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December 25, 1997

Arkansas Baptist State Convention

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JAN 0 5 1998

ARKANSAS BAPTIST

news magazine



Westmoreland elected new Ouachita president

page 3

Christmas Letters

- A** is for **ANGEL**, shining and bright, telling of Jesus that first Christmas night. (Luke 2:8-13)
- B** is for **BETHLEHEM**, crowded and old, the birthplace of Jesus, by prophet foretold. (Micah 5:2)
- C** is for **CATTLE**; their manger, His bed, their trough for His washing, God's star overhead. (Luke 2:7)
- D** is for **David**, his long-ago throne, God promised forever to Jesus alone. (Luke 1:31-33)
- E** is for **EAST**, where men saw the star, and rode on their camels to follow it far. (Matt. 2:1-2)
- F** is for **FRANKINCENSE**, myrrh and fine gold; that the wise men gave Jesus, in Matthew we're told. (Matt. 2:11)
- G** is for **GOD**, who so loves everyone, that He sent from heaven His very own Son. (John 3:16)
- H** is for **HEROD**, whose murderous schemes were told to the wise men, and Joseph, in dreams. (Matt. 2:12-13)
- I** is for **INEANT**, taken by night, with His mother, far from that wicked king's sight. (Matt. 2:14-15)
- J** is for **JOSEPH**, quiet and just, who obeyed all God's orders with absolute trust. (Matt. 1:19-25)
- K** is for "The **KING** of the Jews" - to be. "But we'll worship Him now," said the wise men three. (Matt. 2:2)
- L** is for **LOVE** that brought Him to earth and made Him forever our Savior by birth. (John 4:10)
- M** is for **MARY** His mother; so true, in believing God faithful and mighty to save. (Luke 1:39-45)
- N** is for **NIGHT**, most holy and still, when heav'n proclaimed peace - to all of good will. (Luke 2:13-14)
- O** is for **ONLY**, for God's Only Son, it's so we might live that He sent us this One. (1 John 4:9)
- P** is for **PROPHETS** who saw Jesus' story, in visions of Bethlehem, Calv'ry and glory. (Isaiah 53)
- Q** tells how **QUICKLY** the shepherds who heard, hastened to act on the heavenly word. (Luke 2:15-16)
- R** says, "**REJOICE!**" with God's friends old and new - Mary, the shepherds, the wise men, and you! (Psalm 40:16)
- S** means **SALVATION**, that saves us from sin. It's a gift from the Lord, for cleansing within. (Matt. 1:21, Eph. 2:8)
- T** says to **TELL** the good news to all, like the shepherds, who told of the Child in the stall. (Luke 2:10-11, 17)
- U** stands for **US**, for to us God has given, the Child born of Mary, the Son sent from heaven. (Isaiah 9:8)
- V** means the **VIRGIN**, from earliest ages, pictured in stars and in prophecy's pages. (Isaiah 7:14)
- W** is for "**WONDERFUL**." That's the Lord's name, for with wonderful works and words He came. (Luke 1:16)
- X** is for "**CHRIST**," when in Greek it is read. He's your Savior and Lord, the angel said. (Luke 2:31)
- Y** is for "**YES**" to trusting in Him, a decision life-changing, to save you from sin. (Romans 10:9, 1 John 2:12)
- Z** is for **ZBAL** that burned in God's Son, from His childhood years' till His work here was done. (John 2:17)

Huckabee encourages U.N. officials to affirm integrity

SHARING HIS CALL for character on a global stage, Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee was the featured speaker for a Dec. 12 United Nations luncheon hosted by the Southern Baptist North American Mission Board. The event marked the beginning of Southern Baptists' 25th year of ministry at the United Nations.

The crowd of 250 officials included nearly 30 ambassadors from such nations as Bulgaria, El Salvador, India, Libya, Turkey and the League of Arab States. Officials representing U.N. delegations from Algeria, China, South Africa and Ukraine also participated.

NAMB president Bob Reccord told the gathering, "I feel comfortable standing before you because I too am an ambassador — an ambassador of Jesus Christ. I am honored to represent to you the one I serve: the Lord God Almighty."

Citing the theme of his recent book, *Character Is the Issue*, Huckabee emphasized that personal character and integrity are the key issues facing his state, the United States and the world.

"Most people think the answers to problems in our world are related to improvements in education and economics," noted Huckabee, former president of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention. "But it occurred to me that some of the most miserable people have the best education and the most wealth....I believe the answer is character."

A call for character

Recounting statistics on the cost of a host of social ills, such as crime, chemical abuse and teen pregnancy, Huckabee said, "Most of the governmental expenditures of my state are not to improve education or build infrastructure, but to correct the failure of a society whose individuals have lost the sense of personal character. We're spending money not to help people live better, but to help them get out of trouble that could have been prevented had the level of their character been higher.

"We live in a world where we all want to make up our own rules, but if we live that way, the result is disaster," Huckabee insisted. "Character is when we come to the place where we no longer make up our own rules, but we seek to root our laws in values that are eternal rather than values that are constantly changing."

The root of those eternal values, he added, is the Golden Rule. "Those of us who govern must be governed not by the culture or the current temperature of society but by an eternal God," he said.

Sharing his testimony of the role that faith in Jesus Christ plays in his own life, Huckabee told the crowd, "The only permanence in my life is my relationship with Christ and the hope that relationship gives me."

Following Huckabee's presentation, Reccord presented each person in attendance with a copy of the governor's book. He added, however, that the book was not the greatest gift they were being offered.

"The greatest gift is the one God offers to all of us: His Son, Jesus Christ," Reccord said. "Understand that God loves you so very much that He made Himself available for a personal relationship with you."

Reccord offered to provide further information to those expressing an interest as well as a copy of the Bible in their own language and a copy of the "Jesus" video. More than 40 of the U.N. officials responded by completing information cards requesting a Bible or video.

NEW YORK (BP)

ARKANSAS BAPTIST

news magazine



Cover Story

New OBU president

Andrew "Andy" Westmoreland, executive vice president of Ouachita Baptist University, has been elected president of Ouachita by the university's board of trustees. Outgoing president Ben Elrod has been named OBU chancellor.

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Ouachita transition

Westmoreland elected OBU president, Elrod named chancellor

Trennis Henderson

Editor, Arkansas Baptist

TRUSTEES OF OUACHITA Baptist University unanimously elected Andrew "Andy" Westmoreland as the university's 14th president during a Dec. 11 board meeting in Arkadelphia. Westmoreland, who currently serves as OBU's executive vice president, will succeed Ben Elrod who has served as president since 1988.

Westmoreland, 40, will begin his new role Jan. 1. The trustees elected Elrod, 67, to the position of chancellor with responsibilities in fundraising and public relations.

According to trustee chairman William H. "Buddy" Sutton, "For more than a year, Dr. Elrod had been indicating that he would like to be relieved of some of his responsibilities." He said the official search process began in the summer when the board's executive committee, which served as the presidential search committee, "began to consider how we should go about" seeking Elrod's successor.

Noting that the presidential search was conducted confidentially, Sutton said, "We felt like it was obvious and expected that Dr. Westmoreland would be a serious candidate. It was only fair to him to be considered with a certain amount of confidentiality."

Search committee chairman Wesley Kluck said Westmoreland was the only presidential candidate interviewed by the committee. Although some people may sense that the search process "came across as rapid," Kluck explained that the committee "met several times and came to the point where we felt there were two ways to go—a formal search or interview one person. We all strongly felt we wanted to talk to Dr. Westmoreland first."

Following the interview with Westmoreland, "we felt he was the right man and to do a search just for the sake of a search would not be fair....There was much prayer and much time put into it. It was so clear to us that God led us to Dr. Westmoreland."

Following a two-hour executive session of the full board, Sutton announced that Westmoreland had been elected president and Elrod has been elected chancellor, a new position for Ouachita.

During an interview following the



Andrew "Andy" Westmoreland (right) has been elected to succeed Ben Elrod as Ouachita president effective Jan. 1. Elrod will serve as OBU chancellor.

board meeting, Sutton told the *Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine* that Westmoreland "has had an enormously important role in the last few years in the area of administration and dealing with issues before the university."

Describing the new president as "a Christian servant," Sutton added, "He has had an exemplary Christian life....He has the confidence of the faculty and has the ability to listen to different ideas and bring them to a workable consensus."

Westmoreland, a 1979 graduate of Ouachita, also holds degrees from the University of Arkansas and University of Arkansas - Little Rock. Prior to being named executive vice president in 1995, he served as OBU's vice president for development, assistant to the president and director of alumni affairs, development officer, director of student support services, director of the Ouachita Student Foundation and director of student activities and Evans Student Center. His wife, Jeanna, is an assistant professor of education at OBU.

"Obviously, Dr. Westmoreland knows everything about Ouachita from being a student to holding several different jobs there," noted Kluck. "He is very strong in making Christ the center of everything. I don't think Ouachita could be in any better hands for the future."

Affirming that "all of the vital signs

of the university are strong," Westmoreland said, "I want to continue on much the same path where we've been the past few years." He said primary goals include a commitment to quality faculty, a strong student body, a clear sense of community on campus, strong relationships with Southern Baptist churches and a growing endowment.

"I want us to have the strongest possible sense of the spirit of Christ on campus," he added. "That's the overarching goal."

Ouachita's leadership transition comes amid ongoing discussion about Ouachita's relationship with the Arkansas Baptist State Convention.

Westmoreland "is very familiar with the convention situation and has been very involved in that," Kluck said. "He very much wants Ouachita strongly connected to the Arkansas Baptist State Convention."

"I do know most of the issues and many of the individuals," Westmoreland agreed. "I love the Arkansas Baptist State Convention and I love Ouachita....I think it will take additional time to work through the current situation and seek God's guidance."

According to Elrod, his successor "understands Arkansas Baptists and Southern Baptists."

Affirming that Westmoreland "has a heart for the Christian mission of Ouachita and will be very attentive to the churches and the convention," Elrod added, "He shares my own desire that Ouachita remain right at the heart of Arkansas Baptist life."

Emphasizing that he is "extremely pleased" with the board's decision to elect Westmoreland, Elrod said, "I think the greatest days of Ouachita are in the future. The only limitation is our vision."

Elrod's tenure as president has been marked by strong growth in student enrollment and financial support for the university. During his presidency, student enrollment increased from 1,200 to more than 1,600, the market value of OBU's endowment grew from \$13 million to \$29 million and five major campus buildings were constructed.

"I've been in and around Ouachita most of my life," Elrod reflected. "We've had a wonderful time here. I am looking forward to having less responsibility, but staying connected to Ouachita."

PERSPECTIVE

A Pastor's Heart



Emil Turner

ABSC Executive Director

FROM THE ROOFTOP restaurant, I could see the traffic all around downtown Lake Charles. In fact, I could see one particular intersection better than the drivers who were negotiating that intersection. From that vantage point I could see what was around the corners that were blind intersections to the drivers who were negotiating those intersections. Often I thought that someone stationed in that restaurant could have prevented many traffic accidents if there had just been some way of communicating with those who were driving.

At the outset of 1998 you are facing some blind intersections. You do not know what the year holds for you and your family. Though it is uncomfortable

to consider, we know that some of us will face some difficulties in 1998. People we love will die. We may face conflict. Our jobs may change. Cancer, change and other struggles may occur in the next 365 days. There will be some great joys as well. While we rarely anticipate them, they are as likely as the possibility of struggles. Children will make good grades, you will get a raise, the tumor will be benign, a daughter will marry a bright young man with a good job.

But we are still at a blind intersection. However, high above us there is One who sees every corner clearly. He knows what is in store for us. The best preparation for 1998 is to draw close to Him. He sees the future.

■ Have you read *The Church Building Manual* compiled by Benny Grant? Benny is on our Evangelism and Church Growth Team and is very knowledgeable about architectural needs of churches. This manual can help you when you are considering a new building or renovation of your current church facility. You can get a copy by calling 1-800-838-ABSC.

Executive director's schedule:
Dec. 28 Levy Baptist Church
Jan. 6 New Trustee Orientation,
 Baptist Building

President's Perspective



Greg Kirksey

ABSC President

YOU HAVE PROBABLY been asked many times over the past few days what you want for Christmas. Some of your presents under the tree are probably a result of your requests. Your greatest gift, however, was unsolicited. Mankind did not see our need and cry out to God. It was God who recognized our great need, and gave us the ultimate gift, Jesus.

Norman Rockwell's paintings grab our hearts and draw us into the picture. Rockwell's teacher, Thomas Fogarty, taught him the secret of doing that. Fogarty would say, "Step over the frame, Norman, and live in the picture." That is what Jesus did. He stepped over the frame of time to live in our world of sin and suffering. He became one of us.

