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Arkansas Baptist State Convention

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Sacrificing to serve
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March 20, 1986

Arkansas Baptist
Newsmagazine



ABN photo / Mille Gill

A near-capacity crowd filled Ouachita Baptist University's Mitchell Hall Auditorium Friday, March 7, for a foreign missions rally and commissioning service sponsored by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board. Following a message by FMB President R. Keith Parks, a commitment service brought dozens of persons forward to acknowledge decisions regarding foreign mission service (see related articles, pp. 8-9).

In this issue

7 remodeled roadhouse

When law enforcement officers padlocked the door of a Pine Bluff roadhouse nearly 50 years ago, a local church saw an answer to the need for a mission in the area. Now, the church that grew up in that converted "honky tonk" is building on a tradition of missions and evangelism.

12 in disaster's wake

Southern Baptist missionaries continue to meet physical and spiritual needs in the aftermath of last November's volcano eruption and mudslide in western Colombia.

Baptist Joint Committee opposes infiltration

WASHINGTON (BP)—Noting an emerging pattern of government insensitivity to the rights of churches, the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs has adopted a position statement on government infiltration of churches.

The infiltration statement was approved during the annual meeting of the Baptist Joint Committee, which is made up of 42 members representing eight U.S. Baptist denominations, including the Southern Baptist Convention.

In addition to approving the position statement, the committee also authorized a taskforce study on the teaching of religion and values in public schools, adopted a proposed budget for 1986-87 and heard reports on ongoing work by Baptist Joint Committee staff.

In its position statement, the committee pointed to an increased willingness of the government to infringe upon the free exercise of religion and to intrude into churches without regarding separation of church and state.

According to the statement: "The BJCPA condemns the use of paid informants, undercover agents and surreptitious tactics by any government agency investigating religious organizations as improper and illegal when less intrusive means of investigation or fact gathering are available. We lament the chilling effect upon worship, prayer, faith and fellowship freely exercised when worship services are invaded through the use of electronic eavesdropping equipment. We abhor government agents' fraudulent use of the name of Jesus Christ to gain access to the household of faith."

The task force that drafted the position statement was set up last year following a report on alleged church infiltration by U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service agents and paid informants, who tape-recorded worship services in Phoenix, Tucson and Scottsdale, Ariz.

The position statement also calls upon Baptists to be alert to government intrusion into churches and to report any such intrusions to the Baptist Joint Committee.

A proposed resolution introduced by

Albert Lee Smith, a Southern Baptist representative from Birmingham, Ala., sparked the authorization of a taskforce study on the teaching of religion and values in public schools.

Smith's resolution, which cited a research study conducted by Paul Vitz for the National Institute of Education, called for recognition of the lack of references to "the history, heritage, beliefs and values" of religion in American social studies and history textbooks. Smith also asked the committee to "affirm that religion has made a valuable contribution to the formation and development of our country and that it still does today."

Following discussion on the proposed resolution, Robert Tiller, director of governmental relations for the American Baptist Churches, USA, called for the formation of a task force to study the issues raised by Smith's resolution. Tiller's motion was approved by the committee with one dissenting vote.

In other business:

— The committee adopted a proposed 1986-87 budget of \$598,200, of which \$435,700 would come from the SBC Cooperative Program budget.

— James M. Dunn, Baptist Joint Committee executive director, presented a report on denominational Bible chairs at state universities. Dunn said the Baptist Joint Committee is continuing to work with Texas Attorney General Jim Mattox on developing guidelines that would maintain such chairs in that state without violating the First Amendment.

— The committee heard a progress report concerning representation on the Baptist Joint Committee. Currently, the committee's governing board includes 15 representatives from the SBC; 11 from American Baptist Churches, USA; two from Baptist General Conference; three from National Baptist Convention of America; two from National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.; three from North American Baptist Conference; three from Progressive National Baptist Convention, Inc.; and three from Seventh Day Baptist General Conference.

Cooperative Program report: February

Jan.-Feb. gifts

	Year	Over (under) budget to date	% increase over previous year
Summary for February, 1986			
Received		\$826,859.28	
Budget		\$1,020,833.33	
(Under)		(\$ 193,974.05)	
	1981	\$ 24,841.17	17.25
	1982	\$ 5,131.33	11.81
	1983	\$ 21,483.81	10.71
	1984	(\$156,824.15)	-2.34
	1985	(\$199,901.09)	3.88
	1986	(\$193,974.05)	16.95

Thanks for the support our people are giving to worldwide mission causes through the Cooperative Program. It would be great if every church could have a service in which they were told what that money accomplishes. — Don Moore



A report last year alleged that, in the United States, immigration and naturalization agents and paid informants are infiltrating church worship services to determine, if in fact, the organization is a legitimate religion. This raises several important questions. Does the government have a right to spy on a church worship service to determine if it is truly a church? The first reaction of most traditional Christians is a resounding "no!"

After careful study, the answer still remains emphatically negative. Freedom of worship is clearly guaranteed in the Bill of Rights. The First Amendment says, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or pertaining to the free exercise thereof. . . ." Thus, the First Amendment guarantees that the government does not interfere with or levy any taxes on our worship or our places of worship. Yet, reports alleged that the government has already tape-recorded worship services in Phoenix, Tucson and Scottsdale, Ariz. (See Baptist Press article on opposite page.)

