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Arkansas Baptist State Convention

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ARKANSAS BAPTIST

news magazine

SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL
LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES
Nashville, Tennessee
DEC 16 1997



Christians celebrate Christ's birth in a variety of ways. Several Arkansas Baptist churches are celebrating Christmas through a spirit of giving and service to others.

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Increased relief giving meets needs overseas

Marty Croll

SBC International Mission Board

SOUTHERN BAPTISTS have increased their giving to human needs this year, allowing the International Mission Board to respond to major world crises that have left people lacking adequate food and water.

Through October, the IMB had received just over \$4 million for hunger and relief, an increase of about 23 percent over the same period last year. If gifts continue at that rate, receipts at year's end will total \$7.3 million, compared to \$5.9 million for 1996.

But needs have sharply increased, too. In the past month, the IMB has sent \$400,000 overseas, responding to drought in Indonesia, famine in Tanzania, a typhoon in North Korea and economic woes in Bulgaria. Missionaries also expect to respond to an earthquake in Chile, a tropical storm in Mexico and flooding in Spain.

"It seems the number and the severity of disasters that we have been asked to respond to have increased," said Bill Cashion, the IMB's consultant for human needs. "We're rejoicing over the increased giving, but our hearts are burdened as we see disasters increasing all over the world."

Overwhelming global needs

Cashion's office responded to 500 inquiries about overseas suffering in October, a sharp increase from the average 20 his office has taken per month during the past three to four years, he said. "It's as if God is saying, 'There are people who are going to send the help you're needing,' and then He's sending us an increase in funds from these people."

In North Korea, already wracked by years of flood-induced famine, a recent typhoon destroyed key salt reserves. North Koreans use salt to prepare kimchi, a staple dish made of pickled cabbage. An estimated 100,000 metric tons of salt will be needed to replace what was lost, Cashion said. In cooperation with Texas Baptist Men, the IMB has donated \$50,000 toward sending the country 2,000 metric tons of salt.

The IMB already has released about \$1.5 million during the past 18 months to respond to North Korea's famine. In addition, Baptist state conventions working with Woman's Missionary Union and Brotherhood groups have sent more than 30 ocean containers of food. North Korean government officials credit Southern Baptists with \$5 to \$7 million in aid, Cashion said.

Indonesia is bracing for up to two more years of drought resulting from unfavorable trade winds - the effect of "El Nino" - carrying moisture away from parts of East Asia. "They're having to go deeper and deeper down to find water," Cashion said. The IMB has released \$153,247 to buy drilling equipment and to pay for labor to drill 100 deep wells during the next two years. "Water from the new wells will save thousands of people, especially children, from the jaws of death," he said.

Bulgarian churches benefited last year as unbelievers were introduced to Jesus by receiving food packets in the midst of a harsh winter. This year the IMB will provide \$100,000 to Bulgarian Baptists to provide food packets to their own members, plus jobless Gypsies and Turks, as well as others around their churches who have no incomes.

In Tanzania, missionaries and area Baptists have chosen 18 churches as distribution points for about \$75,000 worth of food and seed. Tanzanian Baptists expect to start a new church near each of the distribution points.

RICHMOND, VA (BP)

ARKANSAS BAPTIST

news magazine



Cover Story

'Let us adore Him'

As Arkansas Baptists prepare to celebrate the birth of Christ, many churches are using the holiday season to help others in need.

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Beyond the pageants

Arkansas Baptists share food, clothing along with holiday hope

CHRISTMAS IS A TIME when many Baptists focus on family, entertaining and — yes — shopping to prepare for the holiday season. Others busy themselves preparing for the number of Christmas cantatas and pageants that many churches use as the prime witnessing tool in their communities during Christmas.

Many churches seek to minister to the physical needs of those around them, offering food, clothing, toys — and hope — to help meet spiritual needs.

Among those is First Church in Benton, which concentrates on a food ministry. Rick Grant, associate pastor at First Church, said the congregation's largest Christmas ministry is at its Care Center.

"When we have holiday celebrations, the attendance nearly doubles," he said about the Care Center. He said the ministry "originated as an off-campus mission location to address the physical needs of our community, to spread the gospel and change physical lives." It involves members, community organizations and businesses.

During Thanksgiving and Christmas, said Grant, "We celebrate the holiday a week before the holiday takes place. At Thanksgiving, we cooked 200 chickens to feed the families and Sunday School classes are buying sweat shirts for Care Center families."

Blessing Baskets

For sheer volume and organization, the Blessing Baskets program of First Church in Springdale may be the largest holiday ministry in the state. Doug Sarver, minister of missions for First Church administers the Blessing Baskets ministry for Mission Northwest Arkansas, the local missions and community outreach of the church.

"A Blessing Basket is a grocery bag of holiday foods plus a little more," he said. "It's more than a Christmas meal, enough for about three meals. Along with the basket, there is a fresh-baked loaf of bread, fruit and a turkey."

During the Thanksgiving Blessing Baskets ministry, he said, the church served 1,224 families in an effort that saw 247 professions of faith and 39 baptisms. In its sixth year, the ministry is scheduled again for the Monday before Christmas. Sarver said volunteers hand-deliver "Celebration Service" invitations to the doors of multi-housing residents in areas targeted by the church's extension ministries.

"We build a rapport throughout the year," he said. "Then we send volunteers into those locations and distribute about 4,000 invitations."

While some volunteers distribute invitations, others assemble baskets for members to "purchase." The basket contents are assembled, he said, with the help of area agencies and businesses which discount the needed items.

The church will then hold an "Ingathering Day," he said, "where our members purchase and bring their baskets to church." Prior to receiving Blessing

Baskets, recipients register and attend the Christmas Celebration Service at First Church, which holds the event at three times.

"The service is upbeat," Sarver explained. "The theme is 'There is Healing for All,'" he added, noting that many of the participants "are like sheep without a shepherd. They look downcast. We have testimonies from people who have been there, we include drama and music. I share Christ and we extend an invitation."

While the purpose of the Blessing Baskets is to win the lost, he noted, "the food says, 'We care about your real needs: You need as you see them. We have no agendas.' They see food as their basic need."

While many churches attend to those basic needs, others, such as First Church in Piggott, are spreading Christmas cheer through gifts. Pastor David Smith reported that members "raised money and bought Christmas presents for 75 kids associated with our van ministry" this year.

"Our benevolence committee coordinated it as a churchwide project," he explained. "Members picked the child and bought the gifts and the rest were donations from the church."

"Some of the gifts were toys," he said, "but a lot were clothing because these kids don't have a lot of basic clothing items, such as coats and shoes. There was one family that sleeps on the floor and doesn't have any furniture."

Smith said the church adopted the project because "they need to know that this church cares for them and this is our way of demonstrating that Christ cares for them."

Like the Springdale ministry, the Piggott ministry is the culmination of years of cultivation, said Smith. "This church sees these kids every week. Our workers have been in their homes. Our church members sit with the children during worship. A lot of them bought gifts for the kids they sit with."

"These families are responding to this," he emphasized. "We've seen dramatic changes in these kids' lives. One, now a teenager, was stand-offish but is now active in doing ministry here."

Second Church in Little Rock provides a unique Christmas ministry — carrying out the bequest of George Dame, a former Little Rock resident who died in 1981 in San Francisco. The Dame estate provides several thousand dollars a year, said Second Church pastor Ray Higgins, to feed and clothe needy children.

"We give them a box of food that includes a Bible," he explained. This year's project, held Dec. 6, saw members "take 96 children in 25 families, one with as many as 11 children, to purchase clothes and one toy."

The church received the ministry responsibility in part because Dame, who grew up poor in Little Rock, was helped through feeding ministries at Second Church when he was a child.



“The food says, ‘We care about your real needs. ... We have no agendas.’ They see food as their basic need.”

DOUG SARVER
Minister of missions,
First Church,
Springdale



A Pastor's Heart



Emil Turner

ABCs Executive Director

THE ADOPTION AGENCY called on Christmas Eve. The young couple could hardly believe it! A new baby, one for which they had prayed for so long. It was as if the silence of the universe had been broken with a shout of joy.

Late that night they talked about God's goodness to them, then in the early morning hours of Christmas day, the obvious finally became clear. This was the second child given to them, not the first. This child came as an act of love from its parents. Because they loved the baby and because they knew they could never give it a home, they gave the child to someone who could show it more love

than they could show it.

The first Child, however, came differently. He came as an act of love not for the Child, for those who received the Child. Not because they could provide a better home for the Child, but because the Child could provide a better home for them.

The beauty of Christmas is that we have all received a Child. Yet, we are the ones who have been adopted.

Mary, Joel, Jonathan and I hope that your Christmas is great!

■ Have you read *Firefall* by Malcolm McDow and Alvin Reid? (Broadman & Holman, 1997). This would be a good book to give your pastor. It is the first history of revivals I've seen that deals with the biblical revivals as well as those in recent history. It has excellent preaching and illustration material. *Firefall* will make you pray for it to happen again.

Executive director's schedule:

Dec. 14 FBC, Dalhart, TX

Dec. 21 East End, Little Rock

Dec. 24-Jan. 1 Baptist Building closed for Holidays

Woman's Viewpoint



Diana Lewis

First Church, Benton

IN MAY 1996 I had the privilege of going on a mission trip to Romania. Our team saw many people come to know Christ on that trip.

One day, our team was walking the streets in a little village called Vieru. We came upon a young woman and her daughter sitting on a rock outside the courtyard of their home. As one of our team members began to share the gospel with her, her heart began to open to Christ and she prayed to become a believer. As we were leaving, she said to us, "No one has ever told me about Jesus before." As I returned from Romania to my ministry here in Arkansas with low-income families, I wanted to understand what God was trying to teach me about my ministry here.

Sometimes the changes where I work, and the ministry are very slow. I haven't yet had a day where I see 14 people come to know Christ in one day like I did in

Romania. But many of the people I work with here have never had anyone to love with God's love before.

God has shown me that reaching people here is not really any different from reaching people in Romania. The people who live down dirt roads in rural Arkansas or live down dirt roads in Romania, are all saying to us, "No one has ever told me about Jesus before."

Some of them are saying, "No one has ever taken the time to hold my child who is wearing dirty, torn clothes on the their lap before and taught my child the song 'Jesus Loves Me.'" Others are saying, "No one has taught me to read so that I can learn to read the Bible." Someone is saying, "No one has ever told me that He is the hope and peace and the best friend I could ever have." Someone who lives near you may be saying, "No one has ever told me and shown me how He has made a difference in their life." God is teaching me that the world is saying to us, "No one has ever really told me about Jesus before."

Diana Edmondson Lewis, a North American Mission Board missionary, works with the Arkansas Baptist missions department and Central Association. A member of First Church, Benton, she and her husband, John, a chaplain, have one child, Caleb. She has been the director of Dixonville Baptist Center for seven years.

quotes

"Our attempt to keep making progress toward the American dream requires us to make progress on the issues of race."

— President Bill Clinton

"If the preacher makes himself the front porch to the house of God, the people will feel welcome and will want to come in."

— Gerald Stone, author of *God's Front Porch*

"The whole school is now turning to God. It's not just a little circle anymore."

