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June 12, 1986

Arkansas Baptist State Convention

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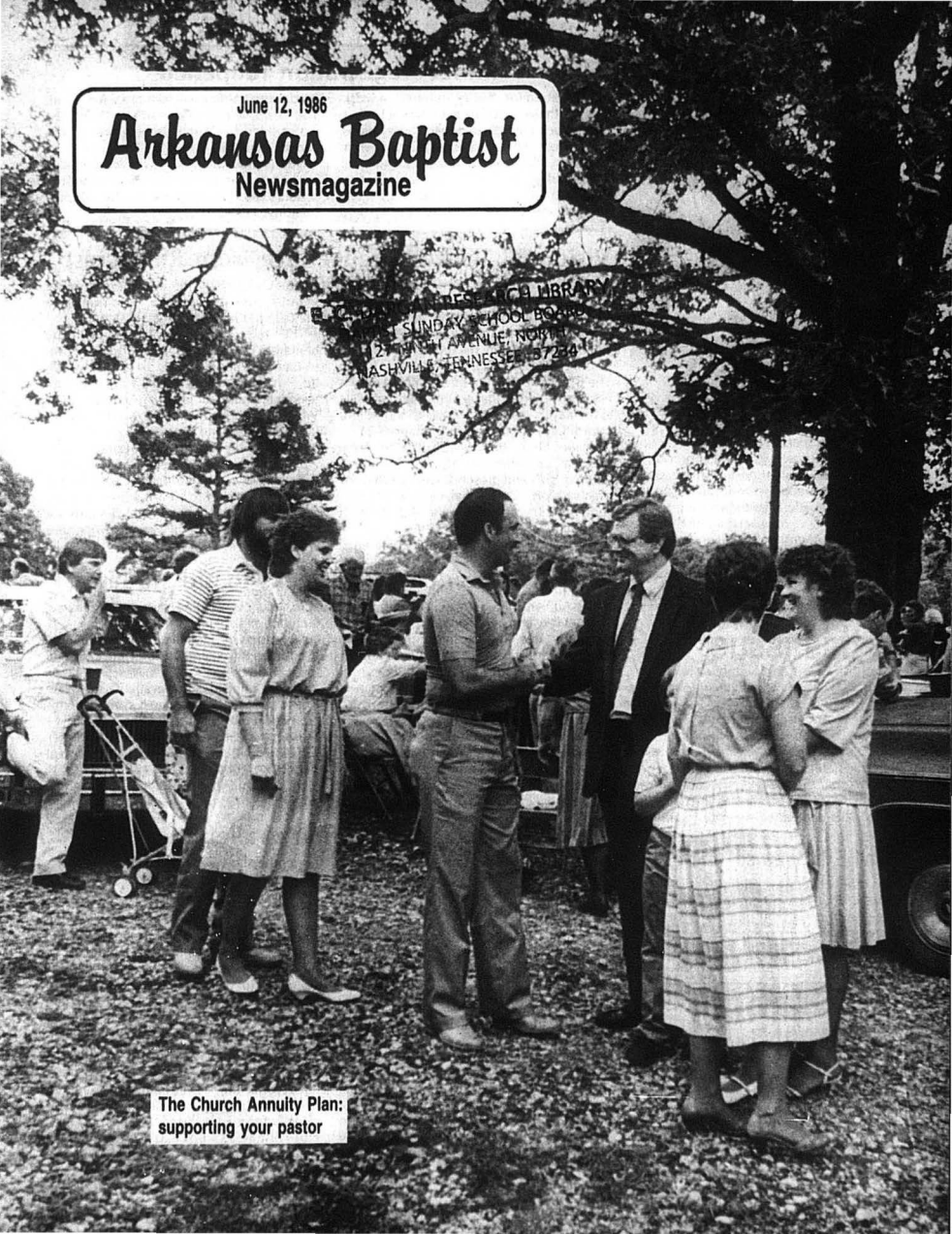


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June 12, 1986

Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine

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**The Church Annuity Plan:
supporting your pastor**



ABN photo / Millie Gill

Through the years, churches have found many ways to express love and appreciation for their pastors. A more contemporary expression of support—the Church Annuity Plan—will provide a pastor monthly retirement income, a regular reminder of the church's love. Annuity Board Sunday is June 26, 1986.

In this issue

8-9 musical mission

Forty-one Arkansans were among 180 Southern Baptist musicians from 14 states participating in a regional Musicians on Mission project in Kansas and Nebraska. A Booneville couple found themselves personally revived by the experience at least as much as the church they served.

13 reach the unsaved

After reviewing statistics from the 8.5 by '85 campaign, Sunday School experts focused on a need to increase the number of unsaved people enrolled in Sunday School.

'Super Summer' registration reopened

Registration for "Super Summer," a week-long youth event at Ouachita Baptist University, has been reopened due to cancellations. According to Jim Lagrone, ABSC evangelism associate, "Some youth have changed their minds and we have spaces available for persons who would like to come."

The intensive week of discipleship and

evangelism training will take place July 14-18. The event will feature Dawson McAllister, worship led by Tierce Green, and a concert by Gabriel.

Cost for the week is \$55, which includes room, board and materials. Those interested should call Jim Lagrone at the Baptist Building, (501)376-4791.

Vision 88 Teleconference: live from Ridgecrest

The first live telecast from Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center will focus on a plan to double the enrollment in Woman's Missionary Union organizations. The Vision 88 Teleconference will be telecast over BTN starting at 7 p.m. (CDT), on Tuesday, July 1. The BTN signal will not be scrambled for this teleconference so that anyone with a satellite dish may participate. Viewers should set coordinates for Spacenet 1, channel 21.

Vision 88 is the WMU plan to bring national membership up to 2 million women, girls and preschoolers by 1988, the organization's centennial year. WMU currently has approximately 1.2 million members nationwide.

WMU has chosen to use a teleconference

approach to Vision 88 education because viewers have the unique opportunity to actually participate in the show.

The teleconference program will be centered on a game show format. Contestants will solve a word or phrase which will trigger a program feature. The teleconference is an ideal way to reach many WMU members, in small towns as well as large cities, at one time.

Set aside the evening of Tuesday, July 1, 7 p.m., to view the Vision 88 Teleconference. If you have a satellite dish in your home, invite friends over to view it with you. Contact your associational WMU director for information concerning where viewing sites will be held in your association.

Air Force Academy BSU seeks to aid students

The Air Force Academy BSU would like to contact the men and women coming to the Academy this July, according to Dwain Gregory, director of Baptist campus ministries.

Academy BSU workers will meet planes, provide transportation and housing overnight, and help cadets to report to the Academy at the required time. The Academy's BSU ministry, which has been carried on since the late fifties, seeks to contribute to the cadets' spiritual growth by involvement in Bible study, discipleship, wor-

ship, and church and mission endeavors, Gregory explains.

July cadets may contact Gregory at 550 W. Woodmen Rd., Colorado Springs, CO 80919; (303) 599-9094.

Similar ministries are available for those attending West Point or the Naval Academy. At West Point contact: Alton Harpe, 11 Washington St., Cornwall-on-Hudson, NY 12520; (914) 534-7954. At the Naval Academy contact: Dick Bumpass, 201 Hanover St., Annapolis, MD 21401; (301) 263-0963.

'Cotton Patch Gospel' film available

From his birth in a Gainesville, Ga., trailer to his Good Friday lynching and Easter Sunday victory, the story of Mary Davidson's boy Jesus is retold in often-convicting, sometimes-hilarious terms in "Cotton Patch Gospel."

The critically-acclaimed musical drama is based on the "Cotton Patch" versions of the Gospels as translated by Southern Baptist preacher, scholar, farmer and civil rights activist Clarence Jordan. The state production now has been recreated in a film version starring Tom Key and the original award-winning cast.

The original stage production, featuring some of the late Harry Chapin's finest musical compositions and musical direction by Chapin's brother Tom, had a Broadway run of more than 200 performances. From

there, the show went to Atlanta and Dallas and set all-time attendance records as the longest-running play in both cities.

Though a touring company is still taking the play to churches and theaters across the country, Tom Key and the original cast of bluegrass musicians, "The Cotton Pickers," have gone on to other things. But thanks to Texas-based producer/director Michael Meece, the magical chemistry of Key and his partners on stage has been captured on film and is now available through the church film rental market.