The reason the government is seriously considering the idea of infiltrating certain cults and ritualistic groups is to determine if they are eligible for tax exemption as religious bodies. Consider the problem that is confronting our government. The traditional definition of "religion" and what constitutes a "church" has strayed far from the concept of the founders of the constitution. Our nation's religions long ago moved far beyond the traditional Roman Catholic, Jewish, Protestant and Baptist groupings.

This century has seen a proliferation of cults, many of which have no relationship to our concept of God. There are groups, for example, which hold that spirits inhabit the bodies of certain animals. Others worship the sun, the moon and the stars. There are even groups which require complete obedience to and worship of a certain individual. The Jim Jones cult and the Bhagwan are examples.

Witchcraft, which is growing rapidly in America, wishes to be treated as a religion. The basic organization of witches is the "coven." Most covens believe in reincarnation and the manipulative world view. They place strong emphasis on the power of spells. They believe they can cast spells for healing of themselves and others. On rare occasions, they attempt to place negative spells against others. Contemporary witches claim an association with witches, covens and a faith which they claim to trace back from many generations. According to the *Encyclopedia of American Religions*, most people who are involved in witchcraft today are converts who have come into the movement since 1954.

Freedom of religion, with tax-exempt contributions to maintain places of worship which are also free from property tax, involves a huge percentage of the economy. Some estimates are that all personal and property taxes could be reduced from 25 to 30 percent if churches and religious works did not enjoy tax exemption.

Clearly the cults and "so-called" religions which are structured simply as tax shelters are out of hand. Our government has a right to be concerned. The time has come when it is incumbent that religion be redefined. But spying on a worship service certainly is not the way.

How, then, can a definition of religion be obtained? Should a special board of outstanding jurists be set up to hear each church body's statement of belief and appeals for tax-exempt status? This would be strongly opposed by most church leaders. Most of us would see this as having to receive state approval to have a church. This, obviously, would give the government control over what is legally and not legally a religion.

A second approach would be to have representative church bodies commission a study to prepare a list of "approved" religious bodies. This, also, could never succeed. Denominational views are too conflicting and too much heated emotion exists between the various church groups. Even within our own Baptist denomination, there is considerable diversity as to what constitutes a church.

There is absolutely no need to even consider the idea of all churches agreeing to voluntary taxation. In addition to the financial obligation, it smacks of the idea of "coming under government control." There is a great deal of truth in the old adage, "The right to tax is the right to control."

Clearly, something will have to be done in the next generation. For 200 years, America has been a shining light to the world on freedom of worship. Great Christian denominations flourish in our country as do other religious bodies. We lead all major nations in the percentage of population regularly gathered for worship in some church. But this freedom also has made our nation an excellent environment for cults, communes, self-styled television evangelists and others who would attempt to take advantage of the government. These groups threaten to destroy freedom of religion in the days that are ahead.

The *Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine* always welcomes letters on timely topics. It may be that some of our readers have some good ideas on how to deal with this problem. Letters should be under 350 words and should be clearly marked "for publication."

Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine

Arkansas' third largest publication,
meeting the information needs of Arkansas Baptists

VOLUME 85

NUMBER 12

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Letters to the editor expressing opinions are invited. Letters should be typed double-space and must be signed. Letters must not contain more than 350 words and must not defame the character of persons. They must be marked "for publication."

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You'll be glad to know...

... You can help! The Apostle John had great, Spirit-born confidence that if the love of God dwells in a person it will manifest itself in concern for those who have need (1 John 3:17).

"Our nation needs help! A nation that is hemorrhaging internally from unforgiven sin and spiritual lostness needs help.

"A nation that patiently watches one out of every two homes shatter in a divorce court and politely sanctions cohabitation without marriage as the wave of the future needs help.

"A nation that gasps as its youth and teenage population is physically decimated by drug abuse and alcoholism but searches for rehabilitation in the archives of secular humanism needs help.

"A nation whose calloused, non-involve-ment attitude watches a 75-year-old man beaten to death in broad daylight needs help."

I could add to Dr. William G. Tanner's statements above. A nation that tolerates, encourages and glorifies godlessness and immorality as the major interests of entertainment and leisure needs help. A nation that takes advantage of human depravity to gain revenue from alcohol, smoking and gambling needs help. It is generally agreed government exists for the good of the people, but in the case of gambling 35 states have voted for government to exploit their people through lotteries. How mercenary, blind and greedy is our society!

"You say I can help?" Yes, and it isn't that complicated. First, be the God-honoring, Christ-oriented, church-building, responsible person you should be. Second, lead your church family to be concerned about the entire nation and the world, not just about themselves. Last year, 200 of our churches received no foreign mission offering, and 414 received no home mission offering.

Third, give to the Annie Armstrong offering. You will be supporting 3,723 home missionaries, which is one-third of the missionaries from all the Christian denominations in the United States.

The gospel changes individuals, and individuals change the society. God has charged his churches with this responsibility.

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



Moore

Letters to the editor

Criswell misquoted?

I wanted to voice concern over an article printed in the March 6 *Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine* (p. 14) in which W.A. Criswell is quoted as having made the following statement during the closing session of the "School of the Prophets" at First Church, Dallas, Feb. 10. Criswell is quoted as having said, "A laity-led, layman-led, deacon-led church will be a weak church anywhere on God's earth.... The pastor is the ruler of the church. There is no other thing than that in the Bible." I am wondering if Criswell has been misquoted. If so, some correction needs to be publicly made.

