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Arkansas Baptist State Convention

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ARKANSAS BAPTIST



Volume 94, Number 6

SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL

March 23, 1995

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Nashville, Tennessee



David Perry

unanimously elected
executive director
of Arkansas Baptist
Children's Homes
and Family Ministries

“

I

*see a tremendous heritage here
(at the Arkansas Baptist Children's
Homes and Family Ministries). My most
important priorities are to be true to
the Lord and to that heritage.”*

- David Perry



California Baptist volunteers minister to storm-battered state

By Mark Wyatt

Editor, California Southern Baptist

WATSONVILLE, CA (BP)—While weather watchers rate the severity of California's most recent winter storms, Southern Baptists are once again providing help and hope to thousands affected by the state's latest natural disaster.

"A lot of people are very happy to see us," remarked Don Hargis, California Southern Baptist Convention Men's Ministries director. Hargis is coordinating Baptist aid to victims of the March storms which officials say eclipsed the intensity, damage and death toll produced by record bad weather in January.

Southern Baptist disaster relief stations were set up in two cities as the deadly storms battered California for several days beginning in early March. Extensive flooding—described as the state's worst in more than 100 years—triggered mudslides which swallowed houses in the Southern California community of La Conchita and collapsed bridges in several locations.

The worst bridge collapse occurred near Coalinga on Interstate 5, California's main north-south artery. At least six people died when several cars and trucks plunged 40 feet into the flood-swollen torrent.

In saturated areas of northern California, predictions of more rainfall raised concern that additional storms could trigger renewed flooding, further endangering lives and property. By March 15 the statewide death toll blamed on the storms had reached at least 14, officials reported. Damage estimates to structures and crops are running into the billions of dollars.

As torrential storms dumped record

rainfall amounts across the state, American Red Cross officials requested assistance from California Southern Baptist Convention disaster relief workers, Hargis reported. Less than 24 hours after getting the call for help on March 12, Baptist volunteers were operating a temporary field kitchen in Watsonville.

Fifteen volunteers from churches in Fresno, Sacramento, Orange County and San Jose served 2,500 hot meals at the Watsonville site the first day. Among those seeking shelter and food were hundreds of field hands suddenly left without work or homes when the lush Salinas Valley was inundated.

"Most of these people came from the Monterey area, mostly Hispanic migrant workers who speak no English," Hargis explained. "About half of our volunteers are bilingual, so that helps."

In the central California town of Clovis, nearly 100 residents—most of them Hmong immigrants forced from their homes by flooding—took shelter at an adult community center. Southern Baptist volunteers operated a kitchen at the center.

Hargis said both relief centers would remain in operation for at least one week. But even when relief work at those centers is completed, there is more work awaiting Baptist volunteers.

Dennis Schmierer, CSBC business services director, said some volunteers likely will relocate to help with repairs and cleanup at Jenness Park, California Southern Baptists' state camp in the Sierra Nevada Mountains. Flood damage to grounds and structures at the 160-acre complex was expected to require several weeks and thousands of dollars to repair.

Cover Story



Children's Homes 3

Directors of the Arkansas Baptist Children's Homes and Family Ministries unanimously elected David W. Perry as the agency's next executive director, effective May 1. Perry will succeed Johnny Biggs who will retire April 30.

Also inside

Perspective

You'll Be Glad to Know.....	4
President's Corner.....	4
One Person's View.....	5
Letters to the Editor.....	5

Arkansas Baptists

Examine tax changes.....	6
Baptism rate increases.....	7
Prison ministries in Arkansas.....	8-9
'Whatevertakes'.....	10
Arkansas All Over.....	12-13
College Digest.....	16
Training opportunities.....	20
Ministers' wives retreat.....	21

Nation

Leaders assess SBC changes.....	11
Catholic document protested.....	14
SBC child care available.....	15

Lessons.....	22-23
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Next issue: April 6

ARKANSAS BAPTIST

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Perry elected Children's Homes director

By Trennis Henderson

Editor, Arkansas Baptist

David W. Perry, an employee of the Arkansas Baptist Children's Homes and Family Ministries since 1979, has been elected as the agency's next executive director, effective May 1.

Perry, 40, was unanimously elected to the position March 14 by the Children's Homes board of directors. He will succeed Johnny Biggs, who will retire as executive director April 30 following 24 years as head of the statewide Arkansas Baptist agency.

Search committee chairman George Wadley said the committee sought "to find the best person possible to lead this agency for the next era." Noting that the committee received 27 resumes during its nationwide search, he said each vote of the committee was unanimous as they narrowed the field of candidates. Presenting Perry to the full board, Wadley added, "I'm absolutely confident that he is the best person for this job."

Perry, who has served since 1991 as the ABCHEM's director of program and staff development, previously was an area director in Little Rock and Harrison as well as a Children's Homes social worker in Jonesboro. A graduate of Baylor University, he also holds a master of social work degree from the University of Georgia. He is a former president of the Arkansas Association of Homes for Children.

Affirming the agency's "tremendous heritage," Perry told board members, "My most important priorities are to be true to the Lord and to that heritage.

"This is very exciting to me but it's also an awesome responsibility," Perry noted. Citing 1 Peter 3:15 as his ministry philosophy, he quoted the verse's opening phrase, "Set apart a place in your heart for Christ as Lord...."

Emphasizing the "good example" that Biggs has provided as executive director, Perry added that he will rely heavily on his Christian faith and the leadership of the Holy Spirit as he accepts his new responsibilities.

Describing his vision for the future of the Children's Homes and Family Ministries, Perry said the greatest need is to continue providing service to children and families in need throughout the state. "We need to shore up and take care of



David Perry, who has served on the staff of the Arkansas Baptist Children's Homes and Family Ministries since 1979, will begin serving May 1 as executive director.

those ministries that are already operating while always being open to expansion and new ministries," he explained.

The Children's Homes ministries, which have experienced widespread growth under Biggs' leadership, currently include the main children's home campus in Monticello, as well as a home for unwed mothers, a ranch program for boys with

"We have an opportunity to make a difference....A lot of lives will perish if we're not there."

— David Perry
ABCHEM executive director-elect

chemical additions, area offices, emergency receiving homes and satellite counseling services throughout the state.

"Child care institutions today are dealing with a broader array of issues and problems related to the breakdown of the family and our society as a whole," Perry noted in an interview during the agency's centennial

celebration last year. "Thanks to the vision of our leadership, board of directors and the generosity of Arkansas Baptists and other benefactors, we have been able to respond to this multitude of needs."

"We have a deteriorating society which will make us more in demand," Perry told board members. "We have an opportunity to make a difference....A lot of lives will perish if we're not there."

Biggs told the board he "would like to applaud you for the choice you've made today. It doesn't surprise me that after a nationwide search, David Perry would be the top choice. He's very strong, very stable and will bring us to an even higher level of service in the years to come."

Board chairman Jeff Cheatham added that Perry "will build upon the foundation we have and yet bring a fresh enthusiasm to future opportunities and challenges. The unanimous vote of the board of directors is an indication of our support of him and of his leadership abilities."

State convention executive director Don Moore noted that Perry "has demonstrated the kind of commitment and character necessary to provide excellent leadership. He has done that not only in the Children's Homes and Family Ministries but in his local church as well. I like that he is a strong local churchman."

Perry and his wife, Lucia, are active members of Sherwood First Church where Perry has served as Sunday School director. He also has been deacon chairman as well as chairman of the finance committee, nominating committee and benevolence committee. The Perrys have three children: Austin, Nathan and Amanda.

"I feel a keen responsibility to Arkansas Baptists because of their ongoing support of this ministry," Perry said following his election. "I want it to be all that Arkansas Baptists hope and dream it can be."

In other action, board members approved plans to establish an advisory committee to explore the possibility of conducting a multi-year capital improvement campaign.

Board members also held a recognition dinner to honor Biggs for his years of service. They presented him with a watch and a book of remembrance featuring letters of tribute.

Convention changes require study, prayer

The changes recommended by the Program and Structure Study Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention to the Executive Committee are truly sweeping.

The details of their recommendation have been presented in the March 9 issue of the *News* magazine as well as in the March issue of *SBC Life*.

It was time for a careful look to be taken at the organization and operation of the Southern Baptist Convention. The committee had an unbelievably difficult task. Only time will confirm the appropriateness of the changes recommended, assuming that the messengers to the next two conventions approve them.

All Southern Baptists need to study the recommendation. We also need to pray much. Messengers to the convention will ultimately decide the nature of the convention and the approach to ministry it will take. Much of what is being recommended will put programs and personnel on hold for the next two to three years. We will likely experience a lot of uneasiness, loss of momentum and simply marking of time while everything is in a state of change. Negative press,

YOU'LL BE GLAD TO KNOW



By DON MOORE
ABSBC Executive Director

declining statistics and shifting of loyalties will likely result. We need to be prepared to steadfastly endure during such times. Change is never easy.

Streamlining of the organization, which is one of the objectives, matches with secular corporate trends but conflicts with Baptists' resistance to concentration and centralization of power. Adding several new program assignments to an already overworked/understaffed and underfunded Sunday School Board concerns me.

Involving the SBC Executive Committee in program-type work concerns me.

Provision for the North American Mission Board to develop evangelism, ministry and church planting projects directly with the churches rather than in concert with the state conventions greatly concerns me. The lack of recognition and consideration for the local association also concerns me. The shifting of missions education and promotion of the Lottie Moon and Annie Armstrong offerings to the missions boards without acknowledgment of the place the Woman's Missionary Union has traditionally had in this is unfortunate. While WMU is an auxiliary of the SBC and not under control of convention-elected trustees, it would seem that recognition and appreciation would have been in order with some expression of desire for them to continue their promotion of these offerings.

A lot of analysis and prayer needs to be given to the recommendation. I have only touched on a few of the issues. God is not through with Southern Baptists. We must, together, discover His leading in these serious matters.

RONNIE ROGERS

President's Corner

A woman's worth

Woman was the crowning creation of God; evidenced by God saying, "It is not good for man to live alone." A woman's worth is based on being created in the image of God just as the man's worth is. The value of woman upon the human race is summed up when she is called "the Mother of the Living."

The immense value of her ministry in the Old Testament is demonstrated by examples like the widow who fed Elijah and the Shunammite who gave hospitality to Elisha; or women who spiritually surpassed their male counterparts like Jochebed, Hannah and Deborah. Then there are those who have books in their name like Ruth and Esther.

Their significance is even more obvious in the New Testament with

women like Mary, who experienced an indescribable blessing by being able to give birth to the Messiah. Women such as Mary and Martha ministered to Jesus continually; women followed Jesus on His journey to the cross. They remained faithful during the crucifixion and prepared His body with spices for burial. They were the first to witness the resurrection (while the macho male apostles were all in hiding). The church of Philippi owes its origin to Lydia, and the early church met in the home of Mary, the mother of John Mark. Jesus' highest compliment is seen in that He referred to the church as feminine.

Today it is no different. It is no overstatement to say the ministry of women in the church is absolutely essential. Women are uniquely gifted by God to minister in a whole galaxy of ways.

