject of "Seeking God's Face." That is not a subject that I found easy to prepare for because most of the references in the Bible to things coming before the face of God are not comforting.

In Genesis 19, the angels said that what was taking place in Sodom and Gomorrah had come before the face of God. In 1 Samuel 26:20, David prayed about Saul's pursuit of him and said, "I don't want my blood to fall before the face of God." Jeroboam decided that he would set up a place of worship in Bethel that would rival the place of worship in Jerusalem and the prophet came to him and said, "This does not please God. You must repent." Jeroboam said, "We will take you and do with you as we will." As he reached out his hand to lay hold to the prophet suddenly his hand withered and dried up. Jeroboam said to the prophet, "Entreat now the face of the Lord thy God and pray for me that my hand may be restored to me again." The man of God sought the Lord and the king's hand was restored to him and became as it was before.

The Bible says that the "face of the Lord is against them that do evil. To cut off the remembrance of them from the earth." Suppose God should find me, suppose He should find you, your church, your community, this state convention, the Southern Baptist Convention doing evil.

We ought to fear doing evil, not because we may be caught, but because the face of God may be set against us. In Lamentations, Jeremiah said, "Arise, cry out in the night. In the beginning of the watches, pour out thy heart like water before the face of the Lord."

Peter said, "The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous and His ears are open unto their prayers but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil." I think there isn't any doubt in any of our minds that it would please God to give revival and awakening. We must also ask why God has not given revival and awakening. We need to acknowledge that while we are concerned and while we pray and will continue to pray, we do not have any idea when the sovereign God will send revival and awakening.

None of us may live to see God send the revival and awakening that we are praying about. Nevertheless, it is right for us to pray. It is right for us to believe, for us to expect. These prayers are not

in vain. They are in accord with the will of God.

We are at a time in history when it is apparent that something more must be done than is being done for this nation, our churches and our denomination. We have developed wonderful materials, great strategies, outstanding preachers and extensive programs for trying to get the gospel to all of the world. Yet we have not even succeeded in getting our churches alarmed about the situation in the kingdom and the situation in our nation and in our churches. The masses are still eaten up with social ills.

Addictive behavior and addictive bondage continue to plague our loved ones, our families, our friends. Brutality continues to expand and there is almost universal disregard for the principals of God and His work. Something more must be done.

We must approach this matter from a different standpoint. A quick glance into the Word of God will show us what God's people had to do in order for God to do what He wanted to do. The Scriptures reveal great promises of God to those who will seek Him.

In Deuteronomy 4:29, God said through his spokesmen that "those who seek the Lord thy God with all their heart and with all thy soul shall find Him." When we are seeking God, we are not exercising ourselves in a futile activity. Have we not sought Him with all of our heart and with all of our soul? God promises He will be found.

Psalms 34:10 says, "They that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." Is God meeting the needs of you heart, your life, your family, your church, your community? Is God meeting the needs of this nation or are we still relying upon substitutes for God? It is the Father's good pleasure to give to us those things that are necessary to life and godliness.

Amos said, "If you will seek the Lord, you will live." We see a lot of signs around us that people who are part of the kingdom are not living the abundant life, they're not living a life of victory.

Isaiah 55:6-7 says, "Seek ye the Lord while He is near. Let the unrighteous man forsake his sin and then turn to the Lord." Then he says, "He will have mercy." The Bible says if we seek Him we can be forgiven because He is full of mercy.

These are some of the promises of God about people who seek Him. I would like to take two examples out of the Old Testament to encourage your faith about how God honors those who seek the Lord.

In II Chronicles 14, Asa came to power. He not only sought the Lord, He commanded all of his people to seek the Lord. Because we understand that each individual is accountable before God, we are not really in a position to command anybody to seek the Lord. But Asa was so convinced that the salvation of the people of God hinged upon them seeking the Lord He commanded that it be done. It was not hard for him to do that because he had only 850,000 soldiers. Only 850,000 and the Ethiopians had 1 million plus 300 chariots. I think I could seek the Lord if I was out-numbered that much. But that is not the end of the story. God gave them the victory over those 1 million soldiers and those 300 chariots. He gave them victory and so they are now without a threatening enemy.

That may be where we are today. We don't see secularism as an army charging against us, although it is. We don't see humanism



"God is the only hope for revival," Don Moore reminded Arkansas Baptists.

as an ominous cloud of folks coming over the horizon, although they already have. We see ourselves as being pretty well free from the cold war and other things that used to scare us such as communism. So maybe we don't need to seek the Lord so much.

But in chapter 15, the prophet told Asa, "The Lord is with you while you are with Him and if you seek Him He will be found by you but if you forsake Him He will forsake you." When Asa heard these words, he said we are going to put away the abominable idols. When you find out that you are in trouble with God and God begins to identify to you what the abominable idols are in your life, in your family, in your church, you had better be ready to get rid of those abominable idols.

Verse 9 says Asa gathered all Judah and Benjamin together. Here is a leader seeking God. Here is a leader taking the initiative. Here is a leader being aggressive and to the leader's surprise folks are following him right and left. Do you suppose there are some laypeople in our churches who are just waiting for us as pastors to take the lead?

When Asa took the lead they just fell in behind him in great numbers. They entered into a covenant to seek the Lord God of their fathers with all of their heart and with all of their soul and that whoever would not seek the Lord God of Israel should be put to death.... They took a vow that was going to really cost them something. But you see there isn't but one thing worth everything. That's God and they knew that they had to be in right relationship to Him if they were to have His blessings. So what do you find? You have a whole group of people, tens of thousands of people, deciding to seek the Lord.

Great preaching is not going to bring a revival to the church. It is not going to bring awakening to the communities. I can tell you that ingenious structures in the SBC, the state or in the church is not going to bring revival. Is there anybody here so spiritually inept that you are counting on anything bringing revival besides God? Surely not. If God is the only hope of revival then the only thing we must do is continue to seek Him until He has revealed those things that grieve Him, that quench His Spirit, that obstruct His movement. When those are out of the way, the highway of the Lord will be prepared and He will move in great and mighty power.

In chapter 20, Jehoshaphat has a very similar experience. His army never raised a weapon. God just spoke to Jehoshaphat about the threat that was there. He didn't have to worry about the Ethiopians, but he had the Moabites, the Ammonites and the Edomites and here are the people of God, backs to the wall once again. Do you suppose we could have our backs to the wall now and not even know it?

How necessary do you think it is that we seek the Lord? Can dead sinners raise themselves? Can carnal Christians improve themselves? Can an impotent church move itself? Can a sleeping world awaken itself? Can a rotting social order heal itself? Can an evil empire surrender itself? Can a righteous judge reverse himself? The biblical answer to all of those questions is no. If we are going to stay in business, God has to do all of these things. If God has to do it, when will He do it? He will do it when His people seek His face and not before.

There are four essentials to seeking the face of God.

The first is the will of God. The issue of praying for revival and awakening to a certain extent revolves around whether we really believe it is the will of God to send revival and awakening.

That Hindu student was pretty near right. He said, "You Christians could win the world in 25 years but you won't unless

it is easy, popular or financially beneficial." What an awful rebuke to us. God does not like those kind of things. So we must believe that God wants to send revival and awakening. Do you really believe that?

I will never forget that day when the 55 of us gathered. We had been studying about what all of our churches need. There were 25 from all over the state: directors of missions, pastors, staff people, laywomen, others who came. We spent many hours trying to determine what were the needs of the church. We broke up in small groups and every group said "awakening" is a priority concern for this convention of ours. I believe that it was the will of God saying, "I do want to send awakening to the churches of Arkansas." That is how our awakening theme came to be. We believe it came from God.

Second, God says if you will ask for anything that's consistent with the name of Jesus, I will do it. Do you think revival and awakening would be consistent with the name of Jesus? Yes.

Third, an essential is faith. Whatever is not of faith is sin. If we really believe that God is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him wouldn't it stand to reason that the pastor would get with the deacons and the pastor and deacons get with the staff and the Sunday School people, the other committee people.

Wouldn't it stand to reason that we would diligently seek Him if we believed that He is a rewarder of them who diligently seek Him?

The other essential element is desperation. Let your loved ones be subjected to the ravages of disease and you can be desperate. Let your kid get off in rebellion and appear that their life is going to be ruined and you can be desperate. You can think of a lot of things that will cause you to be desperate but nearly all of them are individual and personal and selfish. Who gets desperate about your church? I am talking about from the standpoint of prayer.

