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Arkansas Baptist State Convention

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ARKANSAS BAPTIST



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Volume 95, Number 24

November 28, 1996

RECONCILIATION

**Messengers
vote 801-456
to approve
reconciliation
agreement
between state
convention
and Ouachita
Baptist
University**



**Rex Horne re-elected state
convention president by acclamation**

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Turner prescribes spiritual cure for hardness of the heart

Delivering his first convention message at state convention executive director, Emil Turner challenged Arkansas Baptists to "turn your attention tonight to your own relationship to Jesus Christ."

Noting that "we have talked all year about spiritual awakening and revival," Turner warned that "the deadly disease of hardness of the heart is a major hindrance to revival." This year 600,000 Americans are going to die from heart related diseases," he pointed out. "Heart disease is ravaging America." By contrast, he added, a spiritual heart disease is ravaging our churches — hardness of the heart.

Preaching from Mark 3:1-6, Turner compared the physical condition of the man with a withered hand to the spiritual condition of the hard-hearted Pharisees. The man with the withered hand wanted to be healed, he suggested, "but the people with the hardened hearts didn't."

Emphasizing that "the Pharisees were religious people," Turner cautioned that "those of us who are at high risk of hardness of the heart are the most religious among us — not the wicked and the worldly, but the worshippers."

Turner said symptoms of hardness of the heart include being spectators in one's faith rather than participants, being fault-finders, being silent about one's one sin and being inconsistent.

"The Pharisees 'could see everyone's sin but their own,' he explained. "Are you going to church to see if somebody else is going to get right with God and it never dawned on you that you need to get right with God also?... Hardness of the heart will keep you from saying I've been wrong and I want to be right."

Describing Christ's response to those with hardness of the heart, Turner said, "I believe He is angered because we have hard hearts. I believe He is heartbroken because we keep hard hearts."

The religious leaders in Mark 3 "didn't get cured — they were terminal," Turner remarked. "I don't want our condition to be terminal."

"The cure for hardness of the heart begins when you ask God to cleanse your heart," he added. "If your heart is going to be softened by God, it has to be yielded to Him."

"God desires to control your heart," Turner affirmed. "If He is ever going to use you, you're going to have to yield to Him. If He is ever going to bless you, you're going to have to yield to Him. God has never blessed and used anybody with a hard heart."

"Jesus encountered two diseases — one was a man with a withered hand, the other was people with hardened hearts," he concluded. "Stretch out your heart and He will make it brand new."



Emil Turner

Cover Story



Reconciliation 3

State convention messengers voted last week 801-45 to approve a reconciliation agreement between the Arkansas Baptist State Convention and Ouachita Baptist University.

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ARKANSAS BAPTIST

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Reconciliation: Messengers approve proposal

By Tremah Henderson

Editor, Arkansas Baptist

Following more than a month of uncertainty about the future relationship between the Arkansas Baptist State Convention and Ouachita Baptist University, Arkansas Baptist messengers voted Nov. 19 to approve a compromise between the two entities. The 801-456 vote sets in motion a two-year procedure to formally amend OBU's trustee selection process.

The recommendation was developed by a five-member "reconciliation committee" working in cooperation with OBU's five-member bylaws committee. The proposal gained the approval of OBU's board of trustees and the Arkansas Baptist Executive Board before being submitted for messenger action.

The primary focus of the agreement is for future OBU trustee nominees to be recommended to the convention by a joint committee "composed of an equal number of persons from the Arkansas Baptist State Convention nominating committee and the Ouachita Baptist University committee authorized to act on behalf of the board." The plan also allows messengers to make substitute nominations from the floor of the convention.

The previous process gave the state convention's nine-member nominating committee the sole responsibility for submitting a slate of trustee nominations to the convention each year. Although the nominating committee traditionally invites recommendations from agency officials for their consideration, concern was voiced this year after the nominating committee declined to recommend any of the eight names submitted by OBU president Ben Elrod for four openings on the Ouachita board of trustees.

Following the nominating committee's action, OBU trustees voted Oct. 10 to return to the university's original charter and resume responsibility for naming their own successors. Their action reversed a 1914 decision by the OBU trustees to allow the convention to elect the school's trustees. Elrod said at the time that last month's action was taken "to remove Ouachita from the line of fire of denominational dispute" and "to guarantee a return to a more inclusive trustee selection process."

The state convention Executive Board's executive committee responded four days later by voting to escrow OBU's Cooperative Program funds until the issue was resolved. They also voted to establish the five-member reconciliation committee to negotiate with Ouachita trustees.

The groups held two joint meetings to draft the proposal adopted last week by

convention messengers. Emphasizing that "it is understood that good faith and a spirit of cooperation and respect are essential for this plan to be followed," the report added, "It is in the spirit that it has been recommended and it is in that prayerful spirit that we petition our respective institutions to follow it."

ABSC Executive Board chairman Chuck McAlister, who also chaired the reconciliation committee, presented the proposal to convention messengers. Acknowledging that he personally viewed OBU's Oct. 10 decision as "a wrong action," McAlister added, "The time for blame is past. The issue is no longer who was right or who was wrong... The issue is now how to fix it."

Comparing the proposal to action in other state conventions, McAlister said, "This is the strongest agreement in existence for the benefit of a state convention." Although "it's not a perfect agreement," he added, "It is a strong agreement that starts a process of reconciliation." He explained that the process would begin immediately with the convention releasing OBU's escrowed funds and the joint nominating plan being utilized in 1997.

'A time for restoration'

"This is a time for restoration, to exhibit to a lost world that we are in fact a redemptive people," McAlister declared. "We have an enemy of reconciliation and it is not our fellow Arkansas Baptists. His name is Satan."

During debate on the issue, David Miller, a member of Tumbling Shoals Church, voiced concern that OBU's trustees were seeking to "steal the university out from under Arkansas Baptists."

"We ought to stand for righteousness and truth and not compromise or be held hostage by any group," he insisted. "We would not be here today voting on this proposal if we were not being held hostage by the trustees of Ouachita Baptist University."

Miller was one of four people recommended by the state convention nominating committee to serve on OBU's board but he was not among those elected Oct. 10 by the Ouachita trustees. Two other individuals — Stephen Davis, pastor of First Church, Russellville, and Bill Elliff, pastor of First Church, Little Rock — were both proposed by the nominating committee and elected by the OBU trustees. Both Davis and Elliff also served on the reconciliation committee.

Executive Board member Wayne Williams, a member of Beech Street First Church in Texarkana, affirmed that "the

committees of the convention and Ouachita have both done a tremendous job. I think it's a good solution and I think we ought to proceed with it."

Reconciliation committee member Barry King, who voted against the proposal, told messengers, "Many of us who oppose this proposal do not view ourselves as the enemies of reconciliation, but we view ourselves as the advocates of righteousness."

Calling OBU's action an "institutional temper tantrum," King added, "We need to stand for what is right and reject this action." King, pastor of Tumbling Shoals Church, is a member and past chairman of the convention nominating committee.

Del Medlin, pastor of First Church, Cabot, called the proposal "a good way of doing our work so that the convention can still have its authority and Ouachita can continue to do the work that it does." Medlin, who served as chairman of this year's resolutions committee, was elected ABSC first vice president the following day.

Rex Terry, a member of First Church, Fort Smith, also was proposed by the nominating committee to serve as an OBU trustee but was not among the slate elected by the Ouachita board. Describing OBU's Oct. 10 vote as "a fundamental breach of trust," Terry said the proposed compromise "violates our constitution and violates our bylaws." He urged messengers "to vote against this on principle."

Following the 801-456 vote to adopt the reconciliation proposal, Terry offered a proposal to defund Ouachita from the convention's proposed 1997 Cooperative Program budget. Labeling the messengers' 63.7 percent affirmative vote a "very unwise action," Terry insisted that "the convention will regret this decision" to amend the trustee selection process.

Terry's effort to defund OBU was overwhelmingly defeated on a show-of-hands vote followed by a strong vote in favor of the proposed 1997 CP budget of \$17,595,000. The budget earmarks \$7,349,432 for Southern Baptist CP causes and \$10,245,569 for total state programs, including \$2,527,528 for OBU.

In other action, messengers approved a unified budget formula for 1998-2002 which specifies that any percentage increase to SBC causes will be based on the average five-year increase of CP gifts from local churches.

Messengers also approved extending Arkansas Baptists' missions partnership with the European Baptist Convention through the year 2000 and adopted a series of priority projects to highlight the state convention's 1997 "Strengthen the Family" emphasis.

A PASTOR'S HEART



By REX HORNE
ABC Executive Director

Lewis and Clark mapped the great American west. They were the first Americans to do so. Journals include a lot of tedious detail. Those journals also include a lot of excitement. The maps they drew were good — not perfect, but good. A rewarding new phase of American history began with the work of their expedition.

Arkansas Baptists drew a new map. Last week, it was tedious at times and exciting at times. The new phase in our history will require brave, good hearts to lead the way. We proved we are willing to blaze new trails. As we begin to travel these new trails, there will be some dangers. But faith pleases God.

Can you imagine those settlers who first began to move west along the lines of Lewis and Clark's maps? No doubt godly men began the journey by leading their families by prayer. Let us begin our journey into a new relationship with Ouachita Baptist University with prayer for God's guidance and protection and asking God to make us the kind of people who will follow Him into the future.

■ Have you read *Man to Man* by Chuck Swindoll (Zondervan, 1996)? Good friends recently gave me this collection of Swindoll's writings that focus on issues of interest to men. Good Bible stories, great illustrations, clever planning and practical applications make this an excellent book for men.

Executive director's schedule:

- Nov. 30 Liberty Assoc. Dedication, El Dorado
- Dec. 1 Second, El Dorado; East Main, El Dorado — 40th anniversary
- Dec. 2 Faulkner Assoc. Exec. Board, Conway
- Dec. 6 Williams Baptist College Board Meeting, Walnut Ridge
- Dec. 8 First, Clarendon
- Dec. 9 Calvary Assoc. Exec. Board, Searcy
- Dec. 13 Sr. Adult Banquet, Beech Street, Texarkana

REX HORNE

President's Perspective

Thanks for the privilege



I want to thank the messengers at our recent convention for electing me to a second term as president of our convention. More importantly, I thank the messengers for their convictions and conduct. Although the proposal concerning the relationship between Ouachita and the convention met with varied views, the debate was carried out in a commendable way.

The convention president has work to do in a substantive and symbolic way. The substantive work relates to appointments to the ABC nominating committee, committees that serve the convention next November and planning for next year's convention. I will also be involved in moving the proposal mentioned already into action. The restructuring committee will continue its reporting this year as well.

My prayer is that beyond the

required duties, I might lead in a proper spirit. In being interviewed by our editor, I told Tremis my desire for the coming year is to live up to the sermon I preached at the convention: I deeply desire to follow the new commandment of our Lord that I love you as He loves.

I have found in going across the state believers who are ready to press toward a new era of service to Christ. These are challenging and exciting times. May these few years we spend on earth be significant in the only way that matters in the eyes of our Lord.

May the Lord bless all Arkansas Baptist churches, institutions and agencies in the coming year. Thanks again, for this privilege of serving alongside of you.

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



During the opening session of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention Nov. 19, Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee presented Sue Lady a plaque honoring her late husband, Frank, who served as state convention second vice president until his death last January. Huckabee noted that Lady was "a very special Baptist in our state who gave leadership not only in the arena of his professional career and the civic life of this state but, as a Baptist layman, gave some of the most extraordinary leadership that we have seen."