— Brittney Thomas, student

at Heath High School in Kentucky, site of last week's fatal shooting

ARKANSAS BAPTIST

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'Rejoice with exceeding great joy'

CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS are a cherished part of the holiday season. Whether it's going to Grandma's house on Christmas Eve, hanging stockings above the fireplace or reading the Christmas story together from Luke 2, most families have very specific traditions surrounding their annual Christmas celebration.

While family traditions are wonderful, the risk is that traditions can easily slip into nothing more than routines which gradually lose their original significance.

The dictionary defines tradition as "an established or customary pattern of action or behavior." Sounds pretty good. By contrast, routine is described as "a habitual or mechanical performance of an established procedure." Not quite as inviting, is it? A further risk is that tradition/routines slowly sink into a rut—"a monotonous routine." Yuk!

So much for our yuletide vocabulary lesson. The real question is: In what ways will your Christmas celebration be fresh and new this season? Along with our years of tradition, we need to recapture the joy and wonder of the first Christmas.

Remember the reaction of the shepherds who were "glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen"? What about the wise men who "rejoiced with exceeding great joy"? When was the last time that spontaneous worship was a significant part of your Christmas experience?

The reality is that familiarity with the miracle of Bethlehem has allowed us to almost ignore the Christ of Christmas. We often trudge through the holiday season with a Scrooge-like wish that we merely endure another year of too-slow shopping lines, too many parties and too little time. Traditions slip into routines which collapse into ruts.

Straight from the Editor



Trennis Henderson
Editor, Arkansas Baptist

How do we break the cycle? A starting point is to reexamine the traditions that are part of our lives. Which ones are worth preserving? Which ones need dumping? Which ones should be added?

While gift buying and giving will always be a key element of any American Christmas celebration, an even more significant gift is discovering ways to give of yourself. We all recall the homemade cards and the "art" projects made out of paper plates, popsicle sticks and glitter that Mom and Dad always insisted were their favorite gifts. As we grew older, however, it seemed more appropriate to pull out our checkbooks or credit cards to make Christmas wishes come true.

How can we regain the true joy of Christmas? One way is to give generously to those in need. Southern Baptists have made the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering synonymous with December for decades. There are few actions more in keeping with the spirit of the season than to help fund efforts to spread the gospel throughout the world.

Don't think that you're done with Christmas giving by writing one check a year to Lottie Moon, however. One creative giving opportunity the International Mission Board has announced is an effort to supply 180,000 winter coats

to protect North Korean children from the upcoming bitter winter. North Korean officials have asked that the coats arrive by Dec. 25 to help keep thousands of needy children from freezing to death.

The project is jointly sponsored by the IMB, North American Mission Board and Woman's Missionary Union. IMB officials have requested that participants in the "Coats for Christmas" drive send financial contributions or new or good, used coats to their office by Dec. 15. Those interested in providing resources may contact the IMB's human needs office at 1-800-866-3621 for details.

Closer to home, a recent article in Associated Baptist Press offered a series of suggestions for personalizing family Christmas celebrations. Among the ideas listed were:

- Go Christmas caroling together.
 - Give "gift certificates" for back rubs, shoveling snow or stacking wood.
 - Print favorite recipes on cards and give to friends.
 - As a family project, adopt a nursing home resident and establish an ongoing relationship.
 - Create your own game of family trivia.
 - Serve food at a soup kitchen or deliver food to shut-ins.
 - Schedule a specific time during the holidays to read Bible stories and share your favorite Christmas memories with your children.
 - Read a book to your grandchildren on tape.
 - Arrange for an old friend to call your parents and share memories.
- Whatever traditions you and your family choose to share together this Christmas, make certain to discover ways to "rejoice with exceeding great joy." Merry Christmas.

'Hark! The Herald Angels Sing'

William J. Reynolds

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

LESS THAN A YEAR after his conversion experience at Aldersgate, Charles Wesley wrote these lines in 1738. In his lifetime he wrote no fewer than 6,500 hymns, but this may be the best known of all.

No one surpasses Charles Wesley in filling a short hymn with an extraordinary amount of scriptural truth. Because the hymn is so familiar, we tend to overlook its full theological impact.

Wesley wanted all who sang these lines to understand more fully the redemptive and reconciling mission of Christ. He added line upon line, truth upon truth, doctrine upon doctrine to emphasize that Christ came to redeem all mankind.

The dominant theme of the hymn is found in the fourth line of the first stanza: "God and sinners reconciled." Here is a theological masterpiece in concise, terse lines.

The tune that has become so identified with this text has a fascinating story. In 1840, Felix Mendelssohn wrote a festive choral work for men's voices and brass instruments for the 400th anniversary celebrating Johannes Gutenberg's invention of printing by movable type.

Fifteen years later, William H. Cummings, an English musician, was struck by the fact that the melody from the second chorus of Mendelssohn's work was a perfect fit for Wesley's hymn. He made the adaptation, and it has become a perennial holiday favorite.

Unfortunately, Mendelssohn died in 1847 and never knew of the use of his melody for this classic Christmas hymn.

Arkansans among 57 appointed as international missionaries

FIVE PEOPLE with Arkansas connections were among 57 workers appointed by the Southern Baptist International Mission Board Nov. 19 during a service in Leavell Chapel at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

The appointments brought the number of new missionaries this year to more than 600, continuing a five-year upward trend. Nearly 4,300 IMB missionaries are now under assignment.

Todd and Anne Beel will live in Mexico, where he will start and develop churches. From 1993 through 1995 they were North American Mission Board (formerly Home Mission Board) church planter apprentices in Illinois, where he was pastor of First Baptist Church/Primera Iglesia Bautista in West Chicago.

Born in Forrest City, Beel is a graduate of Baylor University in Waco, Texas, and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He served as a chaplain in the U.S. Army Reserve and Illinois Army National Guard.

Mrs. Beel, the former Anne Gaeke, considers Houston her hometown. She is a graduate of Baylor University. The Beels have three children: Rachel, Stephanie and Leah.

Marvin and Peggy Emmons will live in Portugal, where he will serve as pastor of International Baptist Church in Lisbon. He has been pastor of Finch Church in Paragould since 1993.

Emmons is the son of Sallie Byars of Imboden and the late Marvin L. Emmons. While growing up he also lived in Ravenwood Springs, and he considers Central Church in Jonesboro his home church. He is a graduate of Mid-America Seminary in Memphis. He also attended Arkansas State University in Jonesboro; Memphis University; and Union University in Jackson, Tenn. He has been pastor of New Hope Baptist Church in Black Oak and interim pastor of First Church in Fisher.

Mrs. Emmons, who was born in Water Valley, is the daughter of Chris and Louise Mitchell of Imboden. A graduate of Williams Baptist College, she also considers Central Church in Jonesboro her home church.

Joel M. Matheny will live in Spain,



Todd & Anne Beel



Marvin & Peggy Emmons

where he will work in literature distribution and promotion. He attends Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and is a member of Second Church in Little Rock.

Matheny was born in Peru, where his parents were Southern Baptist missionaries. They also served in Ecuador. He also lived in Fayetteville while growing up. He is a graduate of the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville and the University of Arkansas in Little Rock.

He has served in Spain through the International Mission Board's journeyman program and was a research assistant at the University of Arkansas in Little Rock.

IMB president Jerry Rankin warned the new missionaries Satan will do anything he can to derail their ministries, and he urged them to persevere against whatever forces of evil they face.

He cited recent terrorist attacks in such places as Egypt and Pakistan as examples of how Satan tries to scare off Christians seeking to spread the gospel into satanic strongholds. Satan also seeks to use closed borders and cultural barriers to discourage missionaries, he said.

"But also remember, because you go in Jesus' name and with His power and authority, He goes with you," Rankin said. "You will find the demons are subject to you, and the gates of hell will not prevail against you."

"God is sending you to the lost people of the world because it is His plan to bring all the peoples of the world to Him. Walk in faithfulness and obedience to your Lord Jesus Christ."

The appointees will go to the International Mission Board's training center in Rockville, Va., in January for orientation before leaving for their fields of service.



Joel Matheny

Youth conference urges 'code blue' evangelism effort

ARKANSAS BAPTIST YOUTH and their leaders can still order tickets for the 1997 Youth Evangelism Conference, said Randy Brantley, an associate in the Arkansas Baptist State Convention evangelism department.

He noted that department personnel will continue to mail out reserved tickets until Dec. 15. "If you wait until after Dec. 15, we recommend that you buy them at the door, simply because at Christmas, we can't guarantee you'll receive them by mail in time," he explained, adding that groups planning to purchase tickets at the door need not worry. "We are not anticipating turning anyone away at the door."

The conference, popularly known as Joy Explo, will be held Dec. 29-30 at the Statehouse Convention Center in Little Rock. Brantley said the program will highlight the theme, "Code Blue!" — a hospital term for a life-or-death emergency.

He said the program will focus on training, inspiration and entertainment. "The conference is a platform for presenting the state youth evangelism strategy as we continue to equip teenagers to live radically for Jesus. This dynamic gathering is drawing young people and their leaders for an incredible time of prayer, praise, worship and celebration."

The program will include: Bill Jones, a youth communicator from Columbia (S.C.) International University; Bulgarian Baptist pastor Teddy Oprenov; drama with Paul and Nicole Johnson; and praise and worship, with David Bell and the Good Stuff Band.

The program also will feature recording artists Two or More and 4Him; who Brantley said "will perform all 17 of their No. 1 hits, something they're not planning to do at their Christmas concert."

The cost is \$8 per person for regular seating. Brantley also urged students to each bring \$1 to achieve a conference goal of a \$5,000 offering for food relief and pastoral training in Bulgaria. For more information, contact Brantley toll-free in state at 1-800-838-ABSC or locally in Little Rock at 376-4791, ext. 5222.

Conference gets new look

Planners add breakout sessions, 'dinner & dialogue' to program

ARKANSAS BAPTISTS will see a new look and a new format during next year's Evangelism Conference, including small-group sessions, "dinner & dialogue" sessions and training in a new mapping strategy for church growth.

The 1998 Conference on Evangelism: "Equipping and Igniting for Church Growth in the 21st Century" will be held Jan 26-27 at Immanuel Church in Little Rock. The new format and program features, evangelism department director Sonny Tucker explained, are a blend of "empowered preaching, heart-thumping music and practical ministry techniques that will strengthen and support your ministry throughout the coming year."

He said the changed format was implemented because "I want us to walk away better equipped to reach Arkansas for Christ."

'Jesus new and fresh'

Noting that he "does not want this conference to be merely a parade of popular preachers," he said his goal for the program is "to see Jesus new and fresh."

The conference will feature keynote speakers: Charles Lowrey, senior pastor of Hoffman Town Baptist Church in Albuquerque, N.M.; Frank Harber, a vocational evangelist and president of the Conference of Texas Baptist Evangelists; Bailey Stone, director of evangelism for the Baptist General Convention of Texas; Fred Wolfe, pastor emeritus of Cottage Hills Baptist Church in Mobile, Ala., and founder of Barnabas Ministries, a pastoral encouragement ministry; and Ed Young Jr., senior pastor of Fellowship of Las Colinas in Dallas.

The keynote speakers will join ABCS executive director Emil Turner to lead 10 breakout sessions, a new feature of the conference. Evangelism department associate Randy Brantley said the sessions offer strategies "that reflect the blending of evangelism and church growth."

