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Arkansas Baptist State Convention

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ARKANSAS BAPTIST



Volume 92, Number 23

November 18, 1993



1993 ARKANSAS BAPTIST
STATE CONVENTION



**PERFORM
MINISTRY**
in Jesus' name

Newly elected officers for the Arkansas Baptist State Convention are (left to right) second vice president Grant Ethridge, pastor of First Church, Lavaca; first vice president Jim McDaniel, pastor of First Church, Brinkley; and president Ronnie Rogers, pastor of Lakeside Church, Hot Springs.

Pursue 'ministry that matters,' Rogers tells ABSC messengers

By James Preston

Special to the Arkansas Baptist

Preaching during the Tuesday afternoon session of last week's Arkansas Baptist State Convention, Ronnie Rogers urged messengers to pursue "ministry that matters." Rogers, pastor of Lakeside Church, Hot Springs, was elected state convention president the following morning.

Rogers said keys to having a ministry that matters include having compassion like Christ, the faith to follow Him, and "compliance to His commands."

Taking his text from Matthew 14:13-19, Rogers noted that compassion moved Jesus to minister to the crowds. But when the crowd grew hungry, the disciples urged Jesus to send them away.

"The only thing that stops us from doing ministry is the loss of compassion," Rogers said. "But when we have compassion like Christ, nothing can stop us from doing ministry."

Rogers said the disciples were overwhelmed by the crowd's need. As they questioned Jesus' ability to respond, Jesus moved to minister.

When doing ministry, Rogers said, Christians should apply Jesus' methods, adding that the beginning point is meeting physical needs. "Jesus saw the hunger of the crowds and moved to minister," he emphasized. "When the church is meeting needs, it 'creates an environment conducive to making disciples.'"

Finally, Christians should learn to depend upon Christ for needs to be met. Instead of being overwhelmed by the great ministry needs of the world, Rogers said,

"We must learn to look to Christ for needs to be met."

Rogers said the disciples had compassion for the crowd, but neglected to look to Christ to meet the need. "The disciples were telling Jesus by their limited faith that 'you are spiritually relevant, but you are not socially relevant.'"

Noting that the world believes the church is irrelevant because it sees the church's spiritual lethargy, Rogers said the needs of the world are essentially spiritual and are a problem of sin. But rather than defining the problem of sin for the world, he added, the church has allowed the world to define what its needs are.

"Too often the church has looked to the world to determine its relevance," Rogers declared. "But the world will never see the church as relevant. The question instead should be whether God believes the church is relevant. The first century church didn't turn the world upside down by making the message relevant, but by staying with the gospel."

Rogers noted that when the disciples listened and obeyed what Jesus told them to do, they were more than able to meet the needs of the crowd. "When God's people focus upon Him, He will supply the needs as they come," he added.

The baby boomer generation, according to Rogers, is asking the church if it is relevant. The church may not seem relevant to boomers, but the only way they will be won is with "compassion, faith and compliance. The only ministry that matters is the one in which the people of God proclaim Jesus, not Caesar, as Lord of all."

Cover Story



**PERFORM
MINISTRY**
in Jesus' name

'Perform Ministry'

Messengers attending the 140th session of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention Nov. 9-10 at Park Hill Church, North Little Rock, focused on the theme, "Perform Ministry in Jesus' Name." This week's issue of the *Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine* is dedicated to in-depth coverage of the 1993 state convention.

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Messengers elect Ronnie Rogers president

ABN photo / Mike Gill

By Trennis Henderson

Editor, Arkansas Baptist

When the election results were first announced, Ronnie Rogers misunderstood the totals and momentarily thought he had lost his effort to become president of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention. As people sitting nearby began to congratulate him, however, he soon realized that he had been elected on a vote of 384-347, gaining 52.5 percent of the votes cast.

Rogers, pastor of Lakeside Church in Hot Springs, was elected state convention president over Eddie McCord, director of missions for Independence Association. The election was held Nov. 10, one day after Rogers preached to convention messengers about "ministry that matters."

Acknowledging that the close presidential election "upset some and elated others," Rogers noted, "There are many people more electable than me on a human plane....I'm overwhelmed that I've been allowed the opportunity."

Rogers said he was approached a year ago by Barry King, pastor of Grand Avenue Church in Hot Springs, about the possibility of being nominated for the convention presidency. Prior to that, "being president was never a desire of mine or a thought," Rogers recalled. Yet a series of events led him to accept the nomination.

After being invited several months ago to preach on the convention program, Rogers said he prayed and fasted on three different occasions, eventually sensing "a peace from God to allow myself to be nominated if others wanted me to be." Following an August meeting with "people I knew, loved and respected," Rogers said the group reached a "unanimous consensus that they thought the hand of God was in it."

Rogers said members of his congregation began to pray and fast about the matter 62 days prior to the convention, with at least one man fasting and praying each day. Members also prayed throughout the 24 hours prior to the election.

"It was bathed in prayer and evolved out of God doing some things," the new president said. "If God wasn't in this, this is just not me. I wasn't running against Eddie McCord....We said from the beginning we're not against anything or anybody. Watch everything we do and everything we say. It's about preaching the Bible, ministering."

Looking toward the future, Rogers affirmed that Arkansas Baptists "have a good state convention and a good executive director," adding that the convention



Newly elected Arkansas Baptist Convention officers are (left to right) second vice president Grant Ethridge of Lavaca, first vice president Jim McDaniel of Brinkley and president Ronnie Rogers of Hot Springs.

has "a lot of things to be thankful for."

He said his first goal as president is to appoint "the highest caliber of men and women who are modeling what we're about—ministry in Jesus' name. If holiness and ministry are important, it filters down. The standard of leadership has to be at the pinnacle of the mountain."

Noting that he will be "deliberative in appointments," Rogers added, "I'm going to try to go in the most conservative direction. I would not appoint someone who is not an inerrantist....The resurgence of the absolute inerrancy of Scripture and evangelism and holiness are things dear to my heart."

Rogers said a second goal is "to be a voice to speak to moral issues of our day....The church must share the word of righteousness, love, ministry and truth. We ought to be a voice that is challenging and changing the world." A third goal is to highlight "ministry in holiness."

Voicing his burden for small and medium-size churches, Rogers pointed out, "The authenticity of our ministry is judged by faithfulness, not numerical statistics. If they're faithful to God where they are, that authenticates their ministry."

In his own ministry setting at Lakeside Church, 68 people were baptized in the past year and Sunday School attendance has grown from 68 to 268 during his eight years as pastor. Missions giving has tripled, with the church currently channeling 18 percent of its gifts to mission causes, including 9 percent through the Cooperative Program. He said much of the church's growth has come through an emphasis on "teaching the Word, minister-

ing and loving the people who are there."

Rogers, 41, became a Christian at age 25 and was ordained as a minister three years later. He holds a bachelor of arts degree in biblical studies from Criswell College and a master of science degree in counseling from Henderson State University. He currently is a trustee of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and a member of Criswell College's board of overseers.

Convention vice presidents

In other election results, James McDaniel, pastor of Brinkley First Church was elected first vice president in a three-way race with Tim Redden, pastor of Barcelona Road Church in Hot Springs Village, and Dane Dover, bivocational pastor of Mill Creek Church in Hot Springs. McDaniel received 375 votes, compared to 198 for Redden and 122 for Dover.

McDaniel, a graduate of Ouachita Baptist University and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, has been pastor of Brinkley First Church for 22 years. He is a current member and former president of the ABCS Executive Board as well as a trustee of the Southern Baptist Education Commission.

Grant Ethridge, pastor of Lavaca First Church, was elected second vice president by acclamation. Ethridge is a trustee of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, a member of Criswell College's board of overseers and a former secretary of the Arkansas Baptist Pastors' Conference. He holds degrees from Emmanuel College, Brainerd Theological Seminary, Immanuel Baptist Seminary and Luther Rice Seminary.

Partnership, '94 CP budget gain approval

By Trennis Henderson

Editor, Arkansas Baptist

"Perform Ministry in Jesus' Name" became more than a theme for messengers attending last week's Arkansas Baptist State Convention. Putting the theme into action, messengers voted to establish a three-year partnership with European Baptists, approved a series of ministry-related priority projects for the coming year and increased the convention's 1994 Cooperative Program budget by 5 percent over the current year.

Those and other actions proposed by the ABCS Executive Board gained overwhelming approval among the 1,263 messengers who participated in the Nov. 9-10 convention.

The partnership mission agreement with the European Baptist Convention and the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board will begin in 1994. The partnership's threefold purpose includes plans "to proclaim the gospel to people in Europe who have a special interest in the English language, to accelerate the planting and development of English-speaking churches and to meet human needs where possible through agreed upon strategies and projects."

The European Baptist Convention is an organization of approximately 60 English-speaking Baptist congregations throughout Europe. Arkansas Baptist volunteers will be involved in such activities as prayer support, church planting, participating in simultaneous revival efforts and helping strengthen existing ministries among EBC congregations.

Glendon Grober, director of the ABCS Brotherhood department, will serve as the Arkansas Baptist coordinator for the three-year effort.

Priority projects related to Arkansas Baptists' 1994 commitment to "Perform Ministry in Jesus' Name" include Hope for Hurting Humanity which emphasizes ongoing mission action, Developing a Caring Sunday School which focuses on Sunday School ministry projects and Mississippi River Ministry which addresses regional volunteer mission projects. Also included are TTEOTE (To The Ends Of The Earth) which relates to the European partnership, Evangelism in Ministry which emphasizes witness training and Equipping for Ministry which highlights lay caregiving skills.

Messengers adopted a 1994 Coop-



A total of 1,263 messengers participated in the 140th session of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention held Nov. 9-10 at Park Hill Church in North Little Rock.

erative Program budget of \$15.96 million. Included in the budget is \$5,249,170 for ABCS Executive Board programs; \$4,047,530 for state programs, including Children's Homes and Family Ministries, Foundation, Newsmagazine, Ouachita Baptist University and Williams Baptist College; and \$6,663,300 for Southern Baptist Convention causes.

Among the other Executive Board proposals approved by messengers were:

- Changing the name of the Discipleship Training department to the Discipleship and Family Ministry department in order to be compatible with organizational changes at the Baptist Sunday School Board and to more adequately reflect the scope of the department's current assignment.

- Approving a nine-member committee to plan celebration events related to the convention's 150th anniversary in 1998. Eddie McCord, director of missions for Independence Association, was named chairman.

- Establishing a 24-member Directions 2000 planning committee to recommend areas of ministry, long-range goals and action plans for 1996-2000 Executive Board programs.

- Inviting the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board to conduct an FMB meeting and appointing service in Arkansas in April 1997. According to FMB trustee Jack Bledsoe, director of missions for Carey Association, FMB administrators favor the invitation because they view a 1989 appointment service held in Little Rock as "one of the very best appointment services we have had."

In addition to the Executive Board recommendations, messengers approved the state convention's amended and restated articles of incorporation and bylaws as well as the restated constitution

and articles of incorporation of Williams Baptist College.

The changes to the convention documents, presented by constitution and bylaws committee chairman Betty Harp, gained final approval following initial approval a year ago.