The two-hour, 16mm film can be rented from many major Christian film libraries or directly from Educational Evangelism, Inc., 820 Wilshire, P.O. Box 820, Euless, TX 76039 (817) 267-7500.



People in general have the wrong concept of liberty. Not long ago we were in a convenience store and a man was seeking to buy a pornographic magazine. When he learned that the store did not stock such magazines he complained, "A man ought to have the right to read anything he wants to read. It's not fair that these do-gooders are pressuring stores into not selling my magazine."

During the effort to legalize casino gambling in Garland County we heard another man say, "A man should be allowed to gamble if he wants to. He earns his money, he's entitled to spend it as he chooses."

Both of these expressions displayed the ignorance of those who uttered the words. The truth is, people from which such expressions come are not interested in learning what liberty really is. They define liberty as being out of jail, or being given the privilege to vote, or being given the chance to defend themselves when they are arrested.

Closely related to this group are those who treat liberty lightly. They say, "It's nobody's business what I do." Someone has suggested, "Your reputation is what people think of you; your character is what you really are." One who possesses commendable character is concerned about his reputation.

A critic might say, "Oh! you're talking about Christian liberty." Truthfully there isn't any other kind of liberty.

Christian liberty is the freedom to act, so long as our actions do not affect the rights of others. If Christ had been interested only in providing for his own welfare, where would you and I be? If we would thoroughly define Christian liberty we learn that it means the kind of liberty exercised by Christ.

Christ was always careful to not harm any individual. He dealt forcefully with untruth and formal religion but his whole life was spent to bring out the best in every individual.

The question arises, "Why should our actions toward other people affect liberty?" As Christians we are supposed to be witnesses for Christ. If we fail to reflect Christ to the world, our witness is hampered. So every Christian has the liberty to pray, to sing, to preach, to teach Sunday School classes, but a Christian does not have the liberty to do anything that would harm the work of the Lord.

Second, Christian liberty is freedom in Christ rather than freedom of the world. The children of Israel, under the leadership of Moses, were free from bondage because of their faith in God to the extent they were willing to follow his leadership. They

worshipped the golden calf after molding it from the gold collected from the twelve tribes, and were harshly rebuked for this activity. Yet they exercised the liberty given them to think and act as they pleased. So far as the world is concerned, we are permitted to assemble ourselves together for worship in many forms and ceremonies. But in Christ there is only one plan of salvation, one method of reaching the throne of Grace and one plan for building Christ's church.

Third, Christian liberty is freedom from sin. This does not mean freedom to sin. Some people maintain, "After an individual is saved, he can do anything he desires to do." But a Christian is not free to sin. Sin is a transgression of God's law.

Christian liberty affords many opportunities for a Christian to reflect Christ. When an individual's activities cloud his or her Christian witness, it brings harm to God's kingdom.

Paul's attitude concerning meat offered to idols was if it offended anyone for him to eat this meat he would eat no more meat as long as the world stood. Paul was totally satisfied that there was nothing wrong with eating the meat that had been offered to idols. But for the sake of others he would refrain from eating meat.

Christian liberty also gives opportunity for a Christian to render service. Sacrificial service always brings blessings. It is impossible for a Christian to render service in the name of Christ without compassion for those who are without Christ.

We are saved to serve. Christ cannot use the life in service of one who is not submissive to the will of God.

Christian liberty also gives an opportunity for the greatest cooperation among Christians. The individual who does the will of God is cooperating with thousands of other people around the world. Sometimes we may mistakenly believe that Christianity is diminishing. But there are more Christians in the world today than there has ever been in history.

So why should we exercise Christian liberty? First, it is because our testimony depends upon how we exercise our liberty. The world has a standard by which each Christian is judged. When we fail to meet the test we harm the work of the Lord.

Second, we should exercise Christian liberty because Christ commanded it. Out of attitude grow the actions of life.

Finally, we should exercise Christian liberty under the guidance of Christ, because each Christian is responsible to him for his time, talent and activity. When a Christian properly utilizes his liberty in the Lord he will know true joy.

Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine

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meeting the information needs of Arkansas Baptists

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You'll be glad to know...

One must never conclude that my job is simply attending the festive meetings anniversaries, ground breakings and dedications. Many less attractive duties make up the bulk of my work, but I do get to be involved in many of these joyful occasions on weekends.

...Lake Village Church recently included us in their celebration of 125 years of ministry and service. Pastor Harold Elmore and his committees prepared well and large numbers enjoyed the occasion. A bell dating from the eighteenth hundreds had been located on the grounds. One hundred twenty five people passed by to ring it once for each of their years. Former pastors and friends returned to a warm fellowship. Within two years after the founding of the church, many of the male members would leave for the war between the states, never to return. A plaque identifying the site of that first church had been attached to the library, which is located on the site. As it was unveiled, I began to sense the holiness of a place where men and women of such raw courage on the ragged edge of civilization determined to establish a New Testament church. What a thrill!

The bell and the unveiling of the plaque were different touches from the usual anniversary. The Spanish fellowship's youth choir brought special music. That was a little different. This was a church that in 125 years had never split into separate congregations. That might be more than unusual; it may be a miracle; it certainly is significant. I am grateful for people who as pastors and leaders of our churches pay the price to keep the congregation together.

I was blessed as the pastor called to mind many missions the church had sponsored through the years when the delta was more thickly settled. Some are active churches today. In other parts of our state today established churches must catch the spirit and do the same for various communities and groups around them.

Don Moore is executive director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention.



Moore

Letters to the editor

Have much to offer

I would like to share a part of the experience that I had at the Senior Adult Celebration at Ouachita Baptist University last week. The participants were all treated to a most pleasurable time that included humor, information, inspiration and quality Bible study.

As a church staff member (only in my twenties), my eyes were opened to the tremendous potential in the senior adults that populate our state. They are staunch supporters of our churches and convention. They are a group of vigorous, intelligent, fun-loving people. I was reminded that life does not come to a grinding halt after 65, 75 or even 85 birthdays. These folks have much to offer in service to our Lord's Kingdom.

I was also made aware of the sad fact that this great resource of talent, wisdom, experience and energy is largely ignored or at least taken much too lightly by the pastors of this state. Pastors have time to take children and youth to Siloam and Ridgecrest. They take marriage enrichment and deacon retreats with median age adults. But, my pastor was the only one in attendance at the Senior Adult Celebration.

Pastors, I assure you that your time would have been well spent with these folks for three days. I can almost guarantee that they love and support you with more conviction than any other group in your church. You have missed a good opportunity to develop a closer relationship with your senior adults and to gain a greater insight of who they are.



Food and fellowship

Virginia Kirk and Jane Purtle

Sharing bread

"At mealtime Boaz said to Ruth, 'Come and have a piece of bread, and dip it in the sauce.'" Ruth 2:14 (GNB)

"Stop by the store and get a loaf of bread," we often say to a family member, not thinking that we are asking for a modern miracle. During most of the world's history, people haven't stopped by the store to get a loaf of bread.

Naomi didn't say to Ruth, "Stop by the store and get a loaf of bread." When the two of them arrived in Bethlehem, the barley harvest was just beginning. They needed food, so Ruth said, "Let me go to the fields to gather grain that the harvest workers leave. I am sure to find someone who will let me work with him!"

Her faith was rewarded as she gleaned in Boaz' field. Boaz saw her, admired her beauty, valued her courage and faith. "I have heard about everything you have done for your mother-in-law since your husband died. I know how you left your father and mother and your own country and how you came to live among a people you have never known before. . . . May you have a full reward from God," he said to her.

And at mealtime Boaz said to Ruth, "Come and have a piece of bread and dip it in the sauce." Some things never change. Ruth couldn't go to the store and get a loaf of bread, but Boaz could invite her to eat at his table and to share his food. They ate bread and gravy together and it was the beginning of a love affair.

While things change, they remain the same. Faith and love and bread never change. When we stop at the store to get a loaf of bread, we enjoy a modern miracle; but we also connect ourselves with an ancient tradition, the sharing of bread.

Of the many versions of Mexican cornbread, we like this one.