The question is this: Can we become a desperate people in praying about revival and spiritual awakening? It would be easy not to be desperate. Nearly every church I go to, the carpet doesn't need to be replaced, pews don't need to be replaced, the painting doesn't need to be redone. We are not desperate materially. We manage to have leaders to fill all the slots on the nominating committee chart. We are not too desperate about that. The church down the road is not doing any better than we are so there is no use for us to get upset. We are not desperate about that. Can you tell me or tell the Lord what you and your people are desperate about? Does it have to do with seeking the face of God? Revival and awakening will never come until we are desperate and seek the face of God.

What is the alternative to seeking the face of God? The Scripture says of a king, "He did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the Lord." The options are pretty clear. Seek the Lord and have His blessing or don't seek the Lord and walk in sin. I think every one of us needs to begin to evaluate the intensity of our desire. We may need to evaluate the image of what we have of what revival and awakening will be. God will be glorified, the church will be sanctified and edified and as a result of all of this, the multitudes will be blessed as God works through His people.

I hope that you believe it is the will of God to send revival. I hope that you believe it is consistent with the name of Christ. I hope that you believe He will reward those who diligently seek Him and that you start doing it. I hope, in God's name, that you will become desperate, desperate, desperate. Not until then perhaps will you become a part of the movement of God to bring revival and awakening to this land.

***"Revival and
awakening will never
come until we are
desperate and seek
the face of God."***

- Don Moore

ABSC executive director

Evans: Christians challenged to seek racial reconciliation

By Colleen Backus

Assistant Editor, Arkansas Baptist

Pulling no punches with a message about racial reconciliation, Tony Evans challenged Arkansas Baptists with his dynamic call for unity within the church. Evans, senior pastor of Oak Cliff Bible Fellowship in Dallas, also is a prominent Promise Keepers speaker and founder of The Urban Alternative ministry.

Warning that many Christians "jump ship when things get tough," Evans added, "The going is tough today.

"We have just come off of two cataclysmic events that have brought out the great divide, the great tension in our culture," he declared. "The O.J. Simpson verdict has split not only the broader communities down the middle racially, but the Christian church. The Million Man March has again brought out the great divide that exists in our country.

"We are in a war for our future, we are in a war for our families, for ourselves," Evans emphasized. "Unless we fight this war together, we'll all lose."

Speaking from John 4, Evans detailed what it means to be Christians when there is a clash of cultures. "If we're going to be the continuation of the incarnation, if Jesus Christ is going to be made real and relevant, visible and verbal, it will be because people like you and me have decided to always subject our culture to our Christ," he said. "We must always subject what is popular in society to what is authentic in Scripture.

"John tells us that Jesus had to pass through Samaria...but no Orthodox Jew had to go through Samaria," he explained. "I'll tell you why, because at 12 noon a Samaritan woman who needed a Savior was going to show up at the well...and Jesus was not about to let the standards of the day, the racial distinctions of His other brothers get in the way of Him being the Son of God. He was not going to let what was popular in the day be more significant than what was popular in the kingdom.

"One of the great tragedies of the day is that it's more popular to be culturally correct than biblically accurate," he said. "It's more popular to satisfy our backgrounds, our creeds, our colors and our races than to satisfy the dictates of God."

Jesus met the woman at a place where they could agree, Evans told listeners. Both the Samaritans and the Jews loved Jacob as the father of their race, and He met her at Jacob's well — on common ground.

"If we would spend more time talking about our oneness in Christ rather than about our differences in culture, the kingdom of God would be a lot further," Evans emphasized.

"He says, 'Lady, would you give me a drink?' The Samaritan woman says, 'Don't you know that Jews don't deal with Samaritans?'" Evans pointed out. "The woman is mesmerized. She's facing something that in her heart and mind is unbelievable and culturally irrational.

"This woman knows He is different than she is — but she also notices that He didn't do what every other person she's ever met who's Jewish would do and

that is let their Jewishness get in the way of being children of God.

"Jesus Christ does not give up who He is; He doesn't let society dictate how He acts," Evans affirmed.

Describing the familiar story of living water, he noted that Jesus' willingness to drink from her cup gave Him a hearing into her soul as He related to her as a person. Jesus emphasized that cultural differences in worship no longer mattered. Like Jesus, Evans said, "your cultural background and mine must be subservient to spiritual truth and leading.

"God has spoken and He has not stuttered," Evans declared. "There are two answers to every question. God's answer and everybody else's answer — and everybody else is wrong...The divisions we are facing in our culture at large and particular in the church of Jesus Christ has been because we have let culture be more authoritative than Scripture. No matter which side of the fence you are on, God's truth must rule.

"Your Christianity and mine must be always subjected to the mirror of God's Word," Evans said. "There are risks. That's part of the kingdom call — we must stop the madness."

Recalling that the Samaritans invited Jesus to stay with them and He stayed two days, Evans commented, "When we're serious about the gospel, walls break down fast.

"Are we going to watch our country go up in flames?" he asked. "At the heart of this is the failure of the church to be the people of God...When we live the Word, walls break down."



Tony Evans

Whitlow: The church's mission is to win people to Jesus Christ

Challenging Arkansas Baptists to put the Great Commission into practice, Sam Whitlow emphasized that "the mission of the church is to win people to Jesus Christ."

Whitlow, pastor of Chicot Road Church in Mabelvale, preached during the state convention's opening session, substituting for outgoing convention president Ronnie Rogers who is recuperating from heart bypass surgery. Whitlow noted that he led Rogers to faith in Christ nearly 20 years ago.

Noting that "God takes the initiative to save man and reconcile him back to Himself," Whitlow added, "A person who wants to glorify God must love a lost world the way God does and commit his life to winning the lost world to Jesus Christ.

"Our mission is the same as Christ and that is to bring lost people to Him," he insisted. "The mission of the church is to seek and save those who are lost. That's the only reason we are here. If you are not committed to helping win a lost world to Jesus Christ, you are not fulfilling your mission."

Pointing out that "there are so many opportunities to reach a lost world for Christ," Whitlow remarked, "There are so many lost people in the world. Many are waiting to hear the gospel for the first time.

"In this state there are 1 million people who are unchurched, unenlightened, lost," he declared. "We're not making a dent in the pagan pool because we don't know what our mission really is. Our mission is missions...It's time to count the cost. It's time to be willing to pay the price."

Warning that many Christians are "self-indulgent, self-centered and selfish," he added, "There's a world out there that needs to be won to Jesus Christ and that ought to be every Christian's priority.

"We're real good at fellowship, teaching, preaching and praise but we're not very good at sacrificial living and sacrificial giving," Whitlow said. "Arkansas Baptists, let's close ranks, let's join hands, let's lift high the banner of Jesus Christ...Make missions first place in our lives and in our churches and we will see a great revival in Arkansas that I pray will sweep the world."



Sam Whitlow

Criswell reminds Arkansas Baptists: 'There's just one book!'

"There's just one book!" exclaimed W. A. Criswell during his message to convention participants during the closing session of last week's Arkansas Baptist State Convention.

Criswell, pastor emeritus of First Baptist Church of Dallas, said he would "take a



W.A. Criswell

leaf out of my life and expound upon it" as his message.

He told of a family he visited that would not attend First Church after agreeing repeatedly that they would. Soon after, their son died in an automobile accident.

"When the lad was buried, the following Sunday morning came that family, confessing the Lord and asking to be baptized," he recalled. While many church members claimed that it was a "glorious" event, "I said in my heart, 'There is the saddest sight I have seen in my life.' I didn't tell the rest of my people there was another boy and he lies in a Christless grave.

"The harvest has passed, the summer ended and we are not saving," Criswell lamented. "When the crowds seeking pleasure have vanished into the darkness again and the trumpet of the ages has sounded and when we stand before Him, what then?

"Our great assignment and call from God is to knock at that door, kneel down with the family and read to them how the Lord came to the world to save sinners.... Imploring them to come to the Lord and go to heaven when they die."

Turning to "another leaf" from his life, Criswell defended the Bible as inerrant and infallible. Reading from II Timothy 3, he concluded, "The Bible I hold in my hand is God-breathed."

But, he countered, "our kids go to school, they go to these universities and colleges and they come back and tell me, 'That Bible you preach out of, I hold it in contempt. It says that God made us. Well, I have evolved from a green scum.'"

"A few days ago, I read an article in one of our national magazines and a gifted author was commenting on what was happening to the Christian faith in the western world.

"He said the Christian faith is dying in the western world," Criswell said. "One of his illustrations was that more and more of

the clergy and all of the executive leaders in our present denominations are discarding the Bible. They are using and referring to it less and less and less."

He also noted "losses" of Baptist institutions in Canada, in the North and "to my amazement, we are losing all of our great colleges and universities in the South."

He recalled how a group of Baptist university students had once told him that their Bible classes "teach us that the Bible is a human book and has all the foibles and mistakes of any other human book."