Such identification shocks us and helps us. Beulah Land, a mother of four, is married to a successful contractor and lives in a spacious farmhouse set on 171

acres north of Spokane, Wash. During a visit to the nation's capital, she was haunted by the scores of street people she saw. She told her husband that she was going to go back and live like a street person in order to understand their world.

She flew from Seattle to Washington, D.C., and took a crash course on street survival from a shelter worker. One day she trudged the streets for six hours just looking for a drink of water. As darkness came she could not find the shelter. And when she did find it, the shelter was dirty, vulgar and drug-ridden. During one of the nine nights she spent in the shelter, her life was threatened. She started to live on the streets, eating the remains of sandwiches and pasta that secretaries threw away on their lunch hours. She did her laundry in public fountains and dried it on the spotlights pointed at the Washington Monument. When she returned home, she began to lecture on the problems of street people. She is now an effective advocate for the homeless because of her personal identification with them.

That is what Jesus did. He clothed Himself like us, slept where we sleep, ate what we eat, and lived in our world. He left heaven to become a street person on earth. He has now returned home as an effective advocate for us. What a gift!

Greg Kirksey, pastor of First Church, Benton, is president of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention.

quotes

"Christmas isn't just a time, it is a feeling."

— Adam Chase Massey, 5th grade
 First Church, Benton

"Christmas is...even more joyful having Jesus in your heart."

— Joanna Lee Mayfield, 7th grade
 First Church, Mountain Home

"Gifts are nice, but Jesus is better."

— Corey Nicole Neff, 5th grade
 First Church, Hope

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NEWSMAGAZINE

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Looking back at 1997

Ouachita, Disney, Promise Keepers among major topics of past year

OUACHITA RECONCILIATION efforts, convention staff restructuring and a fire at Camp Paron were among major news items affecting Arkansas Baptists during the past year. On the state level, March 1 tornadoes and the 40th anniversary of Central High School's integration crisis dominated news reports.

In Southern Baptist Convention life, a boycott of Disney and the birth of the North American Mission Board were key topics. In national and international news, the deaths of Princess Diana and Mother Teresa, Promise Keepers' massive "Stand in the Gap" rally and terrorist bombs in Israel prompted widespread coverage. Highlights of those stories and other issues are recounted in the Newsmagazine's review of 1997.

JANUARY: State convention leaders unveil restructuring plan....1996 Cooperative Program gifts set record but fall short of goal....State convention executive director Emil Turner reflects on first year of service....Five staff members in the Arkansas Baptist missions department will be deployed to field positions across the state.

FEBRUARY: North American Mission Board to employ 350 people, eliminate 165 jobs....Southern Baptist Convention president Tom Elliff and state convention president Rex Horne were featured speakers during the 1997 Arkansas Baptist Evangelism Conference....A terrorist attack killed six people attending an open-air Christian worship service in Kampala, Uganda....Misty Rosinbaum of Benton was named one of 20 Acteen Top Teens by the national Woman's Missionary Union.

MARCH: Arkansas Baptist disaster relief workers aided storm victims after deadly tornadoes ripped through the state March 1, killing 25 people....Partial-birth abortion opponents gather at state capital rally to voice protest....The report of the successful cloning of adult sheep in Scotland brings with it a host of ethical problems related to the potential cloning of human beings, according to evangelical scholars....Regional "Hot Hearts" youth evangelism conferences challenge teenagers to be bold witnesses.

APRIL: State convention Executive Board approves proposed staff restructuring....Proposed law threatens Christian witness in Israel....More than 5,000 Arkansans gathered in Little Rock to honor 63 new foreign missionaries appointed during a Foreign Mission Board appointment service....Berryville church closes day care following concerns over enabling mothers to work outside the home.

MAY: Forum participants cite need for church involvement in welfare reform....Arkansas baptism statistics up for '96 while national figures reflect slight loss....Workshop in Little Rock highlights philosophy, practice of prayerwalking....Arkansas Baptist Discipleship Institute highlights family issues....Metro student ministry alters name, philosophy....Debate erupts over proposed "gender-neutral" NTV translation.

JUNE: Arkansas Baptist volunteers to Romania claim spiritual victory despite challenges....Missionaries evacuate amid Sierra Leone coup....Bob Record elected first president of new North American Mission Board....Messenger attendance hits 20-year low at Dallas SBC....Tom Elliff re-elected SBC

president....Southern Baptist messengers endorse Disney boycott....Pre-convention evangelism efforts lead 3,600 people to faith in Christ.

JULY: U.S. Supreme Court declares Religious Freedom Restoration Act unconstitutional....Arkansas pastors join Disney debate....Russian proposal would restrict religious freedom.... Fire destroys Camp Paron dining hall; damage estimated at \$250,000....Ouachita dedicates new \$8 million Harvey Jones Science Center....World Changers renovate homes in West Memphis.

AUGUST: New North American Mission Board president commits to "impossible" baptism goal of 1 million people a year by the year 2005....Louisiana approves covenant marriage law....Terrorist bombs hit near Baptist ministry center in Jerusalem....Yeltsin vetoes proposed law restricting religious liberty....Summer missionaries help meet key missions strategies in

Arkansas....Clinton issues religious freedom guidelines for federal workers.

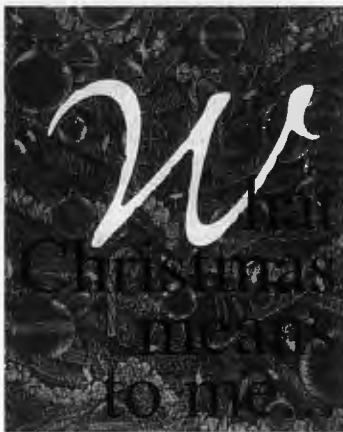
SEPTEMBER: Arkansas Baptist Student Union missionaries witness nearly 250 professions of faith....ABSC executive director Emil Turner unveils "seven-step" process for implementing Ouachita trustee selection agreement....Iowa missions partnership still faces numerous needs....Summer camps draw more than 10,000 for training, inspiration, fun...."Arkansas Baptists Committed" elect Tony Woodell as part-time coordinator....Assets managed by Arkansas Baptist Foundation top \$63 million....Baptist leaders mourn death of Princess Diana, Mother Teresa....Baptist Book Store opens new facility in west Little Rock.

OCTOBER: Thousands of Arkansas students gather for the 1997 "See You at the Pole" prayer emphasis....Romanian mob forces Arkansas team to halt witnessing efforts....Racial reconciliation: Clinton, Huckabee challenge nation to pursue equality during Central High anniversary....Arkansas parents establish Missionary Parents Fellowship group....O.S. Hawkins elected president of Southern Baptist Annuity Board....Baptist Sunday School Board to change name to LifeWay Christian Resources....Arkansas Baptists join hundreds of thousands of men for Promise Keepers' "Stand in the Gap" assembly in Washington, D.C....Mt. Zion Association reprimands Jonesboro church over "alien immersion"....Southern Baptist workers brace for impact of El Nino.

NOVEMBER: Proposed bylaw amendments to implement Ouachita reconciliation plan fall 1.3 percent short of two-thirds majority....Messengers approve ABSC Executive Board staff restructuring....Greg Kirksey elected state convention president....Chinese Christian leaders oppose International Mission Board's "secret" work....Texas Baptists adopt historic changes to SBC relationship.

DECEMBER: Arkansas Baptists share food, clothing along with holiday hope....Arkansans among 57 appointed as new international missionaries....Texas conservatives vote to form new state convention....WWJD bracelets: witnessing tool or latest fashion trend?...Andy Westmoreland elected new president of Ouachita Baptist University.

'97 YEAR IN REVIEW



trimming. Even my totally cool 15-year-old brother enjoys it. Our presents from Mom and Dad are always numbered and each of us open the same numbered gift at the same time. Every time I open a gift, I remember how greatly I've been blessed and Jesus' eternal gift of salvation. I know my family, including my brother who is already with my heavenly Father, will spend forever together because we've all accepted His special gift.

*Jaymi Furniss, 6th grade
First Church, Cabot*

Don't worry about having a bad Christmas, because there is not such a thing, if you're a good sport. Christmas is a time of enjoyment. It is also a time of worrying



and stress for some people. When you're digging up money, saving money, worrying what to get people, hoping they enjoy your present, then Christmas can be exhausting. To those people I would say relax, don't worry so much. I hate to admit I'm kind of one of those people, but I fix that by telling myself "this is not about presents, it's about Jesus' birth and He doesn't want you worrying on His birthday."

*Rachael Walden, 7th grade
First Church, Batesville*

Christmas to me is a time to get together with my family. I have a family that I don't get to see unless it is a holiday or a special occasion so Christmas is also a time to see them. Even though Christmas is a time to see family, it is more importantly a time to celebrate Jesus. We give and receive gifts on Christmas but we really need to think about the true meaning of Christmas, Jesus Christ, the greatest gift of all. Every year our family puts up a nativity scene. For me it is more than a decoration, it is a reminder that we are celebrating Jesus.

*Ashley Billingsley, 7th grade
Immanuel West Church, Lisle Rock*

Christmas, to me, means a time to celebrate Jesus Christ's birthday, give to others and see relatives. I remember when I was at my Mama's and Granddad's. We had all of my mom's family members. As a Christmas gift, my granddad gave my sister, my cousin and me \$50. We all



what Christmas means to me.

*John Bowen, 7th grade
First Church, Mena*

thought it was the greatest gift. Now I realize that the best Christmas gift was the first Christmas gift - Jesus Christ. I also feel it is a time to give to others...like giving to the church for missionaries and those less fortunate. That's

Christmas is an advent calendar to me. It comes in steps. Mary has an angel come to her and tell her she is going to have a baby. An angel came to Joseph and told him he was going to be a father. They traveled to Bethlehem. Mary and Joseph had the baby. The shepherds and the wise men came to visit. My Christmas is in steps, too. We put up decorations, watch movies together, go to church together, celebrate together and put up the manger scene together. It is all in steps.

*Traci Bates, 5th grade
First Church, Marion*



What Christmas means to me is when we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. I like to get presents from everyone. I also like to give to others. I believe in Santa Claus. I don't think he could come down my chimney, but I do think he might exist. I don't think he has elves though. He has helpers all around the world. But I think Christmas was made so we could celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

*Carrie Jenkins, 5th grade
First Church, Fordyce*



I celebrate Christmas by giving gifts, visiting relatives and loving my family. I believe it is better to give than receive. My family eats a traditional turkey dinner on Christmas. My younger brother, Matthew, celebrates his birthday on Christmas so we eat cake and watch him open presents in the afternoon. Then we eat dinner in the evening. But the real meaning of Christmas to me is that Christ came to Earth to be the Savior of the world.

*Stephen Watson, 7th grade
Baring Cross Church, North Little Rock*



The Arkansas Baptist News-magazine asked students in grades five through seven to answer the question, "What does Christmas mean to me?" Their answers focus on warmth, family and gift-giving as well as the celebration of the birth of Christ.

Christmas is the season when we can spend time with our family and friends and worship God at the same time.



Christmas is a very special time for me and my family. My most favorite thing to do at Christmas is to be with my family opening presents under the Christmas tree and see the expressions of joy on their faces when they open the present. God probably feels the same way when we accept Jesus to be our Lord and Savior. Christmas is a very good time to tell others the wonderful story of our Lord.

*Lyndsey Harper, 7th grade
First Church, White Hall*

Even though my family does celebrate Christmas with trees and Santas, the story of Jesus' birth is told over and over through the Christmas holidays. Each year we wait until after Thanksgiving to trim our tree. My seven-year-old brother's favorite time is the tree



When I think about Christmas, I think about the first six letters of the word. Christ was the first Christmas gift. We give gifts on Christmas to show our love and appreciation for our family and friends. God showed us His love by giving us Jesus Christ who died for our sins so that we could have eternal life through Him. We love God because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). As a Christian, I am glad to say that I know the joy of having Jesus Christ as my personal Lord and Savior. Christmas is...even more joyful having Jesus in your heart.



Johnna Lee Mayfield, 7th grade
First Church, Mountain Home

Christmas is a time to settle down and think of just how much God really loves us. I'm not a parent, but I can't imagine seeing one of my children dying on a cross to save everyone. I try not to get caught up in the presents and excitement. It is so hard. But all I have to do is think of this one thought: I see the nativity scene and try to picture that night. I see the three kings, the shepherds and that one bright star leading them. I picture that bright star being Jesus and Him leading me.