The first step down the right path

In a society filled with dysfunctional families, Arkansas Baptists opted last week to buck that trend. Gathered for their annual meeting under the theme of "Strengthen Families," state convention messengers succeeded in putting those providential words into action.

As messengers arrived for the Nov. 19-20 meeting at Geyer Springs First Church in Little Rock, there was no question that the Tuesday afternoon business session would be filled with tense, tough moments — and it was. But the result was that the majority of participants demonstrated strong support for a process of reconciliation and cooperation.

The tension began in early October when Ouachita Baptist University's board of trustees voted to revert to the school's original charter and resume responsibility for naming their own successors. Citing concerns over actions by the state convention's 1996 nominating committee, Ouachita president Ben Elrod said the trustees' action was an effort "to restore broad participation in the (trustee selection) process and to remove Ouachita from the line of fire of denominational dispute."

The tension escalated as the Arkansas Baptist Executive Board's executive committee responded by escrowing the university's Cooperative Program funds. The "Ouachita problem" quickly became a hot topic of discussion and debate in Baptist meetings and informal conversations throughout the state.

On the positive side, executive committee members voted to establish a "reconciliation committee" to seek to dialogue with Ouachita officials and OBU leaders readily agreed to negotiate. The result was an agreement between the two groups to establish a joint committee of Ouachita trustees and state convention nominating committee members to

Action prompts question

In light of the recent cooperative agreement adopted by the Arkansas Baptist State Convention concerning Ouachita Baptist University, the following question seems pertinent: Does Ouachita intend to abide by the votes of the '92 and '93 annual meetings of the convention, namely that "the convention shall elect the...Board of Trustees" of each agency and institution of the state convention and that "no amendment to the corporation's Articles of Incorporation shall be made without the prior consent of the Convention?"

Warren Watkins
Sherwood, AR

STRAIGHT FROM THE EDITOR



By TRENNIS HENDERSON

nominate a slate of new trustees each year. The plan gained the approval of the full Ouachita board and the state convention Executive Board before reaching the floor of the convention.

Despite emotional pleas by opponents of the proposed compromise, 63.7 percent of messengers voted to approve the recommendation, which reconciliation committee chairman Chuck McAllister described as a "good faith process."

"Each side was given ample opportunity to express their views. That's the Baptist way."

That good faith process was immediately tested by an attempt to defund Ouachita from Arkansas Baptists' 1997 Cooperative Program budget. Messengers again affirmed their commitment to reconciliation, however, strongly voting against the defunding effort.

One benefit of the in-depth debate

throughout this process is that each side was given ample opportunity to express their views. That's the Baptist way. Convention president Rex Horne deserves special thanks for his gracious moderating that reflected patience, fairness and integrity.

Even with the reconciliation process officially under way, a few individuals may still seek to criticize Ouachita's trustees for their October action. Some may continue to find fault with the actions of this year's nominating committee while others may voice concern over the attempt to defund Ouachita. A more productive plan is to affirm McAllister's words: "The time for blame is past. The issue is no longer who was right or who was wrong. This is a time for restoration."

According to one dictionary definition, "reconcile" means "to restore to friendship or harmony." Although 456 messengers (36.3 percent) voted against the reconciliation proposal, hopefully few, if any, are against the overall principle of reconciliation.

Now that the majority of messengers have clearly expressed their view, the next challenge will involve hammering out the details of how convention and OBU documents will be amended over the next two years to fully implement the plan. If that process can be accomplished in a spirit of "friendship and harmony," Arkansas Baptists will have the opportunity to show that they're truly serious about their commitment to reconciliation.

During a Tuesday afternoon message following the business session, Charles Petty reminded messengers that "strengthening families has become difficult, but good families make good churches." Good families also make good state conventions — and Arkansas Baptists have taken the first step down the right path.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Thanks for conference

I would like to express my thanks to the officers of the 1996 Arkansas Baptist Pastors' Conference. Dr. Bill Elifff, Bro. Mike Petty and Bro. Randy Hogan are to be commended for the excellent job they

carried out in the conference planning. It was quite evident that there was the hand of God in the plans made.

It has been several years since I sensed the presence of God on a conference as I did this year. Every sermon, every song and every testimony that was shared had a definite anointing of God upon it. Thank God for the way these men allowed the Lord to use them.

Thanks again for a job well done by our 1996 Pastors' Conference officers and others behind the scenes. You've truly refreshed the hearts of many.

Brad Banks
Forrest City, AR

Resolutions address gambling, affirm Christian teachers' roles

By Russell N. Dilday

Associate Editor, Arkansas Baptist

Resolutions expressing appreciation to gambling opponents and affirming Christian public school teachers and administrators were among eight resolutions adopted with little discussion by Arkansas Baptist State Convention messengers during the annual meeting's final session business. Del Medlin, pastor of First Church, Cabot, served as chairman of the five-member Resolutions Committee.

Messengers adopted the resolution on "Appreciation for Gambling Opposition" just two weeks after a Nov. 5 election that resulted in the almost two-to-one defeat of Amendment 4. The proposed constitutional amendment sought to legalize casino gambling in Hot Springs, a state lottery and statewide charitable bingo.

Noting that "gambling proponents used many millions of dollars to influence voters of Arkansas to approve" the ballot initiative, the resolution added that the Christian Civic Foundation and the Christian Civic Action Committee fought the gambling interests and the proposed amendment with limited funds but great resolution.

The resolution offered "greatful thanks and glory to God for this great victory" and expressed "deep appreciation to Larry Page, executive director of the Christian Civic Foundation, Barry King for the Christian Civic Action Committee, and the many people across Arkansas who worked hard to defeat the gambling issue."

Resolution supporters also emphasized that "we will firmly and enthusiastically oppose any and all attempts to further expand legalized gambling in Arkansas by means of constitutional amendments or statutory enactments."

The resolution affirming Christian teachers was adopted without debate or opposition. Noting that "many public school teachers and administrators are active members of Southern Baptist churches," the resolution noted that many Christian teachers "are attempting to make a difference in the lives of their students through lifestyle evangelism."

Acknowledging that "many public school teachers and administrators are constantly confronted with social ills such as illegal drug use, sexual immorality, lack of parental support, violence, lack of respect for authority, influence of secular humanism, etc.," the measure resolved to "express appreciation and pledge prayer support to all Christian public school teachers and administrators."

Other resolutions noted appreciation for both Church Geyer Springs First Church of Little Rock, affirmed the sanctity of human life and the need for racial reconciliation and noted opposition to pornography, homosexuality and alcohol and other drugs. Among the specific resolutions adopted:

■ The sanctity of human life resolution noted that "the current administration in Washington, D.C. represents a pro-abortion agenda that rejects the positions regarding the sanctity of human life as declared by the Arkansas Baptist State Convention and the Southern Baptist Convention." It reaffirmed "our position that abortion can only be justified if it is absolutely necessary to save the physical life of the mother, and that we will spare no effort in opposing any federal or state law that will further legitimize infanticide."

■ Opposing homosexual behavior, messengers affirmed the traditional family, namely people living together who are related by blood, marriage or adoption and called for Baptists "to relate to those caught up in the tragic lifestyle of homosexuality with Christ like and redemptive love while addressing the impropriety of their behavior."

■ The anti pornography resolution expressed opposition to "perverted, destructive and wholly unredeeming pornographic material which cheapens human sexuality by displaying men, women and children as sex objects." Messengers resolved to "promote wholesome and responsible depiction of human sexuality in the broadcast and print media in an effort to halt the ever-increasing limits of what is acceptable and suitable for family entertainment."

■ Calling "the consumption of alcoholic beverages, the use of illicit drugs and the misuse of legal drugs" as "contrary to biblical standards of personal conduct and stewardship of the body," messengers resolved to "encourage abstinence and... support laws that reasonably restrict and limit the accessibility of alcoholic beverages and that provide effective sanctions for those whose use of alcohol and drugs results in property damage, injury and death."

■ Acknowledging that "recent events have reminded us of continued racial tension," a resolution on racial relations encouraged Arkansas Baptists "to examine their individual heart, live out the love of Christ in all relationships, and continue to work toward improving racial harmony in the name of Christ."

'Expect to receive His power,' Graham tells Arkansans

Jack Graham, pastor of Presbwood Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas, told Arkansas Baptists of the "Unlimited Possibilities" before them during the convention's Tuesday morning session.

Preaching from Ephesians 3:20-21, he noted that Paul's prayer "is giving glory to God and his vision of God is a massive, wonderful vision."

"Today I want to remind us of the vision of God that is set before us," Graham said. "We must humbly bow in adoration and dependence before God...in order to rise in eager expectancy to receive from Him all of His provision and power."

"The spiritual awakening that America needs is born in prayer and delivered in prayer," he added. "I've never been more excited about being a pastor of a local church than right now. There's never been a better time, a more strategic time, to preach the gospel of our God than right now."

Look to the future

"As we look to our future, as uncertain as it may be outside the parameters of the church, we need to make sure our gaze is full of God and His glory...because all the rest is superfluous if our gaze is not fixed on Him."

"Our future is so very bright and so very promising," Graham emphasized. "But, as I look at this prayer, I am reminded that there are three pertinent facts that we need to consider today, three action points:"

■ We must fix our focus. "When our focus is on Him, our fullness is from Him," he explained. "It energizes us, powers us. Rather than living for ourselves, we live and give for Him. Paul is saying, 'That power is in you.'"

■ We must stretch our faith. "God is able to do what we even dare not ask Him to do," Graham declared. "Let our faith be stretched not only by looking back to what God has done for us in Christ but by looking forward."

■ Claim your future. "We're destined for the throne. The only hope for America is the church of Jesus Christ and I am giving my life and investing my future in His church," Graham affirmed. "When He comes, we will be exhibit A of His grace and His glory. The Bridegroom will say to the Father, 'Meet the bride, pure, spotless, perfect' and we will spend an eternity praising Him. His church and His Word are going to stand forever."

Horne re-elected president by acclamation

Rex M. Horne Jr., pastor of Immanuel Church in Little Rock, was re-elected by acclamation Nov. 20 as president of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention. Serving with Horne will be first vice president Del Medlin, pastor of First Church, Cabot, and second vice president John Dresbach, associate minister of music for Central Church, Jonesboro.

Horne served much of the past year as the state convention's only elected officer after former first vice president Rich Kincl moved out of state and former second vice president Frank Lady died three months after his election.

Horne was nominated for a second one-year term by Stan Parris, pastor of First Church, Hope. Noting that Horne "has served Arkansas Baptists well and has served us graciously," Parris emphasized that "Arkansas Baptists deserve a president like Dr. Rex Horne. He has the skills of strong leadership but he also has the right spirit for strong leadership."

Following Parris' nomination, Dillard Miller, director of missions for Ouachita Association, moved that Horne be elected by acclamation.

Horne's Wednesday morning election followed his Tuesday evening presidential address in which he urged Arkansas Baptists to reflect unconditional love for one another. During an interview following his re-election, he said his goal for the coming year "is to try to live up to the message I preached."

"The great majority of Arkansas Baptists want to keep the main things the main thing — working on larger issues that bind us together," Horne affirmed. "If we can express love for each other in a Christlike way, we can accomplish our goals and move forward."