"So I stand in my pulpit before my dear congregation with that book in my hand," he said, "and when I open it, there I have a volume of mistakes, contradictions, fables, myths and legends.

"So I throw it away," he said, tossing his Bible down onto the platform, "and I take my place in the pulpit and I preach now as a liberator."

Noting that he would then preach about social issues, current events "and all of the other things that belong to do-gooders," he said that would suffice "until I stand in front of a grieving family who has lost a precious loved one and I look for a word from God that is inerrant and is inspired and infallible and authoritative.

"There's just one book," he repeated. "So, I told my wife that when I die, I want you to put that book over my heart. And when those people come by and look over my still, silent face, I want them to see the Word of God."

Lewis: Christ's Great Commission requires an active response

The Great Commission is not simply to be memorized, but is something to do, insisted Southern Baptist Home Mission Board president Larry Lewis as he addressed Arkansas Baptists last week.

Pointing out that Jesus was giving marching orders for His people, Lewis noted, "When a dying loved one calls us, we heed it carefully. Every single gospel writer tells us that Jesus concluded with the same words as He was taken up." Christ wanted Christians to be sure that nobody can live and die in the world without hearing the good news, he added.

"Do you get the idea that the Lord is trying to tell us something?" Lewis asked. "The redemption was paid — but the work was not finished. How can they believe in Him whom they have not heard?"

Jesus wanted His followers to finish what He started, Lewis explained. "We are part of a strategy that will take the gospel to every part of the world.

"Every church is part of the strategy — not just boards and agencies — it is a cooperative strategy," he declared. "In the churches I served, we could to a lot of things, but we could not put missionaries in 131 foreign countries." Out of this cooperative strategy, Lewis explained, was born a foreign board and a domestic board, which are still continuing to work in new ways around the world.

Recalling a recent trip to Romania, Lewis noted that he preached to a capacity crowd of more than 3,000 for three hours. "God is calling out the called," he said. "If we don't walk through those doors, God will raise up other people who will.

"Jesus said don't forget your own Judea and Samaria," Lewis pointed out. "America is not a Christian nation — there are 184 million unsaved people without Christ. We are the fourth largest pagan nation in the world.

"How we need awakening!" Lewis declared. "Another government program is not going to cure America's problems — only Jesus can.

"From 1970 to 1990 the population of the United States increased 22 percent, but the number of churches only increased 7 percent," he commented. "We are doing better than other evangelicals, but the fields are white with harvest right under our noses."

Reiterating the urgent call of the Great Commission, Lewis asked Arkansas Baptists, "Why did Jesus say Jerusalem? They needed to begin in Jerusalem because that's where they were.

"Wherever I am, I'm on mission for Jesus," he continued. "Is there anybody here that's not a missionary?"

Pointing out that in Luke 14, Jesus instructed His disciples to go out to the highways and hedges to fill the house,

Lewis shared the story of a little old lady in Missouri who "went down the road in a truck, picked up the kids and took them to church.

"Fifteen kids used to ride in the back of that pickup," he said. "Three are in full-time service — and one is president of the Home Mission Board.

"She was just a little lady on mission for Jesus in Missouri," Lewis reflected.

Challenging his listeners to be equally faithful, he concluded, "Awake and live the Word.... Take it out, even to your own Jerusalem."



Larry Lewis

'Having the attitude of Christ'

By David Crouch

Retired pastor, First Church, Searcy

Imagine with me that the Apostle Paul is at this convention. He walks the halls, sits in the sessions and fellowships with us at the bookstore, the seminary luncheons and the displays.

Imagine the responses that he might receive if he meets some of us in the hallway and asks, "How are things going with you?" One man may respond, "Paul, things are going real well. We baptized 350 last year. Our budget ran over \$1 million and we reached it. Now, we are going into an \$8 million building program that will stretch our faith and our giving to the limit. The Lord has blessed us. Yes, things are looking good."

The second man that Paul asks may say, "Well, things are going okay, Paul. We baptized 40 last year. We reached our Lottie Moon goal of \$25,000 and gave more to the budget than we spent. We're in the black. We are going to build a new educational building and remodel our auditorium next year. Paul, you could say that things are going pretty well in our church."

Down in the bookstore, Paul asks the third pastor how things are going. His reply may be: "Brother Paul, I need your help. Things just aren't working out. I've been at that church for nearly a year and have worked hard, but the folks aren't following me. Every deacons' meeting and every business meeting feels like a battleground instead of a church. They don't respect me and they don't pay me what they should. You wouldn't know of a good church you could give my name to, do you?"

I believe that if we met Paul here and we asked him, "Paul, how are things with you?" that he would give us a different answer. It would be the answer that he shared with the Christians in Philippi. It's found in Philippians 2:1-11. Paul was concerned that Christians conduct themselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. He wanted all of God's children to experience the joy of fellowship with God and with each other. In this passage he gives us the goals of this fellowship and the means of reaching these goals.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, animal life, and then He created man in His own image. He created man for fellowship with Himself. It was a normal and sweet fellowship until sin disrupted it. In the centuries following, God has reached out to man to restore this



David Crouch challenges Arkansas Baptists to "live in loving fellowship with all men who are followers of Christ."

relationship. Paul says, "But when the fullness of time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons" (Gal. 4:4-5).

God wills that we meet with Him faithfully and often for fellowship and for learning experiences. It is here that we learn the encouragement in Christ, the consolation of love, the fellowship of the Spirit, affection and compassion.

Paul had found this in his life and desired for all believers to know this joyful relationship. But it takes time. It takes effort. It requires spiritual discipline.

'Sweet fellowship'

Paul would also say to us that our goal should be to have a sweet fellowship with our fellow believers. Paul knew what it was to be hounded by those in the church who did not agree with his claim to apostleship nor his message of salvation by grace through faith. He said to these Philippians that some even preached Christ to cause him distress while he was in prison. But he rejoiced in that Christ was being preached, even if with the wrong motive.

Paul's advice for dealing with others is twofold. First, regard others as more important than self. This requires that we put away our own selfishness and empty conceit. It requires that we see others as important in God's sight as we are. Even if they aren't as successful, nor as intelligent, nor as attractive as we, to God they are just as important as we are.

Second, we are to seek to put the best interest of others before the interest of ourselves. To do this many are going to have to deal with hurts and anger, jealousy and envy in the way Jesus said to deal with those who have mistreated us or ignored us. In Luke 6:27-28, Jesus said, "But I say to you, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you,

pray for those who mistreat you. Paul said, "Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord. But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals upon his head.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil by good" (Romans 12:19-21).

Paul is saying that our conduct toward each other should be based on our sweet fellowship with our Lord.

When we spend quality time with Him, we will be able to share with others in ways that will bless instead of disrupt.

Paul also knew that we could not have this kind of fellowship in our own strength. He, therefore, tells us in verses 5-8 how we can achieve these goals. There must be an emptying of self as Christ Jesus emptied Himself of His true nature to come to earth to do the Father's will. He, who was God Himself, became a man as we are. He took on this new nature to accomplish for us what we could not do. But He also told all men, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me" (Luke 9:23b).

Paul said, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me" (Gal. 2:20).

The attitude of Christ was a willingness to go anywhere the Father sent Him and to do what the Father wanted Him to do. When we learn that willingness, we will die to ourselves and make ourselves available for our Lord to use us. We make ourselves as the clay in the potter's hand. We allow Him to live His life through us. Those who have learned that lesson will serve anywhere under any circumstances and stay on the job regardless of who gets the honors.

Our churches need pastors who have learned that lesson. Our pastors need deacons and Sunday School teachers and laypeople who have learned that attitude. It is the first step to having a church or a denomination where Christians can live in loving fellowship.

The next step to this loving fellowship with our brothers is to humble ourselves and become as servants. Paul said that Jesus humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Jesus' life was characterized by

Sorrell urges ministers' wives to 'abide in the shelter of God'

By Millie Gill

Executive Assistant, Arkansas Baptist

Citing Psalm 91, Buna Sorrell encouraged Arkansas Baptist ministers' wives to "abide in the shelter of the almighty God."

Sorrell, a member of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis where her husband, Robert, is associate pastor and administrator, was the keynote speaker for the 1995 Ministers' Wives Conference held Oct. 30 at First Church in Little Rock.

Sorrell emphasized that ministers' wives "can either fan up or blow out his ministry if you are not his primary prayer warrior. To be that warrior, you must 'abide in the shelter of the almighty God.'"

Urging conference participants to guard against allowing Satan to attack their homes and destroy their ministries, she added, "The shelter of the most high God is a safe place, a secret place and a place that will keep you in the position to weather the storms that come into your life."

"The God of this 'dwelling place' is one to whom absolutely nothing is impossible," she added. "He is faithful to us at all times," even when we are not.