Explaining that "there is no change in our doctrinal positions or in the procedures for appointments or elections," Harp explained that the primary changes "sought to strengthen the documents at the point of relationships between the convention and its agencies and institutions. We sought to reduce the risk of litigation against the convention by eliminating wording that would encourage suits based on ascending liability."

ABCS executive director Don Moore, who presented the Williams Baptist College documents for consideration, explained that the changes already had been approved by the college's trustees. He said one reason for the changes was to address the concern over institutions in other state conventions where trustees unilaterally have severed an institution's ties with the sponsoring state convention.

"We have felt that is a great violation of Christian integrity," Moore said. "We asked for legal counsel to try to sew this thing up as tight as possible so that no group of people can ever take away from this convention an institution that belongs to this convention."

In other business, messengers approved a proposal by Dillard Miller, director of missions for Ouachita Association, to dedicate the 1993 state convention annual to the memory of Lawson Hatfield, Hatfield, who died June 30 at age 72, served 24 years as director of the ABCS Sunday School department. A former Arkansas Baptist pastor, he also served two terms as state convention president.

'Perform Ministry in Jesus' Name'

From the banner prominently proclaiming the theme to the ministry projects and goals approved by messengers, the 1993 Arkansas Baptist State Convention was sharply focused on the call to "Perform Ministry in Jesus' Name."

Bold actions endorsed by convention messengers included approving a Cooperative Program goal of nearly \$16 million and embarking on a three-year partnership with the European Baptist Convention. The challenging CP goal, a 5 percent increase over the current budget, will help ensure ongoing ministry in the name of Christ on the state, national and international levels.

The European partnership, which follows successful Arkansas Baptist partnership efforts in Brazil and Guatemala, will offer a variety of blessings and challenges to volunteers during the next three years.

As Arkansas Baptists take advantage of the opportunity to touch the world through church planting, leadership training, simultaneous revivals and other projects throughout Europe, individuals should begin now to faithfully remember those opportunities in prayer. Amid all that transpired during last week's convention sessions, the 1993 gathering may well be remembered as the year that Arkansas Baptists obediently answered God's call to help spread the gospel throughout Europe.

Among the speakers who challenged Arkansas Baptists to respond to God's leadership, Henry Blackaby emphasized

STRAIGHT FROM THE EDITOR

By TRENNIS HENDERSON



the need to seek God's will in ministry through in-depth Bible study and prayer. Convention president Buddy Sutton urged churches to faithfully proclaim, "Here am I, Lord, send me!"

During the annual convention sermon, Dale Thompson encouraged Arkansas Baptists "to be a voice in the darkness" amid all the challenges of today. Ronnie Rogers, who later was elected convention president, emphasized the need to be involved in "ministry that matters."

Perhaps the most dramatic challenge came during the executive director's message when Don Moore was unable to preach because of his need to be at his wife's side in the hospital. Jimmie Sheffield, associate executive director, filled in for Moore, reminding convention messengers that "ministry expresses our faith in God."

Undergirding the call to ministry was an ongoing focus on the power and

importance of prayer. During pre-convention meetings, Minette Drumwright led ministers' wives in a prayer ministry emphasis and Paige Patterson concluded the pastors' conference with a call to prayer. Blackaby's focus on prayer during the state convention's opening session reiterated the need for fervent prayer related to all God has planned for Arkansas Baptists.

Prayers were voiced throughout the convention for Shirley Moore, who was unable to attend because of her battle with cancer. A resolution adopted by messengers pledged "to continue in Christian love to pray for her."

A call to ministry and prayer, an international missions partnership and a battle with cancer by a loved and respected sister in Christ are poignant reminders of what our ministry priorities should be as Arkansas Baptists.

If we are willing to truly "perform ministry in Jesus' name" on a personal level with those whose paths we cross, there should be many bright days ahead for Arkansas Baptists. If we choose, instead, to focus on differences with one another and adopt a worldly "us and them" mentality, we may miss the blessing of fulfilling God's will through effective ministry in the name of His Son.

The challenge is before us. The opportunities are unlimited. I invite you to join me in praying that Arkansas Baptists will boldly, faithfully and enthusiastically "perform ministry in Jesus' name" throughout the days and years ahead.

Entering God's open doors

I am writing this in anticipation of the annual convention which will have met at Park Hill Church by the time you read this. For all who have made a special effort to be present for the convention, for all of the churches and individuals who have borne the expense of coming, for all of the program people, for our staff and for Park Hill Church, I want to express a strong word of appreciation. Everyone will have done their part and Arkansas Baptists will be ready to move on together to enter the open doors God has made available to us.

By God's grace and providence I hope to have Shirley present for at least a part of the first session. Her survival and her witness in adversity is a part of our victory. You have faithfully borne both of us up in prayer. Her effort has been that the same concerted effort in prayer on her behalf might come to be focused upon an awakening in our churches. We believe

YOU'LL BE GLAD TO KNOW

By DON MOORE
ABSC Executive Director



this is a part of God's "good" that He is working out of her suffering.

You will have been challenged to become the strongest spiritual force in the history of Arkansas Baptists. Caught in the crossfire of a cultural war with large loads

of immoral sewage being poured out upon society, what kind of individuals and churches will we be? Fighting in the quicksand of spiritual indifference, what kind of commitment is going to emerge to be used of God to lead us back to spiritual vitality in our churches? With an attempt at intentional ministry-based evangelism, our churches will have been challenged to "Perform Ministry in Jesus' Name," and thereby earn the right to be heard.

I would like to give a wild and rowdy, yes! to the challenge we face. The floundering peoples of a materialistic, pleasure-based society will begin to open up to a positive, authoritative Word, and hope-filled ministries. Arkansas Baptists will be there with the message and the ministries God will use to make a huge difference in thousands of lives in the years ahead. This convention will have brought our focus on that goal.

Resolutions address variety of issues

ABN photo / Mike Gill

By Trennis Henderson

Editor, Arkansas Baptist

Reaffirming opposition to such concerns as homosexuality, pornography, gambling, and alcohol and other drugs, resolutions adopted by messengers to last week's Arkansas Baptist State Convention reflected a variety of familiar themes. Among the 10 resolutions adopted by messengers, seven included extensive language taken directly from resolutions adopted a year ago.

Among the three resolutions addressing new topics, messengers pledged to pray for Shirley Moore who is hospitalized with cancer and was unable to attend the state convention. Mrs. Moore, the wife of state convention executive director Don Moore, has been battling cancer much of the year.

The resolution voiced messengers' love for Mrs. Moore, adding that Arkansas Baptists "are concerned for her health" and will "continue in Christian love to pray for her." Following the adoption of the resolution, resolutions committee chairman Rick Hyde, pastor of Third Church, Malvern, led a prayer specifically on behalf of Mrs. Moore.

Messengers also adopted resolutions affirming the "True Love Waits" sexual purity campaign aimed at teenagers and commended local ABC affiliates "who courageously choose not to air the 'NYPD Blue' series." The new series had earlier been described by the American Family Association as a "softcore pornography program" that "pushes the limits of nudity, violence and profanity on network TV."

A call for 'moral awakening'

The "True Love Waits" resolution, noting that "sexual promiscuity among America's teenagers has reached epidemic proportions," added that "many Christian teenagers have personally chosen abstinence and sexual purity until marriage as God's plan for their lives."

Encouraging churches "to offer their teens the opportunity of making a commitment to sexual purity until marriage and fidelity within marriage," the resolution also called on Arkansas Baptists to share the campaign with other Christians and churches and to pray that the emphasis "might be used of God to move America toward moral awakening."

A related resolution opposing "the humanistic 'safe sex' message" affirmed "the biblical parameters for human sexual relations of sexual abstinence outside of marriage and fidelity within marriage."

The resolution concerning "NYPD Blue" urges "responsible broadcasters...



Rick Hyde (left), chairman of the state convention resolutions committee, introduces the committee's report as committee members stand ready to field questions.

to continue to evaluate their responsibility regarding the public airwaves."

A proposed amendment by Keith Brickell, pastor of Second Church of Monticello, failed to gain messenger approval. Brickell's proposal called on Arkansas Baptists "to boycott channel 7 and any other ABC affiliate that broadcasts the program 'NYPD Blue'."

Committee member Jim Lagrone, pastor of Bryant First Southern Church, explained that the intent of the resolution "is to compliment those who took a stand."

John McClanahan, pastor of Pine Bluff First Church, noted that his congregation has been broadcasting their church services on channel 7 for nearly 30 years. "I hope you are not seeking to boycott what we seek to do representing the kingdom of God and the Lord Jesus Christ in the 11 o'clock hour on Sunday morning."

"If we want to get the program off the air, as many of us do," McClanahan continued, "the thing to do is not use a shotgun but use a very pointed rifle and tell our people not to watch that Tuesday night program."

Prior to the amendment's defeat by voice vote, Ken Overton, pastor of Marked Tree First Church, remarked, "I do not want to dilute this resolution away from the appreciation... This has to have the strength to say to those ABC affiliates who did the right thing, 'Thank you.'"

A related resolution concerning "pornography and broadcasts depicting indecency and violence" emphasized the need to "promote wholesomeness and responsible depiction of human sexuality in the broadcast and print media."

Other resolutions adopted by messengers included:

- Pledging to "oppose the passage of laws which seek to validate same-sex unions" or which seek to convey specific rights to individuals "who live the homosexual lifestyle."

- Voicing opposition to "any attempts to amend the state constitution to permit casino gambling or any other forms of gambling."

- Opposing the use of alcohol, illicit drugs and the misuse of legal drugs while committing "to ministries of outreach to those... who are ensnared by an addiction or pattern of abuse of alcohol and other drugs."

- Affirming the sanctity of human life and calling on the current administration in Washington "to reverse its pro-abortion policies and proposed policies."

- Expressing appreciation to convention officers, program committee and host church for their contributions to the annual meeting.

Following the resolutions committee report, a proposed resolution introduced on the floor of the convention by Ron West, a furloughing missionary to Taiwan, failed to gain passage. West proposed calling on the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee to consider providing state conventions a more direct role in selecting Southern Baptist trustees in the interest of helping increase Cooperative Program support.

After a voice vote was inconclusive, convention president William H. "Buddy" Sutton ruled that the proposal was defeated on a standing vote.

Speakers highlight TTEOTE ministry

Taking the gospel to the ends of the earth is the goal of Christian missions and evangelism. The Arkansas Baptist State Convention's global missions outreach program, aptly named TTEOTE (To the Ends of the Earth), encompasses the worldwide partnerships Arkansas Baptists will be participating in through 1996.

During the TTEOTE report at last week's Arkansas Baptist State Convention, three speakers highlighted the diversity of projects they participated in this year.

Barry King, pastor of Grand Avenue Church in Hot Springs, noted that during his mission trip to Australia, the effectiveness of spiritual endeavor was directly related to the earnestness of prayer offered for the team.

The trip resulted in 46 professions of faith in Christ and 26 commitments, all of which Kings described as the result of earnest prayer.

Ronnie O'Neal, ABCS Brotherhood department associate, reported on a trip to Latvia, a small former Soviet republic. Many churches in the Baptist union had continued to preach the Word during the communist era, he said, but their numbers were small. TTEOTE coordinator Glendon Grober worked with international evangelist Nilson Panini of Brazil to staff a series of crusades across Latvia. After every crusade, discipling teams provided follow-up discipleship training for two days in each city.

