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August 27, 1992

Arkansas Baptist State Convention

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Arkansas Baptist



Volume 91, Number 18

August 27, 1992



COVER

'Break the Glory Free' *Page 23*

**Children out
of control**

Page 6

**In Gaza:
Still safe with God**

Page 12

**Annuity Board
sets rates**

Page 18

Arkansas Baptist

At a glance

6 Children out of control

When a children's Sunday school teacher is faced with a classroom of children out of control - or just one disruptive child - the first concern is regaining control of the situation. However, teachers should work on helping children develop self-control that will shape their behavior for longer than the one hour in Sunday School.

12 In Gaza: still safe with God

Russellville nurse educator Donna Cheatham felt inspired to be a volunteer medical missionary to Iraq, but God had other plans for her. When she contacted the Foreign Mission Board about the possibility of serving, she learned that needs were much greater in the Gaza strip. In the early summer of 1992, she spent a month in the strife-torn area, where she never believed herself to be in great danger, but "felt uneasy a lot of the time."

16 See You at the Pole

See You at the Pole, a national prayer movement among teenagers began in Arkansas in 1991 with more than 10,300 young people gathering at their schools' flagpoles to pray for 15-30 minutes for campus, community and national concerns. This year the event will take place on campuses across Arkansas on Sept. 16.

18 Annuity Board sets rates

The pricing of Southern Baptists' Church Comprehensive Medical Plan will be done according to state experiences in the future. Board trustees meeting in Atlanta heard reports of a modest decline in claims, but a slow, steady loss in the number of participants. The state-by-state rating was devised to bring more fairness to the rate structure.

Cover Story

(87) photo / Jim Vanneman



'Break the Glory Free' ...23

Kaye Brooks, from First Church of Albuquerque, N.M., played the role of storyteller when her choir performed the musical drama, "Break the Glory Free," at Glorietta Baptist Conference Center. The music was born out of the personal pain and grief of its author, Billie Pate.

Also inside

Speak Up

You'll Be Glad to Know.....	4
Letter to the Editor	5
The President Speaks	6

Local & State

Arkansas All Over	8
Music and discipleship	11
Preschool kiss to altar	11
MRM Convocation	14
World Changers	15

Nation

Trustees approve restructure	17
NOBTS action protested	18
Lloyd surprises doctor again	23

Lessons.....	21-22
--------------	-------

World

Alexanders retire	24
-------------------------	----

Next issue: Sept. 10

THIRD IN A FOUR-PART SERIES

The impact of termination

by L.B. Jordan

Special to the Arkansas Baptist

Dr. Don Moore stated in a recent Arkansas Baptist article entitled "The Church Fight Virus" that, "The pastor, church, or both will lose. There are no winners in church fights." Such a statement should bring serious Christians to our senses and cause us deep grief.

In a recent survey done by the ABCS and Jeff Pounders of OBU, we learned some interesting things about the "Pastor Termination Process" in Arkansas Baptist State Convention churches. The survey related the following characteristics of the process: (1) it is non-rational, (2) deliberate, (3) gradual, (4) behind-scenes, (5) nitpicking, (6) planned, (7) closed-minded, (8) group, (9) confusion, (10) intentional, (11) mean-spirited, (12) confrontational, and (13) loud.

The respondents who were involved in the study were male, female, pastors, DOMs, lay persons, counselors, etc. Their responses did not always agree, but the conclusions above were predominant. With such emotions and actions being used in pastor (or staff) terminations, how could we escape serious consequences following terminations? Occasionally we find a church that handles the need for pastor/staff change with diplomacy, kindness and Christian compassion, but generally these qualities are conspicuously absent. Churches which have adopted procedural guidelines generally do a more acceptable job than those without guidelines.

Upon termination the pastor is faced with many fears. Those fears may be centered around immediate physical and material needs. Housing, food, health insurance and schooling for the children may head the list of fears centered in material needs. If the pastor terminated doesn't have marketable skills outside his church related skills, the fear is multiplied because most ministers know that there is an "over supply" of ministers.

The terminated pastor may also suffer at the point of doubts. He may doubt God himself. He may question the validity of his faith, his adequacy as a minister, the genuineness of his calling. A complete loss of any sense of self-worth often accompanies termination.

Perhaps anger is the most overriding emotion felt in the early weeks following being terminated. Inability to work through the anger to a healthy conclusion may

cancel a minister's ability to fulfill his calling in any subsequent opportunities given. An acquaintance of mine in another state was terminated about 20 years ago. He seemingly has "hugged his anger and self-righteousness to his heart" and has never been used by God in church work since.

Anger, fear and doubt often bring a paralysis-like state to the terminated minister. Inability to focus on what needs to be done at this crucial point can incur serious consequences. Family members, loving members of the church, pastors of neighboring churches, associational DOMs and other denominational persons need to seek out the minister in those days and weeks following termination. Their love and good counsel can help steer the hurting minister and his family in a positive direction.

The pastor's wife suffers perhaps even more sharply than her husband. She has seen his dreams destroyed, his leadership rejected and probably heard him being verbally abused. She may wonder if he will survive and be anything like the man she has watched develop. On top of this, she may have no one she can talk with, no support group.

Much time is usually required for a terminated pastor's wife to regain her balance. Having experienced people injuring her and her family, when she had perceived these folks as friends, is hard to overcome. Surveys indicate that a majority of these wives would like for their husbands to be in some other kind of position than that of pastor if he remains in a church vocation.

A minister's children are truly the vic-

tims in forced terminations. If they are in school, children from the church sometimes say extremely cruel things they have heard from their parents. Teenagers sometimes are so hurt that they turn away from church, refusing to attend any church activities whatever.

Unannounced conflict affects the church with serious consequences. Some of the consequences include: (1) The pastor has to leave (the #1 consequence); (2) Some members leave; (3) Some members withhold tithes and offerings; (4) Some lay leaders resign leadership positions; (5) Staff members often leave; (6) Some church activities are disrupted; (7) Sometimes the church splits and a new congregation forms.

'Handling conflict... with proper use of biblical principles is an urgent need.'

Along with the consequences listed above, many long-standing friendships are terminated between church members. This rupturing of relationships can affect individuals, families, churches and whole communities for many years.

We will always have conflict in our world and in our churches. Handling conflict, especially as it relates to pastors/staff members, with the proper use of biblical principles is an urgent need. Improper handling has negative consequences so serious that we must turn to God's way of dealing with each other.

Arkansas Baptist

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DON MOORE

You'll Be Glad To Know

Following the request of the Task Force on Conflict and Termination, I have written two articles for the Newsmagazine. With this additional column some readers may be feeling that all of this is a bit too much.

The abundance of Scriptures that address the fellowship of the church indicate that conflict has always been a problem and always will be. Even the church at Ephesus was told to walk "with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:2-3). Paul instructed the Colossian Christians to "forbear one another and forgive one another, if any man have a quarrel against any, even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye" (Col. 3:13).

It was a united church that experienced the fullness of the Holy Spirit and the power to turn the Roman world upside down. It is a united church that nurtures children and new converts and appeals to the unsaved.

"But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace" (Ja. 3:14-18).

Scripture requires that our churches learn to get along better. The casualties of church wars are more tragic than national wars. Damage cannot be totalled here, but it is enormous.

Few churches (6 percent) ever call on anyone outside their congregation for help. Consequently, the cycle is repeated over and over. I am encouraging you who may find yourself in such a situation to consider getting someone outside your congregation, or even outside your association, to help you work step by step through your problem. There is hope! There is help! Call 376-4791, ext. 5148, to get the name of someone in your area trained to help in this process.



J. Everett Sneed:

Servant, scholar, statesman

by Gene Puckett

Editor, N.C. Biblical Recorder

"There are many people who, in their own minds, question their self-worth. Such an unhealthy attitude will prevent a person from being all God wants him to be and will result in a miserable, unproductive life."

These are the first words of the last editorial J. Everett Sneed wrote for the *Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine*. They are symbol and substance of what that editor felt about God's value of each person; they are not descriptive of himself because he knew who he was.

First and foremost, Everett was a devoted servant of the Most High God. He found salvation and a mission for his life in Jesus Christ. He was modest, humble, unassuming and always devoted to serving Baptists through his witness and ministry for Christ.

The Arkansas editor was a genuine Christian in the authentic Baptist tradition. He understood freedom and responsibility. He knew the grace of God and walked in love with his fellow believers. He aspired to nothing more than to serve... his Lord and his fellow Baptists.

Everett had an unusually good mind. His academic track record demonstrated that and his implementation of what he had learned benefited churches and individuals as he preached revivals, taught Bible classes in the churches and students in the Boyce Bible School Center in Arkansas.

A perpetual student, he loved Greek and disciplined himself to read at least an hour every day in the original language of the New Testament. His doctorate from Heidelberg enhanced his understanding of theology and yet he had the capacity to translate profound thoughts into graspable language. His editorial style was never flamboyant and sensational, always calm and perhaps ponderous to the casual reader. It was always helpful and instructive.

Back in 1978, six editors of state Baptist papers were invited by government officials to the Middle East, both the Jewish and the Arab worlds. It was an exciting trip which included conferences and visits with royalty and high elected officials. Sidetrips let us increase our understanding of the ancient world.

In this context, Everett overwhelmed us all with his ability to read the Greek and Hebrew from various stones and markers in areas being excavated by archaeologists.

Just last November, a group of journalists—Baptists and secular—spent ten days in Israel. For Everett, it was his 11th trip. When Tennessee Editor Fletcher Allen, president of the Southern Baptist Press Association, suggested we have a worship service on Mount Beatitudes, Everett was the unanimous choice to bring the message. He stood, Bible in hand, his back to the Mount and the beautiful Sea of Galilee before him, and spoke to us all spontaneously and precisely without a note or an outline. It was a rare, rare moment!

J. Everett Sneed was a Baptist statesman of the highest order. He wanted only the best for Baptists and if that meant personal sacrifices, then so let it be. It was always the cause of Christ through the Baptist tradition that came first with him.

For nearly 20 years, he led the Arkansas paper through good times and bad. Prior to 1979, the paper steadily grew under his influence and developed its own Board of Directors to give added stature and strength to the paper's mission.

Like most of the papers, the SBC crisis did great damage to the Arkansas Baptist. Enormous increases in second-class postage rates compounded the situation and produced economic stresses. Every problem in the book rolled over the paper; Everett took the blows and did his best.

J. Everett Sneed will go into the record books as a casualty of the SBC controversy, along with others who had their ministries marred or limited, their careers of leadership shortened.

But the God of eternity knows His true servants. His real Bible scholars, His genuine Baptist statesmen and one of the finest has just made the Great Transition to receive his crown of righteousness.