Second largest convention in history: 1,553 messengers

A near-record number of messengers attended the 143rd session of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention Nov. 19-20 at Geyer Springs First Church in Little Rock. The attendance, which reached 1,553 by the convention's final session, was the second-largest number in convention history. The 1989 annual meeting held at First Church in Little Rock set the record with 1,610 registered messengers.

The convention program highlighted the 1997 ABSC emphasis, "Strengthen Families" and featured sessions on strengthening the Kingdom Family, Members of the Family, the Arkansas Baptist Family, and the Family's Future.

ABSC executive director Emil Turner interpreted the theme, saying, "We want you to know that our state convention has a burden for the families of God's people. What we do in this next year will be a commitment to strengthen families."

The program featured an opening session welcome from Gov. Mike Huckabee, a former ABSC president, who also honored the late Frank Lady, who served as ABSC second vice president from his election last fall until his death in January this year.



State convention officers for the coming year are (left to right) Rex Horne, president; Del Medlin, first vice president; and John Dresbach, second vice president.

In a three-way race for first vice president, Medlin was elected with 403 votes. Leroy Wagner, pastor of First Church, Searcy, received 203 votes and Doyle Robertson, pastor of First Church, Melbourne, received 118 votes.

Dresbach was elected second vice president among four candidates nominated. On the first ballot, Dresbach gained 316 votes and Wagner, also nominated for second vice president, received 208 votes. Other candidates included Burton Perry, a retired bivocational pastor, 152 votes and Wes George, pastor of First Church of Wynne, 148 votes. Dresbach received 382 votes on the second ballot to gain election with a majority of the 660 votes cast.

Among this year's officers, Horne has served as pastor of Immanuel Church since 1990. He previously served churches in Texas, Oklahoma and Louisiana. A graduate of Arkansas College (now Lyon College) in

Batesville, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, Horne served as chairman of the 1994 Southern Baptist Convention Tellers Committee.

Medlin, pastor of First Church, Cabot, since 1985, formerly was a pastor in Texas. A graduate of Ouachita Baptist University and Southwestern Seminary, Medlin served this year as chairman of the state convention resolutions committee.

Dresbach has served as associate minister of music and university student and church organist at Central Church, Jonesboro, since 1991. He formerly was minister of music and youth for First Church, Osceola. Dresbach is a graduate of Memphis State University (now University of Memphis). He also is a member of the Centurymen, sponsored by the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission.

Huckabee noted that Lady "was a trailblazer and pacesetter. He was one who set an example both in active participation as well as in moral character and integrity that let others know what Christian service as a layman would be all about." The governor presented a memorial plaque to Lady's widow, Sue, on behalf of the state convention.

Also recognized during the convention was Clarence Shell, who retired last month following 27 years of service in the ABSC evangelism department.

Miscellaneous business was light during the convention. Messengers approved a motion by Doyle Robertson, pastor of First Church in Melbourne, that the convention annual be dedicated to W.O. Taylor, "who passed away July 7 at the age of 105 and served the Lord and Arkansas Baptists for almost 90 years." Messengers also gave final approval to a bylaw change which specifies that the chairman of the state convention nominating committee "shall have served at least one year on the committee." The proposal was presented by David Napier, chairman of the charter and bylaws committee.

'The urgency of our mission'

By Kerry Powell

Pastor, First Church, Wichita

Not long ago I took my son, Chris, down to my old home place in Marsden, Ark., where I was born and then, just down the road, to my Grandfather's old home place. I used to spend the summers there with my brother working in the fields.

But everything was different. I first missed the turn-off and got lost. A tornado had come through and destroyed all the old trees, the old landmarks that helped me recognize the place.

The house where I was born was gone. The barn, the house, the peach trees, the well, the chicken coop and the old smoke house at my Grandfather's place were all gone.

The big, old oak trees that stood in the front and back yards were all gone. The pond where we used to catch big stringers of **B**rain was all grown up, and I couldn't recognize **R** All the old landmarks were gone.

And as I thought about that, I thought that's the way it is with our country today. Many of our country's old and reliable religious landmarks that have guided us through the years have been removed or replaced.

Chuck Colson said, "We're living in a post Christian era." For all practical purposes, we're living in a pagan society, because the old values, the values of morality and ethics, are no longer accepted by the majority of the people.

Would you ever have believed, in your wildest imagination, that the day would come when simply because a Christian took a stand against homosexuality he would be called a bigot, a fanatic, an extremist, and it's going to get worse.

I'll tell you, when you look closely at our day, you have to believe in the total depravity of man. People are not convicted of sin as they once were. Conviction of sin is something we hear very little about today.

All the old landmarks are gone. Anything goes. Times are changing. History is being rewritten for the convenience of some.

Proverbs 22:28 says, "Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set up."

Today you hear the politicians and the news media castigating the so-called religious right. You don't hear them saying anything about the pagan left. And they claim that Christians want to impose their morality upon society.

However, all laws are somebody's morality or immorality being imposed upon society. If the law says it is legal to put to death unborn babies, isn't that the heathen society imposing its philosophy upon our society? If the law says it is legal to gamble and practice sodomy and sell pornographic material, isn't that the imposition of harmful standards of behavior upon society?

My friends, no law can be morally neutral, every law imposes some view of morality upon society. The particular view may be that of the abortionist imposing his standards on the unborn. It may be that of the homosexual flaunting his view before school children, or it may be that of the secular humanist seeking to remove any religious influence from public life.

And so, the important question is this, "Whose standard of truth will be legislated?"

In our day political correctness, new age theology and multiculturalism are the order of the day. And there are some people who are trying to make the church and the gospel user-friendly in today's world. Pluralism and universalism have cut the heart out of evangelism and missions.

Seventy-nine percent of our churches have either plateaued,

or they are declining today. And in the name of tolerance, we have downplayed the difference that Jesus makes and the lifestyle that He demands.

There is a moral free fall, a moral meltdown going on in this country today. Never has the Christian faith been more ridiculed or the Christian pulpit less influential than today.

But regardless of the difficulties and opposition of our day, we know this, "When the enemy comes in like a flood, the Lord will rise up a standard against him."

"Where sin abounds, grace does much more abound." Our job as Christians and churches is to get the gospel out, sharing Jesus by lip and life, and going into all the world with the message of hope and forgiveness.

As a matter of fact, our convention exists to facilitate, extend and enlarge the Great Commission ministries of our churches to the glory of God. It is vital. It is imperative. It is urgent. This is our mandate. This is our mission. Jesus had a lot to say about it.

Matthew 24:14 - "This gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come."

Matthew 28:19 - "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

Mark 16:15 - "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."

We've got a worldwide responsibility. We've got a missionary obligation. We're to see to it that the gospel gets to the whole world - to every person for whom Jesus died - and that is everybody.

As we look out across our world today and think about the mission that God has given us, to reach every person with the gospel of the Lord Jesus, not only is it an awesome responsibility, but if we're ever going to do it, we're going to have to get serious about it and live differently and sacrificially as never before.

There are 5.7 billion people now living in our world. About 1.5 billion of these identify themselves as Christians. This means that there are more than 4 billion people who say that Krishna, Buddha, Mohammed, Marx, Mao, or someone else is lord.

Our mandate, our commission is to get the gospel out to every creature in all the world, beginning in our own Jerusalem (our own city). If we're not missionary to every creature in our town, crossing a body of water won't make us missionary.

I am convinced that we must have the supernatural anointing of the Spirit of God in this venture. We must live differently and think differently and pray differently and give differently if we are ever going to reach our world for Jesus.

To accept Jesus is to enlist under a missionary banner. But what are we doing about it? Well, I believe we've got to take another look at our priorities. Where does missions and evangelism fit into our lifestyle? What kind of personal sacrifices are we willing to make? Is our brand of Christianity worth piping to the world? Is life-changing? If Christianity is to make a difference in our world, it must first make a difference in us.

Jesus said in Acts 1:8, "And ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and in Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

We must die to our own plans and ambitions and give up our right to live our lives just as we please and surrender our wills to the will of Christ. The Bible says, "Now that Jesus has died, we're not henceforth to live just to please ourselves, but unto him who died for us and rose again."



Kerry Powell

When you study the Bible, you find it beginning its message, not by showing us a tribal God whose aims are limited to one people, but rather, in the creation story, we meet the God of all nations. God's purpose in sending Jesus was world redemption.

When Paul thought about all that Jesus had done for him, he realized that he had a missionary debt to the world.

Notice in our text the pronoun I appears three times: I am debtor, I am ready, and I am not ashamed.

I. A Personal Obligation

"I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise and unwise" (Rom. 1:14).

All of us who are saved are debtors to all mankind. We have had these good tidings for centuries. Hundreds of generations have tarried, and God passed them along to us, and we have held our peace. And because we have tarried, there is misery and heartache all over the world today.

We have sent a few missionaries here and there, and we boast of over 4,150 foreign missionaries and that's wonderful, but we are not winning the world to Christ - we're losing it! In fact we are not keeping up here at home with the population increase.

Let's awake from our sleep and go and tell because I am responsible... I am a debtor... It begins with me.

This personal obligation is seen in the eyes of Isaiah in the temple that caused him to cry out, "Here am I, Lord, send me!"

It is seen in the words and actions of our Lord who said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stoneth them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered you under my wings as a hen doth gather her chicks and you would not," and also in His death on the cross.

And He says to us today, "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." It is a personal obligation that cannot be denied.

Today, we like to think that everybody else is responsible but us: our church is responsible, our denomination is responsible, our missionaries are responsible - instead of me.

I'm responsible. I'm obligated. I'm debtor by virtue of the fact of my acceptance of Jesus. I am debtor to the world.

When I was saved, there came to live in my heart the One who on the cross was reconciling the whole world unto Himself, and I gave up my right to live my life just as I pleased.

Some years ago, back before the days of air travel, some of our missionaries started out for Africa on a ship. The captain of the ship made light of it. He said, "Why, you'll die over there in all those jungles with all those fevers." The head of the group said, "Captain, we died before we started."

They died to their own plans and ambitions. It was a personal obligation. They had died to self, to everything except the will of God. It was a personal obligation that could not be denied.

II. A Pressing Responsibility

"So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also" (Rom. 1:15).

When Paul preached it at Jerusalem, the religious center of the world, he was mobbed. When he preached it at Athens, the intellectual center of the world, he was mocked. When he preached it at Rome, the legislative center of the world, he was martyred.

He was ready to preach the gospel because it was urgent. He had a life-and-death message. He had an urgency about him. He was consumed with the message of Jesus.

He said, "For me to live is Christ." He said, "My heart's desire and prayer for God for Israel is that they might be saved."

When they stoned him at Lystra, he turned his face to Derby. When they expelled him from Antioch, he turned to Iconium. When he was shipwrecked at Melita, he turned toward Rome.

Where is that urgency today? We give up at the slightest inconvenience.

And somebody always says, "Well, if the heathen does the best he can, won't he be saved anyway?" The answer to that is no, because the heathen doesn't do the best he can.

Millions in the name of Buddhism will meet together and avow that there is no God and no eternity. Millions in the name of Hinduism will let cows roam through their streets while their children die of starvation and dysentery. Millions in the name of some spirit will force a widow to lie down beside her dead husband and be burned alive or buried alive.

They don't do the best they can, and something must be done about it. "There is no other name, under heaven, given among men whereby we must be saved, but the name of Jesus."