Katie Fourmy, 6th grade
Fianna Hills Church, Fort Smith

Christmas is a time to celebrate the birth of Christ and a time to share His birth with others. Some of my family's Christmas traditions are participating in our church's living nativity, choosing two children to buy a gift for from the Joy Tree, exchange gifts with friends and family, driving around town to look at lights and listening to lots of Christmas music. I think we need to think less about presents and more about the birth of Christ! It's not bad to buy things for people, but it is bad that we leave Jesus out. Have a Merry Christmas, but don't forget the Lord!



Rachel Duncan, 5th grade
First Church, Russellville

To me, Christmas means giving and keeping our eyes on Jesus. My family have been blessed by material possessions, security, family and God's love. None of these things do us any good if we do not use them to bless other people.



My family always tries to give used coats and toys to people less fortunate during the Christmas season. We tend to get so caught up in presents that we forget what we are really celebrating. This Christmas I am going to give as much as possible and keep my eyes on the real meaning of Christmas.

Rachel Picketts, 6th grade
First Church, Camden

Christmas means much more than a present under a tree. I feel sorry for those who have missed out on life's greatest rewards. But people will not enjoy life without God. That's what makes Christmas so very special, just to be able to think about Jesus and remember that He came to earth as a man and died for our sins so that we could go to heaven and be with God forever. Gifts are nice, but Jesus is better.

Cory Nicole Neff, 5th grade
First Church, Hope



When everyone wakes up, someone in my family reads the passages of Luke 2:1-20, then we all open our presents. It is fun to help my dad put up the lights on our house and also help my mom decorate the tree! Another family tradition is that we hide the baby Jesus from the nativity scene in a stocking on Christmas and then the person who has baby Jesus puts Him in the manger. But last year my mom lost the baby Jesus, so we had to use one of my Barbie babies as baby Jesus. It was really funny!

Brandy Brister, 6th grade
Elmdale Church, Springdale



...the time of the... nothing... buying... decorations... people are too busy to... remember Christmas is much

As a Christian, Christmas is a time of celebration. The first thing we celebrate is the birth of God's Son, Jesus Christ. The Lord also set the example for the second way we celebrate, the giving of gifts. Exchanging gifts with my family is an important part of Christmas to me. I also like the surprised faces when people receive gifts. Another way we celebrate is my dad taking time off work so we can spend time together as a family. We travel to visit my grandparents and celebrate Christmas with them. Finally, we celebrate the spirit of Christmas. Christmas isn't just a time, it is a feeling. We celebrate that by singing. My favorite Christmas song is "Away in a Manger."

Adam Chase Massey, 5th grade
First Church, Benton

Christmas is a great time to get together with my family as we celebrate the birth of Jesus. One of my family's traditions is to let me put the angel on top of our Christmas tree. Another of our traditions is for my mother to read me the Christmas story on Christmas Eve. One of my favorite things to do is play with my six-year-old cousin, Stormie. We both like to scrape the chocolate from the bottom of the mixing bowl after my Granny makes her chocolate cake. Another thing I like to do is make presents for everyone. This year I'm making sock snowmen and candles. I also like to go Christmas caroling and it is always fun to be in the Christmas play at my church. These are just a few reasons why Christmas is a special time for me.

Erica Hefflin, 5th grade
Park Hill Church, Arkadelphia



more than this, Christmas is Jesus' birthday. What Christmas means to me is celebrating Jesus' birthday. I love Christmas because your family gets together to celebrate Jesus' birth. One of our traditions is that every year we read the Bible story about Jesus' birth to start our Christmas party. Another thing that makes December special is that I am adopted and on the 22nd of December I came to live with my family. Each year I get a charm to remember the day I arrived.

Kimber Otman, 5th grade
First Church, Rogers



Annuity Board rep: Beware tax pitfalls

“You have not been through the tribulation until you have to go through an audit.”

CURTIS CROFTON
Southern Baptist Annuity Board Region 4 director



ONE OF THE BIGGEST things that gets preachers in trouble is money," claimed Curtis Crofton, director of Region 4 for the Southern Baptist Annuity Board. Crofton made his comment at a tax seminar at Life Line Church in Little Rock, one of three statewide seminars sponsored by the Annuity Board and the Arkansas Baptist State Convention stewardship and annuity department Dec. 9-10.

Urging participating pastors, staff members and church business officers to minimize their ministerial tax costs and save for the future, Crofton told participants that "one-half of all churches in the Southern Baptist Convention do not have their church enrolled in the church annuity plan."

"That's almost true for Arkansas," he added. "Of the churches in Arkansas that have at least one person on staff, 53 percent are participating."

Crofton voiced the opinion that saving on tax costs is "like a raise. The average SBC salary is \$25,000 a year, total package," he said, "when you throw in the mega-churches. That simply means there are lot of guys down here

making \$5,000...\$8,000...\$10,000 dollars. If I can help you structure your salary in such a way as to allow you to save on taxes, it's like giving you a salary raise."

Reviewing tax-saving principles for ministers and urging caution in their financial dealings, Crofton warned participants that "you have not been through the tribulation until you have to go through an audit."

He noted that among issues ministers face is whether they are employees or self-employed, answering that ministers "have a dual tax status. For federal income tax reporting purposes, the ordained minister is to always be treated as an employee of the church. For Social Security purposes, the minister is always treated as self-employed, so you have a dual status as a minister of the church."

Crofton noted that "a great hope is that you are receiving a W-2 (tax form) and not a 1099. Make sure that all employees of your church, those that are in day care, custodial positions, or nursery workers get a W-2 by Jan. 31.

"That's a federal law," he warned. "There is a fine of \$50 per person if you fail to do that."

He also answered questions from participants, noting that they represent concerns of many ministers. Questions from participants included:

Q: How do I determine if a minister is self-employed? Pointing to the Wingo v. Commissioner case of 1987, Crofton answered, "You never have a staff person who is ordained treating them as a FICA employee."

Q: Can a church pay Social Security on a self-employed person? "We need to communicate to our churches that the minister's got to pay both sides of his Social Security," he said. "What is fair and right is that you would go ahead and give, as part of the budget, a Social Security allowance that would be part of the church's 7.65 percent. Is it taxable? Yes, but I would take that 7.65 any day of the week."

Q: If I live in a parsonage, I'm not eligible for a housing allowance. Right? "False," said Crofton. "Every pastor should have a housing allowance. It's the biggest tax advantage you get."

Q: Can a pastor designate all of his salary as housing allowance? "Yes," he said, if expenses can be documented. "With housing allowance, it must always be made in advance. Can it be amended during a year? Yes. The church must amend it or a committee acting on behalf of the church."



For ministers:

Steps to effective financial support

Step one: Identify categories of financial support. Generally, there are three categories of financial support. They are:

- Church-ministry related reimbursement funds such as auto expenses, books, conferences and entertainment. These are "the tools of the ministry" and are not related to personal income.

- Protection coverages. These are not related to personal income for purposes of "measuring" pay.

- Personal Income. This is what a person lives on and should not be overstated by combining it with ministry-related reimbursement funds and protection coverages.

Step two: Decide that the church will provide adequately in each category. The Bible is clear about supporting those who serve the church vocationally. The church should decide to do all it can, not as little as possible.

It is important not to trap a person in "the package." A lump sum is misleading. Church members conclude that the church is paying the minister much more money than it actually is.

Telling the minister to "divide it up any

way you want" is not always the best practice. Important items like insurance and retirement may be left out because there's not enough in the "package" for food and clothing. A lump sum also may cause a minister to pay unnecessary taxes.

Step three: Arrange the financial support plan in the most tax-favored manner. It's best to provide church ministry-related expenses through an accountable reimbursement plan.

Expense money should not be considered salary and expenses should be paid by the church directly out of church funds or by way of an accountable business reimbursement arrangement.

If there is no accountable business reimbursement arrangement, any money received for expenses is taxable income.

The church should pay for protection coverages directly. Tax Code Section 106 allows an employer, like a church, to pay for medical and disability coverage as well as up to \$50,000 in group term life insurance for any employee and none of the money used has to be considered taxable income to the employee.

From *Financial Issues Facing SBC Churches, Associations and Their Employees*, Southern Baptist Annuity Board

Three new staff members elected

Board members discuss response to concerns over 'alien immersion'

IN PREPARATION for the Arkansas Baptist Executive Board staff's new team structure which will be officially implemented Jan. 1, Executive Board members recently elected three new team members to fill key leadership positions.

Ed Balducci, minister to young and median adults at First Baptist Church of Dallas, was elected as the new Family Ministry Team leader. Denny Wright, pastor of Parkers Chapel First Church in El Dorado, will serve on the Leadership and Worship Team as the stewardship, annuity and capital fund-raising specialist. Jeffrey Jones, associate pastor of First Church, Monticello, has been employed as a member of the Evangelism and Church Growth Team.

Introducing the three men and their wives, operating committee chairman Eugene Ray told board members, "We have three exceptionally good people to present to you."

Balducci, who has served on the staff of First Church, Dallas, since 1995, previously served in similar positions at Hillcrest Baptist Church in Dallas and First Baptist Church of Snellville, Ga. He is a graduate of Florida State University, the University of Florida, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and Dallas Theological Seminary.

Citing the ministry opportunities as leader of the Family Ministry Team, Balducci noted, "Marriage and family is so important in my life....God has definitely moved in my heart. I think God is doing something in Arkansas and I want to be part of it."

According to state convention executive director Emil Turner, Balducci "will add a new dimension to our leadership team. He will provide a resource to minister to families that goes beyond what any state convention currently has."

Wright, pastor of Parkers Chapel First Church since 1991, previously was pastor of Bradley Church as well as associate pastor of churches in Arkansas and Texas. He is a graduate of Ouachita Baptist University, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Affirming "a sense of peace about making this ministry change," Wright told board members that he looked forward to the opportunity to be "a minister to ministers." He noted that the new position on the Leadership and Worship Team matches his spiritual gifts of administration and encouragement.

Turner pointed out that Wright "is following a giant in the ministry" as he succeeds James Walker in the areas of annuity and stewardship work. He added, however, that Wright "has the gifts and abilities that make him effective in ministering to Arkansas Baptist pastors and church staff."

Jones has served on the staff of First Church,

Monticello, since 1995. He previously was associate pastor for youth and education at Mt. Olive Church in Crossett, as well as a staff member of churches in Alabama, Texas and Tennessee. He holds degrees from the University of Memphis and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Noting that "God has been working in my life, preparing me for something like this," Jones remarked, "God is in control....I want to do my best for His glory wherever I am."

According to Turner, Jones "will provide Sunday School and Bible study expertise to the Evangelism and Church Growth Team. He also is very strong in Discipleship Training and will be an asset to all of our churches."

In other Executive Board business, Turner shared a report about the state convention credential committee's recommendation to seat messengers from Highland Drive Church in Jonesboro during last month's state convention annual meeting. The committee's recommendation, which was approved by convention messengers, came in response to a challenge concerning the church's guidelines related to the practice of "alien immersion."

Explaining that the committee "determined the church was not in violation" of the convention's governing documents, Turner said the committee cited a 1980 convention action on the subject as "the controlling legal authority for this issue."

That report, adopted 17 years ago by convention messengers, includes definitions of both alien immersion and open communion. It defines alien immersion as "that immersion for baptism performed or administered by a group whose doctrinal position concerning salvation and the church is foreign to the teachings of the New Testament."

Tommy Stacy, a board member from Mt. Zion Association, suggested that the issue "needs to be looked at a little bit more." Mt. Zion's board of directors voted in October to place Highland Drive Church on probation for one year because of the church's written guidelines that "any person who has been saved... and has received 'believer's baptism'... may be presented as a candidate for membership" in the church.

Following a suggestion that a committee be formed to study the issue, Turner said the convention's charter and bylaws committee is the proper body to address such a topic.

Although the 1980 action "is the most recent action of the convention on this subject," Turner added that "this is not binding on any association, any group of churches or any church."

Board members also approved a request for the Baptist Building to be closed Jan. 8-9 for the annual Executive Board staff retreat which will feature two days of prayer and fasting.



ED BALDUCCI
new leader
Family Ministry Team



JEFF JONES
new member
Evangelism & Church
Growth Team



DENNY WRIGHT
new member
Leadership & Worship
Team

Arkansans complete 53 European partnership projects in 1997

Projects involve record 230 Arkansas Baptists

ABOUT 230 Arkansas Baptists participated in 53 overseas projects to make 1997 a banner year for the missions partnership between the Arkansas Baptist State Convention and the European Baptist Convention.

Doyle Plummer, who retired Dec. 19 as ABCS European partnership coordinator, said this year's 53 projects were carried out in 14 countries. "We've been in a total of 18 of the 21 countries of the European Baptist Convention in the four years of the partnership."

Plummer noted that the 53 projects exceeded numbers in past years, explaining that annual project numbers "have been running about 35 per year...and running about 150 people a year. We had 230 participate this year."