Mexican cornbread

1 1/4 cup cornmeal
1/2 tsp. soda
1/2 cup salt
2 eggs
1/2 cup margarine (melted)

3/4 cup buttermilk
1 cup grated cheese
1 cup cream style corn
1 jalapeno pepper, chopped very fine (more if desired)

Measure ingredients into mixing bowl in the order given, mixing well. Pour into a well-greased 9x9 baking dish or a 9 inch skillet. Cook in a 350 oven for 45 minutes or until firm and well browned.

Virginia Kirk, professor emerita at Arkansas College, is a member of Batesville First Church. Jane Purtle teaches at Lon Morris College in Jacksonville, Texas. They have enjoyed cooking together for several years.

The Senior Adult Celebration is an annual event. I would encourage you to make an effort to attend next year.

A special thanks to Bob Holley and his staff for making the days at Ouachita a real "celebration." — **Bill Craig, West Helena**

Personal attack

Phil Lineberger's letter of May 29 was a personal attack on Johnny Jackson and me. His letter contains several errors and was an attempt to paint Jackson and me as the SBC power brokers in Arkansas. Allow me to set the record straight.

In my 38 years of friendship with Johnny Jackson I have never done one thing to get him appointed or nominated to any position in the SBC. I have never communicated with any SBC president about appointments they were to make. Neither have I done anything to influence any SBC Committee on Committees or Committee on Boards concerning their nominations.

When I was appointed to the Committee on Committees in 1982, I was not a member of the Forest Highlands Church in Little Rock as Lineberger stated. I was pastor of the Walnut Street Church in Jonesboro at that

time. For the Committee on Boards Jackson and I nominated Don Moore of Fort Smith and Doug Bradley from Jonesboro. These men did not nominate Jackson or me to any SBC position.

In 1984, Jimmy Draper named Jim Adams from Texarkana and me to serve on the Committee on Committees. (If asked to serve again on that committee I will decline.) Adams and I agreed to nominate persons to the Committee on Boards who would represent all of Arkansas Baptists. We selected John Maddox of Wynne and Russell Miller of Mountain Home. These two men did not nominate Jackson or me to any position.

I have not been appointed to serve as a trustee of Southwestern Seminary, as Lineberger stated. I will be nominated as a trustee of that institution in Atlanta in June. If elected it will be my first time to serve on any SBC institution, board or agency.

Lastly, Mr. Editor, you do the cause of Baptists a great disservice when you print letters that are personal attacks on individuals. Lineberger's letter was clearly an attempt to smear and discredit two pastors who between them have 80 years of uncontested service and loyalty to the SBC. — **C.A. Johnson, Jonesboro**

(Editor's note: Dr. Johnson is correct. He was pastor of Walnut Street Church, Jonesboro, when the Committee on Committees of which he was a member brought its report to the 1982 SBC annual meeting. However, the bulletin for the first day of that meeting listed Dr. Johnson as a committee member from Arkansas and indicated with an asterisk that he was a layperson. We attempted to check the facts in Dr. Lineberger's letter, as we do in all letters, columns, editorials and articles. Had we discovered the error prior to printing, we would not have printed the letter with the misinformation. We apologize for our mistake. We request our readers to call to our attention any error that appears in the *Arkansas Baptist News* magazine. It is our policy always to be correct.)

Not 'appointed'

I have found through the years the best way to deal with personal criticism is to ignore it, but the letter of Phil Lineberger in the May 29 issue must be answered. Reverend Lineberger has shown his ignorance by several inaccurate statements in his letter.

First of all I was not "appointed" by anyone to serve as "trustee" for the Home Mission Board. I was duly nominated by the Committee on Boards in 1982 to fill an unexpired term on the Board of Directors of the Home Mission Board and elected by the SBC messengers in Kansas City. If Reverend Lineberger feels that my one and only SBC directorship in forty years of service is a "concentration of power," his definition of power might need some explaining.

He is also wrong in his appraisal of the situation of C.A. Johnson. Dr. Johnson has not been "appointed" to anything but will be nominated in Atlanta by the 54 member Committee on Boards from 27 state conventions to serve on the Board of Trustees at Southwestern Seminary if elected by the SBC messengers. This, too, will be C.A.'s first service on a convention agency. His long service to Arkansas Baptists certainly qualifies him for this position of leadership.

My suggestion to Dr. Lineberger is to use his great talents to take care of the state convention matters in Texas and not to worry about nor advise our convention in Arkansas. — **Johnny Jackson, Little Rock**

Church takes to the street

TAIPEI, Taiwan—Instead of having a Sunday evening worship service, members of Hwai Ning Baptist Church in Taipei head for the busy street outside the church to share Christ with people there. Members invite interested listeners inside to hear a five-minute presentation of the gospel. In the last four years more than 25,000 people have heard the message, and about a third of them have expressed a desire to know more about Christ.



The Southern accent

Sheri Midkiff

God's grandeur

Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889) was a poet and Jesuit priest. A man of deep religious feeling, he often chose to write about nature as a revelation of the reality of God. He was also a creative genius with his introduction of such poetic techniques as incape and sprung rhythm. These techniques, involving unusual word combinations, unusual word order and unique poetic rhythms have greatly influenced the writing of poetry in the twentieth century. Hopkins never published his poetry in his lifetime, but its themes and techniques continue to influence those who would read his work for the depth of his thought and the obvious genius of his creativity.

"God's Grandeur" is one such poem which is concerned with the beauty in nature which reveals God's glory in spite of man's indifference and greed. "The world is charged with the grandeur of God./It will flame out, like shining from shook foil:/It gathers to a greatness, like the ooze of oil/Crushed."

The glory of God's creation is in the care of mankind. It cannot be hidden, for it will "flame out" like lightning, and its revelation

is steady and consistent, "like the ooze of oil/Crushed." Yet man pays little heed to the divinely created beauty surrounding him and does not seem to recognize that there will be retribution for his indifference. "Why do men then now not reek his rod?"

Man is preoccupied with his labors for gain and he has separated himself from God and his identity with the soil as an elemental part of his being. Man's indifference and greed have resulted in damage to the productivity of the world. "And all is seared with trade; bleared, smeared with toil/. . . The soil is bare now."

In spite of man's insensitivity, God reaffirms his power to renew and create. "And for all this, nature is never spent;/There lives the dearest freshness deep down things." Morning continues to dawn and the Holy Ghost, like a dove, "over the bent/World broods with warm breast and with a! bright wings." The sinful world is yet given hope for its condition with the assurance of the continued watchcare of its creator.

Sheri Midkiff is a faculty member at Southern Baptist College.

Arkansas all over

by Millie Gill / ABN staff writer

people



McDaniel

Robert W. McDaniel will begin serving June 23 as pastor of Highland Heights Church at Benton. He will move there from Smackover where he has served as pastor of First Church since February, 1982. He has served as pastor of other Arkansas

churches and First Church, Avery, Texas. He is a member of the program committee of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention Executive Board. McDaniel is a graduate of both Ouachita Baptist University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He and his wife, Nancy, are parents of four children.

Elmer Lynn West of West Memphis began serving Marion First Church May 19 as director of education, youth and children. He is a 1985 graduate of Memphis State University with a degree in business education.

Charles Mays will begin serving June 14 as pastor of Leonard Street Church in Hot Springs. He is a graduate of Mid-America Seminary. He and his wife, Rose, have two daughters, Tammy, age 19, and Kim, age 11.

Johnny Jackson has resigned as pastor of Forest Highlands Church in Little Rock, effective Aug. 1 to serve as executive director of the Paul Jackson Evangelistic Association.

Danny Pinnell and **Charlie Lechner** will serve Perryville First Church as summer youth directors.

Bobby Tucker is serving as interim associate pastor of Wynne Church. He is a graduate of Arkansas State University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He previously has served the Wynne Church as summer youth director.

Kim Walker joined the staff of Pulaski Heights Church in Little Rock June 1 as minister to children and singles coordinator. A native of Norfolk, Va., she is a graduate of Bluefield College, Bluefield, Va., and attended Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. She has served as a summer missionary to Hazelwood Church in Louisville, Ky., and has served



West



Mays



Jackson



Young

on the staff of Norfolk First Church, as well as serving as an assistant director of a day care organization in Norfolk.

Marty and Debbie Lutke of Bentonville have been selected as statewide winners of the KARK-TV, Channel Four in Little Rock "Community Services Award." They are members of Bentonville First Church.