She noted that God is not only a protector, but provides comfort, tenderness, security and love through the Holy Spirit. "God has promised that He will always be there as you dwell and abide in His shadow," she said.

"He is the creator God who spoke the Word and created the world," she concluded. "He is one we can trust who delivers us from troubles, sin, error and disease and the one who loved us so much He gave His only Son so that as we come to the cross, we have victory through Jesus."

The conference theme of "Love Finds A Way" was further emphasized as Nita Moore, wife of Arkansas Baptist State Convention executive director Don Moore, shared how she and her first mate, Fred Miller, who died of cancer in 1993, had dwelt in the "shelter of the almighty God" throughout their marriage.

"Following his death I did all the things I was supposed to do day-by-day with God, providing the needs of each day," she said. "Sometime later, I faced the reality of a lonely life and again sought the shelter of

God through prayers in which I asked Him for three things: a companion who was a strong Christian, one who shared my beliefs and one who needed me as badly as I needed him."

Recalling how she and her first husband had prayed for Moore as the result of the two men being involved in a prayer ministry together, she said she never dreamed God would answer her prayers by placing Moore in her life. "God gave me so much more than I prayed for when he sent Don, who also had lost a mate through cancer, into my life. He not only brought into my life a companion, but someone that I could love, respect and enjoy."

"Our former mates provided us to love again and therefore from chaos and crisis we have found happiness and joy," Moore concluded. "In our marriage God is giving us unlimited opportunities to minister and share our blessings with others. We also will continue to be faithful to do whatever He calls us to do following Don's retirement."

"Are We Having Fun Yet?" was the conference's closing topic highlighted by Brenda Woodard of Bentonville, founder of Looking for the Wounded Ministries.

"We, as Christians, should have more reasons to be happy and joyful than others in this world," she noted. "However, it seems that we sometimes have such long faces and heavy hearts that we show 'reverence with rigor mortise' to the world."

Reading Proverbs 17:22 and 25:24, she said prescriptions against worry, anxiety and fear include: be joyful, live in the present, laugh often, stop taking yourself so seriously, look for the funny things in life, imitate your children, be appreciative and change some routines.

Woodard also provided a piano concert, as well as serving as accompanist for musical praise sessions led by Nancy Greer of First Church in Marianna. Dana McKinney of Highland Drive Church in Jonesboro provided special music.

Betty Williamson of Spradling Church in Fort Smith moderated the meeting. Judy Greer of Pleasant Grove Church in Conway was elected president; Nancy Greer, vice president; Janet McCord of First Church in Hazen, secretary; and Terry Evans of Keo Church, 1997 retreat chairman.



Ministers' wives officers elected for the coming year are (left to right) secretary Janet McCord, vice president Nancy Greer and president Judy Greer.

service to others. His ministry was teaching by example as well as precept. He touched the leper and healed him. He walked to the home of the synagogue official to heal his daughter and stopped on the way to heal the woman with an issue of blood for 12 years. He washed the feet of the disputing disciples in the upper room. His days on earth were filled with serving others. If there is anything today our churches need, it is leaders who have this attitude of service.

Then, He did for all of us what we could not do. He died for our sins that we might be forgiven of those sins and be made acceptable to God our Father.

Paul called himself a bond-servant of Christ Jesus (Rom. 1:1). He had given over his own authority in his life to Jesus. He was the servant of his Lord. Paul's service caused him much pain and suffering, but he counted it as nothing compared to knowing Jesus and doing what pleased and honored Christ Jesus.

We need to realize that a servant may not always receive recognition. Sometimes people will abuse a servant. At times a servant will be misunderstood and ridiculed. Jesus didn't say it would be roses. He said take up your cross, deny yourself and follow me. Paul said that we are to have the attitude of the servant because that was the attitude of our Lord.

No person can be what the Lord wants him to be until he is willing to deny himself and take up the attitude of the servant: When a person does have this attitude, he will be usable in the church, the community or the world as the Lord leads.

When we adopt the attitude of Christ, we will learn how to live in loving fellowship with all men who are followers of Christ - even when we do not totally agree. We will be willing to forgive and express our love in action.

Paul then says that God, who is honored by this attitude, honored Jesus by giving Him the highest honor. All men, regardless of their spiritual condition, will bow their knee and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Paul said, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day, but also to all who have loved His appearing" (II Tim. 4:7-8).

What would we say if Paul had preached these words to us from this pulpit today? Would it make a difference in our attitude toward serving our Lord by self-denial and obedience in serving as He served? Would it change our way of looking at our own importance and seeing the value of others? Would we be willing to forgive and treat each other with respect and love? You see, it all depends on our attitude. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus. God bless you.

Pastors urged to 'Hear What the Spirit Saith'

By Russell N. Dillard
Associate Editor, Arkansas Baptist

The 1995 Arkansas Baptist Pastors' Conference Oct. 29-30 at First Church in Little Rock featured a slate of state and national Southern Baptist speakers who interpreted the conference theme, "Hear What the Spirit Saith." Participants also elected host church pastor Bill Elliff as 1995-96 conference president and honored evangelist J. Howard Smith for his lifetime ministry.

All three conference officers were elected to one-year terms by acclamation during the Monday afternoon session. Elliff was nominated by Ronnie Floyd, pastor of First Church, Springdale, who told participants that Elliff "has a heart for revival. We need to elect the right man for the right time."

Also elected were Mike Petty, pastor of Park Place Church in Hot Springs, as vice president and Randy Hogan, pastor of First Church in Waldron, as secretary/treasurer.

The program featured a different schedule, beginning on the Sunday evening prior to the Arkansas Baptist State Convention instead of Monday morning.

Pastors' Conference president Grant Ethridge said he was pleased with the results of the change. "I was overwhelmed at the attendance and the spirit and the support of the pastors" on Sunday night, he said. "It was just a great beginning." He said the main floor of the sanctuary "was full and there were people in the balcony. It looked like the traditional Monday night service, which is the biggest night."

The program was divided into four sessions, each with a theme. During the Sunday evening session, participants heard the call from Elliff, John Bisagno, pastor of First Baptist Church in Houston, Texas, and Floyd to "Revive the Church."

Elliff, preaching from Luke 14, said, "The Lord can bring great revival to the nation" but that "while waiting for God to send great corporate revival...God is waiting for us to obey."

"All of us need real revival," he noted. "What does it take for God to bring real revival to our lives? Total surrender."

"Jesus identified three primary areas where every man who will follow Him must come to a point of total surrender," he said: relationships, physical life and possessions.

Bisagno linked revival in the church to obedience. "Let it be understood...that revival boils down to obedience. When you have holy, penitent, godly people, the Holy Spirit moves."

He shared examples of areas in his church where "revival...is still going on," including vision, change of atmosphere and the priority of Sunday School.

Bisagno also listed unselfishness, unity and faith as factors contributing to revival. "All over this world, God's Spirit is moving in the church," he declared. "Hey, church - arise, wake up, trust God and go forth."

Floyd called for personal prayer and recommitment. "I want to escape how we normally do our conferences and lead you into the presence of the Lord."

Noting that "revival will come to America when He anoints us with the gifts He gives us," Floyd invited pastors, church staff members and their wives to "get on bended knee" at the altar and asked laypeople to "stand beside your pastor and lay hands on him."

Praying for the "broken pastors," he asked God to "make them courageous to go back to their churches...and say, 'My only allegiance is to the Lamb of God.'"

Following the call to prayer, Floyd preached from Joel 2 where "we learn that the people of God are given a tough assignment by the Lord God Himself. When we talk about America, we talk about the people of God."

"How do you return to the Lord?" he asked. "With fasting, weeping and mourning." But they are "going to cost you something: Humility. You may have to stand before your congregation...and talk about your pride. How much will it cost? It will cost you a lot. Will you pay the price?"

During the Monday morning session, participants heard messages from Don Moore, executive director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention; David Miller, an evangelist from Heber Springs; and Sam Cathey, pastor of Graceway Baptist Church in Oklahoma City, as they focused on the session theme, "Relive the Call."

Moore told participants that "we're not in any kind of arguing position" concerning the doctrine of grace. "We are in the position of receiving the will of God. 'It is the work of God to save,' Jesus said."

"Man believes that he can save himself with a little help from God or that God can save man with a little help from man," he said. "Both are heresy. Salvation is of God!"

Moore supported his position on grace with two conclusions: The biblical estimation of man in John 5 and the biblical explanation of salvation in Luke 13. "Salvation was never an action of man choosing



Newly elected Arkansas Baptist Pastors' Conference officers are (left to right) vice president Mike Petty, president Bill Elliff and secretary/treasurer Randy Hogan.