Brotherhood department director Harry Black, who will take the helm as ABCS partnership coordinator Jan. 1, said the increased numbers of participants came about because "teams were larger and there has been a growing awareness on the part of Arkansas Baptists of the need for volunteer missions."

Plummer agreed, adding that the increase also may be due to "a little more planning and forethought on the part of the EBC."

He said increases also may have come from increased opportunities presented by the partnership. "We moved somewhat from working with the English-language churches to moving into opportunities presented to us for working with nationals in Romania, Bulgaria and Ukraine.

"It wasn't expected and not anticipated on the part of the EBC, but (late partnership coordinator) Glendon Grober and Harry were looking at opportunities for going wherever we needed to go. The International Mission Board has been cooperative with us in moving that direction and so has the EBC. For all of us, a soul is a soul."

Black said the increased participation reflected "a renewed sense of excitement and potential in 1997 and I expect that to continue in 1998 with significant involvement from individuals and church and associational groups."



"The church and associational partnerships, I expect, will continue to mature," Black said. "The original direction that was established with this partnership, the building block, has been an Arkansas church or association linked with an EBC partner. I expect that to continue.

"While individual projects can be adopted," he added, "our first commitment is to do those projects through established partnerships."

Notable service

Plummer and Black said that several Arkansas churches provided notable service to the partnership, highlighting:

AA team consisting primarily of youth from First Church in Heber Springs which ministered in Interlaken, Switzerland, and Heidelberg, Germany.

"We did Backyard Bible Clubs at a military base," said First Church youth minister Kevin Hendrix. "You can't imagine the size of the housing situation there and you can't imagine the number of kids. We had three locations there."

The team also performed skits and witnessed in the streets of Heidelberg. Following the trip, seven of the 16 participating youth surrendered to the ministry.

BA team from First Church in Cabot, which remodeled a Bulgarian Baptist Church. Plummer said that project "will likely result in an Arkansas partnership to reach the Turkish and Bulgarian-speaking Muslims in Bulgaria."

C"Continued work with Romania and the openness of the people to the gospel and response of hundreds to evangelism," said Black.

"It is especially significant with the difficulties that occurred," he added.

"The volunteers worked together with the Romanian leaders to resolve that situation."

DThe work started in St. Petersburg, Russia, by Immanuel Church in Little Rock and the EBC to start an English-language work.

E"A traditional type of partnership, the work with the church in Dusseldorf, by First Church in Batesville," said Plummer. "They bought some buildings and five acres and sent people to clear off land, remodel facilities, paint, do handyman work and contributed two preschool teachers. It was a retreat center they remodeled into a church sanctuary, apartments for volunteers and a preschool. This is probably the most active church-to-church partnership."

FOn-site coordinators Glenn and Doris Toler. "They were very active and served a meaningful role for the EBC as well as us," Plummer said. "They went to 35 of the 65 churches during the time they were there and not only coordinated efforts, but were fully a part of the convention work."

As Plummer looks to the future of the partnership, he predicted that "for Harry, I see more activity based on more general needs identified and less from a church-to-church-generated need.

"I think there will be more activity from statewide sources," he said. "There are just more needs being identified than a church-to-church partnership is able to handle. It requires more resources."

Black said the recent restructuring of the ABCS also will help the partnership's future. "By virtue of the fact that partnership missions has been brought together in one office, it puts a heightened focus on the role of Arkansas Baptists in direct missions involvement, with the resources of time as well as finances and the way it all works together.

"Of course, we will be broadening our EBC partnership in 1998 to focus on an unreached people group, the Turkish- and Bulgarian-speaking Muslims in Bulgaria."

Looking to 1998, Black said that in planning for "the direction of future partnership missions, we will be looking at what next primary international partnership we should begin in the year 2000." The ABCS-EBC partnership is slated to end Dec. 31, 1999.

While he said he does not know which countries will be considered as future missions partners, Black emphasized, "We are interested in any other partnership opportunities that will help Arkansas Baptists be involved in partnership missions projects."

Arkansans to respond to Bulgarian needs through European partnership

ARKANSAS BAPTISTS will seek to respond to spiritual and financial needs in the former Soviet republic of Bulgaria through an informal relationship with Baptists in that country, perhaps as early as January.

Arkansas Baptist State Convention partnerships coordinator Harry Black said the relationship, which will be addressed through the current partnership between the ABSC and the European Baptist Convention, is in response to "a great need in Bulgaria."

"We are developing a relationship with the Bulgarian Baptist Union that focuses on the needs they recognize in their country," Black explained, adding that the focus will be on spiritual, financial and humanitarian efforts.

Black noted that talks concerning the relationship began earlier this year, when ABSC state-wide partnership coordinator Doyle Plummer met with Roger Capps, a Southern Baptist international missionary to Bulgaria. The two recognized the need for support of the ministry opportunities there, especially among Turkish-speaking Muslims, considered an unreached people group by the IMB.

Economic bleak

Foremost, Black emphasized, the relationship "will focus on the spiritual need of that country," explaining that the Bulgarian economic situation has prompted many Bulgarians to seek spiritual answers.

That focus has led to growth for Bulgarian Baptists, he shared. "At the fall of communism in 1989, Bulgaria had 14 Baptist churches, 700 members and four full-time pastors. By 1997, they had grown to 65 churches and preaching points, 3,000 members and 30 full-time pastors."

Black explained that the economic conditions in the country are harsh. "Inflation reached 1,000 percent in 1996 and this year they will have an inflation rate of about 600 percent," he said. "Food is difficult to buy, pensioners are living on about \$19 a month. People are having to disconnect heat so they can buy bread. It is reported that as many as 100 elderly people are committing suicide every month because of the economy and mothers are committing suicide so their children can go to an orphanage to be cared for."

In the midst of the nationwide pover-

ty, Black said that Bulgarian Baptists "are responding to the spiritual needs of Gypsies, of the national Bulgarians and also recognizing that God is opening doors to witness to Muslims."

"Muslim spiritual leaders are inviting Christians to mosques to explain their faith in Jesus," he reported, "and individual Muslims are inviting Christians to discuss and explain the Bible. This is occurring in a place where fundamentalist Islamists are experiencing a resurgence."

Black said he and other partnership leaders feel led to help Bulgarian Baptists, especially within the Muslim community, which makes up one-eighth of the Bulgarian population. But how will Arkansas Baptists participate in this type of informal relationship? Black suggested specific areas of concern that need to be met:

■ "Number one, by prayer," he said, "for Bulgarian Baptists and Bulgarian Christians who are on the front line of contacts with Gypsies, Muslims and people who are without hope."

■ "As we can, by providing financially for humanitarian relief to purchase food, heat and basic needs through the BBU and International Mission Board missionaries on the field — they coordinate closely together."

Plummer added that "people could immediately contribute to hunger relief. Starvation is occurring in Bulgaria today. If people felt led to donate to the hunger relief effort, they can call Harry Black. People are starving right now."

■ "By helping to provide church buildings among Christians who are former Muslims," Black said. "They have invited construction teams and financial help to purchase land and materials."

While providing construction funds for an entire church may seem daunting, Black explained that "for one Bulgarian church to purchase prime property and build a building that would accommodate 500 people, it is estimated that they would need only \$60,000."

Other, less expensive options for financial aid also exist. "We have several Sunday School classes giving offerings to help with the expenses for Bulgarian Baptists who are ministering to Muslims," Black said. "A gift of as little as \$20 a month will make a substantial difference in the ability of a pastor or missionary to minister."

Iowa partnership 'revitalized' in '97

ARKANSAS AND IOWA Baptists "got serious" about their mutual missions partnership in 1997, said partnership coordinator Norman Lewis. That serious attitude led to a high number of partnership projects and a record number of requests for 1998, he added.

Lewis, who began work with the Arkansas Baptist State Convention staff in 1997 as Iowa partnership coordinator, said the renewed partnership interest "began this year when the decision was made between (missions department director) Jimmy Barrentine and myself to disperse with the district-to-district partnership and open up missions projects to any church in Arkansas. It made every project accessible to any church in Arkansas whose interests lay in a certain area."

The result, he said, was "a fantastic year. We knew Arkansas had worked on 37 projects this year and, when we went up for their convention, we found three more. About 800 people worked this year."

Lewis said the revitalized interest this year has spurred a flurry of 1998 requests. "When the Iowa directors of missions made requests from pastors for '98, it carried weight because of this year's success. In the past we'd ask them to turn in projects and it hadn't done any good. I told the DOMS, 'Let's get serious about asking for projects.'"

"When I came in, there were four projects," he recalled. "Did they get serious? As evidence for 1998, they have asked for 93 projects and there are more to come. There is an excitement about the partnership I saw at the annual meetings in Iowa and in Arkansas."

Arkansas Baptist churches interested in any of the requests for projects may consult the newly-released 1998 *Arkansas/Iowa Partnership Project Directory*, available by calling the ABSC missions partnerships office toll-free in state at 1-800-838-ABSC or locally in Little Rock at 376-4791, ext. 5158.

"In that book there are nine special projects, long-range link ups and partnership needs," he said. "In the back there is an index that states the needs by category."

Requested projects included in the directory are construction projects such as church building renovation or painting, summer missions opportunities such as Vacation Bible Schools and Backyard Bible Clubs, ministry opportunities such as revival teams and church planting, and financial help for new churches.

people & places

COMPILED BY MILLIE GILL

CHURCH LIFE

Newark Southern Church recently held a noteburning ceremony to celebrate payment of indebtedness on both the church facility and parsonage. Former pastor Manuel Macks was the guest speaker and Jim Cunningham, chairman of the deacons, burned the note.

Park Hill Church of North Little Rock will host Christian recording artist Steve Green in concert Jan. 16 at 7:30 p.m. Additional information is available by calling the church's music ministry at 501-753-3413.

Reyno First Church ordained church member Roger Hovis to the gospel ministry Dec. 7. Hovis currently is serving the congregation as interim pastor.

TRANSITIONS

Frank Shell has announced his retirement as director of missions for North Central Association, effective Dec. 31. He previously served as pastor of several Arkansas churches, including Sage Church, Alicia Church, White Oak Church, First Church of Walnut Ridge and First Church of Clinton. He also taught classes and coached baseball at Williams Baptist College for more than 12 years. Shell and his wife, Carolyn, have served as volunteer missions workers in Montana where he also served as pastor of Easthaven Church in Kalispell and taught at Yellowstone Baptist College in Billings. Shell, a graduate of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, has been involved in other volunteer mission efforts in Iowa, Zambia, Brazil, Peru and Australia. The Shells, who plan to continue doing volunteer mission work, will move in January to Batesville where they will reside at 2400 North Heights. They have four children, Jay Shell of Little Rock, Sara Teague of El Dorado, Joe Shell and Susan Allison, both of Nashville, Tenn.; and 11 grandchildren.

Kenny Dunham is pastor of New Friendship Church of Marmaduke. A student at Williams Baptist College, he served as pastor of Plant Church for five years. He and his wife, Melissa, have two children, Andrea and Taylor.

Wayne Fowler has announced his resignation as pastor of Winfield Church effective Dec. 28. Fowler, who has served the church for 12 years, will be available for supply preaching. He may be contacted at 918-653-7157.

Mike Nichols is serving as bivocational youth minister for Calvary Church in Fort Smith. He previously served South Highland Church of Little Rock. A graduate of Arkansas Tech University, he currently is working with the Western Yell County School District. Nichols is married to the former Resha Ward.

Ryan Miley has joined the staff of First Church in Lepanto as minister of music and youth. He came there from First Church of Macon, Miss., where he served as minister of music and activities. He also has served churches in Iowa, Louisiana, Texas and Michigan. Miley is a graduate of Delta State University, Cleveland, Miss., and attended New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. He and his wife, Rebecca, have one son, Trevor.

Brian Crump began serving Dec. 1 as associate pastor of Cullendale First Church in Camden. He is a graduate of Texas A & M and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

John Bodine will join the staff of Rye Hill Church in Fort Smith Jan. 4 as associate pastor of youth, children and education. He and his wife, Jackie, will move there from Fort Worth, Texas, where he is a recent graduate of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Lendol Jackson of Jonesboro has been called as pastor of First Church of Weiner where he has been serving as interim pastor for more than a year. He previously was pastor of other Arkansas churches, including Central Church of Marked Tree and New Hope Church of Hardy. Jackson and his wife, Dorothy, are volunteer coordinators of Arkansas Campers on Mission.

Chris Hughes has joined the staff of Amboy Church in North Little Rock as minister to students. He is a student at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock where he is majoring in speech communications.

Kerry Powell of Warren, a retired Southern Baptist minister, is serving as interim pastor of Hermitage Church.