They teach, pray, witness, speak for the unborn, encourage, demonstrate mercy, love the saints and perform countless other ministries, all for God's glory. I have seen women remain faithful many times when their male counterparts were in hiding like the apostles.

Thank you, ladies, for being there in innumerable ways. Don't let anyone tell you if you don't do what a man does, you are not complete. The Church is eternally indebted to godly women who serve faithfully, fulfilling their God-given responsibilities. Truly, the church could not be the church without you.

Ronnie Rogers, pastor of Lakeside Church in Hot Springs, is president of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention.



An opportunity to experience revival

When I hear the term "revival" used, it brings excitement and enthusiasm in my life. I am so glad that my home church at Gravel Hill decided to have a summer revival in 1943. I was a 12-year-old boy who had never personally placed his faith in Christ. The revival in that day was a great social event in our community. For me, this revival became a great spiritual event in my life. I do not even know the evangelist who came to preach in our revival. I do have a deep appreciation that he shared the truths of God. When these truths touched my mind and heart, deep conviction came upon my life. I will remember literally, physically trembling in my sins. During the invitation, the evangelist said, "This will be the last opportunity you have to be saved." I probably was the only one there that night who heard him speak these words. He probably said, "This *may* be the last opportunity you have to be saved."

For me, the time had come. That night, I made a personal commitment of my life to Christ. When I turned away from my sins and placed my faith in Jesus, a great joy came to my heart. Some people may have said, "Not much happened in that revival. Just a 12-year-old boy came to know Christ and was baptized." It was for me the beginning of a glorious spiritual journey with my Lord.

God has blessed me in these past 41 years with many wonderful experiences of preaching revivals. It has been my privilege to work with hundreds of churches and thousands of people in the experience of revival. God is faithful to His people when He hears their cry. "Oh God, wilt thou not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee." There is a

WMU's positive influence

Woman's Missionary Union has been one of the most positive influences in my life. Growing up in a missions-minded church and participating in all of the WMU age-level organizations, I was prepared to answer God's call to foreign missions as a young adult.

Recently I read the report of the SBC Program and Structure Study Committee which has received an affirming vote by the SBC Executive Committee, and will be presented as a recommendation to the Southern Baptist Convention this summer in Atlanta. I am disturbed and offended by the restructuring proposal; at the same time, I cannot help but be encouraged!

I am encouraged because I know that WMU will remain faithful to God, and to their God-given tasks of teaching missions, doing missions and supporting missions.

1 PERSON'S VIEW



By CLARENCE SHELL
Director, ABSC Evangelism Department

desperate need of personal revival among God's people in the 20th century. Psalm 51 is a revelation of true revival. Repentance became a reality as the Psalmist cried out, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." He requests a cleansing by stating, "Blot out my transgressions, wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sins." A restoration of joy was experienced. This resulted in influencing others for God. "Then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee."

I am fully convinced that God wants to give personal revival, revival in the local church, a spiritual awakening in our communities and our nation. God still hears the prayers of His people when they come to Him in the right spirit of humility. Prayer is the spiritual powerline between God's spiritual dynamo in heaven and God's spiritual transformers on earth. When we come into the presence of the living God in prayer, conviction comes into our hearts. Confession is made by our lips. Cleansing is received so that we can

really hear the call of God, "Go out to lost people." God is really concerned about every single lost prospect in our community. Jesus said, "The Son of man has come to seek and to save that which is lost." Compassionate concern for lost souls will drive us to personal sharing with the lost. We will want to share publicly the word that Jesus cares for all the lost.

As we participate in spiritual revival, God does some very special things for His people, His church and the community. There is renewing of Christians' spiritual vigor. This comes with the recharging of the Spirit of God in committed lives. There is a reclaiming of those who have been lost to God's service.

My heart breaks to realize that 50 percent of our church members are lost to the cause of Christ. I don't mean they are spiritually lost. I don't know about their relationship to Christ. Their potential is lost. Their testimony is lost. Their finances are lost. God exhorts us in Galatians 6:1, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted." Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ. God has a loving desire to redeem the lost. Every New Testament church should join hands and hearts with our Lord and reach out to each lost person in the community. The love of Christ constrains us to share that same love with every lost person out there.

Our 20th century mind and heart echo the words of Habakkuk 3:2, "O Lord, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid: O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy."

faithful, unselfish, trustworthy and fair.

I am thankful that James Williams, Larry Lewis and Jerry Rankin have expressed their desire to continue in a close working relationship with WMU. Woman's Missionary Union needs the Brotherhood Commission, the Home Mission Board and the Foreign Mission Board. They need WMU. We all need each other as we fulfill God's missions mandate in His world today.

Woman's Missionary Union leaders and members have provided faithful prayer support and financial support for me and all Southern Baptist missionaries for many decades. I encourage my fellow missionaries to be faithful in their love and support for WMU at a time in our convention when not much appreciation is being shown them. We are laborers together with God...we continue to be so.

Debbie Moore

FMB missionary to Liberia



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

We face many changes as we move toward the 21st century, but I believe there is a place for WMU in the SBC. Some in our convention may shun WMU, but God will not abandon those who have been faithful and obedient to Him. We must pray fervently, and seek God's wisdom and leadership in knowing what His place is for WMU.

I am encouraged because WMU remains an auxiliary to the Southern Baptist Convention. If, alone, were the Southern Baptist Convention, I would want to be surrounded by auxiliaries like WMU! I love helpers who are dependable, efficient,

Examine tax code changes, Foundation president says

As the deadline for filing 1994 tax returns approaches, Arkansas Baptist Foundation president David Moore reminded Arkansas Baptists to "watch for personal mistakes and changes in tax codes."

As Baptists file their tax returns by April 15, Moore added, "each Christian should thank God for the privilege of paying voluntary taxes."

"Paying taxes is a privilege? "Yes," he affirmed. "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's. Taxpayers need only consider the alternative countries where they could be living."

Moore emphasized that honesty is the "rule of thumb" for taxpaying. "Each Christian should honestly report and pay his taxes," he noted. "Give everyone what you owe him. If you owe taxes, pay taxes."

He warned, though, that Christians "should not overpay taxes in order to provide more for the family and the work of God. Tax avoidance is good stewardship. Tax evasion is a criminal act. The difference is about 20 years in prison."

He also advised Baptists to watch for "common mistakes" made in tax preparation, including simple mistakes such as writing down the wrong Social Security numbers, mathematical errors and not reporting cash payments for services.

Another common mistake in tax preparation, he said, is reporting the "incorrect basis for mutual fund sales."

"In 1994, the stock and bond markets plunged at various times," Moore explained. "The down markets forced many investors to sell in panic. As a result, many investors who had never sold mutual funds did so in 1994."

"Unless the investor kept up with his monthly or quarterly reinvestments, he may claim his original cost as the 'cost basis' and pay tax on the reinvested basis which has already been taxed in previous years."

Moore also noted that changes in tax codes may affect Baptist taxpayers' reporting of church contributions.

"Receipts from charities, not just a canceled check, are the only acceptable proof for individual charitable deductions of \$250 or more," he emphasized. "Churches should report each individual contribution of \$250 or more, as well as include a statement such as the following: 'Effective January 1, 1994, the Internal Revenue Code requires us to acknowledge your contribution in writing and to state that any goods or services you may have

received in connection with this gift were solely intangible religious benefits.'

Another change in contribution codes involves gifts to charities. Moore pointed out that "gifts to charity of \$75 or more for which the donor received a substantial benefit must be so designated by the charity by receipt."

"This is called a quid pro quo gift," he said. "It works like this: A church holds a 'free' concert to raise money for a major project. When the group performs, tickets are normally \$25. A participant gives \$100 as a gift to the church project, but IRS recognizes that he received a 'free' concert. The church should inform him that he gave \$100 and received \$25 in value as a result of his gift. Therefore, he should claim only \$75 as his charitable gift."

Other tax code changes noted by Moore include:

- Taxpayers who arrange payment plans with the IRS will face additional fees. Through March 31, the rate on an IRS "loan" was 9 percent and the late-payment penalty is the equivalent of another 6 percent a year. "If you can borrow elsewhere for less than 15 percent, you should," he advised.

- The IRS is checking names and numbers of Social Security numbers. "An inconsistency of name and number will cause a considerable delay for any refund this year," he said.

- Unreimbursed moving expenses must be claimed as an adjustment to gross income, not as an itemized deduction.

- Most club dues are not allowable deductions.

- Taxpayers may deduct home-office expenses only if the office is their principal place of business.

- Home buyers may now deduct seller-paid mortgage points for loans used to buy or improve a principal residence.

- The minimum annual wage at which Social Security and Medicare taxes must be paid for household help is now \$1,000, up from \$50 per quarter. Baby-sitters under age 18 and in school are exempt.

Describing 1994 as "an interesting year for investors," Moore said, "The markets were awful and practically everyone lost money."

"However," he added, "the losses incurred are helpful in shielding up to \$3,000 of other income from taxes."

Moore encouraged Baptists to be "good stewards" of financial resources. "If you are a good steward now, you will have more to give to your church, Baptist causes and to leave in your estate," he affirmed.

Youth encouraged to register early for Super Summer

With only 1,200 openings available, student leaders should register Super Summer participants as early as possible, Randy Brantley suggested. Brantley, an associate in the Arkansas Baptist State Convention evangelism department, said the deadline for Super Summer registration is May 26, "but I expect it to be full long before the deadline."

Super Summer, to be held June 19-23 at Ouachita Baptist University, is an evangelism and leadership training school for junior and senior high school students and youth workers. Brantley said the theme for the event, "Pressing the Parameters," urges students to "press back against worldly pressures and give Christ preeminence."

He emphasized that the focus of Super Summer is evangelism. "The schools are designed to provide students with the tools, instruction and the motivation to live godly lives and to win Arkansas youth to Christ."

Brantley said this year's event features four levels of training for junior high school students; senior high school students; an advanced evangelism school for students in grades 10-12 who have attended a previous Super Summer and are recommended by their pastors or youth ministers; and a youth ministry school for adult leaders and workers.

Also leading youth during the week will be volunteer "staffers." Brantley said Super Summer leaders are seeking staffers who are "young men or women, no more than 30 years of age, who are physically and spiritually fit and can attend a mandatory training weekend June 17-19."

The cost for the week is \$85 per person for in-state residents and \$115 per person for out-of-state residents. "The difference is in preference to Arkansas Baptists because of the interest of out-of-state churches," Brantley explained.

Brantley asked participants to bring bedding, towels, personal items and Bibles. "Casual clothing may be worn during the day, but pants and dresses are to be worn after 5 p.m.," he said.

For more information about registration or volunteering as a staffer, contact Brantley at the ABCS evangelism department; phone 501-376-4791, ext. 5222.

1994 statistics show slight rise in baptisms

An increase in the number of Arkansas baptisms last year continues a steady pattern of rises and falls in baptisms during the 1990s, pointed out Paul McClung, an associate in the Arkansas Baptist State Convention evangelism department.