Him, but of God choosing man," he insisted. "If we can accept that our mission was foreordained, why cannot we understand that our salvation was foreordained?"

He said the value of this doctrine is that it "encourages evangelism and missions. Some say, 'Oh no, we are back to (extreme Calvinism),' adding, 'I would caution you to not let this doctrine be divisive in your association or church.'"

Miller, preaching from John 1, said, "Election is God's choice of some persons to everlasting life, not because of foreseen merit in them but the mere mercy of Christ. A consequence of which choice is they are called, justified and glorified."

He then highlighted the "fourfold delineation in the text that distinguishes our Savior," including: the person of Jesus, the prerogative of our Lord, the preference of Jesus, and the plenitude of Jesus. "It boils down to this: Grace piled on top of grace. In Jesus, mercy and righteousness have kissed each other."

Concluding the session, Cathey told participants "about the condition of the sinner." Preaching from Romans 3, he said, "If I could sum up the condition, it would be one word: dead."

"Our churches are in serious trouble," he commented. "Our churches are filled with mean-spirited...persons intently focused on one thing: How much hell they can raise in a heavenly place."

He said that churches are "misunderstanding" the condition of sinners. "What's the answer?" he asked. "By grace are you saved by faith. The only way you know you are saved is that you are different...and God has made you a new creation."

During the Monday afternoon session, "Remember the Commission," participants heard speakers J. Harold Smith, an

evangelist from Newport, Tenn., and James Merritt, pastor of First Baptist Church of Snellville, Ga.

Smith, a former pastor of First Church, Fort Smith, urged pastors to "be about our Father's business. No loss is so great than when a soul is lost." He said the devil has "stolen" three things from pastors: "The wonderful, marvelous vision of seeing one soul saved; the value of one lost soul; and the victory of winning one lost soul."

To win souls, said Smith, "We must find them," fetch them, feed them, fleece them and future them. "Have a handful of souls when you stand before God," he urged.

Following his message, participants honored Smith with a video tribute highlighting his ministry. They also presented him with a stained glass window from the original structure of First Church, Fort Smith, which was built in 1889.

Merritt, reading from Ephesians 4, spoke on the work of the Holy Spirit and asked, "Is the Spirit at home in your heart?"

"The sin of the present age we live in is the rejection of God's Holy Spirit," he declared. "Some of our churches are ignorant of the Holy Spirit. But you cannot be right with God or His Son if you are not right with the Holy Spirit."

He said four things that grieve the Holy Spirit are an uncontrollable tongue, an uncontrolled temper, uncontrolled time and uncontrolled thoughts.

The conference's final session, "Receive the Crown," featured messages from Paige Patterson, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Cathy.

Patterson read from Revelation 19 and said the harlot represented "an alternative faith to the true faith of the Living God. Wherever you find a man-centered faith, there you have Babylonianism that 'is present to deceive the saints of God.'"

"Our old secular, confused academic world is saying, 'We don't believe you silly Christians. Where is the promise of His coming?'" Patterson concluded. "When He comes again, He'll be the conqueror of the nations.... When He comes again, we're going to crown Him King of Kings and Lord of Lords."

Cathy urged pastors to "keep your eyes on heaven. Keep your heart on Jesus.... The only thing that will matter is that you have done the will of God."

Preaching from II Timothy 4, he said that most important is "finishing your course, fighting your fight, running your race. The real reward of serving God is not going to be received down here. The real reward is when we receive the crown He has placed in reserve for you and me.

"It is worth it," he added. "There will be heartaches and wounds and bruises, but they are negligible when I think of the wonderful privilege of serving the Lord."

Shelton, Smith and Davis interpret Pastors' Conference session themes

The 1995 Arkansas Baptist Pastors' Conference featured theme interpretations from three Arkansas Baptist pastors highlighting individual session themes. Bob Shelton, pastor of First Church, Alma, spoke in the Monday morning session; Bryan Smith, pastor of First Church, Van Buren, spoke in the afternoon; and Stephen Davis, pastor of First Church, Russellville, spoke in the evening.

Shelton, interpreting the theme, "Relive the Call," used I Kings 19 and said, like Elijah, "every one of us must relive the call of what God has done in our lives" because of the disillusionment of the call, disobedience to the call and the need to dismantle your call.

Urging pastors to seek other ministers for friendship, he added, "You must realize there are other servants of God just like you who want a friend, a companion that wants to serve God like you."

Smith, encouraging participants to "Remember the Commission," warned, "We are in danger of thinking we have gone to the circus when we have only watched the parade.

"The Lord Jesus commands us to be committed, to do our part to tell them about the difference Christ has done in our lives," he said.

"What is that open door?" he asked. "The door of the Great Commission. We will not win all of the world to Christ. But even though we'll not win all, we must witness to all of them.

"It is a matter of obedience," he added. "Christ has made it clear that His church is not to sit back and wait for the world to come to us, but going out to win the world.... Step through the door."

Davis, preaching from II Timothy 4, interpreted the session theme, "Receive the Crown."

"We are referring to the rewards given by Jesus Himself," Davis said. "It speaks of those who stick with the stuff no matter what it costs them.

"That crown Jesus Himself will give," he noted, "because of your faithfulness to endure... and because of your faithfulness to proclaim the message of the Master."

He also challenged pastors to "stop being slandered by the world's critics. The world has never been happy with the will of God. We must be faithful to stand on the Word.... Stand for the uniqueness of Christ.

"Receive the crown because of your faithfulness to lead sinners to the Savior," he urged. "Be faithful to the end. Sing every day. 'It will be worth it all when we see Jesus.'"

'Prophets panel' provides perspectives

Four Southern Baptist leaders offered personal views to Pastors' Conference participants during a panel discussion called, "A Prophet's Perspective on Practical Issues" held during the conference's Monday afternoon session.

The panelists included Paige Patterson, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary; Sam Cathy, pastor of Graceway Baptist Church in Oklahoma City; Ronnie Floyd, pastor of First Church, Springdale, and chairman of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee; and James Merritt, pastor of First Baptist Church, Snellville, Ga., also an Executive Committee member.

Prior to the panel discussion, participants were invited to submit written questions for consideration. The discussion, moderated by Pastors' Conference president Grant Ethridge, addressed such questions as prayer and fasting, raising hands during worship, the doctrine of election, rebaptism and divorce.

A question about Promise Keepers, a Christian laymen's movement, prompted responses by all four panelists.

Patterson responded that he was "excited when Promise Keepers began.

It seemed an antidote for the rising feminism of our day and some of the promises made are some they need to be making." He added that he "became concerned recently" in the movement's theology.

Cathy said, "My men don't go and... aren't going to go to anything that opposes the local church or asserts that the problem with men today is preachers."

Following Cathy's response, Floyd said, "We just had 100 men go to Promise Keepers. The men came back and surrounded me and prayed for me before I left for the Pastors' Conference. I am excited about the great things occurring and the rallying together around Christ."

Ethridge asked another participant's question, "In light of the doctrine of election, is it true that there will be some people in hell because Christians did not witness to them?"

Patterson commented that it is "my absolute responsibility to witness to everyone I can." Merritt pointed out, "If Calvinism kills personal evangelism, then it is ungodly. If you use your theology to justify not winning people to Christ, then you need to go back and check your theology."

Educators challenged to 'live a praying life'

"Do your prayers have power?" Jennifer Kennedy Dean asked Arkansas Baptist religious educators during their Oct. 30 meeting prior to the Arkansas Baptist State Convention. Dean, a graduate of Baylor University, is author of *Hearts Cry, The Praying Life*, and co-author of *Witnessing through Your Relationships*.

"You can do prayer one of two ways," Dean explained. "You can have a prayer life or you can live a praying life.

"Prayer is not giving God new information; it is the way His sovereign will comes to earth," she said. "When God wants to do something on earth, He raises up an intercessor."

In the Old Testament, Dean pointed out, when God decided there would be a drought, He worked his will through the prayers of Elijah. "God said it and Elijah prayed it," she remarked. "When it was God's idea for the drought to end, he sent Elijah to see Ahab and call for a celebration before it ever rained."

Dean cited James 1:17 as a central scripture about power praying. "The earnest prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective." She said that people have come to the mistaken conclusion that sometimes prayer works and sometimes it doesn't.

"We have been deceived into expecting less than our birthright," Dean emphasized. "There's a lot of bad teaching about prayer—if I can learn the right formula, I can get all the stuff I want from God.

"Instructing God in how to handle a situation" is another pitfall, she pointed



New Arkansas Baptist Religious Education Association officers elected for the coming year include Monica Keathley, president; Ron Selby, second vice president; and Jan Kelley, secretary/treasurer. Not present for the photo was Dennis Smith, first vice president.

out, as is "cajoling God into giving His blessing." The relationship becomes almost adversarial, trying to make God "let go" of His blessing. "When I call that prayer, I will be disappointed," she noted.