As Everett said in the last paragraph of his last editorial: "God can help each person to become all God wants him to be. The Apostle Paul stated it well as he said, 'I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.' (Phil. 4:13).

(Originally printed in the July 18, 1992, North Carolina *Biblical Recorder*. Reprinted by permission.)

Letters to the Editor

On homosexuality

Where do Arkansas Baptists stand on the subject of homosexuality? Moderate heresy teaches that Baptists can believe anything they please except abstinence of tithing, and calling sin sin. Here are two resolutions adopted by the 1990 Arkansas Baptist State Convention.

Resolution No. 8: On Homosexuality

and Civil Rights

WHEREAS, the Bible unequivocally teaches that homosexual behavior is a sin and is clearly unacceptable behavior for the Christian (Ro. 1, 1 Cor 6:9-10); and

WHEREAS, God commands Christians to love sinners and there is an important difference between toleration of deviant lifestyles and official recognition and acceptance of homosexuality by the government; and

WHEREAS, we support current law which protects rights for legitimate minorities of race, national origin, gender,

and religion; and

WHEREAS, the homosexual rights movement has attempted to gain for their sexual preference the status deserving of civil rights protection equal to that of race national origin, gender, and religion; and

WHEREAS, homosexuality is morally unconscionable learned behavior and lifestyle, not deserving of government support and civil rights protection as a minority.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that we, the messengers of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, meeting at Immanuel Baptist Church, Little Rock, October 30-31, 1990, reaffirm the biblical truth that homosexuality is a sinful and unacceptable lifestyle.

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that we oppose the growing cultural assimilation and acceptance on the basis of sexual preference, and all efforts to provide any governmental endorsement, sanction recognition or acceptance of the homosexual lifestyle.

Resolution No. 9: Homosexuality and Public Education

WHEREAS, on June 15th the Arkansas Gay and Lesbian Task Force sponsored a one-day seminar wherein a new program was introduced for public school students, called "One in Ten," designed to help homosexual students feel good about being homosexual and to teach all other students that "gay is good,"

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, that we as Arkansas Baptists would be opposed to any present or future involvement of a state agency of any kind perpetuating a program to encourage, affirm or give credibility to homosexuality. — Jim Glover, Heber Springs

BUDDY SUTTON

The President Speaks

The field is white for harvest



One of the last occasions I had to hear Dr. W. O. Vaught was when he made a heroic effort to meet a commitment to speak to the Arkansas Billy Graham Crusade team in 1989. Dying with cancer and speaking through a tracheotomy he quoted John 4:35, "Do you not say 'there are yet four months and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that are white for harvest."

As the old preacher visualized what he believed Jesus saw in the fields white for harvest, it greatly moved the hearts of some of the world's most experienced campainers.

We have a tendency to lose the vision of fields white for harvest and sometimes feel that they have gone away for our time. They haven't. I was reminded of that fact several nights ago as I watched with great interest the concluding ceremonies of Vacation Bible School at Immanuel Baptist Church in Little Rock. Enrollment for the week was a record 789 children, all below the age of sixth grade. Fifty percent of the children were non-Immanuel; 45. decisions were recorded.

This picture emerges from our Siloam Springs experience. This summer we had a record 7,315 registered; 472 made professions of faith; 678 rededicated their lives and 37 made commitments for full time church service.

Theorizing the reasons for these numbers may not be too important. What is important is the fact that the

children are available to us in great numbers. For people laying claims to evangelistic spirits are being offered the most winnable prospects in the world today. Jesus graphically explained this truth:

"He called a little child and had him stand among them. And he said: 'I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me.' " (Mt. 18:2-5).

But there is a frightfully awesome side to the picture. We are told that 85 percent of all of the people being saved today are below the age of 13. Only one in 1,000 accepts Christ after the age of 30. For those who pass the window of childhood with no one to tell them about Jesus the odds of salvation approach zero. We always connect children with the future but the moment of their salvation is now.

We must seize the moment and devote our best minds and resources to the task. Routine thought and traditional approaches are not sufficient. It is time to pray and mobilize for extraordinary events which could surpass our greatest days of revival.

The field is white for harvest.

William H. "Buddy" Sutton, a Little Rock attorney and member of Immanuel Church, Little Rock, is president of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention.

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(BP photo) / Frank Wm. White



Understanding children's feelings provides a ministry for the Sunday School worker.

Out of control

Developing a child's self-control produces long-term behavior

by Frank Wm. White
Baptist Sunday School Board

NASHVILLE (BP)—When a children's Sunday School teacher is faced with a classroom of children out of control — or just one disruptive child — the first concern is regain, control of the situation.

However, teachers should work on helping children develop self-control that will shape their behavior for longer than the one hour in Sunday School, according to Linda Collins, children's division director at First Baptist Church of Ferguson in St. Louis, Mo.

"Control is what we are trying to achieve but outer control might not be the best option," Collins told participants in a session on guiding behavior in children's Sunday School during the Sunday School Leadership Conference at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center, July 25-Aug. 1.

While maintaining control for the moment may seem important, children's workers should be motivated by what is best for the child, Collins said.

"We need to focus on children's feelings more than their behavior. Usually, their feelings parallel their actions. The focus should be away from what they are doing and on what they are feeling," she said.

Understanding a child's feelings provides an opportunity for ministry as the worker finds why the child is angry or upset. Often, problems at home or at school can be responsible for a child's behavior, she

explained.

Without understanding the reason for those feelings, the worker will not be able to seize the opportunity to minister to the child and his family, she said.

"Children need to believe that Sunday School is a good place to be — a great place where they feel loved and accepted," she said. "The unruly child may be disruptive but that child is a person that Christ died for."

Rather than correcting a behavior problem in front of other children, workers should think about dealing with the problem individually.

"Deal with the child first. Make sure the child knows what he has done that is considered unacceptable," she said.

Only after efforts to deal directly with the child have been exhausted should the worker address the parent with the behavior problem, she said.

Collins offered guidelines for children's Sunday School which she said should help limit behavior problems.

Teachers should create meaningful activities that the children are interested in. "Don't try to pour Bible study down their throats. Use the material and suggested activities to make it fun," she said.

Creating choices will give a child a feeling of control. "The more choices we can give them, the more response we will get from them," she said. A choice may be between colored pencils or markers, but it in-

volves the child in deciding what he is going to do or how he will do it.

By focusing on positive behavior, a teacher can reinforce the things a child is doing that are acceptable and draw attention away from the unacceptable behavior.

Children deal with requirements for proper behavior at school and in other situations, Collins pointed out. While they should be expected to have self-control in Sunday School as they do in school, "We should be able to deal with them better in Sunday School. Whatever they are dealing with at school, we should be able to deal with it better at Sunday School," she said.

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Don't ignore child abuse

by Frank Wm. White
Baptist Sunday School Board

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)—If church workers and ministers aren't seeing child abuse with children they come in contact with, it may be they aren't looking, according to a trauma center doctor and Sunday School worker.

"There are abused children in your church. There are child abusers in your church and there can be child abusers teaching in your Sunday School," said James Mullen, a trauma center doctor at Sharp Memorial Hospital in San Diego, Calif., and member of Bethel Baptist Church in Escondido, Calif.

Mullen was attending a Sunday School Leadership Conference at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center July 25-Aug. 1.

In the past 17 years, Mullen said, he has worked in preschool, children's and youth Sunday School areas and has discovered child abuse with all three age groups.

He said the problem is not limited to Southern California but is a national problem.

In his church, Mullen has called police and child welfare authorities to come into the church when child abuse is noted. "The church must be willing to work with authorities," he said.

Laws dealing with reporting child abuse vary by states and it is important to know individual state laws, said Belvin Cox, a preschool Sunday School consultant at the Sunday School Board who led a session on child abuse.

"Don't wait until you encounter a problem to find out the legal guidelines for your state," Cox said. "You need to know before you get to that point."

Most states require that child abuse be reported by any person who suspects it or becomes aware of it. "It is a legal matter and must be handled as such," Cox said.

Dispelling myths, Cox said child abuse is not limited to lower-income families. "It is just as likely to happen in upper-income families. You can't tell by the clothes they wear," he said.

Cox encourages workers to listen to children. "Listen with your ears, your eyes and your heart," Cox said.

Workers also should know warning signs of abuse such as bruises in odd patterns or in varying stages of healing. Burns, cuts or other injuries that a child does not explain or has an implausible explanation for also may be indications, Cox said.

Abuse comes in many forms and is not limited to physical abuse, Cox said. Abuse can include neglect, sexual abuse and emotional abuse in addition to physical abuse.

Sunday School Board materials dealing with abuse include a chapter in "Equipping Deacons in Caring Skills," Vol. 2 and a chapter in "Ministry with Youth in Crisis," both published by Convention Press.

For youth, two tapes from The 24-Hour

Counselor are available on abuse. "I'm Being Sexually Abused" is tape seven in the 12-tape series. The 24-Hour Counselor II. "I'm Being Physically Abused" is the second tape in the 12-tape series of The 24-Hour Counselor I. Both are published by Broadman Press.

Cox encourages church workers to get information about child abuse from state departments dealing with child welfare.

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Arkansas All Over

MILLIE GILL

People

J.C. Simpleton retired July 19 as pastor of New Hope Church, Eudora. He may be contacted for supply, interims, or revivals at Rt. 1, Box 96, New Edinburg, AR 71660; telephone 501-352-8384.

Scott Johnson has joined the staff of Armored Church as minister of music and youth. He is a senior at Williams Baptist College.

Benny Massey is serving as pastor of West View Church in Paragould, going there from Bethany Church in Manila where he had served for 16 years.

Larry Kladrick has resigned as pastor of First Church in Blytheville, effective Sept. 6 to become pastor of First Church in Atascocita, Texas.

Mark E. Smith is serving as part-time music and youth director for Plainview Church.

Patty Huston, organist for Rosedale Church in Little Rock, was presented July 26 with a certificate for 14 years perfect attendance in Sunday morning worship. All but two of these services have been in her home church.

David Jackson observed 10 years of service Aug. 1 on the staff of Central Church in Jonesboro.

Jim Glover, who has been serving as interim pastor, began serving Aug. 5 as full-time pastor of South Side Church of Heber Springs.

Richard Michael Raymond will join the staff of East Side Church of Paragould in September, coming there from First Church of Kennedale, Texas. He is a graduate of Texas A & M University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Thomas E. Williams will begin serving in September as pastor of First Church of DeWitt, coming there from Richland Church in West Memphis.

Pete Cragar has completed more than six months of service as interim pastor of Casa First Church. He and his wife, Allie Mae, were honored by the congregation with a potluck supper Aug. 16. Cragar may be contacted at P.O. Box 534, Perryville, AR 72126; telephone 501-889-5277.