Our gospel must be preached. It must be sent. Paul asked four questions about it in Romans 10. He said in verse 13, "Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." But then he said, "How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach except they be sent?"

These are questions we need to ask ourselves today. How shall they call? How shall they believe? How shall they hear? How shall they preach? Every Christian is responsible. Every church is responsible. We must pray and give and send and go, and we have got to do it now!

III. A Payable Obligation

"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation, to everyone that believeth" (Rom. 1:16).

Paul said, "I am proud of the gospel. I'm not ashamed of it." And he gives us several reasons why he was not ashamed:

1. He was not ashamed because of its origin. It is the gospel of Christ (v. 16a). How could Paul be ashamed of such a message when it came from God and centered in His Son, Jesus Christ?

2. He was not ashamed because of its operation. It is the power of God (v. 16b). No wonder Paul was not ashamed. He was taking to sinful Rome the one message that had the power to change men's lives!

3. He was not ashamed because of its outcome. It is the power of God unto salvation (v. 16c). The gospel saves lost people from the penalty and power of sin.

4. He was not ashamed because of its outreach. It is to everyone that believeth (v. 16d-17). He knew it to be far superior to any other religion or philosophy ever known on earth.

The world doesn't need new ideas in religion, more education, more government programs - it needs the gospel.

It can make drunken men sober, crooked men straight, and fallen women pure. It can transform the life of any man or woman who believes.

"He that heareth my word," said Jesus, "and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life." We've got to get the gospel out, and we can't do it by ourselves.

What are you personally doing about it? What have you done this week about it? What did you do last week about it?

You see, Jesus gave this job to you and me. Go into all the world. Preach the gospel to every creature. Baptize them, teach them, be witnesses unto me. And when you became a Christian, you took on that responsibility.

Oh, that we could say with Paul, "There's burning within me a desire to share the gospel." Since God has made such an investment in us, we have to stay-with it. We have to get the gospel out. We can't be ashamed. We can't throw in the towel.

It's a personal obligation that cannot be denied. I'm responsible. If I don't witness, there will be no witnessing.

It's a pressing responsibility that must not be delayed. It's urgent. Before long the trumpet will sound and it will all be over.

It's a payable obligation that need not be defaulted. With God's help we can do it!

'The Commandment'

By Rex Horne

President, Arkansas Baptist News Magazine

I have determined the best use of these moments is not to deliver an address, give an opinion, or make any defense, but to simply preach a message. We believe God's Word is our guide, infallible, inerrant, indestructible. We know and believe God's Word is to find itself expressed in the way that we live. We are better at saying what we believe than we are in behaving how we believe.

The Apostle John speaks to us about how our faith is measured by our lifestyle. He said the knowledge that God is light is revealed if we walk in the light. The knowledge that God is righteous is determined by whether we live righteously. The knowledge that God is love is tested by whether we love one another. I speak tonight about a new commandment that commandment is that we love one another.

I. Terminal Love (John 13:1)

Jesus knew that His hour was come that He would depart from this world. Depart carries the idea of changing places. He loved, *agapao*, His disciples. *Agape*, of course, means selfless, sacrificial love, to love without regard to the response made by the object of one's love. He loved His own to the end. *End* (*telos*) means the point aimed at as a limit, the conclusion.

John earlier wrote that God so loved the world. In this he illuminated the sacrificial, selfless nature of divine love. This is the mark of *agape* love, terminal love. If one could love others without judging them, asking anything of them, or thinking of one's needs, this would meet the Christian standard.

He loved these disciples: the sons of thunder, the zealots, the shy and retiring, the brash and boastful, the societal outcasts and the betrayer. Yes, we know of the love of Christ as we see Him on the cross. But John shares something before the cross.

Hours before death, what would Jesus do? Perhaps a review of fundamental teachings of those three years with them, a warning of false teachers, fiery oratory to spur the men on or a threat of future judgment. What did He do? He went to their hearts. Jesus laid aside His garments, took a towel, poured water in a basin and washed His disciples' feet. Of all the things that could have been done or said, Jesus washed feet.

My roots run through the paper mill communities of Bastrop, La., and Camden, Ark., on one side and the sandy fields of a north Louisiana sharecropper on the other. My earliest recollections of visiting my mother's parents, my Big Mama and Big



ABNC president Rex Horne

Papa, center on two experiences.

One was standing by their space heater on cold nights, burning my blue jeans into my hide on one side while freezing on the other. The second is one I saw repeated and is real in my mind today. When Big Papa would come in from the field, he would be tired and dirty. He would sit in his rocker, in that humble home and rest a minute. Big Mama, who figuratively and literally earned this name, would bring an old basin of water, take Big Papa's old work shoes off and wash his feet.

Why did she do this? Because he demanded it? No, she did it for one reason, because she loved him.

When Jesus washed the feet of His disciples, He did so for one reason - He loved them and He wanted to go after their hearts and He wanted to show them what a terminal love is. John 13:13-15 says, "You call me Master and Lord: and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you." The new commandment involves love, terminal love.

II. Unconditional Love (John 13:34)

Jesus gave a new commandment. New, *hainos*, is new in the meaning of that which is unaccustomed or unsecn. It is not *chronos* which would mean new in time. *Kainos* speaks to quality, a new nature.

Jesus gives this as a commandment, not a novel idea. A commandment is an authoritative injunction, a divine expression of God's will. Is it not just as binding as the 10 commandments? Friends, we are to love as He loved. How did He love us? He loved us unconditionally. It is not I love you but...I love you if...I love you when. It is I

love you, I don't need you to love me like a brother. I need you to love me like the Savior. I need to love you the same way. Hatred of one's brother can never be defended as obedience to God. It is either gratification of one's own sinful, evil nature.

If I do not love you, my brothers and sisters, my love is spurious. It is not a matter of interpretation, a liberal or conservative or moderate or fundamental matter. It is a matter of Christian or non-Christian. If we do not love as Christ modeled and commanded, the problem is one of belief and behavior, which makes for a sin problem.

Billy Graham, you might recall years ago, when he returned from Russia during the Brezhnev era, was highly criticized for his trip to Russia. A critic said, "You have set the church back 50 years." Billy Graham replied, "I am deeply unimpressed. I have been trying very hard to set the church back 2,000 years."

This is the Graham who in studying this passage, said he believed that the weight of Scripture leads to fellowship. He asked rhetorically, "What is the great overwhelming evidence that we have passed from death unto life? Orthodoxy? Morality? Evangelistic passion? No!" Billy Graham said it is one thing, "It is love!"

If I don't love you like Jesus loves you, which is terminally and unconditionally, then my love is spurious. If you can't love me like Jesus loves then your love is spurious.

Hatred of our brother, of one another, can never be counted as anything but blatant disobedience to the Word of God, to the will of God and to the work of Jesus Christ.

This terminal, unconditional love is also supernatural.

III. Supernatural Love (John 13:35)

By this, not by something else, not by your words, wealth or wisdom, men will know that you are my disciples. Notice the important, though short word "if." If is a conditional particle. The translation could be something like this, "By this, even the world will come to recognize you are my disciples, provided that you have and cling to terminal, unconditional, supernatural love for one another."

Let's be honest - I can't do this on my own. You can't either. Of course, I can't save myself either. The One who died for me and was raised by the power of God, brought resurrection power into my life when He saved me. I can, therefore, do all things through Christ. The one who gave me life instead of death, heaven instead of hell, hope instead of despair, can live His

Convention agency leaders emphasize goals, progress

life of love through me and enable me to love you like I should love you and enable you to love each other as we should love each other.

Francis Schaeffer said, "Jesus gives the world a piece of His own paper, a reasonable thermometer. There is a mark which, if the world does not see, allows them to conclude, 'This man is not a Christian...' Jesus is stating something else which is more cutting, much more profound: We cannot expect the world to believe that the Father sent the Son, that Jesus' claims are true, and that Christianity is true, unless the world sees some reality of the oneness of true Christians."

Senator Sam Nunn said at last year's prayer breakfast, "May we who would be leaders always be aware that we must first be servants. May we who seek to be admired by others remember that when we practice our piety before men in order to be seen by them, we will have no reward in heaven. May we who have large egos and great ambitions recall that the kingdom of Heaven is promised to those who are humble and poor in spirit."

There are many things at times I wish I could have shared with you my brothers and sisters of the Arkansas Baptist Convention about some things that we have endured as a church family and that my family has endured over the last several years.

During that time, a lot of things were going on through my son Truett's mind. In his special way at age 7, he wrote a poem that I hung on my wall in my study. At 7 years old, he wrote:

*My Dad is great, He loves everybody
he hates.
I love my Dad very much, I love his Dad
small and his gentle touch.
He takes me anywhere I want to go and
he doesn't even go slow.
I love my Dad and that's going to be,
My dad is going down in history.*

His dad one of these days is going before the Lord. When his daddy goes before the Lord, I'd like for my dad to be pleased, I'd like for Big Mama to be pleased, I'd like for my church family to be pleased, I'd like for my children, my three daughters and my son to be pleased, but most of all I'd like the Lord to be pleased.

I'd like for Him to say, "Rex, you went through some things but you determined to take seriously my new commandment. You learned how to love to the end and to love unconditionally and to love supernaturally. The only way for that to ever happen, dear friends, is for me to be able to say to you tonight from the bottom of my heart, I love you, Arkansas Baptists — period. God bless you."

The heads of Arkansas Baptists' three statewide agencies each presented reports during the convention, highlighting their goals and noting progress made during the past year.

Calling the convention "Strengthen Families" theme "admirable," David Perry, executive director of the Arkansas Baptist Children's Homes and Family Ministries, emphasized that "we've dedicated ourselves to healing children and families."

Perry introduced Liz Tate, a houseparent for the Judsonia Emergency Receiving Home, who said that "the kids who come to us have been hurt and their circle is very small. I can't barge into their circle, but I can draw a circle of love...and enclose them in mine."

Noting that she currently is caring for five children, she said, "In the past two weeks we have seen three of those children baptized. We have revival in our house."

He also introduced Sheila Qualls, a resident at the Arkansas Baptist Home for Children in Monticello, who related that she had recently made a discovery while listening to a song at church.

"God spoke to me and I realized how often it is, even though I don't have my mom and dad there to listen to me whenever I have problems or when I sing in front of the church, I have the Baptist Home for Children," Qualls explained. "I have all the houseparents there for me, they are close. I really enjoy how much encouragement I get from my houseparent. We're being taken care of and I'm so grateful for this."

Foundation growth continues

Arkansas Baptist Foundation president David Moore reported the Foundation's market values grew by more than \$10 million in 1995. "This year has been even better," he added.

Moore also introduced Tammy Davis, recently hired at the Foundation as controller, before he was "interrupted" three times by Arkansas Baptists who shared brief reports about how the Foundation helped them in establishing mission church efforts, writing wills and increasing investment returns.

"Most of our work is involved in helping Arkansas Baptist people know how to be better stewards of their estates," Moore explained, "how to set up things they can do for their family, their charities and Baptist ministries. That's the heart of what we do."

He illustrated the Foundation's estate

planning function by introducing Evelyn Ward, who, along with her late husband, Ernest, established a giving plan that supports a variety of ministries ranging from churches in Arkansas and North Dakota to the Home Mission Board and Foreign Mission Board.