O'Neal reported that more than 950 people were saved during the crusades and that the first Southern Baptist missionaries were on the field in Latvia.

Jeff Cheatham, director of missions for Arkansas River Valley Association, told messengers of plans for a three-year partnership between Arkansas Baptists and the European Baptist Convention. He noted the convention is composed of 60 English-language churches and missions throughout Europe. They need assistance with Vacation Bible Schools, leadership training, English instruction and many other areas.

Cheatham encouraged messengers to consider serving in the partnership, which was approved in a later business session of the convention.

'Ministry expresses our faith in God,' Sheffield declares

Addressing the convention theme, "Perform Ministry in Jesus' Name," Jimmie Sheffield challenged Arkansas Baptists to see ministry as an opportunity from God. Sheffield, associate executive director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, stressed that Christians "must minister and serve others because ministry expresses our faith in God."

The most dramatic illustration of that truth was the fact that state convention executive director Don Moore was unable to preach as scheduled during the Tuesday evening session because he was ministering to his wife, Shirley, who is hospitalized with cancer. Moore asked Sheffield to preach in his place so that Moore could remain with his wife.

Noting that Executive Board staff members "carry a very heavy, heavy heart for him and for Shirley," Sheffield said of Moore, "I've marveled at his faith, at his strength, at his love for Shirley. He's got his priorities right."

Sheffield's message, "Ministry: Option? Obligation? Opportunity?", emphasized that "the biblical definition of ministry means to serve, to wait upon or to minister." Noting that "we have interpreted the word to describe the services we perform to help people in need," he added that such needs may be physical, mental, emotional or spiritual.

Pointing to the model of Jesus' ministry, Sheffield remarked, "Jesus' life has many things to say to us today about ministry, especially ministry to the poor."

Sheffield described Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan as "perhaps the greatest model for service and ministry to those in need." He said three key principles of the Samaritan's actions were that the help was very practical, it reflected a generous spirit and it was thorough.

"If you are going to get into ministry, it is going to cost you something, either personally or as a church," Sheffield pointed out. He said those costs include the inconvenience of disrupted plans, the diversion of resources and the commitment of personal time and involvement.

"Jesus left us a mandate for ministry that we cannot escape," Sheffield declared. "Jesus assumed His followers would serve others. It is to be a very natural part of our Christian lives."

Explaining that opportunities for service come in everyday experiences, Sheffield said serving the needy is to serve Christ. "Servanthood begins when we move beyond our own comfort to relieve the discomfort of others," he added.



Jimmie Sheffield challenged Arkansas Baptists to serve others because "ministry expresses our faith in God."

Describing the testimony of the early church, he said first-century Christians modeled both intra-church and inter-church ministry. "The early church felt very strongly about ministry to its own," he remarked. "Ministry to the body begins with a unity and a concern for one another."

Reading 1 John 3:14-19, Sheffield noted that John "makes a case for the assurance of a believer's faith measured by how that professed believer responds to brothers and sisters in need. The ministries of social concern for the poor and needy are hardly set forth as sideline distractions. They are central to what we believe."

Sheffield concluded with a list of ministry principles gleaned from both the Old and New Testaments. He said those truths include the fact that God's desire is that poverty and hunger do not exist and that God's people have a special responsibility to offer a hand of help with an attitude of care and concern.

Describing the need to "offer a hand-up to self-reliance," he added that American Christians "need to re-evaluate our thinking about our possessions." He said in today's society one-fifth of the world's population lives in absolute poverty while another one-fifth consumes four-fifths of the world's income.

"Our churches need to have a vision of ministry to the needy," Sheffield declared. "We need not just to talk about ministry; we need to do ministry."

"With all the hurting people around us, let's not miss the people we are learning how to help," he urged. "Just do it!"

'The best of times, the worst of times'

By William H. "Buddy" Sutton
President, Arkansas Baptist State Convention

I would like to tell you what a great privilege you have given me to represent Arkansas Baptists over the past two years. To have walked around and ridden around over Arkansas and see what you are doing and to have gone to a church service in Iowa in a school building and to have them call with great love and affection the name of Arkansas Baptists and even to travel to Europe as we were privileged to do this summer and meet with the European Baptist Convention there and talk about our plans and theirs for the continued preaching of the name of Jesus over the face of the earth, I thank you for that and will always treasure it as something that you and God have allowed me to enjoy.

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times. It was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epic of belief, it was the epic of incredulity. It was the season of light, it was the season of darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair." So wrote Charles Dickens in his great novel, *A Tale of Two Cities*, to describe the days of the French Revolution.

Had Dickens lived during the first century he would likely have used the same words to describe the days of that era: "It was the worst of times because good men like Stephen were stoned to death. It was the best of time for even in the stoning, Stephen testified to the name of Jesus Christ with such truth and eloquence that his words are permanently canonized in the Bible as God's Holy Word.

A tribute to Stephen

In further tribute to him, the Scriptures state that even as Stephen died, the heavens opened and Christ was seen standing on the right hand of God. My old pastor, Dr. W.O. Vaught, and perhaps others, taught that by standing, Christ, who was usually described as seated at the right hand of God, was offering a standing ovation to a faithful servant who had preached His name.

It was the worst of time in that Peter, Paul and John were arrested, beaten and commanded never to preach the name of Jesus again. It was the best of time in that they endured the suffering and continued to preach for as long as they lived.

In or about 64 A.D., the great apostle Paul languished in chains in that dark, cold underground prison at Maritima and realized that the age of the apostles was coming to a close. Preaching Jesus was

about to pass to another generation and with that realization he took pen and already aware that he was going to die, he wrote Timothy a remarkable letter that we know as the great New Testament book of II Timothy.

In just four short chapters, Paul packed every sentence with rich wisdom for a young preacher fearing difficult times but he charged Timothy in particular to remember several points.

First, Paul said to Timothy, remember that God did not give us a timid spirit, but a spirit of power, love and discipline (II Tim. 1:7).

Second, Timothy, do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord (II Tim. 1:8).

Back in the summer, legal business that I was handling took me to the headquarters of one of the world's largest corporations in New York. There, I visited with the chairman of the board and the CEO of the company. I was very impressed with the palatial surroundings of his office and the great respect shown him by those who worked with him, and I told him so. With good humor he said, "You know, I'm considered a success in this job if I can wake up every morning, think of the worst imaginable thing that could happen to the company and I am deemed a success if I can keep it from happening."

As I have traveled around Arkansas the past two years observing churches all over the state and the work that we have to do, I have pondered the question, what is the worst possible thing that could happen to Arkansas Baptists? I concluded that the worst thing that could possibly happen to Arkansas Baptists would be for there to come a time when the pulpits of our churches were no longer filled by godly men, preaching Jesus Christ as the only name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.

To be sure, the world even now is pressing Baptists and other evangelical peoples to exchange the spirit of power, love and discipline that God gave us for a spirit of timidity and the myths of the world that are being marketed all over the world with great ability to oppose us.

It is undoubtedly true that after more than 140 years of preaching Christ and Him only as the way of salvation, more pressure will be put on us to change the message in coming years than we have ever before experienced. It has already started.

When the Billy Graham crusade was held in Arkansas in 1989, it received splendid support from many various denominations in the community.



ABC president Buddy Sutton declared that ministry "all begins with Jesus."

However, others which had once been strong in evangelism in days gone by politely declined to participate, saying, "We are not involved in that kind of thing."

The news media, as a rule, was very generous. But in the religion section of one of the papers, the point was doggedly made that Billy Graham failed to speak to the great issues of our time. Baptists today have great social obligations and many ministries to fulfill, but fellow Baptists, it all begins with Jesus.

During the crusade, I saw the faces of men and women who had been in church all their lives come forward to be saved. They had heard social issues of their day preached with regularity in their churches but had never heard the simple message of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

Their churches have long since quit reading what Paul wrote in II Timothy 4:1-2: "I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His Kingdom: preach the word, be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction."

Instead they have fallen into the trap which Paul warned of in verses 3 and 4: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths."

We are in an awesome struggle for the souls of men and women in this country today and precious few of our people realize the depth or the consequences of the struggle. As E.V. Hill put it, "Too many people don't have no trouble with what's going on."

Dr. James Dobson in his book, *Children at Risk*, documents the fact that we have been in a spiritual civil war in this country for over 30 years. The sides are divided between one side whose lives and institutions are structured on the concept that God is. The other side has structured their lives and institutions on the concept that God is not. As the Scriptures stated even before Abraham Lincoln made the phrase famous, "A house divided against itself cannot long stand." We will not long co-exist in this country with half living as though God is and half living as though God is not.

Indeed, Dr. Henry Blackaby who was in our city some time ago made the statement and I well remember: If the United States gets away with the way it is living today, it will have done so against the pattern of all that God has ever allowed in the past.

According to Dr. Dobson, the stakes in the struggle are the children of the country and then the country itself. We are not positioned well for the fight.

Consider the power of television on our children today. We are told that between the ages of 6 and 18 the average child in this country will watch 15,000 hours of television as compared to 13,000 hours of instruction in school. By the time he is six years old he will have spent more time watching television than he will spend in a lifetime talking to his father—indeed if the father is there at all to talk with him.

And yet as the issues of violence and pornography on television are being reviewed even today, we are told to be still in deference to the First Amendment and to accept a spirit of timidity on the issue.

God forbid that we shall forever say through our courts and governmental agencies that we cannot tell the difference between pornography and contributions to art. But we cannot wait for the courts or governmental agencies to do a turnaround. The issue is too pressing.

It must fall to the church to take extraordinary measures to minister to millions of children growing up in this country now without Christ and without hope. When the task seems impossible we must find ways to save our own children. The only alternative is to give up.

The predominant answer that children would get from watching 15,000 hours of modern television is that God is not. And what about the 13,000 hours of school instruction? For most, the present course of instruction offers little evidence that

God is and much that God is not. Even the lifestyle of the family (or lack of it) offers for many today little evidence that God is.

Shall we then simply give up and say of our time, there was no best of times, it was all just the worst of times. God forbid.

Let us instead reaffirm that God is and that His Word is and that so long as there is a Baptist church on the face of the earth, His Word shall be proclaimed from it. May God give us the wisdom to replace the myths of our time with the knowledge that "the Word of God is alive and powerful, sharper than a two-edged sword, piercing as far as the division of the soul and the spirit of both joints and marrow and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

'But if not...'

The columnist George Will tells this story from the days of World War II. As the Nazi blitzkrieg rolled over British and French troops fighting in France in 1940, the British were pushed back to the beaches of Dunkirk on the French coast. They were surrounded with no apparent means of escape.

Back home in England a massive effort was being organized to make an attempt to rescue them by sea. Every large ship and every fishing boat available was gathered for the job.

Communications were poor but each unit in England tried to make contact with their own comrades in French in order to determine whether they had already surrendered. The British officers in one particular unit finally received a three-word message which read, "But if not." No one asked whether this was the entire message but instead a quiet, jubilant celebration took place within the communications room for they knew from these three words alone that their soldiers had not quit nor would they give up. You see, those officers had read the Bible and studied together with such belief in its words that the receiving officers knew instantly that the three words, "But if not," came from the book of Daniel where Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, when Nebuchadnezzar commanded them to worship the golden image, replied, "Our God who we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods nor worship the golden image."