Gene Tanner began serving Aug. 16 as pastor of First Church of Casa.

Ray Edwards recently resigned as pastor of First Church of Berryville to enter full-time evangelism. He may be contacted at P.O. Box 287, Berryville, AR 72616; telephone 501-423-6488 or 501-423-2028.

Carl Huddleston retired Aug. 16 as pastor of First Church of Henderson. In his honor, the church hosted an area-wide potluck fellowship meal at the conclusion of the morning worship service.

Bill Tyler resigned July 26 as pastor of Fine Grove Church, Pochontas.

Don Crawford began serving July 26 as pastor of First Church of Greenway. He and his wife, Ruth Ann, live in Kennett, Mo.

Bert Self began serving Aug. 16 as pastor of Grace Church in Augusta. He and his wife, Becky, and their son, Jonathan, moved there from Bay where he had been serving on the staff of First Church.

Steve Harrington, a member and deacon

of First Church in Dardanelle, has joined the church staff as minister of youth, replacing Ken Canitz who recently resigned.

Rudy King is serving as pastor of Walcott Church.

Mike Neefe has joined the staff of Calvary Church in Paragould as minister of music and youth.

Jeff Gammill has resigned as minister of music and youth at First Church of Charleston to complete his college education at Oklahoma State University in Stillwater.

H. Jewell Morris of Kibler, a retired Southern Baptist pastor, having served churches in Clear Creek Association, died Aug. 11 at age 90. He was also a retired teacher for the Crawford County school system. Survivors are his wife, Nita Morris; a son, Jewell Morris Jr. of Van Buren; a daughter, Elwanda Morris of Houston; a sister; and three grandchildren. Memorials may be made to Kibler Church.

ABN photo / Millie Gill



Maumelle First Church, with a current membership of 352 and founded Sept. 25, 1977, by 10 members, celebrated 15 years of service Aug. 15-16. A banquet, in which pastor Bill Hammond challenged the congregation to pay its building indebtedness within three years, launched the weekend of activities. Hammond, in his challenge, said, "With early payment of our building indebtedness we will have extra monies for our ministry programs, reaching out to meet both the physical and spiritual needs of others." Other weekend speakers were former pastors Cline Ellis, Marty Brown and Steve Wilkes, James Burleson, minister of music, coordinated music programs. A break period between two Sunday morning worship services provided a time for Hammond (right) to greet Ellis, the first pastor, and talk with charter members Jess and Willastenin Odum.

James K. Newman is retiring as a Southern Baptist pastor, having served churches for 39 years in Missouri and Arkansas. He recently resigned as pastor of Walnut Valley Church, Hot Springs, following seven years service. Newman will reside in Bauxite and will be available for supply and interim work.

Danny Green of Weatherford, Texas, recently assumed the pastorate of London First Church, coming there from Hilltop Church in Weatherford. A native of Lavaca, he is a graduate of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Green and his wife, Teresa, have two sons, Lee, and Bobby.

W. Francis McBeth, for the 27th consecutive year, has received an American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers Award for his music compositions. McBeth is chairman of the theory-composition department of the School of Music at Ouachita Baptist University.

Frances Imus recently retired as church secretary for First Church in Brinkley, following 31 years of service.

Troy Gramling has resigned as pastor of Mount Zion Church, Paragould.

Marvin Emmons has resigned as pastor of New Hope Church, Black Oak.

Leland Worlow has resigned as pastor of Providence Church, Jonesboro.

Dennis Davis has resigned as pastor of Strawfloor Church in Jonesboro to serve as pastor of Temple Church in Crossett.

James Tucker will begin serving Aug. 30 as pastor of West Helena Church, going there from Fair Oaks Church.

Marty Polston is serving as pastor of Ridgeway Church, Nashville, going there from First Church of Madison.

Aubrey Neal has resigned as pastor of Gilmore Church to serve as pastor of a Memphis church.

Jimmy Vinson has resigned as pastor of Campbell Station Church to serve as pastor of Northside Church of Batesville.

Randall Hawks of Blytheville died Aug. 9 at age 64. He was a member of First Church of Blytheville where he served as a deacon, choir member, and in other leadership positions. Survivors include his wife, Iva Seay Hawks; two sons, Randy Hawks of Fremont, Calif., and Brad Hawks of Blytheville; two daughters, Stacy Smith of Fort Worth, Texas, and Paige Hawks of Blytheville; seven grandchildren; and four great-grandchildren. Memorials may be made to First Church of Blytheville.

Briefly

Dardanelle Calvary Church licensed Terry Byrd to the gospel ministry July 19.

Crow Mountain Church at Russellville voted unanimously July 26 to approve plans to build an auditorium, education building, and fellowship hall at an approximate cost of \$280,000.

Delaware Church ordained Pastor Mark Ronald Lashley to the ministry July 26. Program participants included Stephen Davis, pastor of First Church of Russellville, Jeff Cheatham, director of missions for Arkansas River Valley Association, Bob Parsley, pastor of First Church of Dardanelle, and deacons of the church.

Russellville First Church 31-member mission team has returned from leading a vacation Bible school, and Bible studies for the Armitage Church in Chicago, Ill.

Russellville Second Church voted unanimously July 9 to accept a Statement of Objectives that outlined the church's goals and programs in preparation for the 21st century. Emphasis will be placed in evangelism, missions, worship, discipleship, and fellowship. The church's youth mission team has returned from Oviedo, Fla., where they assisted the Alayafa Community Church with a vacation Bible school.

Walnut Street Church in Jonesboro youth mission team has returned from LeMars, Iowa, where they led Bible schools, presented musical programs, and did personal witnessing.

Heber Springs First Church recently named L.O. Baker, George Cotton, Henry Gleck, and George McCown as deacons emeritus. These men, between them representing 170 years of service, were recognized Aug. 9 by the church.

Nashville First Church recently closed a revival that resulted in 40 professions of faith, 38 rededications, and three additions by letter. William Blackburn of Fort Smith was evangelist. David Blase is pastor.

Park Place Church in Hot Springs observed 90 years of service Aug. 9 with the formal dedication of its redecoreated auditorium. Damon Shook of Houston, Texas, was speaker. A potluck meal was served at noon, followed by a 2 p.m. program that featured testimonies and music by "Glory Sound." Michael D. Petty is pastor.



Yorktown First Church observed homecoming June 14 with a noteburning service, celebrating payment of indebtedness on the sanctuary that was first used May 21, 1978. Burning the note were (left to right) Clara Baugh, widow of Segard Baugh, who was chairman of the building committee; Pastor Coy W. Camp; and Bob Lamb, pastor during the building of the sanctuary. Other guests included former Pastor Ledelle Bailey and Mrs. Gene Smith. Roy Baugh, since deceased, and Sammie Edwards were named as deacons emeritus as a part of the homecoming observance.

Concord Church in Van Buren recently held a vacation Bible school with an enrollment of 158 and a high attendance of 109. There were 14 professions of faith. James Rice is pastor. The church's 27-member mission team recently returned from Lake Tenkiller in Oklahoma where they assisted with camps and ministered to several hundred people in lake services. The trip resulted in three professions of faith. Dave Jackson is minister of youth.

Cave City Eastside Church youth mission team returned July 25 from conducting a week-long vacation Bible school at Garner Church near Ashland, Ky., resulting in a VBS enrollment of 106, average attendance of 91, and eight professions of faith.

Owensville Church will be in revival Sept. 13-18 with Terrell Wallace of Malvern as the evangelist. Clarence Hill of Hot Springs will direct the music. Hurlon Ray is pastor.

Bayou Meto Church in Jacksonville youth recently spent three days at Hope Migrant Mission Center where they assisted in sorting clothing, cleaning, and organizing health kits. In an evening service, they served refreshments, led recreational activities, distributed health kits, and participated in worship services. Prior to departure for Hope, Pastor Randy Owens dedicated Chad Beene, Todd Beene, Ashley Stacy, Chris Schugg, Chrystal Tait, Lane Turner, and Jonathan Watson for mission service.

Career assessment/development seminar

Valuable insights and direction are the outcome of attendance at our state Career Assessment/Development Seminar. The seminar is open to persons involved in salaried ministry positions in ABSC churches or programs, or who are interested in such positions.

One pastor wrote the following words after last year's conference: "I believe God may well use the insights I gained there to rescue my ministry from the pitfall of depression and burnout toward which I was rapidly headed. I have been so favorably impressed with the servant spirit, the genuine love, and the top-notch programs offered to the churches and ministers by our State Convention. Once again you have proven your love for Arkansas pastors.

Spouses of participants are urged to attend, without any additional conference costs.

Who should attend? (1) Ministers who feel a need to move from one ministry area to another; (2) ministers who have been terminated, or feel they are going to be; (3) ministers with health problems; (4) ministers who need an in-depth look at self and ministry; (5) ministers in mid-career; (6) ministers facing retirement in a few years. These are just some suggestions.

Our conference leader is Fred McGehee of Baptist Sunday School Board. Fred has

been conducting conferences in career assessment for many years and is greatly used by the Lord.

Please register at the earliest possible moment. In order for the conference to be of optimal help you will need to begin the process before attending the sessions. Registration deadline is Nov. 13. For more information, call 376-4791, ext. 5148.

The conference will begin at 1 p.m. on Nov. 30 and conclude by 3:30 p.m. on Dec. 1.

Make your own room reservation by contacting La Quinta Inn, 200 South Shackleford Road, Little Rock; telephone 501-224-0900. Specify Arkansas Baptist State Convention when making your reservation.

The Church Leadership Support Department will provide the dinner meal on Monday evening. Participants will be responsible for other meals. —L.B. Jordan, ABSC Church Leadership Department

Tithe enrollment seminars offered

Arkansas Baptist churches reported 49,620 members as titheers on the 1991 Uniform Church Letter. This is 15 percent of our resident members who are titheers. The percentage has remained constant over the last several years.

How can churches encourage their members to tithe? Malachi, the prophet, had the best answer.

Two "How To Enlist Titheers" seminars will encourage church leaders to present the tithe as a Biblical pattern for giving. The first is set for Sept. 15, 6:30 p.m., at Fayetteville's Western Sizzlin. A second seminar is scheduled for Nettie's Cafeteria in Mountain Home on Sept. 17, 6:30 p.m.

Pastors, chairpersons of budget/finance committees and church treasurers are invited to the seminars. For more information contact: James Walker, ABSC Stewardship/Annuity director at 376-4791, ext. 5114.