The sessions will include such titles as: "How to Reach Secular People"; "Side Door Evangelism in a Front Door Church"; "Closing the Back Door - Keeping Those New Members"; "Becoming Visitor Friendly Without Biblical Compromise"; "Children and Conversion"; "Witnessing Techniques for Those Without the Gift of Evangelism"; "Three Models for Church Visitation Programs"; "Battle for a Generation - Key Principles

for Reaching Students for Christ"; "How to Grow Your Church Without Being Fired"; and "Breaking the 100, 200, 400, 600, and 1,000 to 5,000 Growth Barriers."

The program also will feature five "dinner & dialogue" sessions geared to different interest groups. Monday evening sessions will include dinners for vocational evangelists, participants of the Baptist Doctrine Study overview and ministerial students from Ouachita Baptist University and Williams Baptist College.

Tuesday evening sessions will include a dinner for pastors and staff and another for Baptist Student Union directors, college ministers and youth ministers. All dinners will begin at 5 p.m. and the cost is \$6.50 per person (ministerial students are invited to eat free of charge).

During the Tuesday morning session, participants may attend a live demonstration of the Mapping Center for Evangelism resource. Brantley said the Mapping Center "is a computer-based software program that helps churches with new-member assimilation."

"It is a North American Mission Board-supported resource that NAMB is using to track Celebrate Jesus 2000, but has local church implications," he explained. "It is an affordable program for churches that uses the technology that Fortune 500 companies have been using for years."

Worship will be led in music by the contemporary Christian group The Sound, well-known gospel composer Dick Baker and the Master-Singers of Arkansas.

There is no cost for the Evangelism Conference. For additional information, contact the ABCS evangelism department toll-free in state at 1-800-838-ABSC or locally in Little Rock at 376-4791, ext. 5128.



Frank Harber



Charles Lowrey



Bailey Stone

Evangelists' Festival to precede conference

THE SIXTH ANNUAL Festival of Evangelists will be held Jan. 26, 1998, at Immanuel Church in Little Rock, in conjunction with the 1998 Conference on Evangelism.

The festival will focus on the theme, "Revival of Hope," said planner Clarence Shell. "I wanted the theme to say that, in spite of all the gloom in the world today, there is still hope for those who have faith in Christ."

Shell, president of Arkansas Vocational Evangelists, is the retired director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention evangelism department.

He said the program will be a reflection of the theme and will be supported by the program's keynote speakers. Kerry Powell, an evangelist from Warren, will speak on "Hope for the Future"; Sonny Tucker, director of the ABCS evangelism department, will speak on "Hope for the Church"; and Bailey Stone, director of evangelism for the Baptist General Convention of Texas, will speak on "Hope for the Lord."

The festival also will feature Dick and Connie Sagor, music evangelists from Berryville, the Liseby Family, music evangelists from New Edinburg, and Andrea Worley, a music evangelist from Little Rock.

The program will begin at 9:45 a.m. and conclude at 11:45 a.m.

There is no cost for the program, "not even an offering," added Shell. A banquet that evening for all full-time evangelists in the state will be sponsored by the new ABCS evangelism and church growth team.

'A friend to pastors'

James Walker to retire as ABSC stewardship & annuity director

By Russell N. Dilday

Associate Editor, Arkansas Baptist



AS DIRECTOR of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention stewardship and annuity department, James Walker said he has had an opportunity to impact Arkansas Baptists financially while influencing their giving habits, as well.

Walker, who has served as department director since 1977, will retire on March 15, 1998, just two weeks after his 21st year of service. He said it is his "direct impact on people's lives" for which he most wants to be remembered.

"All of us are economic beings in the sense that we have to deal with financial matters," he explained. "There are three things you can do with money: You can spend it, you can share it and you can save it. My two primary focuses have been on the sharing and the saving, because people don't need help with spending their money. I've advocated people sharing 10 percent and saving 10 percent."

From 1977 to 1983, his duties included assisting churches with stewardship needs and promoting the Cooperative Program. In 1983, the department's duties shifted to include local church stewardship promotion and serving Southern Baptist employees and their families as a representative for the Southern Baptist Annuity Board's retirement program.

A native of Harrison, Walker is a graduate of Ouachita Baptist University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has served as pastor of churches in Wimberly and Houston, Texas, and as pastor of First Church in Warren.

Walker noted that among the "joys" he has experienced has been "the one-on-one type of ministry that I've been able to have - sitting down with individuals and staff members and feeling that I've had some input into their lives."

"When you're dealing with finances, they're not always the most popular thing to deal with," he acknowledged, "but they can be dealt with with integrity and without being offensive or manipulative."

ABSC associate executive director Jimmie Sheffield said that one of Walker's "greatest contributions is that he has been a personal friend to many Arkansas pastors and staff members who needed help with retirement and a great friend to annuitants and widows and widowers who needed help with retirement funds."

Sheffield noted that Walker also has "made contributions in the area of stewardship, traveling to churches and associations to let them know how to do good budgeting and

managing of resources and helping pastors manage salaries and adjustments, keeping them current with the marketplace."

In addition to his one-on-one ministry, Walker said he has "been able to do a lot of conferences. Through this year, I've been in 817 churches, speaking on everything from tax issues for local churches, conferences on budgeting, committee meetings on how to establish a salary package and what's fair and equitable for church employees to conferences on planning for retirement, filling out retirement forms, assistance for retired ministers and their widows, introduction of capital fund programs and budget promotion programs."

Along with the joys, he remarked, have also come disappointments. "One of the biggest flops we ever tried to promote was Planned Growth in Giving, a budget promotion that tried to move people toward the tithe. It was so massive and revolutionary, most people weren't ready to buy into it. One told me, 'We wanted something new for years, but not this new.'" After one Planned Growth meeting, he recalled, "I wanted to crawl under the bed."

The issue of tithing also has provided a source of concern for Walker during his tenure. "The average Southern Baptist gives between 2.5 and 3 percent of his income. It's been a matter of concern, but I've had to be able to accept the reality of people sharing their resources."

Despite a lack of tithing, Walker has noted "a slight increase in the percentage of giving in the churches. That's great, especially when you take into account the inflation rate and per capita income. People have probably had more to give and their resources have increased, but I would like to think they've been more sensitive to the needs of their churches."

Walker also noted changes he has observed over the years while working with Annuity Board program participants.

"Our participants are really more aware of the marketplace and investment opportunities through the Annuity Board's expansion into stock funds," he said. "They have changed their style of investment. More have moved from the fixed investments to equity investments."

When Walker began servicing annuity participants in 1983, 1,006 participants were enrolled in the retirement program. That figure has climbed to more than 1,400, he said, adding that "1997 has been the best year in the number of enrollments. Through October, we had 158 new participants. You like your final year to be a good year."

Walker said he will be "forever grateful for the graciousness and the warmth" he has felt from Arkansas Baptists and Annuity Board staff. "I'm thankful for the opportunity to share in their ministry."

He said future plans for him and his wife, Mattie, include "travel, yard work and gardening - growing flowers is my hobby" - as well as any "ministry opportunities the Lord may open for us."

“There are three things you can do with money: You can spend it, you can share it and you can save it. My two primary focuses have been on the sharing and the saving, because people don't need help with spending their money. I've advocated people sharing 10 percent and saving 10 percent.”

JAMES WALKER
Retiring director,
ABSC stewardship
& annuity department



Net ministry: www.your church.com

Colleen Backus

Assistant Editor, Arkansas Baptist

SURFING THE NET. Out on the Web. Cruising the information superhighway. Whatever the terminology, the Internet has become an integral part of life as we approach the 21st century. Although many Christians are concerned about the kinds of material available on the Net, churches and religious organizations across the country have recognized it as a new ministry tool.

■ www.churchatrockcreek.org

The Church at Rock Creek, a contemporary worship congregation, has a web page that captures their unique style online.

"We see it as an outreach tool to people who surf the Net, not primarily a tool to communicate with our members," said pastor Mark Evans. "Just about everything we do is about reaching unchurched 'Harry and Mary.'

"You can download video clips of interviews with church members — one with the governor and another with a lady who shares that the church helped to reach 15 of her family member for Christ — telling about what Rock Creek means to them," he noted.

"People get a glimpse of our style, with pictures and information about the church," Evans said. "We also tell people how to have a relationship with Lord; that emphasizes our church theme of having a relationship with each other and the Lord."

Gary Underwood, technical minister for the church, explained that a web page is "like any other significant program that you are using to reach people. You don't create it and just leave it. You have to keep it fresh.

"Some churches wonder about the value of yellow page ads — they think people know where they are," Underwood pointed out. "That's not necessarily true. You need to communicate phone numbers, staff information and current things that are going on."

Underwood offered several suggestions for churches thinking about setting up web pages.

"Find a reputable Internet service provider that will host the web page," he shared. "They will have the technical expertise to deal with the mechanics."

"Unless someone in the congregation has extensive web experience, have a professional build the page," Underwood added. "It's worth the cost.

"If some people are very proficient in desktop publishing, get them involved in helping maintain it. Once it's built, it's pretty easy to do.

"You need to aggressively search out ways to connect to and from your site," he said. "Also, commit yourself to be linked by e-mail. When they ask for information or a visit while on-line, be sure to follow up. Every reply that you get needs to be answered.

"Remember that you are dealing with the entire family — you are just as likely to have a 60-year-old retiree on-line as you are a seven-year-old interested in summer camp," Underwood remarked. "You are likely to make contact with all different age groups, so you shouldn't restrict yourself to all sections looking the same. A common thread is good, but graphics for teens should be different than those for adult ministry. These people are visiting your church electronically."

■ www2.arkansas.net/kevin/msbc.htm

Markham Street Church in Little Rock has a web page because "it's doing ministry in the 1990s," explained worship pastor Dave Spear.

"There are many ways of telling the story of your church to people. This is a non-confrontational way to look and see what we have to offer," Spear said. "Hopefully, people can find out a little bit about our church, enough of an idea that if they are a new family to the area...our web page is indicative of what we have available.

"It is always a work in progress — it's easy to get out of date," Spear acknowledged. Affirming that the web site "is another ministry in our church," he said the church member who keeps the page updated "loves computers. It has equipped him to serve in an area he is passionate about."

■ ebc.iso.net/

The web page for Elmdale Church, Springdale, comes up easily on a search engine, and is linked to other area services. "I figure the type of people coming into northwest Arkansas are the type who use computers," noted youth minister Brian Coday. "I wanted us to be easy to find. The page is really aimed at the newcomer. It is possible to design keywords to make sure your site comes up in an area of interest when using an Internet search engine."

Another target area is the church's own youth group. "Thanks to Bernice Jones,

our kids have access to the Internet at school," he commented. "I wanted them to be able to show it off to their friends. There are pictures of the youth group and activities and announcements of upcoming activities.

"Keeping it updated is hard," Coday noted. He said he trains about three youth at a time on an ongoing basis to help maintain the site.

■ www.alpha-net.com/users/3rdbaptistchurch/

At Third Church in Malvern, there is a little different story. Pastor Rick Hyde created the web page and maintains it himself. It currently plays an audio track of "We Three Kings" while the accompanying graphics complement the page's Christmas theme.

"I like computers and I enjoy doing that kind of thing," Hyde noted. "I'm the webservant. I'm trying to reach just whoever is out there. I've even gotten requests for my sermon outlines — I was surprised!"