When God walks the face of the earth tomorrow, if He walks it 100 year from now or if He walks it 1,000 years from now looking for those who would proclaim the name of His Son Jesus, may He find it in Baptist churches that are still saying, "Here am I, Lord, send me!"

'Knowing Jesus' is greatest goal, Henry declares

Addressing the session theme, "Ministry that Reflects Jesus," Jim Henry, pastor of First Baptist Church in Orlando, Fla., emphasized that Jesus "went about doing good."

"Out of that life that Jesus lived, the apostle Paul began to experience that life-changing power," he said. "Today, we need to heed the call back to that kind of ambition...if we don't have the life of Jesus, the ministry of Jesus will not come out of our lives."

Henry pointed out that Paul wanted to know Christ — a desire for continuous knowledge in a more intimate way following his salvation.

"Paul said, 'I want to know Christ.' Moses said the same thing about God...David also said it," Henry related. That kind of desire to know God more was stirred in Henry during a trip to the Holy Land. Henry said he took time one day to stop by one of the walls of Jerusalem. "I just wanted to sit and capture all I could of Christ...and it was a beginning point for me." He said the best way to know Jesus is by spending time reading the Bible, praying, praising, obeying and serving Him.

"Ministry to others begins with comprehending who Jesus is in our walk with Him," Henry emphasized. "I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection." Claiming that kind of reality in everyday life, he said, Christians no longer need to let self have dominion and that Satan no longer has power over them because resurrection power conquers death. "That power is the greatest in all the world," he declared.

Henry also noted the "fellowship of sharing in His suffering. Along the way there come those experiences of life, temptation, friends, disappointments, enemies accusing us...We begin to face the things that Jesus did," he said. "In the emotional suffering, we begin to participate." Participation in life is what counts, Henry pointed out. Paul wanted to participate, he said, declaring, "I need the emotional trials to be like Christ."

The most difficult part is to die to self, Henry commented. "Self is the hardest old man to kill in the world. But when we get there, we get life. Are you willing to die to self?"

"The secret of a life in ministry is that God was in Jesus," Henry affirmed, "and He can be in us."

• 'The voice in the darkness'

By Dale Thompson

Pastor, First Church, Fort Smith

It's our desire to always try to be positive about the things that are going on around us but the day in which we live has presented us with a whole host and a myriad of complications and problems: the disintegration of the family, the onset of crime, the increase in unbelievable and senseless violence, a philosophy that says there are no absolutes and immorality that abounds in ways that are outrageous. Pornography, incest, homosexuality and who knows what kinds of unheard of sin may be around the corner.

In the midst of this, justice, order and freedom seem to be slipping through our fingers like sand. Charles Colson suggests in his 1989 book, *Against The Night*, that we are entering a new dark age. It may be so! This new dark age is ushering in a host of voids. Never has the word "lost" meant so much. In the midst of this darkness the great light of the gospel of Jesus Christ and the church can be a tremendous contrast. This new dark age could present us with a Romans 8:28 scenario, "All things will work to the good..." This may be the western churches' greatest opportunity in our land. This may be a handle for us to lay hold of our wayward society with a hand of revival.

As Isaiah spoke of this time in Isaiah 60:1-2, he said these words, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee."

If the church would be this blazing light to go out and meet the darkness there are some necessary weapons. Of course we must be anointed with the power and the Spirit of God, and of course we must put on the whole armor of God to be able to stand in this type of darkness and surely we must awaken out of our sleep for our redemption is nearer than we had thought. But I believe it is very important that we come to an awareness that the voice that speaks for God in this darkness is to become a new prophetic voice. Not in the sense of foretelling the future but in the sense of foretelling the truth, the proclamation of, "...thus saith the Lord."

If we meet the darkness with just the milk of human kindness or just the best of our intellectual debates and arguments or with a new and more demanding social agenda, we will be swallowed up and useless by this new darkness. We must



Dale Thompson challenged Arkansas Baptists to help "lay hold of our wayward society with a hand of revival."

meet this darkness in the power of the Holy Spirit and with the voice of the prophets of old. To accept the prophet's mantle today, as this darkness emerges, will be a challenging situation indeed.

If we would look into God's Word we would find many illustrations of it. One of my favorite illustrations is found in 1 Kings 22. Israel is being swallowed up in the darkness of an evil and spineless king and a pagan wife who rules over him with a hazy influence. There names are Ahab and Jezebel. Israel has not known a good king. When we lay out a chart of the kings of Judah and the kings of Israel, we find that Judah has a 50/50 chance for a good king, but Israel seems to have no chance at all. With Ahab and Jezebel idolatry is in; God is out. With Ahab and Jezebel is the judgment of God and no rain. With Ahab and Jezebel there's fire from heaven on Mount Carmel yet there is no melting in their heart for fear of God nor is there any repentance in their soul for the things that God has done.

On the heels of Mount Carmel comes Ahab's unbelievable coveting of Naboth's vineyard. And when he weeps and whines for that vineyard, it's his wife Jezebel who uses false witnesses and blasphemous accusations to bring down the innocent man Naboth and give Ahab his desired vineyard. There is no character in these people. They call evil good and they plunge Israel deeper into that darkness.

Elijah was not the only light during that

time. As this darkness emerged there was another prophet. He is a little known prophet but one who acts for us as an example of the courage and position that we must take in our day when darkness engulfs our land.

We go to 1 Kings 22 and we find this situation. Ahab has thrown a banquet, it is surely a banquet with a purpose. He has invited Judah's king, Jehoshaphat, a good king though one who does not have great strength within himself. Ahab requests in the opening verses of chapter 22 that Jehoshaphat go up to battle with him against the king of Syria and take back Ramoth-gilead. It is one of those situations in life where Jehoshaphat should have never been unequally yoked with Ahab; but because of the inner marriage of their children, he finds himself meekly unable to resist the proposition that Ahab calls for him to do and Jehoshaphat will surely get in over his head.

Jehoshaphat, hoping to find a way of escape, asks that they seek a word from the Lord. That is the position of a godly man. Ahab is willing to go through the formality of calling upon God. He has 400 payroll prophets who have never heard from God. They are men like those described by the prophet Ezekiel in the 13th chapter of his prophecy where he states in verses 2 and 3, "Son of man, prophesy against the prophets of Israel that prophesy, and say thou unto them that prophesy out of their own hearts, Hear ye the word of the Lord; Thus saith the Lord God; Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing!"

Ahab's payroll prophets come on the scene and offer a majority opinion. It's one of those "everybody is doing it" propositions, they all agree. But Jehoshaphat is suspicious in the midst of this situation. He asks: Is there not another prophet of the Lord that we might see? It's strange that the godly man obviously sees that there is something terribly wrong. Ahab says yes there is one but this prophet never prophesies well of me. What Ahab meant was, he's not on my payroll, he does not compromise and I don't like what I hear. The darkness never really wants to hear the voice of the true prophet. It never wants to hear the truth but it's only truth that penetrates the darkness that can make a difference.

Ahab could not imagine that a man could belong to God. Ahab could not imagine who could not be bought. But these are the types of prophets that can penetrate the darkness. Those on the

payroll of evil, those who are willing to compromise to secure their positions, those who are willing to go with the flow, will never speak words that can impact the darkness and be a bright light.

While waiting for the prophet Micaiah, the 400 pressed dramatically on in their prognostication of what will take place, telling Ahab and Jehosaphat that if they go up against Syria that they will be successful. Meanwhile somewhere in the basement prison the messenger has gone to get Micaiah the prophet, the one that Jehosaphat had requested.

The messenger in verse 13 encourages the prophet Micaiah to compromise, to agree with the voices of the other prophets and it may possibly be his way to escape the prison. One of the great dangers of a powerful darkness is its ability to close the mouths of men who would speak truth and be a light. The position of Micaiah is that he has already decided that he will only speak the words that God has told him to speak. When Micaiah arrives in the banquet room he presents some irony and light humor when he tells Ahab to go on and go up against Syria. Ahab has a short "fit" in response to the satire of Micaiah and commands him to tell him the truth. When Micaiah tells him the truth, the truth is still rejected.

Spiritual darkness has a strange grip on the hearts of men but the voice in the darkness that would be a powerful light must always continue to speak the truth.

The scene of this chapter closes with Ahab and Jehosaphat preparing to go off to battle with Micaiah being taken back to the dungeon but his confidence is overwhelming. Micaiah says that if Ahab returns from battle that the Lord does not speak through him. He knows that he knows the truth of God.

If the church is to be the prophetic voice in this new dark age we must be confident in our message. All men need Jesus! The local church is God's instituted provision to take the message to the world. The times of great darkness can make our lights shine brighter. And yes, the king and the kingdom are coming, there is no doubt about it. Let the church be the church in the midst of the darkness and may she speak the words with the prophet's resolve, that truth is truth and that men everywhere should call on God in repentance and come to Christ.

This is our purpose, to be a light in darkness. It is our great privilege, it is our great responsibility, it is our eternal opportunity.

Are our days dark? It's difficult to admit the condition of our times but I think in seeing the climate of our day it helps us focus the dramatic importance of our mission "to be a voice in the darkness."

Blackaby emphasizes need for Baptists to seek God's will

By Millie Gill

Arkansas Baptist

An overflow crowd that spilled into the aisles and choir loft was in attendance Nov. 9 when keynote speaker Henry Blackaby, director of prayer and spiritual awakening for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, sounded a clarion call for Southern Baptists to return to seeking God's will in ministry through in-depth Bible study and prayer.

"Perform Ministry in Jesus' Name, your convention theme, has been a struggle for me," Blackaby declared. "One of the greatest dangers of our day is that ministries are being done by human reasoning rather than divine guidance. It is time to return to seeking divine guidance through God's Word."

He noted that Southern Baptists need to once again use the Bible as their primary source for guidance. "Southern Baptists are inadvertently using the Bible as a reference book rather than their sole pattern for guidance and ministry," he said.

Blackaby emphasized that the Bible is not a reference book but a textbook for practical ministry. "I believe we have inadvertently taken the Bible and put it into our devotional life and our sermon preparation," he continued. "However, when it comes to our ministries we take out the books of men, being led more by the sociologists than the Word of God which indicates the primary and first line of ministry is to the family, then church and finally to the rest of the world.

"I realize the Southern Baptists were on the forefront when Hurricane Andrew hit, when the floods struck, when the Kurds had problems, when there was turmoil in Africa or the inner city or the native Indian reservations, yet America is going to hell because we are not studying God's Word for guidance in ministry," he said. "When His Word is studied and followed, America will be turned around because individuals are seeking to live in a holiness relationship with Him."

Blackaby added that such a relationship would have incredible results as God's transforming power is released. "I can show you from the Scripture and through history that when individuals and churches believed God and set His rule and His lordship first, He Himself guaranteed to add everything else to it."



"Seek God first," Henry Blackaby urged.

Blackaby emphasized that Southern Baptists often place too much emphasis on trying to attract crowds. He illustrated this point by discussing the life of Peter and its effect on the world after Jesus had spent time alone with him.