During his Wednesday morning report, Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine editor Trennis Henderson said the Newsmagazine "would like to share three words with you this morning: inform, inspire and involve. Those are the goals of the Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine."

"The inform part is a given," he continued. "We are a newspaper and newspapers are designed to inform. But we're not just any newspaper. We're a Christian newspaper and more specifically we're an Arkansas Baptist newspaper. We're proud to be partners with the state convention."

"When we share information, we share everything from local church news to statewide training events to international ministry efforts," he added.

In addition to information, Henderson noted, "one of my greatest joys is the opportunity to share words of inspiration through the Newsmagazine."

He related the story of Glenn and Pauline Nicholson, foreign missionaries to Panama, whose 14-year-old son died last year in an attack from killer bees. "I sat down a few weeks ago with Glenn and Pauline in one of the most heart-wrenching interviews I've ever conducted," he noted. As he wrote the article about the Nicholsons' process of grief and hope, Henderson added, he was able to share "words of inspiration and challenge and truth" through the Newsmagazine.

Henderson also emphasized that "it's not enough merely to be informed and inspired...The key is personal ministry involvement in the kingdom of God. That's what many of our articles are about."

Citing one "negative point" in his report, Henderson said, "We continue to struggle with maintaining circulation at a level that reaches as many Arkansas Baptists as possible. If you believe it is important for your members to be informed and inspired and involved on the local church level and beyond, we challenge you to be advocates to boost circulation in your church, in your association so that we can move forward together as partners in the kingdom of God."

'Becoming the Man God Uses'

Conference draws on sermons, experiences to encourage ministers

By Russell N. Dilday

Associate Editor, Arkansas Baptist

Participants at the 1996 Arkansas Baptist Pastors' Conference heard ways of "Becoming the Man God Uses." The conference, held Nov. 18 at Geyer Springs First Church in Little Rock, featured a program combining well-known Southern Baptist speakers with home-grown pastors.

The program also included election of 1997 officers. Elected by acclamation as president was Ben J. Rowell, pastor of First Church in Rogers. He was nominated by Mike McDaniel, pastor of First Church in Lake City, who called Rowell "a man God has used and is using." He noted that Rowell is "a pastor to pastors who loves the Lord" and "loves the lost."

Also elected were Gene Thomas, pastor of Magnolia Church in Crossett as first vice president, and March Gibson, pastor of First Church in Jacksonville, as secretary.

Pastors' Conference president Bill Elliff noted the purpose of this year's program is a little different. "In planning the event he felt the need for revival in our nation."

"Revival takes the sovereignty of God," he said, "but God has another component in bringing revival — it takes somebody We need to be men used by the Lord. We've identified seven primary things to be men of God. All day today we are going to look at these components."

Speakers focus on needs

Program speakers focused on those components, which included Becoming a Man of Prayer, Perseverance, Pattern, Principle, Purity, Purpose and Passion.

Gregg Greenway, pastor of First Church in Almyra, called pastors to be "a people of the closet... a people of the prayer closet," as he spoke on the theme, "Becoming a Man of Prayer." Preaching from Matthew 6, Greenway said he discovered "four things Jesus teaches us" in the passage:

- "Closet praying is different from all other types of ministry or types of prayer."
- Closet praying is planned. Greenway said "It is planned in two different ways in our lives: It is planned by us. There are times we must view the prayer closet as going to work" and "there are times that the prayer closet is planned for me."
- Closet praying is private. "Look at the word *closet* in Greek," he said. "It is an interior chamber in a house. Jesus here says, 'You need that kind of spot.'"
- Closet praying is rewarded. "What will the reward be? That's God's business."



Officers elected for the 1997 Pastors' Conference are (left to right) March Gibson, secretary; Gene Thomas, vice president; and Ben J. Rowell, president.

But thousands of times more important is the Father's presence. Jesus says there is one place where He is and that is in the prayer closet.

Greenway concluded by saying, "The response to hypocritical praying is the prayer closet. Why? Because hypocrisy cannot stand the prayer closet. There is nothing about the prayer closet that appeals to our flesh — it is a spirit activity."

Also during the morning session, H.D. McCarty, pastor of University Church in Fayetteville, spoke about "Becoming a Man of Perseverance." Preaching from Romans 5, he said, "I rejoice in the glory of God, but also in my sufferings."

McCarty said participants must look at "trinity" in becoming men of perseverance. "Nothing is real unless you see it in three parts: our part, the other part and His part. Until we see everything in three parts, we will never understand anything."

Commenting on the Ouachita Baptist University trustee selection debate among Arkansas Baptists, he said, "There is a convention side to the Ouachita problem, a Ouachita side and the Lord's side. I want to be sure I'm on that side."

He also noted a trinity to ministry. "Ministry to others is how we start out. As I got older, I began to see that I have ministry to myself. But then we have a ministry to God."

Referring to perseverance in Hebrews 12, McCarty said, "I don't care how far you've come, how much talent you have or how gifted you are, if you can't hold on, it's not enough. It's our intimacy with God that matters."

Don Whitney, assistant professor of spiritual formation at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, emphasized that "close attention to your life and doctrine" are needed to become "A Man of Pattern." Preaching from II Timothy 4, Whitney

said Paul urged Timothy to first "pay close attention to your life. Become a godly man. These are disciplines God uses to change our lives."

"Being in the ministry doesn't do that," Whitney remarked. "The things of God, because they become so mundane, make us callous. It is the Word of God, prayer and the silence of solitude that make us closer to God. None are as important as the most basic, the Word of God. Do your people know you as a godly man?"

Second, Paul urged Timothy to "pay close attention to your doctrine," Whitney said. "My impression is that most ministers are not doing that. Some see doctrine as dull or heartless,

but it is just the opposite. Others see doctrinal preachers who are dull and as dry as the inside of a basketball. It is doctrine, though, that sets the heart on fire."

Ronnie Rogers, pastor of Lakeside Church in Hot Springs, said during the afternoon session that to become "A Man of Principle," pastors must have "the principle of a pawn." Preaching from Revelation 1, Rogers said that as a pawn, the apostle John was a humble man and a man of faith.

John was a humble man. Despite extraordinary circumstances, he considered himself an ordinary Christian," Rogers explained, noting that John shared tribulation and perseverance with other Christians.

"John was banished to Patmos, but he said, 'It is all right,'" Rogers noted. "Is it all right with you and me? John can say it was okay because his goal was to be a pawn in the hand of God."

Second, Rogers added, "John was faithful to God. We find this aged, war-torn soldier of the cross banished."

"Some of you are going to be catapulted because of your faithfulness and some of you are going to be cast into obscurity because of your faithfulness," he said. "The question is, 'Will we be like John and be secure in the will of God?'"

Sharing the characteristics of the pawn chess piece, Rogers noted that "it is the least significant piece. It can only move forward. He has no will of his own. He is used to further the purpose of another. He can be promoted, but never kinged. A pawn stays put on his square, content to do so, even though others pass him by. By living the principle of a pawn, God can do more with us than Satan... can do to us."

Junior Hill, an evangelist from Hartselle, Ala., spoke to conference participants during the afternoon session on "Becoming a

Man of Passion." Preaching from 1 Corinthians 13:4, Hill confirmed "three evidences of corrupt motives," including:

■ A person with a corrupt motive always sees success as superior to service. "Many will sacrifice service on the altar of expediency because they see success rather than faithful service," Hill warned.

■ A person with corrupt motives sees performance above position. "God is not much impressed with performance, but He is with those who know their position under the Lordship of God."

■ A person with corrupt motives "always puts recognition before rewards." Hill concluded.

Hill spoke again during the evening session, telling pastors that observation, evaluation and intimidation can prevent "Becoming a Man of Purpose."

Reading from II Timothy 4: Hill said, "Folks, you're gonna get discouraged," and noted "three things that contribute to discouragement in the ministry."

■ Observation: "I am to preach the Word regardless of what I see."

■ Evaluation: "A sower can look at those seeds and try to determine which will come up or not, or he can do what God told him to do and take every one of those seeds and let God determine which of those will come up."

■ Intimidation: "I have found that most of us are ugly," Hill joked. "If God can find some old boy who is plain...and put His power on him, he should have the sense to know where it's coming from."

Southern Baptist Convention president Tom Elliff, brother of Pastors' Conference president Bill Elliff, shared the conference's closing message on "Becoming a Man of Passion." Preaching from Genesis 32 about Jacob's experience of wrestling with an angel at the brook Jabbok, Elliff said, "Jacob came to the end of himself.... There is a Jabbok in every one of us."

Elliff, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church, Del City, Okla., noted that desperation, destitution, dread and demand can call people to a meeting with God. He added that "conduct that would characterize this meeting with the Lord" includes resistance, revelation and requests.

Noting that Jacob requested a blessing from God, Elliff said, "A blessing is a sovereign act of a holy God by which He causes something or someone to supernaturally produce more than is naturally possible. I'm convinced that what the world needs to see in the pulpits of our nation is men on whom the blessing of God rests."

"The consequences from meeting with God," Elliff said, include receiving a new description, a new dynamic, a new devotion and a new distinction. "The world is looking for men of passion who are aflame," he added. "There's so much at stake."

Speakers share times of 'brokenness' during 'Potter's Pressure' vignettes

The 1996 Pastors' Conference program was punctuated by four testimonies focusing on "The Potter's Pressure." Pastors' Conference president Bill Elliff said he invited the four participants to share about "times that God broke them."

Emil Turner, Arkansas Baptist State Convention executive director, said he experienced that brokenness when he was dealt a personal tragedy through the death of a son.

As a Campus Crusade for Christ director, "We were excited about our faith, but we also were proud of our faith," Turner told the conference crowd. "We felt that there was something about our spiritual lives that set us apart."

Then, "there was a problem with Mary's pregnancy. They told me her condition was serious and the baby was in danger, he recalled. Following surgery, Turner said, "Stephen lived only six hours." Had his son lived, he added, he would now be age 20.

Driving home that night to bring clothes to the hospital, he recounted, "I said to God, 'It is not fair, you've done me wrong. You have deceived me. I don't know if my wife will live and our son has died."

"When my rage subsided, that car seemed to fill with the presence of God," Turner recalled, "and He said, 'The things that I do are right.' God does not abide by my understanding of what is right. In that car at that moment, I could say to God, 'Whatever you do, it will be right.'"

Don Whitney, assistant professor of spiritual formation at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, said he felt "The Potter's Pressure" while serving as pastor of a church that was critical of his leadership. Describing church conflict, Whitney said, "It was horrible. In 15 months my wife and I had five hospitalizations. As a result of the pressure, he added, "We lost the ability to have children."

Moving to lessons learned during that pastorate, he urged pastors to "pay attention to the importance of your life and doctrine," and added, "God prepared me to teach seminary students better than I ever could."

The "final breaking" of his time of pressure came during the beginning of a building campaign in his new pastorate. To help the campaign, Whitney sold baseball cards he had collected as a child.

"Dad died in 1985 and selling those cards was almost like selling my memories. The reason I had kept them was the hope that I could give them to my son someday. It was the final breaking of what had happened with the pressure of that pastorate. But," he concluded, "my daughter was born that year."

Southern Baptist Convention president Tom Elliff, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church in Del City, Okla., described how "The Potter's Pressure" affected his life because of the indebtedness of the Del City church. Sharing a testimony he said "I have never shared publicly," he said he discovered "there's something you can do to let every equation in your life be solved."