Knowing Criswell's staunch stand for biblical inerrancy, it is difficult to understand how he could make such a statement in light of what we read in the New Testament. When James and John requested Jesus grant them the privilege of sitting on his right hand and his left hand in his glory, Jesus answered them and the other disciples in this way: "You know that those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you; but

whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all" (Mark 10:42-44 RSV).

Peter addressed those who would be undershepherds, or pastor-elders, under the service of the chief Shepherd, to relate to the churches in this way: "Tend the flock of God that is in your charge; not by constraint but willingly, not for shameful gain but eagerly, not as domineering over those in your charge but being examples to the flock" (1 Pe. 5:2-3, RSV).

These strategic passages, along with Ephesians 4:11-12, affirm a servant role and equipping model for pastoral leadership in the early New Testament churches. I would like to think Criswell has been misquoted. If not, then his misunderstanding of the biblical statements for pastoral leadership is very grave. Please give us more information in this regard. Thank you. — John H. McClanahan, Pine Bluff

Return to true mission

Our Southern Baptist Convention will meet in Atlanta in June of this year to discuss ways



Woman's viewpoint

Lois Hacker

Building memories

"Remember..." This word prefaces so many fond recollections from our memory banks. Some of our feelings and experiences suddenly invade our conscious thought. What prompts these memories?

Getting out the family albums and boxes of pictures (I'll get them sorted someday) is a fun time for our family. As we sprawl out on the floor, looking at bits of history, we share sentimental smiles, snickers and sometimes full-blown, eye-watering laughter!

Leather-jacketed, seven-year-old David astride his bicycle, posing in "thumbs up" Fonzie style... two-year-old Vicky wielding a serving spoon as she sits on the dining table making a disaster of a big bowl of beans... one-year-old Sherry sitting in a white cloud of bath powder, smearing the floor happily... my better half performing his first wedding (was he ever really that young?): such snapshots prompt the comment, "Remember...?"

My children grew up saying, "Oh, Mom, don't take my picture!" From band concerts to piano recitals, from birthdays to Bible drills, from first school days to graduations, from formal poses to off-guard shots, my reply has been, "Someday you'll be glad I did!"

And I merrily proceed to add son-in-law Tate (who hates to have his picture taken) and grandchildren Trey and Tracy (who love it) to our memory collection.

Sometimes just a sound, a thought or a certain time pushes the recall button. Some of our son's best memories are of those times our family relaxed on the lawn, at dusk, just talking, playing or watching him play. Those good feelings are locked in his memory. I, too, have fond memories of my childhood. My parents gave their five children a base for good memories, a home of love and unity.

Both the nurturing of our families (Eph. 6:4b) and our joy in the Lord is complemented by the building of good memories. With my family, I want to "stop and smell the roses along the way," experiencing happy times and storing up good memories for tomorrow. I believe in building memories.

Lois Hacker has written for the Sunday School Board and been a special children's worker for the ABCS Church Training Dept. She is married to S.D. Hacker, pastor of Northvale Church, Harrison.

and means to better carry out the commission given to us by our Lord Jesus. In the past few years, we seem to have been sidetracked from this commission by various issues which have resulted in disagreements and, at times, serious divisions among Southern Baptists. This has been detrimental to our witness and influence.

In my opinion, the lesson in the *Adult Bible Teacher* (Life and Work Series) for Jan. 12, 1986, addressed this situation pointedly:

... we must renew our commitment to the missionary task of the church. "Business as usual" simply will not get the job done. We must begin to think of the Great Commission not as a helpful suggestion but as an urgent command.

We also must be careful not to allow ourselves to become divided over secondary issues and thus to be diverted from our primary responsibility to preach the gospel to all nations. The devil would like nothing better than to see this take place. My earnest prayer is that we will never give him this kind of advantage. From its very

beginning, the Southern Baptist Convention has existed primarily as a missionary body and as the channel through which the combined resources of all the churches could flow out to a lost and needy world. May we never lose this unique character.

Each of us, with God's help and in his power, needs to put aside pride and personal opinion and return to the true mission and purpose of our convention. We must avoid being stumbling blocks to those who have accepted Jesus as Savior and Lord, as well as to numbers who have not yet accepted him.

Many of us at home will be praying as the convention meets that God will have his way in every situation.

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him and he shall direct thy paths" (Prov. 3:5-6). — **Doris H. Hodge, Loudon, Tenn.**

Revival already begun

God has richly blessed Arkansas Baptists with unusually gifted servants of ministry in

our Evangelism Department. Indeed, their zeal and sterling dedication provides the church with an exciting legacy.

In (my) appointed calling as a bi-vocational pastor, I have had occasion to prayerfully summon our church to revival preparation. Several months ago, our membership concurred with its leadership (in) the urgent prerequisite of involvement in careful advance preparation. The revival preparation manual and materials generously provided by our Evangelism Department were obtained, and our membership of less than 50 initiated the exciting task of utilizing the materials.

It is still four weeks before our "scheduled" Good News America happening, yet already revival fires are burning. It is as if the preparation procedures have taken us on a pilgrimage of "fiery furnace renewal."