"Peter was forever changed and was used of God to proclaim on the Day of Pentecost when 3,000 were saved," he declared. "Peter's life literally transformed thousands of lives and when Southern Baptists once again study God's Word and heed its instructions the whole world, not just America, will be changed."

"When we seek God first and walk in His light, acknowledge He is Lord, live in righteousness and holiness and pray earnestly, then He will demonstrate what happens when individuals, one by one, are totally yielded to Him."

Blackaby urged Arkansas Baptists to seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit, allowing them to reach out with the Word of God to someone who is shedding a tear or carrying a heavy load. "When you, as God's people, begin to do this then revival will break out across your state," Blackaby said. "As Jesus proclaimed, He was ministering and so will you as you once again move under the lordship of Jesus Christ and the Word of God."

Blackaby concluded his message by inviting messengers and guests to pray with someone next to them concerning God's personal message to them. "Is the world seeking God's power or our activity?" Blackaby asked the crowd. "What clear, distinguishable works has God done in your life and ministry? What do you believe God can do?"

Arkansas Baptists elected to service

Executive Board

Terms to expire in 1996:

Arkansas River Valley.....	Ira Taylor, Knoxville
Arkansas Valley.....	Carroll Evans, Hughes
Ashley.....	Gene Thomas, Crossett
Bartholomew.....	Greg Stanley, Warren
Calvary.....	Harrel G. Cato, Rose Bud
Caroline.....	Jim Edwards, Cabot
Caroline.....	Don Hubbard, Carlisle
Centennial.....	Raymond McMaster, DeWitt
Clear Creek.....	Bob Floyd, Van Buren
Concord.....	Pete Ramsey, Fort Smith
Concord.....	Ed Saucier, Fort Smith
Current Gains.....	Clyde Spurgin, Piggott
Delta.....	Bruce Bond, Lake Village
Faulkner.....	Phillip Boudreaux, Conway
Garland.....	Jamie Powell, Hot Springs
Garland.....	Lance Hudnell, Hot Springs
Greene.....	Dan Minton, Paragould
Harmony.....	Edward L. Smith, Pine Bluff
Liberty.....	Travis Beeson, Camden
Liberty.....	Gerald Perry, Strong
Little River.....	Lee Clark, Locksburg
Mississippi.....	Mike Henderson, Leachville
Mississippi.....	J. B. Lovett, Wilson
Mount Zion.....	Steve Emerson, Jonesboro

Children's Homes

Terms to expire in 1996:

Lonnie Latham, Warren
Pam Rusher, Jonesboro
Jack Reeves, Mena
Mary Lou Heard, North Little Rock
Jane Jones, Fayetteville
Jane Williams, Little Rock

Terms to expire in 1994:

Bob Lever, Fort Smith
Travis Stephenson, Monticello

Arkansas Baptist Foundation

Terms to expire in 1996:

William F. Woods, Pine Bluff
Dick Gladden, Hot Springs
Bill Goodrich, Little Rock
Larry Kinard, El Dorado
Bruce Murphy, El Dorado

Terms to expire in 1995:

Jay Shell, Little Rock

Historical Commission

Terms to expire in 1996:

District 1 - Walter Jessor, Siloam Springs
District 4 - Trueman Moore, Fort Smith
District 6 - Clyta McAtee, Forrest City

Term to expire in 1994:

District 2 - Alfred K. Mansell, Heber Springs

Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine

Terms to expire in 1996:

District 4 - David McCormick, Dardanelle
District 6 - Mark Baber, Marlon

Member at Large - Otis Turner, Arkadelphia

Term to expire in 1994:

District 7 - James Preston, Stamps

Baptist Memorial Health Care

System, Memphis

Terms to expire in 1996:

Watson Bell, Searcy
James Wallace, Little Rock
Alvin Huffman, Blytheville

Baptist Student Union

Terms to expire in 1996:

District 1 - Joe Finrock,ENTRY
District 2 - Keith Byrd, Batesville
District 4 - Bill Laceywell, Fort Smith
District 7 - Debbie Kluck, Arkadelphia
District 7 - Mark Porter, Murfreesboro

Member at Large - Donna Cheatham, Russellville

Term to expire in 1994:

District 3 - Bruce Raley, Jonesboro

Ouachita Baptist University

Terms to expire in 1996:

James M. Jones, Batesville
William H. Sutton, Little Rock
Pauline Morrow, Mena
Clarence Anthony, Murfreesboro
James D. Gattis, Little Rock
Larry Kircher, Bald Knob
David Uth, El Dorado
Cotton Cordell, Hot Springs

Williams Baptist College

Terms to expire in 1996:

William T. Jessen, Hot Springs Village
Gordon Topping, Pine Bluff
Kenneth Sulcer, Osceola
Amelia Frankum, Newport
John Finn, Parkin
J. Larry Bone, Fort Smith
John Miller, Melbourne
Carol Belford-Lewallen, Pochontas

Term to expire in 1994:

Norman Lewis, Hoxie

North Pulaski.....	Otto Brown, North Little Rock
North Pulaski.....	David Simpson, North Little Rock
North Pulaski.....	Mark Gibson, Jacksonville
Pulaski.....	Don Jones, Bryant
Pulaski.....	Randy Maxwell, Little Rock
Southwest.....	Rich Kincl, Magnolia
Southwest.....	Stan Parris, Hope
Southwest.....	Wayne Williams, Texarkana
Tri County.....	Larry Jones, Wynne
Tri County.....	Don Settles, Earle
Trinity.....	Ken Overton, Marked Tree
Washington-Madison.....	Gary L. Burney, West Fork
Washington-Madison.....	Les Elam, Huntsville
District 5.....	Mary Schroeder, Little Rock
District 6.....	Pam Worrell, Pine Bluff

Terms to expire in 1994:

Big Creek.....	Tommy Garner, Salem
Mississippi.....	Marvin Reynolds, Blytheville
Mount Zion.....	Bruce Raley, Jonesboro
North Pulaski.....	Scott Hinton, Sherwood
Tri County.....	Eugene Ray, Wynne

Terms to expires in 1995:

Mount Zion.....	Johnny Hutchinson, Jonesboro
District 1.....	Nadcan Bell, Bentonville

State Joint Committee

Cooperative Ministries

with National Baptists

Dillard Miller, Mena
John Finn, Parkin
Don Moore, Little Rock
Kerry Powell, McGehee

Constitution/Bylaws Committee

Terms to expire in 1996:

Monty Murray, Texarkana
Charles Allen, Conway

World Hunger Committee

Terms to expire in 1996:

Rick Grant, Benton
Angie Schleitf, Benton

Term to expire in 1995:

Helen Parman, Batesville

Convention Program Committee

Term to expire in 1996:

Jim Lagrone, Bryant

1998 Convention

Date: November 3-4, 1998
Place: Ouachita Baptist University

1994 Convention Preacher

Preacher: Cliff Palmer, Rogers
Alternate: H.D. McCarty, Fayetteville

1994 Convention

Change in Time and Place
Date: Nov. 1-2 (From Nov. 15-16)
Place: Immanuel Baptist Church, Little Rock

1995 Convention

Change in Time and Place
Date: Oct. 31 - Nov. 1 (From Nov. 14-15)
Place: First Baptist Church, Little Rock



ABREA officers are (left to right) Pat Ratton, Little Rock, secretary/treasurer; Bruce Raley, Jonesboro, president; Larry Grayson, North Little Rock, first vice president; and David Stawn, Little Rock, second vice president.

Religious educators focus on keys to work, worship

By Colleen Backus

Arkansas Baptist

"Too many church staffs co-exist, instead of cooperating," Larry Heslip told religious educators during their annual meeting last week prior to the Arkansas Baptist State Convention. Heslip, minister of education at First Baptist Church of Ponca City, Okla., was one of two speakers on a double track program for members of the Arkansas Baptist Religious Education Association.

Bob Woolley, retired state music director for the Missouri Baptist Convention, led the music workshop on worship concepts. He emphasized planning as a key to effective worship. "Who do you involve in planning the worship service?" Woolley asked. He pointed out the need to involve all staff members, accompanists and a small worship committee to get the "view from the pew."

Woolley also reminded the music participants that "we are teachers as well as ministers and we need to teach the congregation how to worship."

Ministers of education concentrated on time management and helping key people accountable for delegated tasks. "Often, time manages us, rather than the other way around," Heslip noted.

"You must evaluate when work is 'work' - often church staff members are always 'on the job,'" Heslip added. One thing staff members must do is evaluate how they handle stress, he said. They also should build effective relationships with trustworthy individuals.

Another essential factor in time management and stress reduction is the importance of non-church based activity. In addition to helping balance family and church, "down time" is essential. "What do you do for release?" he asked. Heslip suggested that school activities, civic opportunities and pursuing personal growth and creativity are all viable options.

Holding those people accountable to whom you have delegated tasks can be difficult, but can be managed effectively. Heslip noted that "accountability is a response to delegation...and is reliant upon good communication between people who work together in a common task."

Communication also was a major emphasis of the educators' joint session. In order to coordinate workloads and have respect between ministries, the ability to communicate is essential, Woolley and Heslip asserted.

Ministers' Wives conference highlights personal ministry

By Millie Gill

Arkansas Baptist

"Your Own Ministry" was the theme interpreted by Minette Drumwright when Arkansas Baptist Ministers' Wives held their annual conference Nov. 8 at Park Hill Church, North Little Rock.

Drumwright, director of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's International Prayer Strategy office, challenged those attending to discern their ministry by first discovering the gifts with which God had equipped them.

"As you study the Scriptures you will find there are no ungifted believers," she continued. "The sad news is that when these gifts or talents are not used they will be removed and one day will have to be accounted for.

"Jesus made it clear in the parable of the talent that if the gifts He had equipped Christians with were neglected or not used they would be lost," Drumwright noted. "However, when put into action users' lives will expand, become physically healthier and great joy will be experienced."

She noted that as gifts are put into use ministries could change from year to year, except for the basic unchanging ministry to the family. "Today, however, we are discussing ministering to those beyond our family and it is important that children see that ministry to others is an important part of life even though it is sometimes inconvenient to home life," she said.

Conference participants were encouraged to be completely open to the Holy Spirit by spending time alone with the Lord, asking His guidance in the ministries He would have them do beyond being a witness, showing mercy and being an encourager and helper as instructed in the Scriptures.

"God guides and blesses daily those who seek His guidance," Drumwright added. "He wants His followers to be filled to overflowing so they might share their blessings either through spoken words, a meaningful touch, helping others find their potential or by meeting needs," she declared.

Drumwright challenged the ministers' wives to discover what God is calling them to do. "Though you may feel that as ministers' wives too much already is expected of you and that you cannot handle any more responsibility, I believe God wants you to find your spiritual gift or gifts and with His guidance to minister to others. God is pleased when gifts are used day by day to touch lives."



Ministers' Wives officers for the coming year are (left to right) Kerri Evan, Blytheville, 1995 retreat chairman; Rachel Preston of Stamps, president; Betty Williamson, Fort Smith, vice president; and Sandy Neuberry, Crossett, secretary.

Pastors challenged to seek renewal

AEN photo / Mike Gill

By James Preston

Special to the Arkansas Baptist

With renewal for its theme, the 1993 Arkansas Baptist Pastors' Conference featured preachers and evangelists whose sermons emphasized spiritual awakening.

