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### December 14, 1995

Arkansas Baptist State Convention

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#### Recommended Citation

Arkansas Baptist State Convention, "December 14, 1995" (1995). *Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine, 1995-1999*. 74.

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# ARKANSAS BAPTIST



Volume 94, Number 25

December 14, 1995

## TURNER ELECTED ARKANSAS BAPTIST EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Emil Turner, pastor of First Baptist Church, Lake Charles, La., was unanimously elected Dec. 12 as the executive director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention.

Turner, 45, will begin his new ministry among Arkansas Baptists Jan. 15, 1996.



## Southern Baptist statesman Herschel H. Hobbs dies at 88

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)—Herschel H. Hobbs, one of Southern Baptists' most loved and best known figures, died Nov. 28 in an Oklahoma City hospital. He was 88.

Hobbs was a legend in Southern Baptist life. Pastor, writer, teacher, theologian and statesman were some of the titles Hobbs earned during a ministry of 69 years. A heart attack was listed as the cause of death, according to officials at Baptist Medical Center in Oklahoma City, where he had been hospitalized three times in recent weeks, suffering from congestive heart failure.

Funeral services were held Dec. 2 at First Baptist Church, Oklahoma City, with Hobbs' longtime friend, W.A. Criswell, pastor emeritus of First Baptist Church, Dallas, officiating. "We have been friends since 1931," Criswell said, "and I have never had a sweeter prayer partner and encourager in all of my life."

Many had called Hobbs "Mr. Southern Baptist," Criswell noted, adding there is "nothing more appropriate" for what he did for Southern Baptists.

"I have known Dr. Hobbs for over half a century," Criswell noted, "and every year has been filled with infinite gratitude to God for his faithfulness, for his scholarship and for his devotion to our Southern Baptist Convention."

In a telegram to the Hobbs family, evangelist Billy Graham said of Hobbs, "In many ways he was like a father in the ministry to me. He supported me from the earliest days of my ministry. I called on him many times for advice and counsel."

"He was one of the greatest pastors, evangelists and theologians in the Southern

Baptist Convention. I shall greatly miss him, but will look forward to our reunion in Heaven. May God bless those thousands whose lives he touched, and may God especially bless his family."

Hobbs was first and foremost a pastor, according to his autobiography, *Herschel H. Hobbs: My Faith and Message*, published in 1993.

"If I had 10,000 lives to live, I would want to be a pastor in every one of them," Hobbs said in his book. He was pastor of First Baptist Church, Oklahoma City, for 23 years and pastor-emeritus since 1973.

But to Southern Baptists he was known for his leadership in the Southern Baptist Convention as a prolific writer, popular theologian and esteemed statesman.

A former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, Hobbs is probably best known as chairman of the 24-member committee to draft a statement of Baptist beliefs, which became known as the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message. He also served on the SBC Peace Committee.

He was also a member of the boards of trustees of the Foreign Mission Board, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary as well as a member of the SBC Executive Committee.

Millions of people around the world knew Hobbs as the "Baptist Hour" preacher for 20 years. Southern Baptists studied his words for 28 years through a quarterly Sunday School lesson commentary for adult teachers.

Herschel Harold Hobbs is survived by a son, Jerry of Houston, and two granddaughters. Hobbs' wife, Frances, preceded him in death in 1984.

## Cover Story



### New executive director 3

Emil Turner, pastor of First Baptist Church, Lake Charles, La., was elected this week as the new executive director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention. He will begin his ministry in Arkansas Jan. 15.

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# ARKANSAS BAPTIST

USPS 008021

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The Arkansas Baptist (ISSN 1040-6096) is published bi-weekly by the Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine, Inc., 601-W. Capitol, Little Rock, AR 72201. Subscription rates are \$8.85 per year (individual) \$6.36 per year (Every Resident Family Plan), \$7.08 per year (Group Plan). Second Class Postage Paid at Little Rock, AR. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the Arkansas Baptist, P.O. 552, Little Rock, AR 72203; telephone 501-376-4791.

Member of the Southern Baptist Press Association

Volume 94 • Number 25

BOARD OF DIRECTORS: Mark Baber, Marion, president; James Alcock, Ilope; Robin Cook, Magnolia; Carl Cunningham, Mena; Lyndon Finney, Little Rock; Lucie Hagins, Fordyce; Curt Hodges, Jonesboro; Greg Kirksey, Benton; Eddie McCord, Mount Ida; David McCormick, Russellville; Glenda Miller, Heber Springs; Mike Petty, Hot Springs; Karen Ramsey, Fayetteville; Ken Shaddox, Fordyce; Ouis Turner, Arkadelphia



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# Turner unanimously elected new executive

By Trennis Henderson

Editor, Arkansas Baptist

Former Arkansas Baptist pastor Emil Turner was elected Dec. 12 as the next executive director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention. Turner, 45, will officially begin his ministry in Arkansas Jan. 15, 1996, succeeding current executive director Don Moore who will retire at the end of February.

Turner was unanimously elected during this week's Arkansas Baptist Executive Board meeting in Little Rock. Search committee chairman Billy Kite, director of missions for Ashley County Association, described Turner as "a soul-winner" who has "personal concern for people who need the Lord."

The new executive director has served as pastor of First Baptist Church, Lake Charles, La., since January 1991. He previously served four years as pastor of Mount Olive Church in Crossett. Turner, a native of Louisiana, also has been pastor of First Baptist Church, Harrisonburg, Va.; a staff member of Hillvue Heights Baptist Church in Bowling Green, Ky.; and a director for Campus Crusade for Christ.

Kite said committee members first interviewed Turner on Sept. 14 and voted unanimously to continue discussions with him as their top candidate. A second meeting with Turner, followed by an additional committee meeting, resulted in the committee voting unanimously to recommend him to the full board.

"I believe he's going to do a great job for Arkansas," Kite affirmed. "He's a



*"We know we're here by the hand of God and we know He will continue to sustain and lead."*

— Emil Turner

Newly-elected ABSC Executive Director

visionary. He dreams big and then he implements his dreams by the grace of God. He's a gifted administrator, a people person and a great communicator."

"I really believe Emil Turner has the great potential to be an outstanding leader for you," Don Moore remarked. "He is very conscientious, very thorough, very committed."

"Enable the man to have free hands and a free heart to embrace his convictions with all of his heart and to serve all Arkansas Baptists," Moore added. He urged board members to "give him the very best of your support. Be fair with him and expect him to be fair with everybody else."

Following words of affirmation from each of the nine committee members about Turner's qualifications, state convention president Rex Home, pastor of Immanuel Church, Little Rock, responded, "We appreciate this committee very much and we believe this committee is representative of Arkansas Baptists. We trust you and we're ready to get on with it."

Kite introduced Turner and his wife, Mary, to board members, providing Turner

the opportunity to share his thoughts and field questions.

"You have paid me the consummate honor in asking me to take this responsibility," Turner noted. "I feel a deep sense of humility in responding to this request. We commit this to God. This is nothing we would have ever sought or even dreamed. We know we're here by the hand of God and we know He will continue to sustain and lead."

Following the unanimous vote, Turner told board members, "I have never followed anyone more loved and respected than Dr. Moore." Acknowledging that the new position of leadership "is a tremendous honor and a tremendous challenge," he added, "We look forward to serving in Arkansas."

"The challenges that face a person in this job are tremendous and they can't be met without the help of the Lord Jesus Christ," Turner told the *Arkansas Baptist News* magazine, adding that a primary goal as executive director will be to help encourage and equip Arkansas Baptist churches to "continually baptize more and more people."

A graduate of Louisiana State University and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, Turner currently is a trustee of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board. He served this year as chairman of the Louisiana Baptist Convention's committee on convention arrangements and previously has served on the SBC Committee on Committees. The Turners have two teenage sons, Joel and Jonathan.

## Turner preaches convention sermon in Louisiana

Declaring that churches "used to set the world on fire and now we put the world to sleep," Emil Turner recently challenged Louisiana Baptists to "pay the price" to reach people with the gospel of Christ.

Turner, the newly elected executive director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, preached the convention sermon during last month's Louisiana Baptist Convention annual meeting. Turner, a former Arkansas Baptist pastor, has been pastor of First Baptist Church, Lake Charles, La., since 1991.

"Statistics scream at us that our denomination is dying, that our churches are dying, but we've stopped listening because we don't like to hear it. So we just write it off," Turner warned. "Our churches have become a place for our families but no longer a place for the faith to grow. Our churches have become a place of culture but no longer a place where Christ is pre-eminent."

He added, however, that "Ezekiel's vision tells us that dry bones can live again, that it doesn't have to be that way." Noting that Christ's followers in the first century church were upsetting the entire world with their message, Turner said today's congregations need to perceive their true condition.

"Our churches ought to be churches that do what they do for the sake and purpose of reaching the lost world, not for the sake of meaningless fads and not for the sake of forgotten traditions," he emphasized. "We're not there to keep the saints happy and let the sinners go to hell. We're there to reach the lost."

The world will not be reached without churches that proclaim the Scripture, Turner insisted. "Inerrant Scripture has been the womb of the church that's given birth to the church and it's the CPR that will revive a dying church. It's food for a growing church. It's a roadmap for a going church. It's a checkbook for a giving church. And it's a guidebook for a church that glorifies Jesus Christ."

Warning that many churches have become too practical and too political, Turner added, "There is nothing you can do to help a hurting world more than to preach Jesus Christ....The victory is not in the vote. The victory is in Jesus Christ."

"When our churches perceive their true condition, purpose in their hearts that they exist to reach a lost world, pay the price, proclaim the Scripture and make Christ pre-eminent, again our churches will be the churches that upset the world."

YOU'LL  
BE GLAD  
TO KNOW

By DON MOORE  
ABCS Executive Director

How do you welcome a new executive director? That is the question. Though he will not be "on the field" until February 1, I felt that I should share some thoughts with you at this stage of the game. Your early experiences with the new executive director will impact your relationships and therefore his effectiveness, just as would be true in a local church.

First and foremost, the man who fills this position must receive the earnest prayers of Arkansas Baptists. The job requires more of a man than he has within himself. Unless God enables the man, he is destined to fail. I have no illusions about my ministry. It has been the product of prayer.

Second, get to know the new exec. There is only one of him and 500,000 of you. It will take time and effort on the part of you and him. Help him! Tell him who you are and where you serve. In time he will get to know you. This is so important. We tend to suspicion those we do not know. He does not deserve that. He deserves to be trusted and respected. He would not be where he is if he had not demonstrated over many years his integrity and genuine spirituality.

Third, be fair with him. He will be working for all of you and with all of you. Please do not have expectations of him that would require him to do things for you that would call for him to be unfair with others. We have been in a "political mode" for the last few years, and election votes have been nearly 50/50. It will not be possible for him to line up with one group or another without alienating nearly 50 percent of the people on one side or the other. As a statesman, he will not compromise his beliefs nor will he expect you to compromise yours. You will love each other and walk and work together for Christ's sake.

The new executive director will be ably assisted by the Baptist Building staff and agency leaders. I will have the month of February to work with him. These will be exciting days for all of us as we help God's man on his way to a great ministry with Arkansas Baptists.