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Twenty-two young people from Second Church of Little Rock assisted Aug. 8 with a Habitat for Humanity construction project at 4007 Ludwig in Little Rock. Building porch rails were (left to right) Eva Umboltz, Richard Binns, Reagan Binns, and Brad Williams. Youth Minister Paul Warren coordinated the volunteer effort.

Music and discipleship

GLORIETA, N.M. — Jeff Lawson carries the somewhat unusual Southern Baptist church staff title of minister of music and discipleship at Wynne Baptist Church, but it's a combination he is finding challenging and workable.

In his six months on the church staff, Lawson finds he spends 60-70 percent of his time on the music assignment and 30-40 percent on discipleship. He served as music leader for the July 4-10 Discipleship Training Leadership Conference at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center.

"If we're going to be serious about discipleship we've got to get out of our comfort zone," said Lawson.

In adult discipleship training, three groups have been established — one which uses ongoing curriculum, another which is studying the Lay Institute for Equipping course Parenting by Grace and a third which is using the Equipping Center module, The Bible Speaks to Ethical Issues.

Also, about 15 men are participating in encourager teams where three to four men



Jeff Lawson from Wynne Church plans a Glorieta worship service with organist Richard Brown from Nashville, Tenn.

meet weekly to support one another, with the goal of involving more men as leaders in the church.

"We're trying to build a three-phase program of training leaders, training church members and training new members. I'm trying to meet some practical needs through adult discipleship training classes and form a three-to-four year training plan that will recycle," Lawson said.

Preschool kiss nudges couple toward altar

by Charles Allbright
Special to the Arkansas Baptist

CONWAY, Ark. (BP)—Her freshman year at the University of Central Arkansas, Becki Nicholes joined the Baptist Student Union.

A student-to-student worker, Nancy Patterson, welcomed her. Patterson knew well how to get new students talking about themselves. She said as they visited, "Becki, tell me about your first kiss."

Becki thought about it. She said all right, yes, she remembered it.

"My family was living in Batesville. I was in church preschool. A boy ran over and kissed me."

Not long after that, the Nicholes family moved away from Batesville.

The counselor said now wait a minute. "You were living in Batesville. Going to preschool. And a little boy ran over and kissed you?"

Becki said yes.

Patterson said, "Becki, I've got someone you just have to meet."

Go back two weeks before that. . . .

A UCA sophomore named Randy Whiteaker walked into the Baptist Student Union. The counselor on duty was Nancy Patterson. She welcomed Randy and they began an informal visit.

"Tell me something, Randy. What

about your first kiss? Do you remember it?"

Randy said yes. He remembered it very well.

He lived in Batesville. At the time of the momentous occurrence, he was going to church preschool.

"There was this cute little girl. Somebody dared me to go over and kiss her. I did. That was my first-ever kiss." He never saw that cute little girl again. Her family must have moved away.

Becki lives in Batesville again — Becki Nicholes Whiteaker. She's an agent for White River Insurance Agency. Her husband, Randy, is an analyst in the water lab at Arkansas Eastman.

What happened was, according to Nancy Patterson, counselor extraordinaire, what the fates had in mind. She arranged for the grown-up preschoolers to meet, there on the UCA campus.

That was back in 1985. This month Becki and Randy will celebrate their sixth wedding anniversary. They met, dated for 10 months, got married and haven't kissed anybody else since.

[Reprinted by permission from the August 9 issue of the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette. Allbright is a longtime columnist for the newspaper. Patterson now is a teacher at a state vocational technical school in Morrilton, Ark.]

"Discipleship is where you teach people to live in the trenches of life," he said.

Lawson believes his discipleship role has influenced him to become more spiritually oriented and less technically oriented as a music minister.

"I'm a minister before I'm a choir director. If we're seeking spiritual excellence, musical excellence will follow," he said.

"Music should undergird every other ministry of the church and discipleship should complement all other ministries."



Crofts celebrate 50th

Rev. and Mrs. Raymond B. Crofts of Benton will celebrate their golden wedding anniversary Aug. 30 with a reception. The affair will be held in the Family Life Center of Benton First Church from 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. The couple was married Sept. 7, 1942. Mrs. Crofts, the former Thelma Lee Elkins, is a retired elementary public school principal. He served in the U.S. Navy during World War II, and is a retired Southern Baptist minister, having pastored several Arkansas churches, including Third Street Church in Malvern, First Church of Lepanto, Wynne Church, Owensville Church, and Hurricane Lake Church, Benton. They are parents of one son, Mike Crofts of Mountain Home. The Crofts have two grandchildren, Mekelle Crofts Stanley of Marion, and Bobby Crofts of Jonesboro.

Still safe with God

by Lynda Hollenbeck
Special to the Arkansas Baptist

"I'm safe where God wants me."

That thought, included in the headline of an *Arkansas Baptist* story stressing the need for medical missionaries in Iraq, inspired nurse educator Donna Cheatham of Russellville to volunteer. God had other plans for her, however.

Bolstered by her husband's encouragement, Cheatham contacted the Foreign Mission Board in regard to medical service in Iraq. At that time she learned the needs were even greater in the Gaza strip, an area that formed part of Palestine until 1948 when it came under Egyptian administration. (Israel forces occupied the area after the Arab-Israeli War of 1967.)

Cheatham was asked if she would consider serving in that strife-torn part of the world. Saying she "swallowed hard" before answering, she felt the Lord's leading and agreed to spend a month in Gaza. She left May 6 for this assignment that she found challenging and inspiring, even though there were some uneasy moments as a result of the political and religious tensions there.

A registered nurse, Cheatham holds associate and bachelor's degrees in her field and was assigned to the clinical area of a nursing school operated by the Southern Baptist Church. All clinical work was done in the Ahli Arab Hospital, one of two hospitals in the Gaza strip. The other is a government facility, which also has a nursing program, she noted.

Although she expected to bear all of her expenses, an unexpected benefactor made this unnecessary. A gift from the Arkansas River Valley Baptist Association, for which her husband Jeff is director of missions, took care of all but a minute amount. The association's gift was \$1,500; when she added up everything she had spent, the total was \$1,501.83. Living quarters and utilities were provided free of charge, but she was responsible for her own meals and incidental costs.

Competition for the nursing program in Gaza is intense, Cheatham noted. Each individual who applied was required to pay 10 shekels; out of 800 applicants, only 14 were chosen. She was assigned to work with the seven female students.

Cheatham said she found the teaching itself to be excellent, although the clinical area would not meet this country's standards for health-care facilities. A better clinical rotation would improve the program, she noted in her evaluation for the Foreign Mission Board.

Because of Moslem traditions, female

and male nursing students do not have the same responsibilities, Cheatham pointed out. A female student is not allowed to provide care for male patients, but a male student could give care to a female patient "in certain areas," such as starting an intravenous line. Something as personal as removing a catheter from a female could never be so, she said.

Male nurses can act as supervisors in the women's area of the hospital, but the reverse could never be so, she added.

A highlight of her trip occurred when the members of the school's board of directors made their annual visit to the school. The board members included a member of the Foreign Mission Board and a former administrator of the Ahli Arab Hospital, she noted.

Cheatham said she never believed herself to be in great danger during her month in Gaza but "felt uneasy a lot of the time." No one lingered in the courtyard of the living area, she said. "It was very public and we took care of what we needed to do. We didn't stand out very much."

While she suffered no harm, she was unsettled by an incident in which a rock was thrown at a window screen while she was adjusting the tie-backs of her bedroom curtains. The windows are reinforced with iron bars and the rock did not penetrate the screen, she said.

Another time she was startled by the popping sound of a light bulb thrown on-



Russellville nurse educator Donna Cheatham with mementos from Gaza.

to the porch of her apartment.

Rock-throwing and tire-burning in the streets are common occurrences in the area, but tensions escalated dramatically after a Palestinian came out of the Gaza strip and killed a 15-year-old girl in Israel, Cheatham noted.

Before that incident, the nurses and others involved in the program had driven to Ashkelon, Israel, to make their food pur-

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chases and to pick up their mail. However, the border closed two weeks after her arrival and the trips became less frequent and were not without risk. During one of these excursions, as they were returning to Gaza, a stop was made to eat. When they had completed the meal and reached their car, they found a window smashed and souvenir pottery, fruit purchases and all mail missing. "We were fortunate that our suitcases were locked in the trunk. . . so our clothes were not taken. That was pretty nerve-racking for me."

After that time, Gaza-tagged cars were allowed to cross into Israel less often, she said. When the school board members had completed their visit, they were taken to the Gaza border, where they walked across and were then met by missionaries from Israel who delivered them to the airport.

Much of the unrest evolves from the 50,000-60,000 inhabitants of the eight refugee camps in the area, Cheatham noted. But in that Moslem-dominated land, there is a small Baptist church that is active. "It has about 30 members and all of the services are held in Arabic."

Only rarely had assemblies been held at the school prior to Cheatham's arrival, but these were resumed when she was there. Anything prior to her visit had not been spiritual in nature, but occasionally included a moral teaching. She was told that "no one mentions the name of Jesus in Gaza," but she felt challenged to do so. When it was her turn to speak during an assembly, as part of her own "spiritual pilgrimage" she attempted to share what the Christian

faith means to her.

In her remarks, she referred to the Salvation bracelet attached to her stethoscope, an instrument the girls had borrowed many times since they did not have their own. "I was really disappointed they didn't ask about it, but I think the Lord used that. . . to help her witness to them.

At that point, the students admitted they had noticed the bracelet and made inquiries among themselves. Although all are Moslem, Cheatham said she saw "total politeness and even interest in their eyes" as she spoke of Christ's presence in her life. She said she "fell in love with the students" and believes those feelings were reciprocated. "I felt well received."

She recalled being asked about the Los Angeles riots that resulted from the police beating of Rodney King. "The students said to me, 'Miss Donna, that's no different from what it is here.'" Cheatham said, she found those remarks disturbing, but she could not totally refute their assessment of the violence.

The Rev. Jeff Cheatham said he was able to survive his wife's month-long absence because he knew "she had wanted to do something like this for a long time." Since he had served as a Navy chaplain, the two had experienced separations on prior occasions.

Donna Cheatham hopes that sharing her experiences will encourage others to volunteer as nurse educators since there is an ongoing request from the school for persons to serve in this ministry, she said. While her trip could never be considered

a vacation, she found the experience meaningful, Cheatham said. "Mostly I worked. . . I worked hard. . . but it was very enjoyable because that's my field. I love to teach, and I loved the students.

Linda Hollenbeck is associate editor of the *Benton Courier*.