According to statistics reported in the 1994 Annual Church Profile (ACP), baptisms in the state totaled 12,713, up less than 1 percent from 12,645 in 1993.

"Hopefully, Here's Hope revivals will change this trend," McClung said, adding that three trends have emerged in Arkansas baptisms over the past 20 years. All three, he said, were affected by simultaneous revivals held throughout the Southern Baptist Convention every five years.

Following a peak of 15,507 baptisms during simultaneous revivals in 1980, "we had a trend of continual decline for several years, then it leveled" following the 1985 simultaneous revivals, he explained.

"Then there was a trend back up," McClung noted. The upward trend spiked in 1990, again a year of simultaneous revivals.

"Were still in that," he concluded. "Other revivals have changed the trend. We are hoping that Here's Hope will change it in another upward scale."

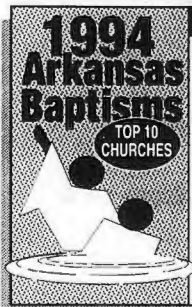
Here's Hope is an evangelistic emphasis among Southern Baptists to witness and conduct simultaneous revivals in 1995.

Evangelism department director Clarence Shell said the emphasis relies "on the involvement of our laypeople getting out and sharing Christ. When this happens, the Lord is going to move in a wonderful way and we will see many people saved."

Shell warned, though, that the key to keeping baptism levels up "is if our people remain at the same intensity level. Winning people to Christ is a whole lot like a basketball team. If they take everything for granted, they go down instead of up."

McClung said ABSC evangelism department personnel were surprised at the 1994 rise in baptisms. "We anticipated a decline this year. Reports we were getting from across the state told us baptisms were down. Also, this is a year of preparation and the focus is on something else."

He also noted that the number of baptismless churches has risen to its



TOP 10 BY NUMBER		TOP 10 BY RATIO*	
829	First, Springdale	1.56	Harmony, Rector
195	Saintsville, NLR	1.69	New Providence
155	Second, Hot Springs	1.02	Victory
149	First, Mulberry	2.29	Lake Hills
142	Immanuel, Rogers	2.68	Buie, Prattsville
112	Trinity, Texarkana	3.18	Good Hope, McRory
106	First, Lavaca	3.29	Faith, Camden
102	First, Van Buren	3.55	Bethel, Hatfield
96	First, West Memphis	3.71	First, Knobel
95	Central, Jonesboro	3.93	Enola

*ratio= number of members per baptism

second-highest point since 1975. Statistics show 251 Arkansas Baptist churches reported no baptisms in 1994, second only to 253 churches that reported no baptisms in 1991. The number of baptismless churches has slowly risen from a 20-year low of 161 recorded in 1982.

"That's even with an increase of baptisms," McClung said. "And we are concerned about it. We have set up communication with these churches and are trying to offer to them whatever help they need."

'Worship evangelism'

Leading the state in baptisms in 1994 was First Church, Springdale, which reported 829 baptisms. Pastor Ronnie Floyd said a combination of ongoing evangelism efforts and "worship evangelism" contributed to the church's high baptism rate. "We stuck to the basics. We try to put the emphasis on the week-by-week, even though we are strong on event evangelism."

"Last year the most effective thing we did was worship evangelism," he said. "The Lord brings people and no matter what I preach, I end up at the cross."

He also highlighted the church's ongoing evangelism emphasis among other church ministries. "Among the various divisions - youth, children, college or adult - we do our very best to have a ministry program presenting Christ."

Floyd added, however, that the "secret" to more baptisms is "you have to determine in your heart you will be a Great Commission church and that everything you do must come up to that plumbline. No matter that it is Vacation Bible School or Singles Day, the goal is to reach the unchurched."

"We get excited when someone moves their letter," Floyd affirmed, "but our goal is to reach unchurched people for Christ."

New Providence Church, located between Leachville and Manila, increased its outreach efforts to make it the second-highest church in baptisms per member. The congregation reported that it took the effort of 1.69 members to result in one baptism. An average Baptist church takes 40 people to win one person to Christ.

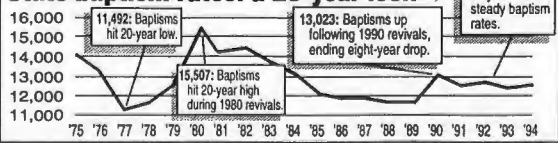
Pastor Gerald Baker said the church "had community activities after church, like dinners and singings. We got people interested in coming to church for other activities than services," he said. "Then we just had basic preaching of God's Word and...hellfire and brimstone. We didn't leave out any of the 'what's going to happen if you don't accept.'"

The baptisms have resulted in increased membership for the church. Baker said when he accepted the call as pastor, "the church had eight active members. We now are running 25 on a bad day."

McClung said he is optimistic about 1995 baptisms rates following the Here's Hope revivals. "We really expect an increase in baptisms this year."

"In Arkansas, the Here's Hope preparation has gone well," he said. "The associations have responded well, churches have been reporting excitement and there has been a strong prayer for awakening around the state. I don't know if it is the climate of America morally, politically or whatever, but there is a hunger for God to do something."

State baptism rates: a 20-year look



A different kind of pardon

Pardoned Ministries seeks to teach the Bible to inmates at the Arkansas Department of Corrections' Tucker women's unit. Their goal? That inmates will never come back.

By Russell N. Dilday
Associate Editor, Arkansas Baptist

The classroom looks like a grade-school English class. Steel desk chairs point to the front of the classroom, where a chalk board hangs on a white cinder block wall. Students begin to file into the room, exchanging greetings with each other and their teacher.

It resembles any other classroom, except that the classmates are all women wearing standard white prison-issue uniforms and the setting sun shows twin-inch steel bars outside of the window.

It is Thursday night at the Tucker women's prison unit, an Arkansas Department of Corrections facility south of England. The women are gathering for their weekly Bible study, led by Pardoned Ministries, an interdenominational ministry which teaches the Bible to inmates and supports them through prayer.

Willie Harris, who is in her ninth year of serving a life sentence, has been active in the ministry's Bible studies for more than a year. Currently enrolled in an Experiencing God class, she said the ministry "helps me to feel God's presence. It opened up a whole new world so I can get the big picture of God and how He uses us individually."

"I love this class," she remarked. "I have a hunger for more and more of the Word of God and this ministry has been an answer to pray for me in terms of growth."

She said one of the most profound points in her Christian growth "is that I quit smoking. That's something I couldn't ever master. I would quit awhile and go back. I just got strong enough to put those cigarettes down."

The ministry began in 1993 when Cindi Edwards, a member of Fellowship Bible Church in Conway, discovered the need for a Bible study leader at the unit.

She soon talked to her friend Marcia Charton, a member of First Church in Morrilton, about teaching a Bible study. "Cindi asked me to join the ministry and I prayed about that because I knew it wasn't what the Lord wanted me to do," Charton laughed.

Charton then invited an acquaintance, Paula Stratton, a member of First Church, Stuttgart, to join the ministry. "I knew the way that happened that I needed to find out what God was up to and become involved," Stratton said.

Although Charton and Edwards had been visiting the prison since August 1993, classes officially began in February 1994.

The three, said Stratton, use Bible study materials from Precept Ministries, a parachurch ministry led by Kay Arthur of Chattanooga, Tenn.

"It teaches the inductive method of how to get into the Word yourself," Stratton said, "not reading a lot of commentaries or books about the books of Bible, but studying yourself. It works well for us."

Edwards explained that the classes "use the Bible as our textbook. It's what makes a difference.

"Marcia teaches (Arthur's Bible study) *Lord, I Want to Know You*," she said. "It's a study of who God is. Paula just completed teaching Experiencing God to a group of women."

Stratton noted that the Precept class is a beginner course, while the Experiencing God class was targeted to more mature believers. "Lord, I Want to Know You was such a hit with the ladies it just seemed perfect for this situation," she said. "Once you know God, you go into Experiencing God.

"The next natural step, it seemed to us, was to offer Experiencing God," she added, "because of the difference Experiencing God made with Marcia and me and knowing that...this is what opened our eyes and caused us to see that the Lord was working here and wanted us involved."

Edwards and Stratton currently are teaching "How to Study the Bible Inductively," using Jude, as their curriculum. Edwards said she feels their curriculum choice was important because "there are so many contradictory teachings. We felt like it was important to study and get them what God wanted them to get."

God's hand is evident

All three point to God's hand in establishing the ministry at Tucker. "Everyone of us felt like God worked this out," Edwards said. "Not one of us started this or thought that this is what we'd be doing or asked anybody to do this."

"When we first started," Charton said, "We were told by ADC that we would have to be trained as Certified Religious Advisors. But we were told we couldn't be trained because of a (yearlong) backlog." Three weeks later, a letter came inviting Charton for training.

God's guidance also was evident through Helen Lefert, a member of Second Church, Conway, and a district representative for Precept Ministries, who organized efforts to buy the International Inductive Study Bible for inmates. She found she could not use the inexpensive hardback Bibles in prison because prisoners can make weapons out of the hard covers.

"Their only alternative," said Freddie Pike, Second Church's minister of education, "if they wanted to stay with that Bible, was to buy a leather-bound version. Those ladies prayed about that and decided that was the Bible the Lord wanted them to use. They began to look for a way to purchase the \$80 Bibles to give to prisoners."

As the women prayed, funds came from individuals around the state to purchase the Bibles. "People have given us more money," Charton acknowledged. "We've never asked for it. People have just handed us money. We are a faith ministry. God has never called us to go out and raise money."

Help also came from Christian Supply, a Conway bookstore, which Charton said "provided Bibles for \$37.50 and they pay the shipping. Every time we have to take a step, God's has somebody in place to take care of a need. He has amply provided everything He has brought about here."

Charton said a prayer ministry also accompanies the Bible Study. "Wanda Brown of Second Church, Conway, felt like God had led her to reach one of the



First in a five-part series

women in class through prayer. She organized prayer captains all over the state that take and distribute names and prayer requests and they pray for each woman each day. It's a vital part of the ministry."

What do the women want to accomplish through the ministry? "One of our goals is once they leave here they'll never come back," Edwards said.

"We encourage those that get out to not leave God at Tucker when they go back to the free world," Charton said. "Helen Leffert has contacted Precept leaders all over the state to funnel these women who are released back into a study and to help ease them back in."

"We are literally birthing babies," said Charton. "We have seekers, we have some that are coming just because they see the excitement in the barracks, and we have some that are mature Christians and have some with the Lord."

All three agreed there are many mature Christians in the group. "We were shocked at the ladies when we first came," Stratton emphasized. "They are just like our classes back home. We expected 10 to attend. We have had 200-plus go through and actually receive Bibles."

"They are the same as believers in the free world," observed Edwards. "It's their obedience to the Word that makes them so special. But we do see more pain than

you would normally see in other classes. Everyone here is hurting in some way."

"One of the main problems I see in prison," said Stratton, "is the women are devastated at what has occurred in their families. Because of what they have done, they have been separated from their children. That's just a momma's heart."