NAN MAXWELL

## Woman's Viewpoint

### Christmas: survival of the fittest?

Is Christmas becoming a survival of the fittest? Do we catch ourselves saying, "I love the Christmas season, but I'm glad it only comes once a year"? Maybe we need to see why we feel we need survival techniques for this time of the year. Are we too busy to stop and celebrate the Gift so graciously and lovingly given by God? As we look back to Bethlehem so many years ago, let me suggest some ways of survival for the Christmas season:

*Take a few minutes each day to be quiet.* As we think of the stable and the Baby sleeping, it makes us want to quiet ourselves before the Christ Child to discover His birth.

*Keep the simplicity in Christmas whether it is in decorating, activities or lifestyle.* The simplicity in which the first Christmas came shows us how for centuries its uncluttered elegance has inspired artists, musicians and writers.

*Be prepared.* Not just being sure the gifts are bought, the decorations in place or the Christmas cards sent, but be prepared inwardly. Christmas is more than shopping and holiday merriment. It is the season to keep our hearts and minds on Christ Jesus.

*Remember the true meaning of Christmas and why Christ came to earth.* This allows us to recall who we are and to whom we belong. To help

our family remember, we always read the Christmas story from the Bible before we open our gifts, so that we don't forget the goodness of the Christ Child.

*Give in the right spirit.* Too many of us abuse and misunderstand the blessing of giving at Christmas. We give expensive credit card gifts and strap ourselves financially for months, all under the idea that more is better. But the greatest gift is Immanuel Himself - "God with us." Jesus, God's greatest gift that He has given to a world in need, offers us a relationship again with God the Father.

*Learn to celebrate.* The shepherds taught us the meaning of celebration. They came, worshipped and glorified God. They told others. God wants us to celebrate His goodness - the celebration that God is with us.

Christmas is more than surviving. It is a holy season to be celebrated - remembering the Christ Child with a message to shout to the world: Jesus is born! Hallelujah!

Nan Maxwell is a pastor's wife and works part-time in the Discipleship and Family Ministry department of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention. Her husband, Randy, is pastor of South Highland Church in Little Rock. They have one son, a student at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville.

## Personal perspectives

"Can we Christians overcome our prejudices and love past our theology to help meet the needs of dying people? I pray so."

-*Jimmy Allen, author of Burden of a Secret:  
A Story of Truth and Mercy in the Face of AIDS*

"We don't expect to change the world. We just want to affect one life at a time."

-*Larry Page, foster parent to an abandoned infant*

"It's wonderful how in the midst of tragedy that God's people are at their finest."

-*Mark Baber, pastor of First Church, Marion,  
whose facilities were destroyed by fire Nov. 24*

# The presence of Christ

Barbie dolls, Power Rangers, CD players, ties, jewelry, waffle irons. Whether you're watching TV commercials, listening to radio spots or scanning the latest sale bill, it's clear that corporate America has one definition of Christmas — a season to sell presents, presents and more presents.

While the spirit of giving is a wonderful part of the holiday tradition, it is obvious that gift buying and giving can consume so much time, money and energy that the greater meaning of Christmas is carelessly shoved aside.

Most church services this time of year seek to emphasize the importance of focusing on Christ instead of commercialism; the manger rather than the mall. Christmas pageants, caroling, food baskets for the needy, generous Lottic Moon Christmas Offering gifts and other ministry opportunities gently remind us what the spirit of Christmas giving truly means.

Yet for many of our friends, neighbors and co-workers, the Christmas season means nothing more than festive decorations, exchanging gifts, attending countless parties and getting a few days off from work or school. We as Christians easily fall into the same hectic routine, scurrying from one activity to the next with little thought about the eternal significance of the celebration of Christ's birth.

Perhaps, even in the midst of another non-stop Christmas season, we should pause long enough to reflect on the wondrous message of the angels that first Christmas day. It is a vivid reminder that the holiday season is not about Christmas

## STRAIGHT FROM THE EDITOR

By TRENNIS HENDERSON



presents, but the presence of Christ.

Yes, Jesus did bring a number of presents with Him when He was born in Bethlehem, but not the kind of presents we lavishly wrap and stack beneath a tree.

The first present produced by Christ's presence was the gift of joy. "Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people," the heavenly messenger told the shepherds in Luke 2:10. Two thousand years later, we enthusiastically affirm, "Joy to the world! The Lord is come."

Christmas joy is based on the birth of the Savior who came to rescue His people from their sins. Do you know someone who needs to receive the gift of spiritual joy this Christmas? There's no better time to share the message of Christian joy than during the celebration of the Messiah's miraculous arrival among men.

Coupled with the gift of joy is the gift of hope — not some wishful-thinking type of hope — but the kind of certain, confident

hope that the apostle Paul described as "Christ in you, the hope of glory." Such hope is reflected in the angel's announcement: "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord."

The life-changing hope that accompanied Christ's mission on earth is noted in the classic Christmas carol that declares: "O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!...The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight." In a culture filled with hopelessness, the hope available through the presence of Christ is a priceless gift.

Along with joy and hope, the presence of Christ also provides the presence of peace. "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men," the heavenly host proclaimed. In our war-weary world, true peace seems nothing more than an elusive dream. Yet the perfect Prince of Peace freely offers "peace that passes understanding" which can transform our world one heart at a time.

Christ's presents of joy, hope and peace are wrapped by His Father in the precious package of love. "For God so loved the world that He gave..." is the source of our Christmas celebrations throughout history.

There's certainly nothing wrong with the holiday traditions of Christmas decorations, gift-giving and parties galore. But as you're exchanging gifts and greetings with family and friends, don't forget to include a generous supply of joy, hope, peace and love — timeless Christmas presents that truly reflect the presence of Christ.

## A tribute to Dr. Hobbs

Southern Baptists lost an irreplaceable treasure Nov. 28 when Dr. Herschel Hobbs concluded his earthly pilgrimage at age 88. Fortunately, his words of wisdom will live for generations to come through the more than 100 books and commentaries he wrote.

Words like statesman, denominational servant, gifted theologian and prolific writer seem inadequate to convey all that Dr. Hobbs meant in Southern Baptist life. He was, perhaps above all else, a role model of what a minister of the gospel should be and do. His humility and honesty served him well throughout his years as a Southern Baptist peacemaker.

Among his many friends, evangelist Billy Graham said Dr. Hobbs "was like a father in the ministry to me."

Dr. Hobbs' longtime friend, W.A. Criswell, pastor emeritus of First Baptist Church, Dallas, remarked, "Our Southern Baptist Zion has lost one of its greatest stalwarts, one of its greatest preachers, one of its greatest biblical commentators and one of its greatest church leaders and builders."

Dr. Hobbs was best known for his role as chairman of the Southern Baptist committee which produced the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message statement. He was widely loved for his 28 years of work as the writer for the Baptist Sunday School Board's quarterly Sunday School commentary. An estimated 90,000 Sunday School teachers utilize the commentary as part of their weekly lesson preparation. BSSB officials already have announced that

the commentary will be published for the "foreseeable future," drawing excerpts from his numerous published works.

From a personal perspective, one of the highlights in my ministry as editor of the Newsmagazine was the privilege to work with Dr. Hobbs in 1993 on a 10-part series entitled, "The Baptist Faith and Message Revisited." The articles, which were reprinted in numerous other state Baptist papers, featured Dr. Hobbs' perspectives on the historical significance of the document and its application for Southern Baptists today.

It is a rare honor to cross paths with someone who so graciously "fought the good fight, finished the course and kept the faith." Farewell, dear friend, and thank you.

## Arkansas native helps impact Brazil for Christ

By Trennis Henderson  
Editor, Arkansas Baptist

RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL—In a nation of 160 million people, Brazilian Baptists have fewer than 850,000 members. Among Southern Baptist missionaries seeking to strengthen the Baptist witness in South America's largest nation are Don and Angie Finley.

Angie, who grew up as a member of Second Church, Hot Springs, is among a handful of Arkansas Baptists serving as missionaries to Brazil. She and her husband, who were first appointed to Brazil in 1988, transferred for a short time to Central Asia before returning to Brazil earlier this year.

Recalling her childhood interest in foreign missions, Angie noted, "Listening to missionary speakers as a kid, I was always captivated by the presentations. At invitation time, my heart would race." As a student at Ouachita Baptist University, she said ongoing exposure to missions opportunities continued to nurture her interest in missions.

"When Don and I started dating, he would ask about missions and I would say maybe in the future," she noted, adding that she "began to look at my life, values and priorities" following a Tony Campolo crusade.

During a 1987 Student Week event at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Conference Center, the Finleys responded to a missions invitation presented by Keith Parks. "When our eyes met (during the invitation), we both knew," she recalled, explaining that she and Don "felt a call to missions, a call to the world."

Sensing a specific call to student ministry, the Finleys discovered there were only nine such positions available worldwide through the Foreign Mission Board. They eventually accepted a position in Brazil.

"People have tried to do student work in Brazil for 20 years and it's never taken off," Angie noted. "For Brazilians, being a student isn't their identity — most attend commuter schools."

Soon after the Finleys arrived in Brazil, rapid social changes began to take place in Eastern Europe and Central Asia with the collapse of the Iron Curtain and the former Soviet Union.

"We began to pray about missiological opportunities and prayed that we as Southern Baptists would respond to the opportunities before us," Angie said. As



Don and Angie Finley, Southern Baptist missionaries to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, are seeking to help impact Brazilian society for Christ through student ministry.

she and Don prayed for God to send missionaries to the former Soviet nations, they began to sense the need to personally respond.

Although "we were happy where we were," Angie explained, "we didn't feel a call to a geographic area." While choosing to leave Brazil "was the hardest decision we ever made," she added, "We went to Central Asia following our best understanding of God's will at the time."

*"We have an inescapable call to missions... I wouldn't trade it for anything."*

— Angie Finley  
SBC missionary to Brazil

The Finleys had to leave Central Asia a year and a half later, however, in order to get adequate orthodontic care for their older daughter, Kristen. Rather than resigning their missionary appointment or taking an extended leave of absence, however, the Finleys took advantage of an opportunity to return to Brazil. "We felt like our place was on the mission field," Angie pointed out. "We have an inescapable call to missions."

Despite disappointment about their previous assignment being so brief, Don affirmed that he and Angie as well as daughters Kristen and Lauren "feel good

about where we are now."

As the family settled into their new field of service in Rio de Janeiro this year, Don noted, "Over 73 percent of the population of Brazil is age 35 or younger so student work is a priority here." He said their mission field in Rio includes more than 100 campuses, adding that "some of the largest and most prestigious universities in Brazil are here."

"One way to impact society is to reach students who will be leaders in Brazilian life," Don said. "One crucial point is to get churches to develop a mentality where they want to reach students and they think they can. Churches need to be responsible to help students see their presence on campus as an opportunity to share the gospel."

"Having a chance to touch people's lives for God is a process that happens through relationships," he emphasized. "That's the most rewarding part of what we do."

"My plan, my dream, my goal is to build relationships with students," Angie agreed. "There is a lot of potential."

As Southern Baptists commit prayer support and financial gifts throughout this year's Lottie Moon Christmas Offering emphasis, the Finleys provide a clear example of the commitment of Baptist missionaries serving around the world.

"A lot of people talk about the sacrifices of being a missionary," Angie acknowledged. "I don't consider it a sacrifice. God has blessed us beyond anything we could imagine."