Pastors' Conference president Dale Thompson said, "Spiritual renewal is the answer for renewing our strength." Thomas, pastor of First Church, Fort Smith, said his prayer for the conference was for "spiritual renewal among men of God in order to lead churches to spiritual renewal."

The Monday morning session featured sermons by Fort Smith evangelist William Blackburn, Springdale church growth consultant Cliff Jenkins, and Robert McGee, founder of Rapha in Houston.

Blackburn spoke about his motivation to be an evangelist. Saved Oct. 24, 1983, at the age of 36, he said, "God changed me that night from the inside out."

The focus of the gospel is conversion, he said. "Don't believe the lie that you must lower standards to get people to come to church." Taking his message from II Timothy 4, Blackburn noted there are more people and more preaching today than ever before, but fewer people are coming to church.

The reason fewer people respond, according to Blackburn, is that churches have lost their vision of hell, their vision of the cross, and the vision that "men without Jesus have absolutely no hope."

"We've taken our eyes off Calvary and put them on circumstances," he said. "Jesus died on the cross to save our souls. It is finished, the price is paid. Nobody has to go to hell if they accept what Jesus has done."

Later that morning, Jenkins told pastors that churches need to renew the strength of the Sunday School.

Citing Romans 13, Jenkins said it is time to wake up to the fact that Jesus is coming soon and the church needs people. The Sunday School is already organized to reach people but, according to Jenkins, "we're haphazard about our organization. It's time to clean up the Sunday School. We can still build churches through the Sunday School."

Teaching must also be cleaned up, Jenkins said. "People only come about 35 Sundays per year. That means only 35 chances for their lives to be changed. Marginal attenders only two or three weeks. Teaching, therefore, must be for transformation, not just information."

Jenkins said reaching and caring must also be cleaned up. "People who join



Arkansas Baptist Pastors' Conference officers are (left to right) secretary Joe Baguelli, Mt. Ida First Church; president Wallace Edgar, Trinity Church, Texarkana; and vice president Gary Pridmore, Beryl Church, Vilonia.

churches today ask three questions: 'Do you care about me? Can you help me? Will you see me through?' They may join the church if you can answer these questions."

McGee, author of the book, *Search for Significance*, warned pastors that "going into ministry to gain purpose for life is a prescription for frustration. You will end up being manipulated by others' expectations, or manipulating others, instead of ministering from a relationship with Christ. It's easy to be addicted to the approval of others, but our significance should be built solely upon God's approval."

Issuing a second warning, McGee noted, "In spite of the way we want ministry to be, people are judgmental, critical and grossly intrusive in the lives of ministers. But no one else in your church would put up with that. There is no heresy as destructive as the judgmental, critical attitudes toward ministers that we've allowed to infiltrate our churches."

McGee admonished pastors to come to one another's aid. Recalling the way his comrades in Vietnam could be trusted to rally around a wounded brother, he urged pastors to do the same. "Instead, we've scattered. No wonder we have everyone sharing our hearts with one another. We wonder if anybody will come to our aid."

McGee cited three ways to combat judgmentalism toward ministers and their wives in the church. First, he said "we must confess that judgmentalism is absolutely evil, robbing the life and creativity of our churches. We've tolerated it too long."

Second, "we must concentrate on the grace of the gospel. If your heart doesn't

break when you see a brother fall you are closer than you realize to falling yourself. Pride goes before a fall. We must protest. By our toleration, we have taught acceptance of such attitudes."

And finally, McGee said, "we must recognize we are asking people to go into a difficult vocation. When they enter the ministry, we must do certain things to help them."

The afternoon session featured evangelist Bill Stafford from Chattanooga, Tenn.; Johnny Hunt, pastor of First Baptist Church, Woodstock, Ga.; and Houston evangelist Mickey Bonner.

Stafford said revival starts "one person at a time." Looking at Joshua 7, he said, "We are too far down the road for methods to bring revival without the divine intervention of God." He warned that "when there is no direction in the churches the nation will be directionless."

Stafford said humility is necessary for revival to come. "Joshua was playing 'false humility' in verse six because he was embarrassed by the army at Ai. But God said, 'Joshua, get up and deal with sin. You should have been humble before and now it's too late.'"

For revival to come there must first be an honest recognition of sin, a complete confession of sin, and a ruthless dealing with sin, Stafford said. "Sin must be hated like God hates sin."

In a message from Mark 6 entitled, "The Shackling of Omnipotence," Hunt said, "God is looking for a person, people or a church that will allow Him to be Himself." He said the unbelief of believers affected the ministry of the Savior in His own

PASTORS' CONFERENCE

hometown. In verse two, the people were astonished at Jesus, Hunt said. "They had come expecting the familiar from Jesus who had grown up in their town. Instead, they were amazed by Him.

"We've become too familiar with the Son of God, too," Hunt said. "Jesus could preach in our churches and unbelief would shackle what He would do."

Continuing the theme of revival, Bonner said a brokenness which leads to reconciliation and prayer will bring revival. "Other religions are outside in, but Christianity is inside out. Christ inside us will flow through the cracks in a broken vessel."

An evangelist for 35 years, Bonner said the only true revivals he has seen were in churches where "people walked across the aisle rather than down the aisle. Revival starts with people getting right with one another."

He said prayer is a key to evangelism. "Prayer evangelism is based on Matt. 18:19, and two or more praying together that God's will be done. But prayer requires a brokenness that is lacking today," Bonner remarked.

Hunt and Stafford both preached again during the evening service, preceding Paige Patterson, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Preaching a sermon entitled "We Never

Saw It on This Fashion," Hunt asked, "What would happen if there was a real spirit of expectancy each time we met to worship?"

Hunt said a crowded church will encourage expectancy. "A full church is electric. Jesus said, 'Go that my house might be full.' The house was full the day the paralytic was healed," Hunt said, because "Jesus was there and Scripture was preached."

Concerned Christians contributed to the expectant crowd that day, Hunt said. But what truly caused the people to marvel at Jesus was the change that came to the paralytic. "The service was different because Jesus changed somebody's life," Hunt emphasized. "Nothing will change a church more than getting people saved."

Stafford's message during the evening service was also a call to revival. "We've got to get starved and hungry for a mighty moving of God," he declared. "Everything we do does not seem to cause sin to subside. We need revival."

Stafford said Christians have become satisfied with this world. "God's got to do a work of dissatisfaction in order to get you satisfied with Christ. Independence is our problem. We think we are too strong to trust God."

The church's response to sin must be more like God's response, Stafford said. "We need to see God's attribute of anger

toward sin. He hates sin. That's why He moves to bring us to repentance. Christians must realize these are desperate times," Stafford insisted. "It is out of desperation that revival comes."

Patterson, preaching from the book of Judges concerning Samson, compared Samson's life to the movie, "Sleeping with the Enemy." Noting that Samson's life began as "a chosen life of promise," Patterson added, "When you take a chosen life of promise and turn it into a carnal life of pleasure, it will end up being a cratered life of pain."

Emphasizing that Samson's greatest enemy was neither the Philistines nor Delilah, Patterson remarked, "Samson slept with the enemy every night of his life because in his heart of hearts he had determined not to please God but to please self."

Contrasting Samson's life with that of Polycarp, an early Christian martyr, Patterson pointed out, "It's not how you begin your ministry but how you end your ministry that makes all the difference in the world."

"Our churches die when they determine to please self rather than God," Patterson warned. "May we renew our determination, may we seek His face, may we not rest until revival comes."

Bobbie Lewis, who serves on the staff of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tenn., led congregational singing during the conference. Susan Haines and Stephanie Maddox, members of First Church, Fort Smith, provided special music during the meeting.

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Hewell affirms Arkansas Baptists' musical efforts

The introduction of Rob Hewell as director of the church music department for the Arkansas Baptist State Convention was among the music-related highlights of last week's state convention.

Hewell joined the ABSC Executive Board staff Sept. 20, coming there from First Baptist Church of New Orleans. Describing the 1993 convention as a joy and a blessing for him, Hewell commended the performances and musical selections of the musicians. "Each individual came prepared, leading, playing and singing with a great sense of commitment and integrity," Hewell said.

"The variety in musical selections reflected the diversity of our state convention," he added. "I also noted that all of those attending from our churches and associations seemed interested not only in hearing the music, but were willing to participate as well, doing so heartily."

Hewell directed the music presented on Tuesday afternoon by Arkansas' Master Singers. A Master Singers instrumental ensemble, directed by Glen Ennes, associate director of the church music department, presented a mini-concert to open the Tuesday afternoon session in which Hewell and Larry Grayson, minister of music for Baring Cross Church in North Little Rock, led congregational singing.

The Tuesday morning congregational singing was directed by Richard Rose, minister of music for Highland Heights Church in Benton. Cherie Ross, a member of First Church in Warren, was the featured soloist. Joe Fitzpatrick, minister of music at the host church, led congregational singing for the Tuesday evening session with the Williams Baptist College choir, under the direction of Bob Magee, and Arkansas' Singing Women, under the direction of Jean Pilcher, presenting special music.

Jerry Wilson, minister of music for First Church of Batesville, led congregational hymns for the closing session on Wednesday morning. The Powell Brothers, Brent Powell, minister of music for Highland Drive Church in Jonesboro; Gary Powell, minister of music for Sylvan Hills Church in North Little Rock; and Jamie Powell, pastor of Twin Lakes Church, Diamondhead, were featured musicians for the closing session.

Convention accompanists were Mary Winters of Cedar Heights Church, North Little Rock; Jeff Bennett of Calvary Church, Little Rock; and Patty Tanner and Dawn Carroll, both of Park Hill Church, North Little Rock.

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to crack a smile as | memories God pro-
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from under his | The things that
glasses. After that | we cherish are
I made my first | inside. What we
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A CHRISTMAS OF MEMORIES

Arkansas Baptist Children's Homes and Family Ministries

The prayerful and financial support of Arkansas Baptists has allowed the Arkansas Baptist Children's Homes and Family Ministries to exist for nearly 100 years, reported agency director Johnny Biggs. Biggs informed messengers that over the past year, the ministry had provided direct care for 500 children and youth, and area staff has processed 1,600 referrals.

Recent accomplishments have included the completion of a fourth ranch house for boys, with construction of a chapel under way; the dedication of a sixth emergency receiving home in West Fork, and the extension of counseling services with satellite offices in the state.

In all of these areas, Biggs noted, the dedication to extend ministries has been preceded by prayer, extensive study and the cooperation of area churches.

Last year, 51 children and youth cared

for by the agency gave their lives to Christ, Biggs noted. He said next year will mark the agency's centennial.

Arkansas Baptist Foundation

Harry Trulove, president of the Arkansas Baptist Foundation, noted that he has announced his retirement effective in 1994. When Trulove began his tenure in 1974, the Foundation was managing \$1 million dollars; this year, at the end of October that figure was \$38 million.

Affirming the efficiency of his accounting staff, Trulove noted that with an account of over \$30 million, last year's auditing adjustments totaled only \$6.12.

Explaining that "every area of Baptist work is strengthened" through the work of the Foundation, Trulove said income generated through the Foundation aids convention agencies, summer missionaries, students, retired pastors and others.

Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine

Trennis Henderson, editor of the *Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine* emphasized that "sharing the world with Arkansas Baptists is our ongoing goal." He said articles about home and foreign missions, local church and associational news, and a variety of diverse articles demonstrate the Newsmagazine's commitment to being an effective ministry tool among Arkansas Baptists. He urged Arkansas Baptists not to handicap ministry opportunities due to lack of information, when it's readily available through the pages of the Newsmagazine.

Henderson announced that as of Nov. 1 the Newsmagazine was debt-free, adding that he is committed to maintaining good stewardship and "living within our means." He also reported a positive net income for 1992 and 1993 as well as a reserve fund recently established with the Arkansas Baptist Foundation.

Emphasizing that the greatest concern to readers is the content and quality of each issue, Henderson said the Newsmagazine's commitment to fair, balanced coverage "can help make a significant difference in our state for the cause of Christ."

Rachel Preston, minister of music at First Church in Stamps, concluded the report by singing a "Tell the Good News" medley.

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Testimonies personalize convention's ministry theme

Churches all across Arkansas are touching lives in Jesus' name. During each session of last week's state convention, messengers heard examples of ministries that highlighted the convention's "Perform Ministry" theme.

During the opening Tuesday morning session, Mitch Tapson, pastor of Mt. Carmel Church in Cabot, defined ministry as

walking in Jesus' steps.

Influenced by Sydney Sheldon's classic, *In His Steps*, Tapson asked, "If Jesus were a member of your church, what would He do?" The answer is "ministry," Tapson insisted.

Tapson's church started "Living Touch Ministries" four years ago. In that time, he said, "we have seen miracles happen, lives

changed, church members blessed, and a good testimony in the community" as a result of the ministry.

Tapson said applying Sheldon's dialectic to ministry has invigorated his church and could do the same for other churches.

The work of ministry teams from Benton First Church were described by Rick Grant during the afternoon session. Grant, the church's associate pastor, pointed out that "people don't care what we know until they know that we care." He noted that the ministry teams focus on meeting community needs, including ministry to the mentally handicapped. One young woman asked Grant, "Because I'm different, does God really love me?"

"The whole purpose of this kind of ministry is to tell people God loves them," Grant said. "When people really see we care, they will want to know that the reason why we care is Jesus."

During the evening session, Doris Nash, multi-housing coordinator for the Pines Apartment Ministry in Little Rock, said Christians must let the Lord shine through us regardless of difficult circumstances.

She said the Lord has given her courage to conduct ministry in an increasingly violent neighborhood. "I go to bed with gunfire, but have no fear because the Lord is with me, the Lord provides our need."

"Working at the Pines is indeed a blessing, even though much of the ministry is just planting seeds. But the objective of the ministry is to tell people about God, and that the church cares."

During the closing session on Wednesday morning, Carl Schmidt described his ministry to Hispanics. The ministry in Leachville includes Bible studies, a health clinic and backyard cotton patch Bible clubs, which are conducted while the people work.

This year more than 300 families, and more than 1,600 people were contacted through the ministry. Of those contacted, 34 people were converted to faith in Christ.

Schmidt, who serves as pastor of the Hispanic mission, described a young cotton chopper named Fernando who was killed by lightning. Just three weeks before his death, a ministry team led a Bible study at an old cotton gin where Fernando had lived with 50 others. Fernando asked for a Bible the night of the study. The morning that he died, he had asked his parents if the family could sing songs learned at the Bible study.

"Though he never walked the aisle, God was working in his heart," Schmidt noted. "We do know that we were available to minister, to do what God called us to do, which was to perform ministry in Jesus' name."

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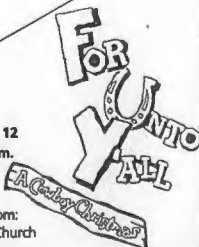
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Williams, Ouachita share highlights

A series of interviews highlighted reports from Williams Baptist College and Ouachita Baptist University during last week's Arkansas Baptist State Convention.

In an impromptu interview, Gary Huckabay, the recently elected president of Williams, called on a student in the college choir to come forward. Carolyn Topping from Pine Bluff was more than a little surprised when she was invited to share the platform with Huckabay who asked her to related her experiences as a summer missionary.

Topping, a sophomore, said she felt a call to summer missions, but was apprehensive when assigned to New Orleans. "I knew I was going to get killed there," she said. After the initial uneasiness, however, Topping found herself adjusting to the point of making friends with "a big, big guy" who she had first feared, noting that he eventually "became one of the best friends I made down there."

Huckabay also reported a watershed of good news. He said a recent accreditation review had removed all the stipulations on degree plans, allowing the college to begin offering several new degree programs. He said WBC has hired a new chemistry professor and also recently received a \$500,000 in endowment for student scholarships.

Ben Elrod, president of Ouachita, noted in his report that "all vital signs are excellent." The university has the largest transfer and freshman enrollment since 1973, and is planning to build "a dorm or two" to accommodate future students. Elrod said the institution is financially strong, and the goodwill and support from the OBU constituency is equally strong.

There are three priorities at OBU, Elrod noted. First, "OBU is in the business of helping people prepare to be a part of the kingdom of God," no matter their prospective profession. Second, OBU seeks to help students "find meaning in life in the context of Christian commitment." Third, Elrod said, "OBU is about people" and preparing leaders for tomorrow's world.

Inviting a representative group of students to the front of the sanctuary, Elrod presented Bradley Bernard Jr., an OBU student and member of First Church, Benton, who explained how OBU is helping him define his spiritual calling. "Balance is there, with a really practical touch," Bernard explained.

Elrod also introduced Anna Richardson from Warren, a senior chemistry major who served as a summer missionary to Taiwan and was an exchange student to Kazakhstan, noting that the experiences there expanded her consciousness of global missions. Elrod noted that Richardson also is a finalist for an International Rotary Scholarship to Russia.

In an event resembling an altar call, Elrod invited church staff members and denominational employees who were Ouachita graduates or former students to come forward. Elrod then amused messengers by calling on an "unknown" member of the alumni group — Lieutenant Governor Mike Huckabee — who shared briefly about the positive nature of his OBU experience.

Youth Minister Needed — First Baptist Church, Augusta, Arkansas, is now accepting resumes for anyone interested in this position. Resumes may be submitted to First Baptist Church, 310 Pearl Street, Augusta, AR 72006.

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ALUMNI

Seminary alumni gather for food and fellowship

Arkansas alumni of Southern Baptist seminaries held luncheon meetings-Nov. 9 in conjunction with the 1993 Arkansas Baptist State Convention:

Southern Baptist Theological Seminary alumni met in the Gold Room of Park Hill Church, North Little Rock. The 54 in attendance re-elected Bo Barnes of Little Rock as their president.

Gerald Borchert, chairman of the seminary's New Testament department, was the featured speaker.

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary alumni met at the Ramda Inn in North Little Rock with 16 in attendance.

Jerry W. Mixon of Hot Springs presided over the business session which included a general discussion of the seminary and its future.

Elected as 1993-94 officers were Angus Emerson of Cabot, president; Tim Johnson of Pocahontas, vice president; and Betty Remont of Hot Springs, secretary.

Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary's alumni luncheon meeting was held at Baring Cross Church in North Little Rock with David Uth of El Dorado presiding.

The 120 in attendance elected Mark Tolbert of Wynnes as president; Scott Duvall of Arkadelphia, vice president; and Denny Wright of El Dorado as secretary/treasurer.

Justice Anderson, professor of missions at the seminary, was the featured speaker.

Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary alumni met at Shoney's in North Little Rock with Ed Smith of Pine Bluff presiding.

The nine in attendance named Smith and Sid Carswell of Little Rock to a steering committee to formulate plans for organizing an Arkansas alumni chapter, with plans to write a charter prior to the 1994 state convention.

Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary alumni met at the Olive Garden in North Little Rock with 21 in attendance. Marty Blankenship, director of seminary relations, was the featured speaker.

Elected as officers were Tommy Goode of Benton, president; Ed Simpson of Sheridan, vice president; and Greg Jackson of North Little Rock, secretary/treasurer.

In other business, the Midwestern alumni unanimously agreed to support the seminary faculty and especially professor Bill Stancil with prayers and letters of encouragement. Stancil, associate professor of theology, was denied tenure last month by seminary trustees.

Convention Uniform

God's blessing moves on

By Robert U. Ferguson, retired,
Arkansas Baptist State Convention
Basic passage: Genesis 48:1-22
Focal passage: Genesis 48:1-22
Central truth: The blessing of God is a precious treasure and a public trust.

The final five verses of Genesis 47 set the scene for our lesson today. Jacob (Israel) lived in Egypt 17 years and prospered. As he neared his death at the age of 147 years, he asked Joseph to promise to take his body for burial to the cave at Machpelah where his father was buried. Joseph, of course, agreed and Jacob was relieved and grateful.

In a short period of time, Joseph is told that his father is near death. Joseph takes his two oldest sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, to their grandfather's home. Jacob repeats to Joseph the promise that Jehovah had made to him concerning the promised land. Jacob then claims both of Joseph's sons, Manasseh and Ephraim, as his own, allowing Joseph to keep his other children in Egypt if he so desires. However, Manasseh and Ephraim are to belong to the children of Israel!

Both of these sons of Joseph become leaders of distinction among the twelve tribes. However, we must note that Joseph is casting his lot for life to share in and identify with the children of Israel instead of the riches of Egypt. Joseph is more interested in the despised Shepherd Race than the military power of Egypt.

At the time of Moses, Manasseh still counted 20,000 men more than Ephraim (Num. 26:34-37) but by the time of Judges and ever after, Ephraim continued next to Judah as the most powerful tribe in Israel.

As Jacob blesses Joseph in Genesis 48:15-16, we note the three-fold reference to God: The God before whom my father walked, the Shepherd-God and the Redeemer-Angel. Here is a distinct anticipation of the Trinity.

Jacob closes his life in giving to Joseph these words, "I am about to die, but God will be with you, and bring you back to the land of your father." This land, the land of your father, was a piece of land near Sychar, the ancient Shechem, which he had bought from the children of Heth (Gen. 33:19). This land as indicated would be redeemed in battle with the Amorite, and later become the site of our Lord Jesus Christ's conversation with the Woman of Samaria (John 4:1-7).

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Life and Work

Lion in sheep's clothing

By Michael Seaboard, pastor, Pike
Avenue Church, North Little Rock
Basic passage: Isaiah 52:13-15; 53:1-12
Focal passage: Isaiah 53:6
Central truth: Because we were lost, God sent Jesus.

Sheep are the only herd animals that require full-time supervision. Other animals can be fenced, fed, watered and checked on — but not so with sheep. They must be watched by day and secured by night. God likens man to sheep. If we understand how we are like sheep, then we can better understand how God cares for us.

Isaiah 53:6 states it rather plainly — "All we like sheep...." Sheep are not trainable. They do not learn from mistakes. Do you doubt Isaiah is talking about you? How many diets have you been on?

Sheep are afraid to drink from running water. The flowing nature of running water keeps it from stagnating but we are often content with bottled living water. Our theme song is "Fill My Spoon, Teacher." We don't like change — especially in ourselves!