"We hope we are helping them see that

"The hardest part is having people believe in you. You not only have to talk it but walk it."

—Yolanda Moncrief, inmate Tucker women's prison unit

this may be the best thing that ever happened to them — to be called on the carpet," explained Stratton. "Your heart is broken and He is ready to do something."

Because of the hurt, she said, "The body of Christ functions better here than I have seen in a regular church situation."

"The persecution brings that out," added Edwards.

Cary Hudson, serving a five-year sentence for theft, acknowledged that there is persecution of believers by other inmates. "I'm a newcomer. I find that it is tougher to be a Christian in prison."

"You have all kinds of people coming at you with different things and trying to throw you off kilter," Hudson said. "To me it has been very rough to be a Christian as I should be and live among some of these people."

Yolanda Moncrief, serving a six-year sentence for forgery, agreed. "It is harder being a Christian. People think you're just getting jailhouse religion: 'Oh, she's coming to these classes and getting saved just because she wants to get out.' The hardest part is having people believe in you. You not only have to talk it but walk it."

Doris Guest, serving a 20-year sentence on drug-related charges, voiced a different perspective. "I have found it easier to be a Christian in prison. Everybody knows I am sick in the Lord, so there are a lot of people that come to me and ask me questions and ask me for advice. On the streets I never thought about it. Go to church? I never had the time."

"It's easier in some ways and harder in others," said Linda Wise, serving a seven-year sentence for drug violations. "I have more time to devote to it here than I did out there. But in other ways it's harder."

"Out there you have a choice of who you can associate with," she said. "Not really in here because we're all in such close quarters. Sometimes you have to be

around folks that are probably not the best to be around when you are trying to walk the Christian walk. I just try to let my light shine and hope they catch some of it."

Many of the inmates in the Pardoned Ministry program say they have had their lives changed because of the in-depth Bible study.

Linda Thomas, serving a five-year term for forgery, said the ministry "is a way the Lord is getting our attention. When I give my testimony I know from experience what God has done in my life. He's worked miracles for me and if He can do it for me, He can do it for anyone."

'God never changes'

She also said attending classes "is the only peace of mind I have. It's the only sane thing I have. Behind prison walls you always have something going on and everything changes. But God never changes."

"I first came because people told me about it," Moncrief recalled. "I enjoyed it because of the way Marcia taught. I was impressed with her teaching. I've learned things in six months that I haven't learned in the four years I've been going to church."

"I came because I've never been in a Bible study," said Guest. "I've never gotten into church before. I never wanted to learn. This is my third time down and this is the only rehabilitation I have found in the system."

Bob Holyfield, a chaplain for the Tucker unit, agreed that the ministry is aiding rehabilitation efforts. "This is the Department of Corrections and correction is what we hope to see."

"The Precept program is probably doing that as good as any program we have had here before," he said. "Never have we had a class where our inmates write to me and say, 'Put me on the waiting list' all the time."

"One thing we are having happen is that they are meeting in the barracks, praying together and studying the Bible together," he emphasized. "What we've seen it do is the women are growing closer to God and as they've gotten closer to God, they have gotten closer to each other."



Marcia Charton, a member of First Church, Morrilton, teaches a Bible study class of more than 30 inmates each Thursday night at the Tucker women's prison unit near England.

WHATEVER IT TAKES 4!



Whateveritakes 4, a statewide recreation/ministries workshop, was held March 3-4 at Calvary Church in Little Rock. The workshop, designed to combine recreation and ministry to reach people and meet needs for local ministry as well as missions beyond the local church, was jointly sponsored by the discipleship training and missions departments of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention.

Recreation/ministry leaders from the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, Sunday School Board, state convention and Arkansas churches not only trained participants for ministry, but prepared them for a closing worship session that included special music by John Paul Moccia, minister of music, and Retha Kilmer, pianist, both of First Church in Sherwood.



▲ The use of puppets as an outreach tool was highlighted during a worship skit directed by Lyn Sawyer, director of the puppet ministry for Park Hill Church in North Little Rock.

Clowns Bill Hale, a member of Bethel Church in Gould, and Gwen McCallister, a member of Cross Road Church in Little Rock, practice a worship skit about how to reach others beyond the church walls. ▼

▲ Harley Petty, minister to youth for First Church in Sherwood, demonstrated in a mime presentation the importance of following God's instructions. Illustrating Moses' response when the Lord told him to cast his rod to the ground and it became a serpent, Petty showed that just as God let the serpent once again become a rod, He will never fall people who heed His voice.

▶ Sisters Hannah and Andrea Gelger, members of Cherry Hill Church of Mena, practiced the art of face painting in a workshop led by June Chandler, a member of Second Church in Jacksonville.



ABN photos/ Millie Gill

WMU urges study of proposed SBC changes

BIRMINGHAM, AL (BP)—While Woman's Missionary Union does not plan to make a formal response to the Program and Structure Study Committee's recommendations for changing the Southern Baptist Convention's structure, WMU officials are encouraging members and others to study the committee's report.

WMU executive director Dellanna O'Brien said WMU does not plan to make an immediate formal response because the WMU executive board is not scheduled to meet again until June 16-17.

"However, we do encourage those who have called us, and would encourage all Southern Baptists, to do several things," O'Brien said, including:

- "Pray for the leadership of the Holy Spirit in interpreting and understanding the report. We have great confidence that the intelligent, informed members and friends of WMU can be trusted to seek God's leadership and act on it."

- "Study the report well. I am pleased that it will be well distributed, giving our membership the opportunity to study the proposals."

- "Read your state paper."

- "If you have questions, ask the right people. Letters to state papers, to your state's representatives on the Executive Committee, to members of the Program and Structure Study Committee and to the presidents of the Foreign Mission Board, Home Mission Board and Brotherhood Commission will yield information."

- "Go to the Southern Baptist

Convention meeting in Atlanta and vote your conscience."

The study committee report approved last month by the SBC Executive Committee, proposes a new North American Mission Board to combine the efforts of the HMB, Radio & Television Commission and Brotherhood Commission. It also calls for primary responsibility for promoting the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions and Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for home missions to reside with the renamed International Mission Board (currently the FMB) and North American Mission Board, instead of WMU.

While Executive Committee legal counsel has suggested the FMB and HMB own the offerings since they are the beneficiaries, O'Brien pointed out, "Another argument could be made, however, that historical and emotional ownership belongs to WMU....Did we give the offerings away? Perhaps so, in the interest of wider involvement and increased giving to missions. We have no regret for this. But while WMU has involved the mission boards and Brotherhood in the promotion of the offerings, we have continued to be the primary agents in the work."

Study committee chairman Mark Brister said the committee's proposals should not change the working relationship of the Southern Baptist Convention with the WMU.

"Quite simply, the WMU requested to remain an auxiliary," Brister said. "We honored their request."

"While WMU has done a superlative job in promoting these mission offerings, the initiation of the offerings was influenced by the vision of the Foreign Mission Board, the Home Mission Board, as well as Woman's Missionary Union," he added.

"Given the historical non-binding nature of WMU program statements, it is reasonable to confirm the responsibility for these vital offerings to agencies whose accountability to the SBC is binding," Brister said. "It is also logical to anticipate continuation of the vital role of WMU in assisting the mission boards in promoting the offering."

Explaining WMU's commitment to remain an auxiliary, O'Brien noted, "The dictionary defines auxiliary as 'offering or providing help.' By being an auxiliary WMU has been able to be a helper to the convention and all its causes. WMU has shared in every large undertaking of Southern Baptists without losing the major emphasis on home or foreign missions.

"Another reason for remaining an auxiliary is that the women elect their own leaders. At the state level, WMU members elect a president. The state president then becomes an officer of the national WMU executive board. This means that women know WMU work on every level and they are well able to represent the women in their state.

"WMU continues to be dedicated to the God-given task of proclaiming the good news to all the world and we can best do it as an auxiliary to the Southern Baptist Convention," she concluded.

State historians oppose SBC Historical Commission's end

NASHVILLE, TN (BP)—A plea to retain the Southern Baptist Historical Commission has been issued by 15 state Baptist historical directors and historians, who described the agency as "the collective memory of the Southern Baptist Convention."

The commission, founded in 1951, would be dissolved under a proposed reorganization of the SBC. Under the proposal, its archival duties would be assigned to a council of presidents of the six SBC seminaries and educational duties would be assigned to the Baptist Sunday School Board.

The state Baptist historians' statement noted, "Any restructuring of historical work within the SBC should be done to enhance and strengthen Southern Baptists' understanding of our heritage. The recommendation of the Program and Structure Study Committee does neither.

"We believe that the Historical Commission is the single most effective and efficient means for Southern Baptists to continue to preserve, interpret and communicate our heritage," the historians contended. "Our past experiences, our history, affect not only who we are as Southern Baptists today but also who we will be in the future."

Brotherhood trustees respond to SBC reorganization proposal

MEMPHIS, TN (BP)—The Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission's trustee executive committee, meeting via conference call, has reviewed the "Covenant for a New Century" proposal to restructure Southern Baptist agencies, formed a transition team and affirmed the work of the commission's staff. The proposal includes a call for the move of the commission's work to Atlanta as part of a new North American Mission Board.

"With the formation of the transition team, we are not presuming anything about the will of the Southern Baptist Convention," said James D. Williams, Brotherhood Commission president. "We are simply taking a proactive step to be prepared to respond to whatever we are called upon to do."

Trustee chairman Donley Brown said the consensus of the board is to accept the recommendations in the proposal and "proceed with an orderly transition, based on the will of the SBC."

"We do have questions about the impact of these recommendations on the laity in the local churches and about the potential loss of the entrepreneurial spirit of the Brotherhood Commission," added Brown. "We're also concerned about the staff and their families."

The Brotherhood transition team will include three commission vice presidents, two trustees, two state convention Brotherhood leaders and two members of the agency's staff.

Staff changes



ARKANSAS ALL OVER

By MILLIE GILL

Carl Fawcett retired Jan. 31 as director of missions for Arkansas Valley Association, having completed 31 years of ministry in December 1994. He is a graduate of Ouachita Baptist University and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. Fawcett served as the first pastor of Second Church in West Helena prior to attending seminary. He also was pastor of Knoxville Church and Wheatley Church prior to becoming a director of missions. Fawcett is married to the former Barbara Ann Agee of Little Rock. They have three married children and seven grandchildren. Fawcett is available for supply preaching and serving as an interim pastor. He may be contacted at 901 Jack Fawcett Road, Austin, AR 72007; phone 501-941-1116. The association honored the Fawcetts with a special tribute at an associational rally in January, presenting them with a plaque and a grandfather clock.

Joe A. Thompson, who has served as pastor of Calvary Church in Blytheville for 25 years, has announced his retirement, effective April 16. During his tenure as pastor, Calvary Church has paid off its indebtedness for a new sanctuary and educational center and completed several renovation programs. Thompson also has been active in the ministry of Mississippi County Association, serving two terms as moderator. He has been chairman of the Blytheville Ministerial Alliance and served two terms on the Arkansas Baptist State Convention Executive Board. Thompson, a graduate of Mississippi College in Clinton, Miss., and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, has also been pastor of Bellaire Church in Dermott and of churches in Mississippi. Thompson's wife, Elizabeth, has worked with the children's department as teacher and director and with the senior adults at Calvary Church. The Thompsons have two children and four grandchildren. After retirement, Thompson will be available for supply preaching and revivals. He may be contacted at 1012 Putting Green, Blytheville, AR 72315; phone 501-763-8774.