Rena Phillips died May 21 in Wagner, S.D. She was a former Conway resident. Survivors include a daughter, Mrs. Troy Nell Brookman of Wagner; two brothers, H.D. Burlison of Garden Grove, Calif., and Ervin Burlison of Longview, Texas; a sister, Myrtle F. Mason of Blytheville and four grandchildren.

Larry White is serving as interim music director at Barnett Memorial Church in Little Rock.

Kevin Sigbsy of Rector was recently selected by Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary for inclusion in the 1985-86 edition of *Who's Who Among Students in American Universities and Colleges*.

Bill Brown was recognized June 1 by his congregation, Bayou Meto Church in Jacksonville, for 35 years of service as a Southern Baptist minister. He was presented a plaque.

Rita Frazier has joined the staff of Rosedale Church in Little Rock as youth director. She is a junior at Ouachita Baptist University, majoring in religious education. She has served as a summer missionary to Indiana, as well as serving as church pianist for churches in Benton.

Bruce Tippitt will begin serving July 6 as pastor of Fianna Hills Mission in Fort Smith. He is a graduate of Ouachita Baptist University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He was licensed to the preaching ministry by Hot Springs Second Church and was ordained by Bethlehem Church at Whelen Springs. Tippitt has served as pastor of churches in both Arkansas and Texas. He has served Arkansas Baptist State Convention and Southwest Association in leadership positions and as secretary of the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary Alumni Association, 1984-85. Tippitt is married to the former Kathy Joan Marable, a graduate of Ouachita Baptist University. They have two children, Jennifer Leigh and Amy Kathleen.

Etio Sims of Scott died May 18 as a result of injuries sustained in an automobile accident. Her funeral services were held May 20 at Toltec Church, Scott, where she was an active member, serving as choir director, a Sunday School and Church Training teacher, and Woman's Missionary Union leader. She also served Caroline Association as WMU Enlistment/Engagement director. Survivors include her husband, Waylon; two sons, Mike Sims and Jim Sims of Scott; three children, Nettie Henderson, Norine Wilson and Mildred Gibson of Bradford; and five grandchildren.

George Adams of Fayetteville is one of four ministers of youth who have been invited by the Sunday School Board to come to Nashville for an idea sharing seminary for a new plan book for youth ministers. He serves as minister to youth at Fayetteville First Church.

Kendall Owens has joined the staff of Lincoln First Church as director of youth and music.

Dawn Maria Whitney of Rector was fatally injured May 18 in an automobile accident at Scott. Her funeral services were held May 19 at Rector First Church where she was a member. She was a student at Arkansas State University and an employee of State Representative William F. (Bill) Foster Sr. Survivors are her

adoptive parents, Rev. and Mrs. Guy Whitney of Rector; her father, Guy Broyles of Paragould her mother, Judy Pohold of Tulsa; a brother, Marvin Whitney of Rector; a sister, Leah Ann Whitney of Rector; and her grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. W. W. Carey of Elaine.

Wayne Clayton has resigned as pastor of Floral Church.

Alwyn Coleman has resigned as pastor of Grace Mission in Independence Association. **George Rudick** is serving the mission as interim pastor.

George Roberts has retired as pastor of Salado Church.

David Young was ordained May 18 to the preaching ministry by Deer Park Church in Louisville, Ky., where he serves as youth director. A former Little Rock resident and member of Tyler Street Church, he is a graduate of Parkview High School, Baylor University and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Young is the son of Norman and Betty Young of Little Rock.

briefly

Judsonia First Church has planned a Wednesday night youth Bible study as one of the new summer activities.

Sheridan First Church continued its Festival of the Christian June 1 with a Children's Day celebration. The children's choirs, grades one through six, performed during the morning worship service. Claudia Denson was director and Jenny Swilling was accompanist.

Hope Calvary Church mission team was recently in Indiana to assist the Carthage Church with backyard Bible clubs and a census.

Star City First Church will observe homecoming June 15 with services that begin at 10 a. m. A noon meal will follow.

Des Arc First Church ordained Bill Eagle, Kay Garth, Keith Knupp and Cy Stafford to the deacon ministry June 1.

Boles Mission was constituted into **Boles Church** May 18. The mission was organized in 1977 under the sponsorship of Waldron First Church and since that time 19 have been baptized into its membership. Members currently meet in

a rented building, but property has been purchased for a building program from a mission site fund of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention. Floyd Tidsworth Jr., ABSC Church Extension director, delivered the constituting message. Others on program were Elva Adams, former director of missions for Buckner Association; Nelson Wilhelm, pastor of the sponsoring church and Pastor Jack Gurdy.

Lonoke Church has a new organization, "The Second Milers," designed to provide opportunities for fellowship, recreation, information and fun for those 55 years of age or older. Mary Mathis is serving as director.

Springdale First Church with conduct backyard Bible clubs June 23-27 in the Springdale area. Worker training sessions were held on June 8 and 11 and the final session will be held June 22 at 5 p.m.

Salem Church near Benton ordained Max Oliver as a deacon June 8.

Mount Zion Church at Huff recently broke ground for a new sanctuary.

The Laotian Congregation at Fort Smith held a recent revival at Grand Avenue Church. Pastor Khamsing Norady reported six professions of faiths and 18 re-dedications.

Batesville First Church held open house June 8 and invited Batesville residents to tour their new building which houses a library, offices, choir and bell room and educational space.

Osceola First Church deacons have organized a weekly prayer ministry that provides eight consecutive hours of prayer for Pastor Bob Wilson.

Little Rock Cross Road Church was in a revival May 5-11. Bill Fleming, who serves the church as full-time pastor, was evangelist and Ben Craft directed music. There were five professions of faith.

Congo Road Mission near Benton was constituted June 8 in a 2 p.m. service. Harold Stephens, pastor, and Darrel Dungey, music director, of Benton Trinity Church led the service.

ABN photo / Millie Gill



Owensville Church dedicated a new two-story building June 1 that houses a 250-seat sanctuary, 12 classrooms, a pastor's study, kitchen and fellowship hall. The building, valued at \$340,000, was built at a cost of \$110,000 as a result of volunteer labor. Pastor Max Garrison reported that a \$15,000 loan from the Arkansas Baptist State Convention Missions Department was the only indebtedness. Building committee members were Bob Nichols, chairman, Andy Westerman, Royce Harris and John James. Dedication speakers included Carl Overton, director of missions for Central Association; R. B. Crotts, a former pastor; and Ronnie Garner of Hot Springs.

Music missions project

It's a funny thing about missions volunteers. Seems they always get at least as much out of a trip as they put into it.

That's the testimony of Skip and Nancy Wofford of First Church, Booneville. They participated in a regional Musicians on Mission project in the Kansas-Nebraska Convention of Southern Baptists April 17-25.

Wofford, minister of music at Booneville First for 13 years, and his wife joined 178 other musicians from 14 states in a three-day clinic in Wichita, Kan. The clinic, sponsored jointly by the state convention and the Baptist Sunday School Board, climaxed with a commissioning service for musicians who were going on to week-long revival efforts in 118 of the convention's 296 churches. Forty-one Arkansas musicians attended the clinic; 27 went on to mission revivals.

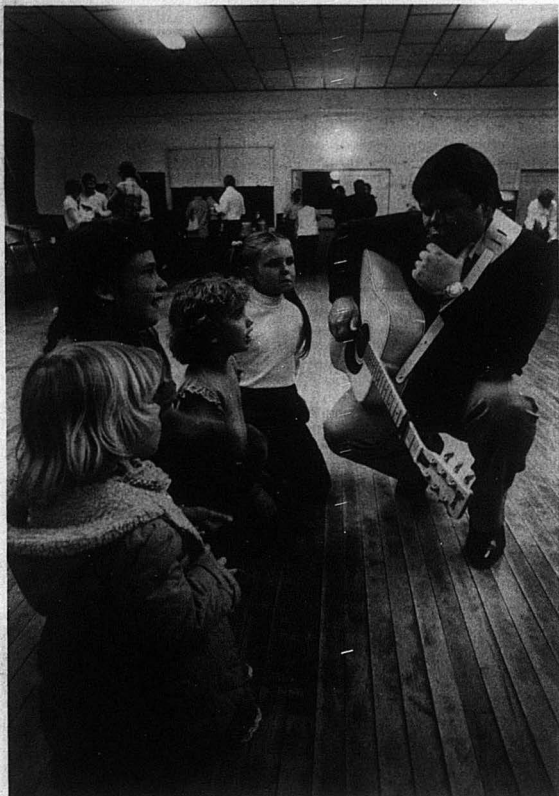
Paying their own expenses, the musicians fanned out across the vast two-state area to assist young churches with their Good News America revivals and share their expertise with staff and volunteer musicians.