Our people are genuinely excited. Deacons who rarely have accepted their servant-ministry calling are visiting active and hurting members. Cottage prayer meetings, during which God's Holy Spirit has touched the hearts of those attending with convicting power, have caused us to confess our own inadequacies and become effective channels for God's supreme grace.

A revival telephone blitz reaching 2,000 residents in the community has been initiated by the membership. Soul-winning clinics are being held with many members participating. Hospitality for our revival messengers has been secured weeks before the actual meeting. Even the pastor has been caught up in the endowment of excitement the preparation has showered on the church.

Midway Church, where revival flames have heretofore barely flickered, is experiencing genuine rebirth, and the evangelist hasn't even packed his traveling bags!

Thank you, Dr. Shell and your beloved associates, for enabling miracles to happen, even before the calendar says it's time! — **John D. Davey, Judsonia**



One layman's opinion

Daniel R. Grant

Mark Baber's meddling with my contentment

Contentment has always seemed to me a Christian virtue, at least in the sense of the testimony of Paul: "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content" (Phil. 4:11). Mark Baber, Ouachita's director of student religious activities, recently preached in the place of my pastor, who was in bed with the flu, and the result was serious meddling with my contentment.

He preached on the value of the "trumpet of discontentment" and suggested Jeremiah 6:10-17 is a strong denunciation of the deadly paralysis of contentment. He even went so far as to say that contentment freezes us just where we are, and that most progress in the world has come from discontentment.

In spite of my discomfort with his words, it did occur to me that necessity (or discontentment) is rightly known as "the mother of invention" or progress. It may well be that my first dozen or so years as president of Ouachita Baptist University saw so much success, support and achievement (enrollment increases, new and improved buildings, a stronger faculty and staff, increased Cooperative Program support from the Arkansas Baptist State Convention and a closing of the salary gap between Ouachita

and comparable state colleges and universities in the region), that it became very easy to begin resting "at ease in Zion."

When energy costs shot up and the prospective student population turned downward at about the same time a few years ago, the result was a serious budget crunch for Ouachita and many other colleges. There was less money for faculty and staff and for their equipment, supplies and travel.

As I reflected on some of these troubles, I heard Mark Baber telling me it is important to develop a healthy discontent even with our Cooperative Program shortfall, with the enrollment decline and with our salary gap in comparison with the state institutions.

I hope and pray this kind of constructive discontent will lead to progress and a strategic turnaround in the financing of Christian higher education, including Ouachita. Surely we should have a divine discontent with anything short of reaching the challenging goal of "Bold Mission Thrust."

Thanks to Mark, I believe I am now much more contented with my state of discontent.

Daniel R. Grant is president of Ouachita Baptist University.

Use of hymnals studied

Harry Eskew, professor of music history and hymnology at New Orleans (La.) Baptist Theological Seminary, is conducting "a study of the use of hymnals among Baptists to 1915" and has requested assistance from Arkansas Baptist churches.

Eskew is interested in the dates when congregations adopted the use of hymnals and the titles of the hymnals adopted. He also is concerned about when churches "began to supply hymnals for the entire congregation in place of lining out the hymns."

Churches willing to assist Eskew may send that information to him at New Orleans Seminary, Box 506, 3939 Gentilly Blvd., New Orleans, LA 70126.

by Millie Gill / ABN staff writer

people

L.B. Jordan is serving as Red River Association director of missions, coming there from First Church in Wake Village, Texas, where he served as pastor. A native of Malvern, Jordan is a graduate of Ouachita Baptist University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He was licensed to the ministry by Hope First Church and ordained by Arkadelphia First Church. He has served churches in Arkansas and Texas. He has served on Arkansas Baptist State Convention Executive Board; on the program committee of the Baptist General Convention of Texas; on the board of trustees of East Texas Baptist University; on the executive board of Lakeview Baptist Assembly in Lone Star, Texas, and as moderator of Bowie Association in east Texas. Jordan is married to the former Nancy Ruth Beard of Warren. They have three married children, Lynn Jordan, Jennifer Babcock and Nancy Alice McKay.

J. Randall O'Brien has been notified of his appointment as a Yale Research Scholar for the summer of 1986 by Yale University in New Haven, Conn. He was also awarded a summer sabbatical by Ouachita Baptist University, where he is assistant professor of religion. As a research scholar, O'Brien will be working with Thomas Brown, professor of religion and psychology at Yale. They will investigate parental influence on identity, both self and God, and the relationship of childhood to one's approach to ministry, pulpit performance in particular.

Larry E. Kindrick has accepted a call to serve as pastor of Blytheville First Church, coming there from 10 years of service as pastor of Greggton First Church in Longview, Texas. A native Texan, he holds a bachelor of arts degree from the University of Corpus Christi and master of divinity and doctor of ministry degrees from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. He has served as pastor of other Texas churches in Cameron, Poyner and Marshall. Kindrick and his wife, Penny, are parents of two daughters, Pam, age 12, and Patricia, age nine.

Mark Fawcett has accepted a call to join the staff of Green Forest First Church as minister of music and youth. He has served on the staff of Ward First Church.

Charles Locke is serving as pastor of Weiner First Church.



Jordan



O'Brien

Harold Jones is serving Camden Hillside Church as interim minister of music. He is a professor in the music department of Ouachita Baptist University.