David Spraggins began serving Feb. 5 as pastor of First Church in Hampton. He moved there from Atlanta, Texas, where he had been pastor of Bethesda Y Church. He and his wife, Pam, have two children, Todd and Kim.

William E. Piercy began serving Feb. 26 as pastor of Grace Church in Augusta. He and his wife, Lillie, moved there from Manila where he had been pastor of First Church for more than 20 years.

Ted R. Grove began serving Feb. 26 as pastor of Portland Church. He previously has been a staff member of churches in Michigan and Texas, as well as being associated with Campus Crusade for Christ and the Christian Heritage Children's Home in Hickman, Neb. Grove is a graduate of Dallas Theological Seminary, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and Southwest Texas State University. He and his wife, Bobetta, moved to Portland from Sherwood.

Derek Grigg has begun his first service as a Southern Baptist minister, serving as pastor of New Hope Church of Ralph. He is a graduate of Arkansas State University. Grigg and his wife, Teresa, moved to Ralph from Gassville.

Michael Berry has joined the staff of Sunset Lane Church in Little Rock as minister of music. He previously was on the staff of West Pulaski Church in Little Rock. He and his wife, Ann, have three adult children and two grandchildren.

J. Fulton Amonette began serving March 1 as pastor of First Church in Clarendon, coming there from First Church in Horatio. Amonette has served in leadership roles in Little River, Red River and Southwest Arkansas associations. He is a graduate of Dallas Baptist University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Amonette and his wife, Glynda Ruth, have three children, Jamie, Nicole and Michelle.

Mike Raymond began serving March 12 as pastor of Chapel Hill Church in Jacksonville, coming there from Paragould where he was minister of youth and single adults at East Side Church. Raymond is a graduate of Texas A & M and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. His wife, Brenda, is a former Southern Baptist journeyman to Brazil. They have two children, Hallie and Hannah.

Roy McLeod began serving March 19 as interim pastor of Old Union Church at Benton. He previously was at Bluffton Church. McLeod and his wife, Hella, live in Hot Springs.

Brett Cooper is serving as interim minister to youth and single adults at East Side Church in Paragould. He is director of public relations for Williams Baptist College.



First Church of Hampton recently held a noteburning service, recognizing payment of a \$50,000 indebtedness on a family life center. The facility, constructed in 1994 under the leadership of former pastor Dwain Miller, includes an activities area, Sunday School rooms and a parlor. Loren Strickland served as building committee chairman, assisted by Phillip Mitchell, Pat Donaldson, Shirley Jones, Louise Thomason, Bruce Siringfellow and Pat Newton. Fred Gay (left), director of missions for Carey Association, was the speaker for the special service. Burning the note were (left to right) Thomason, Strickland, pastor David Spraggins, Mitchell, Donaldson and Newton.

ARKANSAS BAPTISTS

People

Richard and Dorothy Johnson of Strong were honored March 19 by Knowles Church where he is pastor. The special services commemorated the couple's 50th wedding anniversary and his 47 years in the ministry. Johnson was ordained in 1944 in Searcy and has spent more than 31 of his 47 years of ministry in Southern Baptist churches in Arkansas. The couple was married April 8, 1945. Seven Southern Baptist ministers participated in the celebration that included a morning worship service, an open house and a reception. Hosts for the occasion were the couple's five children.

Tom and Kay Cox recently led their 14th annual partnership missions trip to India. The 50-member team, representing Southern Baptist churches in 16 states, included one medical doctor, two dentists, 15 nurses, two dental assistants, 12 crusade preachers, children's workers and evangelistic singers. Other Arkansas team members were Ted Duke, pastor of First Church in Elkins, and Thresha Wilson of Fayetteville. The trip was an approved project of the Foreign Mission Board.



Arkansas Baptist directors of missions elected 1995-96 officers during their annual retreat March 1-3 at DeGray Lodge near Arkadelphia. New officers include (left to right) Lee Lawson of Faulkner Association, president; Marvin Peters of North Pulaski Association, president-elect; and Lonnie Latham of Bartholomew Association, secretary/treasurer. Ralph Smith of Hyde Park Church in Austin, Texas, was the Bible study leader for the retreat, Gary Farley of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board led discussions on evangelism in a rural setting and ABSC executive director Don Moore was the inspirational speaker. Outgoing president Marvin Reynolds moderated the meeting which was coordinated by ABSC associate executive director Jimmie Sheffield.

Church news

Bentonville First Church is launching a ministry to Hispanics this month by starting a Sunday School class with future plans to begin Hispanic worship services.

Searcy First Church recently honored Millie Williams upon her retirement, following 37 years of service as secretary to the pastor. She was presented with a gift at the reception given for her.

Cove First Church honored Berniece Scott March 5 for her 85th birthday. She was given a corsage and cake, a letter from Gov. Jim Guy Tucker and proclamations from Polk County Judge Stanley and Cove Mayor Neblick, as well as gifts and wishes from family and friends. There was a record church attendance of 149 for the occasion. Mrs. Scott, who had been a public school teacher for 34 years and served as the first bus driver for the Cove public schools, received a humorous tribute from Sheriff Oglesby.

Rison Church will present Josephus Smith in "Parables from the Potter" March 26 at 6 p.m. Smith, who has portrayed Christ in the Great Passion Play in Eureka Springs, will illustrate the Word of God through the ancient craft of pottery.

Northwest Association will host an "Older Women...Younger Women" spring

brunch April 1 from 10 a.m. to noon at the Bentonville Ramada Inn, located on north Walton Boulevard. The buffet brunch, based on Titus 2, will feature a panel of older Christian women in a question and answer session. Additional information is available by contacting the associational office at 501-273-5442.

Baring Cross Church in North Little Rock will host a "Forgiveness" single adult seminar April 29, featuring Diane O'Connell as leader. The seminar, which will include small-group discussions, will include special music by Larry Grayson, minister of music for the host church. Linda Gray, minister to single adults, is serving as coordinator.

Ordinations

Greenbrier First Church ordained Mike Gray as a deacon Jan. 15.

Grace Memorial Church of Belleville ordained pastor Tracy Vodraska to the gospel ministry Feb. 12.

Pocahontas First Church ordained James Down as a deacon Feb. 19.

Booneville First Church ordained Tom McCone, minister of music and family life director, to the gospel ministry March 12.

Long-time Arkansas pastor McAtee dies

D.C. McAtee, 78, of Forrest City died March 7 at Baptist Central Hospital in Memphis. A retired Southern Baptist minister, McAtee had served 40 years as pastor of churches in Arkansas, Oklahoma, Alabama and Mississippi before serving with the Baptist Student Union department of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention.

He served twice as vice president of the ABSC, twice as president of the Arkansas Baptist Training Union Convention and twice as president of the Fellowship of Retired Southern Baptist Workers in Arkansas. He also had held the office of vice president of the Christian Civic Foundation of Arkansas and had been a member of the state convention executive boards in both Arkansas and Alabama and of the Baptist Hospitals Corporation of Arkansas.

His funeral services were held March 11 at First Church in Forrest City where he was a member. Memorials may be made to Ouachita Baptist University's scholarship funds.

Survivors include his wife, Clyta Agee McAtee of Forrest City; one daughter, Marilyn McVeigh of Germantown, Tenn.; two sisters; three brothers; and two grandchildren.

Hispanic Baptists protest Catholic document

DALLAS (BP)—Hispanic Texas Baptist leaders have disassociated themselves from a document affirming relations between Catholics and evangelicals, and they have asked one of its signers to distance himself from it.

The three top-ranking officers of the Mexican Baptist Convention of Texas released a statement March 10 disassociating themselves from the "Catholics and Evangelicals Together" document.

Along with presidents of the 30 regional Hispanic fellowships of Texas, they also sent a letter to Larry Lewis, president of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, asking him to rescind his endorsement of the high-profile accord.

Lewis, along with Richard Land of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, were among the 40 original signers of the document, drafted a year ago to highlight areas of common concern for Catholics and conservative Protestants.

The statement of protest signed by the convention's president, Roland Lopez of McAllen, vice president Ramiro Pena Jr. of Waco and Victor Lopez of San Antonio said:

"We, the Mexican Baptist Convention of Texas, have supported the Home Mission Board through our Cooperative Program for many years. However, because of the Evangelical/Catholic document, many of our congregations have confronted resistance in their witness.

"This document not only goes against Vision 2000, a report that Hispanic Baptists of Texas put together, but also denies the grace of God as revealed in the Bible concerning how a person is justified before God.

"We, the Mexican Baptist Convention of Texas, disassociate ourselves from the document. We support those whose witness has been hindered by the Roman Catholic Church's use of the document."

Lopez said Hispanic Texas Baptists felt the need to distance themselves from the Catholic/evangelical statement because it was being used by Catholic priests in various communities. He said the priests were harassing Baptists by accusing them of "sheep-stealing" and "not submitting to their superiors" who signed the accord.

"We know that Baptists are autonomous. We know that we can witness to anyone," Lopez pointed out. "But the Catholic hierarchy does not understand that."

The Catholic/evangelical document "set back" evangelistic efforts, has caused conflict within congregations and is theologically flawed, Lopez said.

"We also are concerned that Hispanic Baptists were not conferred with before the document was signed," he noted. "We were not contacted or asked how it would affect us. There was no thought as to what the ramifications of it would be for us."

Land, Lewis sign clarification of controversial document

RALEIGH, NC (ABP)—Evangelicals who last year signed a controversial accord with Roman Catholics have issued a clarification designed to mute some of the criticism the document received.

Among those signing the clarification were two Southern Baptist Convention agency heads who signed the original "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" document last spring: Richard Land, executive director of the Christian Life Commission, and Larry Lewis, president of the Home Mission Board.

Both Land and Lewis have been criticized for signing the statement, which some say embraces false doctrine and undermines evangelism efforts by banning "sheep-stealing" from Catholic churches.

Land reported to CLC trustees March 2 that he recently signed a statement of "applicatory clarifications," drafted by three other signers of the evangelical/Catholic accord, intended to "prevent divisive misunderstandings of our beliefs and purposes."

Lewis, in a statement March 9, said he also endorsed the clarification, which should "alleviate the fears" of critics. Lewis emphasized that the evangelical-Catholic accord "was not and is not primarily a theological document," but "an attempt to consolidate the influence of Catholics and evangelicals on the most serious moral and social concerns of our day."

The clarification was drafted at the request of Chuck Colson, chairman of Prison Fellowship. Two other signers of the document were involved in drafting

the statement—J.J. Packer and Bill Bright. Several evangelical leaders who did not sign the document were involved in drafting the clarification, including John Ankerberg, John MacArthur, R.C. Sproul and James Kennedy.