The Woffords were assigned to assist First Southern Baptist Church of Dodge City, Kan., a congregation of 150 attendance in the plains of western Kansas.

When they arrived, they began to wonder what they were doing there.

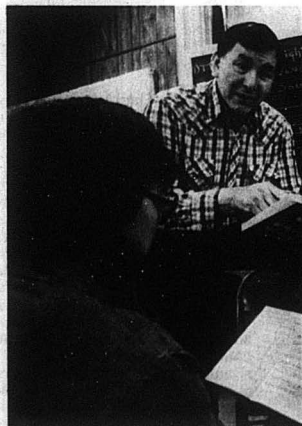
"I couldn't find anything they were doing wrong," recalled Wofford. "They were on the right track, filled with enthusiasm. The church was overrun with young couples and children. They seemed to have a bright future."

"The church had a full-time minister of music," explained Mrs. Wofford. "I didn't feel like there was anything I could do. I kept thinking a little church with no musician would have been better."



David Lewis, music evangelist and pastor of Proctor's Chapel Church, Rocky Mount, N.C., entertains children of area ranchers during the April Musicians on Mission project in the Kansas-Nebraska Convention of Southern Baptists.

Musicians on Mission



evives church—and volunteers, too

by Mark Kelly

Despite their misgivings, the couple jumped into gear. Drawing on her learnings from the clinic, Mrs. Wofford put together a "mini-workshop" for the church's keyboard accompanists. Wofford helped the minister of music evaluate his programs and identify new directions for ministry. He spent one day in consultation with the church's youth director, and one evening they held a meeting with parents in the church who were concerned about reaching unsaved young people.

Of course, there also were the revival services. Working with Rick Ousley of Fort Worth, Texas, Wofford led six days of services. Fifteen persons—the majority of them adults—made professions of faith and "many more" recommitted their lives, Wofford reported. The closing service Friday evening lasted until 10:30 p.m., prolonged by a movement of healing relationships in the congregation. Commented Wofford, "It was the kind of service I've always prayed to be part of."

"If we helped them, great, but the greatest thing happened in us," said Mrs. Wofford. "We were able to share what we learned in the clinic, share material we had, and play duets, but by the first afternoon we knew God had brought us here to revive us."

"We were able to encourage their minister of music," Wofford noted. "In Boonville, I'm only 20 miles from the nearest professional musician. In Dodge City, he is the only full-time minister of music within a three-hour radius. He needed encouragement from a fellow professional."

"But what we gained was that we came to know, beyond any shadow of a doubt, we are doing precisely what God wants with our lives," Wofford continued. "After 13 years in

one place, you can begin to wonder whether you have gotten so involved with your family that you have missed God's call. And it's easy to get complacent and fall into a rut."

"I've got a new vision of what we can do here," said Mrs. Wofford. "I see things here differently than when I left. I don't seem to have enough waking hours to think about all the things that occur to me that we can do here."

For example, Mrs. Wofford and the First

Church organist began planning a keyboard clinic for accompanists in the church. Before they were finished, they had identified 39 persons in the church with playing ability.

"I'm excited to see that kind of development," Wofford noted. "It's great to see others catch onto the spark we brought back with us."

Mark Kelly is managing editor of the Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine.



(Above) Ed Wyatt of First Church, Seminole, Texas, tunes the aging piano of New Hope Mission in Topeka, Kan., as part of a two-week tour of volunteer work in the Kaw Valley Association. (Left) Charles Peak of First Church, Moore, Okla., provides instruction in music sight reading to choir members at Haskell Indian Mission in Lawrence, Kan.



Evangelism and stewardship priorities for First Church, Warren

by J. Everett Sneed

When Everett Martin became pastor of the First Church, Warren, in August 1983, the church had been in a steady decline for 10 years. The Sunday School attendance had been dropping about 15 people each year. Martin, who came from the Oak Haven Church, Memphis, Tenn., observed that there had been a time when the church had 500-600 in Sunday School attendance regularly.

The progressive loss in attendance continued the year Martin came as pastor of the church. The church had averaged 316 in 1982 but dropped to 300 in average Sunday School attendance in 1983.

Martin began to examine how the decline in membership could be stopped and turned around. He said, "When we began to share our desire to increase our attendance with the congregation, we discovered an excellent spirit among the people. The membership has been open to change, growth and development from the very beginning."

Martin suggested to the church that a Sunday School growth specialist should be brought in to assist the congregation. In 1984, the decline stopped and the congregation remained at the 300 mark.

In the fall of 1984, Elmer Bailey, a growth consultant who served for a number of years as the educational director of Bellevue Church, Memphis, Tenn., came to study the Sunday School structure of the church and to make recommendations. (Dr. Bailey now serves as a full-time consultant assisting churches throughout the Southern Baptist Convention.)

Bailey concluded the Sunday School was pretty well graded but the adults were not properly distributed. He suggested the congregation restructure the entire adult division and every individual be assigned according to his or her age. The church approved all the recommendations made by Bailey. There were very few changes recommended below the adult division except in the nursery.

Martin said, "Because of previous practices, the Nursery Department had dwindled to almost nothing. Our greatest growth has come in the Young Adult Department and in the nursery."

When Martin came to First Church, the only staff member was a part-time music director who also was on staff at the University of Arkansas at Monticello. The congregation began to search for an educational director who would temporarily work with the youth. Later the church wanted to employ a full-time music-youth director.

The congregation called Donnie O'Fallon, a native of the area, who was a graduate of Ouachita Baptist University and had attended Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. O'Fallon began his work at First Church in December.

"O'Fallon has meant much to the life of

the church," Martin said. "He started an officers and teachers' meeting, planning meetings, and we saw the Sunday School make a good advance."

For six weeks, beginning with the first Sunday in March this year, the congregation had more than 400 in Sunday School for six weeks in a row. This represents a 25 percent increase over attendance two years ago.

The church also is using the Growth Spiral. Recently, O'Fallon learned in a Growth Spiral meeting with Andy Anderson that Warren First Church was one of six churches recognized among 60 present as achieving substantial growth turnaround.

In addition to restructuring the Sunday School, the church has used the Outreach Sunday School Class approach. Every class has outreach leaders and every Tuesday night 20 to 25 people come for visitation. The congregation will be starting the Continuing Witness Training program in the near future.

Another staff member, Mark Brim, was employed to serve as music and youth director in March 1985. Martin said, "Mark is a very innovative young man. He is assertive and knows how to project and to follow through with his work. We have reached a number of young people under his leadership. The adult choir has doubled and this has strengthened the overall appeal of our church."

Recently, the church choir performed "The Witness," a musical drama by Ron and Carol Owens. The attendance for the musical drama was excellent, with the entire auditorium and balcony packed on Saturday and Sunday evenings.

Martin observed, "The talk about town

concerning First Church is entirely different from what it was two years ago. Now people are talking about what is happening at the church and we are excited about it."

Baptisms are up. In 1983 the church baptized eight people. This had been pretty much the norm for several years. Last year the church baptized 20 and received 19 by letter.

Stewardship growth in the church has even been more dramatic. Martin said that for years he had used the Forward Program of Church Finance. He does everything exactly as recommended in the guidebook. As a result, the congregation has experienced a 35 percent increase in the finances.

In 1983, the church received approximately \$225,000. Last year, the total receipts of the church were over \$380,000. The 1986 budget is \$322,400. The budget does not include the special mission offerings that will be taken in the church. Last year, the church gave in excess of \$80,000 in special mission offerings.

Pastor Martin observed, "Primarily, we have taken the programs of the Southern Baptist Convention and implemented them. Our people have had a good spirit and have responded to our suggestions."

"I believe that there are two characteristics of every New Testament church," Martin continued. "These are evangelism and stewardship, and when a church ceases to be evangelistic or fails to give a good count of its resources, it ceases to be a New Testament church. These have been and will continue to be our major emphases."

J. Everett Sneed is editor of the Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine.

ABN photo / J. Everett Sneed



Some of the greatest growth in First Church, Warren, has come in the nursery, as well as the Young Adult Department. Changes recommended by a church growth consultant enabled the church to bring about the increase, according to Pastor Everett Martin.