Dewey "Tildon" Williams died March 10 at age 87 in Geriatrics Nursing Home in Jonesboro. His funeral services were held March 12 at Jonesboro First Church where his son, Emil Williams, serves as pastor. Other survivors include his wife, Margaret Williams, a son, James R. Williams, and a sister, Mrs. Kelly Cooper, all of Searcy; six grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Bob Crabb has resigned as pastor of Martindale Church in Little Rock following more than five years of service to serve as pastor of First Church in Campbell, Mo. Crabb, whose resignation is effective April 6, has served as moderator of Pulaski Association. He is a graduate of Southern Baptist College. He and his wife, Martha, have three children, Bobby, Joyce and Sheila.

Marty Sharp is serving as pastor of Shorewood Hills Church and was ordained to the preaching ministry by the church on March 16. He was a member of Temple Church near Benton.

Cephas Charles Barton of Crossett died March 8 at age 74. He was a lifelong resident of Ashley County and was a member of Gaines Church at Wilmot. Funeral services were held March 10 at Mount Olive Church in North Crossett. Survivors include his wife, Opal M. Barton; a son, Cephas Charles Barton Jr. of Bastrop, La; two daughters, Charlene Martin and Patsy Yancy, both of Crossett; two brothers; four sisters; nine grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

Ford F. Bauntt of Beeville, Texas, formerly of El Dorado, died Feb. 25. He was a Baptist minister, having served churches in Oklahoma, Texas and Arkansas. Survivors include two daughters, Mrs. John W. Hanshall of Beeville and Mrs. Robert

D. Smith of Copenhagen, Denmark; eight grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

Harold Brewer is serving as pastor of Kern Heights Church in DeQueen. He also has served other Arkansas churches in Hatfield, Warren, Ashdown and Beebe.

briefly

Prairie Grove First Church ordained Chuck Arnold to the deacon ministry March 2. Pastor Brad Sheffield was moderator.

Trumann First Church Acteens have been working on Studaict requirements for the past two years with projects including a weekly Mother's Day Out program, gathering supplies for a child abuse center and a migrant mission center and distribution of both Scripture trees and New Testaments. In April, they will begin sponsoring a quarterly Parent's Night Out and have plans to begin a clown ministry as an outreach tool.

Camden Hillside Church recently ordained John Womack, Donald Starr and Larry Greenfield to the deacon ministry.

Clarks Chapel at Huntington recently ordained Ray Stephens to the deacon ministry. Ordination council members were Johnnie Darr, director of missions for Buckner Association, Levi Stephens, Charles Whedbee and Gerald Ware. Donnie Stephens, pastor of Cedar Creek Church and son of the candidate, delivered the ordination message. Warren Leonard is pastor.

Pleasant Grove 3 Church at Waldron ordained Ray Jett to the deacon ministry March 16. V. W. Simpson is pastor.

Concord Association churches will assist with "Good News America—God Loves You" revivals in Muncie and Richmond, Ind., April 18-25.

Prairie Grove First Church ordained Chuck Arnold to the deacon ministry March 2. Pastor Brad Sheffield preached the ordination message.

Garland County Association sponsored a "Good News America—God Loves You" revival rally March 4 at Leonard Street Church in Hot Springs. Gene Ellis, director of missions, coordinated the rally, which featured Neal Prock of Haven Heights Church in Fort Smith as speaker.

Pine Bluff roadhouse 'converted' for missions and evangelism

by Gene Herrington

PINE BLUFF—A rough and rowdy roadhouse transformed into a church?

That may sound like a fictional story line, but, to the older members of Pine Bluff's Matthews Memorial Church, it is an integral part of the congregation's history.

It was almost 50 years ago that Jefferson County authorities, because of repeated outbreaks of violence, permanently padlocked the Lone Star Night Club on Highway 79 (now Blake Street) on the western edge of the city.

The nondescript frame building that had quartered the "night club" ("honky tonk" was the word used by residents of the area) provided the answer to a need for a newly-organized mission Sunday School just a few blocks away.

The real beginning of the church came, however, not from that padlocked night club but from the vision of several members of Pine Bluff First Church.

The church's name, Matthews Memorial, is a tribute to William L. Matthews, longtime Pine Bluff businessman who was serving a chairman of deacons at First Church. His mission-mindedness motivated his leadership in a project envisioned by a Mrs. Taylor,

office secretary at First Church. She and two other women, Mrs. G.D. Smith and Mrs. Harry Atkins, led in a survey of the area which turned up 600 people who did not attend any church regularly.

The survey was conducted in February 1937, just a few months after the need became apparent, and on April 4, 1937, a mission Sunday School was started in a rented three-room house at 13th and Highway 79. On that day, 61 people crowded into the small house, and Matthews knew a larger building was a necessity. Twenty-three of that 61 had never been in Sunday School or church before.

Pastors in Harmony Association shared the preaching duties at the mission, which was constituted as a church March 26, 1939, with 61 charter members.

The first revival, led by Associational Missionary Charles Finch, recorded 23 professions of faith, and the early years were marked by dramatic results in the field of evangelism. More than 50 baptisms were recorded for several years, and Matthews continues to rank in Harmony Association's top churches in baptisms.

The congregation has demonstrated a

heart for missions, sponsoring two that have become churches: Watson Chapel and Claud Road.