Looking Ahead September

Foundation Month(FND)

- 1 How to Enlist Tithers Seminar, Calvary Church, West Memphis;(SA)
- 1-2 IMPACT 92, Calvary Church, West Memphis (WMU)
- 3 IMPACT 92, First Church, Paragould (WMU)
- 6-12 Brotherhood Leadership Week (SBC)
- 8 State SMC Committee Meeting, Baptist Building, Little Rock (ADM)
- 10-13 Campers on Missions Rally, Maumelle Park, Little Rock, (Ms)
- 11 Furloughing Missionaries Orientation, Baptist Building, Little Rock; 10am-12pm (SA)
- 12 Baptist Youth Day, Magic Springs, Hot Springs (DT)

13 Foundation Sunday (Fnd)

- 13 Single Adult Day (SBC)
- 14 Bivocational & Small Church Conf, First, Corning; 7pm-9pm(EVAN)
- 14 How to Enlist Tithers Seminar, Fort Smith; (SA)
- 14 IMPACT 92, Grand Avenue Church, Fort Smith (WMU)
- 15 Bivocational & Small Church Conf, Sbell Lake; (Ev)
- 15 How to Enlist Tithers Seminar, Fayetteville
- 15-16 IMPACT 92, First Church, Fayetteville (WMU)
- 17 Bivocational & Small Church Conf., First Church, Hampton; (Ev)

Abbreviations: Ad - Administration; 3bd - Brotherhood; CL - Church Leadership; CFM - Children's Homes and Family Ministries; DT - Discipleship Training; Ev - Evangelism; M - Music; Mn - Missions; NB - National Baptists; SS - Sunday School; SA - Stewardship/Annuity; Stu - Student; WMU - Woman's Missionary Union.

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MISSISSIPPI RIVER MINISTRY CONVOCATION

'Lunch-box or grace-bucket'

by Jack Kwok
Special to the ABM

"Lunch-box or grace-bucket Christian; the choice is yours."

Jimmy Barrentine, Arkansas Baptist State Convention Missions Department director, issued this challenge to more than 400 participants in the Mississippi River Ministry Convocation held in Memphis, Tenn. Aug. 7-8.

This convocation formally launched the Mississippi River Ministry. It is designed to build bridges of hope and change in a region blighted by entrenched poverty and widespread hopelessness.

The region includes 214 counties in Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee, Kentucky, Illinois, and Missouri. More than four million people live in this area that is described as the poorest region in the United States.

One convocation speaker, Wilbur Hawkins, referred to the region as "the third world within the United States." Hawkins directed the government-sponsored Delta Commission which documented that living conditions for many in this region are worse than those in some third-world countries.



ABSC Missions Department Director Jimmy Barrentine addresses a convocation work group.

Mississippi River Ministry is a Southern Baptist response to the Delta Commission report. Tommy Goode, ABSC director of Christian and Social Ministries, gave birth and leadership to this cooperative effort of Southern Baptists from the above seven states and three Southern Baptist agencies: Brotherhood Commission, Home Mission Board, and Woman's Missionary Union. In Arkansas, National and Southern Baptists will cooperate in local community ministries.

At the convocation, 57 National and

Southern Baptists from Arkansas listened with other participants as Jimmy Barrentine challenged them to respond to the enormous need from the inexhaustible supply of God's grace. He informed them that when a Christian avoids personal involvement in a ministry such as this, that Christian limits the amount of God's grace and blessing upon her or his life to the size of a lunch box. However, a Christian's life will overflow with God's grace and blessing when he or she gives time, talent, and treasure to the Lord Jesus in such a ministry as this. Instead of a lunch box, a large bucket would be needed to receive and share the grace and blessings of God.

According to Tommy Goode, the goal of the Mississippi River Ministry is to enlist Christian volunteers from within and without the region to be grace buckets in a desert of poverty. Local churches in the region will develop ministry projects to address health, housing, education, employment, spiritual, and other needs.

Goode will coordinate the process of matching the volunteers with the projects. volunteers may contact him through the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, P.O. Box 552, Little Rock, AR 72203; telephone 376-4791, ext. 5249.

As volunteers meet physical needs, bridges for evangelism will be built to share everlasting hope and change in Jesus Christ. The need is here. Resources are available. The choice must be made.

Jack Kwok is director of ABSC Cooperative Ministries and a member of the Arkansas MRM advisory board.

Classifieds

Needed—General church secretary, Calvary Baptist Church, N.L.R. Send resume: c/o Personnel Committee, 5025 Lynch Dr., N.L.R. 72117. Applications will be taken at the church office M-F 8:30-4:30.

877

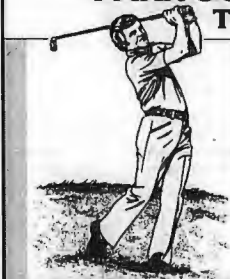
Accepting—resumes for minister of music and education position. Send to Minister Search Committee, c/o First Baptist Church, P.O. Box 356, Siloam Springs, AR 72761.

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World Changers

by Lisa Griffin
SBC Brotherhood Commission

BRICEVILLE, Tenn.—Ten Arkansas youth and leaders participated in a national work project to rebuild low-income homes in Campbell County, Tenn., July 18-25.

The youth, from First Baptist Church in Searcy, worked with youth from 15 other Southern Baptist churches through World Changers, an eight-day coeducational missions project for high school youth. Sponsored by the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission, World Changers combines missions education and missions involvement.

The Arkansas youth worked with more than 300 Southern Baptist teenagers to re-roof and shingle homes, replace doors and windows, scrape and paint walls, put in sheet rock and fix floors on 28 Anderson and Campbell County homes during the week.

Paying \$225 to cover project expenses, all of the teens prepared for their work through 11 sessions of training in their local churches. There they learned how to share their personal testimony and prepared for their future work in Tennessee by learning the basics of construction.

Upon their arrival, participants were divided into various work crews and given names such as "The Nails," "Square Jaws" and "Brick Bats." Crews were led by an individual with construction experience.

Teen-agers resided in Lake City Middle School during the week. Evening programs were held at the school with recreation, talent shows, skits and free time. Bill Kerr, minister of music at Main Street Baptist, Lake City, Tenn., led the worship and large group meetings.

The teens worked from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, occasionally starting work at 6:30 a.m. or combining crews and working late hours to finish the job.

Cameron Byler, Brotherhood director for the Tennessee Baptist Convention said World Changers "is truly a life-changing experience because they (the youth) are learning what servanthood is all about. They get a new perspective on life and learn to see what people's needs are."

The "Brush Bunch" and "Brick Bats" crews finished a project that was begun the week before by two crews participating in a World Changers National Work Project in neighboring Briceville, Tenn.

They built a new house for Jessie and Shiela Duncan. The family had been living with their parents after their home and everything they owned was destroyed by a fire five years earlier.

The crews caulked the house, put in the insulation and wiring, cut the stairs and put on the rest of the siding in order to complete the house.

The Duncans agreed that the teens did

Brotherhood Commission photo / Chris Ockon



Ryan Duncan, 19, from Searcy First Baptist Church, puts the final touches on a Lake City, Tenn., home.

an excellent job working on the house. "It was remarkable to come in from work and see more walls up," said Shiela Duncan.

Expressing gratitude for the teens and for the Lord's help, Jessie Duncan said that the teenagers are "just going around making people's dreams come true."

Nine youth and leaders from Park Hill Baptist in North Little Rock participated in a World Changers National Work Project in Memphis, Tenn., earlier in the summer. They joined more than 200 youth to repair and renovate 17 homes during the week of June 13-20.

In 1991, World Changers successfully completed work projects in six locations. This summer, more than 2,500 youth representing 20 states are expected to participate in 12 World Changers Work Projects. Other World Changers sites were Laredo, Texas; Weslaco, Texas; Savannah River, S.C.; Savannah, Ga.; Louisville, Ky.; Briceville, Tenn.; Eastern Shore, Va.; Canton, N.C.; and Ciudad Victoria, Mexico. A junior high pilot project will be held in Birmingham, Ala.

To qualify to participate in a national project, youth must complete 10 sessions of missions education study and a local missions project. World Changers is for high school youth who have completed the ninth grade or who are 15 years old.

Lisa Griffin is a communication specialist on the World Changers summer staff.

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Dr. McGriff

SEPTEMBER 16

Prayer at the Pole

by Colleen Backus
Arkansas Baptist

"See You at the Pole has become a prayer movement in our state, in pure form," stated Randy Brantley, ABSC Evangelism Department associate and one of the statewide organizers for the prayer movement.

In 1991, more than 10,300 junior and senior high school students from 237 campuses participated in the national student day of prayer. This year, Christian young people in Arkansas will join their counterparts throughout the United States in gathering at their schools' flagpoles for 15-30 minutes to pray for campus, community and national concerns on Sept. 16 at 7 a.m.

"The event started in Texas in 1990 with 46,000 students involved," Brantley explained. "Numbers multiplied the next years as news of the grassroots movement spread through church denominations and organizations such as the Southern Baptist Convention, Focus on the Family, Youth for Christ, the Assemblies of God, Fellowship

of Christian Athletes, and the National Network of Youth Ministries," he said.

Brantley has geared up this year to mobilize Arkansas Baptist teenagers through publicity at Siloam Baptist Assembly, Super Summer and direct mail. He also has sent personal letters to other denominational leaders to mobilize their teenagers. Brantley is encouraging students to further promote the prayer movement by approaching area businesses and asking them to put "See You at the Pole — Sept. 16" on their marquees.

"We are doing one thing this year that may be considered aggressive," Brantley commented, referring to an open letter available to be presented to school administrators concerning the students' rights to assemble. The letter, prepared by Jay Skulow, general counsel for the American Center for Law and Justice, explains student rights as expressed by the U.S. Supreme Court in the 1969 Tinker vs. Des Moines Independent School District case.

Brantley also offers some organizational helps including brochures and a videotape. Some young people have been wearing "freedom bands," wristbands designed to encourage students to organize and spread the word to their friends. Here's a simple reminder:

- P — Plan now to pray at 7 a.m.
- O — Organize students to take leadership
- L — Let your friends know
- E — Encourage others.

Brantley commented that last year, nearly 2,000 adults in the state met at courthouses, city halls and in their place' of

business for prayer, at the same time as the student-led effort, to pray for American youth.

Although there is no central organizer, the National Network of Youth Ministries has set up a 24-hour "Pole Hot Line" at 619-592-9200, for anyone desiring more information about See You at the Pole. In Arkansas, those needing additional help can contact Randy Brantley at 376-4791, ext 5132.



Group anticipates gambling push

A group of concerned Arkansas Baptist pastors and denominational leaders recently met at the Baptist Building, Little Rock, to discuss an agenda for defeating expected attempts to expand gambling in Arkansas. The group anticipates a major push for land based casinos and low risk gambling (video poker machines) to be the center of the legalized emphasis.