"I wouldn't trade it for anything. We could never imagine doing anything else," she declared. "It's who we are. It's all we want to do."

# Arkansas missionaries: Lottie Moon gifts essential

According to Arkansas Baptist missionaries serving around the world, there is no way to overemphasize the impact the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions has on their lives and ministries.

Southern Baptists have adopted a record goal of \$100 million for the annual offering, in addition to a \$50 million goal for home missions, to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Southern Baptist Convention this year.

To many missionaries, finances play a major role in security for their families and ministries.

"During our 22 years of service in Israel, we have faced bombings, harassment and threats, but my greatest concern is finances," commented John Anthony, an SBC representative to Israel.

Anthony, a native of Hope, is on furlough in Murfreesboro along with his wife, Connie, a Mount Ida native.

"Giving to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering means we have been able to stay on the field and minister for 22 years in Israel," he said. "It means we are provided with housing, a car, an economic base and education for our children."

He warned Arkansas Baptists, though, that Lottie Moon gifts need to be increased each year to match overseas inflation. "Since 1988, because of the lack of giving by Southern Baptists to Lottie Moon, we now have half the (relative) budget that we did because of the lack of being able keep up with the cost of living. We now have 25-35 percent less in buying power than we did in 1991."

Urging Baptists to increase their missions giving through the Foreign Mission Board, he warned that many churches claiming to give large amounts to missions actually give to para-church missions, television ministries and non-Southern Baptist missions efforts.

He said the "main problem" in reaching Southern Baptists' goal of putting 5,000 missionaries on the foreign mission field is that salarywise, we don't have the economic base to support the 4,100 we have."

Anthony said that "by increasing the goal from \$86 million to \$100 million, Baptists are voting. There's never been a jump that big. To me, that's a vote by Southern Baptists on whether they want foreign missions or not."

Geneva Weiler, a church/home worker in the Philippines who will soon begin a ministry in Moldova, said that "without support from the States, we would not be able to stay on the field. That is our lifeline to keep us there."

"Anything we do with the people takes money: ministering, passing out Bibles, even running off copies," she said.

## Reshaping Our World View



1995 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering National Goal: \$100 million

*"By increasing the goal from \$86 million to \$100 million, Baptists are voting. There's never been a jump that big. To me, that's a vote by Southern Baptists on whether they want foreign missions or not."*

— John Anthony  
SBC representative to Israel

Weiler, on furlough in Fayetteville, added that the Lottie Moon Offering and other gifts from Southern Baptists allow her and her husband to "survive. We can't be employed on the field. We can't drum up our own support, so we are totally reliant on money from the States."

That is important to her, Weiler said, because "I have three elementary-age children. Being a mother and supporting my husband is a big part of what I do. It allows me time to be a mother."

She urged Baptists to give more to the Lottie Moon Offering because "more and more missionaries are being appointed,

but we need funds to keep them on the field."

Camden native Craig Bird, FMB overseas correspondent for Africa, commented that "without the Lottie Moon offering, I probably wouldn't be there."

"Since over half of our budget comes from Lottie Moon," said Bird, who lives in Kenya, "that means that half the coverage comes from Lottie Moon. Without it, we could not tell Baptists what was happening in places like Somalia, Uganda or South Africa."

He said without the offering, his wife, Melissa, "would have to home school the kids instead of teaching Bible classes or helping with medical clinics in the slums."

Bird voiced a special praise for their Lottie Moon-provided vehicle. "I've been in 14 countries that were having civil wars and I've only been shot at in Kenya. Without our vehicle (in which he fled his attackers), I don't know if we would be alive."

He said that because of the Cooperative Program and the Lottie Moon Offering, Southern Baptists can be in the tough places as well as the responsive places.

"There are great (baptism) numbers coming out of Kenya. Twenty years ago, the numbers weren't that great, but through the Cooperative Program and Lottie Moon, the foundation could be laid," Bird explained.

Among those who have helped build that "strong foundation" is Mountain View native Gilbert Nichols, a seminary administrator in Paraguay, who has been a foreign missionary since 1958 along with his wife, Deanie, a Cabot native.

He recalled that when he arrived on the field, the Lottie Moon Offering "was used more for capital needs than it is now. At the time when we arrived, we had a Lottie Moon Christmas Offering house to live in, the transportation we used was provided by Lottie Moon and we lived across the street from the Baptist hospital, which was built and furnished with Lottie Moon Christmas Offering funds.

"Since then things have changed," he noted. "A good part is used to pay salaries."

"Is that good?" he asked. "I think not. I suppose that the Cooperative Program has not been enough for capital expenses and part of the Lottie Moon Offering has been used for operating expenses."

Without the Lottie Moon Offering, said Nichols, "I don't know what we would do. We would come up way short."

He said that even in years when giving has fallen short of needs, he has had faith "that Southern Baptists would come through some way. They never have failed to appoint missionaries because of lack of money. I trust that would still be true."



# AIDS: Baptists ponder ministry options amid fear, theological concerns

By Russell N. Dilday  
Associate Editor, Arkansas Baptist

When Eric Camp was diagnosed with AIDS in 1992, he did what many Southern Baptists would do — he turned to a pastor. He called Rich Kincl, pastor of his home congregation, Central Church in Magnolia.

"I needed to tell my parents. It was one of my first concerns," Camp recalled. "So one of the first phone calls I made was to Rich Kincl. My concern was when I told my parents that he be prepared."

Kincl's response, said Camp, was "a very compassionate, supporting, loving conversation. He let me know he would be there for my family."

When Camp, a Springdale resident, was told he was HIV-positive, "my immediate reaction was, 'I'm going to die a slow, painful, socially unacceptable death.'"

His next thought, he said, was the decision of "who to tell and how to tell them." Among the first persons he told was an AIDS activist. After the conversation, he said, "I knew that above anything else, I could make a difference with what time I had left: Educating schools, churches and clubs on prevention, compassion with those who have the virus and letting them know you don't have to be afraid of a person with AIDS."

Camp found an education outlet through the Regional Aids Interfaith Network, a not-for-profit group that, in addition to providing education programs, ministers to people with AIDS.

When Camp told his parents, their reaction also was typical of many Southern Baptists. "Mom and Pop kept everything pretty quiet the first year. There are many in the church who have never talked to

them about it, but mainly because they don't know how to talk about it."

Many Baptists who deal with the trauma of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome cite fear and the transmittal of the disease through homosexual or promiscuous heterosexual intercourse as reasons Baptists "keep quiet" in dealing with infected people and their families. Arkansas Department of Health AIDS Surveillance Program figures confirm the prevalence of transmission through homosexual and heterosexual intercourse.

Through Nov. 12, a total of 3,380 Arkansans had been reported as HIV-positive. HIV is the virus which causes AIDS, an incurable disease which attacks the body's immune system. Of the total, 50 percent were identified as having contracted the disease through male-to-male sexual contact. An additional 7 percent have contracted AIDS through a combination of male-to-male sex and injection drug use. Other transmission factors include injection drug use only (15 percent) and heterosexual intercourse (14 percent).

Camp contracted AIDS through homosexual involvement. He admitted wrestling with the issue of homosexuality throughout his life. "I knew before puberty I was gay, and being a Christian raised in a Southern Baptist church and a strong Southern Baptist family, I also knew this was an abomination and a separation from God." Insisting that "I did everything I could to change," Camp said his struggle with his sexuality led him to attempt suicide twice.

Tommy Goode, an Arkansas Baptist missions associate, said the issue of homosexuality is one of the "two most significant" factors contributing to Baptist hesitancy to minister to people with AIDS.



Eric Camp, a Southern Baptist with AIDS, is an advocate of AIDS education. He was a guest on the 1993 AETN feature, "Open Channels: A World AIDS Day Stimulcast."

"One is the fear of the contagion of the virus and having physical contact or exposing people we love to somebody who has that virus," he said. "It is a fearful thing. Regardless of what reports say, there is still a concern people have, that 'we still might be able to catch this virus.'"

"The other is the repulsion that most heterosexuals feel toward the homosexual lifestyle," Goode added. "You compound that with the biblical teaching against homosexuality and you have two factors there, the fear of a deadly disease and the fear of a deadly lifestyle, which most average people, including Arkansas Baptists, are almost unable to overcome in order to reach out and do ministry."

## 1996 WMU project to focus on AIDS ministry opportunities

Southern Baptists will participate in AIDS ministries through Project HELP: AIDS, the national Woman's Missionary Union 1996 mission emphasis project. The emphasis will culminate Feb. 11 with a "Dare to Care" gathering of supplies needed by people with AIDS.

Sandy Wisdom-Martin, an associate in the Arkansas Baptist WMU department, said the project goal is "to provide a way for everyone to be involved in the project. Individual members and churches have the opportunity to choose their level of involvement."

She noted that "one of the best ways to participate is to lead others to participate in the 'Dare to Care' national gathering Feb. 11," adding that "WMU members will lead their churches to collect items needed by local AIDS ministries, plus \$1 per item." Needed items include personal items such as shampoo, toothpaste, soap, combs and razors; sanitation items such as latex gloves, bleach, laundry supplies and plastic bags; literature such

as books, tapes, CDs and Bibles; and canned food products.

The financial gifts, she said, "will be given through the WMU, SBC Vision Fund to support the House of Hope in Vitoria, Brazil, a hospice for people infected with AIDS."

Arkansas Baptists also have AIDS educational opportunities through Project HELP. Trudy Smith, the project's volunteer coordinator, is available to teach groups about AIDS. Smith said she is available to "lead AIDS awareness conferences in churches dealing with medical facts and ways to get involved and minister to AIDS victims and families."

Resources available from national WMU include prayer cards, the video "Echoes from the Valley" and the book *Broken Dreams: Journal of a Life Shattered by AIDS*.

For additional information about Project HELP or establishing an AIDS ministry, contact Wisdom-Martin at 501-376-4791 or toll-free in state at 1-800-838-ABSC, ext. 5137.



Goode said he believes Arkansas Baptist ministries to people with AIDS will increase, "and this is how we will do it: God will and is calling very specially-gifted people to reach out in ministry and is empowering them in such a way that they overcome their fear and wall of prejudice and are ministering simply in Jesus' name."

"We need to affirm those people, help them, train them and embrace what God is doing with them and let that be a ministry in their churches," he urged.

Ray Higgins, pastor of Second Church in Little Rock and former professor of Christian ethics at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, said that in working with the homosexual community in any ministry, "we need to avoid two mistakes."

"On the one hand we should not be so against a behavior we believe the Bible calls sin that we cannot love and we end up even hating and cannot minister to those people who embody that characteristic," he said. "On the other hand, we should avoid rationalizing or excusing behaviors that the Bible describes as sin."

"There's an idea that you have to point out people's sins to them as you minister to them and that's true," Higgins added. "But the more you stick sin in people's faces, the more difficult it makes it to minister to them. And we are not consistent with the way we relate to people. Everyone in our congregations is a sinner, including the pastor. But what we do is choose pet sins that we talk about and condemn, and we sweep under the rug a Bible full of sins that we excuse or that hit closer to home."