Lake Village Church celebrates 125 years of ministry

by Mark Kelly

One hundred twenty-five years of Christian ministry brought together a capacity crowd June 1 at Lake Village Church. They opened their celebration by tolling the church bell—dormant since 1931—one time for each year of ministry.

The Lake Village Church was organized with 22 members in 1861. The outbreak of the "War Between the States," however, drew off much of the male membership, including the church's pastor, William Green. Although Sunday School was maintained during the period, it was not until 1869 that the congregation was revived. Pastor Green never returned from the war.

In May 1871, a 65 by 35-foot lot was purchased for the construction of a building. The same year, George B. Eager was called as pastor. A race riot in December 1871 halted church construction, and services were held in the unfinished facility until 1874.

With the coming of the railroad in 1904, Lake Village began to experience significant growth. In 1915 property was purchased on the lake front, and in 1926 an adjacent lot was acquired. Construction on new church facilities began in 1930, and on Feb. 22, 1931, Lake Village Church held its first services in the sanctuary it still occupies.

In 1953 the church built a parsonage, and in 1955 a building on a lot adjacent to the church was purchased and used for educational space. In 1962 the congregation added more educational space, and in 1985 a modern, two-story brick structure replaced the older educational space.

Twenty-nine pastors have served the Lake Village Church. One man, Jim McCommas, has served the congregation three times as interim pastor. The current pastor, Harold E. Elmore, is in his 10th year.

During its 125-year history, Lake Village Church has established seven missions: Lakeport, Rossmere, Crooked Bayou, Luna, Smith's Chapel, Hynes, and the Hispanic Mission which shares the Lake Village facilities.

During its anniversary services, the congregation heard greetings from local officials and representatives of associational and state convention organizations. Don Moore, executive director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention brought the morning sermon.

Moore helped the congregation recall the "delightful things" of their history, including those who had been converted and those who had been called to ministry in the church.

But he also noted several dangers the congregation needed to avoid. First, the congregation must beware the danger of forgetting the spiritual significance of the past and taking credit themselves for the success of the church. At the same time, however, he warned them away from fantasizing the past beyond its significance.



ABN photo / Mark Kelly

Members of Lake Village Church gathered in front of the County Library June 1 for the unveiling of a plaque marking the site of the congregation's original building. Leading in the observance were J. Marvin Buffington (right), chairman of the church anniversary committee; Homer Beavers (left), committee member; and Harold E. Elmore (center), pastor.

The past must not be used as a standard to judge the present, either, Moore warned. The past is but the preparation for the future, he noted, and "to whom much is given, much is expected." By the same token, the church must not allow itself to bog down in its delight in tradition, counting on the successes of the past for successes in the future.

The church which will gain ground in the future will be a church with a challenging vision, Moore explained. "Your new vision must require much of you," he said. "Don't stop dreaming, don't stop reaching, don't lose your vision."

Progress in Christian ministry does not come without suffering, Moore noted. He recalled a quote from Hudson Taylor, "If

you reap without suffering, remember someone suffered without reaping."

"The next generation may not reap at all, if we have not suffered and sacrificed," Moore said.

"The church is not here for fellowship," he concluded. "The chief reason for the church's existence is that men, women, boys, and girls might be reconciled to God."

After the morning worship, a plaque was unveiled at the County Library, which now stands on the site of the original church building. The anniversary celebration concluded with an afternoon open house in the church's fellowship hall.

Mark Kelly is managing editor of the Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine.

Flood damages mission property in Thailand

BANGKOK, Thailand (BP)—Floodwater two feet deep swept through the Thailand Baptist Theological Seminary in Bangkok in May, ruining doors and damaging beds and other items.

Standing floodwater also warped the doors of Calvary Church in Bangkok and covered ground floors in the homes of Southern Baptist missionaries Richard and Linda Blount and Bill and Kaaren Hitt.

The May flooding was touched off by Bangkok's heaviest rain in 54 years, said Chamlong Srimuang, governor of the city. Fifteen inches of rain fell in 24 hours, inundating the city, halting commerce and eventually leading to at least 50 deaths.

The flood dealt damage to files, music materials and books on the campus of the Baptist seminary. Doors swelled and separated, and teak pews in the chapel sat in two feet of water for several days. Four pianos had to be lifted above the water on blocks.

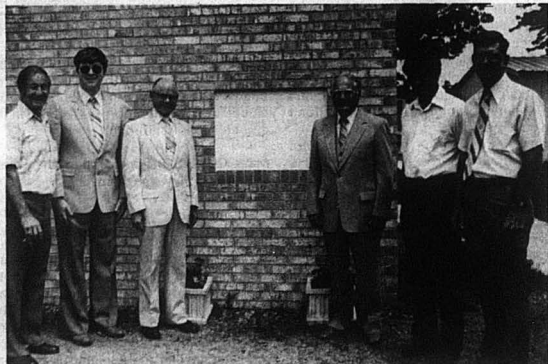
Water several inches deep seeped into storage units on the faculty compound next-door, soaking mattresses and whatever else stood outside sealed metal drums. Water was found inside nearly every mission vehicle on the seminary compound.

Mission-related property sustained much less damage than during a flood three years ago, however. Then, much of the city was under water for two to four months.



Music awards—The 1986 State Music Tournament and Ensemble Jubilee, held at First Church, Benton, drew 169 young people and 95 adults for a total attendance of 264. Winners were: Vocal solo—Junior High, Melanie Cicero, Camden Cullendale; Senior High, Mark Groves, Blytheville First; Keyboard—Junior High, Melanie Cicero, Camden Cullendale and Amy Lunsford, Magnolia First; Senior High, Christie Gunter, Hope First; Instrumental solo—Alex Ennes, violin, Little Rock Geyer Springs First; Shannon Lauterbach, flute, Hope Calvary; Handbell solo—Christie Gunter, Hope First; Small ensemble—Junior High, Boys Duet, Atkins First; Senior High, Girls Duet, Hope Calvary; Large ensemble amplified—Senior High, Chara, Mountain Home First; Large ensemble unamplified—Junior High, Living Free, Texarkana Beech Street; Senior High, Happy Side, Texarkana Beech Street (pictured). Achieving a Superior rating in Keyboard Proficiency/Accompanying were: Leisa Arnett, Texarkana Calvary; Terry Walls, Paragould East Side; and Christie Gunter, Hope First.

ABN photo / J. Everett Sneed



Building dedicated—Anderson Chapel Church near Dumas held a service June 1 to dedicate a remodeled, enlarged and refurbished church plant. The two-phase improvement program was done at a cost of \$26,500 with volunteer labor and included sanctuary and office improvements, construction of four classrooms, the installation of a baptistry, new pulpit area, eight pews, carpeting, pew cushions and additional lighting. The dedication service included laying a cornerstone to honor Ralph Douglas, a former pastor, interim pastor and former associate executive director of Arkansas Baptist State Convention. Participants in laying the cornerstone included (left to right) John Leonard, Joe Burgess, Jesse Reed, Douglas, Davan Tanner and John E. Curry.

Lottie Moon totals almost \$67 million

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)—Southern Baptists contributed \$66,862,113.65 to the 1985 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions.

The offering, Southern Baptists' largest ever, will help support nearly 3,700 Southern Baptist missionaries overseas. It totaled 95.5 percent of the 1985 goal of \$70 million.

The shortfall of \$3.1 million was less than anticipated. Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board analysts had feared final receipts, calculated May 31, might come up as much as \$3.6 million short.


Mission planners budgeted the entire \$70 million goal last year, but the shortfall will not affect personal missionary support. It will require cuts in overseas capital budgets, which fund missionary housing and cars, church construction and other needs.

The 1981 offering was the last to surpass its goal. The 1986 goal will be \$75 million.

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Review of 8.5 campaign sets trend for Challenge 10/90

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz.(BP)—Statistics from Southern Baptists 8.5 by '85 Sunday School enrollment campaign indicate the new Challenge 10/90 effort must focus on actual enrollment increases, starting new Sunday Schools, reaching ethnics and enrolling non-Christians.

Challenge 10/90 is an effort to reach a Southern Baptist Sunday School enrollment of 10 million by 1990. At the end of 8.5 by '85, the Sunday School enrollment stood at a record 7.9 million.