During its first half century, the church has had 12 full-time pastors: L.F. Monk, J.T. Summers, Dr. L.G. Whitehorn, R.J. Seberry, Homer Bradley, Jon Berrier, T.R. Coulter, Vernon Dutton, Michael Norfleet, E.V. Appling, Milton L. Wilson and Dr. Edgar W. Bryan.

Earlier this year, the congregation achieved debt-free status with the burning of the mortgage note on the church parsonage.

The 1985 Harmony Association book of reports lists Matthews Memorial in the top 10 in many categories: resident membership, budget gifts, Cooperative Program and associational missions gifts, numerical and percentage enrollment gains in Sunday School, numerical, and percentage attendance gains, baptisms and membership gain.

Dr. Bryan, who has served as pastor since 1982, envisions a continuing bright future for the church: "We have the facilities, location, prospects and leadership to reach and teach for the Lord."

Gene Herrington is a retired journalist and member of Olivet Church, Little Rock.

Worldwide decline reported in urban Christian strength

by Art Toalston

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)—The population explosion has "completely outstripped" evangelism in the world's urban areas, says missions researcher David Barrett.

Barrett is the author of *World-Class Cities and World Evangelization*, a pioneering study of Christianity in cities with more than 1 million people. The study recently was released by New Hope, a publishing arm of Woman's Missionary Union, SBC.

Christianity in urban areas has "suffered a marked and progressive decline throughout this century," he says. Churches are "fast losing the battle for the cities."

For example, 17 of the world's 25 largest cities will be non-Christian by the year 2000, just 14 years from now, Barrett says. Nearly all 17 are strongholds of Islam, Hinduism or other non-Christian beliefs, and many are "hostile to Christian missions."

In 1950, only seven of the 25 largest cities were predominantly non-Christian.

"There must be 500 big cities where there are either no Christians or no Christian activities, no churches," Barrett estimates.

"Cities are the great phenomenon of the Third World and the 20th century," he says. "The Third World is largely non-Christian; therefore, its cities are going to be largely non-Christian."

The world's urban areas are growing by more than 80,000 non-Christians a day, counting births minus deaths and the influx of people from rural areas, Barrett says.

Christians accounted for 69 percent of the world's urban population in 1900; today, they total only 46 percent, he reports. By 2050, he estimates they will represent just 38 percent.

Three Islamic cities will join the top 25 by the year 2000—Karachi, Pakistan; Baghdad, Iraq; and Dhaka, Bangladesh—each growing to more than 11 million people, according to United Nations statistics used by Barrett.

Four other Islamic cities already among the top 25 will continue to mushroom: Cairo-Giza-Imbaba, Egypt, from 8.5 million in 1985 to 13.2 million in 2000; Jakarta, Indonesia, from 7.9 million to 12.8 million; Tehran, Iran, 7.2 million to 12.7 million; and Istanbul, Turkey, from 6.6 million to 11.9 million.

Two Chinese and three Indian cities likewise will remain on the list: Shanghai and Beijing, each with more than 10 million people and millions more in adjacent urban areas, and Bombay, Calcutta and Delhi, with populations ranging from Bombay's 16.3 million people to Delhi's 13.3 million.

Mexico City, with an estimated 26.3 million people, will become the world's largest city in 2000, replacing Tokyo-Yokohama and its estimated 17.1 million people by that year.

In Africa at large, the population explosion is bolstering Christianity, Barrett says. Churches are growing by 6 million people a year, two-thirds of them from Christian families.

Among measures Barrett advocates for

reaching urban populations are "megaministries" geared to reach 100,000 to 1 million people a day through radio, TV, films and Bible distribution; giving evangelistic priority to areas where there are no Christians; and interdenominational cooperation.

As the population explosion continues, Barrett notes, "Everybody is going to run into trouble. It's not just going to be a missionary problem or a church problem." Terrorist attacks may spiral; the international business community may falter; desperately poor people may form a sea of humanity and swarm into neighboring countries.

Even if Southern Baptists reach their Bold Mission Thrust goal of 5,000 missionaries, Barrett asks, "What is their impact on a world of 5 billion people? The answer is one missionary per million people. That's not all that powerful an influence."

And many communist and Islamic countries are closed to U.S. missionaries. Efforts to assist Christians abroad who can gain entry must be expanded, he says.

Counting all Christian groups in the world, there are 250,000 foreign missionaries. Strategists say the number must quadruple. But, Barrett says, each Christian faces a serious question: "Am I prepared to quadruple my own support, financial and spiritual? Unless I do, I'm not really making any impact at all on the world." Christians worldwide presently give an average of only 10 cents a week to foreign missions.

Arkansans given send-off to foreign fields

Three Arkansas missionary couples were commissioned to overseas ministry in a March 7 service on the campus of Ouachita Baptist University.

John and Lorene Heskett will work as missionary associates in the Dominican Republic, where he will be an English-language pastor and she will be a church and home worker. He is a native of Helena and a graduate of Ouachita Baptist University.

Charles and Audrey Morris will work as missionary associates in Kenya, where he will be a business manager and she will be a

church and home worker. A native of Parkin, he is the son of the late Elmer and Annie Morris of that city. Born in Earle, Mrs. Morris, the former Audrey Dulin, is the daughter of the late Obie and Estelle Dulin.