After accepting the call to serve First Southern in 1985, he related how "the bottom fell out of the economy" and he soon learned that interest on the church's building debt would be \$7,000 a day.

"We needed twice the income we were receiving," he recalled. "Some weeks we received just enough to pay only our building payment. It got so bad that I would get up early in the morning to get the newspaper to take out whatever was critical about us so our kids wouldn't see it."

"Never in my life had I owed money. It was humiliating. One day the Lord told me, 'If you take one thing out of the equation, any problem you've got can be quickly solved. Take yourself out.'"

As a result, he concluded, "It has been a Holy Ghost runaway. In the year 1999 the debt will be paid. God, in His love and mercy, was determined not to let this character go on until he learned to take himself out of the equation. I thank God for teaching me that lesson."

H.D. McCarty, longtime pastor of University Church in Fayetteville, recounted how he faced a series of personal problems several years ago that left him deeply depressed. Reaching the point where "all I could say was I'm alive and I'm making a living," he said the Lord told him, "I'm going to make you a model of comeback."

"He told me, 'You have to drink your cup,'" McCarty recalled. "I drank mine. Every one of you has a cup to drink."

Noting that "I was reduced to the point to where only God matters," he added, "You're never through until God's through with you."



SBC president Tom Elliff



Officers for the Arkansas Baptist Religious Educators Association are (left to right) Dennis Smith, Sherwood First Church, president; Edward Ellis, Batesville First Church, first vice president; Barry Bates, Smackover First Church, second vice president, and Peggy Pearson, ARSC church music ministries, secretary-treasurer.

Short explores church leadership styles with religious educators

People do things for their reasons, not ours," Mark Short told religious educators during their Nov. 18 meeting prior to the Arkansas Baptist State Convention. Short, executive director of the Louisiana Baptist Convention, is a specialist in administrative procedure and time management.

"We cannot motivate other people," he explained. "We can manipulate them once or twice, but then they won't trust us again."

There are three levels of biblical motivation," he noted. Motivation by fear, common in the Old Testament, is the lowest level of motivation, he explained. The next is motivation by reward, and focuses on externals like Sunday School attendance pins.

The highest level is motivation by love, Short remarked. "Leadership savvy comes in when you can get people to motivate themselves through love."

"What is a leader?" he asked participants. "It's the ability to get a group of people committed to a common task and maintain the direction of the organization."

"There are three things good leaders do," he pointed out. "They plan, implement the plan and evaluate the plan."

To succeed as church staff members, educators must understand several pastoral leadership styles, Short noted:

■ **Autocratic.** "They are beneficent dictators. These guys can move mountains, but can overlook people and process."

■ **Bureaucratic.** "They operate by the constitution and bylaws. They pay close attention to the rules."

■ **Yes'** leader. "This man can never say a negative word, not even 'no.'"

■ **Hands off'** leader. "Nothing is his responsibility. He passes everything off."

■ **Hermit.** "This man got a scintillatory Ph.D. in the 1950s and considers people a necessary evil."

■ **Company man.** "He's always at every meeting and seminar, but his church is dying due to lack of pastoral care."

■ **Participatory.** "He allows people to do what the church needs to do and is able to depend on others."

Short told religious educators they also need to be able to identify different people groups to meet the needs of the church, including:

■ **Survivors (70 and above).** "These people are the most patriotic, with values set during World War I."

■ **Truman (60-69).** "They came out of World War II and built great churches. They are very committed but are losing their energy and influence. Eighty percent of them are tithers."

■ **Boomers (35-59).** "There are 80 million of them in America. This age group is mad—they will not give and will not work in the church. They feel they need something else, but don't know what it is."

■ **Busters (18-34).** "This is the lost generation. If we lose this group...we have lost the church for the future. They respond to fellowship rather than a traditional church service."

In other business, Monty Pierce from First Church, Ed Dorado, brought a study committee report offering suggestions for improvements in the organization. According to a survey, members want to enhance fellowship, establish a network and furnish opportunities for quality training.

Strengthening families is complex goal

"If we'd known about cholesterol when I was growing up, we would have listed it and put a little gravy on it," family specialist Charles Petty joked. "Choices are so complex today—choices we didn't even have a generation ago."

Using humor throughout his sermon, Petty, an Arkansas native and president of Family Success Unlimited in North Carolina, affirmed the ARSC theme, "Strengthen Families."

"The whole way we do family is totally different than in the '40s and '50s," he pointed out. "Strengthening families has become difficult, but good families make good churches."

"Expectations in churches and the secular world are so high," he noted. "It used to be you were married until death. Now in six months, they're back here."

"Families have become so complex—a family with a working dad, a stay-at-home mom and two kids, now comprises only 8 percent of families," Petty commented. "Twenty-six percent of children are being raised by a single parent, and 20 percent are in blended families."

Even adult children operate within different parameters, he told messengers. "Nineteen million young people under the age of 35 have moved back home," he explained. "This is the boomercang generation—after they graduate from college or move out for a while, they come back."

"When the family is very diverse, what is the church to do?" Petty asked. "Preparation, enrichment, crisis ministry, pre-marital and marriage counseling—the church needs to do things all along the way."

"Do it through schedules, programs and materials," he urged. "Sit down and figure out how to be effective. Senior adult meetings need to be during the day because they have trouble driving at night; teen meetings need to be in the spring because football happens in the fall."

Petty also noted that churches need to check their schedule and structure to make sure church activities are not draining family time. "Satan is very subtle," he warned. "He knows that those who know to do good and do it not are sinning."

"Put your ego and your job behind your family," Petty urged. "Family can come and go very quickly."

College reports highlight advancement, vision

The presidents of Williams Baptist College and Ouachita Baptist University shared reports Nov. 19 on advancement and their vision for the future.

Williams president Jerol Swain presented WBC's report Tuesday morning, saying he is "grateful for what is going on at Williams Baptist College."

Swain recounted gains at the college, including approval during the 1995 state convention annual meeting for church-based fund-raising campaigns for both colleges and for "dear friends who remember us in their estates," highlighting a recent gift valued at \$700,000.

"Yet, we must award more than \$550,000 in scholarships," he added. "This would require from \$8-10 million in endowment to fund. We are still many millions away from that \$8-10 million."

Swain also highlighted two new

computer labs with Internet access, new married housing, an "outstanding student body" and the track team, which won an all-conference academic team award.

He recognized North Central Association director of missions Frank Shell and association members for renovating a dormitory wing "at a savings of \$250,000" by providing materials and labor.

"I want to encourage you in thinking about this," Shell urged. "Our suggestion is that your churches give 2 percent of your budget for the next two years" for the campaign.

Following a performance by the Ouachita Baptist University Choir, Ouachita president Ben Elrod shared his personal testimony of being a student at OBU.

"Thank God for His grace that Ouachita was there for me," Elrod said. "God spoke to me daily on that campus to help me

solidify my sense of call into His service.

"A virtual army of students is preparing right now to serve kingdom causes of tomorrow," he noted. "About 400 of the 1,600 students there right now sense the call of God to full-time Christian service. Hundreds of others will be the Christian teachers, doctors, lawyers, business people, homemakers and community leaders in our state, in our region and around the world.

"True, they could have all served God without the Ouachita experience, but it's also true that they will serve more effectively because of the Ouachita experience.

"What about the future of Ouachita Baptist University?" Elrod asked. "I can envision two scenarios. We can be marginalized by being pushed into a corner of sectarian harshness and insensitivity...or, we can be trusted and nourished into flourishing as a truly great university under the Lordship of Jesus Christ."

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From Doyle Plummer: On a recent visit to Europe, I met Del Allen, FMB representative. He has started an English-speaking church in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, and is asking Arkansas Baptists to help locate a pastor. This is the only Baptist church in the Arab Gulf. Following is a message from him regarding their needs:

"Greetings from Dubai, U.A.E. A group of Baptists from nine countries now living in Dubai wanted to start a Baptist church. We began in May 1996...we are the only Baptist Church in the entire Gulf area. We need a pastor to come over and help us either on a short term or longer basis. Requests have been submitted through the FMB, but we need someone in the interim...or perhaps someone to volunteer through the International Service Corp, FMB. Would you consider whether this might be God's call for your involvement in missions?" — Del Allen

For more information, contact Doyle Plummer or Harry Black, ABSC Brotherhood Dept., 1-800-838-2272, ext. 5190 or 501-376-4791, ext. 5190.

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MISSIONS

Arkansas Baptists hear partnership updates with Europe, Iowa

Arkansas Baptists heard updates from mission partnerships in Europe and Iowa during the state convention annual meeting. Messengers, who voted last year to extend the Iowa partnership through the year 2001, voted this year to extend the European partnership through 1999.

Harry Black, director of the Arkansas Baptist Brotherhood department, noted that projects during the first three years of the partnership with the European Baptist Convention have resulted "in 950 people coming to know Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord."

Black introduced Ray and Helen Reynolds, former Foreign Mission Board church planters for the EBC, who brought greetings from the European convention and expressed thanks for Arkansas missions efforts in Europe.

They expressed appreciation for efforts made by Black and partnership coordinator Doyne Plummer and voiced thanks for sending Arkansans as coordinators, sending training and support personnel during the EBC's summer training retreat, and for the partnership of prayer that is experienced between churches.

Ray Reynolds also highlighted current needs of the partnership, including church planters in Russia, pastors in Belgium and Germany and partner churches in France and Germany. "These are open doors and God is calling you," he added.

Arkansas Baptists also celebrated their partnership with the Baptist Convention of Iowa as they heard Steve Melvin, BCI director of evangelism and church extension, report on the partnership's progress.

Mimicking the popular "You might be a redneck if..." jokes, Melvin noted that "You might be an Iowa Southern Baptist if...you know 48 of 99 counties have no Southern Baptist witness...if you know that there were nine new church starts in 1996...if you are praying that the Lord of the harvest would send workers into the harvest field called Iowa."

Melvin reported that 37 projects were completed and 28 professions of faith were made this year during partnership efforts. He also highlighted needs, including the need for church-starting pastors, interim pastors and reciprocal projects.

Quoting Mark Twain, Melvin challenged Arkansans to minister in Iowa: "I know a man who grabbed a cat by the tail and learned 40 percent more about cats than the man who didn't," he said. "I would challenge you to grab missions by the tail and learn 40 percent more about missions than those who stay here."

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Junior Hill: Be 'refreshers,' learn from sorrows

Urging Arkansas Baptists to "be refreshers" in their pastors and to learn from their sorrows, Junior Hill presented two Bible studies during the Arkansas Baptist State Convention. Hill, an evangelist from Hartselle, Ala., replaced a scheduled Bible study leader Charles Fuller of Brinslow, Va., who could not attend because of a family illness.

Reading from II Tim. 1:16, Hill shared during the Tuesday morning session "about the ministry of refreshers."

"After all these years and preaching in hundreds of churches, I've realized in every congregation there are four basic groups," he said, listing reproducers, rebuffers, resters and "refreshers" — those special men and women of God that have the ministry of refreshing," pastors and church staff.

Hill described refreshers as being like the word in the passage "that translates as the blowing of air much like the Holy Spirit. It is the air that blows across in that causes the evaporation of perspiration."

He noted that refreshers do their work in three ways, including:

- They refresh by their presence. "We know they are going to encourage us and build us up."