Harry Piland, Sunday School department

director, and James Lackey, special projects coordinator, in the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's Sunday School Department, reviewed statistics from 8.5 by '85 with state Sunday School directors at a mid-year planning meeting in Scottsdale, Ariz.

An increase in Sunday School enrollment is the most important factor in Challenge 10/90, Piland said, noting, "Unless we increase the number of unsaved people enrolled in Sunday School, we are not going to change the trend."

Although the Sunday School enrollment

increased each year during the 8.5 by '85 campaign, the number of new members actually enrolled annually remained at about 900,000. And transfers from one church to another, persons moving from a church area or joining another denomination total about 800,000, leaving a net increase of about 100,000 each year, Piland explained.

"Transferring members is good, and we need to focus on getting persons into another Sunday School when they move, but we need to reach new people," Piland said. Enrolling church members could significantly increase Sunday School rolls, but "we are not going to reach the lost until we reach outside the church."

The 8.5 by '85 statistics point to an increase in the number of non-Christians enrolled in Bible study. "The involvement of those persons in Bible study should change the declining baptism trend," he predicted.

New churches also are important in providing new opportunities to reach the non-Christians, but "we have not yet broken through in starting new churches," Piland said. Southern Baptists have started an average of more than 1,000 new Sunday Schools and 440 new churches each year for the past five years.

Because many of the new Sunday Schools reported are mission Sunday Schools, statistical data are not available to show the net increase in Sunday Schools for the five-year period. The net gain of churches has been an average of 230 per year.

Challenge 10/90 increases the goals for new Sunday Schools for each of the next five years for a five-year goal of 8,000 new Sunday Schools.

Enrollment of ethnic Sunday School members was one of the most significant gains during the 8.5 by '85 campaign. Ethnic enrollment increased from 81,000 to 120,000, according to church-reported statistics.

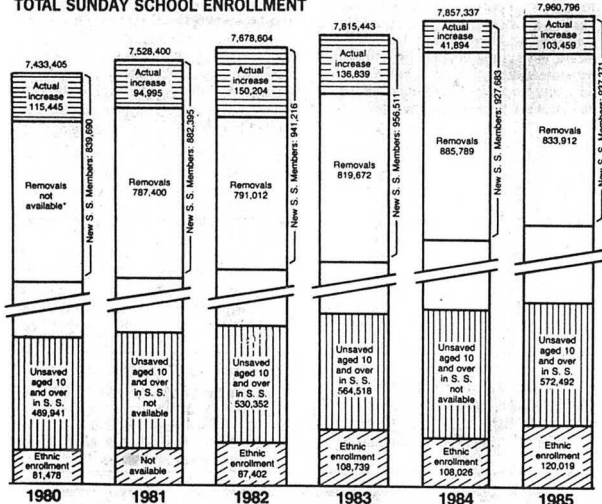
The 1985-90 goal for new Sunday Schools includes 2,000 new ethnic Sunday Schools. Funding and personnel have been increased in the board's special ministries department, which includes black church development and language areas. Ethnic work will receive increased emphasis at Sunday School leadership conferences, Piland said.

The 8.5 by '85 campaign relied on big events for impact. The big event approach was effective and will continue in Challenge 10/90, Lackey said.

Events such as enrollment-training clinics, people searches and Scripture distribution give members an opportunity to get involved and see others involved in evangelism, he explained.

Piland said Challenge 10/90 will focus on the same basic principles as 8.5 by '85 because that campaign proved again the basic principles of growth continue to work.

TOTAL SUNDAY SCHOOL ENROLLMENT



*Removels refers to persons who have died, joined another Sunday School or moved their church membership

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Baptist workers in Ethiopia start crop, animal projects

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia (BP)—A tuluget is a tuft of hair left on an Ethiopian child's otherwise-shaven head. If death comes, tradition holds, an angel can grab the tuluget to lift the child to heaven.

Death and the threat of famine are as much a part of Ethiopian culture as the tuluget. "They're one dry spell away from famine at all times," says Southern Baptist missionary Jerry Besdole, a veterinarian. "They live from crop to crop."

To make the dry spells less deadly, the Ethiopian government's Ministry of Agriculture and Southern Baptist missionaries in Ethiopia have signed an initial agreement for Southern Baptist development work in one area. The long-range agreement is one of the first between the government and a private agency active in famine relief.

Southern Baptists will undertake crop and animal projects in a canyon region between the Rift Valley and the Blue Nile, where they operate five feeding stations battling several years of drought. Ninety-eight percent of the people in the area depend on their harvests to survive.

Additional volunteers—at least one agronomist and one veterinarian—will be needed beyond the 23 Southern Baptists already working in Ethiopia.

Through development projects, Southern Baptist missionaries and volunteers will be "working with people at the level of their needs," explains Lynn Groce, mission organization chairman and an agronomist. Close contact with individual farmers and their families will provide opportunities "to share Christ's love and concern for the

whole man."

Ethiopia, Africa's poorest country per capita, critically needs development aid, says Dag Hareide, United Nations rehabilitation coordinator in Ethiopia.

Despite \$1.3 billion in emergency assistance last year, the country receives the least amount of long-term aid per capita in Africa—about \$10 per person compared to the continent's \$25 average, Hareide notes.

Other drought-stricken countries, he adds, receive six to seven times more development aid per capita than Ethiopia.

Famine has afflicted Ethiopia about every 10 years "for as long as we have written sources, for as long as we know... and it will come again," Hareide says. The famine in recent years, he adds, has been the most widespread and catastrophic of this century.

Experts predict Ethiopia's population of 44 million—Africa's second largest will double by the year 2000, reports Ed Mason, a Southern Baptist volunteer administrator from Florida. "You wonder, if they have trouble feeding 44 million people, how in the world are they going to feed 88 million?"

Southern Baptist missionaries and volunteers will work with several farmers' associations, or rural governmental districts of 250 to 300 families, in small-scale projects to serve as models for other associations.

Initial efforts will include terracing and other soil conservation techniques, seed improvements for better harvests, breeding

programs to build the stamina of oxen, sheep and other animals and veterinary medicine. Measures for clean drinking water also may be involved.

The projects "will seek to attack the root problems rather than dealing with the symptoms of a time of crisis," says R. Keith Parks, president of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, who visited Ethiopia in April.

Supervising each project will be a three-member committee of one representative of Ethiopia's Ministry of Agriculture, one farmers' representative and one representative of the Southern Baptists.

Two Southern Baptist volunteers already have begun development work in the region. "Water specialist Mike Camden has capped two springs at the village of Rabel to eliminate mud and animal waste from the water. Veterinarian Charles Field conducting mobile clinics.

Southern Baptist missionaries also have supplied wheat seed to 12,000 families and corn seed to 8,000. Further seed distribution is planned.

Groce says the farmland "has an amazing ability to recover" with proper care over several growing seasons. But agricultural changes come slowly.

Subsistence farmers cannot afford to take risks with their meager fields, he notes. "Concrete, demonstrable agricultural methods" are a must, as is day-to-day contact with the farmers.

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International

False worship condemned

by S. Mikael Carrier, Nettleton Church, Jonesboro

Basic passage: Jeremiah 7:1-15,26

Focal passage: Jeremiah 7:1-4,8-10; 26:7-9,12-14

Central truth: God calls for repentance by persons who claim they worship and thus feel they deserve God's blessings, but who yet refuse to do his will.

Jeremiah understood that most people would much rather hear a sermon about something "theological" or "spiritual" than to hear a sermon about something practical and personal. The age-old comment from the pew, "He has quit preaching and gone to meddling," certainly has application here.

In Jeremiah chapter 7 and 26, we have the same experience recorded from two distinct vantage points. In the seventh chapter, the emphasis is upon the content of Jeremiah's sermon, while in chapter 26 the primary concern is with the consequences resulting from the delivery of that sermon.

In this message, Jeremiah warns the people as they prepare for worship that they were trusting in Temple ritual rather than placing their trust in a true relationship with the covenant God who had called them in to being as a people. The prophet, confronting the people regarding their false feeling of security, stood in the gate of the Temple and warned the worshippers not to trust in the deceptive words, "the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord" (v. 4). The people thought repeating this magical formula would insulate them from experiencing a disaster similar to what occurred in Israel.