Dennis and Bonita Murray will work in Ashkelon, Israel, where he will be a general evangelist and she will be a church and home worker. Born in Arkadelphia, Murray is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Fred A. Murray of El Dorado and is a graduate of Ouachita Baptist University. Born in Magnolia, Mrs. Murray is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. B. Thomas Pettus of El Dorado.



John Heskett

Lorene Heskett

Redemption of world requires suffering,

by Mark Kelly

Peter should be "soberingly meaningful to anyone called to serve Jesus Christ."

Parks told the families to understand first of all "the Lord is in control." He reminded them the testing of God's servants is done only with God's permission.

But he warned them they would be "assailed with the powers of Satan in a way unlike any here in the United States." Christians must be equipped spiritually because theirs is a spiritual warfare, Parks said, adding a reminder that "Satan will always attack those who are doing something significant for the Lord."

Noting the passage's reference to Satan's "sifting," which he defined as "a process of separating the usable from the unusable," Parks gravely warned the appointees Satan would "seek to throw you on the heap with the chaff of the world."

Yet, Jesus' words hold a note of hope, Parks added, noting Jesus' promise, "... but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail..." (v.32). "If you will let Jesus intercede for you, your sifting will only make you purer, stronger and better fit for his service," Parks declared.

Jesus' servants also can take comfort in the promise of 1 Corinthians 10:13 that "... God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it," Parks said.

Turning to the congregation, Parks then challenged rally participants to put their own names in the place of Peter's in the Luke passage. He wondered aloud why Southern Baptists are not subjected to the kind of satanic attacks missionaries experience elsewhere.

"I have a growing concern more and more of us do not even realize we are supposed to be engaged in a spiritual warfare," Parks said. "Perhaps we are not subject to Satan's attacks because we aren't doing anything."

Parks told the near-capacity crowd it is "harder to recognize the battle, identify the enemy and throw ourselves into the fight"

Though the world could not have been redeemed unless someone was willing to suffer and die, far too many people believe they can serve God without having to sacrifice anything, the president of Southern Baptists' Foreign Mission Board told Arkansans gathered for the commissioning of three families to overseas mission service.

The Foreign Mission Board-sponsored rally and commissioning service featured a 12-minute film spotlighting Ouachita Baptist University graduates serving as SBC foreign missionaries, and testimonies from the three Arkansas couples preparing for service. Held March 7 on the Ouachita campus in Arkadelphia, the commissioning service climaxed a full week of intensive focus on global missions at the school.

Produced by the Foreign Mission Board in honor of Ouachita's centennial year, the film, "A Circle of Love," highlighted the contribution Ouachita Baptist University graduates have made in Southern Baptist foreign mission efforts. Rally participants gasped audibly and murmurs of recognition floated across the auditorium as they heard former classmates and acquaintances testify to service as foreign missionaries.

Ouachita Baptist University has consistently ranked in the top schools in graduates appointed to SBC missions overseas. Two hundred OBU graduates have served in the Southern Baptist foreign mission program, which continues to appoint record numbers of career missionaries, 429 in 1985.

Three Arkansas couples who are on their way to mission fields—John and Lorene Heskett, missionary associates to the Dominican Republic; Charles and Audrey Morris, missionary associates to Kenya; and Dennis and Bonita Murray, missionaries to Israel—shared their own testimonies about their calls to missions and the influence of Ouachita Baptist University.

Foreign Mission Board President R. Keith Parks delivered a charge to the appointees. Reading from Luke 22:31-32, he told the new missionaries these words of Jesus to Simon

A black and white photograph showing three people. On the left is a young boy, Michael Murray, age 13. In the center is a man, Dennis Murray. On the right is a woman, Bonita Murray. They are all dressed in formal attire.

Dennis and Bonita Murray and their son Michael, age 13, were among the newly-appointed SBC foreign missionaries with Arkansas ties who were commissioned Friday, March 7, at a Foreign Mission Board-sponsored service on the campus of Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia.

"Far too many of us believe we can serve God without having to sacrifice anything!"

ABN photos by Millie Gill



Charles Morris



Audrey Morris



Dennis Murray



Bonita Murray

sacrifice, Parks says

in countries such as the United States "where traditional Christianity is so blurred with the culture that most people don't know the difference." U.S. Christians have to "reach for a distinction (between Christian faith and national culture) that is forced on missionaries overseas," he said.

Parks recalled a missions candidate who was asked to consider a certain country as a possible place of service. Informed of the potential dangers of serving there, the candidate responded, "I don't believe God expects me to take my wife and four children to some place dangerous to serve."

"What if God the Father had said to God the Son, 'I want you to redeem the world, but don't take any risks. I don't want you to get hurt,'" Parks asked. "Our redemption is free, but it was not cheap. The world could not have been redeemed unless someone was willing to suffer and die for it. Far too many of us believe we can serve God without having to sacrifice anything," he declared.

In contrast to the candidate, Parks recalled a missionary doctor who was serving in a country torn by civil war. Faced with a daily threat to his life, the doctor continued to work. Parks recounted his attitude toward the danger: "More people will die if I don't go (to the hospital) than may die if I don't. There is still something worth dying for."

"God thought your redemption was worth dying for," Parks declared. "Do you and I believe God expects us to die to self so the people of the world may know Jesus Christ?"

"God has laid in our outstretched arms a broken, bleeding, emaciated world that has no hope," Parks continued. "Many would say, 'You can't do anything about it anyway. Go on with the program.'"