- They refresh by the pen. "There is not someone here today that has not received that letter that has refreshed you."

- They refresh with the purse. "Aren't you glad for people that bless you financially just at a time when you need it?"

He also emphasized the reward of refreshers. "He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward. He that receiveth a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward," he quoted. "That means that if I refresh you, whatever you do in the name of Christ, I will share in that reward."

During his second study in the afternoon session, Hill cited Ecclesiastes 7:2,4 as he noted, "Our heart often is made better by sadness. Everything in our natural state

rebels against that, but the heart is made better by the sadness of the countenance."

"Sorrow puts us in the right position," he said. "I've learned that the blessings of God rarely reach you much about God, and seldom draw you close to God. The blessings always went through a cycle — blessings, sin, judgment. Sometimes blessings cause us to forget God. America is so blessed financially and materially that we have forgotten who the blessing is."

Citing Psalm 119:67, Hill noted, "Sorrow teaches you the right principles and it teaches you about patience. The Word of God says tribulation works patience."

It also teaches something about pride. Why did God afflict the apostle Paul? Because he had his eyes on the blessings, not on the blesser, so God gave him a thorn in the flesh.

"Sorrow teaches us something about productivity," he added. "When the breaking process begins in the heart, it produces something that couldn't come otherwise."

"The reason for all God's afflictions is that we come to the place with the Psalmist that we may delight in the Lord, where desires of our hearts are directed solely at God, then He will give what you desire."

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Ministers' Wives program focuses on home

By Millie Gill

Executive Editor

"Heaven Help the Home," the theme for the 1996 Arkansas Baptist Ministers' Wives Conference, was interpreted by sessions on time management, Bible study and help for the family. The meeting, led by president Judy Greer of Pleasant Grove Church in Conway, was held Nov. 18 at Geyer Springs First Church in conjunction with last week's state convention.

Holly Elliff of First Church in Little Rock cited the story of Mary and Martha in Luke 10 to illustrate the importance of ministers' wives managing the time which God had given them. Elliff, director of the women's ministry at her church and the mother of eight, said a basic difference between the two women was that Martha was trying to tell Christ what to do about her "hand problems" while Mary was at His feet listening to what He would have her do with her "heart problems."

"Whether you have a heart problem or a hand problem," the solution is the same," Elliff explained. "It is to allow God's Spirit to dwell within you, admitting your weaknesses to Him and trusting Him to supply all your needs."



Officers elected for the coming year are Nancy Greer (left) of Parkway Place Church in Little Rock, president, and Holly Elliff of First Church in Little Rock, vice president. Not pictured is Terry Guerra of First Church in Carlisle, secretary.

Bible study leader Barbara O'Chester of Austin, Texas, also acknowledged the pain and persecution one could encounter while ministering in Christ's name. "As you try to cheer other people in their day-to-day struggles, you will at times hit a wall of pain."

She encouraged them to keep their

eyes on Jesus as their strategy for ministry. "Remember God has not called you to do every job that has to be done in the church but rather that He has specific tasks for you which include your lives and homes being strong evangelistic witnessing tools."

Greg Kirksey, pastor of First Church of Benton, spoke about emotional and spiritual help for the family in crisis.

"The secret to discipleship is letting go of all that God owns," he declared. Kirksey cited the illness and death of his wife, Pam, as an illustration of how "letting go" enabled him to trust her to God.

"As I knelt one day by her bed about two weeks prior to her death, I heard her say very softly, 'I am so tired.' I then asked her if she wanted to quit fighting her battle with cancer and she quickly responded, 'Yes. I immediately 'let go,' telling her she didn't have to try anymore."

"I challenge you to 'let go,' entrusting to God the life He has given to you," Kirksey concluded. "As you 'let go,' you then will experience the joy of the Master."

Special music for the annual conference included a piano concert by Pam Wesel, pianist for the host church, praise choruses directed by Carla White and vocal selections by Becky Self of Monette.

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CONVENTION MUSIC

Music highlights convention's 'Strengthen Families' theme

"Strengthen Families," the theme for the 1996 Arkansas Baptist State Convention, was reflected in musical presentations throughout the two-day meeting.

Highlighting the Tuesday afternoon session theme of "Strengthen Members of the Family" was David Stanley, the 18-year-old son of Gary Stanley, pastor of First Church of Warren, who sang during the session. Also reflecting the family theme were the Powell Brothers who sang Wednesday morning prior to the annual convention sermon preached by their father, Kerry Powell, pastor of First Church of McGehee. The brothers are Brent, minister of worship and education at Calvary Church of Camden; Gary, minister of music for First Church of Forrest City; Jamie, pastor of First Church of Chatanooga, Okla.; and Chris, a student at Ouachita Baptist University.

The Sanctuary Choir and Orchestra of Immanuel Church in Little Rock reflected the Tuesday evening theme "Strengthen the Arkansas Baptist Family." Their performance, directed by minister of music Lynn Madden, came immediately before Immanuel pastor Rex Horne delivered his message as president of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention.

The Arkansas Baptist family also was represented throughout the meeting by the Master Singers Instrumentalists, the Master Singers Women's Chorus and the Master Singers Men's Chorus who performed under the direction of Glen Ennes, Jean Pilcher and Rob Hewell.

Representing the state convention's family of institutions and agencies was the Ouachita Baptist University choir directed by Charles Wright, dean of OBU's Bernard Jones School of Fine Arts. A special arrangement of "Amazing Grace," which featured Micah McRay of Arkadelphia in soloist, was among selections sung before the annual OBU report given by president Ben Elrod.

Other special music performances included One Heart, a trio composed of Linda DeArmond Young, Gina Cash and Laura Grisham of the host church, a worship band from Second Church of Little Rock directed by Kathy Cooper, and a piano concert presented by host church pianist Pam Wesel.

Congregational singing was directed by Hewell, director of the ABSP church music ministries department, Phil Wilson, a Little Rock police officer and vocational minister of music for Olive Church in Little Rock; Madden and Billy Bowrie, minister of music for First Church of Osceola; Wesel and Tim Blann, minister of music for Second Church of Little Rock; were convention accompanists.

"Arkansas Baptists should be proud," Hewell remarked. "Church musicians from every corner of the state and every place in between sang and played and led, and did it all well. They provided moments of worship, inspiration and motivation."

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UPDATE
Arkansas/European Baptist Partnership

Partnership Needs:

- * Arkansas churches to become partners with churches in: Paris, France; Bielefeld, Germany; Munich, Germany.
- * Vacation Bible School teams in 1997 for: Hoensbroek, The Netherlands; Budapest, Hungary.
- * Pastors or interim pastors for: Dubai, United Arab Emirates; Kitzingen, Germany; Giessen, Germany; Kiev, Ukraine.
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ANTI-GAMBLING UPDATE

Gambling defeat is God's victory, CCF leader affirms

"We kept our integrity with the name of Jesus Christ intact," affirmed Christian Civic Foundation executive director Larry Page. He thanked Arkansas Baptists for their anti-gambling efforts, which helped defeat the proposed gambling amendment on the November ballot.

"If God calls us to a task, He provides the resources," Page declared. Noting that "we refused money from out-of-state gambling interests," he explained that the sponsors of the four original pro-gambling amendments spent at least \$10 million or \$4 per person in Arkansas, while the Christian Civic Action Committee spent only \$400,000 or 16 cents per person.

Page pointed out that the gambling defeat was a classic grassroots effort, which had even gained the attention of the *New York Times*. "It took everyone," he said. "We needed a win in this issue — we needed a demonstration of God's sovereign power when His people take up the cause of righteousness."

"We succeeded with the voter registration drive and with voter education,"

Page told state convention messengers. "We did a lot of voter education even in secular forums. We informed people about the economic and social woes of gambling and how it perverts the role of government."

"We had the third highest vote total on the ballot after the presidential and lieutenant governor's race. We sent a message to the promoters of gambling."

"Of the issues we face today," he added, "gambling may be easiest one." He said race relations, degeneration of the sanctity of life, drug and alcohol use — especially among teens — are all issues that Christians must face today. "We need to be in the public square," he insisted. "We need to be militant — not with people — but with the ideas that will harm people."

"There needs to be a sense of urgency about what we do," Page emphasized. "If not, it comes across that we don't believe what we're saying or we don't think it's important. The world doesn't need a milquetoast church to build a righteous society."



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Family Bible

God of the impossible

By Bruce A. Swihart, director,
Church Leadership Support
Department, ARBC.

Basic passage: Luke 1:26-36

Focal passage: Luke 1:26-36

Central truth: God chooses to involve ordinary people as He carries out His divine eternal plan.

Luke shifted the story from Zechariah and Elizabeth to a place called Nazareth (v. 26). He introduced Mary a simple virgin peasant girl and Joseph, her future husband, to his gospel. Both were of the royal family of David. The significant point of the story is that God had chosen Mary to give birth to His one and only Son, Jesus (v. 27). Our God is God of the impossible. He chose simple people to be the vehicles of good news. He chose common people to do His kingdom work.

Many people have difficulty with the virginity of Mary and divinity of Jesus. To many, it is impossible for a virgin to conceive. It is also impossible to their understanding that God could produce an offspring who is both fully human and divine. The virgin birth and the incarnation are two mysteries that require faith in God, who alone can do the impossible.

Gabriel's pronouncement was perplexing to Mary (v. 29). To be "highly favored" by the Lord God was a stunning thought (v. 28). Gabriel clearly revealed to her that she was bound up in the eternal purpose of God (vv. 30-33). She did not question the possibility but asked for clarification about how this should be accomplished because of her virgin condition (v. 34). Gabriel explained the "overshadowing" through the Holy Spirit of the "power" of God (v. 35).

This "overshadowing" suggests the Shekinah glory or the hovering presence of God. Mary did not ask for proof, but received it anyway. Her proof was that her relative, Elizabeth, had conceived in her old age (v. 36). Already Elizabeth was in her sixth month of pregnancy. If God could provide this supernatural phenomenon, why not a virgin conception?

The foundation of the Christian faith rests upon the virgin birth and the incarnation. Mary's story reveals that she did not question what she was unable to understand. God continues to reach out to ordinary people and offer the opportunity of forgiveness and eternal salvation. As believers, He makes us His agents of good news. Let's join in telling the good news of

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Life and Work

Truthful testimony

By Darrell Cook, associate director,
Baptist Student Union,
Arkansas State University

Basic passage: Exodus 20:16;

1 Kings 21:1-16; Proverbs 6:16-19;

Ephesians 4:25

Focal passage: Exodus 20:16;

Proverbs 6:16-19

Central truth: Speaking the truth in love is always our standard.

The last couple of years have seen a dramatic rise of interest in the criminal justice system and how it works. There are prime time network news shows that usually have at least one feature about a current court case. There are cable networks that focus exclusively on the courts. And of course there was the trial in California that was seemingly covered by every news commentator in the world.

At the heart of any fair trial, truthful testimony is essential to the process. At the heart of any person that is seeking to be Christ like, once again truthful testimony is essential to the process. God made it clear in the ninth commandment, "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor" (Ex 20:16). His intention for our words is that they not contain falsehood, especially in situations where a false word can bring harm to our neighbor.

Unlike the courtroom setting, our truthful testimony is not dependent on being "sworn in" or "under oath." Truth telling is simply a part of who we are and who we are becoming. Every word we speak throughout the common activities of daily life should carry the same weight and dependability of a trial witness who takes seriously the implications and importance of a truthful testimony.