Hyde has some advice for smaller churches that want to create a web page on their own. "Don't spend a lot of money; make a wise buy on software," he suggested. "Shop and compare — you don't have to spend a lot of money. The software I used cost about \$50.

"Change it regularly — don't leave the same thing up there for months on end," Hyde emphasized. "Update it! Provide links to other churches or resources.

"Make your home page brief. You want it to load up quickly and come up fast. People won't hang around for it to load up," he pointed out. "Make buttons to sermon outlines and answer e-mail promptly!"

"Provide button and links to Southern Baptist Convention pages and other resources," he added. "Some people don't know they are out there."

Aside from technical matters, Hyde emphasized that pastors or churches considering putting up a web page should first educate the congregation. "They need to know the Internet is much more than pornography and bad stuff," he explained.

"We need to convey what a good thing it is — that it's not a tool of the devil," Hyde pointed out. "It's kind of like cable television — there are some things you shouldn't watch."

And thanks to several innovative Arkansas Baptist churches, there are plenty of sites on the web that people should watch.

Snake attack helps create opportunity for witness

She didn't know the man she saw stumbling around her back yard and clutching his eyes, but Southern Baptist international missionary Annie Tidenberg immediately knew what was wrong.

A spitting cobra's venom burns and temporarily blinds its victim. Left untreated, the anguish continues for days. But

Tidenberg knows how to counteract it – and the Maasai people who live for miles around her home in Longido, Tanzania, know she will help.

People in crisis often come to the Tidenbergs for help because “we've gotten a reputation for having almost endless resources,” explained

Tim Tidenberg, Annie's husband. The couple has served as Southern Baptist International Mission Board missionaries to Tanzania since 1988.

Annie flushed the man's eyes with a cooling solution and then shared a Christian witness with him.

Although the treatment relieved the man's pain, his eyes remained sensitive to the bright African sun. So Annie loaned him her only pair of sunglasses, thinking she'd never see him – or the glasses – again.

A few days later, however, the man came back to thank Annie profusely for her care – and to return her glasses.

The incident is symbolic of the ministry the Tidenbergs and other Southern Baptist missionaries have, Annie remarked. Noting that the world is full of people blinded by another serpent's poison, the Tidenbergs know the love of Christ they share will help others see the light of the world.
LONGIDO, TANZANIA (BP)

World missions

IMB, colleges sign bilateral agreement

Following more than a decade of informal cooperation between the Southern Baptist International Mission Board and nearly 50 Baptist-related colleges and universities, leaders of both groups signed a bilateral agreement Nov. 19, pledging mutual support for common purposes.

Signing for the IMB were president Jerry Rankin and vice president for World A Strategies Lewis Myers. The Consortium for Global Education was represented by chairman Ben Elrod and president Dan Grant.

IMB missionary Carolyn Bishop was named to serve as international director of the consortium. Under the new agreement, the IMB will pay her salary and the CGE board will supervise her work. Bishop has served as a liaison with the consortium in recent years. She has extensive overseas ministry experience, including service in South Korea, London and Hong Kong.

The Consortium for Global Education was established in 1987 as an autonomous organization supporting the development of international exchange programs in pursuit of quality higher education and opportunities to share the gospel.

During its first decade, CGE institutions have established more than 300 partnerships with some of the world's most prestigious universities in 80 countries. In recent years, more than 200 faculty members and 600 students have participated in CGE-related exchanges.
NEW ORLEANS (BP)

Six IMB missionaries resign to start new ministry

Michael Stroope, a key leader in the Southern Baptist International Mission Board's effort to share the Christian gospel with “unreached people groups,” has resigned to start an independent ministry helping local congregations send missionaries abroad.

Joining Stroope, and his wife, Kay, in the new organization – called All Peoples – will be Mark Morris, who oversees work in one of the IMB's 14 administrative regions; his wife, Cindy; and missionaries David and Mary Carpenter, who are resigning their positions as field workers in the IMB's Central and Southern Asia region.

Stroope, a 20-year veteran of the IMB, administered the board's Cooperative Services International from 1992 until a staff reorganization in June in which CSI was discontinued as a separate entity. CSI's strategies now are to be utilized as needed in the 14 regions the board has adopted for its global work.

Morris, who has been the IMB's regional leader for central and southern Asia less than six months, spent eight of his 14 years of IMB service as a CSI representative. The Carpenters have been IMB missionaries since 1992.

Stroope said All Peoples will assist churches to send out their own long-term missionary teams by offering support services in the United States and abroad.

ARLINGTON, TX (ABP)

Accord ends dispute among Bengal Baptists

A seed planted four years ago by the Baptist World Alliance recently bore fruit when three Baptist groups in the region of Bengal in India celebrated reconciliation and unity after 25 years of disagreement.

More than 500 guests from across Bengal participated in a joyful reunification service at St. Paul's Cathedral in Calcutta. Many traveled all night by bus to attend.

In 1993, when Bengal Baptists celebrated the 200th anniversary of the arrival of pioneer Baptist missionary William Carey in Bengal, BWA general secretary Denton Lotz issued a call for the fighting factions to come together.

The clashes among Bengal Baptists were not over theology but property. Those conflicts led to court cases before secular judges, as well as leadership conflicts, pitting two Bengal Baptist unions – both affiliated with Carey's British Missionary Society – against the Bengal Baptist Fellowship, an independent group that is an offshoot of both of those unions.

Following ten meetings of the Ad-Hoc Reconciliation Committee formed after the Carey celebrations, the final process for reconciliation began a year ago in Calcutta.

At the Nov. 8 reunification ceremony, Bengal Baptist leaders submitted their resignations and agreed to elect new leaders next March for the newly formed Bengal Baptist Union.

Lotz congratulated Bengal Baptists on behalf of Baptists around the world. “We rejoice with you in the magnificent way in which the Holy Spirit has moved to bring it together,” Lotz declared. He noted that the worldwide Baptist family is praying that their unity “will be an impetus to further evangelize your great city and country.”

CALCUTTA, INDIA (ABP)

WHILE MANY Christians celebrate Christ's birth—with the joy of the holiday season, crisis situations for others rob them of the traditional happy holidays, according to the current winter issue of *Caregiving*, a resource for Christian ministry published by the Baptist Sunday School Board.

The crisis for some may be a disaster such as losing a home to fire. Others struggle with Christmas divided between divorced parents. Emotions related to loss and grief are intensified. Financial stress and emotional depression are byproducts of the holidays for significant numbers of people.

Yet in all these circumstances are opportunities for ministry, writers for *Caregiving* emphasize. Assessing and understanding the loss are key needs in determining how to respond, and those who hurt, may need care at times other than at Christmas.

"Often we reach out during the traditional holiday season because we are more aware of the suffering and loss experienced at that time," writes Terry Lynn Ray, a nurse from Little Rock. "However, care needs to be extended on any of the holidays that may have special significance for the individuals who have experienced loss or trauma of some kind."

Don Aycock, pastor of McLean Baptist Church in Memphis, Tenn., observes that while memories can be both pleasant and painful, "the future can be scary and uncertain" for those who have had a loss. He provides guidance for understanding one's changing situation, uniting with others in similar circumstances, reaching out to those in need and evolving with the times.

In an article about Christmas Season Depression Syndrome, an authority on psychosocial care acknowledges that "hauling out discussions of the Christmas depression syndrome has become, in the United States, an annual Christmas custom somewhat like hauling out the decorations, singing carols and putting on Santa Claus suits."

Richard Dayringer of Southern Illinois University maintains that an under-

Got the holiday blues?

BSSB resource responds to holiday hurts, stresses

Charles Willis

Baptist Sunday School Board



standing of the syndrome is important because it "gives people permission not to feel euphoric throughout the season, the way that other Christmas customs suggest they are supposed to feel."

Dayringer discusses the biological, psychological and social categories of "holiday blues" as well as the ways in which pastors and pastoral counselors can minister to those who are depressed.

While every year there are people who face a first Christmas without a family member, Cos Davis urges readers to especially remember children in such circumstances. An educational specialist and pastoral counselor from Franklin, Tenn., Davis explains that parents can be "so absorbed in their own grief that their

child is not encouraged to deal with the pain the loss has caused....As with adults, the depth of the sense of loss has to do with the sense of security and personal importance the person or object has to the child." He offers suggestions for responding to children, as well as questions to consider in deciding how to help a particular child.

Financial stress can come due to the loss of a job, mismanagement, inadequate income, unexpected expenses or expensive taste, Jimmie Sheffield points out. Truths related to money, indulgences, self-worth and attaining love and respect can serve as guiding principles for coping with financial stress, he notes.

Sheffield, associate executive director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, also offers practical suggestions concerning holiday finances, including: develop a pre-holiday budget, give your time in service instead of tangible gifts, make gifts, shop creatively, use the barter system and, if necessary, get a second job to meet a specific need.

"Counseling people in financial crisis during the holiday season can prove to be intense and highly emotional," Sheffield emphasizes. Providing such a service is a challenge, he explains, pointing out "that's one thing your church members want — practical help to alleviate tremendous

pressure."

Greg Jackson, minister of education at First Baptist Church, Bolivar, Mo., discusses the shock, numbness, fear and embarrassment that can follow loss of a home due to fire. Suggestions for meeting special needs also come out of Jackson's personal experience in losing a home.

Two fears grew out of the Jackson family's experience with a house fire, he shared: Everyone becomes more conscious of belongings and more aware of mortality.

Other topics featured in the winter issue of *Caregiving* include finding hope for the new year and caregiving through love-in-action projects.

NASHVILLE, TN (BP)

people & places

COMPILED BY

MILLIE GILL

TRANSITIONS

Geoffray A. Hammond has been named director of missions for Washington Madison Association. He has been serving with the Southern Baptist International Mission Board as a missionary to Brazil, teaching and serving as coordinator for the area of missiology in the department of theology at the North Brazil Baptist Theological Seminary in Recife. He has been involved in church planting and church growth in the Brazilian state of Pernambuco. He previously served churches in Texas, serving on the staff of First Church in Dallas and as pastor of Orchard Road Church in Lewisville. He completed studies at Spurgeon's Seminary in England, Baylor University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Hammond is married to the former Deborah Atchison, a graduate of Baylor University and founder and director of the North Brazil Baptist Seminary Preschool Center. They have two sons, Timothy Lewis and Nicholas Bailey.

Eldron Gill is pastor of Turrell Church. He previously served Pleasant Valley Church of Trumann and Fellowship Church of Tyrone. Gill attended Williams Baptist College. He and his wife, Debby, have two children, Whitney and Stephen.

Dennis E. Colvin has begun his first service as a minister by serving as bivocational pastor of Antioch Church in Wynne where he previously was a member. He and his wife, Robin, have two children, J.R. and Jonathan.

A.B. Hicks began serving Nov. 30 as pastor of Remount Church in North Little Rock. He has served other Arkansas churches, including Steel Bridge Church, Lonoke. Hicks is a graduate of Andersonville Baptist Seminary in Georgia. He and his wife, Judy, have three children, Amy, Angela and Joel.

Jay McAllister will begin serving Dec. 14 as pastor of First Church of Locksburg, coming there from Moore, Okla. He and his wife, Katrina, have a son, Eli.