OBITUARIES

Ruby Mae Sherrill Veneman of Fordyce died Dec. 4 at age 84. She was a member of First Church of Fordyce, Fordyce Garden Club and Eastern Star. Survivors are her husband, James V. Veneman; a son, Jim Veneman, photography editor for the Baptist Sunday School Board; one sister, and five grandchildren.

Bernard L. Ford, 72, of Hot Springs died Dec. 9. He was a retired Southern Baptist minister, home missionary and a World War II Navy veteran. Ford, who had served as pastor of several Arkansas churches, is survived by his wife, Edna Sloan Ford of Hot Springs; three sons,



Pulaski Association held a dedication service and open house Dec. 7 for the association's new office facilities located at 18502 Lawson Road in Little Rock. The facility includes offices for the association and regional offices for the Arkansas Baptist Children's Homes and Family Ministries as well as a kitchen and multipurpose meeting room. The building, valued at \$600,000, was built with volunteer labor at a cost of approximately \$350,000. Building committee chairman Jim Lagrone, pastor of First Southern Church in Bryant, was the featured speaker for the dedication service. He presented a cornerstone plaque during the service to associational director of missions Ed Hinkson.

Jack Ford of Hawthorne, Nev., Robert Ford of Hot Springs and Sgt. Edward Ford of Stavenger, Norway; three daughters, Donita Kossovser of Fayetteville, Janice Weatherford of Malvern and Minnie Bain of Tacoma, Wash.; 15 grandchildren; and 10 great-grandchildren. Memorials may be made to the Adopt an Annuitant program of the Southern Baptist Annuity Board.

David LeRoy Verble, 30, of Farmington, died Dec. 8. Verble, former pastor of Providence Church in Fayetteville, was featured in the Oct. 30 issue of the *Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine* for his battle with diabetes-related illnesses. He is survived by his wife, Julie; son, Michael Keoni; daughter, Hayley Morgyn; father, Gary Verble; mother, Darlene Gilman; two brothers; a sister and his maternal grandparents.

Margaret Jacks Deese of Little Rock died Dec. 10 at age 75. Her funeral services were held Dec. 12 at Lakeshore Drive Church in Little Rock where she was a member. Survivors are her husband, Wilson Deese, a former director of chaplaincy for the Arkansas Baptist State Convention; three daughters, Lane Phelps of Maumelle, Linda Pate of Fort Worth, Texas, and Charla Cheatwood of Little Rock; seven grandchildren; four great-grandchildren; a brother; and a aunt. Memorials may be made to Ouachita Baptist University.

Bertie Hagood, a longtime resident of Dumas, died Nov. 26 at Trinity Village in Pine Bluff at age 93. Hagood, who joined the staff of Arkansas Woman's Missionary Union in 1952 and retired in 1970, was the first director for Woman's Missionary Society (currently Women on Mission). In addition, she was active in WMU programs for First Church of Dumas where she was honored in 1992 when the church observed Bertie Hagood Day in recognition of 65 years of service. Hagood had also taught in Enon, Parkdale and Redfield schools after attending Arkansas A & M College in Monticello, Arkansas State Teachers College in Conway and the University of Arkansas. Survivors include a daughter, Robbie Robinson of Dumas; five grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren; and five great-great grandchildren. Memorials may be made to First Church of Dumas.

Rex Francis Nelson, 73, of El Dorado died Nov. 26. He was a member of Caledonia Church of El Dorado, a retired employee of Arkansas Power and Light and a U.S. Army veteran. Survivors include two daughters, Rosemarie Armer of El Dorado and Renita Lee of Bixby, Okla.; his mother, Elizabeth Nelson Dunn of El Dorado; three brothers; and three grandchildren.



Williams Baptist College president Jerol Swaim (left) looks on as Speedy Shoemaker of Osceola (second from left) chairman of the college's board of trustees' capital provisions committee, discusses plans for a new men's dormitory slated to be built in 1998. Other board members are (left to right) board chairman Kenneth Suicer of Osceola, Carter Dryer of Jonesboro and Amelia Frankum of Newport.

Williams trustees approve construction of residence hall

THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES of Williams Baptist College voted to begin construction of a new men's residence hall and endorsed annexation of College City into Walnut Ridge during a Dec. 12 board meeting at the college.

The board voted to proceed with the building of the 64-bed residence hall and authorized the construction at a cost of approximately \$1 million.

Capital provisions committee chairman Speedy Shoemaker of Osceola reported that approximately \$400,000 had been raised for the project through gifts and commitments. He said the committee recommended that an additional \$400,000 be borrowed for construction, with the anticipation that the remainder of the capital needs will be met through future financial gifts and pledges. The board approved the committee recommendation unanimously.

Acknowledging that the loan amount "bothers me," Williams president Jerol Swaim noted, "My goal is that we don't borrow a penny on this construction. I'm guardedly optimistic that when this is all over, we won't have to borrow more than \$200,000 to \$300,000 to complete it."

The new dorm is a reflection of the strong student enrollment at Williams this fall, Swaim added. "This has been a good fall for us. We had a full-time equivalent of 425 and actually enrolled 490 students. That has allowed us to make additional improvements around campus. It's the kind of fall you enjoy having."

The bad news, Swaim added, is that the strong enrollment numbers mean Williams is facing a student housing shortage. "It makes you kind of nervous. The board approved today expending a million dollars on a new dorm facility that will house 64 additional beds, but if this kind of increase lasts another year or two, we will be right back where we were."

Site work on the new dorm "will begin in the next few days," Swaim reported. "The goal is to start as soon as possible and allow 210 consecutive days for construction. We're going to have to have students in there in August."

The board also endorsed the annexation of College City, where Williams is located, into nearby Walnut Ridge. City leaders in Walnut Ridge have recently taken preliminary steps toward the annexation.

Board chairman Kenneth Suicer of Osceola said he felt the action would help Williams be more closely identified with Walnut Ridge. Board member Larry Sloan, a Walnut Ridge resident, noted that he had "never seen the relationship better" between the college, agreeing that it was time for annexation.

In other board action, trustees passed a resolution of appreciation for Williams women's basketball coach Carol Halford, who won her 250th career game the night prior to the board meeting.

World missions

Christmas prayers sought for North Korea coat project

Southern Baptists are being urged to voice a special Christmas Day prayer that children's coats sent to North Korea will bring glory to God and help people in that country sense the love of Jesus Christ.

The "Coats for Christmas" effort for North Korean children needs to be bathed in prayer to be truly effective, organizers of the project emphasized.

Volunteers began sorting and packing coats Dec. 13, preparing them for air shipping to Pyongyang, North Korea's capital city. Truckloads and carloads of coats were still arriving at International Mission Board headquarters in Richmond, Va., in mid-December.

Without the coats, North Korean officials fear children in several North Korean provinces will die in the frigid winter. Flooding in recent years devastated farmland and triggered a catastrophic food shortage, sending the country into an economic tailspin and leaving hundreds of thousands of people on the brink of starvation. Many people, especially children, are now too weak to resist sickness, and relief workers fear for their lives.

Leaders in the officially atheistic country have asked for 102,000 coats by Dec. 25 and an additional 78,000 in January.

Those interested in additional information about the project may write to Coats for Christmas, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, VA 23230, call 1-800-866-3621 (menu item 6), or contact anna@imb.org by e-mail.
RICHMOND, VA (BP)

Belgian Baptists gain official recognition

Baptists in Belgium are now officially recognized, after having been classified as a "cult" for a number of years, and thus outside the country's constitutional protections.

The recognition came Dec. 6 in a unanimous vote by the Protestant Synod in Brussels to accept the Union of Baptists in Belgium. There are 19 churches with approximately 850 members in the Baptist Union.

Samuel Verhaeghe, the union's general secretary, reported that a representative from the minister of justice was on hand for the vote. "He congratulated us at the end," Verhaeghe noted. He thanked Baptists around the world who prayed and wrote letters to help their cause.

The Baptist World Alliance had joined with European Baptists to plead the cause of Belgian Baptists to be officially recognized, since their previous status prevented them from carrying out many church duties, such as marriage.

Former President Jimmy Carter also had asked the Belgian government to grant the Baptist union official status. An official with the Carter Center's human rights program in Atlanta had called Belgium's lack of official recognition of Baptists "a violation of guaranteed international human rights."

Denton Lotz, BWA general secretary, noted that the Belgian recognition is a sign of hope for Baptists in Austria who still are not officially recognized.

WASHINGTON (BP)

South Africans report reconciliation progress

Ongoing steps toward reconciliation are being taken in South Africa by the predominantly white Baptist Union and predominantly black Baptist Convention, according to recent reports received by Baptist World Alliance officials.

Baptist leaders of the union and convention have announced that they will hold their own "Truth and Reconciliation" event in April 1998, similar to the South African government's reconciliation proceedings.

A public rally is being planned for next July to celebrate the progress toward reconciliation when Baptist leaders meet in Durban, South Africa, for the BWA general council. "We look forward to the public rally where we can celebrate this with Baptists from around the world," affirmed BWA general secretary Denton Lotz.

Terry Rae, Baptist Union general secretary, said leaders are modeling the reconciliation effort "on Genesis 33 where Jacob and Esau were able to meet each other and reconcile, finding the face of God in each other."

Rae said the union and convention hope to bring together "those who have been deeply hurt and affected" by the division between the two Baptist bodies "and give an opportunity for people to express their hurts and find forgiveness and reconciliation."

WASHINGTON (BP)

12,000 in Nagaland profess faith in Christ

More than 12,000 Nagas responded to an invitation given by Baptist World Alliance president Nilson Fanini to accept Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior during three evangelistic meetings held in conjunction with the 125th anniversary celebrations of Nagaland Baptist Church in Kohima, North East India.

An estimated 740,000 people attending the anniversary celebration's overall seven meetings gave thanks for the gospel and prayed for peace.

As BWA president, Fanini has focused his message on the need for Baptists to share the gospel of Jesus Christ and double their churches and membership by the year 2000.

During a rally led by BWA evangelism director Tony Cupit and attended by 75,000 young people, 30 committed themselves to full-time missionary service.

While Nagaland is largely a Christian state today, there is much nominal Christianity, and civil war between Baptist factions has hurt the Christian witness. Although hostilities between warring Nagas stopped long enough for the celebrations, the need for peace was prominent in the minds of those who attended. While many groups, including the BWA, have worked and prayed for peace, hundreds of people continue to be killed because of land and power disputes and an underground civil war of the Nagas against the Indian government from whom they want independence.

"The recent years have been a time of exceptional pain and sorrow for most Nagas," said S.C. Jamir, chief minister of Nagaland, "a time when our own guns have turned many into widows, orphans and childless parents." WASHINGTON (BP)

Christmas in Bethlehem

Site of Christ's birth attracts thousands of Christian pilgrims

Mark Wingfield

Kentucky Western Recorder

THIS CHRISTMAS, thousands of Christian pilgrims will descend upon the no-longer-little town of Bethlehem to mark the event that put the village on the map 2,000 years ago.

Bethlehem is more than a name in the Bible or the subject of Christmas carols. It is an actual place — a city of 50,000 residents living on Israel's Palestinian-controlled West Bank. About 1.25 million tourists visit Bethlehem each year, with heightened interest at Christmastime.

Actually, make that Christmas times three, since Christmas Day is celebrated three times each year in Bethlehem. Western Christians commemorate Jesus' birth on Dec. 25; Orthodox Christians mark the day on Jan. 6; and Armenians celebrate Jan. 18.

Bethlehem's focal point is the Church of the Nativity, a Greek Orthodox Church built in 530 A.D. by the Byzantine emperor Justinian I. The church is built on what is believed to be site of the ancient inn where the Bible reports Mary and Joseph sought lodging when they journeyed to Bethlehem to register for a census decreed by Caesar Augustus.

According to Luke's Gospel, Mary placed Jesus in a manger, because there was no room in the inn. That manger was likely in a cave rather than the wooden stall depicted in most Christmas Nativity scenes, according to biblical scholars.

"In that day, inns were built around caves, usually enclosed in a big quadrangle with a courtyard area in the middle," explained Wayne Ward, senior research professor of Christian theology at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and a frequent visitor to the Holy Land. Animals often were kept in these limestone caves adjoining the inns, he said.

Ward said he is convinced the site marked by the Church of the Nativity is authentic. The site was first permanently marked by Helena, mother of the Roman emperor Constantine, in about 325 A.D. Following Constantine's conversion to Christianity, his mother traveled across Palestine to locate all the sites revered by the Christian community. She and others erected ornate church buildings on many of those holy sites.