Proverbs 6:16-19 gives us God's view of false testimony, whether in or out of court. Among the things the Lord "hates" and "are detestable to him" (v. 16) are "a lying tongue" (v. 17) and "a false witness who pours out lies" (v. 19). God's extreme displeasure with falsehood is motivation enough to do all we can to root it out of our lives.

We are ambassadors for the one who is named "Faithful and True" (Rev. 19:11). He boldly declared to His disciples, "I am the way and the truth and the life" (John 14:6). His character is the very definition of truth, so His people need to bear His stamp as we speak "the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15).

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Explore the Bible

The unselfish servant

By Bob Harper, pastor,

First Church, White Hall

Basic passage: Matthew 13:53-14:36

Focal passage: Matthew 13:57-58;

13:13-14, 25-36

Central truth: Jesus looked beyond His own needs to meet the needs of others as the true suffering servant.

Our scripture text relates four significant events in the life of Jesus. Two of them had to be disconcerting to Jesus, the other two became unforgettable lessons in the minds of the disciples as Jesus taught them some invaluable lessons on faith. The first two relate the account of Jesus' rejection in His hometown and the death of His friend, John the Baptist. The next two show the power and compassion of a suffering servant in action. Instead of feeling sorry for himself, He performs two marvelous miracles to help heal the hurts of those around Him.

Jesus had every right to feel sorry for himself. His own townspeople were rejecting who He was and what He was doing in their midst. Because of their "lack of faith," He performed very few miracles. They were so preoccupied with His humanity they failed to see His divinity. We too are often guilty of looking only on the human side of others instead of sensing what is happening spiritually in their lives.

Topping off the rejection of Jesus was His realization of the death of John the Baptist. Upon hearing the news of John's death, Jesus withdrew to a solitary place. The crowds followed close behind, giving Jesus little or no time to grieve the death of His friend. But Jesus showed His true colors. Instead of being selfish, He turned to being a suffering servant for the needs of others.

Jesus not only healed their sick, but also fed the 5,000 with plenty to spare. This proved to be a true teachable moment for the disciples and for us. Even when He grieved, Jesus showed us that the grace of God is sufficient for all of our needs. We can still function under His power.

That evening, Jesus demonstrated His power over nature by walking to His disciples on the water. Peter discovered that with genuine faith nothing is impossible with God. Our hurts are healed as well when by faith we realize that Jesus "truly is the Son of God."

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Family Bible

An instrument

By Bruce A. Scharf, director,
Church Leadership Support
Department, ARBC.

Basic passage: Luke 2:1-20

Focal passage: Luke 2:1-7

Central truth: God uses any instrument He chooses to carry out His divine plan of redemption.

Six months passed between Chapters 1 and 2 of Luke. It was about time for Mary's baby to be born. Prophecy indicated that Christ would be born in Bethlehem (Mic. 5:2). Mary lived in Nazareth in Galilee about 80 miles away. God used a decree from Augustus Caesar to bring Mary to Bethlehem and fulfill His promise.

God even works through unbelievers to bring about His eternal divine purpose. It is possible to be an unwitting instrument to what God is doing even today. But it is much better to serve as a willing instrument of God's grace.

Luke was an instrument God used to spread the good news. The census enrollment was a focal point among some scholars concerning historical accuracy. If Luke could be proved in error here, then every statement in his writings would be under suspicion. Study of the writings of the early church fathers shows that they made reference to such an enrollment. Archaeological records also have revealed that the Roman empire had a system of census enrollments taken every 14 years.

Mary and Joseph were willing instruments in the hand of God. It was because of their faith and faithfulness to God's will that Jesus was born in a "manger" stall (v. 7). Consider God tabernacled in the womb of a young peasant woman; placed in an animal-feeding trough; born not in a palace, but in a place for animals. Consider that Joseph was not filled with jealousy or unbelief. He submitted to God's plan and became a faithful husband. Consider also that Mary submitted to God's plan even though there would be misunderstanding, embarrassment and some confusion surrounding her pregnancy.

An instrument! You and I need to be willing instruments for God. He will accomplish great things through us if we are willing to be put in the places He chooses, if we are willing to serve in the places He designs and if we are willing to be spent without reservation for His cause.

Let us share God's good news with a confused, lost world. Let us be willing instruments in the Lord's hands.

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Life and Work

Curing covetousness

By Darrell Cook, associate director,
Baptist Student Union,
Arkansas State University

Basic passage: Exodus 20:17

Joshua 7:1-24; Romans 7:7-11;

II Corinthians 6:1-4

Focal passage: Exodus 20:17

II Corinthians 6:1-4

Central truth: We are to cultivate generosity.

One of the incredible facets of the Ten Commandments is their seeming ability to sum up all laws. Even modern laws carry some relation to those stone tablets carried by Moses. Detailed copyright laws remind us, "You shall not steal" (Ex. 20:15). Perjury, libel and slander laws remind us, "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor" (Ex. 20:16).

Fortunately our society has grown past the need for the tenth commandment, "You shall not covet" (Ex. 20:17). Easy and extended credit has answered most of our problems in this area. We don't have to worry about coveting our neighbor's house when we can get the credit line to buy a better and bigger one. Our credit card can quickly end our jealousy over our neighbor's new stereo system. We should all be thankful that coveting is a thing of the past.

By now I am sure you have figured out that I am being facetious. Some might think that credit can free us from coveting because it can enable us to say, "I have" instead of "I want," but the chains of debt can take the problem of coveting to an even deeper level. Credit plans and charge cards are a symptom of the problem, not a solution to the problem.

As with all the commandments, we understand the negative prohibition better when we try to live out the positive expression of the command. We can better understand moving away from coveting and jealousy by nurturing generosity, as Paul taught the Corinthians by sharing the example of the Macedonians.

It is difficult to imagine the Macedonians as a covetous people when "their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity" (II Cor. 8:2). It is difficult to imagine them as a jealous people when "they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints" (II Cor. 8:4). We are a part of the advance of God's kingdom when we are more concerned with cultivating generosity than cultivating our credit line.

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Explore the Bible

The revelation of Jesus

By Bob Harper, pastor,
First Church, White Hall

Basic passage: Matthew 15:1-16:20

Focal passage: Matthew 15:16-20;

16:13-20

Central truth: Correct Christology reveals Jesus as the bread of life for all people.

"What's for supper? When are we going to eat?" Sound familiar? If you live in a household with children, I bet you hear these questions frequently. Christmas is a time when we especially emphasize eating.

Our scripture text deals with how we go about eating and what that reveals about ourselves. The Pharisees didn't like it that the disciples weren't putting enough emphasis on washing their hands before they ate. Their traditions had become more important to them than the content of what they were putting into their bodies.

Jesus uses their questions to teach His disciples that physical food is important, but not to the neglect of the spiritual food offered from the Father. All throughout our text, people are hungry. Some simply for physical food, others show a different hunger by their faith in the Master (v. 21-28). This faithful hunger for the touch of the Master on our lives always turns loose His healing power upon us.

The feeding of the 4,000 exemplifies this truth. The crowds were so preoccupied with the healing power of Jesus upon their lives that they had been with Him for three days and had nothing to eat. Jesus was afraid they were so physically hungry they would collapse on their way home. Thus, His second miracle of feeding took place.

The progression of our text to Peter's confession shows that Jesus was not concerned just about what was for supper and when they could have it. His concern was for them to realize who He was and what changes He would make in their lives. God revealed this to Peter. Those in God's church will realize it as well.

This kind of makes us wonder what we are spending our time on during these holidays. What are we going to eat? Who is the Father revealing to us and how will that impact His kingdom?

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CONVENTION DIGEST

SBC president urges prayer for spiritual awakening

Affirming that "people are praying that God will bring a spiritual awakening to our nation," Southern Baptist Convention president Tom Ellitt noted that "at the heart of the SBC there is a genuine concern for this nation as well as for the world."

Ellitt, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church, Del City, Okla., urged Arkansas Baptists to "join with me in praying for an awakening in our nation. We must do more than just voice our concern. It is time to wrap our arms around our nation and over our churches."

"Be a person of prayer," he concluded. "I believe Southern Baptists, more than any other denomination, are poised to be a catalyst for awakening."

Foreign Mission Board report highlights world needs

With a piece of string tied to his wrist, Fred Sorrells, a Southern Baptist missionary to Zimbabwe, illustrated the need for people to "take up the string and be a guide." Sorrells, a native of Brady, explained that while he was part of the Zimbabwe delegation to the international Para Olympic games this summer, blind athletes were led around the track by a string on their wrists, enabling them to race. "Who will take up the string?" he asked. "There are 1.7 billion people in the world without Christ."

Sorrells expressed appreciation from the Foreign Mission Board to Arkansas Baptists for their faithful support. Thanks to that support, he explained, new ministries, like sports missions, have been able to touch those not previously reached with the gospel.

Annuity Board expanding retirement, health care benefits

Retirement funds can now be evaluated daily over the telephone, Southern Baptist Annuity Board vice president Brad Thompson told convention messengers. He noted that 80,000 members have attended LifePoints meetings to decide how to invest their monies in the new diverse funds. He also expressed thanks for those who participate in the Adopt an Annuitant plan, which assists retired ministers whose funds are inadequate.

Representative Doug Day explained that the board is seeking to help control the alarming rise in health care costs, noting that there is no insurance increase projected for 1997. He also reported that more choice will be available in managed care in 1997, with new products available in all counties in Arkansas.

Patterson notes CP support reduces student indebtedness

Paige Patterson, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, thanked messengers for their support on behalf of the six Southern Baptist seminaries. He noted that a national study has determined that the six SBC seminaries have the lowest student indebtedness among all seminaries. "This is because of CP support," he affirmed.

"Our Foreign Mission Board will not appoint a student with outstanding indebtedness to go to the field," he added. Because of CP support, however, students are able to graduate with little or no debt and can qualify more quickly to serve overseas.

Declaring that revival has broken out at Southern Baptist seminaries, Patterson said students "get a good education with the spirit of a camp meeting."

Bold Mission Prayer Thrust seeks prayer warriors

"How important do we really think prayer is?" asked Dave Greenman, Bold Mission Prayer Thrust coordinator. "God has been doing wonderful things to call people to prayer." Describing easy ways to become a people of prayer, Greenman encouraged churches without a prayer ministry to start one. "Find a prayer warrior who believes everything should be bathed in prayer," he suggested, and let that person be the center of the prayer ministry. He said other opportunities include participating in the annual day of prayer for spiritual awakening or setting aside a day, weekend or week for prayer.

Greenman encouraged Arkansas Baptists to attend the Prayer Practicum on May 2-3 to learn practical ways to take steps to win one's community for Christ.

World hunger funds mean life, health for hungry people

"Hungry people don't have time to wait," emphasized Tommy Goode, an associate in the ABSC missions department and chairman of the Arkansas World Hunger task force. "Fifteen million people are at risk of starvation, with governments holding hungry people hostage," he noted.

He reported that Baptist giving to world hunger is at a 10-year low. "All gifts are used for hunger and mean life and health for hungry people," Goode explained. One hundred percent of Southern Baptist world hunger gifts go to relieve hunger, with no administrative costs. With hunger needs ranging from Rwandan refugees to the elderly in northwest Arkansas, it is time to give, Goode said.