"You can know God's will," she said. "It was completely revealed in Jesus Christ, and Jesus lives in us. God reveals Himself through Scripture and through His creation.

"You must have vision to see God's will," she explained. "In order for vision to work, you must have something to see, the ability to see it and light. God created spiritual reality and we must have spiritual vision — light bouncing off the realities

within. Jesus is the light source.

"God wants you to know His will," she said. "But it can be a mystery — everyone sees, but not everyone comprehends.

"The vision progressively unfolds, and is for an appointed time," she added. "God always reveals infinite truth in finite stages.

"The vision belongs to God — you are simply hosting the vision," Dean noted. "There is nothing on earth that God didn't tell somebody about first." Citing John 14:30, "I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen, you will believe," she challenged participants to lay claim to the vision in prayer.

Monica Keathley, president of the Arkansas Baptist Religious Education Association, noted participants "were challenged by the thought-provoking presentation" of Dean.

In other actions, Keathley appointed a task force to study how the association can be more effective. The task force is headed by Bruce Raley, minister of education for Walnut Street Church in Jonesboro.

The organization also elected officers for the coming year. They include: Monica Keathley, Arkansas Woman on Mission director, president; Dennis Smith, minister of education for Sherwood First Church; first vice president; Ron Selby, minister of music and youth at Levy Church, second vice president; and Jan Kelley, media services director for the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, secretary/treasurer.

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Seminary alumni elect state officers, hear reports

Arkansas alumni of Southern Baptist seminaries elected officers and heard seminary reports during luncheon meetings Oct. 31. The meetings were all held at First Church in Little Rock in conjunction with the 1995 Arkansas Baptist State Convention.

Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary alumni elected Sid and Ruth Carswell to serve a second term as president and secretary/treasurer. Grant Ethridge, pastor

of First Church in Lavaca and a seminary trustee, was guest speaker.

Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary alumni elected Nadean Bell of Bentonville to a second term as president; Roland Reitz of Midland, vice president; and Angela Lowe of Little Rock, secretary/treasurer. Ron Rogers, a Southern Baptist missionary to Brazil and a Midwestern visiting professor, was the speaker.

New Orleans Baptist Theological

Seminary alumni elected Don Moseley of North Little Rock as president; Robert Eubanks of Midway, vice president; and Mike Kinsey of North Little Rock, secretary/treasurer. Seminary trustee Ronald Burke, a member of First Church in Russellville, was the speaker.

Southern Baptist Theological Seminary alumni elected Bill Steeger, chairman of the department of religion at Ouachita Baptist University, as 1995-1997 president. Michael Duduit, Southern Seminary's director of public relations, was the speaker.

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary alumni elected as officers: Denny Wright of El Dorado, president; Jim Lagrone of Bryant, vice president; and Herbert Riddle of Ashdown, secretary/treasurer. Tommy Lea, newly elected dean of the seminary's School of Theology, was the speaker.

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Booths highlight variety of ministry opportunities available to Arkansans

"Did you nail it to the floor?" a woman asked Harry Black, director of the Arkansas Baptist Brotherhood department. Black chuckled and assured her that the display — a mock-up of two-by-four studs portraying construction work — was not nailed to the gym floor of First Church, Little Rock, which served as the exhibit area for the Arkansas Baptist State Convention.

Exhibitors utilized diverse methods to catch the attention of messengers. David Moore, president of the Arkansas Baptist Federation, offered a chance at a \$50 gift certificate to the Baptist Book Store if messengers would take a Foundation IQ test. "We had between 100 and 200 people participate," Moore said. "We gave a 15-question test on assets, estate planning and charitable giving aimed at raising awareness. If people know what we do, we hope they will call us for help." The gift certificate, he noted, went to Mark Brooks, pastor of Elmdale Church in Springdale.

The Baptist Book Store convention display got good traffic even though it was far away from the traffic flow, said Bob Barnett, manager of the store.

Other booths featured literature, which is always popular, according to David Porter of the Home Mission Board, who manned his agency's booth. "We've had a lot of people come by and get literature for missions groups," he noted.

Getting a chance to visit with missionaries was the attraction at the Foreign Mission Board booth, where Jerry and Barbara Schlieff, missionaries to Zimbabwe for 28 years, warmly greeted messengers and told of life on the mission field.

A beautiful banquet table highlighted the need for world hunger funds while Discipleship and Family Ministries celebrated its anniversary with cake for all who came by. Baptist Health took blood pressure readings. Disaster relief personnel set up their unit and gave tours, as well as a generous meal of beef stew, cheese, fruit and punch.

Pete Petty, an associate in the state missions department, summed up the need for the exhibit area by noting, "It's not the number of contacts you make, but making the right contact....It's being there for that person who needs you."

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Agency leaders emphasize care and service

The leaders of Arkansas Baptists' three statewide agencies shared convention reports focusing on care and service to their constituents.

David Perry, executive director of the Arkansas Baptist Children's Homes and Family Ministries, noted that "a spiritually-awakened church can and will respond" to the needs of children and youth served by the agency's ministries.

"It is with a sense of urgency that Arkansas Baptist Children's Homes and Family Ministries voices its support for spiritual awakening" in families, churches, the state and nation, he said.

"The breakdown of the family and the moral and spiritual decline of our society were contributing factors in bringing 533 children into our nine residential programs this past year," he explained. "We looked upon each child as an opportunity to provide restoration."

Perry also recognized retiring state convention executive director Don Moore for his support of the agency's ministries. Youth representing ABCFHM ministries presented Moore with an Arkansas Baptist Home for Children T-shirt, a Boys Ranch cap and engraved belt buckle and a plaque commemorating a scholarship endowment honoring Moore's late wife, Shirley, presented by the scholarship's first recipient.

David Moore, president of the Arkansas Baptist Foundation, suggested during his report that convention messengers elect the Foundation as a "servant."

"Our motto is to give people more service than they expect and do more for them than they expect," he explained. "We call that, 'servicing the people we love.'"

Moore introduced the Foundation's newest staff member, Paul White, vice president and general counsel.

During his report, Moore noted that in 1994, "we had a difficult year in the investing world. In fact, it was the worst year in the bond market and we have a lot of bonds."

"As the market values went down," he said, "it made our portfolios look bad, but in 1994 and early 1995 we bought the best bonds because of higher yields."

He added that 1995 "has been a wonderful year in the stock and bond markets. Our funds are up 18 to 25 percent for the year.... It looks like long before our

50th anniversary in 1998, we will have \$50 million in assets under management. In fact, we hope we have it by the end of the year."

Revival is going to come in America, he affirmed, adding that, "We know it's going to take more programs, more plans, more buildings and more ministries to assimilate all those converts into the lives of our local churches and getting them busy growing up as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ."

"I want to pledge to you that the staff of the Foundation wants to be there helping to provide that foundational support for those ministries and those projects your churches will be involved in."

Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine editor Trennis Henderson honored Don Moore during the Newsmagazine report by titling the report, "You'll Be Glad to Know..." the title of the column Moore has written for the Newsmagazine since 1982. He presented Moore with a plaque expressing "deepest appreciation" from the agency's staff and board for his "Spirit-led vision, leadership and ministry among Arkansas Baptists; for his faithful support and encouragement of the ministry of Christian journalism; and for his unwavering commitment to spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ both at home and around the world."

Henderson also introduced Newsmagazine staff members, who shared the remainder of the "You'll Be Glad" report. Accountant Becky Hardwick reported that Arkansas Baptists would "be glad to know

that the Newsmagazine will finish the 1995 financial year strongly in the black for the fourth consecutive year" despite increases in postage and printing costs.

"As a result of our financial stewardship," she said, "the Newsmagazine has not increased subscription costs during the past four years." She said that means churches which participate in the Every Resident Family Plan "can continue to provide the Newsmagazine to church members for less than 25 cents per issue."

Executive assistant Millie Gill reported that the magazine published about 650 "Arkansas All Over" news items the past year to "allow our readers to stay informed about the accomplishments and changes in the lives of fellow Arkansas Baptists."

Assistant editor Colleen Backus shared that "one of the most exciting opportunities" being utilized by the magazine is electronic communications. She said that "major Arkansas Baptist news and feature articles from the Newsmagazine are now available electronically over SBCNet, the Southern Baptist communications service provided on CompuServe, one of the largest computer information services in the world."

Associate editor Russell Dilday said subscribers would be glad to know that the staff produced "hundreds of major Arkansas Baptist news and feature articles as well as providing the latest information about significant events and actions on both the national and international levels" during the past 12 months.