"The oldest and surest site she picked out was the inn at Bethlehem," Ward said. Biblical archaeologist Joel Drinkard, professor of Old Testament interpretation at Southern Seminary, agreed that the

Bethlehem inn is one of the most-reliable locations related to Jesus' earthly life and ministry.

However, Drinkard said, Helena marked the site 300 years after the birth of Christ. "The gap from the birth in 5 or 6 B.C. down to 300 A.D. is an awfully long gap," Drinkard said. "We have an awfully hard time proving this is actually the site. Likewise we have a hard time proving it is not."

That gap isn't as huge as it appears, though, Ward said, because there were signs of earlier veneration of the site predating Helena's visit. Also, a village the size of Bethlehem would likely have had only one inn, and everybody would have known where it was, he said. And unlike nearby Jerusalem, Bethlehem never has been destroyed by war.

"I don't think there's any doubt about that location," Ward said.

Whether the silver star embedded in marble in the grotto beneath the Church of the Nativity marks the exact spot of Jesus' birth and of the manger, as tradition holds, really isn't the point, added Rusty Cherry, vice president of Dehoney Travel, a Louisville, Ky., firm which organizes Holy Land tours.

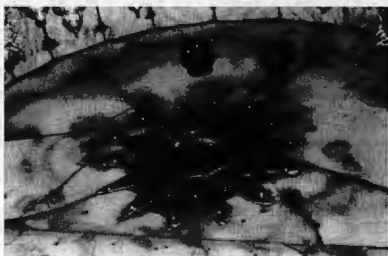
Site offers visualization

"What we want people to come away from this site with is that this is an event that occurred," Cherry emphasized. "It occurred somewhere near here. This is kind of representative for us as we think through the story. This can be our visualization of the space."

What tourists see today at the Church of the Nativity, however, bears little resemblance to the Bethlehem during Mary and Joseph's time.

In modern Bethlehem, the Church of the Nativity sits off a square. Visitors stoop to enter the church through a four-and-a-half foot doorway called the "gate of humility." It actually is the result of precautions that were taken centuries ago. According to the Israeli Ministry of Tourism, the church's wooden door was built in 1272 by the Armenian King Hetrion to protect the site from invaders.

During a previous invasion, horses had been stabled inside the church.



A silver star embedded in marble marks the site believed by many scholars to be the cave where Jesus was born. Today the site is covered by the Church of the Nativity.

Just inside, some areas of the floor are pulled back so visitors can look down on mosaic tiles from a previous, significantly older, floor.

The older floor dates to the original fourth century church. One mosaic features the Greek word for "fish," an acronym for Christ which Christians used as a secret code during Roman persecution.

The church sits above the spot where the inn of Bethlehem's stables are believed to have been. Visitors descend a narrow stairway to the grotto, where one small area is marked off with a silver star embedded in marble to mark the spot where Jesus is believed to have been born.

American Protestants often find the appearance of the site disconcerting at first, noted Drinkard. "To us, there's nothing very worshipful about the idea of the marble, the hanging lights, the silver of the star encrusting the location. That doesn't speak to most of our Baptist feelings of worship. Nonetheless, those are the most ancient indications we have of veneration of this site as a place of worship."

And ultimately, the most important aspect of a visit to the Holy Land is to increase the pilgrim's sense of worship, Drinkard added. "That's what these churches and the traditions tied to these churches do. They help make it concrete.

"In some places you are seeing and touching remains that were present during the time of Christ or the Old Testament prophets. That helps concretize and make much more real these biblical narratives to us," Drinkard said. "Every time I've been, I've been very much moved."

BETHLEHEM, WEST BANK (ABP)

HopeFest '97 brings eternal message, revival to Hazen

A MULTI-DENOMINATIONAL, lay-led revival for Hazen and the surrounding area drew nearly 2,700 participants to hear evangelist Ken Freeman and resulted in more than 200 people making professions of faith in Christ. HopeFest '97, held Nov. 30-Dec. 4 at Hazen High School, led to "a movement of God," reported Ron Malone, pastor of First Church of Hazen.

The idea for a community event had generated in the mind of First Church layman Gary King, said Malone. "For over two years, he had been carrying a burden for Hazen and our community and wanted us to get Ken Freeman to speak. He said, 'He's unusual. I doubt if anyone around here has seen anything like this.'" Freeman, who is a popular youth speaker, has a cross shaved into the back of his hair.

First Church members soon formed a multi-denominational planning committee with other churches. "One of the things we said is, 'We don't want to own it. We don't want it to be a Baptist thing, a Methodist thing, Assembly of God or anything like this.' We want it to strictly exalt Jesus and give Him the glory. So we made it countywide and multi-denominational."

First youth minister Russell Roderick added that God "had really been preparing the ground," noting that Methodist, Assembly of God, Full Gospel and National Baptist churches joined the effort.

Malone explained that planners "raised money through car washes, a catfish dinner, a style show and church suppers. Companies donated materials so we could give gifts to people each night, such as water bottles with Scripture verses tied to them."

During the days, Freeman gave motivational talks to schools in Des Arc, Carlisle and Hazen. Services were held each night at the Hazen High School auditorium and featured Freeman giving an evangelistic message.

Listeners also heard testimonies from former Razorback quarterback Barry Lunney, former Channel 4 news anchor Margaret Preston and reigning Miss

Arkansas Stacy Freeman and music by local Christian band Green Olive Tree.

Even though Freeman led in worship, Roderick emphasized the event was "not youth evangelism. After we sort through the decisions, I think we'll find more adults made decisions than youth."

"What we saw was a generation come to Jesus this week," he said. "The seeds that had been planted for years finally came to fruition."

Those seeds, he emphasized, resulted in personal professions of faith. "We know over 200 and close to 300 decisions were made. That may not sound like much, but in a town of 1,600 in a community like that.... These were hardcore people that came to the Lord. Ken visited the jail at Des Arc and a boy was saved there. In short, we saw a movement of God."

The appeal of the event was evidenced by the numbers of people that attended, said Malone. "Our auditorium will seat about 500. It had 20 to 30 empty seats the first two nights, but Wednesday and Thursday, we had close to 800. There were people standing. They could hardly get into the building. We were all shocked."

The numbers prompted attention by the *Grand Prairie Herald*, which printed the majority of one of Freeman's messages.

Word also spread person-to-person. "An unchurched guy had come down for duck hunting from Fort Worth," said Malone. "The people he was staying with said, 'We're going to a meeting tonight, come go with us. He went and got saved.'"

That and other stories have left Roderick and Malone "in awe," said Roderick. "It's the God factor. There was a freedom in worship where people were not tied up by tradition."

"It shows that with God, nothing is impossible," he said. "I saw the faces of people light up that I didn't think would move at all toward making a decision for Christ."

"I saw people lifting their hands to Jesus, saying, 'Lord, pour out more, more, more,'" Malone observed. "They didn't want to leave each night when it was over."

“Our auditorium will seat about 500. It had 20 to 30 empty seats the first two nights, but Wednesday and Thursday, we had close to 800. They could hardly get into the building. We were all shocked.”

RON MALONE
Pastor, First Church
of Hazen

First, Springdale, hosts event for middle schoolers

FIRST CHURCH of Springdale will host a "Treasures in Jars of Clay" regional middle school conference Feb. 6-7, 1998. The conference, designed for students in grades six through eight, "will address the questions pre-teens ask most and will give answers from God's point of view," said coordinator Cindy Weber.

"Middle school can be a time of great confusion. Students get conflicting answers to life's toughest questions all week long and are presented with the truth for a couple of hours on Sunday," Weber said. "Satan desires nothing more than to capture the middle schooler's mind with falsehoods about the family, money, dating, abortion, drugs and alcohol, anorexia and bulimia and gangs through textbooks, TV and other forms of media."

She said the conference will be an "opportunity to help these young people make commitments that will impact them for a lifetime."

The program will feature keynote speaker Gary Hunt of First Baptist Church of Indian Rocks in Largo, Fla., and author of *Surviving the Tweenage Years...A Guide for Parents and Youth Workers*.

Also featured will be a testimony from former Irish militia member Bill Stevenson, music by contemporary Christian musicians Memphis Swing, drama by the group Rough Draft from Ouachita Baptist University and a presentation by Passion Play potter Joe Smith.

Participants also may choose to attend sessions that include: "Are Grandparents Really Important?"; "Dressing to Glorify God"; "Teenagers and Money"; "When Can I Start Dating?"; "Getting Along When Mom and Dad Don't"; and sessions on suicide, alcohol, drugs, gangs and abuse.

The program will begin with registration at 5 p.m. Friday and end at noon on Saturday.

The cost is \$25 per student of \$20 per student when 10 or more register together prior to Jan. 10. After Jan. 10, the cost will rise to \$30 per student and \$25 per student with a group discount.

For more information, contact First Church of Springdale at 501-753-4323.

Ministry impact

Resources offer ways to involve single adults in vital ministry

Colleen Backus

Assistant Editor, Arkansas Baptist

■ **SOME OBSERVERS** estimate that by the year 2000 half of American adults will be unmarried, according to pollster George Barna.

■ Currently, 81 percent of men and 60 percent of women ages 20 to 24 have never married, based on U.S. Census Bureau statistics.

"The singles population has grown a great deal," explained Bill Mabry, singles minister at Park Hill Church in North Little Rock. "The singles culture itself has also changed and poses a challenge to the church."

Mabry believes in centering the singles ministry around Sunday School. "Sunday School is still working," he noted. "We have five departments, divided by age groups, starting at 25 and going on up to heaven." He explained that the departments are not divided by marital status, just age.

"Each department has a missions service or activity," Mabry said. "One group goes down to Our House (homeless shelter) to serve meals, another relieves the house parents at the emergency receiving home once a month, and another collects money for the children's advocacy fund for North Pulaski Association."

"We have a real service orientation, and involve the singles in everything else going on in the church, including outreach and missions projects."

"The other major arm of the ministry is the singles council," Mabry said. "Representatives from all five departments plan any activity that would involve all singles, rather than keeping everything just departmental."

"They do a variety of things; for example, right now they are getting ready to do separate retreats for single men and single women," he explained. "In February, the council has planned a Bible study on the four Greek words for love. They also sponsor some social events and encourage church involvement."

Mabry, who has been singles minister at the church for five years, noted that Park Hill has been in singles work "since the early days of that kind of ministry."

"Churches at-large tend to be more receptive to singles work," he pointed out. "The permissiveness of the singles culture is a challenge — to meet them where they are without compromising. Sometimes there are those with very different thinking within your own singles group."

"But my philosophy for what we need to accomplish in singles ministry is what we need to accomplish as the task of the church — evangelism and outreach to the lost. How?"

"By letting the singles themselves do the work — that's where the singles council comes in," Mabry emphasized. "The singles ministry here itself has discussed and decided that the church mission statement is the singles mission statement."

"There is so much good work that the church has done in singles ministry for years that works," he commented. "I feel singles ministry centered in Bible study in Sunday School works best. It may not be new, but it is effective."



THE SINGLE ADULT MINISTRY SOLUTION

Many single adults want to be an integral part of the church. Realizing that they represent one of the greatest untapped resources in many congregations today, the Baptist Sunday School Board has developed training curriculum to help churches develop strategic ministries with single adults.

"This is really the first time we've had a national strategy empowering single adults to fully activate as believers," noted Tim Cleary, the BSSB's national single adult ministry specialist. "We want to give people the tools to empower single adults in their church."

Those "tools" center around *The Single Adult Ministry Solution* resource materials, which include a leader's guide,

audio tapes, and a lay resource entitled *Start a Revolution*, by Steven Felts.

"The resources are designed to help start a new ministry or make an existing one better," noted Gerald Jackson, who is retiring this month as associate in the Arkansas Baptist discipleship and family ministry department.

Diane Swaim, a member of Second Church in Little Rock and a national singles and women's ministry consultant, agreed. "These materials empower single adults to lead single adult ministry."

"It's a team concept — putting together personalities and temperaments with spiritual gifts," Swaim explained. "The book outlines the process of doing it."

The lay book includes a personality profile and spiritual gifts indicator which provides readers a clear view of their own temperaments and abilities, with encouragement and cautions. The leader book is full of essays and other information designed to help leaders understand single adults, empower them, develop teams and integrate them into the body.

"Whether churches want to begin a single adult ministry or improve an existing one, the materials help them with this concept," Swaim said. "*Start a Revolution* is written for single adult themselves."

Trained through the Baptist Sunday School Board, Swaim travels nationally, teaching the Single Adult Ministry Solution materials. She noted that at one church in Tennessee where the materials were taught, their single adult attendance tripled.

"The materials help them to be able to catch a vision of how single adults can make ministry work, even without a leader," she pointed out. "God has given everybody a call, and surrounded them with people with spiritual gifts to help them accomplish it."