The Protestant signers said their "parachurch cooperation" with Catholics "in pursuit of agreed objectives does not imply acceptance of Roman Catholic doctrinal

distinctives or endorsement of the Roman Catholic church system."

While Land and Lewis have been sharply criticized for signing the document, the boards of trustees of their respective agencies have defended the action. A resolution at last year's SBC annual meeting deflected criticism by "clarifying" the intent of the "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" signers.



I.M.O.B.Y.*

*(In My Own Backyard)

WHAT IS IT?

I.M.O.B.Y. is an Arkansas WMU plan to involve all our churches in ministry projects in their own communities between June 1 and August 31, 1995.

HOW CAN WE GET INVOLVED?

For more information, contact the state WMU office at (501) 376-4791, ext. 5137.

**A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO DO MISSIONS
"IN MY OWN BACKYARD!"**

Annuity Board relief, retirement benefits top \$166 million in 1994

DALLAS (BP)—Retirement and relief benefits paid by the Southern Baptist Annuity Board rose 18 percent in 1994, to \$166 million. The future of the board's relief ministry was enhanced by gifts and commitments that totaled \$8,824,473 over the last three years. Those were among the reports given to the agency's trustees during their recent meeting in Dallas.

Harold D. Richardson, the board's treasurer, reported that contributions to participants' accounts reached \$238.5 million. Total assets remained essentially flat for the past year at \$4.402 billion due to financial markets that suffered losses in both stocks and bonds.

Annualized earnings for the board's three investment funds were 5.72 percent

for the Fixed Fund, a loss of 0.98 percent for the Variable Fund, and a loss of 2.51 percent for the Balanced Fund. In his report to trustees, John R. Jones, who heads the board's investment program, said 1994 was the first time in 20 years when both the bond and stock markets ended in a negative earnings position. Despite the 1994 figures, 10-year average returns for the three Annuity Board funds are 8.87 for the Fixed Fund, 10.57 percent for the Balanced Fund and 12.04 percent for the Variable Fund.

Annuity Board president Paul W. Powell reported that retirement benefits paid totaled \$164.38 million, with 25,948 persons receiving benefits. In the past year, 3,885 new benefits were established.

Relief benefits of \$1,097,550 were paid to 502 individuals or couples in 1994, with most of the money going to retired ministers or their widows who receive no regular annuity benefit.

Child care registration open for Atlanta SBC

ATLANTA (BP)—Registration for child care for preschool children of messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention in Atlanta, June 20-22, is now being accepted.

A registration form is available by writing to: SBC Preschool Child Care, c/o Briarlake Baptist Church, 3715 LaVista Road, Decatur, GA 30033.

Cost of child care is \$10 per person per session. Each registration form must be accompanied by a non-refundable deposit of 50 percent of the anticipated cost.

Child care registration will be confirmed on a first-come, first-served basis. Parents are urged to write for registration materials immediately, SBC officials said.

MK prayer calendar

Missionary kids attending college in Arkansas with birthdays in April:

■ April 3 — Elizabeth Blackmon, OBU Box 3310, Arkadelphia, AR 71998-0001; senior from South Brazil.

■ April 19 — April Lee, OBU Box 4527, Arkadelphia, AR 71998-0001; senior from Japan.

■ April 19 — Lendy Seaberry, OBU Box 3529, Arkadelphia, AR 71998-0001; freshman from Zaire/Senegal.

■ April 23 — Tim Day, OBU Box 4518, Arkadelphia, AR 71998-0001; freshman from South Brazil.

■ April 29 — Gavin Falkner, OBU Box 3091, Arkadelphia, AR 71998-0001; sophomore from Canada.

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Ouachita Baptist University

Ouachita Singers concert — The OBU School of Music will present the Ouachita Singers in concert on March 28 at 7:30 p.m. in the recital hall of Mabee Fine Arts Center at OBU. There is no admission charge and the public is invited to attend.

The Ouachita Singers is an auditioned choral ensemble of approximately 40 students that represent the OBU School of Music in a range of concerts each year in schools and churches throughout Arkansas and across North America.

Swimming coach honored — Jim Dann, head coach of OBU's Tiger Sharks and Lady Tiger Sharks swimming and diving teams, has been named the 1995 NALA National Men's Swimming and Diving Coach of the Year.

In his 14th season as the head coach of the OBU swimming and diving program, Dann has amassed a record of 110-35. This season, his men's team finished ninth best in the nation, while the women placed 18th.

Swimming and diving teams named to academic list — The OBU Tiger Sharks and Lady Tiger Sharks swimming and diving teams have been named to the College Swimming Coaches Association of America's Academic Swimming Teams list for the 1994 fall semester.

The CSCAA recognized 151 Academic Swimming Teams for the fall semester for better than average academic work. The Tiger Sharks was the only NALA men's squad to be recognized by the committee.

The team's 2.84 grade point average earned them a "Commendable" ranking by the committee.

The Lady Tiger Sharks were one of only two NALA women's squads to be recognized by the committee. The grade point average for the Lady Tiger Sharks of 3.391 earned them a "Superior" ranking.

Editor presents books — Erwin L. McDonald, editor emeritus of the *Arkansas Baptist News* magazine, has made a gift of his personal library to OBU.

The 4,321-title library has been accepted for use at OBU's Riley-Hickingbotham Library. The books in the collection were designated as a memorial gift to Ouachita in honor of his late wife, Mary Elsie Price McDonald, who died in 1993. McDonald served as *News* magazine editor from 1957 to 1972.

Yearbook honored — The 1994 "Ouachitonian" yearbook was recently awarded a Medalist rating by the Columbia Scholastic Press Association. A Medalist rating is the highest award given by CSPA in its annual critique of student publications.

The critique provides specific criteria that describes the ideal student publication. Publications that receive a Medalist rating earn a minimum 925 points out of 1,000 possible in the critique.

Deborah Root, director of development publications and assistant professor of communications, serves as yearbook adviser. Rachael Ward, a 1994 communications graduate who now serves Ouachita's development office as director

of annual giving, was yearbook editor.

Arrington wins Miss OBU title — Ashley Arrington of Arkadelphia, a 19-year-old sophomore political science and speech major at Ouachita, was crowned as Miss OBU 1995. Arrington, the daughter of Mike and Pam Arrington of Arkadelphia, was among 14 contestants who completed for the title.

Williams Baptist College

Williams introduces ExCELL — Williams Baptist College has unveiled a new program designed to help adults complete their bachelor's degrees. The program, known as ExCELL, is intended to help those 25 and older, with some college experience, to earn their degrees at an accelerated pace. Steve Mullin has joined WBC's staff to direct the program.

ExCELL is an acronym for Experiential Completion Education for Lifelong Learners. As the name implies, students can receive a significant number of credit hours for learning they have acquired through outside experience.

Missions Training Institute

May 22-23
Noon to Noon
First Baptist
Church, Benton

This event is sponsored by the ABSC State Missions Department and is designed to provide training for mission pastors, chaplains, directors of missions, volunteer ministry coordinators, language pastors and missions development councils.

Meet with state missions staff and national missions leaders for missions up-date, missions planning and program development.

Pre-register by contacting the State Missions Department.

Motel reservations should be made at the Days Inn, Benton; phone 776-3200.

Located on Frontage Road south of I-30 and Congo Road exit. For more information, contact the State Missions Department at 376-4791, ext. 5149.

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OBU's Cone-Bottoms Hall begins new chapter

By Jeff Root

Ouachita Baptist University

Looking as shiny and new as it must have originally appeared in 1923, Cone-Bottoms Hall was dedicated March 9 into new service as an administration building at Ouachita Baptist University.

The dedication ceremony took place on the front lawn of Ouachita's oldest building and was highlighted by the cutting of a ribbon between the freshly painted white columns.

For its first 60 years, Cone-Bottoms served as a women's dormitory, and two of its former resident took part in the ribbon cutting. Betty Elrod and Sharon Heflin stood on the steps of their former dormitory and assisted their husbands, Ouachita president Ben M. Elrod and board chairman John Heflin, in dedicating the building.

Describing the building's tie between the history of the university and its future, OBU vice president for development Andrew Westmoreland said, "More than any place on campus, this building speaks of our heritage, of our tradition and of our connection with past and future generations.

The renovation of Cone-Bottoms Hall was funded through OBU's Decade of Progress capital campaign which surpassed its challenge goal of \$26.7 million in gifts and pledges. More than \$2.5 million was raised for the renovation of Cone-Bottoms.



OBU president Ben Elrod (left) and his wife, Betty, and board chairman John Heflin and his wife, Sharon, participate in the dedication of Cone-Bottoms Hall, which has been refurbished for service as Ouachita's administration building.

The renovation project, which began more than a year ago, focused primarily on the interior of the building, where dormitory rooms gave way to office suites.

The Grant Administration Center is the heart of the new Cone-Bottoms named for the father and son who each served as president of Ouachita. Administration offices in Cone-Bottoms include: president, development, administrative affairs,

academic affairs, career planning and placement, registrar, computer services, admission counseling, alumni, financial aid and the business office.

In the midst of the new offices, a hint of the past remains. The Dicken Historical Room is a preservation of the original size and styling of a Cone-Bottoms dormitory room. It was named in honor of Charles E. Dicken, who was president of Ouachita when the dormitory was built.

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Registration for Super Summer has begun! Space is limited to 1200 total participants. Individual registration forms are now available. **Call or write:** ABSC Youth Evangelism, Super Summer, P.O. Box 552, Little Rock, AR 72203; phone 501-376-4791, ext. 5222.

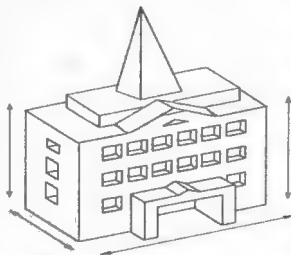


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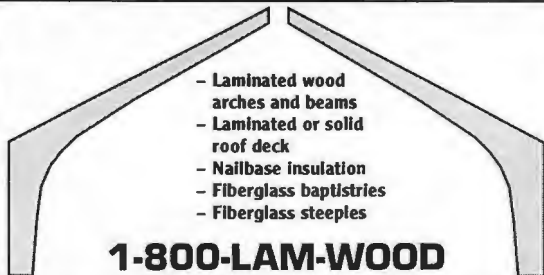
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ARKANSAS BAPTISTS



Ashley Association director of missions Billy Kite speaks during the March 5 dedication of the association's new 3,000-square-foot office building.

Ashley Association dedicates new office building during ceremony

Ashley County Association dedicated a new office building March 5 on property given to the association by Mount Olive Church in North Crossett.

J. W. Buckner, who helped organize the association, recalled that he led in establishing the association because he felt area pastors needed a local office rather than having to drive to Warren for associational meetings. Buckner, a former pastor of First Church in Crossett, is retired.

The associational office, first housed in First Church of Hamburg, later moved to a small office in Hamburg. It moved into the new facility from a 1,000-square-foot building. The new building includes an office, reception area, conference room, workroom, media room and restrooms.