## 'Christlike response' urged

Camp said that as a homosexual with AIDS, "what I would expect from Christians is a Christlike response. Look at how Christ treated lepers: a misunderstood disease the religious leaders of the time said was the judgment of God." Like those with AIDS, he said, "lepers were a socially ostracized group of people who were ill and needed the love of God more than many others in society. Christ rebuked the religious leaders of the time and reached out and healed lepers."

One way Southern Baptists are ministering to people with AIDS is through the Woman's Missionary Union national 1996 Project HELP emphasis, which focuses on AIDS. Planners say the project's goal is for participants to share the gospel while meeting physical and spiritual needs of those affected by AIDS. The plan involves education, personal involvement and a day set aside to collect resources and money for AIDS ministries.

Trudy Smith, 1996 Project HELP coordinator for Arkansas, agreed with Goode that Baptists must go beyond preconceptions and fear to minister to those with

AIDS. Noting that Arkansas Baptist messengers have adopted numerous resolutions opposing homosexuality in recent years, Smith voiced concern that such efforts "only broaden the gap between us and a community we need to be reaching."

Smith, a registered nurse and member of Immanuel Church in Little Rock, cautioned Baptists not to ignore the AIDS epidemic. "By and large, we are not a congregation at high risk, so it really hasn't been on our face. But it's going to be."

Trudy James, executive director of RAIN, said rejection is a major concern for people with AIDS. "When they are sick, they are often treated as outcasts," she emphasized. "As religious people, especially as followers of Jesus, the model for us is very clear. Jesus ate with those who others were afraid to eat with, Jesus touched those others would not touch. Jesus told us to love one another."

Part of RAIN's mission is to train and implement "careteams," church-based groups that "adopt" a person with AIDS as their "carepartner."

"The people on our careteams are courageous and loving people," James declared, "and they really make a difference in the lives of those who are ill and in the lives of their loved ones."

"They do simple things..." she explained. "But because the team members come from churches, those simple things bring the message that God loves the person with AIDS and their family."

James said that of the 123 RAIN careteams active in Arkansas, only five are Southern Baptist. The first Southern Baptist careteam in the state, from Second Church in Little Rock, began ministering in 1991.

Second Church team member Ira Hocutt said his team became involved because "every soul has to have some hope and, if there's anything we Baptists hate most, I feel it's seeing people without hope."

One result of the team's efforts was that participants "had shared enough to see our carepartner baptized at our church before he passed away," Hocutt said.

Describing the spiritual impact of ministry to people with AIDS, Camp said, "I've learned that in the absence of effective treatments...a spiritual life is critical."

He said a recent visit to speak at a Baptist church changed his perspective about his illness. "Because of the love of God in their hearts and the need to reach out to those in need, I felt the love of God in that room like I had not felt since a child in my hometown church," Camp shared.

"It put me on a course that I am not a person dying of AIDS, but one who lives with it," he said. "I thank God for another day. I've got a long way still to go...but I don't have the fear of death, which makes life a lot better."

## New book details Christian family's struggle with AIDS

DALLAS (ABP) — Jimmy Allen, who formerly led the SBC's Radio and Television Commission and was SBC president in 1978-79, detailed his family's struggle with AIDS in a new book, *Burden of a Secret: A Story of Truth and Mercy in the Face of AIDS*.

Allen's 13-year-old grandson, Matt, died Nov. 10 after a lifelong battle with AIDS. Matt, the third member in the Allen family to die of AIDS, contracted the HIV virus that causes AIDS from a tainted blood transfusion given to his mother hours before his birth. Before Matt's mother, Lydia, discovered she had the virus, she had another son, Bryan, who died in infancy in 1986. Lydia died from AIDS in 1992.

Matt's father, Scott, wasn't infected, but was fired as minister of education at First Christian Church in Colorado Springs, Colo., when he told his pastor about his family. Matt was kicked out of the church's day-care and the family searched for a new church home.

They moved to Dallas and a string of churches refused to accept Matt in their Sunday Schools because of fear and prejudice about AIDS.

Jimmy Allen said he wrote the book because a decade after his family's crisis began, churches are still shunning people with AIDS. In the book, he describes the AIDS epidemic as the greatest challenge facing churches. AIDS provides churches with an opportunity to express loving compassion but also may force many to re-examine their reason for being, he said.

Allen challenged churches to become informed about AIDS and to confront their feelings about homosexuality, since the disease most often affects homosexual men.

"Can we Christians overcome our prejudices and love past our theology to help meet the needs of dying people? I pray so," Allen wrote. "If we truly love...we can deal with his or her deviant behavior, whether it be dishonesty, thievery, drunkenness, promiscuity, drug addiction or homosexuality. As we often say, but have a much more difficult time doing, the Christian is to hate the sin but love the sinner."

"Churches are ideally equipped to respond to AIDS," Allen insisted. "With adequate information about how AIDS spreads, caregivers can put aside fear and compassion can flow."

## 'Part of the solution'

*Foster parenting is one Arkansas family's answer to unwanted kids*

By Russell N. Dilday

Associate Editor, Arkansas Baptist

Life is tough when you are addicted to crack cocaine, have lived on the streets of Little Rock and were abandoned by your mother. It's even tougher when you are just two months old.

But that was Jimmy's situation when a relative took him to a Little Rock hospital suffering from his addiction, malnutrition and neglect. Jimmy (not his real name) eventually was placed with foster parents Larry and Mickie Page, members of South Highland Church in Little Rock.

"We've had him for a month," explained Larry Page, executive director of the Arkansas Christian Civic Foundation. "He was a couple of months old when we got him. He was in pretty bad shape. He had no proper nourishment or care or hygiene. Basically, he was suffering from severe neglect."

"They said that at one point he was borderline 'failure to thrive,'" added Mickie, a trustee of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

"He was in trouble for a while," Larry said. "From the condition he was in, he could have been on the street. His mother obviously had a crack cocaine habit because he was born with that addiction."

Larry, well-known in the state as a right-to-life proponent and lobbyist in his role with the Christian Civic Foundation, said he and his wife became foster parents to "become part of the solution" for unwanted and neglected children.

"We qualified this year, but it's something we've had on our minds for years," he said. "It was the need. So many times you don't do anything because you look at the sheer numbers and the size of the problem and feel hopeless and helpless."

"We finally came to the opinion that we would do what we could — a life here and a life there," he noted. "We couldn't solve all the problems, but may become part of the solution."

While taking foster parenting classes, Larry said, they noted the need for more Christian involvement in foster parenting. "We asked, 'Where are all the Christians?' Christians should be involved in taking care of the least of these. We didn't see that. The families are there, the homes are there. A lot of people aren't aware of the tremendous need for homes for children who simply aren't wanted."

Jimmy, who is African-American, is the Page family's second foster child. The first, an infant girl abandoned after being born in a Little Rock hospital, was adopted by another family last month.



*"A lot of people are not aware of the tremendous need for homes for children who simply aren't wanted," said Larry Page. He and his wife, Mickie, recently began serving as foster parents for three-month-old Jimmy.*

"I think every white person needs to hold a little black baby," Mickie said, "and African-American people need to hold little white babies. In God's eyes we're all pink."

According to the Centers for Youth and Families, 1,972 children were under foster care in Arkansas last year.

The Pages also have three daughters, Sarah, a freshman at the University of Central Arkansas; Jenny, a high school junior; and sixth-grader Katie, who help care for their foster siblings.

"It's a family passion," Mickie said. "It's the whole crew that agreed to this."

### 'A little gift'

"I love it," affirmed Jenny. "I love getting up before school in enough time to hold him before I have to leave. I've always loved kids. He's just like a little gift."

"Yeah," said Katie. "It's like Christmas every day. It's good to know that no matter what else happens, he will have one good time in his life where he will be treated as loving as he could be."

Jenny said having a baby brother in the house is a lesson of responsibility for her and her sisters. "I know a lot of teenagers who think that babies are going to be cute and fun," she said. "I know firsthand that it's not all that, with middle-of-the-night feedings and the spit-up all over you when you're ready to walk out the door. We get that all the time. It's good to learn how to deal with that."

Raising a foster child is not without its problems, though. "Honestly, we have more laundry and less sleep and less freedom to run and do," said Mickie. "You can organize well, but...your normal schedule

is going to be uprooted because you have added another personality in the family."

However, she added, "you also get those morning flashes when they first wake up and they are feeling good and they love you to death and everything you say makes them smile and laugh."

"For those of us who are Christians, I think we have a built-in need to reach out," he emphasized. "That would be manifested in a lot of different ways for different people. Foster care is not for everybody; foster care is not for everybody; foster care is not for everybody. This is a niche we fill."

Jimmy's time with the Pages is uncertain. He is in the process for adoption. "I don't know what will happen to this little guy," said Mickie, "but if we can do something now, then that's important."

In addition to care, said Mickie, "the prayers that he will receive as a result of being here will follow him long after he leaves. We will always be praying for him."

Family reminders include a Christmas ornament with photos of their foster children and "a book with pictures so we can say, 'These are kids we love,'" she said.

Reflecting on Jimmy's first Christmas season, Jenny remarked, "I wonder what kind of Christmas he would have if he wasn't with us. I wonder what he would be doing, where he would be, and I wonder about the other kids who don't have that."

Jimmy sleeps now in a warm crib in a loving home. Above his bed is the verse, Luke 9:48, "Whoever welcomes this little child in my name, welcomes me."

"We don't expect to change the world," said Larry. "We just want to affect one life at a time."

# Four Acteens named to state advisory panel

Four Arkansas Baptist Acteens have been selected to serve on the 1995-96 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 department. The State Acteens Committee then selects four panelists and one alternate.

The Acteens will help plan the Acteens Encounter, April 12-13, 1996, at Immanuel Church in Little Rock and have high visibility during that event. The girls recently participated in a retreat, where they helped plan events for Encounter, with the theme "Change Your World."

"The girls came up with the idea of a missions extravaganza, 'It's a Small World,' featuring missionaries, experiential games, food and fun," noted state Acteens director Angela Lowe. Encounter also will feature worship leader Trish Landers, the soloist for the new Acteens song, "Together Hand in Hand" and "The Company," a drama troupe from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. "Dorcas Byrd, a dynamic young home missionary from Texas, also will be with us," Lowe noted.



Jennifer Croft



Allison Kemmer



Misty Rosinbaum



Sarah Walker

This year's Acteens panelists include: **Jennifer Croft** of Calvary Church in Little Rock. She is a junior at Hall High School where she is involved in Student Council, Beta Club and Y Teens. She also is active in Girl Scouts, church choir and dance. She enjoys creative writing,

photography and crafts.

**Allison Kemmer** of First Church in Brinkley. She is a junior at Brinkley High School where she is active in Library Club, National Honor Society, Quiz Bowl, French Club, Thespians Club and is a senior majorette. Her hobbies are twirling, flute and tennis.

**Misty Rosinbaum** of First Church in Benton. She is a junior at Beaton High School where she is involved in Future Business Leaders of America, Fellowship of Christian Students and Key Club. Her hobbies include reading, writing, cross-stitching, clowning and mime.

**Sarah Walker** of Glendale Church in Booneville. She is a sophomore at Booneville High School, where she is involved in Student Council, Senior Beta Club, Key Club, Science Club and choir. Her hobbies are drawing, singing and signing.

Patrice Johnson of Glendale Church in Booneville has been selected as alternate. She is a junior at Booneville High School.