"To me, the whole program is somewhat unique," she said. "The test — the book that merges spiritual gifts with personal temperament — is eye-opening for most people. Once they realize the integration between the two, it's amazing."

Swaim is available to help Arkansas congregations that want to start or revamp a singles ministry. She can be reached at 501-834-5843.

For information about the national single adult material, contact Tim Cleary at the Baptist Sunday School Board, 127 Ninth Ave, North, Nashville, TN 37234; phone 615-251-2231 or e-mail tcleary@bssb.com.

NATION

New NIV translation completed without gender revisions

A NEW, EASIER-TO-READ New International Version Bible translation is complete — minus the so-called “gender-accurate” revisions which sparked controversy in an earlier edition. A 40-member translation team worked four years on the project.

The updated New International Reader's Version (NirV) has been completed on schedule, according to Gene Rubingh, vice president for translations at the International Bible Society in Colorado Springs, Colo. The Bible, due for release in August, contains simpler language than the regular NIV and is geared toward children and readers for whom English is a second language.

The new Bible treats gender exactly the same as the current NIV. Earlier, translators had planned to replace some male references in the Bible with gender-neutral terms. They abandoned those plans when a controversy erupted over news reports about the planned revisions.

Bible society officials insisted the dispute was based on misunderstanding and distortion. They said their intent was not to create a “unisex” Bible, as some critics charged, but to more accurately render certain passages which use gender-specific language although the context implies that both males and females are included.

The NirV is translated thought-for-thought from biblical languages of Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek, as compared to the word-for-word translation method used in such editions as the King James Version. The NirV uses shorter sentences and simpler grammar than the regular NIV, gearing it to a third-grade reading level.

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CrossSeekers makes impact on campus

A DISCIPLESHIP initiative recently launched by Southern Baptists already is capturing the attention of college students across the country. "CrossSeekers" was introduced in August by the Baptist Sunday School Board's national student ministry (NSM) and has since been endorsed by the Fellowship of Christian Athletes.

The initiative has three components: a discipleship emphasis built around a six-point covenant, a series of discipleship events and the publication of discipleship materials to support students in their spiritual growth.

Much of the student interest has centered around the "CrossSeekers covenant" which challenges students to commit to a lifestyle of integrity, spiritual growth, an authentic and consistent witness, service, purity and Christlike relationships.

To date, more than 1,000 students have signed up to receive monthly updates about CrossSeekers via e-mail and hundreds have agreed to be "CrossSeeker Champions." The latter group promises to encourage, pray for and be involved in the lives of at least six of their peers with the goal of having them also commit to the covenant.

"And all this is happening before we've done hardly any publicity or put out any resources," explained NSM director Bill Henry.

Although it's a little too early to call this a movement, Henry emphasized that "the numerous positive reactions we've received so far convince me it has the potential to make a huge impact on campus. I'm hopeful CrossSeekers can provide a platform for Christian college students the way True Love Waits has for youth and Promise Keepers has for Christian men."



David James, Arkansas Baptist team leader of collegiate ministry, pointed out that CrossSeekers is different from Promise Keepers since "it is for both males and females and it is much more of a discipleship ministry in which resources will be provided for all six areas of the covenant for ongoing personal discipleship."

Noting that it "is a big deal at the Baptist Sunday School Board and on the national student ministry level," James added, "There is lots of energy and vision being put out. We're seeking to endorse and support it."

Jonathan Beasley, collegiate pastor for University Church in Fayetteville, serves on the national CrossSeekers committee, and views it in even broader terms.

"In the history of Christian awakenings in America, there has always seemed to be a revival movement on college campuses," he said. "CrossSeekers offers an opportunity for a revival to take place with a specific generation in mind."

"A Celebration of the Covenant," the first national CrossSeekers event, will be held Labor Day weekend (Sept. 4-6, 1998) in New Orleans. The event will feature widely known Christian recording artists and speakers such as Steven Curtis Chapman, Jars of Clay, Anne Graham Lotz and Dave Edwards. Organizers hope to attract 10,000 to 15,000 students to the New Orleans Convention Center for the event.

Landon Dowden, BSU president at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge, leads the "Bayou CrossSeekers," a group of 12 male students who meet weekly for Bible study, worship and prayer.

"The true heart of what CrossSeekers is all about is what we strive to accomplish in our Bible study," Dowden said. "We study things such as prayer, service and fasting and then apply them to our lives. We then turn our focus to others and look for ways that we can reach out to them."

"The true grit of this movement is not about fanfare or trumpet blowing, but about rolling your sleeves up and getting involved in the daily lives...of your brothers and sisters in Christ," Dowden explained. "Labor Day '98 can be an awesome celebration, but it will only be great if we realize the opportunities we have for one-on-one relationships every day."

Students or those who work with college students can receive the weekly CrossSeekers e-mail update by sending a message to cschampion@bssb.com. Individuals should include their name, address, phone number and school in the e-mail.

More information about CrossSeekers will be available on its new Internet site (www.crossseekers.org) which is scheduled to go on-line in January.

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Cooperative effort produces new church in Costa Rica

CONSTRUCTION VOLUNTEERS from Arkansas, Georgia and Tennessee have helped complete a strategic church facility in Gupiles, Costa Rica. Members of the new church have named it "Casa de Oracin" (House of Prayer).

The congregation, which grew out of the church planting efforts of Southern Baptist international missionaries Ben and Susie Argil, is composed of about 12 dedicated members and approximately 50 "sympathizers." The Argils were joined in their efforts by Keith and Pam Travis who completed language school earlier this year.

The new work began as a children's Bible club and storytelling group for adults in the Argils' home soon after they moved to the area three years ago. Later, with occasional assistance from other missionaries, language school students, and young people from First Baptist Church of San Jose, the numbers grew.

Using a combination of sports evangelism with youth, the children's programs, home Bible studies, and personal testimony, the two missionary couples have challenged the congregation with a vision not only to become a self-

supporting church, but also to start other churches throughout this unreached area of Costa Rica.

The House of Prayer was built through the cooperative efforts of the Costa Rica Baptist Mission, the local congregation and mission volunteers from the United States who provided much of the labor for constructing the building.

The organization of Southern Baptist missionaries in Costa Rica earmarked money for buying property back when the Argils were still in the initial stages of their work. Additional funds came from Southern Baptists and other Christians from Florida, New Jersey and Virginia who heard about what was being done in Gupiles and asked for the opportunity to contribute.

During the dedication service attended by nearly 100 people, Travis shared his vision of seeing the multi-purpose building full of youth playing basketball or volleyball, children holding their club meetings or families seeing Christian movies together. He added, however, that it was being called House of Prayer because that is its primary purpose.

Several families and individuals shared testimonies of the power of God working in their lives to heal both physical and spiritual pain.

Greg Smith, who represented the Baptist Mission, encouraged the congregation to fulfill the missionary vision which the Argils had sought to instill in them.

The Argils, who returned to Texas for furlough following the building dedication, assured the members that if the Lord would allow, they will return to help them fulfill that vision through the House of Prayer.

mk prayer calendar

Missionary kids attending college in Arkansas celebrating birthdays in January:

■ Jan. 3: Cindy Miller, OBU Box 3937, Arkadelphia, AR 71998-0001; sophomore from Uruguay.

■ Jan. 18: Rachel Spiegel, OBU Box 3137; sophomore from Brazil.

■ Jan. 19: Karrie Cowin, OBU Box 3256; sophomore from the West Indies.

■ Jan. 28: Nick Jones, OBU Box 3947; sophomore from Tanzania.

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HMO officials cite spiritual impact on medical healing

STUDIES OF THE EFFECTS of prayer, meditation and other spiritual practices on healing have gained growing attention among many doctors and nurses in recent years. Now they are capturing the consideration of health maintenance organization executives as well.

A survey of 300 HMO professionals released Dec. 15 found that 94 percent believe spiritual practices can aid medical

treatment and speed the healing process.

The study, sponsored by the John Templeton Foundation, also found that 74 percent of the HMO professionals believe the positive effects of spirituality can reduce health-care costs. However, 89 percent said the rules and policies of their health-care plans or institutions do not currently take research findings on the subject into account.

John M. Templeton Jr., a pediatric surgeon and president of the foundation, said he anticipated "in the years ahead, we can expect more plans to include complementary medical approaches that will help patients unlock the healing powers of their spiritual beliefs."

Such steps in integrating spiritual and medical components of healing are endorsed by Ben Mitchell, assistant

professor of ethics at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and biomedical and life issues consultant to the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission.

"I think that's part of ministry to the whole person," Mitchell said. "Modern clinical medicine has adopted what I would call body-plumber approach. But if we're going to return to whole-person medicine, then the variety of ways in which the whole person relates to the illness has to be considered."

The HMO survey results were released in connection with a three-day course titled, "Spirituality and Healing in Medicine," presented by the Harvard Medical School's Department of Continuing Education and the Mind Body Medical Institute. The course sponsors reported that more than 200 clinical studies provide direct and indirect evidence of the power of faith, spirituality and meditation in improving health and the healing process.

"I think that the HMO policies, with caution and careful analysis, should take those therapies into account," Mitchell remarked. **BOSTON (BP)**

classified ads

Two part-time positions — music minister and youth minister, may be combined. Send resumes to Personnel Committee, Indianhead Lake Baptist Church, 8601 Indianhead Drive, Sherwood, AR 71210.

For sale — 22 pews, one pulpit, two pulpit chairs. Grace Baptist Church, 1505 California, Camden, AR 71701; 870-836-5382.

Planlet — Temple Baptist Church on Hwy. 67 in Benton, AR, is seeking a piano player. Contact Dane Dover at 501-315-4272.

Part-time music director — Temple Baptist Church in Benton, AR, is accepting resumes. 8601 Hwy. 67, Haskell-Benton, AR 72015.

Accepting resumes — for full-time pastor. Send to First Southern Baptist Church, Attn: Pastor Search Committee, P.O. Box 449, Bearden, AR 71720.

Seeking — Contemporary church is seeking part-time preschool/children's minister. Position could become full-time. Send resume to: Markham Street Baptist Church, 8701 West Markham, Little Rock, AR 72205, ATTN: Sandy Hjnson. Call 501-225-2877 for more information.

For sale — 1990 32-passenger Ford Econoline 350 bus, Star Tran body, new ac, excellent tires. 51,700 actual miles. \$15,000. First Baptist Church, 507 N. Rosser, Forrest City, AR 72335; 870-833-2382.

Taking resumes — Second Baptist Church, Pine Bluff, is taking resumes for a bivocational music director. Mail to: Personnel Committee, Second Baptist Church, 1401 East Sixth Ave., Pine Bluff, AR 71601.

For sale — Black Yamaha upright grand piano \$2500. Contact Gayle Teague, 14309 Sunset Dr., Rogers, AR 72758; 501-986-0820.

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

Now accepting — resumes for pastor. Lee Creek Baptist Church, 2445 Old Uniontown Road, Van Buren, AR 72958.

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

Classified ads must be submitted in writing to the ARN office no less than 10 days prior to the date of publication desired. A check or money order in the proper amount, figured at 90 cents per word, must be included. Multiple insertions of the same ad shall be paid for in advance. Classified ads shall be restricted to church-related subject matter.



Southwest Baptist University

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF EDUCATION

The education department at Southwest Baptist University seeks applications for a tenure-track assistant professorship in education, beginning August 1998. The teaching load is 24 hours of undergraduate and graduate courses in education per academic year. Candidates must have an earned doctorate, teaching experience in the public school is required, a potential for excellence in teaching, and a commitment to undergraduate, church-related (Southern Baptist) education. Send application letter, curriculum vita, statement of Christian educational philosophy and three letters of recommendation to Dr. Janet Juhlin, chair of search committee, department of education, Southwest Baptist University, 1600 University Avenue, Bolivar, MO 65613. Fax: 417-326-1719. Review of applications to begin 1/15/98.

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Family Bible Living with hope

By Jimmy Barrentine, director,
ABSC missions department

Basic passage:

I Peter 1:3-22

Focal passage:

I Peter 1:3-12

Central truth:

God has made us to be people of hope.

Across the years, we have added words to our vocabulary. Some of those words are: depression, suicide, hospice and terminal. For Christians, those words are calls to action. I Peter 1:3 praises God for making us people of hope. We are called to have and dispense hope.

Before we can dispense hope, we must have it. Peter tells us that we have an inheritance in Jesus that is perfect and assured. (I Peter 1:4) We even have a guaranteed reservation for eternity. The blank for the departure date reads "never leaving." The amount due reads "paid in full." That is enough to make us people of hope.

But what does it mean when we say we have hope? It means that we have an optimistic outlook toward the here and the hereafter. We want to change things for the good. We believe that God can and does make a difference.