"It was a joy for our church to provide the property and be involved in the construction of this facility which we are dedicating today," declared Ricky Lee, Mount Olive pastor and associational building committee chairman. "It is my desire that we dedicate this office as a place for associational churches to gather and plan for ways of serving our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

Others serving on the committee for the 3,000-square-foot brick structure that was built and furnished at a cost of \$102,000 were Karen Cherry, Eugene Howie, Eddie Felchle, Joann Mizell, Dan Webb, Jimmie Lewis and Travis Roberts.

Director of missions Billy Kite credited Arkansas Nailbenders and volunteer labor for helping keep construction costs to a minimum. He also affirmed associational church members for contributing the major portion of interior furnishings and

decorations, crediting associational secretary Margie Dopson and her husband, Ronald, for coordinating the office furnishings and decor. In addition, layman Steve Maxwell, a member of Mount Olive Church, was recognized for his availability and willingness to assist in numerous construction needs.

"This house of the Lord, being dedicated for His purposes, must be holy and set aside for His use," emphasized guest speaker Don Moore, executive director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention.

Moore noted that the office reveals a tremendous expression of the association's love for God, challenging them to always reflect that love, edify the church and honor the Lord as they use it for planning and organizing associational events.

"The people of the world will perceive the miraculous work of God as you love one another and are enthusiastic about sharing His word and doing His mission in this area," Moore concluded.

ABSC associate executive director Jimmie Sheffield congratulated the association on its major accomplishment and encouraged them to let the office become a "lighthouse" for people in the area.

He said strengths of an effective association include a program of ministry with a purpose; associational leaders with commitment; trust; and financial commitment of churches that enables an association to accomplish its purpose.

"How does this relate to your new building?" Sheffield asked. "It represents who you are as an association and should be used as a tool to foster ministry and as a resource center for its churches."

Leadership training focuses on equipping college students

Baptist student leaders will be trained for missions service and leadership roles during the 1995 Leadership Training Conference April 7-9 at Camp Paron. The conference, sponsored by the Arkansas Baptist State Convention student ministry department, will feature training workshops, fellowship and worship.

Department director David James said the conference's theme, "Truth Alive," will highlight the state's 1995-96 student ministry emphasis on Bible study. The emphasis is designed to match the 1996 ABCS theme, "Live the Word."

James said the conference is open to several groups. "In addition to Baptist Student Union leaders and members, the conference also will train BSU and Home Mission Board summer missionaries, Innovators participants and those involved in short-term mission projects," James explained.

He said the conference will feature workshops in six areas: leadership, discipleship, evangelism, worship, fellowship and missions.

Other sessions will focus on training skills for summer missions workers and their parents. A special missions commissioning service will be held for the missionaries Saturday evening.

The program also will feature a concert and worship services led by worship team

Mack and Shayla Blake of Ruston, La.; music from Perfect Praise, a music group from Henderson State University; Forgiveness by Faith, a drama team from Arkansas Technical University; and a leadership message from Arkansas Lieutenant Governor Mike Huckabee.

The conference will begin at 7:30 p.m. Friday and conclude Sunday following an 8:30 a.m. worship service.

The cost for the conference is \$25 per person, which includes meals and lodging. Participants must bring their own linens and personal items.

For additional information, contact James at the ABCS student ministry department; phone 501-376-4791, ext. 5142.

Girls in Action 'go ape' over Missions Safari camps in June, July

Girls in Action members will "go ape" over four GA Missions Safari Camps held "in the jungle known to natives as Camp Paron" in June and July, according to Sandy Wisdom-Martin.

Wisdom-Martin, an associate in the Arkansas Baptist State Convention Woman's Missionary Union department, said the camp sessions will feature two Mother-Daughter Camps, June 9-10 and 16-17, for girls who have completed grades

1-3 and their mothers, and two Mini-Camps, July 17-19 and 20-22, for girls who have completed grades 3-6.

"The focus at this year's camps will be on hunger," she explained. "We will focus on hunger by setting up a feeding station, educating on hunger issues and highlighting the Mississippi River Ministry."

She said the camps also will feature missionaries, singing, crafts, recreation and swimming.

The Mother-Daughter Camps will each begin at 5 p.m. Friday and conclude at 3 p.m. Saturday. The cost is \$20 per person, which includes meals, lodging, insurance and program costs.

The July 17-19 Mini-Camp will begin at 1:30 p.m. Monday and conclude at 10 a.m. Wednesday. The July 20-22 Mini-Camp will begin at 1:30 p.m. Thursday and conclude at 10 a.m. Saturday. Wisdom-Martin said Mini-Camp participants also will take a special surprise field trip during the camps.

The cost for the Mini-Camps is \$32 per person, which includes meals, lodging, insurance and program costs. Wisdom-Martin recommended a chaperone-to-camper ratio of one adult female chaperone for every five girls.

For additional information or to request a registration form, contact the state WMU department at P.O. Box 552, Little Rock, AR 72203; phone 501-376-4791, ext. 5137.

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Positions open—Part-time singles director, full-time minister of music, full-time minister of recreation/youth. Direct resumes to Sylvan Hills First Baptist Church, 9008 Sylvan Hills Hwy., North Little Rock, AR 72120.

Seeking—First Baptist Church, Horseshoe Bend, is seeking a minister of music/youth full-time. Salary range: \$19,000 to \$21,000 based on experience and education. Send resume to: Bill Haynes, HB 82 Box 202, Violet Hill, AR 72584.

Accepting resumes—for part-time director of music and youth. Send resumes to Search Committee, Union Valley Baptist Church, 932 Hwy. 64 West, Beebe, AR 72012.

Needed—Christian comedian for Saturday night seeker worship service in north Arkansas. Phone 1-800-842-8168, days; 501-492-5959, evenings.

Wanted—Person to plan, shop and cook each Wednesday. Pay negotiable. Call Rex Pilcher at Parkway Place Church, 224-3003.

Accepting resumes—for part-time youth minister. Send to First Baptist Church, P.O. Box 438, Dierks, AR 71833.

Position open—for full-time youth/music minister. Send resume to Search Committee, Calvary Baptist Church, P.O. Box 825, Osceola, AR 72370.

Classified ads must be submitted in writing to the ABN 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 must be paid for in advance. Classified ads shall be restricted to church-related subject matter.

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ARKANSAS BAPTISTS

'Set your mind on sharing a smile,' Terrell encourages ministers' wives

By Millie Gill

Executive Assistant, Arkansas Baptist

Arkansas Baptist ministers' wives were encouraged by Beverly Terrell to develop an attitude of happiness during their "Fresh Elastic for Stretched-Out Women" retreat March 3-4 at the Holiday Inn Airport in Little Rock.

"No matter your circumstances, set your mind on sharing a smile and giving joy to those you encounter daily," admonished Terrell, a world renowned lyric soprano and speaker from Houston, Texas. She also pointed out that daily Bible study and a deeper prayer life will equip ministers' wives for "rejoicing in the day which the Lord hath made" as well as "magnifying Him" with individuals they encounter.

Terrell, using adverse family situations and the illness of her husband as illustrations, said that despite difficult circumstances they were continuing to let God control their lives with laughter and joy. She explained how God has used the lifestyle changes brought about by her

husband's advanced Parkinson's disease as a teaching tool for making choices.

"I have learned to make choices and not to delegate some responsibilities to others rather than having a martyr complex and becoming stressed out," she explained. "We have to make choices and we must ask the Lord to give us the answers as we make them."

Terrell closed with a request for Arkansas Baptists to pray for her husband, Jack, a retired Southern Baptist minister, who will be evaluated May 16 at Emory Medical Center in Atlanta as a possible candidate for laser brain surgery, a new treatment for Parkinson's disease.

Kerri Evans of Keo, retreat chairman, was assisted by Whanda Swihart and Anita Clothier of Paragould, Beth Reynolds of Bytcheville, Laurie Seabaugh of North Little Rock, and Dan Jordan and Nan Maxwell, both of Little Rock. Lou Ann Banks of Paragould led praise and worship sessions. A creative workshop was led by Millie Gill, executive assistant to the editor of the *Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine*.

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The way to salvation

By Rich L. Kincl, pastor,
Central Church, Magnolia
Basic passage: Romans 10:1-21
Focal passage: Romans 10:8-17
Central truth: We are commissioned to share that salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ.

Paul did not cease praying for Israel's salvation. They had a zeal for God based on ancestral traditions. They did not know God's way of righteousness but tried to establish their own. He wanted his fellow Jews to understand that Christ put an end to the law which they could not perfectly keep. Paul illustrates righteousness by faith by using Moses' farewell exhortation to Israel (Deut. 30:11-14) in verses 5-8. The stumbling of Israel consisted of seeking righteousness by works and not by faith.

Many today still believe in a "works theology." It is validated in our churches when we come up with lists of do's and don'ts which must be followed to demonstrate you are a Christian. This passage focuses on confession that Jesus is Lord and belief that God raised Him from the dead.

■ *Salvation is available to all* (vv. 11-13).

Jesus' death on the cross was for every man. He offers the abundant life to each one who will trust Him. When it is said that He "is rich unto all that call upon Him" (v. 12), the thought is not so much that of the riches that reside in Christ as that of the readiness and fullness with which He receives those who call upon Him.

■ *We must tell our world that Jesus saves* (vv. 14-15).

We are the Lord's spokesmen. These verses indicate that Christ is represented by and speaks through His sent messengers. He speaks through our pastors as they faithfully proclaim the gospel message from our pulpits. He speaks through you and me as we faithfully share Christ with our families, friends, neighbors and work associates.

■ *Make a personal commitment to lead someone to Christ* (v. 17).

I will be eternally grateful to the university student who was a personal soul winner. He shared with me very clearly how I could be saved. Every Christian is a witness - good or bad - but very few are soul-winners. Determine today that you will follow Christ's command and lead others to Him.

Life and Work

Righteousness by faith

By R. Wilbur Herring,
pastor emeritus, Central Church,
Jonesboro
Basic passage: Romans 10:1-21
Focal passage: Romans 10:8-13
Central truth: Get right with God through faith, not works.

Obtaining God's righteousness:
The wrong way - works (vv. 1-5).

There is the wrong way of trying to obtain God's righteousness. It is by works. This was Israel's trouble. They had a zeal for God, but they were ignorant of just how to get right with God. They tried hard to establish their righteousness by working at keeping the law. They really thought and taught that the person who lived perfectly under the law would be saved.

The right way - faith (vv. 6-10).

The right way of obtaining God's righteousness that saves is by faith. You will be saved if you do two things: You must believe in your heart that God has raised the Lord Jesus from the dead and you must confess Him as your Lord and Savior. It is just that simple. It is just that necessary.

The message of faith (vv. 11-13).

Salvation (having a right relationship with God) comes by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8). Grace is God's part. Faith is our part. All we can do is to take God at His Word. We hear the Word, then we believe, and then we act on our belief. Have faith in God. (Mark 11:22). This is the answer. This is the key.