"What impresses me most about the panelists is their commitment to doing missions," Lowe remarked. "They have outstanding leadership skills which come through at school and church activities as well as Acteens. They worked well together at the retreat to plan an exciting year for Acteens."

## Acteen leaders conduct project in Appalachia

By Teresa Dickens

SBC Woman's Missionary Union

BIRMINGHAM, AL — Hammers, nails, lumber, shovels, face paint and balloons are not things state Acteens consultants and national Acteens editors use every day in their work. But during a recent ministry project these instruments became their avenue for communicating the gospel.

The Acteens workers, representing eight state conventions and the national Woman's Missionary Union were part of a ministry project called the A\* State Activator Team. The 10-member team worked through two community outreach ministries of Cumberland College, Williamsburg, Ky., to rebuild the porch of a residence, sort clothes for a clothing ministry, and entertain more than 100 children during a carnival. Angela Lowe, Arkansas Baptists' state Acteens director, was among the team members.

The Acteens leaders borrowed the idea for their project from the short-term volunteer missions program for teenage girls called Acteens Activators. Hundreds of Acteens, WMU's organization for girls in grades 7-12, are involved in similar ministry projects each summer in the U.S. and overseas.

"We promote hands-on missions involvement with Acteens year-round," noted Becky Nelson, youth products editor at WMU, SBC. "This was our opportunity to be a part of what we ask others to do."

Fellowship was another important factor in the project, added Jan Turrentine, design editor for WMU's magazines for Acteens and their advisors, *Accent* and *Accent Leadership*.

"The leaders who work with Acteens at the state level do not

have a lot of opportunities to spend time together," Turrentine noted. "The project allowed them a time to visit and share ideas and do something positive for someone else at the same time."

The Activators worked in two groups: one led children's activities while the other did construction. Lowe helped with Appalachian Ministries, a 20-year-old children's ministry sponsored by Cumberland College's Baptist Student Union. The ongoing ministry sponsors four Bible clubs each week in Williamsburg and surrounding communities, and two recreation events for special education children in area schools.

The carnival brought together children involved in the Bible clubs for a few hours of fun and games, and a hot meal.

The Acteens leaders used their talents at clowning to entertain the children. Among their duties for the day were creating animals out of balloons, painting various figurines on the children's faces, and leading a group time which included storytelling.

Noting that this was the first carnival sponsored by the ministry, Wyndee Holbrook said the clowning team helped make the event a success.

"The women were a wonderful asset to the carnival," said Holbrook, director of campus ministries for Cumberland. "Their artistic abilities in clowning and storytelling provided great entertainment for the children."

"However," she added, "it was evident that they did not come here just to perform. They were here to minister."

The other women worked with Mountain Outreach, a home-improvement ministry sponsored by the college. The ministry, started in 1982, involves students and other volunteers in repairing and building homes for low income families as well as furnishing clothes and home furnishings for the needy.

## People

**S. Cary Heard** recently observed 20 years of ministry as pastor of Park Hill Church in North Little Rock. A former president of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, he also has served as president of the Arkansas Christian Civic Foundation and moderator of North Pulaski Association. Prior to coming to Arkansas he served churches in Texas and Louisiana. Heard is a graduate of Baylor University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He and his wife, Mary Lou, have two sons, Samuel and Daniel, and a married daughter, Sarah Renshaw.

**Ozzie Berryhill**, a member of Park Hill Church in North Little Rock, recently resigned as North Pulaski Association's Brotherhood and Royal Ambassadors director after 25 years of service in those positions. Berryhill will continue to serve as state RA coordinator and trainer. He also serves as a trustee for the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission.

**Bill Bowen** was honored Nov. 5 by First Church of Mena in recognition of 10 years of service as pastor. He was presented with a money tree, appreciation plaque, book of letters and a four-wheeler. Pastor emeritus Dillard Miller, director of missions for Ouachita Association, was the guest speaker for the recognition service.

**Carlos Carter** was honored Nov. 5 by Crystal Hill Church in Little Rock in recognition of his ministry as church music director. During an evening reception, he was presented with a bound volume of appreciation letters and a money tree.

**Earl Hays** recently was named deacon emeritus by Hatfield First Church in recognition of his 45 years of service as a deacon. He was presented with a plaque and a carnation floral arrangement was presented to his wife, Ruth.

## Obituaries

**John Marvin Basinger** of Jonesboro died Nov. 8 at age 90. Basinger retired in 1970 as a Southern Baptist pastor having served Arkansas churches in Greenwood, Huntington, Van Buren, Dyess, Rudy, Mulberry, Lavaca, Almyra, Sparkman, Trumann, Lake City and Ouachita, as well as in Oklahoma. Following his retirement, he served as interim pastor of 21 churches. In addition, he served as moderator of three Baptist associations, as a member of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention Executive Board and as a staff member of both Central and First churches in



## ARKANSAS ALL OVER

By MILLIE GIL

Jonesboro. An ordained minister for 75 years, he was a graduate of Hoganville Academy, Mountain Home Baptist College and Ouachita Baptist University and attended Southwestern Seminary. Basinger was a member of Central Church of Jonesboro. Survivors are his wife, Lillian Dent Basinger; two sons, James W. Basinger of Jonesboro and Gary John Basinger of Idaho Falls, Idaho; two daughters, Ann Martin of Little Rock and Dorothy Martin of Trumann; one brother, one sister; 10 grandchildren; and six great-grandchildren. Memorials may be made to First Church of Trumann, First Church of Jonesboro or Central Church of Jonesboro.

**Carl Paschal Nelson** of Huntsville died Nov. 19 at age 93. He was a former pastor of First Church and Calvary Church, both of Huntsville. His funeral services were held Nov. 22 at First Church of Huntsville where he was a member. Survivors are his wife, Marion Katherine "Katie" Edmondson Nelson; four sons, Carl P. Nelson of Okmulgee, Okla., Gayle Nelson

of Fort Walton Beach, Fla., Jerry Nelson of Santa Rosa Beach, Fla., Randy Nelson of Huntsville; a daughter, Mary Ann Shilling of Springdale; two brothers; three sisters; 12 grandchildren; and six great-grandchildren. Memorials may be made to the youth or bus funds of First Church in Huntsville or to Communities Home Health and Hospice Care.

**Wendell L. Poole** of North Little Rock died Nov. 27 at age 80. A retired Southern Baptist minister, he was a member of Tulip Memorial Church at Carthage. He was pastor of First Church of Thornton for 32 years and of Mineral Springs Church. He also served churches in Texas and Louisiana and served four years as associational missionary for Little River Association. Poole is survived by his wife of 57 years, Plevna Newton Poole of North Little Rock; two sons, Lec Poole of Point Comfort, Texas, and Robert Poole of West Monroe, La.; a daughter, Wynelle Nutt of Little Rock; two brothers; and two sisters.

## Ordinations

**Hindsville First Church** ordained Mickey

White and Lynn Stone as deacons Nov. 12.

**Oden First Church** recently ordained Randy Carter as a deacon.



*First Church of Jasper broke ground Nov. 12 for a 12,500-square-foot worship center at its new location site on Scenic Byway 7. The concrete slab has already been poured for the 250-seat facility that will be constructed in the spring by a volunteer group from Texas. The old church property has been sold to adjoining Jasper Public School. Those participating in the ceremony were (left to right) Ed Wilhoit, Harry Moore, Richard Waters, Fred Bell, Bob Jones, C.B. Hudson, county judge Eugene Villines, mayor Shannon Willis, Virginia Lavery, Bob Magennis, North Arkansas Association director of missions Royce Sweatman and pastor Manuel Macks.*

**Winslow First Church** ordained Donald Talley and Glenn Jorgenson to serve as deacons Nov. 5.

**Elkins First Church** ordained Jim Justus, Rayburn Eaton and Tom Hill to the deacon ministry Nov. 19.

**Little Hope Church** of Oden ordained Andy Kennedy to the gospel ministry Nov. 26. Kennedy is pastor of Community Bible Church of Glenwood.

**Mountain Home First Church** ordained Ed White, Kevin Adkins and Richard Mell as deacons Nov. 19.

**Lake Village Church** ordained Bob Graham and Cullen Livingston as deacons Nov. 26.

**Wynne Church** ordained Jack Cauble and David Dowd to serve as deacons Nov. 26.

**Osceola First Church** ordained minister of youth Scott Hutchins to the gospel ministry Dec. 3.

## Staff changes

**Clyde Paul Spurgin** is serving as pastor of First Church in Desha, going there from 12 years of ministry with First Church in Piggott. He previously served First Church of Green Forest, as well as churches in Missouri. A member of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention Executive Board, Spurgin is a graduate of Southwest Baptist College (now Southwest Baptist University) in Bolivar, Mo., and Washington University in St. Louis. He also has done post-graduate studies at the University of Missouri, St. Louis. Spurgin and his wife, Hilda, have three children, Stephen P. Spurgin, Cheryl Kay Bone and Brenda Sue Tapson. They have four grandchildren.

**Calvin Bryant** began serving Nov. 28 as pastor of Trinity Church in Blytheville, coming there from Crofton Church in Crofton, Ky. He is a graduate of Bethany Theological Seminary in Oak Brook, Ill. Bryant and his wife, Annette, have a daughter, Tracy.

**Nolen Rollins** joined the staff of First Church in Little Rock Dec. 3 as associate pastor of education and administration, coming there from First Church of Atlanta, Ga., where he has served for eight years as associate pastor of program administration. He previously has served churches in Oklahoma, Tennessee and Kentucky. Rollins is a graduate of the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, Temple Baptist Theological Seminary in Chattanooga and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He currently is enrolled in the doctor of

ministry program at Luther Rice Seminary. He and his wife, Clarice, have two daughters, April and Rachel.

**Randy Collins** is serving as minister of youth for Highfill Church of Gentry. He previously was interim pastor of First Church of Altus.

**David Fowler** is serving as minister of youth for First Church of London. He is a student at Arkansas Tech University.

**Elizabeth Lawson Cromwell** is serving as director of children's ministries for First Church in Conway where she has been director of second grade Sunday School and children's division coordinator. She previously has been involved in the programs of churches in Texas and Arkansas. A registered nurse, Cromwell is a graduate of Baylor University.

**Wade Tomlinson** will join the staff of First Church of Benton Dec. 31 as minister to students, coming there from Faith Church in Iowa Park, Texas. He previously has served on the staff of Baring Cross Church of North Little Rock and as a summer youth minister for First Church of Hayti, Mo. Tomlinson, who is a student at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, will continue his studies through the seminary's Little Rock center. He graduated from Ouachita Baptist University with a bachelor of arts degree in biblical studies and language.

**Chris Taylor** has accepted the call to join the staff of Grand Avenue Church in Fort Smith as minister to students, coming there from secular employment in Bedford, Texas. He is a graduate of Ouachita Baptist University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He and his wife, Wendy, have a son, Caleb.

**Doug Stevens** resigned Dec. 4 as minister of music and youth for First Church of Beebe, following more than five years of service.

## Church news

**Unity Church** of Paragould launched a children's church ministry Nov. 5 for children, ages three years through the first grade that will feature music, stories and structured learning activities. Brenda Lenderman is serving as coordinator.