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World leaders mourn slaying of Israeli leader Yitzhak Rabin

JERUSALEM (ABP/BP) — World leaders mourned slain Israeli leader Yitzhak Rabin while observers pondered what his assassination means to the tenuous peace process under way in the Middle East.

In remarks at Rabin's Nov. 6 funeral, President Bill Clinton called the slain prime minister "haver," the Hebrew word for friend, and quoted a Bible passage shared by Jews and Christians. "As Moses said to the children of Israel, when he knew he would not cross over into the Promised Land, be strong and of good courage, fear not for God will go with you. He will not fail you. He will not forsake you," Clinton said, alluding to Deuteronomy 31:6.

"As you stay the course of peace, I make this pledge: neither will America forsake you," Clinton added.

Southern Baptist Convention president Jim Henry attended Rabin's funeral at Clinton's invitation as a member of the official U.S. delegation.

Henry, pastor of First Baptist Church of Orlando, Fla., urged Southern Baptists to pray for Rabin's successor, interim prime minister Shimon Peres, and the ongoing peace process. "We need to pray that Peres and those he works with in the Mideast can move through with this process," Henry said. "It is a very narrow window he has to move through."

The Baptist Convention of Israel sent

messages of condolences to the offices of the prime minister and to Rabin's widow.

Arkansans John and Connie Anthony, Southern Baptist representatives to Israel, said they cried, prayed and sat in numb silence as they watched Rabin's funeral on television while on furlough in Murfreesboro.

Shock immediately hit them when they learned of Rabin's assassination. Anthony said his wife fainted when she heard the news. He said they regret that they were not in Jerusalem to grieve with the Israelis they have long served.

"It's like the leader of our own nation has been shot," Anthony noted. "We've been in Israel 22 years."

Rabin's death marks "the end of an era for Israel," Anthony said. "I believe Rabin will go down in history as a great leader, someone like Abraham Lincoln was to American society." Like Lincoln, he noted, "Rabin gave his life and his blood for peace in his country" after leading it through years of war.

Evangelist Billy Graham asked Christians to pray that the hatred and violence that beset the Middle East will give way to compassion and tolerance.

"Modern Israel truly has lost one of its greatest leaders," Graham said, "and the world has lost a valiant and courageous champion of peace."

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Convention Uniform

The Gospel's power

By Tommy Robertson, director of missions, Liberty Association

Basic passage: Acts 18:18-19:41

Focal passage: Acts 19:8-10

Central truth: Opposition may cause discouragement, but God can overcome it all.

■ **A Faithful Witness.** In Ephesus, Paul followed his usual pattern of going to the synagogue first. There he found those familiar with the Scripture and looking for a Messiah. He would try to lead them to Christ as long as they would listen. When they refused, he turned to the Gentiles.

According to Luke, Paul spent three months speaking boldly and persuasively about the Kingdom of God. He was concerned about his fellow Jews because they had not believed in Christ as Savior. He wanted to see them turned around as he had been on the road to Damascus.

■ **Determined Opposition.** Predictably, many of the Jews in Ephesus refused to believe that Jesus was the Christ or Messiah. Moreover, some were obstinate and began to publicly malign the Christian faith.

In every generation, we will experience determined opposition if we are faithful in our witness to a lost and deluded world. Yet we must remember God is more powerful than all the opposition and He will not leave us to fight the battle alone.

The disturbance caused by Demetrius the silversmith looked so dangerous, yet was defused by the hand of the Lord. The city clerk took charge and dismissed the crowd, telling them they were in danger of being charged with rioting. The Roman officials would come down hard on such behavior. If we allow the Lord to defend us and protect us, we will find He is more than able. We must never use the weapons of man to fight the Lord's battles.

■ **Effective Proclamation.** Paul left the synagogue and began to have daily discussions in the hall of Tyrannus for two years. Luke said that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the Word of the Lord. This does not mean that all were saved, but that the good news of Christ was spread across the whole area.

During this time there was opposition to Christ, yet the gospel changes lives and practices for those who believe. The power of the gospel to overcome is evident. In our day of many religions, lifestyles and frightening events, we must remember that when these become larger than life to us, they are exactly right for God to handle.

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Life and Work

Faithfulness a trademark

By Mike Petty, pastor,

Park Place Church, Hot Springs

Basic passage: Daniel 6

Focal passage: Daniel 6:1-5, 10-11, 24-27

Central truth: Our faithfulness to our Lord has a greater influence upon others than we know.

I believe it was Vance Havner who first said, "The greatest evidence for Christianity and...against Christianity is the life of a Christian." I do not know who deserves credit for the quote, nor does it matter. The bigger question is, who is receiving credit for our lives? Does our life cause people to give God credit or blame?

Of examples of faithfulness, Daniel is among the most respected. Throughout this portion of the book, we see repeated evidence that Daniel's life had a profound influence upon others. His integrity and faithfulness caused some to reject his witness and his God. Yet, it caused others to respect Daniel and revere the Lord his God (vv. 1-53). Notice, though, that those who hated Daniel and rejected God did so in spite of his faithfulness. It was not due to any hypocrisy, compromise or "play-act" religion seen in so many today.

Where does the ability to remain faithful to God, despite persecution, come from? It is found in the "secret" of a godly life—prayer. In verses 10 and 11, we see the qualities of a victorious prayer life. Daniel exhibited the manner of prayer, praying three times daily, and the meekness of prayer, on his knees and bowed in his heart. He exhausted the method of prayer, praying openly, faithfully and thankfully. Verses 9:3-19 show his prayer life included confession, adoration, supplication and intercession as well. Could it be that one reason we become easily defeated is that we have not developed such a prayer life?

When God delivered Daniel through the den of lions, He vindicated Daniel's lifestyle. King Darius would not allow the treachery of the envious enemies of Daniel to go unpunished and doled out a sentence that also was suffered by their families (v. 24). The greater result of Daniel's faithfulness is seen in how the whole dominion would hear more about Daniel's God.

May we learn to stand as strong as Daniel and not succumb to the intimidation of the evil one and his army. We will never know how the Lord may choose to use us to manifest His power and glory if we lose courage and compromise our convictions.

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Bible Book

A time for celebration

By Bob L. Klutts, chaplain, Baptist Memorial Medical Center, North Little Rock

Basic passage: Nehemiah 11:1-13:3

Focal passage: Nehemiah 11:1-2;

12:27, 30, 43-45

Central truth: God's people find their true joy in dedication to His service.

Verses 11:1-2. It would have been easy to relax. The wall was built and so was the temple. Covenant commitments had been affirmed. Now the business of following through began. That is often the greatest challenge. It is easy to lose a hard-won battle simply by ignoring daily, routine needs that require constant attention. The nation was still in a somewhat bleak situation. It was only as a significant portion of the population made the continuing sacrifice of living in Jerusalem that the hard-earned gains could be kept.

This was not a haphazard affair. True to Nehemiah's pious practicality, the society in this holy city was organized to respond both to the everyday needs of life and to the holy calling of serving God. Even a holy city needs a balance of people and professions to be viable. Otherwise it could become a ghost town. It would be foolish to resurrect Jerusalem only to let it die due to neglect.

Verses 12:27, 43. The dedication of the wall of Jerusalem was a time of great joy. "Joy" or "rejoice" were used five times in v. 43. This chapter describes elaborate pageantry that vividly reminded them of what had been accomplished.

Verses 12:30. The time of purification and dedication of themselves and the wall brought everything into focus. They were servants of God. Everything was His and for His glory. That was to be the central truth of their lives from that day forward. Anything else missed the point.

Verses 12:44-45. Every task in God's service was holy. Those who had the mundane work of gathering, protecting and distributing goods from the storehouse were also served and needed to be purified. We all have a holy calling.

Verses 13:1-3. Once again, the exclusiveness of God's people came into view. The uniqueness of their calling called for a unique people. Not all who were in Israel were of Israel. However, even a Moabite such as Ruth could become an ancestor of the Messiah and be included among God's people.

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Convention Uniform

For those who hurt

By Steven Mullen, assistant professor, Williams Baptist College
 Basic passage: Isaiah 40:1-11
 Focal passage: Isaiah 40:1-2, 5
 Central truth: As believers, we have a unique responsibility to offer comfort to those who hurt.

There is a primitive African tribe that has some interesting beliefs. They believe that although God is good and wishes good for all of us, He has a half-witted brother who keeps getting in His way and mixes things up. The antics of this half-witted brother cause us to hurt.

If one is minimally observant, it is soon recognized that people everywhere are hurting. They really are. Why else would authorities at the Golden Gate Bridge fear such an onslaught of suicide attempts and cease releasing such statistics as the number approached 1,000? Do we as believers have a unique responsibility to those who hurt? I think so.