The Department of Parks and Tourism recently released the report of a special committee charged with studying "Gambling: The Impact on Arkansas Tourism." Low stakes gambling is viewed as providing an additional appeal for tourists to come to Arkansas.

A spokesman for the group said, "We expect a statewide effort by some to change the state constitution by amendment to allow bingo and other forms of low risk gambling. When we do this as a state, we must remember we have opened the flood gates for the gambling industry."

The group's first action will be that of informing church members to begin a letter writing campaign to members of the state legislature. A move to change the constitution to allow gambling could begin with them.

Larry Page, Director of the Christian Civic Foundation, and other non-Baptist denominational leaders were present.

1943 OBU grads to meet

The class of 1943 graduates of Ouachita Baptist University will have a fellowship planning meeting at 11:30 a.m. on Sept. 12 at the Spaghetti Warehouse restaurant, 1010 E. 3rd, Little Rock. The luncheon will be held in the dining car. For more information, call John Ashcraft at 562-4437.



Don't miss VENTURE '92 featuring speaker Mark Baber and the music of the Praise Singers along with a special concert by TRUTH.

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SUNDAY SCHOOL BOARD

Trustees approve restructure

by Linda Lawson
Baptist Sunday School Board

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)—A restructured organization for the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board and 10 personnel recommendations for administrative positions were approved by trustees, meeting Aug. 17-19 at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center.

Trustees also approved a one-time voluntary early retirement incentive program to be offered to 191 management, professional and support staff employees. They will have six weeks (Sept. 1-Oct. 15) to decide whether to accept the retirement "window." All funds for the program will come from the board's pension trust fund.

The organizational structure and nine of the 10 personnel recommendations proposed by board President James T. Draper Jr. had been affirmed June 25 by the trustee executive committee and general administration committee and announced June 26 to employees.

Among personnel recommendations, Roland Maddox, 55, president of a real estate development and sales company in Memphis, Tenn., and a former board trustee, was elected director of the newly created church program support division.

Maddox said as he considered joining the board he studied recent employee task force reports on organization and goals for the future. "Every page seemed to say 'yes,'" he said.

G.W. Lankford, 48, manager of the engineering/maintenance and construction section in the board's property management department, will become director of Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center. Lankford, who earlier supervised the Ridgecrest building maintenance unit for five years, will succeed Ken McNear who is retiring.

Four board officers were approved for reassignment to work with Draper on the senior executive team: Gene Mims, from executive vice president for planning, research and denominational relations to vice president for church growth and programs; Michael Arrington, from executive vice president for operations to vice president for corporate services; E.V. King, from executive vice president for finance and administration to vice president for finance and administration; and Charles Wilson, from assistant vice president for business to vice president for trade and retail markets.

Four trustee-elected administrators were approved for new assignments: Harry Pfand, from director of the Sunday school

division to director of the church growth and Sunday school division; Roy Edgemon, from director of the discipleship training department to director of the discipleship and family development division; Doug Anderson, from director of the family ministry department to director of the marketing research department; and James Shull, from director of the procurement and administrative services division to director of the production services department.

Approval by the 93-member board moved forward a process begun in March when Draper named four employee task forces to conduct research and bring recommendations concerning organizational options, people/leadership development, external marketing/customer strategies and internal and external communication. The task forces presented reports in May to the senior executive team who finalized proposals in June.

Presently, 11 employee workgroups and a transition team are developing proposals on a variety of organization implementation assignments including decentralization of art and marketing functions and reducing the number of policies and procedures.

Draper, who estimated implementation of the restructured organization will be complete by the end of 1992, told Baptist Press it will position the board to do six things: 1) simplify the organization; 2) be accountable for results; 3) become more service oriented; 4) produce higher quality products; 5) release products in a timely manner; and 6) become more customer sensitive.

"Our goal is to be the best publisher and provider of products and services for churches and individual believers," he said.

Draper acknowledged change, including recent announcements of the retirements of nine employees in middle- and upper-management positions, has heightened employee concern but emphasized he is optimistic about the future.

"It has been difficult the last six weeks because everything has depended on your action here," he told trustees. "One of the causes of anxiety has been one of the strengths of the process. We've told employees everything we know when we know it."

The early retirement window approved by trustees specifies eligible employees must be at least 52 years of age, with their age and years of service totalling at least 77.

For those electing the window, early retirement reductions in monthly benefits will not be applied. Employees under 62

years of age will receive a benefit enhancement based on their projected Social Security benefits to age 62. Those between 62 and 65 will receive a benefit enhancement based on their projected Social Security benefits until they reach 65. Eligible employees choosing the option will stay in the board's regular medical plan until age 65 when they will be covered by the board's Medicare supplement plan, along with other retirees.

Turner announces retirement

NASHVILLE (BP)—Robert M. Turner, assistant vice president for church programs and services and director of the church services division at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, has announced his retirement, effective Sept. 1.

Turner, 61, a 34-year employee of the board, has overseen the work of Giorieta (N.M.) and Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist conference centers and the church media library, church architecture, church recreation and CPS art departments. He also directed budget planning and provided financial guidance for the office of church programs and services.

"I regret that the board will lose the expertise and valuable contributions of Bob Turner," Sunday School Board President James T. Draper Jr. said. "I wish him well as he retires after a long and distinguished career."

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ANNUITY BOARD

Rates set on experience basis

by Thomas E. Miller Jr.
SBC Annuity Board

ATLANTA — The pricing of Southern Baptists' Church Comprehensive Medical Plan will be done according to state experience in the future. A firm date for implementation has not been established.

Trustees of the Annuity Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, meeting in Atlanta, heard reports of a modest decline in claims, but a slow, steady loss in number of participants.

The board's executive staff brought a recommendation to begin rating state-by-state to bring more fairness to the rate structure and to protect against shifting losses from one state to another if a state convention endorses another plan as an alternative. The move was supported by independent consultants and the board's carrier, Prudential Insurance Company of America.

Joel H. Mathis, senior vice president for insurance administration, said it is too early to say which states may benefit or be hurt by the change.

"Our consultants and carrier are already hard at work analyzing claims state-by-state. We know that some states will have no increase in rates for 1993. Others may have a significant increase."

Mathis said he will issue information in the next several weeks to help churches know how to budget for the medical program in 1993.

"I am well aware," said Mathis, "that everyone is anxious for details. I wish we had them today. We don't. But we'll inform every church at the earliest possible moment."

"But the important point to make," said Mathis, "is that each state convention, its leadership, pastors and churches, can do something to help themselves. They can promote the plan."

"Making this change (in rating by state)," said Mathis, "will not guarantee competitiveness in every state. In some, it may make it worse, while in others it may become significantly better. But if the states — their churches, ministers and executive leadership — will become aggressive in

promoting enrollment of young, healthy participants, they will be able to directly affect rates in their states."

Paul W. Powell, president, spoke with alarm to trustees about the apparent lack of commitment to the denomination's medical plan. "Confronted with steeply rising costs and decreasing participation, many churches have sought less expensive coverage elsewhere. At the same time, messengers to state conventions have clamored for their states' executive leadership to find solutions close to home!" he said.

Said Powell, "Several state conventions have appointed committees to study alternative insurance plans for their states. In the light of this (the possibility of some states endorsing competing plans) the only fair way to rate our people, and perhaps the only way our convention health coverage plan can survive, is to set rates by state."

The problem, explained Powell, is when alternate plans are endorsed by a state convention: "It inadvertently encourages the young and healthy to get coverage elsewhere, leaving behind the high-cost or high-risk participants in the church plan. These people cannot get coverage elsewhere, but we pay their claims from a reduced income flow."

"Insurance consultants tell us that ours is a unique plan and it cannot survive unless it has the support of its sponsoring groups," said Powell, "and that includes SBC leadership, state conventions, and local churches. If our leadership does not participate in support, and endorse the plan, and if our people do not come in, it cannot survive."

"Affordability is the number one concern of churches and their staffs," said Powell. "Because we had to raise rates dramatically over the period 1988-1991, we have been seen by many as an adversary instead of a benefactor," he said. "This year we've been more successful, but still more are leaving than enrolling," said Powell.

"We have striven for fairness," declared Powell. "The most unfair thing we could ever do is fail to charge enough to pay the claims. In this we will never fail. The rates will always be set to cover expected claims and provide a safety margin."

"There may be 75,000 to 100,000 eligible families out there," said Powell. "We have less than 24,000 of them in the plan. We need commitment, conviction and cooperation. This is a family problem that is part of a national crisis. We can't fix the whole nation's medical-care crisis, but we can do something about our part. This plan can be successful. It's up to the churches and state conventions."

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ANNUITY BOARD

\$17 million credited back to states

ATLANTA — Southern Baptist state conventions will receive \$17 million in billing credits for the Church Annuity Plan as a result of action in Atlanta by trustees of the Annuity Board of the Southern Baptist Convention.

The Dallas-based agency has a tradition of holding its summer trustee meeting away from the home city.

Trustees heard a mixed report on the board's Church Comprehensive Medical Plan. Claims were down and reserves were reported rising to a level that permits introduction of two less-costly optional plans on January 1, but participation in the comprehensive plan is declining.

In another major action, trustees approved a staff recommendation that the Annuity Board begin preparations leading to a restructure of its investment functions into a mutual fund format. Its investment funds would become registered securities under Securities and Exchange Commission regulation. The board's investment committee explained that this will allow the Annuity Board to better serve its annuitants, retirement plan participants and Southern Baptist agencies and institutions.

The allocation of surplus funds in the Protection Section of the Church Annuity Plan back to state conventions was the third major financial boost given by the Annuity Board this year. In January more than 16,000 annuitants received a permanent 10 percent increase in monthly benefits. In July all 22,000 annuitants received a permanent 5 percent increase. The 734 annuitants who had selected a variable annuity received an increase of more than 25 percent on January 1.

Paul W. Powell, president, said of the credits to state conventions, "Our excellent earnings with investments in the Protection Section, and a favorable claims experience created a surplus. We saw this as a blessing to the states who paid in the original contributions. It is wonderful to make the good experience available in the form of billing credits."

The Protection Section is a state convention-funded part of the Church Annuity Plan that provides supplemental disability and life benefits to eligible participants.

In his quarterly report to trustees, Powell reported continuing growth in both enrollments and contributions to the Church Annuity Plan and Convention Annuity Plan.

The next scheduled meeting of the Annuity Board trustees will be November 2-3, 1992 in Dallas.



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New Orleans action protested

by Herb Hollinger
Baptist Press

NASHVILLE (BP)—An undergraduate degree program to start this month at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary has drawn strong criticism from state Baptist colleges and universities and a request to the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee for intervention.

Thirty-one Baptist college and university presidents have asked the Executive Committee to intervene in the New Orleans proposal because, college presidents allege, it conflicts with the seminary's program statement.