**Ozone Church** is observing the holiday season with special events that include the presentation of the Christmas play "Heaven's Viewpoint! As Discussed by Angels" at 7 p.m. Dec. 22 and a Christmas Eve worship service at 10:30 a.m. Raymond Palmer is pastor.

## Facilities of FBC, Marion, destroyed by fire Nov. 24

An early morning fire destroyed the facilities of First Church, Marion, the day following Thanksgiving. Pastor Mark Baber said the Nov. 24 blaze, which apparently began in the facility's heating units, totally destroyed the church's sanctuary and educational building.

The sanctuary, originally built in 1926, was previously gutted by fire in 1947 and rebuilt using the original exterior walls. Despite the devastating loss of the historic structure, Baber noted that the response of both the congregation and community "is more than I would have ever imagined or dreamed."

Baber said church members voted unanimously Dec. 3 to begin the process of planning the construction of new facilities on land purchased in 1994. Church members pledged \$333,000 earlier this year to pay off the land debt in anticipation of relocating to the new property on Highway 77. In addition to gifts from the fund-raising campaign, Baber said the church facilities and contents were insured for more than \$900,000.

## Temporary worship site

Church members have been meeting for Sunday morning worship at the Marion Intermediate School and are seeking approval to use the facility for an extended period of time. Children's Sunday School classes are being held in a day care center, youth are meeting in the fire station and adults are holding Sunday School in homes, a bank building and city hall.

"We have been overwhelmed with the kindness and grace of local churches, both Baptist and otherwise, including a generous love offering from the Marion Church of God," Baber said.

Although the initial shock of seeing the church building burn "was like watching a tragic death," he added, "It's wonderful how in the midst of tragedy that God's people are at their finest."

"The harmony and sense of confidence in the power and presence of God has been astounding," Baber emphasized. "The witness in the community has been profound."

# Baptist ethicists divided over U.S. involvement in Bosnia

WASHINGTON (ABP) — Ethicists, like the American public, are divided over President Clinton's decision to send U.S. troops into Bosnia.

Clinton announced plans to deploy troops in a televised address Nov. 27. The U.S. will provide 20,000 troops for a 60,000-troop NATO peacekeeping operation.

The mission will be limited and focused on implementing a peace plan recently initiated by leaders of Serbia, Croatia and the Bosnian Muslims, Clinton declared. Deployment will begin after a ceremonial signing of the accord this week in Paris.

"America's role will not be about fighting a war. It will be about helping the people of Bosnia to secure their own peace agreement," Clinton said. "In the choice between peace and war, America must choose peace."

Glen Stassen, professor of Christian ethics at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., lauded the peace agreement negotiated by leaders in the former Yugoslavia and supported the decision to use U.S. troops to enforce it.

"Jesus commanded when there is something between you and your brother, go talk and be reconciled. The Dayton conference was a victory for Jesus' rule. Now we need to do our part to support the peace," Stassen said.

Richard Land, executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, said he has "profound discomfort with the nature of this intervention" and noted similarities with American involvement in Vietnam during the 1960s.

U.S. troops are going "into a situation where they are not going to be peacekeepers, they are going to be peace-makers," Land said. "The difference is they are coming in heavily armed, they are coming in to separate and stay between forces and implement and guarantee implementation of a peace agreement that a lot of people on the ground are unhappy with."

Ken Sehested, executive director of the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America, said the war in Bosnia poses "a deeply complex issue."

"I would say anyone who feels that the use of violence can be redemptive, I don't see how they can oppose sending U.S. troops there," Sehested said. "I happen not to feel violence can serve a redemptive purpose."

## FMB sends relief aid to Bosnia, Croatia

RICHMOND, VA (BP)—The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board recently released \$255,000 for relief to the former Yugoslavia region, including \$120,000 for Bosnia-Herzegovina and \$135,000 for Croatia.

The appropriation to Bosnia is only half of what missionaries in the region requested, but the board's human needs office was forced to wait until more funds become available.

Since September 1992, after conflict broke out in the former Yugoslavia, the FMB has allocated nearly \$2 million for refugee relief and hunger relief ministries in the region.

The request for Bosnia calls for missionaries to work with Croatian Baptists to buy and distribute 2,000 two-person food parcels in Sarajevo during a three-month period, and 3,500 parcels for three other areas to be distributed during a six-month period.

The money for Croatia will provide food to the Krajina region, where many Croatian refugees are returning.

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Mileage paid at 13 cents per mile for vehicles bringing 3 or more persons. Pre-registration required.

For more information, contact the ABSC Missions Dept., 1-800-838-2272, ext. 1510.

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## Church leaders top needs list for European partnership

Both pastoral and lay ministry leaders top the list of needs in strengthening the partnership between European Baptists and the Arkansas Baptist State Convention.

According to statewide partnership coordinator Doyne Plummer, churches in Schweinfurt, Germany; Naples, Italy; Kiev, Ukraine; and Waterloo, Belgium, need ministry leaders, while the EBC offices need secretarial support and Dusseldorf (Germany) International Baptist Church has requested a preschool teacher. All of the EBC opportunities are English-speaking positions.

Plummer said Anderson Memorial Baptist Church in Schweinfurt needs an

interim pastor "for at least six months. For the last year and a half, they have had a series of three or four interims. They really need someone for two years."

Plummer said the church may be able to provide an apartment, utilities, a car and gas, as well as a stipend.

Calvary Baptist Church in Naples and a new work in Kiev are searching for full-time pastors. While the Naples ministry may furnish an apartment, utilities, a car and stipend, the Kiev ministry should be considered self-supported by the pastor, Plummer noted.

Also in need of an interim minister is a new work in Waterloo, which is a mission

of International Baptist Church in Belgium. "The church needs someone, and it can be a layman," Plummer said, "for at least three months to perform weekday ministry in Waterloo." He said the volunteer would need to be financially self-supporting.

Two other partnership opportunities are available for Baptist laypeople. One of EBC general secretary John Merritt's top priorities is finding a two-year volunteer to serve as a secretary, office manager and computer administrator for the EBC offices in Wiesbaden, Germany.

Dusseldorf International Baptist Church plans to establish a preschool at the church as early as January, Plummer said. The congregation had requested a single person or a couple with teaching experience who can provide their own expenses.

For additional information, contact Plummer at 1-800-838-ABSC, or 501-376-4791, ext. 5190.

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# FMB couple fired for charismatic practices

By Greg Warner

Associated Baptist Press

SINGAPORE (ABP) — A Southern Baptist missionary couple in Singapore has been fired by the Foreign Mission Board for promoting charismatic practices.

Charles and Sharon Carroll, 13-year missionary veterans, were dismissed as missionaries for practices "not consistent with what Foreign Mission Board personnel should be encouraging and leading," according to their letter of termination.

Jerry Rankin, who was area director for FMB mission work in the region before his election as FMB president in 1993, encouraged and supported Carroll's ministry at the time, according to both Carroll and Rankin. But recently the practices simply went too far, Rankin said.

At issue is the experience of "falling under the Spirit," also called being slain in the Spirit, in which a worshiper falls to the floor apparently in an unconscious or semi-conscious state. The practice is not a major element in worship at the Community of Praise Baptist Church in Singapore, said Carroll, the church's pastor, but it has become more frequent in recent months.

Rankin said the charismatic practices

at Community of Praise have caused "dissension and confusion" among Baptists in Singapore and that the Carrolls are guilty of insubordination. "All of that kind of worked together" to force the termination, Rankin said.

Carroll, 41, told ABP there is no evidence of dissension among Baptists in Singapore, where charismatic worship is common. And the couple insists they have not violated any FMB policy or the agency's doctrinal statement, "The Baptist Faith and Message."

The couple was asked to resign but refused, saying it would be unethical. They are appealing their termination, which takes effect Dec. 31.

"We don't want to leave the FMB," Charles Carroll said. "Southern Baptists have demonstrated that God has had His hand on this denomination....Although we worship in a different style now, this is who we are."

If the appeal fails, Carroll said he hopes to remain as pastor of the Singapore congregation, which sponsors an effective church-starting program in Southeast Asia. The church has agreed to take on the responsibility of paying his support.

Rankin, whose own private, infrequent practice of speaking in tongues was

questioned prior to his election as FMB president, said the FMB allows "a great deal of latitude" for the spiritual experiences of missionaries. But missionaries cross the line, he said, when they teach that charismatic practices are "normative." Carroll crossed that line, Rankin said.

Carroll said he recently preached a sermon in which he encouraged worshipers to be open to the Holy Spirit's moving, including "falling down," but said it is "not normative for everybody."

"I told them I'm not impressed if you 'fall.' It's not a sign of (spiritual) maturity."

Carroll and Rankin agree charismatic practices — and particularly "falling under the Spirit" — are not part of traditional Southern Baptist worship.

Rankin confirmed that he supported Carroll's work initially. "In the past, I worked alongside him as a defender and advocate," Rankin said, "but I had to frequently admonish him and give guidance and alert him to the dangers of going too far."

"I always felt my inerrant view of Scripture confirmed the validity of charismatic gifts," Rankin told ABP. But, he added, he has conformed his views to fit "the context God has placed me in" as a Southern Baptist missionary.

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## Former OBU dean Donald Seward dies

Donald Monfort Seward, professor emeritus of mathematics at Ouachita Baptist University, died Nov. 28 as the result of a heart attack.

Seward, 90, who was associated with OBU from 1942 through 1978, served as professor of math and physics, math department chairman, dean of the faculty and acting president of the university.

OBU president Ben Elrod said, "I have had the privilege of knowing Seward as a faculty member when I was a student, a Sunday School teacher during those student years, an excellent teacher, a next-door neighbor and a friend. In all those capacities, I always found him to be a superb person."

Seward was a graduate of Stetson University in DeLand, Fla.; the University of North Carolina in Asheville; Harvard University in Cambridge, Mass.; and Duke University in Durham, N.C. He served in China with the U.S. Marine Corps, taught high school for five years in Florida and North Carolina and taught at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville from 1939 to 1942.

His funeral services were held Dec. 2 at First Church in Arkadelphia where he was a deacon, Sunday School teacher and past president of the Senior Adult Club.

Survivors include his wife, Anna, and four daughters, Jean Cahill of Nashville, Tenn.; Ann Barber of Sacramento, Calif.; Patricia Mace of Sanford, N.C.; and Helen Davis of Vacaville, Calif.

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# Annuity leaders urge support for church pension bill

DALLAS (BP)—The proposed Church Retirement Benefits Simplification Act of 1995 passed the U.S. Senate, but was dropped from a budget reconciliation bill in conference committee. Now the Southern Baptist Annuity Board and other members of the Church Alliance, encompassing the benefits boards of 29 religious groups, are seeking to get the measure attached to another bill.

One of the reasons for urgency is a new Internal Revenue Service audit guideline that declares a minister's housing allow-

ance in retirement is "net income" subject to self-employment (SECA) tax.

"It is imperative that this bill be enacted in this calendar year," said Thomas Miller Jr., the board's senior vice president for public relations. "The proposed act, which has negligible revenue implications for the federal budget, is extremely important to clarify the law on church pensions."

Annuity Board president Paul W. Powell sent a letter to affected pastors and denom-

national executives Nov. 22 asking them to write President Clinton, Senate majority leader Bob Dole, House speaker Newt Gingrich and other congressional leaders urging them to attach the bill to appropriate legislation. The Senate bill is S. 881 and a companion House bill is H.R. 528.