Jeremiah preached that in order for the people to expect God to allow them to remain in the land that he had given to them, the people must amend their behavior and their conduct from dealing unjustly with their fellow man to dealing justly with their fellow man. He charges that the people are treating God's covenant as a license for immoral living, thinking they are insuring themselves against judgement by coming to the Temple for worship (7:8-10).

Obedience has always been more important to God than animal sacrifices. Worship that does not result in obedience to God's commands is sham and mockery. As far as God is concerned, attending worship services, as important as that is, can not substitute for morality, right living and obedience.

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Life and Work

The Second Coming

by Bert Thomas, Valley Church, Searcy

Basic passage: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

Focal passage: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

Central truth: Believers are to be ready for the Second Coming of Jesus.

"Is Jesus going to return tomorrow?" a small boy asked his father. His question came as a result of a news report that a radical religious group was predicting Jesus' Second Coming the next day.

Why do men predict the date of Jesus' Second Coming? Why do they go beyond clear biblical truths? One reason may be that mankind is curious about the unknown and has a desire to be perceived as being "in the know" about spiritual matters.

Many rumors about our Lord's Second Coming begin quite innocently when people misunderstand sound biblical teaching. Others begin when current events are distorted and linked to the doctrine of the Second Coming.

Being ready for the Lord's Second Coming is accepting the fact he is coming. 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 is an expansion of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. These verses clearly reveal Jesus shall return. "The Lord himself will descend from Heaven . . ." (v. 16). Luke wrote, "This same Jesus who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner. . ." (Acts 1:11). Jesus said, "If I go and prepare a place for you I will come again and receive you to myself. . ." (John 14:3).

Being ready for the Lord's return is expecting the unexpected. "Now as to the time and epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you" (1 Thess. 5:1). Paul said exactly what Jesus said to his disciples: "It is not for you to know the times or epochs, which the Father has fixed by his own authority" (Acts 1:7). "Times and epochs" refers to the date and events concerning the Second Coming. While we cannot predict the date or the events, we can be prepared. Some will not be ready. Jesus will come as suddenly as a thief in the night and find them unprepared.

Being ready for the Lord's return is being in control of our lives. We are in a battle with the forces of evil. Our weapons are the breastplate of faith and love. Our helmet is the hope of salvation.

Being ready for our Lord's return is a means of encouragement and growth. Whether we are dead or alive, we have the privilege of knowing we are together with him (v. 10).

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Bible Book

Esther becomes queen

by Roy A. Fowler, First Church, Mountain Home

Basic passage: Esther 1:1 to 2:23

Focal passage: Esther 1:10-12; 2:1-2,4-7b,16-17

Central truth: The selection of Esther as the new queen demonstrates that God acts in history to accomplish his will.

Queen Vashti decided to risk her queen-ship rather than participate in the immoral schemes of her drunken husband, King Ahasuerus. She took the risk and lost her position as queen, but maintained her high moral standards.

As always, after the king was sober and recovered from his anger, he was remorseful over his conduct and actions (2:1). His problem now is that his remorse is too late, Vashti is banished from the throne. Many people today suffer the same sad experience because of alcohol and lack of self-control. "After these things . . . he remembered Vashti" (2:1). In other words, he finally woke up to what was happening in his life.

The high standards of Vashti and her dethronement opened the doors for Esther to become the new queen. The king's servants put into motion their plan for the selection of the new queen. Persian queens were supposed to come from seven leading Persian families. However, Esther was destined to become queen by divine appointment.

The selection process designed by the king's servants was followed as each candidate went in before the king. The servants or the king had absolutely no idea of what was taking place over which they had no control. God already knew bad days were just ahead for the Jews, and they were saved from death because God acted many days before trouble came.

We all need to realize the significance of Esther's being made queen. God is active in the affairs of this world. He is able to influence the selection of world leaders, community leaders, pastors, missionaries, Sunday School teachers and any person he needs in any place or position.

The next time you are facing difficult days, remember God has already provided your victory long before the difficulty appeared. We can trust him every day and in every trial. Now, honestly ask, is there anything that God ever needed to do in which he failed? As he influenced the dethronement of a queen in order to enthronize his chosen queen, he can well care for you.

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Hospitality House stimulates prison ministry

by Ken Camp

HUNTSVILLE, Texas (BP)—An around-the-clock effort by about 270 volunteer builders signaled the beginning of a new era in Southern Baptist prison ministry as workers erected a Hospitality House near state penitentiaries in Huntsville, Texas, May 23-24.

The volunteers completed much of the work on the 7,000 sq. ft., two-story building within 24 hours. Some planned to stay for another week to complete bricking and finishing work. The completed structure will be valued at about \$300,000.

Sponsored by the State Missions Commission of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, Texas Baptist Men and Tryon-Evergreen Association, the Hospitality House will provide a temporary home for visiting families of inmates in Texas Department of Corrections facilities in the Huntsville area. The house was built on land purchased by the convention and the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

The house, the second of its kind in the United States and the first sponsored by Southern Baptists, will accommodate up to 48 overnight visitors in dormitory-style rooms and will include a common kitchen where guests will be able to prepare their own meals. Visitors will be asked to pay no more than \$2 a night to help defray the cost of laundering linens and to give the guests a sense of helping to pay their own way.

Like most states, the Texas prison population is taken disproportionately from low socioeconomic groups. Since prisons are centered in East Texas far from many inmates' homes, visits with loved ones in prison are luxuries family members outside the prison walls seldom can afford. The Hospitality House is designed to provide affordable overnight housing for these families and offer encouragement for them to visit the prisoners more often.

"The two greatest rehabilitating forces in the correctional system are the strong ties of the earthly family and the eternal ties to our heavenly family. Whenever someone is sent to prison, there is almost always a family of some kind left behind to wait," said W.J. Isbell, director of Baptist Men for the Texas convention.

"These family members represent an unusual opportunity for dedicated Christians to minister," said Isbell. "They need our love and concern. These people represent an excellent opportunity for Christian outreach, and they will be much more receptive to the Gospel than usual because of this crisis in their lives."

This dual purpose of ministry and outreach was foremost in the minds of the board of trustees as they developed plans for the Hospitality House, said Chairman Bill Glass, evangelist from Cedar Hill, Texas.

"The Hospitality House presents the opportunity to do social action and evangelism.

It is a beautiful combination of the two," said Glass. "It's a great opportunity to meet a real human need, and it is a door opener to sharing the gospel with the inmates' families."

Part of meeting that "real human need" of the inmates' families will mean involving churches in ministry to them, said Bob Dixon, executive director of Texas Baptist Men. He explained while only weekend visits are permitted for inmates with family living within 350 miles of the prison facility, those outside that boundary are considered "hardship" cases and are allowed weekday visits.

"We expect to see churches involving their Baptist Men in bringing to Huntsville prisoners' wives and children in church vans that would otherwise go unused during the week so that they can visit their loved ones and stay in the Hospitality House," said Dixon. "Our prayer is that as they come here to stay in these rooms that they would come to know Jesus."

The Hospitality House is scheduled to open in mid-July under the direction of Bob and Nelda Norris, who will live in a four-room apartment in the house.

"Our objective is to meet the needs of people—physical, emotional and spiritual," said Norris. "We intend to make ourselves available to everyone who comes, giving them an opportunity for counseling and discussion of problems. Then we want to get them in touch with a local church back home as part of an on going ministry."

"We want to give this place a real home atmosphere for the families who visit here. We want it to be a place of safety and refuge for them," Nelda Norris said.

Assisting the Norrises will be Mission Service Corps volunteers and workers from Tryon-Evergreen Association who will serve as needed. Local leaders in prison ministry see this as one of the greatest benefits of the house.

"I see the Hospitality House primarily as a management tool to help focus the energy of churches in ministry to inmates and their families," said Emmett Solomon, assistant administrator of chaplaincy programs for the Texas Department of Corrections. He noted in many cases churches have wanted to become involved in prison ministries but did not know how. The Hospitality House will offer them a way to enter that ministry.

"The Hospitality House will provide both a place and an opportunity to get people in our churches into direct ministry with inmates' families," said Jim Putman, associate director of Tryon-Evergreen Baptist Association. "That should create more personal caring and concern both for the families and the inmates as our people begin to see them as persons not all that different from themselves."

Ken Camp writes for the Texas Baptist public relations office.