Harold C. Bennett, Executive Committee president, has agreed with the colleges' protest and has written New Orleans Seminary's president, Landrum P. Leavell II, expressing his opinion the action will violate the seminary's program statement. Bennett told Leavell in a July 20 letter that the matter will be on the agenda of the SBC Executive Committee meeting in Nashville, Sept. 21-23.

Bylaws of the Southern Baptist Convention give the Executive Committee a "watchdog" responsibility in matters of program statements of the various SBC agencies.

SBC seminaries traditionally have offered graduate-level degrees such as the master of divinity, master of religious education and master of music education. Some have offered associate degrees for students who did not have undergraduate-level degrees but these have been mainly awarded to students interested in church-related vocations.

New Orleans will begin bachelor of arts and bachelor of general studies degrees when its fall term starts Aug. 25. The programs are for seminary students age 25 and older, the first of their kind offered by any SBC seminary, according to New Orleans officials.

Bennett says CP goal remains in sight

NASHVILLE (BP)—Southern Baptist Convention Cooperative Program funds received by the SBC Executive Committee in July dipped 1.89 percent over the same month a year ago, according to Harold C. Bennett, the committee's president-treasurer.

"There is still time for us to meet the Cooperative Program goal for 1991-92, and I pray we will respond to the challenge," Bennett said. He voiced conviction that "Southern Baptists remain committed to

spreading the gospel in all the world and to the Cooperative Program as the channel of financial support."

After 10 months of the SBC fiscal year (Oct. 1 to Sept. 30), Southern Baptists Cooperative Program giving for missions and ministry — \$116,631,991 — remains just 0.51 percent below the rate of a year ago. The monthly basic CP operating budget is \$11,725,856; the overall 1992 goal is \$140,712,282.

Designated gifts for July, meanwhile, jumped 55.37 percent, totaling \$4,990,614 compared to \$3,212,018 in July 1991. For 10 months of the current fiscal year, designated receipts were 2.99 percent above the same period a year ago.

In Cooperative Program giving, the July 1992 total was \$11,372,445 compared to July 1991 gifts of \$11,591,867, or down 1.89 percent.

Kentucky is top in SBC attendance

NASHVILLE (BP)—Kentucky, Tennessee, Georgia, North Carolina and Texas were the top five states in number of messengers who attended the Southern Baptist Convention's June meeting in Indianapolis, according to figures released by registration secretary Lee Porter.

Kentucky churches sent 1,631 messengers to the convention, for 9.08 percent of the total 17,956 messengers who attended the annual SBC meeting.

Tennessee's 1,533 messengers were 8.54

percent of the overall total; Georgia, 1,529 messengers, 8.52 percent; North Carolina, 1,507, 8.39 percent; and Texas, 1,287, 7.17 percent. Arkansas messenger attendance was 503.

Goode given home missions award

Tommy Goode, associate director of church and community ministries for the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, was one of four people presented with awards during home missions week at Glorieta Baptist Conference Center.

Goode was given an award for creating the Southern Baptist Multihousing Association. Goode served as the first president of that organization.

Herbert Martin, director of Carver Baptist Center in New Orleans, received the Clovis Brantley award for ministry. The award is named for Clovis Brantley who was instrumental in developing many of the mission centers across the country.

Charles Lee Williamson, missions leader for the Baptist General Convention of Texas, was given an award of appreciation for his work with urban churches. He pioneered a strategy to help churches in inner cities discover and meet needs in their communities.

David Beal, who retired two years ago from the Home Mission Board staff, was recognized for developing multihousing ministries. He is now working in multihousing ministries in Kansas City, Mo.

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Convention Uniform

Following father's footsteps

by Harry Black, Natural Steps Church, Roland

Basic passage: Genesis 11:27-12:9

Focal passage: Genesis 11:27-12:5

Central truth: There is wisdom in following the leadership of our national and spiritual fathers.

Ever noticed 11:31 before? "Terah took his son Abram... and together they set out from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to Canaan." Abram left his home to go to Canaan at the encouragement of his father, Terah. The only Scripture that seemingly disputes this is when Stephen says in Acts 7, "The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham while he was still in Mesopotamia, before he had left Haran" (7:2).

Who did call Abram to an unknown land of promise: Terah or God? It was both! Certainly there is no reason to dispute Stephen's testimony. As a young man living in Ur, Abram was called by the Lord. But neither is there cause to doubt the clear reading of 11:31; Terah provided a strong influence in leading Abram to accept the challenge of that call. It was under the call of God and the encouragement of Terah that Abram started toward Canaan.

As we find in verse 31, their journey was interrupted in Haran where they settled for a time. But after Terah's death God renewed his call to Abram (12:1, NAS Amplified).

This time both the call and encouragement came from the heavenly Father. The call was the same: "Leave... and go to the land I will show you." The encouragement took the form of four promises: (1) to give Abram a land to become the possession of his descendants; (2) to make him a nation which would become great numerically and spiritually; (3) to make his name great; and (4) to make him a blessing to all peoples, as seen in that Jews, Christians, and Moslems all call him father, as well as the Messiah's birth by his lineage.

As we know, these promises were fulfilled. Abram followed the leadership of his earthly and heavenly fathers, and God blessed him. Will God not do the same for us? Our national forefathers have encouraged us to be "one nation under God," and they have charted our course by engraving "In God We Trust" in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, as well as on every coin minted in the U.S. We have been called by God and encouraged by our forefathers to make this a "promised land."

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Life and Work

Witnessing foundation

by Robert A. Parker, Mount Vernon Church, Benton

Basic passage: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

Focal passage: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

Central truth: Our personal experience with Jesus Christ is the foundation for an effective witness.

Is Jesus Christ your personal Savior and Lord? Is he your shepherd? Are you one of his sheep? Animals such as dogs and sheep are smart enough to know who is their master or shepherd. If a so-called "dumb" animal is smart enough to know who his master is, so can we as human beings created in God's image.

This lesson's scriptural passage leaves no doubt that the Apostle Paul knew who his master was. As one born out of due season, along with Peter, the other apostles and the five hundred, he had the privilege of meeting the Lord personally on the Damascus highway. Having had that wonderful experience, Paul had the needed foundation or basis for witnessing.

Recorded in verse 9, he recognized that as one who formerly persecuted the church, he was undeserving to proclaim the good news of the gospel. God's grace or unmerited favor was sufficient for his bearing an effective witness for the Lord Jesus.

None of us deserves to be such a witness, but God has called us to do so. The Great Commission makes it clear that all of us, individually, as a local church, or as a denomination are to be faithful in carrying out that witness unto the uttermost parts of the earth, beginning at home!

God's Word is plain in letting us know that we are to be doers of his Word and not hearers only. We must remember also that having a proper foundation makes it possible for our actions to be louder than our words. The main task that we as Christians, local churches, and denomination have on this earth, until Jesus returns, is to be his witnesses.

We must pray daily for the power of the Holy Spirit to give us witnessing opportunities. Such power can be used even as someone has suggested, in leaving a witnessing tract in our tracks. Do that at least if verbal witnessing opportunities do not present themselves.

Pray too that more and more Christians throughout the world will effectively witness whenever possible.

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Bible Book

The final solution

by Bruce A. Swihart, East Side Church, Paragould

Basic passage: 2 Kings 24:3-4, 11-14, 20; 25:8-11

Focal passage: 2 Kings 25:8-11

Central truth: God is faithful to do what he says he will do.

Unfaithfulness to God brings about the judgment of God. Christians should never presume upon God's blessings. We can expect continued blessing only as we are faithfully obedient to God. He is faithful to the point that he will not let us manipulate him, use him for our own purposes, or neglect our duties to him. God must ultimately act. His final solution comes in three ways.

(1) Discipline. Judah refused to learn the lesson of Israel. They, too, rejected the voice of God's prophets. They refused to abandon political solutions to their problems for spiritual solutions (2 K. 21:1-16). They continued to expect God to intervene in history to save them. Instead, God intervened through Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon to destroy them as a nation.

(2) Alienation. Sin's final consequence leads us out of God's presence. We find ourselves totally alienated from our Creator and Savior. God destroyed the temple in Jerusalem (25:9) for it had served as the symbol of his presence with the people. To be the people of God is an activity as well as a calling. The prophets called Israel and Judah to act like people of God. They never accepted the message to change their way of living. We, too, sin when we refuse to listen to all of God's Word.

(3) Judgment. God's wrath comes when his loving will is repeatedly rejected and his gracious purposes are ignored. It might appear that Jerusalem fell because of Babylon's military might. Jerusalem fell as a result of God's anger, the prophets' words, and the people's sin. The people, the priests, and the politicians were so steeped in wickedness that God's judgment was inevitable. God used the uncontrolled violence of a wicked nation to accomplish his purposes.

God is sovereign over human history. He did not ignore the wickedness of Judah nor will he ignore the wickedness of the people of America. He will not wink at the iniquity of our time. This lesson should drive all Christians to their knees in tears of repentance for our sin.

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Convention Uniform

The hesitant helper

by Harry Black, Natural Steps Church, Roland

Basic passage: Exodus 3:1-4:17

Focal passage: Exodus 3:1-4:17

Central truth: Those whom God calls he equips to succeed, no matter how great the challenge.

In a few weeks many churches will begin a new church year. By now every teaching and administrative position has been filled and the church is poised to effectively perform every ministry to which God has called it. No? Why not? Because every church has the same problem that God found in Midian, the problem of hesitant helpers.

Moses' call came in 3:4 as God called him by name. Many of us pray "God, if only you would audibly call me like you did Moses." But we have a better call. God calls us from within; his Spirit in direct fellowship with our spirits.

Next came the commission. God said, "Go, I am sending you." Many hesitant helpers are waiting for God to give an individual commission to their calling. But he already has. Every believer is individually commissioned to serve. In the Old and New Testaments the commission is repeated, "Go." Do we have so little faith that God must repeat it especially for us? Go! Do the job.

Then we find Moses' concerns: five excuses common to hesitant helpers. (1) "Who am I, that I should go?" (3:11) Self worth is a concern to many, but God's call is not dependent upon our concept of worth. (2) In 3:13, Moses expressed concern that he did not know enough. Many hesitate to lead because they fear they will not know all the answers. As was true with Moses, God provides the answers. (3) "What if they do not believe or listen?" (4:1) Every leader shares the concern that people will not respond, but God equips us with tools to verify our ministry. (4) In 4:10, Moses complained that he was not eloquent enough. By God's answer we are reminded that our handicaps are not handicaps to God. (5) Moses just did not want to go. It was at this point that God's anger burned against Moses. God can answer any concern that we have, any but disobedience. His answer to that is anger.