Brice B. Early has joined the staff of First Church in Rogers as activities director, coming there from First Church of West Fork where he was associate pastor of student ministry and education. He is a graduate of Williams Baptist College, Arkansas State University and Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary.

Jennifer Anderson has joined the staff of First Church of Conway as

director of children's ministry. She has been an International Mission Board Journeyman/teacher in Caracas, Venezuela. In addition, she served on the staff of Sagamore Hill Church in Fort Worth, Texas, with children's mission education and apartment ministry. Anderson is a graduate of Baylor University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Aaron LeMay has joined the staff of First Church of Star City as youth minister. He is a freshman at Ouachita Baptist University.

Mike McCauley has joined the staff of Cabin Creek Church of Lamar as minister to students. He previously served in Gentry.

Tony DeSoto has accepted the call to join the staff of First Church of Sherwood as minister of music. He will come there from First Church of Montgomery, Ala., where he has served as assistant minister of music since July 1993. He also has served on the staff of churches in Louisiana. DeSoto is a graduate of Louisiana College, Pineville; Loyola University, New Orleans; and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. He and his wife, Sheila Ann, have a daughter, Hannah Rose.

Mike Seay has resigned as pastor of Lee Creek Church in Van Buren to serve a church in Colorado.

L.B. Jordan of Arkadelphia began serving Dec. 7 as interim pastor of Beech Street First Church in Texarkana. He is the retired director of the Arkansas Baptist church leadership support department.

Eddie Douglas has resigned as pastor of Hermitage Church to move to Louisiana.

CHURCH LIFE

Central Church of Pine Bluff celebrated its 50th anniversary Nov. 2 with a morning worship service, a noon meal and an afternoon musical program. Former pastors Andy O'Kelley and Ray Meador were featured speakers. Gary Akers is pastor.

LifeLine Chapel of Prescott, a mission of Second Church in Arkadelphia, celebrated its first anniversary of ministry Nov. 2. The morning worship service, followed by a fellowship luncheon, featured Maurice Hitt, director of missions for Red River Association, as guest speaker and a baptismal service in which two candidates were baptized by pastor David Burgess. The 93 attending the afternoon anniversary service heard special music by the Messengers of Hope

and a message by Shelby Cowling, pastor of the sponsoring congregation.

Trinity Church of Fort Smith will observe 75 years of ministry Feb. 21-22. Activities will begin Feb. 21 with a 1 p.m. potluck luncheon and fellowship followed by a time of sharing from former staff pastors and staff members. Mason Bondurant will be the speaker for the 9:45 a.m. Sunday service. A group photo session on the church's front steps and a light lunch and fellowship will conclude the celebration.

Little Rock First Church honored Jack Hazelwood Nov. 23 in recognition of 30 years of service as staff evangelist. He was presented with a plaque, a picture and a monetary gift.

Harrison First Church and **Jacksonville First Church** recently sent mission teams to Kaiserslautern, Germany, to renovate a youth center for Faith Church. Ralf Horak of Faith Church coordinated the project in which Ben and Joe Martin, Paul Cramer, Wayne Gidden and Larry Brandt of Harrison First Church participated. Participants from Jacksonville First Church were Harold Drenth, Lee Brown and Ray and Lucy Hummel.

Zion Hill Church of Cabot has formed a partnership with Calmar Fellowship in Calmar, Iowa, as part of the Arkansas-Iowa Partnership. The Calmar congregation, a mission of Community Church of Waterloo, was started in 1992 as a home Bible study. In 1993, under the leadership of Clayton Bratton of Fort Smith, a retired Arkansas pastor, it was launched as a mission with 22 members. John and Laura Hill, recent graduates of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, are currently leading the congregation. Terry Fortner is pastor of Zion Hill Church.

Bethel Church of Gould ordained Gary Joe Mizell as a deacon Nov. 23.

OBITUARIES

Jimmie L. Garner, 67, of Trumann died Dec. 2 as the result of cancer. His funeral services were held Dec. 4 at First Church of Trumann where he was a member. Garner, who had been pastor of Arkansas churches, retired this year as director of missions for Trinity Association, following 29 years of service. Named by Ouachita Baptist University in 1979 as Director of Missions of the Year, he was honored earlier this year by the university as a retired DOM. A native of Blytheville, Garner was a veteran of the U.S. Army. Survivors are his wife, Evelyn Garner of Trumann; a daughter, Rebekah Lee Self of Pangburn; a son, James Matthew "Matt" Garner of Bentonville; a sister; two brothers; two grandchildren; and four step-grand-

children. Memorials may be made to Cedar Glade Baptist Camp in care of Trinity Association.

Gailon Nethercutt of Sherwood died Nov. 27 at age 91. He was a retired Baptist minister, having served Steel Bridge Church, Lonoke, and Kerr Mission, sponsored by Immanuel Church of Little Rock. He also was a retired school teacher and was employed by the Little Rock Police Department for seven years. Survivors are one daughter, Claris Taylor of Sherwood; five grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren; four great-great grandchildren; and three sisters.

Joyce Elaine Brown Deaton died Nov. 26 at age 57 as the result of cancer. She was a member and Sunday School teacher at Hurricane Lake Church where her husband, Max Deaton, serves as pastor. Deaton, who had assisted her husband in his role as a Southern Baptist minister, had taught in both public and private schools, as well as serving as an instructor at Remington College. Other survivors include a daughter, Tammie Lynn Dack; a son, Scott Allen Deaton; two grandchildren; five sisters; and two brothers. Memorials may be made to the Hurricane Lake Church Office Complex.

B. Richard Eoff of Little Rock died Nov. 27 at age 50. He was a member of Immanuel Church in Little Rock, a Uni-Serv director for the Arkansas Education Association and a member of the White House Advance Staff of President Bill Clinton. Survivors are his wife, Tina Eoff; two daughters, Christina Michele and Heather Rae Eoff, all of Little Rock; his mother, Edith Crim of Dell; and a sister. Memorials may be made to the Eoff Scholarship Fund in care of the Arkansas Education Association.

A.O. "Bo" Smith, a member of First Church in Stamps, died recently in Magnolia. Smith, a deacon at First Church for more than 50 years, was the founder and president of A.O. Smith Funeral Homes. Smith was an active supporter of Baptist Student Unions across the state and provided major funding for the construction of BSU facilities at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff and Henderson State University in Arkadelphia. He was named Man of the Year by the Stamps Chamber of Commerce and was the first recipient of the A.O. Smith Influence Award by the Fellowship of Christian Athletes in 1997. He is survived by daughters Virginia Stevens of Daingerfield, Texas; Corrine Wheelington of Texarkana, Texas; and Martha Ford of Magnolia. He also is survived by brothers James Smith of Little Rock and Don Ross Smith of Magnolia, twelve grandchildren and 24 great-grandchildren.



Sara Blair

Emily Gibson

Jill Gray

Sarah Thompson

State Acteens panelists named

FOUR ARKANSAS BAPTIST Acteens have been selected to serve on the 1997-98 Arkansas Acteens Advisory Panel. The panelists will be available to speak at associational and local church Acteens events.

Panelist applications are sent out statewide during the summer. Interested individuals who meet the requirements are invited to complete an application and submit it to the state Woman's Missionary Union. The State Youth Committee then selects four panelists and one alternate.

This year's Acteens panelists include:

■ **Sara Blair** of First Church in Mena. She is a sophomore at Mena High School where she is involved in band, Fellowship of Christian Students, Future Business Leaders of America, Bearcats Against Drugs, and Spanish Club. She enjoys playing the drums, singing, cooking and working with children.

■ **Emily Gibson** of First Southern Church in Central City. She is a sophomore at Fort Smith Christian School where she is active in basketball, track, softball, Future Business Leaders of America, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, and National Honor Society. She enjoys teaching and ministering to her friends and other youth.

■ **Jill Gray** of First Church in Green Forest. She is a senior at Alpena High School where she is the president of Fellowship of Christian Athletes as well as a member of Future Business Leaders of America, Future Homemakers of America, Spanish Club, Beta Club, Creative Writing Club, yearbook editor, Student Council and is active in See You at the Pole. She enjoys singing, playing basketball, writing and public speaking.

■ **Sarah Thompson** of First Church in Arkadelphia. She is a sophomore who is home schooled. She is involved in choir, drama, Vacation Bible School, orchestra and serves as children's handbell assistant at her church. She enjoys playing softball, singing, playing the piano, drama and babysitting.

Charitta Saulsbery of First Southern Church in Central City has been selected as alternate. She is a sophomore at Fort Smith Christian School.

The Acteens will preside during the Acteens Encounter, April 3-4, 1998, at Ouachita Baptist University. The girls recently participated in a retreat, where they helped plan events for Encounter. The event, which will feature the theme, "God Is in Control," will include an expanded conference track on Saturday, a new activity for sophomores and a flag procession to kick off the opening session.

"The girls emphasized that the general sessions be filled with music, testimonies from missionaries of what God is doing in their lives, and presentations which show that God is still in control even when the world seems to be falling apart," explained event coordinator Angela Lowe.

Encounter will feature worship leader Trish Landers Ragsdale, who works in media technology for the North American Mission Board and is the featured soloist in the "Together Hand in Hand" video. Missionaries and MKs will speak in the general sessions and lead conferences. The Company, a drama group from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, will present theme interpretations and lead creative ministry conferences. A concert on Friday night will feature the Praise Singers from Ouachita.

"What impresses me most about the panelists is their commitment to doing missions," Lowe noted. "They have outstanding leadership skills which come through at school and church activities as well as Acteens. I commend them for their continual involvement in missions activities during their busy high school years. Their spiritual maturity, creativity and love for our Lord was apparent as they worked together planning for the Encounter."

NATION

Texas conservatives vote to form new state convention

Toby Drulin

Texas Baptist Standard

DIRECTORS of Southern Baptists of Texas, the organization that had pushed for closer alignment of the Baptist General Convention of Texas with the Southern Baptist Convention, have voted to establish a new state convention.

Dee Slocum, pastor of Highland Baptist Church in Amarillo and vice president for the organization, said its 30-member board of directors voted unanimously Nov. 20 to begin the process of setting up the new organization.

The directors and officers - executive director Ronnie Yarber of Mesquite, president Miles Seaborn of Fort Worth and Slocum - will serve as a "transitional team" to give it birth, Slocum said. He said no date has been set for an organizational meeting but that he anticipated it could come as early as spring.

William Pinson, executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, said the reasons cited for establishing the new state convention "are not well founded and are not justification for such an act."

If a new convention is formed, Pinson added, it will not be because state convention leaders have encouraged it. "In fact, just the opposite will be the case," he said. "Written and spoken appeals have been and will be made for togetherness for the sake of the gospel."

While any Baptist group is free to do what it wills, Pinson said, "I pray that all Southern Baptists in Texas will find a way to continue to serve together in the power and direction of the Holy Spirit to fulfill the Great Commission given us by the Lord Jesus Christ."

Southern Baptists of Texas opposed passage of the Efficiency/Effectiveness report at last month's BGCT annual meeting because they contended that the action distanced the BGCT from the SBC, a claim denied by BGCT leaders and the committee which drafted the plan.

Following approval of the E/E report, the directors of Southern Baptists of Texas conducted a written poll of some 400 persons attending a rally after the Monday night convention session.