Still, there is more. We are people of hope, but we are also people who dispense hope. We scatter it around. We share it with others. We help

people catch it. When they think they cannot, we are there to remind them that God can.

Some years ago, a friend of our family ran into trouble for dispensing without a license. He owned a store with a pharmacy, but he was not a pharmacist. The pharmacist took a break and the friend, with all good intentions, went behind the counter and filled an order for a customer in a hurry. He rather soon received notification of the fines and fees related to his error.

What has that to do with Christians? Some of us are dispensing without a license. God made us dispensers of the gospel. He did not give us a license to dispense blame, judgment, vengeance or anger. We can stay fully occupied dispensing hope. We can dispense hope within the church. We can dispense it throughout the world. We can give it to the sick, the needy, the lonely, the grieved, the lost and the dying. The more we give it away, the more of it God will give us. Praise God for making us dispensers of hope!

Life and Work Human life

By Marvin Peters,
director of missions,
North Pulaski Association

Basic passage:

II Samuel 13:1-39

Focal passage:

Genesis 1:26-27; Psalm
8:3-8; Matthew 12:9-13

Central truth:

God has placed a higher value upon human life than on all of His creation.

God is the creator of all that exists. In the midst of all His magnificent creation are humans. The God who created all the world created and cares for humans as well. The focal passages show us three things about human life.

■ God is the creator of human life (Gen. 1:26-27). God climaxed the creation act on the sixth day by creating Adam and Eve, the first humans. Though humans were the last creatures in the creation account, they did not evolve, they were created. It is important to understand and believe that for a number of reasons.

One reason is that humans are created in the image of God (1:26). This image was imparted only upon humans. One of the most important aspects of being in God's image is the spiritual ability to have a relationship with God.

■ Human life is the crown of God's creation (Psa. 8:3-8). The psalmist examines the theme that God entrusted His dominion to humankind. He had observed the magnificence of God's

creation and stood in awe of it. He was amazed that the creator of this vast universe would even think about people, and even more amazed that He would give people responsibility over it.

■ Jesus shows that human life is important (Matt. 12:9-13). Jesus arrived in the Synagogue on a Sabbath. Many people were there, including a man with a shriveled hand. Pharisees were there, watching Jesus to see what He would do. They raised the question about healing on the Sabbath. Jesus, in turn, asked how a person would deal with an animal in distress, though their actions could be construed as work. Since human life is more important than that of an animal, mercy could be shown toward a person in need. The message is clear. God created the Sabbath for people, not people for the Sabbath.

God made human life of superior importance over all of His other creation. God has given to humans the responsibility to take care of His creation and to be His representatives on earth.

Explore the Bible Face to face with the situation

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

Basic passage:

Genesis 33

Focal passage:

Genesis 33:10

Central truth:

God has a solution to our problems when we acknowledge and trust Him.

Esau and Jacob had been miles apart, geographically, physically and emotionally. They felt safer this way. Time had allowed them to "cool off" from the deceit, hate and anger that had so filled their relationship. The fear was still there. This chapter brings them face to face, and the outcome seems to have only two possibilities: (1) they can do battle to the death, and the winner can have the spoils of the battle, or (2) they can attempt to unravel their differences, compromise and live in peace with each other. Jacob must have broken out in a cold sweat when he "lifted his eyes and behold, Esau was coming!" (v. 1).

Jacob's faith in his God had probably never been as strong as at that moment. He got his family in order, he bowed down before Esau, and he begged him to take gifts that he brought as a peace offering.

At that tense moment when Jacob was unsure of what Esau might do, he said something very significant in verse 10. "If I have found favor in your eyes, accept this gift from me. For to see

your face is like seeing the face of God, now that you have received me favorably" (NIV).

Isn't this a wonderful example for us. Our life is filled with problems. We place our faith in God, but it is limited because we do not understand how God will work things out, so we do our best to solve the problem our own way. At that moment when life is on the line, we see the solution that God has prepared all along!

Jacob experienced Esau's love and kindness at that moment, which could only come from God. We also experience solutions that can only come from God. May we always recognize His presence in solving our own problems of daily life. Ephesians 4:31-32 says, "Get rid of all bitterness, passion, and anger. No more shouting or insults, no more hateful feelings of any sort. Instead, be kind and tender-hearted to one another, and forgive one another, as God has forgiven you through Christ" (Good News Bible).

LESSONS FOR LIVING

Peter knew that the church was a "who" and not a "what." It was a "who," the people of God. The church was people who had been nobodies, but who had become somebodies in Christ. The church was people who had once been under judgment, but who had more recently received the mercy of Christ (I Peter 2: 10). Peter also knew what he wanted for the church. He wanted each and every member to grow in grace, to be more like Jesus.

For many today, it is difficult to think of church as a "who." We have spent too much time thinking of it as a "what." We speak of the church as a building, as an organization or even as a denomination. To help the church has come to signify "give monies and energies to improve buildings, acquire properties and the like." For Peter, help the church meant to help the "whos" themselves. He spoke to them about what they needed to do, needed not to do. He reminded them of who their Lord was, and he asked them

to remember that they had been a bunch of scattered nobodies before being saved and called together as a family of faith. His focus was on them as the church and not on them as people who could help the church.

People who can help the church? The fact that the expression does not sound especially strange is an indication of how far we are removed from Peter's thoughts and heart. We need to return to Peter's point of view. The church is the people, not people helping the church. Church members gain their highest level of significance when they think of themselves as a community of faith. With that understanding in place, churches are more likely to grow in grace until they are so much like Jesus that they become beacons of lights in a world of darkness (I Peter 2:9). They are also more likely to reach the world for Christ by presenting the church as a family to which people belong rather than as an institution which people are recruited to serve.

Ammon had burning desire for his half sister, Tamar. Frustrated by his failure to win her over, he pretended to be ill and requested that she be allowed to bring him bread. As she did, he dismissed all the servants and raped her, despite her urgent pleading. Tamar was devastated. Her brother, Absalom, began to devise a plan for revenge, which ended in the murder of Amnon and estrangement from his father, David.

This biblical account shows some of the agony associated with sexual abuse. It is devastating both for victims and their families. It is so widespread in our society today that the church needs to take action to help prevent it, and to minister to those who are sexual abusers, their victims and their families.

Sexual abuse results in deep problems. Tamar, the victim, was emotionally and spiritually destroyed by the violation. After the incident, Amnon hated Tamar as much as he pretended to love her, and angrily sent her away. This rejection

added insult to injury. A young maiden who had lost her virginity faced an unbearable curse in Israel. The Law of Moses strictly forbade sexual relationships between half brothers and sisters. Those guilty of such things were to be cut off from the community. Tamar reacted by putting ashes on her head and tore her garment as an indication of the intensity of her sorrow.

Sexual abuse is widespread in our nation. Approximately one in four females and one in 10 males are sexually abused by the age of 10. The sexual abuse is usually committed by a family member. Many never overcome the scars of sexual abuse.

One of the greatest needs in the case of sexual abuse is forgiveness. Forgive the abuser, and forgive one's own self. Release and self esteem come from the ability to forgive. Jesus can give forgiveness and the church can provide counseling and spiritual guidance to find peace with self, with God and within families.

A Brazilian friend of mine, who graduated in 1974, returns to Arkadelphia as often as he can. Every time he comes to visit, he walks down to the Ouachita River to what he calls "his tree." When he was a student in the early '70s, he came to know Christ in a very personal way, and the location of that experience was under a particular tree on the river bank. Since then, he has been a successful stock broker, a rancher and a chief executive of a shipping company. He has said many times to me that he is always closest to God under "his tree."

Many of us have special places where we have encountered God. For Jacob, it was Bethel, and after years of fear, running and disobedience, he followed God's instruction to "go up to Bethel." Note what Jacob did: (1) He obeyed the Lord and followed the instructions that he was given, (2) He took his entire household. Bethel had been such a meaningful place to him at the time of his dream that he wanted his family to share with him the very presence of God. (3) Jacob

instructed all his family to put away their foreign gods and recognize the one true God. The family members surrendered their idols, and Jacob buried them so that they would not tempt them again. (4) Although there was turmoil and fear all around, Jacob's family experienced peace, and finally (5) Jacob worshipped God at the altar that he had built there.

In this scripture, Jacob shows us a model of his relationship with God and his leadership in his family. In the early chapters of Genesis, God had been seeking Jacob, and in today's lesson, Jacob seeks God for himself and his family. Jacob had found his Bethel as a place of forgiveness, renewal, peace and worship.

In the time when families are often sacrificed because of crowded schedules, should not we often return to "our tree" or "our Bethel" for the renewal of our relationship with Jesus Christ? God still speaks to us...and who knows, He might even change our name too!

Family Bible Growing in Grace

By Jimmy Barentine, director, ABSC missions department

Basic passage:

I Peter 2:1-10

Focal passage:

I Peter 2:1-10

Central truth:

The church is a family of faith seeking to grow in grace.

Life and Work Sexual abuse

By Marvin Peters, director of missions, North Pulaski Association

Basic passage:

II Samuel 13:1-39

Focal passage:

II Samuel 13:1-2, 6-15, 19-22

Central truth:

In spite of the agony that comes from sexual abuse, there is hope.

Explore the Bible Back to Bethel

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

Basic passage:

Genesis 35:1-21

Focal passage:

Genesis 35:1-10

Central truth:

Jacob follows God's instruction and leads his family to a relationship with his God.

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Bible society seeks to link churches via Internet

NEW YORK (ABP)—The American Bible Society has pledged \$3 million to link every church in North America to the World Wide Web.

The Houses of Worship (HOW) project has a goal of networking an estimated 300,000 churches in the United States and Canada through the Internet. Churches which sign up for the program will receive four free pages on the HOW website.

The \$5 million is for initial funding until next summer. *Evangelical News International* reported. The project is expected to go worldwide by 2000.

Officials said the Internet can help churches connect with their members, with each other and with the communities they serve. The New York-based Bible society hopes to benefit by closer contact with churches using its products.

The American Bible Society's Houses of Worship website address is: <http://www.housesofworship.net>.

Agee to head school association

NEW ORLEANS (BP)—Board members of the Association of Southern Baptist Colleges and Schools (ASBCS) have elected fellow board member Bob Agee, retiring president of Oklahoma Baptist University, as their executive director effective June 1, 1998.

The election came during a board meeting Dec. 9 in New Orleans held in conjunction with a meeting of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

Agee, president of OBU since 1982, will retire from that position Aug. 31. After assuming the helm of the association, Agee will become president emeritus of OBU with no administrative duties, but he will continue to do fund-raising and assist the school in the transition of leadership.

ASBCS is an association of 65 Southern Baptist-related seminaries, colleges, universities, Bible colleges and academies. ASBCS was formerly staffed by employees of the Southern Baptist Education Commission. The commission was dissolved Dec. 31, 1996, as part of the Southern Baptist Convention's "Covenant for a New Century" restructuring.

Steve Carleton, former executive director of the association, resigned June 30 to direct a private medical education foundation in Oklahoma City.

Kentucky Baptists elect new executive secretary

LOUISVILLE, KY (ABP)—Bill Mackey, a 56-year-old Baptist leader from South Carolina, was elected Dec. 8 as executive secretary of the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

The Kentucky Baptist executive board unanimously elected Mackey, a former Kentucky pastor who currently serves on the staff of the South Carolina Baptist Convention. He was nominated by a 14-member search committee.

Search committee chairman Peggy Hicks of Louisville described Mackey as "conservative by conviction and non-political" and predicted he will "work well with the entire constituency."

Since 1992, Mackey has been director of the South Carolina convention's leadership development and evangelism growth team. From 1979 to 1992 he was the South Carolina convention's evangelism director.

Mackey begins his new job Feb. 1. He succeeds Bill Marshall, who retired last year after 14 years as KBC executive secretary.

Mercer trustees approve reconciliation plan

MACON, GA (ABP)—Mercer University trustees overwhelmingly approved a plan designed to ease tensions and chart future cooperation between the Macon school and the Georgia Baptist Convention.

In a closed-door meeting Dec. 4, Mercer trustees voted 38-5 in favor of a nine-point reconciliation plan drafted by a study committee and approved by GBC messengers in November.

Some trustees said they were displeased, however, with a resolution passed by the state convention threatening to cut off \$2.8 million in funding to the university unless trustees approved the plan. Past trustee chairman Lee Burge said he voted against the measure not because he was particularly opposed to the reconciliation plan but due to the "punitive and mandatory terms" in which it was presented. The plan is aimed at calming tensions over a recent book by Mercer president Kirby Godsey, *When We Talk About God...Let's Be Honest*.

NEWS DIGEST