The conclusion is not in our text. Did Moses help? We know the answer to that. Will you help?

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Life and Work

Ready to witness

by Robert A. Parker, Mount Vernon Church, Benton

Basic passage: 1 Peter 3:8-22

Focal passage: 1 Peter 3:8-18

Central truth: Living the Christian life, willingness to suffer for witnessing and always being ready to witness prepares us to witness.

Many people, as Boy or Girl Scouts, learned how important it is to "Be Prepared." The same truth has, in a spiritual context, also been set forth by biblical educators. Some of us learned early that in light of eternal destinies being heaven or hell, we need to be prepared for eternity.

After having gained blessed assurance of being heaven bound through personal faith in Jesus Christ, we need to be thoroughly prepared to witness to others about him. Peter, in his first letter certainly makes it clear that we must live, not just talk, the Christian life.

Are we, as part of being prepared to witness, willing to suffer and even die in doing so? Jesus made it clear that to be his disciple we must deny self and daily take up the cross to follow him. "Taking up the cross" would include even the possibility of death! Some today, on both home and foreign mission fields, daily face that possibility. We are all missionaries appointed upon conversion.

As professing, born again believers it is imperative that we be always ready to witness. If we pray without ceasing, or always be aware that praying is something that we could do at any given time: It's likely that the Holy Spirit will encourage us to witness at every opportunity.

No one but the Lord can know the eternal effect of a word of witness to those we encounter briefly while on life's journey. What joy it will be to have a waitress, service station employee, or any one else who received a brief witness to tell you in heaven, "You are the one who shared your faith back on earth years ago, causing me to eventually be saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ."

Of all preparations, we must as Christians be constantly prepared to witness to those with whom we come in contact, whether for a brief or long period of time. In today's Bible passage, Peter gives us encouragement to always be ready. Don't forget that his and our Master, Savior, and Teacher did likewise!

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Bible Book

Economic chaos

by Bruce A. Swihart, East Side Church, Paragould

Basic passage: Micah 2:1-2; 3:1-4, 7-12

Focal passage: Micah 2:1-2, 8-9; 3:11

Central truth: A society which concentrates on personal economic fulfillment instead of on what is best for the nation faces a future of nightmares.

It appears America is facing economic chaos unlike anything experienced in our history. We are following very much the path of Micah's world. Greed, injustice, and oppression were the rule of the day. The moral perversions of ancient Canaan were being flaunted brazenly, and even given the status of "rights" in some places. The faith of the new covenant was all but submerged under secularism, humanism, and the influence of pagan oriental religions. God promised judgment then and his standard has not changed. What causes God to bring judgment into our world?

(1) The covetousness of the people (2:1-2). When sin so dominates a person that every hour is filled with evil scheming against helpless people, moral values have disappeared. We are living in a time when it seems that all people are clamoring for riches.

(2) The callousness of the people (2:8-9). Communities exist because people trust one another to help and not hurt each other. When people take advantage of one another, they deny their responsibility, and destroy their community. Many in our nation lack moral character. Common decency and respect are quickly vanishing as people grasp at every financial straw.

(3) The greed of political and religious leaders (3:11). When people in charge of creating justice despise it, a nation has no future. Prayer and worship do not secure the future for a greedy, unrighteous people. When a people believe they alone, apart from God, determine their future, chaos is sure to follow.

Many have breathed a sigh of relief now that the Soviet Union has crumbled. Somehow we believe that the enemy has been defeated. Our greatest enemy is economic instability caused by greed. Because we are worshipping the god of materialism and money we face the same judgment that Israel faced. The Lord says, "I am planning disaster against this people, from which you cannot save yourselves" (2:3).

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'Break the Glory Free'

by Frank Wm. White
 Baptist Sunday School Board

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)—As Billie Pate has listened to her own musical performance this summer, she has recalled anew the pain that preceded writing the work.

"It seems the most significant things I have written have been born in pain," said Pate, associate director of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's Sunday school division, after the performance of "Break the Glory Free" during a Sunday school leadership conference in July.

"Break the Glory Free" is being performed this summer at Sunday school, church music and Jericho missions conferences. The Sunday school conference was the third presentation when Pate had been present.

"It was about six months after my father died in July 1989 when they asked me to write this. I said I couldn't do it ... I just didn't have the heart for it," she recalled.

But after she and Bob Dean, senior editorial and curriculum specialist at the board, began searching the Bible for significant breakthrough events to use and as she began to write, "the words began to flow and it filled a void I had," she said.

Pate recounted how she wrote "Touch Life," a book of poetry, soon after she left the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union staff in Birmingham, Ala., and her 22-year-old niece suffered permanent brain damage in an auto accident. That work was dedicated to her niece.

Then, "Til Millions Know," a song written for the 8.5 by '85 Sunday school enrollment campaign and later selected for the Baptist Hymnal 1991 edition, was written after a time of personal illness.

"There is a reason for significant work coming from pain," Pate said. "You become more reflective at times like that. You look inside yourself to examine your values."

Lloyd surprises doctor again

by Ferrell Foster
 Illinois Baptist

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)—Once again, Kathy Lloyd has surprised her doctor—or rather, she would say, God has.

She attended Sunday school week at Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center here Aug. 2-7, thus achieving a goal she set in early spring before beginning prolonged cancer treatment.

Lloyd, a former missionary to South Korea who had extensive bone cancer earlier this year, underwent a second bone marrow transplant July 20 at St. Louis University Medical Center. Ten days later she was released from the hospital.

"I told (the doctor) I would really like to leave by Saturday," Aug. 1, Lloyd said in a telephone interview. The doctor discouraged such a hope because Lloyd's white blood cell count was so low on Tuesday, July 28. But the count began to climb dramatically.

"(The doctor) said he's never seen it grow that fast in one day," Lloyd stated. "I said, 'You've never known the power of God.' He threw his head back and said, 'I'm learning.'"

She was released Thursday, July 30, with the condition she have her blood count checked Aug. 3 and 5 by a doctor "familiar with bone marrow transplants.

That need was supplied by another woman in the St. Louis hospital. When

Lloyd walked past the room she occupied during her first transplant, she noticed the new patient in that room had her name, Katherine. Lloyd stopped to visit and discovered the woman was from Ashville, N.C., a few miles from the Baptist conference center where Lloyd wanted to go. Thus a doctor was secured.

"God wanted me to be at Ridgecrest," she emphasized. "There were a lot of training things I needed for this next year that I was planning to do in Sunday school." She is a member of First Baptist Church in Henderson, Ky., where her husband, Skip, is minister of education and administration.

The good news for Kathy Lloyd has come in the midst of a Southern Baptist prayer barrage keyed by Woman's Missionary Union and a number of state Baptist newspapers.

In January this year, the young mother of two was given six months to two years to live. Recent bone scans and biopsies have indicated the cancer is in retreat.

Lloyd doesn't know how long she will live but her desire is "to use wisely the time that God has given me. . . . He has given me some time and I need to be accountable for it."

Her personal goal now is to grow some hair. "My little one (6 years old) does not remember me with hair," Lloyd said. She lost her hair, even her eyelashes, during recent chemotherapy.

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THAILAND

Alexander's retire

by Maxine Stewart
Special to the Arkansas Baptist

Missionaries Betty and Max Alexander were appointed to Thailand in 1961. Although Max had six years of church planting experience at the First Baptist Church of El Cerrito, Calif., he was appointed to serve as the business manager of the Thailand Baptist Mission (TBM), a position he held for 22 years.

Max and Betty planted their lives in the capital city of Bangkok where the TBM office is located. In addition to serving as business manager, the Alexanders were asked to work with a weak church, Sala Baptist Thonburi, that had been started several years earlier. Max was the missionary advisor with Betty working along with him.

The Alexanders were also asked to be the first hostel parents for the "up country" missionary kids who were ready to attend the 8th grade at the International School Bangkok (ISB). This was no easy task for them as they had three small children of their own, were still in language study and were working with a struggling church. They filled this position for three years before they went on their first furlough.

In 1984, in an effort to "streamline" the administration of the TBM, one person took on the combined job of treasurer and business manager. This freed Max to become a church planter. For the past 10 years the Alexanders have lived in a MUU BAAN (housing area). One of the greatest efforts Betty has made on the mission field was to try to start new work among the ladies in her MUU BAAN, hoping that a church would develop.

Betty invited some of the ladies from her church, Prakanong Baptist Church, to assist her in trying to reach the women in her neighborhood. She worked diligently in this effort for several years. She had Bible studies, fellowship times, covered dish meals, cooking classes, hand-crafts, coffees, parties and special speakers on family health needs. She invited the neighborhood ladies to attend her church. She took some of the ladies to the annual women's meeting at the Baptist Christian Conference Center. She worked very faithfully, but not one lady ever accepted Christ! "It turned out to be seed-sowing more than reaping," said Betty. "Prayerfully, some day they will come to understand God's love and salvation for them."

While in the Prakanong Church, Betty was asked to be the Sunday School Director one year. Through this she was able to help disciple some of the church members and enlist them in working in the Sunday



Photo / Maxine Stewart

Max and Betty Alexander

School. "One lady, Khun Narumon was hungry to learn and is now a leader in her church and in the association," said Betty. "She was the epitome of Waylong Moore's FAT person—faithful, available and teachable." Six years ago, Max was asked to enlist a team and begin a new church in Bangkok. Thus the "A-Team" was formed. They distributed 15,000 questionnaires in a selected Thai neighborhood to determine what they could offer that would give them an entree into the hearts and homes of the people. Again, it was teaching English. They had hoped to meet in a home, but they ended up having to rent a shop building and classes got underway—English and Thai Bible. By having several people on the team, they usually enroll 80 to 90 people each term. "Since mid-year 1991," Betty pointed out, "we've had a Christian group meeting each Sunday for study, prayer and worship. This we envision as the start of a new church."

The most disappointing experience the Alexanders have had on the mission field is the slow growth of churches. Although legally there is religious freedom in Thailand, there is still great opposition from family, co-workers, friends and neighbors when one becomes a Christian. Buddhism is the state religion, although all Thais are not Buddhists.

Max attended Arkansas State College (now University) at Jonesboro and finished at Ozark Bible College. He and Betty attended Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in California.

The Alexanders have three daughters who grew up in Thailand. Pamela and Donna were small children when they arrived on the mission field. Doris was born in Thailand. Pam is working in New York, Donna is a lawyer and physical therapist in Washington D.C., and Doris is a judge and therapist living in Atlanta, Ga.

The Alexanders went on their final furlough Aug. 24, 1992, which will end with retirement Oct. 1, 1993.

Maxine Stewart is the Baptist Press representative in Thailand.