Slocum said response to the poll was "overwhelmingly" in favor of beginning a new convention. He said the purpose of the new organization will be "to ensure and maintain a strong SBC presence in Texas." DALLAS (ABP)

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Alabamans protest school prayer ban

The Alabama Baptist Convention passed a resolution criticizing a federal judge's injunction banning prayers in the state's public schools.

Messengers to the convention's Nov. 18-19 meeting overwhelmingly approved a resolution opposing the recent ruling by U.S. District Court Judge Ira DeMent that certain religious practices in a rural county in northeast Alabama were unconstitutional.

The resolution says the court order "inhibited our public institutions from reinforcing the values upon which our country was established." It asks messengers to support efforts by state leaders to challenge "overbroad and objectionable" portions of the order and to inform students of their First Amendment rights concerning religious freedom. The resolution received about a two-thirds vote after debate.

Messengers also opposed the National Endowment for the Arts in a resolution because of some objectionable material produced by artists funded through NEA.

In other business, the convention approved funding for the financially troubled University of Mobile, even though the university ignored a 1994 agreement not to send funds to its controversial branch in Nicaragua. A compromise recommendation urged that current students not be penalized for past mistakes.

While university officials reported improving finances, the state convention's audit committee cited "continuing grave concerns" over finances as well as a "lack of independence" by the university's auditor.

Some messengers contested the appointment of the newly elected coordinator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Alabama to the executive committee of the state board of missions. The effort to block election of Mart Gray failed by 11 votes. Gray was elected to the CBF coordinator's post the previous week.

In other business, Alabama Baptists unanimously approved new bylaws which allow convention entities more freedom in buying, selling or leasing property and in selecting their own trustees. The change extends terms of last year's covenant agreement with Samford University to all convention agencies. That covenant allows the university to

appoint its own trustees for convention approval.

Messengers also voted to extend Alabama's partnerships with Baptists in Hawaii and Spain until December 1999.

HUNTSVILLE, AL (ABP/BP)

Florida Baptists focus on inspiration

The 136th annual meeting of the Florida Baptist Convention was long on inspiration and short on business.

None of the messengers from Florida Baptist churches presented any miscellaneous business; three of the four resolutions presented were referred to the state board of missions; and new convention officers were elected by acclamation.

A total of 1,573 messengers and 553 visitors attended the annual session. Messengers adopted a 1998 budget of \$27,069,494, up \$1,053,602 from the current budget.

The only discussion came during the report of the state board of missions, which voted to sell the Florida Baptist Children's Home property in Miami and relocate the south Florida facilities to Broward County.

Mason H. Van Tassel, pastor of First Baptist Church of Redlands in Homestead, raised questions about the sale.

"Why move from where there is a great need for the children's home?" Van Tassel asked. "How did you arrive at the cost? Did they get an appraisal or a contract? And, it is vague where the children's home is going to move to."

Florida Baptist executive director John Sullivan explained that "we have a written letter of intent. But we need the convention's approval to enter into a contractual agreement. We did not go out looking for (this offer), or putting (the children's home) on the market."

"But once the offer was made, we had to explore whether to or how to facilitate the offer.... We feel that if God is in it, it will happen. If not, it won't. But we felt we had to explore the opportunity." Messengers then passed the motion to relocate the facility.

Messengers submitted four resolutions for consideration. The resolutions committee decided to refer resolutions addressing taxation of churches, the Year of the Bible and covenant marriages to the state board of missions for further consideration.

JACKSONVILLE, FL (BP)

California Baptists approve restructure

A sweeping reorganization plan for the California Southern Baptist Convention survived several parliamentary challenges before being approved by a wide majority of messengers during the convention's annual meeting Nov. 11-12.

And, for the second time in five years, the convention refused to seat messengers from a San Francisco church whose pastor is a woman.

Following extended debate, the convention voted 359-181 to adopt 13 recommendations in the "Our Mission for a New Millennium" report developed by a 40-member strategic planning team and endorsed earlier by the convention's Executive Board. Some of the actions require constitutional changes, which must receive a two-thirds majority at next year's convention.

Messengers questioned recommendations to change the convention's name, divide the state into seven regions to determine representation on the Executive Board, and abolish a resolutions committee. All eventually passed although the recommendation does not offer a specific suggestion for a new name.

In other business, the convention voted 329-227 to refuse to seat messengers from 19th Avenue Baptist Church in San Francisco because the congregation has a female pastor.

It was the fifth straight year that the convention opened with a challenge to the seating of messengers from the San Francisco church. For the past three years, messengers rejected those challenges and voted to accept the church's messengers. The church was unseated once before, in 1993, the year Julie Pennington-Russell became pastor.

Richard Barker, chairman of the convention's credentials committee, said 1 Timothy 3 describes the office of pastor in masculine terms. "The Bible says clearly, 'Let a man...' It means exactly what it says," he declared.

Despite that action, messengers rejected an effort to tighten membership requirements. The rejected constitutional amendment would have granted messengers only to churches with practices which do not "contradict" tenets of "The Baptist Faith and Message."

VISALIA, CA (ABP)

School killings prompt singer to return home to aid healing

SEVENTEEN YEARS AGO I would have been sitting in that circle," said Stephen Curtis Chapman.

The circle was the one in which three high school students were killed and five others wounded by gunfire unleashed by a fellow student Dec. 1.

Chapman, one of the nation's most popular Christian singers, is a graduate of Heath High School in West Paducah, Ky., which found itself in the nation's spotlight after a 14-year-old student opened fire on 30 to 40 students who had just finished praying before classes.

Chapman also grew up in Paducah's Olivet Baptist Church and drove from his home near Nashville, Tenn., to the church's prayer service on the night of Dec. 1 — one of several held in the rural community after the morning's killings.

"I knew and felt that I needed to be here," Chapman said. He also attended the Dec. 5 joint funeral of the three students who were killed. The deceased students are Heath High School senior Jessica James, 17; sophomore Kacey Steger, 15; and freshman Nicole Hadley, 14. Charged with their murder is freshman Michael Carneal, 14.

Brittney Thomas stood only a few feet from Hadley when Carneal reportedly opened fire on the school's Agape Christian Club. Thomas, who was shoved by a friend behind glass doors in the school hallway, recalled, "We just watched

people fall and scream and run."

As she talked with friends two days after the shooting, Thomas already was trying to make some sense of the tragedy. "The whole school is now turning to God. It's not just a little circle anymore," she said. "I don't want them to say, 'Yeah, I remember Heath. They're the one (school) where all those kids died. I want them to say, 'Yeah, I remember Heath. They're the one with the prayer group of 400 and didn't let one incident ruin their life.'"

As the school reopened Dec. 3, Heath High senior Ben Strong, a pastor's son described as a hero for persuading Carneal to drop his gun, led another prayer meeting before class in the school lobby — the scene of the shootings. An estimated 200 of the school's 600 students attended.

"We just had a time of silence for everyone to reflect and pray," Strong said. "I told them God's the only thing we can turn to in a moment like this."

Heath High School Principal Bill Bond, a member of First Baptist Church of Paducah, told reporters, "I still believe in public education and we can't let one mixed-up person destroy our society. If someone believes in anarchy and we let that anarchy control us, then he is in control of us. And I don't believe in letting someone control me, so we will go about our business."

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God's Front Porch humorous look at church in '50s

Russell N. Dilday

Associate Editor, Arkansas Baptist

AND IF YOU INTEND to be a real preacher, you have got to learn that people need to read you as much as they do the Good Book. You may not like it now, but you are the front porch to the house of God, and if you want folks coming in, they're going to have to walk through and over you, clean their feet off on you, spit on you, sit and enjoy the view with you - know you, or they never will go in the house."

So narrator Ollie, an older deacon at the fictional Blacksburg Baptist Church, helps steer the budding ministry of pastor Gene Marshall, who has recently come to the church from "that Baptist seminary down in Texas" in the short novel, *God's Front Porch*.

The book is the work of author Gerald Stone, a Denton architect and former pastor of two Arkansas Baptist churches. It is a warm, thoughtful look at a young pastor's trials and triumphs while ministering in his first church - which had fired its last three pastors - somewhere near Russellville in the 1950s.

It's also hilarious. Marshall, called simply "Preacher" by church members, is prone to mishaps both of his making and from his lack of knowledge of the Arkansas Ozarks area and its people.

In attempting to provide a ministry

in Blacksburg, Preacher blunders into comedic situations that run from uncomfortable (becoming mired in the mud bottom of a tank baptizing Sally Peete, who "weighed in at about three or four feed sacks") to slapstick (throwing up on the casket during his first funeral service).

Along Preacher's way, Stone takes humorous pokes at Baptist institutions and traditions, such as:

■ Deacons. "There they sat with great anticipation as the missionary uncovered his displays for view.

There was a huge, rolled-up snakeskin, a pair of drums, an ominous hornet's nest...and the usual shrunken heads. Dolph allowed as how they were probably deacons' heads, but Millard said, 'No, they couldn't be deacons, because their mouths are too small and they're sewed shut.'"

■ Call to ministry. "'The only way this preacher won't come is if He --' Millard glanced skyward, -- don't want him to come. And that's exactly why I hope this preacher does come. We need somebody who won't listen to every wheedling, whining, conniving sinner around here, but is interested in what God is saying.' We called him and crossed our fingers."

■ Ordination. "Then everybody on the council and the deacons went by to lay hands on Preacher, seeing who could whisper the most memorable prayer, or word of wisdom, so that others could hear it without sounding intentional. I was

behind Brother Dacus, and heard him whisper in Preacher's ear, 'I'm going to keep my eye on you, young man!'"

Although *Porch* is fiction, it has significant historical value as a snapshot of Ozarks culture and Arkansas Baptists that Stone said is "pretty close to the mark."

He cultivated that snapshot as pastor of Knoxville Church and a mission of Second Church in Little Rock after his graduation from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1957.

"What rubbed off on me is their dry sense of humor and rural conservatism," noted Stone. "It is similar to that in eastern Oklahoma and parts of Texas. It was very rural and a very poor region."

"Blacksburg was the original name of Knoxville in the early 1800s, but (the book's) Blacksburg isn't Knoxville," Stone said. "It's an amalgam of many places, with a little imagination thrown in. The characters are composites of many people I knew back then."

While many of the characters are composites, Stone noted, the attitudes and lifestyles of the people who dot the work's landscape "are very true."

Ollie, however, "never existed," he said. "He's the mentor I wish I'd had when I was learning the ropes of being a preacher. He is Gene Marshall 15 years later, with the experience he had gained."

But is the sometimes clumsy, hapless Gene Marshall actually Stone? "I don't think it's a stretch," he laughed.

Although *Porch* is a humorous look at church life, Preacher has a love and care for the church and area people that Stone said he wants readers to see.

"God's Front Porch isn't a place, it's an attitude," he said. "If the preacher makes himself the front porch to the house of God, the people will feel welcome and will want to come in."

God's Front Porch is published by Tattersall Publishing and is available through special order at many bookstores or through Tattersall's website (www.tattersallpub.com).



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Seminary alumni elect state officers for coming year

ARKANSAS ALUMNI of Southern Baptist seminaries and Ouachita Baptist University held meetings in conjunction with last month's Arkansas Baptist State Convention annual meeting.