In addition to the audit guideline, the Alliance is seeking simplification of rules and clarification of the right of chaplains to participate in church plans.

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■ **Thurman and Kathie Braughton**, missionaries to the Philippines, are on the field (P.O. Box 80322, Davao City 8000, Philippines). She is the former Kathleen Blount of Little Rock.

■ **Robert and Janice Mooney**, missionaries to Uganda, are on the field (P.O. Box 1734, Kampala, Uganda). He was born in Marvell.

■ **Billy and Judith Sutton**, missionaries

to the Philippines, are on the field (P.O. Box 7506 DAPO Lock Box, 1300 Domestic Rd., Pasay City, Metro Manila, Philippines). He was born in McGehee.

■ **Karl and Thelma Weathers**, representatives to the Middle East, are on the field (Box 835, 6307 Lamaca, Cyprus). They consider Earle their hometown.

■ **Emmett and La Nell Barnes**, representatives to Morocco, are on the field (27

Rue Abou Alla El Maari, Apt. 4, Tangier 90000, Morocco). She is from Monnette.

■ **Stephen and Susan Bowers**, missionaries to Ecuador, are in the States (2520 Hilderbrand Dr., Douglasville, GA 30135). He was born in Blytheville.

■ **Robert and Nancy Calvert**, missionaries to Kenya, are in the States (1004 Bryant, Benbrook, TX 76126). He is a native of Little Rock.

■ **Boyd and Rhonda Hall**, missionaries to Botswana, are in the States (200 Bettle St., Jonesboro, AR 72401). He considers Jonesboro his hometown. She was born in Little Rock and considers Pine Bluff her hometown.

■ **Michael and Linda Ray**, Baptist representatives in the Ukraine, have arrived on the field to begin their first term of service (UEC-Baptists, 3-A L. Tolstogo St., Kiev-4, 252004, Ukraine). He is a native of Crossett.



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# '95 Joy Explo set for Little Rock

Youth will "Show the World Jesus Makes the Difference" during the 1995 Joy Explo Youth Evangelism Conference Dec. 28-29 at the State House Convention Center in Little Rock. Sponsored by the Arkansas Baptist State Convention evangelism department, the event will feature evangelism training, special music and comedy.

Randy Brantley, an evangelism department associate, said the conference "is the platform for presenting the state youth evangelism strategy as we continue to equip teenagers to live radically for Jesus."

"This dynamic gathering," he explained, "will draw Christian young people and their leaders for an incredible time of prayer, praise, worship and celebration."

The Little Rock location marks a change for the Explo, which in previous years has been held in Hot Springs.

The keynote speaker for Joy Explo will be youth communicator Paul Jackson, pastor of Highlands Church in Little Rock.

The program also will feature Christian

musicians Bryan Duncan, Clay Crosse and Scott Springer and Christian comedian Steve Geyer.

Duncan was the 1994 Dove Award Male Vocalist of the Year, Crosse is the 1995 Dove Award New Artist of the Year and Springer has performed top hits such as "Hello Forever" and "Behold the Lamb."

The cost for Joy Explo is \$7 per person, which includes all of the Explo events. "Joy Explo is a low-cost event that gives kids a Christian event out of the house during the holidays," Brantley emphasized.

Youth leaders are responsible for their group's meals and lodging during Joy Explo. Brantley encouraged students to bring their Bibles and for churches to send one sponsor per six students.

The program will begin at 1 p.m. Thursday and conclude at noon on Friday. For more information, contact Brantley at the ABCS evangelism department; phone 501-376-4791, or toll-free in state at 1-800-838-ABSC, ext. 5222.

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**Staff position** — Opening for minister of education/youth, after 1/1/96. Send resume or inquiry to Search Committee, FBC, PO Box 1339, St. Francisville, LA 70775.

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**Bi-vocational youth director** — Send resumes to Personnel Committee, Immanuel Baptist Church, 2201 South Dallas, Fort Smith, AR 72901.

**Needed** — Part-time minister of music/senior adults. Send resume to Gosnell Baptist Church, 603 Highway 181, Blytheville, AR 72315.

**Bi-vocational youth director** — Send resumes to Personnel Committee, Claud Road Baptist Church, 1821 Claud Road, Pine Bluff, AR 71602.

**Needed** — Paid part-time youth director or summer missionary. Send resumes and references to: Youth Committee, P.O. Box 186, McRae, AR 72102.

**Accepting resumes** — for full-time pastor. Send to: East Side Baptist Church, 1605 Wisconsin St., Pine Bluff, AR 71601.

**Needed** — Part-time minister of music and youth. Excellent compensation, good opportunity. Send resumes c/o Search Committee, Union Baptist Church, 144 Crain City Rd., El Dorado, AR 71730; phone 501-862-2668.

**Seeking full-time pastor** — FBC Horseshoe Bend, Ark. Salary base: \$25,000. Mail resume to: Bill Haynes, HC 82, Box 202, Violet Hill, AR 72584.

**Resumes** — for Minister of music/senior adults or minister of music/education. First Baptist Church, P.O. Box 195, Ozark, AR 72949.

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## TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

### Boyce Bible School offers spring classes for Arkansas Baptists

Arkansas Baptists interested in gaining seminary training will have their choice of three classes when Boyce Bible School's spring semester begins Jan. 5. Boyce, an extension of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, will offer classes in sermon preparation, Christian history and English.

The courses include Preparation and Delivery of Sermons, taught by Tommy Goode; Introduction to Christian History, taught by Maurice Hurley; and English Composition, taught by Robert Stagg. All are three-hour courses.

Marion Reynolds, an associate in the Arkansas Baptist State Convention missions department, said Boyce offers "off-campus, seminary-type instruction to God-called persons who cannot attend college full-time. This is especially helpful for bivocational ministers who need such educational preparation but who, because of employment and family responsibilities, are prevented from attending on-campus classes."

Reynolds noted that requirements for

admission include completion of an application form, a pastor approval form, three recommendations, a high school diploma or GED certificate and documentation of immigration classification for non-U.S. citizens. All forms are provided in a registration kit.

He urged those interested in classes to register during office hours at the ABCS missions department prior to the beginning of classes. The cost for Southern Baptist or National Baptist students is \$100 for enrollment, \$60 per course and a \$35 application fee for first-time enrollees. Fees for students from other denominations, he said, "are significantly higher." Spouses of enrolled students also may enroll, with reduced fees.

The classes will be held each Friday and Saturday at the Baptist Health School of Nursing and Allied Health at 11900 Col. Glenn Road in Little Rock through Saturday, April 20. There will be no classes April 5-6 during the Easter holiday.

For registration materials or information, call Reynolds at the ABCS missions department at 1-800-838-ABSC or 501-376-4791, ext. 5249.

### DIRECTOR OF GRADUATE PROGRAM IN EDUCATION

Southwest Baptist University seeks applications for the position of Director of the Graduate Program in Education. The candidate will be responsible for all facets of the Graduate Program in Education, including budget, curriculum and personnel. Extensive travel is required to several teaching sites throughout the state. Deadline for application is January 1, 1996. Applications must include a curriculum vita, statement of Christian education philosophy and names, addresses and phone numbers of three references. Send applications to: Dr. Janet Juhlin, Chair of Search Committee, Southwest Baptist University, 1600 University Drive, Bolivar, MO 65613; Fax: 417-326-1719.

### YOUTH GROUPS NEEDED

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## Convention Uniform

### *For those who seek peace*

By Steven Mullen, assistant professor, Williams Baptist College  
 Basic passage: Isaiah 11:1-9; Luke 2:1-20

Focal passage: Isaiah 11:4; Luke 2:4, 5  
 Central truth: If we allow the characteristics of the Peacemaker to control our lives, we are assured of His peace.

Different situations cause people to feel like the world is crushing in on them from all directions. This was certainly Joseph's experience; a fatherless commitment to an expectant mother, forced to travel into a city with inferior accommodations, laden with governmental regulations. If anyone had cause to seek a place of refuge, peace and comfort, it was he. Little did Joseph know, in the midst of such enormous pressures, he would play a significant role in the coming of the One who would change the peace offerings throughout the remainder of history.

People often question why God would allow believers to feel as though there is no peace in their lives. The question is complex, but let me offer two suggestions:

■ *First, we run the risk of not having peace because we fail to make a total commitment to God.* Years ago, in an effort to study the mechanics of a hurricane, the Army Air Corps sent a plane directly into the storm. It was the first time that any person had ever flown into the center of a hurricane. They described the outer extremities as turbulent and frightening. However, once the plane reached the eye of the storm it was so calm and peaceful that they were able to fly around it for some time. Later, one of those men said he would never again be afraid of a hurricane if he could only get to the center of it. Some people are so close to peace they are miserable. They linger in the outer extremities of the storm without stepping into the center of God's will. Why? Because that step into the center involves commitment—something not easily made.

■ *Second, we may not have peace because we do not have the characteristics of the Peacemaker.* He does not judge by the sight of His eyes, nor decide by the hearing of His ears (v. 3). Neither should we. Christ saved us so that we might be instruments through which His grace might flow; not judge and jury. If we allow less grace to flow through us than flowed to us from Calvary's cross, we run the imminent risk of not having God's peace.

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## Life and Work

### *Jesus' coming as Savior*

By Park Petty, pastor,  
 Park Place Church, Hot Springs  
 Basic passage: Luke 2:1-40  
 Focal passage: Luke 2:1-20

Central truth: The news of the Savior is the greatest news we can tell.

When something exciting takes place, it cannot be contained. Someone will hear of it and the news will spread. The most exciting news one could ever hear or tell is that God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, into the world to provide His greatest gift—redemption. Luke was chosen by God to record clear evidence of the person and work of Jesus. Luke's gospel is the only New Testament record that gives information of Jesus' birth and early childhood.

■ *Jesus' arrival is detailed (vv. 1-7).* Details are important and provide clear evidence of perfect fulfillment of prophecy relating to the coming of the Messiah. To cite a few: Christ was to be supernaturally conceived of a virgin (Isa. 7:14; Luke 1:26-27, 30-31); born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2); of the lineage of David (Isa. 9:7; Luke 1:32-33). Even the timing of His birth was fulfillment of what was foretold (Dan. 9:25; Gal. 4:4; Luke 2:1-2). It is futile to ignore the evidence and impossible to refute it. Jesus the Christ is God in the flesh who came to earth to "save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21). He came to fulfill the Father's purpose of bringing salvation to mankind. The joy for us is that His arrival brings this salvation to us today.

■ *The joyous announcement is given (vv. 8-20).* The announcement of the birth of Christ was the most momentous declaration in history. Until then, Mary, Joseph and Elisabeth were among the few who were enlisted with the knowledge of the imminent coming of the Messiah. Now that Jesus had been born, the news was to explode upon the world.

Notice to whom this heavenly message was given—shepherds.

*Not reserved for the religious elite, but announced to common keepers of sheep. A people not elevated in society tall, but blessed to know: there is a Savior for all.*

The redemption announcement brought hope to mankind. God was glorified in the incarnation of His Son, the praise of angels and the witness of the shepherds. Let us, too, join in bringing this news to our world. Jesus has indeed come to "seek and to save that which is lost" (Luke 19:10). His work, accomplished two millennia ago, still changes lives today.