The messengers of faith (vv. 14-21).

People will not believe in Christ unless they hear the gospel. But how can they hear the gospel without a preacher? And how can they preach except they be sent? They won't go, they can't go, unless we send them. The church must be a mission station sending preachers to all places in the community and in the world. Missionary zeal is what we call it and we must make it our objective.

Bible Book

How will they find hope?

By Greg Stanley, pastor,
First Church, Warren
Basic passage: Romans 10:1-21
Focal passage: Romans 10:9-17
Central truth: Before the lost can believe, they must hear the good news of Jesus Christ.

Though unbelievers sometimes come to know Jesus Christ the first time they hear the gospel, most find salvation through a series of events and witnesses that move them toward that decision of faith. Paul seems to express this truth and encourage us to share the gospel in the heart of the 10th chapter of Romans.

A definite progression can be seen in verses 9-17. Paul begins in verses 9-13 by stating the absolute necessity for all people to commit themselves to Jesus as Savior and Lord for salvation. God offers this salvation to all, regardless of their race, nationality or status in life.

Jesus, God's Son, died to pay the penalty for man's sins and was raised to demonstrate that forgiveness and salvation are available. The way is through simple faith. The result is certain, never-failing, eternal salvation for the believer.

In verses 14-17, Paul then made a plea for all believers to share this wonderful good news. His appeal was structured in the form of several rhetorical questions designed to lead readers to a conclusion requiring action. "How can someone believe a message he's never heard?" Paul asked. "How will he hear unless someone shares the good news with him? Who will share if no one sends out messengers?"

Of course, all of these questions address impossible situations. Paul hoped his readers would draw the conclusion that they need to be involved in personally sharing the gospel and sending others to do so.

Paul added words of encouragement and motivation as he described how "beautiful, or welcome, or wonderful" are those who come bringing such good news. Though all will not immediately believe, sharing Jesus faithfully will lead many to salvation through faith in the Lord.

Through "Here's Hope, Share Jesus Now," and "Here's Hope, Jesus Cares for You," Southern Baptists have unique opportunities to obey our Lord's command to be His witnesses. Paul's words remind us of its central priority in the Kingdom's work.

Convention Uniform

Exercise your gift

By Rich L. Kincl, pastor,
Central Church, Magnolia
Basic passage: I Corinthians 14:1-33a
Focal passage: I Corinthians 14:1,
3-12, 18-19, 33a
Central truth: Every Christian
should discover his spiritual gift
and use it in service to God in the
church.

"About gifts of the Spirit, there are some things of which I do not wish you to remain ignorant.... In each of us the Spirit is manifested in one particular way, for some useful purpose" (1 Cor. 12:1, 7).

The term "gifts of the Spirit" is, in the Greek, simply "the spirituals," describing specific capacities produced in Christians by the Holy Spirit so that we might perform adequately as members of Christ's body.

■ *Spiritual gifts minister to others and build up the church (vv. 3-12).*

The abuses of glossolalia, or speaking in tongues, constituted a problem in the church of Corinth. Other concerns for Paul included factionalism, sexual immorality, members suing one another in pagan courts and denial of the resurrection, among others.

The errors and excesses of the glossolalists were but one manifestation among many of the deeper problem. They were spiritually immature and carnal (I Cor. 3:1-3).

A believer who properly ministers with a true spiritual gift ministers to others. One who prophesies, for example, speaks to men for edification, exhortation and comfort.

■ *Beware of counterfeits (vv. 18-19).* Lovelessness was the Corinthians' greatest problem. Paul emphasized that they should pursue love (chapter 13 and v. 14:1a).

Every spiritual gift can be counterfeited by Satan and used to influence both Christians and non-Christians. The magicians of Pharaoh's court had the ability to perform miracles (Exodus 7 and 8) and the false prophet in the Tribulation will perform miracles (Rev. 13).

■ *Discover your spiritual gift and use it for the glory of God (v. 33a).* God's people are to pursue love. How better may we exhibit our God-given love than by discovering, training, polishing and using our spiritual gifts?

Life and Work

The Crucifixion of Christ

By R. Wilbur Herring,
pastor emeritus, Central Church,
Jonesboro
Basic passage: Mark 15:1-41
Focal passage: Mark 15:15-32
Central truth: Christ was crucified
for our sins.

The 15th chapter of the Gospel of Mark is known as the "Crucifixion Chapter." Eight times the word "crucify" or "crucifixion" is used in this one chapter, which consists of three parts:

■ *His trial before Pilate (vv. 1-14).*

The Sanhedrin met early on the morning of Christ's death. They trumped up charges against Him which would be worthy of Roman condemnation to death. They then took Him before Pilate, the Roman governor, for trial. Pilate asked five questions—two to Jesus and three to the people. These five questions make an interesting study of the lack of grounds to crucify the Lord. The last question asked was directed to the people, "Why, what has He done?" The people cried out just that much more that Jesus should be crucified, yet Jesus was innocent of any wrong.

■ *His scourging (v. 15).*

You can enumerate the step-by-step progress of His crucifixion, but here it is well for us to consider the horribleness of the scourging before the crucifixion.

The prisoner was bent over to expose his back. The whip was a long leather thong with sharp pieces of lead or bone tied along the way that literally tore a man's back into ribbons. It sometimes tore a man's eye out or ripped open his bowels. Some went raving mad from the ordeal and very few could survive the punishment. In this condition they led our Lord away for crucifixion.

■ *His crucifixion (vv. 16-41).*

For six hours Christ hung on the cross and suffered untold agony. The chief priests and the people mocked Him, made fun of Him and even spit upon Him. At noon there was darkness over the land until three o'clock in the afternoon when Jesus cried with a loud voice and "gave up the ghost." The veil in the temple was torn from top to bottom and the centurion who stood by said, "Truly, this is the Son of God."

In the plan of God it was necessary for Christ to suffer and shed His blood for the remission of our sins. In Him we have life—life abundant and everlasting.

Bible Book

Good news travels fast!

By Greg Stanley, pastor,
First Church, Warren
Basic passage: Mark 1:1-45
Focal passage: Mark 1:1, 12-33, 45b
Central truth: The good news of
Christ's coming is too wonderful to
be hidden.

We often speak of rumor or gossip being spread "by the grapevine." It seems that negative and sensational information just naturally becomes widely known in a short time. However, it is also true that good news spreads with amazing speed.

That seems to be what Mark intended to say in this first chapter of "the beginning of the gospel (the good news) about Jesus Christ" (NIV). The writer sets the stage for his "gospel of action" as he portrays Jesus as a Savior who seems to literally "hit the ground running" in these opening scenes.

One of Mark's favorite words, frequently used in this gospel, is the word translated "straightway," "immediately," "at once" or "as soon as," depending on the Bible translation. The word gives a feeling of movement and urgency and seems to tie one episode in the Savior's life to another in a quickly moving panorama of ministry, teaching and redemption by God's perfect Servant. It was used four times in this first chapter.

Following His baptism by John the Baptist, Jesus demonstrated His power over Satan by overcoming his temptations. With royal authority, Jesus announced the coming of the Kingdom and called men to turn from sin to faith in Him. Men recognized the truth and authority of His teaching.

Jesus showed His spiritual command of men in calling His first disciples beside the lake. He vanquished evil demonic spirits with a word. His control over physical diseases of all types was easily seen. The good news traveled fast and soon Jesus was literally swamped with people coming to Him for help.

We too must recognize Jesus' authority and lordship over our lives and respond to His call to repent, enter the Kingdom and follow Him in spiritual labors. In this relationship, we find that He is master over any challenge we will face.

We also must recognize the tremendous appeal of this good news about Jesus. As we announce the coming of God's perfect Servant, many will be drawn to Him for the answers they need for their lives. We can truly become "fishers of men."

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NEWS DIGEST

Chapel service sparks revival on Southwestern campus

FORT WORTH, TX (BP)—A spontaneous spirit of revival reportedly began at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary March 1, following a chapel message by a Texas Baptist pastor whose church and community are in the midst of spiritual renewal.

John Avant, a Southwestern graduate and pastor of Coggin Avenue Baptist Church, Brownwood, told a packed Truett Auditorium audience, "I don't understand why God is doing it (a spiritual awakening) where it is, but we can never predict how the Spirit of God will work. We are a work in progress."

Avant's chapel message was immediately followed by what many seminary students are calling an outpouring of healing, purging and cleansing among students, faculty, staff and administrators. Southwestern president Ken Hemphill described the activity as "a genuine moving of God and the beginning of authentic spiritual revival."

The morning chapel service continued into the late evening March 1. Many teachers called off classes during the day so they and their students could remain in the auditorium.

Southwestern decides against plan to appeal probation

FORT WORTH, TX (BP)—Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary will not continue to appeal the probation ruling of the Association of Theological Schools, according to president Ken Hemphill.

"Our decision was based largely on our desire to move positively toward the future rather than to dwell in the past," Hemphill said. "A lengthy appeal process would consume energy and resources that could best be spent on the building of the seminary for the glory of God."

Hemphill emphasized that "the decision not to appeal does not mean that we agree with the decision of ATS to place Southwestern on probation, but it does mean that we are united in our conviction that we can work quickly and constructively through probation."

Christian Life Commission elects new media director

RALEIGH, NC (BP)—Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission trustees have voted to call Oklahoma associational director of missions Bill Merrell as director of media and product development.

The trustees voted unanimously in favor of Merrell, 51, who served as pastor of seven churches for 27 years before accepting the associational position in 1991. He is a graduate of Dallas Baptist University, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Merrell, who said he regularly addressed moral issues as a pastor and DOM, was a founding board member of two pro-life crisis pregnancy centers.

In other action, the board voted to oppose the confirmation of Henry Foster as surgeon general. Board members also voted to endorse the recent report of the Program and Structure Committee of the SBC Executive Committee. Commissioners noted the proposal would "enhance" the CLC's work by giving the agency a higher profile in a streamlined denominational structure.

Federal courts differ on religious freedom statute

SAN ANTONIO (ABP)—Two federal courts have addressed the constitutionality of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, reaching opposite conclusions.

District Judge Helen Gillmor of Hawaii upheld the statute in a February ruling while District Judge Lucius Bunton of San Antonio ruled March 13 that Congress intruded on the power and duty of the judiciary when it enacted RFRA, violating the separation of powers between the branches of government outlined in the U.S. Constitution.

The religious freedom law was overwhelmingly approved by Congress and signed by President Clinton in November 1993 with unprecedented support from U.S. religious bodies. The law restored a stiff legal standard that allowed government to restrict religious practice only for a compelling reason.

Baptist group drops ties with Peace Fellowship over gays

VALLEY FORGE, PA (ABP)—A ministry arm of the American Baptist Churches in the USA has severed ties with the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America over a recent statement urging "justice" for gays, lesbians and others "whose sexual orientation has caused them to suffer persecution and alienation."

The executive committee of the American Baptist Board of National Ministries voted to discontinue its relationship with the Baptist Peace Fellowship until the organization's "stated aims, goals and resolutions are consistent with American Baptist policies."