■ *We are commissioned to make a tangible effort to offer comfort for those who are hurting (v. 1).* Offering comfort to God's people is a mandate that is reiterated twice within the confine of this single verse. It is as though God, speaking through His divine word, is ensuring that we recognize our mission is not optional.

■ *We are to speak God's comfort tangibly (v. 2).* It is important to recognize that verbal communication is not the only method of effective communication. In fact, some of the most effective communication tools include a heartfelt touch, a gentle smile or a warm embrace. When we have nothing to say, our only alternative is to listen. Some of us need to be reminded that, instead of manufacturing empty words, we should be more comforting by listening. Through this, we allow ourselves to be an instrument through which God might touch the life of a hurting person.

■ *When we comfort others, Christ should be exalted (v. 5).* As followers of Christ, our focus should be on drawing people to Him; not ourselves. That is a lesson to follow while comforting others and while being comforted. Any person who offers a cold cup of water in the name of Jesus without "revealing the glory of the Lord so that all flesh shall see it" compromises the integrity of the Scripture (v. 4).

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Life and Work

Jesus' credentials as God

By Mike Petty, pastor, Park Place Church, Hot Springs
 Basic passage: John 1:1-18
 Focal passage: John 1:1-5, 10-14
 Central truth: Jesus is still God's complete Word, the world's greatest need and Christians' only message.

"Jesus is the reason for the season." What a wonderful reminder of the meaning of Christmas. America's observation of the season has become so secularized, though, that the Christmas message is obscured, if not omitted. Nonbelievers seldom hear the true meaning of Christmas. We have cards, choirs and carolers, yet many of us are celebrating among ourselves and not communicating the message of God's love and plan of redemption. In the next several weeks, our focus will be the "central truth" of Christmas — Jesus: God's good news to the world. We need to know what we are talking about as we share Him.

John's gospel is about the Lord and Savior, Jesus. John intended to lead the reader to faith, knowledge and joy of a personal relationship with Christ. Questions many ask are, "What qualifies Jesus to be Savior and Lord?" and "How can today's Christian claim that Jesus is relevant to our needs?" The Christian can know that He is Lord and can meet needs because of the Word of God and the Holy Spirit.

John's opening remarks reveal many things about Jesus:

- 1) Jesus is eternal: "in the beginning," Jesus was already there (v. 1).
- 2) Jesus co-exists and is co-equal with God the Father: "the Word was with God."
- 3) Jesus is God: "the Word was God." The word order in the Greek text literally reads, "and God was the Word" (vv. 1-2).
- 4) Jesus is the agent of creation (v. 3).
- 5) Jesus is the source of life, the life missing in a fallen people (vv. 4-5).
- 6) He is the Savior: "He was in the world ... as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God... which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (vv. 10-13).

7) This Deity has become humanity: "the Word was made flesh" (vv. 14).

Jesus is God's complete "communication" to man, the visible expression of the invisible God. He is the Father's expression of love, desire and determination to bring redemption to a fallen people.

Throughout this Christmas season may we be more attentive to this "Word."

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Bible Book

A return to former sins

By Bob L. Klutts, chaplain, Baptist Memorial Medical Center, North Little Rock
 Basic passage: Nehemiah 13:4-31
 Focal passage: Nehemiah 13:4-5, 9-11, 15-18, 23-26, 30
 Central truth: Lessons once learned are soon forgotten. Reform is always needed.

Verses 13:4-5, 9. Nehemiah worked 12 years in Jerusalem and then returned to Babylon. Later, he returned to Jerusalem and then returned to Babylon. He then returned to Jerusalem for a visit. What he found was a community that had quickly forgotten its distinctiveness and had compromised their beliefs in so many areas as to be unable to function as God's people.

The priest Elishah had given Tobias a large room to live in that was intended to be used for God's service. Space that was to be holy was treated as if it were common, ordinary. A personal relationship became more important to the high priest than his sacred responsibilities.

Verses 13:10-11. The people had promised not to neglect the house of God. Now, due to lack of stewardship, the temple and its ministers were being ignored to the point of abandonment. The stark difference between chapter 12 and 13 is a clear warning about the difference between good intentions and commitment.

Verses 13:15-18. They were warned before the exile about the need to value piety above profits. The Sabbath again became a common work day. When our holy days become common, so do we.

Verses 13:23-26. The issue was not racial but religious. This holy nation was at risk of being paganized. The children were unable to understand the word of God. The children were being raised in the pagan heritage of their mothers and not the Jewish heritage of the fathers. Even Solomon was not smart enough to overcome this subtle and persistent threat.

Verses 13:30. Nehemiah closed his book by telling us of one more reform. It was not the last one that was needed. The acknowledgment of God's grace that was prayed in chapter 9 was forgotten. The act of faithfulness sealed in chapter 10 was denied. They behaved like mere human offspring of Abraham, not children of faith. Their failures were not unique or exotic. It was simply more of the same old thing. Lessons once learned were soon forgotten and the same old sins repeated.

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Baptist Health report highlights 75th anniversary

"Whatever interests Arkansas Baptists interests Baptist Health," declared Russell Harrington, president of Baptist Health in Little Rock. "We are still a healing ministry for the spirit, mind and body, combining human compassion and Christian faith."

As part of its 75th anniversary celebration, Baptist Health recently conducted Operation CARE in North Little Rock, Harrington noted, which provided free health and dental care and spiritual ministry. Baptist Health also is setting up free wellness clinics with Park Hill Church in North Rock and Immanuel Church in Little Rock.

An inspirational video portraying Christy Johnson, a mother of two in northeast Arkansas, showed messengers how Baptist Health affects everyday lives. A rare virus that attacked Johnson's central nervous system caused her to lose both legs and hands. Baptist Rehab helped her with prostheses and physical therapy to help her achieve greater independence.

World hunger emphasis cites widespread needs

A slide presentation by Tommy Goode, an associate in the Arkansas Baptist state mission department, illustrated how world hunger funds are used to relieve hunger, even here in Arkansas. The very young, very old and the homeless are at high hunger risk, the presentation explained. Feeding ministries, food depots and agricultural missionaries in foreign countries are all aided by world hunger funds.

Citing Lamentations 2:19, Goode challenged Arkansas Baptists to "pour out your heart" and give to the world hunger fund, where 100 percent of gifts relieve hunger.

Seminary extension efforts help 'multiply the gifts'

The parable of the talents teaches how important it is to magnify one's gifts, explained Marion Reynolds, an associate in the state missions department, adding that is exactly what Seminary Extension Studies does.

Noting his admiration for those who devote their time and energy to multiply their gifts, Reynolds reported that 21 students are enrolled in Boyce Bible studies, 21 others are pursuing master's degrees through Southwestern Seminary extension courses, 10 are studying for their doctorate degrees through the Midwestern Seminary extension program and 54 are enrolled in five seminary extension centers in the state.

Church extension offers mission fields at home

During the past 10 years, Arkansas Baptists have planted 183 Anglo and black churches, and 35 ethnic churches, reported Jack Ramsey, director of Arkansas Baptist church extension.

A video featuring recent church growth efforts highlighted key ingredients to planting churches including surveying and planting new congregations in strategic locations around the state followed by strong promotion and cultivation efforts.

Another key opportunity, explained language extension director Jim Hausler, is in the area of ethnic congregations. "We are committed that those to whom English is not their first language also hear the good news of Jesus," Hausler explained. There are 50 churches with language and deaf work that feel the love and caring of Arkansas Baptists, he said, adding "I challenge you to be a foreign missionary here in Arkansas."

Christian Civic Foundation addresses legislative issues

"We've heard a lot of words but they don't have any meaning unless they have legs," said Larry Page, director of the Christian Civic Foundation. He reported that his agency had been involved in the passage of one of the strongest DWI laws in the nation, passage of a stronger child pornography law and assisted in the blocking of the repeal of the state's sodomy law.

Page said CCF is mounting a major campaign against legalized gambling's expansion into Arkansas. He also asked messengers to support U.S. House Bill 1833, preventing late-term D and X abortions. Another area of concern, Page explained, is the possibility of a state constitutional revision. Emphasizing that the state constitution "is the people's business," he urged Baptists to be informed about the process.

Coppenger affirms 'new day' on seminary campuses

Proclaiming "a new day on the seminary campuses," Mark Coppenger, newly-elected president of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, brought greetings on behalf of the six Southern Baptist seminaries. He said record gifts to the Cooperative Program have allowed for special needs capital improvements on the campuses.

"God is up to something good," he said. "We are praying for prairie fire to burn out the trash, crack our shells and stimulate growth."