In her book, *All We Like Sheep*, Mary Glynn Peoples describes many ways that people are aptly compared to being like sheep. Sheep must be led, they will not be driven.

Sheep cannot right themselves when they are on their backs. Sheep are not burden-bearing animals. Sheep are defenseless.

"All we like sheep have gone astray" (Isa. 53:6). Not only is our character much like sheep, but so is our conduct. We wander. Read Proverbs 14:12. This world is a dangerous place to get lost in. God knows that, even if we cannot seem to remember it. In Luke 15:4-5, Jesus tells the parable of the lost sheep. Lost sheep need to be found.

We are not, however, "just" like sheep. We are created in the image of God. The Good Shepherd does not come and grab us and drag us home. Man was created in the image of God to choose God.

God seeks lost sheep by sending His Son into the world as the lion in sheep's clothing (Rev. 5:5-6, 12). He came as a sheep so that we might understand Him. He came as a lamb that He might die in our place. "For the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53:6).

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Bible Book

Remember, rededicate

By Maurice L. Hitt, DOM, Red River
Association
Basic Passage: Deuteronomy 27:1-28:68
Focal Passage: Deuteronomy 27:1-28:68
Central truth: God calls His people to remember His grace and rededicate ourselves to Him.

Moses gave Israel instructions concerning a ceremony to hold after they entered the promised land. They were to assemble at Mounts Ebal and Gertizim. An altar would be erected at the base of these peaks, along with the commands written upon plastered stones. The tribes would be divided to stand on each mountain, and there they would pronounce the blessings and curses of these verses. The ceremony was held as commanded (Josh. 8:30-35).

What took place was a combination memorial and rededication service. The people of God walked by the plastered stones with the law written thereon. They passed by burnt offerings as they congregated on the mountainsides.

Perhaps the solemnity of that day was missed by some, but clearly this was a sober reminder of promises and dedications they had made to God. A word that stands out in all of Deuteronomy is "Remember." Remember God's word; remember God's promises; remember God's provisions in the wilderness.

This ceremony was also about rededication. Israel had ratified the covenant at Horeb. There they had agreed to do all that God had said. Yet time and again, they violated God's law and broke their promises. To gather on that day at Ebal, Israel would be saying, "All that we promised before and all that God has commanded, we will do."

On that day, Israel publicly testified that the law of God is the law of the land. They were recommitting themselves and their posterity to God. They heard in the presence of all Israel the blessings of obedience and the curses of disobedience. They heard those awesome blessings and curses, and said publicly, "Amen."

Solemn and sober is it when a person or congregation rededicates its life to God. The congregation of God needs to take seriously her covenant with God who blesses by grace, but loves us too much to ignore our wrongs.

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Convention Uniform

True or false children

By Lonnie W. Latham, DOM,
Bartholomew Association

Basic passage: Luke 1:5-25; 3:1-18

Focal passage: Luke 1:5-25; 3:1-8

Central truth: True children come from God and obey Him.

A stark contrast screams out from the pages of the Bible. The contrast is as different as dark and light, hot and cold, new and old. That contrast is a line drawn in the dust of the earth dividing humanity into two camps.

Luke sets the stage by introducing two children to his readers.

Outside of the fact that the children are to be related by blood as cousins, they share other similarities. Both children were born to unlikely parents: an old, childless couple named Zacharias and Elizabeth, and an unmarried but engaged couple named Joseph and Mary. Both births came to morally pure people. Both births are miraculous. Both births had purpose.

Elizabeth, married and "blameless," was "barren." Biologically she could not have a child, but God said she would give birth to John. And she did. And God said that John would turn many of Israel to the Lord their God. And he did.

Mary, a morally pure young lady and a virgin, could not by herself, biologically have a child, but God promised her a son named Jesus. Miraculously, without physical knowledge of any man, she did. God promised Jesus would save His people and He still does.

In stark contrast to those two accounts we find Luke 3:8. What a shock to the religious system and the Jewish community to hear these words: God could raise up better sons from the stones at their feet than they were. They thought because they were biological descendants of Abraham they were God's children, but they were wrong.

God's children always have been and always will be born miraculously, born with a purpose, and born with a heart to obey. Biology and history are not enough. God's children always have a spiritual birth too.

Life and Work

The age of devotion

By Martin Babb, minister of education/
youth, Pulaski Heights Church,
Little Rock

Basic passage: Luke 1:5-25, 57-80

Focal passage: Luke 1:5-6, 8-9, 11-17

Central truth: A daily walk is better than weakly talk.

Today's Christmas story is not as well-known as the one that follows in Luke but its message is timely. It is the story of two elderly, devoted servants of God, Elizabeth and Zechariah, and the birth of their son, John (later to be known as John the Baptist). Luke thought it an important enough event that he chose it to begin his gospel account. These godly parents have set an example for us by displaying the following characteristics:

(1) They were dutiful. They did everything God told them to do and were "both righteous before God" (v. 6). How many of us can say that we have done everything that God has told us over the years? We need to encourage class members to be consistent in their day-to-day Christian living.

(2) They were worshipful. Does that mean that they sat still in church? Hardly. It means their lifestyle was one of worship. Can we truly worship God just on Sundays? No. We must worship Him daily. Our worship on Sunday will reflect how we have worshipped during the week.

(3) They were prayerful. "God has heard your prayer" (v. 13). Wouldn't it be great to be known as a praying people rather than a prying people? Evidently Elizabeth and Zechariah had prayed for years to have children and now they were finally going to be blessed. Prayer is a major part of being dutiful and worshipful but we must remember that the answers will come on God's timetable, not ours.

We can see from this story that God does not always use the spectacular to carry out His redemptive plan. He can use the lives of ordinary Christians who are living daily for Him. Besides, if God were so caught up in the spectacular, next week's lesson would have its origin in some place other than a stable.

Bible Book

Reclaiming the covenant

By Don Carter, pastor, First Church,
Eureka Springs
Basic Passage: Deuteronomy 29:1 -
30:20

Focal passage: Deuteronomy 29:1-6,
9-15, 30:1-5, 15-16, 19b-20

Central truth: Our responsibility to God's covenant is to follow Him.

Our God is a God of covenants. He continually established covenants with the people of Israel and their leaders. He was always the initiator. He wanted to draw His chosen people into relationship with Him.

Moses begins reminding the children of Israel of God's wonderful provision. In Deuteronomy 29:1-6, Moses relates that God was in the business of caring for the needs of His children. Their clothes and sandals didn't even wear out in 40 years of wandering. God provided ample food for them to eat.

The reclaiming or renewing of God's covenant was for all Israel. In 29:9-15, the people are seen as "standing in the presence of Yahweh." They were present for one purpose, to enter into a covenant with God. God would set His seal upon the contract to make it binding. It was an agreement with all the people of Israel.

Moses continues to exhort the crowd with the promises of God's faithfulness to His covenants. Even when the people are scattered throughout the world, God will bring them back (30:15). The promise of restoration does not come lightly. Moses knows from past experience that the people of God will probably not remain faithful to Him. Thus, this prophetic passage of an exile period rings very true centuries before their captivity.

No matter where they are or what they have done, God will remain faithful to His part of the covenant. If they turn back to Him, He will restore them back to Himself and to their promised land. The promise of the special land is a continual thread that runs through the Old Testament. Most of the covenants between God and His people contain a promise of a special land.

The choice of the people is simple. In Deuteronomy 30:15-16, the choice is spelled out to be a choice between life or death and prosperity or destruction. Choose to follow God and you are choosing to have life and prosperity. He promises that the choice and following are in our reach. We can follow Him.

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CONVENTION REPORTS

Testimony affirms 'True Love Waits' campaign

Citing disturbing statistics on teenage pregnancy, abortion and sexually transmitted diseases, Doug Porter, minister of youth at Beech Street Church in Texarkana, described the dangers of increasing sexual activity among teenagers.

In response, Porter explained, the Baptist Sunday School Board has launched the "True Love Waits" campaign, promoting God's plan of sexual abstinence until marriage.

Porter emphasized that "True Love Waits" is a campaign, not an event, and has a four-fold purpose to communicate the value of remaining pure until marriage, to challenge families to address biblical standards of sexual behavior, to provide churches a way of supporting parents and teenager and to express to the world the biblical commitment to sexual purity.

Porter noted the availability of a kit which provides a guide to family worship, plans for a worship service and commitment cards. "Don't brush teens off," Porter urged. "They desperately need our help and time is not on our side."

'The church is the answer,' CCF leader emphasizes

Larry Page, Christian Civic Foundation director, reported to convention messengers that his agency is seeking to make a difference "so that the world will see that the church is the answer." Page reported that some of the issues the CCF will be facing in the next year include preservation of the unborn child amendment, contesting efforts to repeal the sodomy law and opposing gambling.

"Gambling may be the major issue for 12 to 36 months because businesses and merchants want to compete with gambling in Mississippi," Page said. He also noted that the fight against the ABC television series "NYPD Blue" did not fail even though the show is still on the air. "We drew a line and the church said, 'Enough is enough,'" Page asserted. "But we have to find a way to get more networked and get more attention."

"The ministry we neglect is the ministry of hate - we don't hate wickedness enough," Page continued. He said that Baptists need to have "a white hot passion" against child abuse, sexual abuse and pornography, breweries, racial hatred and other moral issues.

Iowa executive director reports on flood, partnership

O. Wyndell Jones, executive director of the Iowa Southern Baptist Fellowship, reported that it has been an "interesting year" for Iowa Southern Baptists. Deeply affected by the floods of '93, Jones noted that God used the tragedy in "awesome and unusual ways."

Jones explained that this was the greatest disaster the state had ever faced. "A city of 300,000 people was without water for a week, and most were out of electricity," he explained. "But out of that experience has come the richest blessings that Southern Baptists could have gained."

Before the flood, many Iowans did not know who Southern Baptists were. "Before the flood receded, the American Red Cross, when called for aid, would refer the calls to Iowa Southern Baptists," Jones said. Arkansas Baptists, through their partnership with Iowa Baptists, helped establish that relationship, he explained. "Many Arkansans have come, sent supplies and prayed. We have ministered in many ways. We are grateful that we could reach into homes because people came from Arkansas."

Affirming other ministry efforts going on among Iowa Baptists, he noted that Iowa messengers voted this year to seek to constitute as a state convention in 1995. At the same time they will continue working to begin ministry in 50 Iowa counties that have no Baptist church or mission.

Baptist seminaries report student enrollment gains

Sharing about the work of Southern Baptists' six seminaries, Jimmy Barrentine, director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention missions department, noted that Arkansas Baptists have strong ties to the seminaries through such ministries as Boyce Bible School, special programs from Southwestern and Midwestern seminaries and Seminary Extension.

Barrentine reported an overall student enrollment increase of 8 percent among the seminaries. The largest increase was at New Orleans Seminary with a 28 percent increase, with Golden Gate and Midwestern each posting a 15 percent increase. Southeastern followed with an increase of 10 percent and Southwestern reported a 3 percent increase. Southern reported a 4 percent enrollment decline. Overall, there are 9,136 students taking seminary courses for credit. Barrentine reported, noting that the seminaries are on the threshold of even greater student expansion. In addition, he noted, 30,842 people took non-credit seminary-affiliated classes.