Midwestern Seminary alumni heard reports from faculty representatives Don Hammer and Gary Ledbetter during a luncheon at the Olive Garden in North Little Rock. Officers elected were Eddie

Howell of Conway, president; Eric Lee Taylor of Hot Springs, vice president; and Angela Love of Little Rock, secretary/treasurer.

New Orleans Seminary alumni held a luncheon meeting at Highway Church in North Little Rock. Elected as officers were Jack Albritton of Lake Village, president; David Newberry of Crossett, vice president; and George Sims of Little

Rock, secretary/treasurer.

Southern Seminary alumni held an evening reception at Holiday Inn North in North Little Rock. Marsha Ellis Smith, a seminary representative, previewed a video which featured the seminary's new Children's Conference Center and a discussion of its new Christian counseling degrees. Zeke Moore of Pine Bluff was named alumni president.

Southwestern Seminary alumni attending a luncheon at Park Hill Church heard a message from seminary president Ken Hemphill and special music by harpist Pat Qualls and the Ouachita Singers. Elected as officers were Butch Riddle of Ashdown, president; Bill Harris of Gravel Ridge, vice president; and John Gerlach of Little Rock, secretary/treasurer.

Ouachita Baptist University alumni held a dinner meeting at Central Church in North Little Rock. It was sponsored by alumni officers Yevonne Conrad of Colorado Springs, Colo., president; Bruce Tippit of Jonesboro, vice president; and Junanne Brown of Hope, secretary. Central Church pastor Bryan Webb and his staff were hosts for the event attended by alumni, friends, faculty and staff. OBU president Ben Elrod was the featured speaker.

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WWJD bracelets: witnessing tool or latest fashion trend?

WHAT WOULD JESUS DO? Would He wear a bracelet to remind Him to do the right thing?

Bracelets with the initials W.W.J.D. are sweeping the nation. To some wearers they are a trendy fashion statement. To others they are a witnessing tool and a testimony of Christian commitment.

What Would Jesus Do? bracelets are distributed to about 4,000 Christian bookstores across the country, according to Mike Freestone, a salesman with Lesco Corporation in Michigan, who designed the first bracelets. The cost of the cloth bands is usually below \$2 each.

In addition to the popular wristbands, W.W.J.D. products include mugs, T-shirts and sweatshirts, necklaces, key rings, fish- and heart-shaped lapel pins, Bible covers, plaques, pencils, highlighters, backpacks, bumper stickers, shoelaces, a W.W.J.D. book that lists different situations and indicates what Jesus would do and a CD with selections by Big Tent Revival, Geoff Moore and the Distance, Rebecca St. James, Steven Curtis Chapman and other artists. A free bracelet comes with the purchase of each CD.

The company also now produces beaded wristbands and silver bracelets with engraved initials of W.W.J.D. in addition to the cloth bands.

"A lot of our kids have them and a lot of our adults have gone to wearing them now," noted Doug Goetzinger, minister of youth at Cherokee Hills Baptist Church in Oklahoma City. "They are kind of an identifying mark, somewhat like the old cross necklaces."

Goetzinger said some of the youth have changed the message to "Why Would Jesus Die?" — using that expression as a more direct witnessing tool.

"We have about 15 kids who are involved in sharing their faith on a regular basis," Goetzinger explained. "A few have

had a chance to share a testimony of what the bracelet means."

Aimee Stafford, a member of Olivet Baptist Church in Oklahoma City, said wearing the bracelet not only reminds her of what she should do, it also makes her friends aware of her actions.

"When I start to do something, a friend will stop me and say, 'Okay, Aimee, what would Jesus do?'"

James Lankford, youth specialist with the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, said as he was eating dinner recently he noticed the waitress was wearing a W.W.J.D. wristband.

"When I asked her about it, she said instead of What Would Jesus Do? she interprets it as 'Walk With Jesus Daily,' and her commitment was she will not allow five minutes of her life to go by that she won't pray," Lankford recounted. "Her bracelet is a reminder for her to stay in constant prayer."

The idea for the bracelets came from a youth group at Calvary Reform Church

in Holland, Mich., who had studied the classic Christian novel *In His Steps*. It asks the question: What would Jesus do?

The group contacted Freestone, whose company in Lansing produces promotional items.

"We happened to have the bracelets available and it was easy to put the initials on them," Freestone said. "It fit price-wise with what the church wanted, was a durable message and something that would appeal to kids."

The bracelets, first produced in 1989, caught on, the company received referrals and for two years has been distributing them to Christian bookstores.

Shannon McLaughlin, who works with the W.W.J.D. division of Lesco, said the company started out with just a few orders and a few colors.

"We've branched out, added new colors, T-shirts, coffee mugs, hats and other products," she said. "We can special custom orders in school colors."

McLaughlin added that Lesco now has 15 employees who are assigned just to the W.W.J.D. products. As of October, she said, "we have sold 9 million bracelets, 4 million just this year."

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)

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National CP gifts decline for month

SOUTHERN BAPTIST Convention Cooperative Program receipts for November dropped more than \$2 million from the same month a year ago, according to a report from Morris H. Chapman, president of the SBC Executive Committee.

For November 1997, CP receipts were \$11,869,780 compared to November 1996 of \$13,934,056, a decrease of \$2,064,275 or 14.81 percent.

For the first two months (October and November) of the SBC fiscal year, CP receipts totaled \$25,045,808 compared to the same period a year ago of \$26,249,173, a decline of \$1,203,365 or 4.58 percent.

Designated gifts were up more than 26 percent during November. The November total of \$3,082,127 compared to the same

month a year ago of \$2,434,287, an increase of \$647,839 or 26.61 percent. For designated gifts year to date, \$5,046,606 has been received compared to last year's total of \$4,150,180, an increase of \$896,425 or 21.6 percent.

Designated contributions include the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for international missions, the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American missions, world hunger and other special gifts.

For the SBC Cooperative Program Allocation Budget, the monthly requirement is \$12,348,756, meaning that the November 1977 total fell \$478,975 short of the required figure. For the budget year to date, receipts total \$348,295 more than the two-month required figure.

NASHVILLE, TN (BP)

Accepting resumes — Full-time youth/education minister. Send resumes to Search Committee, FBC, 315 Church St., Stamps, AR 71860.

Houseparents — Oklahoma Baptist Homes for Children is looking for a loving, Christian couple to be houseparents at the Baptist Children's Home in Owasso. Call Steve Singletary at 918-272-2233.

Accepting resumes — for youth minister: Send resumes to Personnel Committee, FBC, P.O. Box 87, Mount Ida, AR 71957.

Now accepting — resumes for pastor. Lee Creek Baptist Church, 2445 Old Uniontown Road, Van Buren, AR 72956.

Accepting resumes — for full-time music minister/associate pastor. Send to Balboa Baptist Church, 415 Ponca de Leon Drive, Hot Springs Village, AR 71909.

Preschool/Children's Minister — wanted for Village Baptist Church in Oklahoma City. Masters degree from seminary preferred. Will consider full-time experience in lieu of masters. Send resume to S. Taylor, 10600 N. May Ave., Oklahoma City, OK 73120.

Accepting resumes — Resumes are being accepted by Green Valley Baptist Church of Henderson, Nevada, for a senior pastor and a minister of music by Jan. 15, 1998. Send resume to Mike Famham, chairman of Senior Pastor Search Committee or Tony Yacano, chairman of Music Pastor Search Committee, 270 N. Valle Verde Drive, Henderson, NV 89014.

Seeking — Full-time youth/music director for small-town church. Mail resumes to: Search Committee, First Baptist Church, P.O. Box 384, Monette, AR 72447.

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Clinton discusses racial issues with religious leaders

WITHIN 50 YEARS, no single race will comprise a majority in the United States, President Bill Clinton reminded approximately 120 religious leaders at a White House breakfast held Nov. 20.

Such diversity will test the nation's ideals, Clinton told the religious leaders. "The scholars have said for 200 years that America was not about race or a place, it was about an idea," he said. "We're about to find out. And we had best be ready."

The religious leaders represented Christian, Jewish, Islamic and other faiths. During a nearly two-hour private meeting with Clinton, they discussed racial initiatives and other issues.

Dellanna O'Brien, executive director of the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union; James Dunn, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs; and Brian Harbour, pastor of First Baptist Church of Richardson, Texas, were among participants at the meeting.

During a portion of the meeting open to the press, Clinton explained he wanted to discuss race with religious leaders because the administration has an obligation to think about issues which will affect the next generation.

Clinton said racial problems are evident in high juvenile-crime rates, an exploding prison population, disparities

among credit practices of banks, access to higher education and earnings in the workplace.

"It is clear that our attempt to keep making progress toward the American dream requires us to make progress on the issues of race," he noted.

The growing racial diversity in the country is leading to more diversity in America's religious landscape as well, Clinton said.

"We know what we're going to look like -- the demographics can tell us that. But they can't tell us what we're going to be like. That's a decision we have to make," he said. "And I am persuaded that we will be an infinitely better, stronger nation if that decision is informed by, driven by, embraced by and advanced by people of faith in our country."

Clinton thanked the religious leaders for working together for enactment of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 and education guidelines to clarify what religious expression is allowed in public schools under current law.

The 1993 law bolstering protections for religious practice was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court. Clinton noted that he issued an executive order instructing federal officials to apply the principles of that law to protect the religious practices of federal employees. Clinton also applauded the religious community for its work on the issue of global religious persecution.

WASHINGTON (ABP)

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Family Bible Celebrating in joy

By Jimmy Barretina, director,
ABSC missions department

Basic passage:

Matthew 1:18-25; I John 4

Focal passage:

Matthew 1:20-21;

I John 4:7-17

Central truth:

We can celebrate in joy because God loves us!

He was what would be termed handsome. I say it of him, but not with the certainty with which he would have said it of himself. Not long after my first introduction to him, he informed his girlfriend that he simply could not believe that he "loved her the way he did." The point was not missed. She was to be grateful that someone like him loved someone like her.

Christians are in trouble when they are impressed by the extent to which they love God. I John 4 reminds us that the truly remarkable piece of information is that God loves us, not that we love Him. Our love is one of response. He is the one who reaches out, initiates and draws us into a family relationship with Him. Christmas is a celebration of joy because God loves us.

As we celebrate in joy, we are reminded that God's love sets us free. It sets us free from sin, self, fear and loneliness.

By the way, have you ever released a butterfly from a spider's web? The initial extraction from

the web is only the beginning. Removing the remaining strings of web without damaging the butterfly's wings requires a lot of patience and effort. So it is with God and us. Coming to faith can occur in the twinkling of an eye. Cleaning up the mess can take a long time. Completing the entire process will require that we be transported into eternity.

Still, we have much to celebrate. Sin does not hold us the way it once did. We are not held to self the way we were. We can think of others and even take risks for the good of others. We are still afraid now and again, but we are learning to believe that God does love us and that He will be true to His promise to be with us here and in the hereafter. We still have those times when we feel very much alone, but we are more and more certain that He is always with us and looking out for our best interests.

Celebrate with joy. Do not marvel over your love for God. Marvel over this: God loves you!

Life and Work GoodNews @www.com?

By Darffy Bryson,
minister of education,
First Church, Hot Springs

Basic passage:

Luke 2:1-35

Focal passage:

Luke 2:8-14

Central truth:

Care enough to share the good news with the whole earth, not just our little corner.