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## Bible Book

### *The Savior's birth*

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

Basic passage: Matthew 1:18-2:23  
 Focal passage: Matthew 1:18-2:23  
 Central truth: In Jesus, God has entered history to save people.

The Christmas story in the Gospels is quite a story. There are armies of angels, exotic men from the East, lowly shepherds, a young family on a dangerous trip and a sinister king. It includes a miraculous birth, a guiding star and escapes from life-threatening danger. Quite a story. It is easy to get caught up in its beauty and drama and miss the point.

In a word, the point is Immanuel, "God is with us." A key question for understanding who we are is, "Where do we come from?" Matthew answers that question about Jesus. He comes from God and, in fact, is God with us. That is the point of the virgin birth. God's creative Spirit was at work.

Jesus' origin makes it possible for Him to save us from our sins and create fellowship between God and us. God is so committed to us that He came to us in tangible form, Jesus, who was that incarnation, is God's agenda for ministering to all who will respond to Him.

The constant references to the fulfillment of Scripture reminds us that Jesus was not an afterthought. He was not a last-ditch, sudden desperation attempt by God to regain control over a chaotic world and save mankind. Instead Jesus has been God's plan all along. In Jesus, God has simply been true to His promise of a Messiah.

In Jesus, the Sovereign God was working out His plan. This was not a matter of fate. It did not just happen. Jesus means we have not been abandoned to the whimsical hands of the powerful or the merciless hands of the cruel. More important, nor have we been left to fully experience the results of our own sinfulness.

What Matthew has told us is amazing and surprising. It is very different from what God has done in the past. Certainly there have been miracles and this one is consistent with God's acts of salvation in the past. But this goes far beyond what anyone would have expected. This outpouring of God's grace is astonishing. And yet it is just like Him.

Jesus, Immanuel, God who is with us is also for us.

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## Convention Uniform

### For those who proclaim

By Steven Mullen, assistant professor, Williams Baptist College  
 Basic passage: Isaiah 60-61  
 Focal passage: Isaiah 60:1-2, 20;  
 Isaiah 61:10  
 Central truth: The good news God has given to us is for every man.

Have you ever said to someone, "I have good news and bad news; which do you want first?" Most will respond, "Tell me the bad news first!" Why? People want to use the good news to cushion the bad. They want to remember good news as outliving bad news.

In preparing for the new year, do you need some good news? Good! I have some for you. The glory of the Lord is risen on you (v. 60:1). The glory of God which has shined brightly since before the dawn of creation will outshine the darkness of an evil, immoral world (v. 60:2).

Several years ago, I had the privilege of cruising the inside passage of Alaska during the season when the sun doesn't set. It is nice as a tourist to enjoy 24 hours of sunlight. I knew, however, that if I stayed long enough, the day would come when darkness would remain 24 hours a day. For believers, the shining brightness of the Lord will be perpetual throughout the entire new year and beyond (v. 60:20).

We have the privilege of sharing the good news of Christ. One visit with a proud grandparent confirms that people like to tell good news.

What is our good news? In a world where people are lost in their sin, Christ has died so that they may be exempt from just punishment. At Calvary, Christ paid the price for our sins so that we might be "clothed in the garments of salvation" and "covered with the robe of righteousness" (v. 61:10). In response to that grace, we, as beggars, have the unique privilege of showing other beggars where we found bread. In doing so, we must exercise the same compassion and love that was granted us.

We were saved through the sweet spirit of grace, not a mean spirit of legalism. Likewise, in telling the good news of Christ, we must not compromise the seriousness of sin and depravity of man. We must, however, do so with a Christ-like attitude. Anything else will not be heard.

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## Life and Work

### Jesus' coronation as King

By Mike Petty, pastor,  
 Park Place Church, Hot Springs  
 Basic passage: John 18:33-19:22;  
 Revelation 11:15  
 Focal passage: Revelation 11:15  
 Central truth: Jesus is King and we are to bow to Him in all things.

Handel's *Messiah* is only a glimpse of the praise and glory that will be attributed to Jesus upon His coronation in heaven. Our passage reveals not only the text of the Handel's anthem, but the praise of all creation. It speaks of the theocracy that will be known when King Jesus is rightfully enthroned as the sovereign authority over all the earth. Today, people resist, reject and rebel against this truth. Yet, the believer already lives his or her life under the rule of King Jesus. His rule in our body, soul and spirit will be seen in every area of our lives. "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). The one who now crowns Jesus the King of their life seeks to live only to please Him and He is pleased when our lives reflect His character, attitude, priorities and purpose.

Think of the differences He alone makes in our lives when we yield to Him as our King. Here are just a few:

■ *Our heart's desire and purpose in all of life is to please Him.* We come to say with the apostles that "in Him we live, and move and have our being" (Acts 17:28).

■ *Our home life is different from that of the secular and carnal.* Husbands and wives are united under His authority and parents and children enjoy the security of Christian love. When this is true, the world sees a functioning model of society.

■ *Unlike the humanist, our ethics become subject to biblical convictions.* We do not argue that situations determine what one should do, but that the Scriptures speak with clarity and courage of the right thing to do. The values we hold have a direct link to the King's statutes.

The crowning of Jesus as your King is life's greatest decision, resulting in life's greatest blessing. He becomes your Protector, Provider and Potentate. The ultimate crowning of Jesus as King of Kings and Lord of Lords is a fact in eternity as true as that of His birth, substitutionary death and victorious resurrection. We need to be reminded that though we live in a world whose god is unlike our God, we are to live as faithful subjects to the Sovereign Lord of the universe (Phil. 2:9-13).

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## Bible Book

### Deliverance

By Bob L. Klutts, chaplain,  
 Baptist Memorial Medical Center,  
 North Little Rock  
 Basic passage: Esther 8:1-10:3  
 Focal passage: Esther 8:1-2, 8-10,  
 15-16; 9:16-23  
 Central truth: We should remember and celebrate God's deliverance.

Verses 8:1-2. There is a complete reversal of fortunes. Mordecai took Haman's place as prime minister and received all of his worldly goods as well.

Verses 8:8-10. The laws of the Persians could not be revoked, so the edict that put the Jews at risk had to stand. However, there was the option of a new edict that would counterbalance the former. This is what they received. The Jews now had a counter edict that would allow them to defend themselves. They were allowed to completely turn the tables on those who sought to destroy them.

Verses 8:15-16. The city of Susa had been perplexed at the earlier edict that would have destroyed the Jews. Now they rejoice with the Jews at the new edict. The Jews had proven their worth in captivity and had more supporters than detractors.

Verses 9:16-23. The amount of opposition that still existed against the Jews is surprising. With the dramatic change in power, their enemies should have seen the futility of pursuing the fight. But hatred is blinding.

In verses 10, 15 and 16 we are told that the Jews took no plunder, even though the king gave them that option. Mordecai and Esther required them to take a defensive posture. This was a fight for survival, not monetary gain. Motivation is always crucial for the people of God.

The holiday of Purim is named for the casting of the *pur*, or lots. The irony here is that a pagan activity that blindly affirmed that there were forces beyond human control, governing events, became the occasion for demonstrating the Lordship of the God of Israel.

Some might wonder about God's existence and involvement with mankind. The book of Esther reminds us that God is faithfully still delivering His people from the forces of evil.

Those who intended to destroy God's people in fact inspired them to unite and helped assure their survival. The holiday of Purim still inspires and encourages Jews today.

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## 'Celebrate Jesus 2000' campaign launched by HMB

JACKSON, WY (BP)—A five-year plan to share the gospel in every household in America is being developed by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

Known as "Celebrate Jesus 2000," the process includes training, prayer, personal witnessing, evangelistic crusades and publicity. HMB president Larry Lewis described the strategy as "Spirit-led and God-directed."

After being trained to witness and pray for lost people, Southern Baptists will be encouraged to share the gospel "house to house, door to door and face to face," Lewis said. The final phase of Celebrate Jesus 2000 is mass evangelistic programs such as crusades and revivals. One component will be "YouthLink," simultaneous youth rallies to be held in seven cities Dec. 29, 1999, through 1 a.m. Jan. 1, 2000. The rallies will be transmitted via satellite to churches across the country.

## Bethlehem residents anxious about security at Christmas

BETHLEHEM (ABP)—With Israeli troops scheduled to pull out just before Christmas, residents of Bethlehem are anxious about security as they approach the anniversary of the birth of Jesus.

"It's always chaotic here at Christmas time," Zoughbi Zoughbi, director of the Palestinian Conflict Resolution Centre, told *Ecumenical News International*. "But we wonder whether we can be ready to welcome the crowds since the Israelis will be pulling out only a day or so before Christmas."

Bethlehem lies just inside the southern checkpoint separating Israel from the occupied West Bank. It is one of the last cities to be turned over to Palestinian police in concessions negotiated by assassinated Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. Israel's acting prime minister, Shimon Peres, has pledged to keep to the timetable for the redeployment of Israeli defense forces agreed to before Rabin's Nov. 4 assassination.

## Baptist Foundation trustees air qualms over agency's fate

NASHVILLE, TN (BP)—The Southern Baptist Foundation, facing a clouded future under the proposed restructuring of the Southern Baptist Convention, has experienced a "dramatic halt in growth of assets," the agency's president, Hollis E. Johnson III, told trustees at their Dec. 6 annual meeting in Nashville, Tenn.

Trustees voted unanimously to authorize their executive committee to "develop and share its concerns about the assimilation of the Southern Baptist Foundation into the Covenant for a New Century plan" — the restructuring approved by SBC messengers which includes assigning the foundation's work to the SBC Executive Committee.

Johnson said growth in the foundation's assets ended about the same time the Covenant for a New Century was introduced, at the February meeting of the SBC Executive Committee, which voted to recommend the restructuring to the SBC.

## Congress undergirds charities against class-action suits

WASHINGTON (BP)—The U.S. House and Senate have resoundingly passed legislation to protect the nation's charities against class-action lawsuits.

In back-to-back votes Nov. 28 and 29, the two houses of Congress passed the Charitable Gift Annuity Antitrust Relief Act of 1995 (H.R. 2525) and the Philanthropy Protection Act of 1995 (H.R. 2519) to clarify federal securities and antitrust laws.

The House passed the gift annuity bill by a vote of 427-11 and was unanimous in its support of the philanthropy act. The Senate passed both bills unanimously.

The bills affirm that antitrust and securities laws do not apply to charitable organizations and donations or gifts made to the charities in the form of charitable gift annuities or charitable trusts.

## Supreme Court rejects dispute over research paper

WASHINGTON (ABP)—The U.S. Supreme Court has declined to hear arguments that a Tennessee student's free-speech rights were violated when a teacher refused to allow her to write a research paper on "The Life of Jesus Christ."

Britney Settle sued ninth-grade teacher Dana Ramsey and Dickson County school officials after she declined to select another topic and received a zero on the research project. A federal district court dismissed Settle's complaint, a judgment later upheld by the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

Federal courts should exercise restraint in teacher-student conflicts "over matters falling within the ordinary authority of the teacher over curriculum and course content," the appeals court said, adding that "it is not for us to overrule the teacher's view that the student should learn to write research papers by beginning with a topic other than her own theology."