The creation of the Internet has opened windows to the whole world! One may send an e-mail message to another person almost anywhere or call up information on virtually any subject anytime. A company could maximize advertising at minimal cost with thousands per day accessing their Web page. You can shop till you drop browsing the World Wide Web.

Yet, our mindset of sharing the good news of great joy for all people may be limited to a once-a-year offering. Is that enough? It helps, but is that all we can do? Our 19th century mission model needs to upgrade to the 21st century.

Do we believe where there's a will, there's a way? We are fairly good at keeping watch over our flock, at least in the Bible Belt. We may even have a vision to evangelize in the same country, in America the beautiful.

However, do we think, where there's a will there's a way to peace on earth? Do we agree with the scripture that God's will is for the good

tidings of great joy which shall be to all people? Are we sore afraid to spread the news beyond our color or culture or language? Perhaps we should fear not in bringing the gift to all people.

I was taught that Christ came at a prime time in history for the spread of the message. The Roman Empire had reached to much of the known world on three continents. This provided a road system, a mandated peaceful period and a common language. Persecuted Christians further caused the spread of the gospel by fleeing harm.

Today we have transportation galore, information highways, direct TV and cellular phones. We can land and remotely control a dune buggy on Mars; send a Hubble telescope to the far reaches of our solar system, but we are still losing the race of propagation of the gospel versus the population explosion.

Let us be bold and creatively active in spreading the Christ of Christmas! Share the good will toward all men!

Explore the Bible Don't be afraid!

By B. Aldon Dixon,
vice president
for student services,
Ouachita Baptist University

Basic passage:

Matthew 1:18-2:23

Focal passage:

Luke 2:10

Central truth:

Jesus Christ came to remove our fears.

As I write this lesson, our daughter-in-law is completing her ninth week in the hospital with a "high risk" pregnancy. There have been many moments during this time that our family has been filled with fears and questions.

As I reread this Christmas story, I realized that it is so familiar to Christians that we often miss many of the intense words that Matthew (and other gospel writers) used to show us what an incredible happening this is! Fear is one such word.

God chose to have Jesus born into a real family. He could have entered the world in any way He chose, but He came to a family much like yours and mine. Fear must have been ever present for Mary. Joseph must have had hundreds of questions and feared for his reputation, his future and perhaps even his life. They were instructed, "Do not be afraid" (1:20). With this assurance from God, Joseph became a patient, considerate, supportive believer. Mary took comfort in the fact that she would overcome any

stigmas attached to this birth. His name was already given by God, and she was told that His mission would be to "save His people from their sins" (v. 21).

Note all the "fear" surrounding the Christmas story. King Herod was troubled and all Jerusalem with him (2:3); the magi feared Herod, and chose to depart another way; the shepherds, seeing the angel, were terribly frightened (Luke 2:9); Mary and Joseph fled into Egypt, fearing for their life and that of young Jesus (2:14). What a contemporary story!

How comforting it is in our times of anxiety and fear to have God say to us "Be not afraid, for behold I bring you good news of a great joy which shall be for all the people" (Luke 2:10).

LESSONS FOR LIVING

John declares that Christians are empowered by God to overcome the world (1 John 5:4-5). On the surface, that appears to be a claim that cannot be honestly supported. The evidence in John's day seemed to point to the conclusion that the Roman Empire would overcome Christianity. With swords, fire and wild animals, the rage of the Roman state was turned against God's people. But when the rage was spent, Rome had only added to the increase of the population of Christians both in heaven and on earth.

All coaches would like to have God whisper in their ear, "You are going to have a winning season. You might lose a game or two, but you will have a winning season." In 1 John, God whispers in our ears the assurance that we are going to have a winning season. There is only one condition for that claim to be honored in our individual lives. As stated in 1 John 5:1, we must be born of God through faith in Jesus. I John 5:12 adds that to have Jesus is to have life

that overcomes the world. To receive Him and the power to overcome the world, we acknowledge our sin, repent, confess our need for forgiveness and ask God to give us the gift of faith.

We overcome the world as we live the Christian life. I John 5:30 tells us that we will be able to keep His commandments. There is even better news. It will not be a burden to obey Him. It will be a source of joy to hear His voice, to follow Him, and to develop relationships that bring honor to His name.

We overcome the world in eternity. In a very significant way, sports events should not be anything like the Christian struggle. In sports, nobody should die. In the Christian struggle, unless Jesus returns with the final trumpet sound, all of us will be carried from the field dead. So what? That is a fact of life. Faith, however, informs us that even in death we will overcome the world and live forever with God Himself. Now that is a real winning season!

Some people treat the call of God like they treat a telephone salesman. "No thanks, I'm not interested." Maybe they don't recognize who's calling. They may know it's God but can't seem to understand the message. Too much static interference in their lives. Possibly they know it's God, knows what He wants, but they're just not interested.

Does God only call vocational ministers, missionaries and monks? Our focal passage may only directly refer to first century missionaries. But I believe God has a purpose for every individual. Paul said he had been given a task. What's yours?

What's your message? Better yet, what's God's message? He wants you to convey? You may feel inferior, inadequate to share His message. Paul didn't. You might be afraid of what others might think or say. He wasn't. He indicated those who seemed important made no difference in his message. People may judge your

worth by external appearances. God judges by the heart. Be confident because God gives you the message.

We each have a different task. Peter's task was different than Paul's. But God was at work in each ministry. That's the vital element which should be common in each of our ministries.

Wondering what your gift is? Sometimes we discover our gifts and our task or purpose when we see where God is at work through us. Some people may need the affirmation of other Christians. The pillars in the early church recognized the grace given to Paul. Listen for other Christians to recognize and affirm the grace gifts and ministry in you.

Paul went on mission and did the very thing he was eager to do. When you are in God's will, you will be eager to follow His call. When you are eagerly doing it, you'll know it's right. What is the very thing He's calling you to do? Now, just do it!

Jacob must have been a psychological mess! He had dreamed about a ladder with angels ascending and descending (28:12); he had fallen in love with the beautiful Rachel (29:18) but was deceived by her father and had to marry her unloved sister (29:31); 14 years and several sons later, he got his real love, Rachel, who became jealous because of her barrenness; he had to deal with his father-in-law who threatened him, chased him and scolded him, then made a covenant with him.

With today's scripture, Jacob meets another angel (32:1) and he learns that his brother Esau is in hot pursuit with 400 men with him (32:6). Life has been tough for Jacob for over 20 years! Many readers may be saying by this time, "This sounds like my life!" Most of us can identify with the roller-coaster processes of life.

Jacob decided when he could not handle any more of life's challenges, he would pray! The maturity expressed in his prayer in this lesson's focal passage can be a model for all of us when

our own world begins to fall apart.

How did Jacob respond?

■ He addressed God (v. 9), placing Him in His rightful position of power, love and consistency.

■ He realized his own unworthiness (v. 10). How therapeutic it is to confess our sins to the One who can forgive us.

■ He expressed his faith in God because He had been patient and long-suffering with Jacob. He had been completely faithful to Jacob, and he offered God a prayer of thanksgiving in response.

■ Jacob made his request to God (v. 11), and admitted that he was not able to solve the problem without God's help.

■ Finally, Jacob restated that God had made a promise to him that caused him to know that he had a purpose in life.

Jacob's simple prayer can remind us that God cares about us even in times when life seems rotten!

Family Bible Living in Victory

By Jimmy Barrentine, director, ABSC missions department

Basic passage:

1 John 5:1-12

Focal passage:

1 John 1:1-12

Central truth:

In Christ, God's people know victory.

Life and Work Just do it!

By Danny Bryson, minister of education, First Church, Hot Springs

Basic passage:

Acts 13:1-3, 14:26-27, 26; Galatians 2:6-10

Focal passage:

Galatians 2:6-10

Central truth:

Recognize God's purpose for your life and get on with it.

Explore the Bible It's time to pray!

By B. Aldon Dixon, vice president for student services, Ouachita Baptist University

Basic passage:

Genesis 32

Focal passage:

Genesis 32:9-12

Central truth:

The prayers of a righteous man availeth much.

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Christian dramatists form national association

ATLANTA (BP)—Southern Baptists representing all disciplines of the dramatic arts voted Nov. 15 to form a professional organization and elected a committee to oversee its beginning.

The Christian Dramatists Association of Southern Baptists was voted into existence by Christian artists in Atlanta for the Baptist-Sunday School Board-sponsored National Drama Festival held Nov. 14-16 at First Baptist Church, Atlanta.

The organization—to represent drama, puppetry, clowning, mime, interpretive movement and other disciplines—is expected to encourage Christian dramatic artists. Among other purposes are to promote the dramatic arts in ministry and to provide information about new products, training events and other resources for dramatic artists.

BSSB names media specialists

NASHVILLE, TN (BP)—Four regional specialists have been named to provide consultative services for the Baptist Sunday School Board's national church media program. Beth Andrews of Fort Worth, Texas; Rita Kirkland of Dallas, Texas; Eva Nell Hunter of Decatur, Ala.; and Sue Bechtel of Gonzales, La., will lead regional events and provide on-site consultations representing the board.

Program director Mancel Ezell said the redesign of the church media program and its services in October 1997 has made possible regional specialists located nearer to church media directors and more immediately accessible to their needs.

"This approach will provide a more localized team to enhance media support to the congregation, its leaders, homeschool parents and Christian schools," Ezell said. "These specialists will fulfill engagements as full-time consultants have in past."

Missouri convention elects new executive director

JEFFERSON CITY, MO (BP)—James L. "Jim" Hill, pastor of South County Baptist Church in St. Louis, has been elected the new executive director of the Missouri Baptist Convention, effective Jan. 1. He succeeds Don Wideaman, who retired earlier this year.

The MBC Executive Board elected Hill Nov. 24 in a special called meeting. The vote was 37 (82.2 percent) in favor of Hill and 8 against.

Concerning the 37-8 vote, Hill said, "I think God speaks through the majority. There was a strong majority, and I sensed God's leadership here, and their vote was a confirmation of that."

Hill became South County Church's first pastor in 1990. He previously was director of the field services department of the Home Mission Board, now the North American Mission Board. He earlier served with the HMB as director of church extension and language missions for Blue River-Kansas City Association.

A native of Missouri, Hill is a graduate of Southwest Baptist University, Bolivar, and Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Baptist college offers scholarships to septuplets

HANNIBAL, MO (BP)—It may be a long time before the gift of a Baptist-related college in Missouri is accepted by any of the septuplets born Nov. 19 to Kenneth and Bobbi McCaughey of Carlisle, Iowa.

Planning ahead, however, Hannibal-LaGrange College has extended an offer of full scholarships to any or all of the seven McCaughey septuplets who earn a high school diploma and meet entrance requirements for the college.

HLG president Woodrow Burt made the announcement Nov. 26, and officials of the 1,000-student college in Hannibal, Mo., sent the announcement to the Iowa Methodist Medical Center in Des Moines where the babies were born and remain under care. The Baptist college's scholarship offer, including tuition, room and board and general fees, has a current value of nearly \$300,000.

Burt said his interest in the birth of the septuplets was sparked when he learned of the McCaughey family's Christian beliefs. The parents are members of Carlisle's Missionary Baptist Church. Hannibal-LaGrange is a four-year liberal arts college affiliated with the Missouri Baptist Convention.

NEWS DIGEST