"But others have said, 'I won't let the world die without Jesus Christ. I will pour out my life to save it.'" Parks concluded. "What does God expect out of you?"

Mark Kelly is a staff writer for the Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine.



Mark Baber, director of student religious activities at Ouachita, was driving the 10 miles home after a long day of work on the Global Focus Week plans. As he considered the possibility all that work might make only a minimal impact on the students, he voiced a prayer. Baber told the Lord, "I'm willing to be the one to get a fresh word from you on missions commitment." He already had decided he could not, with integrity, plan and promote activities to challenge students to missions involvement if he was not open himself. Not that Baber had suddenly had a change of heart. He was practicing what he preached about sacrifice and commitment to career missions while he was a pastor by being willing then. The result of all this was that Baber and his wife, Janie, made their final commitment public in the Friday night service climaxing Global Focus Week at OBU. They spoke about the path they had traveled to their decision. That public statement was "the culmination of a 10-year pilgrimage of faith" for the Babers, both of whom have the education necessary for foreign mission service. They have communicated with the Foreign Mission Board to begin the process of appointment and have been told they could be in orientation for the field as early as a year from now, according to Baber. Dozens of persons came forward Friday night to acknowledge commitments to mission service, affirming Baber's planning was worthwhile. Even if they had not, Mark Baber still would have had his prayer for a fresh word from the Lord answered. — Betty J. Kennedy

Professor challenges Baptists to rediscover 'Baptist-ness'

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)—In regard to their current church-state position, Southern Baptists are like Humphrey, the hump-backed whale who left his natural environment, swam up the Sacramento River, and captured the nation's attention for nearly a month before being lured back out to sea last fall, said Bill Tillman, assistant professor of Christian ethics at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas.

Tillman made the analogy during a presentation on church and state at the closing session of the 1986 Texas Christian Life Commission workshop in Fort Worth Feb. 26.

"For whatever reason, the poor thing acted as if he forgot he was a whale," said Tillman. "He entered into a compromise with his environment which ultimately would have led to his demise.

"Could many among us have forgotten, or maybe never have known, what it means to be a Baptist?" he asked. "I think so."

Looking at the Anglican, Lutheran and Calvinist models on church-state relationships in contrast to the Anabaptist-Baptist models throughout church history, Tillman warned many Baptists have lost sight of their heritage.

"Many who have come to be a part of us are more Reformed in their theology than Baptist," he said.

In Reformed theology, emphasis is placed on the sovereignty of God, virtually to the exclusion of the priesthood of the believer, he explained. On the other hand, while Anabaptists and Baptists believe in the sovereignty of God that belief is brought into creative tension with a strong conviction about the priesthood of the believer, he added.

"We may be further up the creek than we already realize in expressing Reformed theology and methodology not truly representative of our heritage," he said. "Indeed, we may have already burst on through the Reformation barrier in a kind of retrogression of history and become more Catholic

than we know."

Tillman reminded his listeners Humphrey was rescued from the river and led back to sea by appeals to his "whaleness," specifically echolocation recordings of other humpbacks that led him back to his salt-water home. Tillman said Baptists, similarly, can be rescued from their current church-state confusion by being helped to "be Baptists" through education.

"Check your own echolocations. Trace the development of Baptists. Work through their

theological positions. If that is who you are, then be about the business of proclaiming that," he urged.

"The end of the tale of the whale by the name of Humphrey? Most of us know it," he said. "He swam out of his self-imposed prison at peace again with his environment and man.

"The end of our tale? Church and state matters will long be with us," Tillman said. "It remains to be seen if we are able to be as successful as Humphrey."

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BTA-217

Baptist ministry continues to victims of Armero disaster

IBAGUE, Colombia (BP)—From their new Center of Hope in Ibague, Baptists in Colombia are seeking to meet continuing spiritual and physical needs of refugees from the volcanic eruption that destroyed the western Colombian city of Armero in November.

The ministries and concern they already have shown have resulted in contacts and opportunities for witness at least one Southern Baptist missionary calls unprecedented.

Baptists opened the center as a base from which to offer continuing ministry to survivors of the disaster, which claimed an estimated 24,000 lives. Through the center, Baptists are providing various kinds of occupational therapy and practical training to help restore the refugees to self-sufficiency. As part of evangelistic outreach, Bible study is held at the center each Thursday night.

In Lerida, a town only a few miles south of where Armero stood, two homes have been opened for Baptist worship services as a result of Baptist assistance to a family, reports missionary associate Bob Caperton. He and his wife, Joan, temporarily have been reassigned to Ibague from Barranquilla to assist with the center.

"About 20 attended the first service and 30 were in another in a neighbor's home," says Caperton. Most of the rebuilding for Armero survivors apparently will be in Lerida.

Baptist work in Guayabal, a town a few miles north of the old Armero site, "is very promising," adds Caperton. More than 200 people attended an open-air worship service conducted by Baptists in mid-February at the place where a number of refugees temporarily have been housed, he reports.

Seven patients released from the Ibague hospital for the afternoon were among refugees and others attending an informal opening and reception at the Center of Hope in early February.

The first to arrive was Jose Orozco, 20

(BP) photo by Joanna Pinnoo



Ministry associate Joan Caperton of Alvin, Texas, demonstrates an artificial limb to Jose Arevalo during the opening of Baptists' Center of Hope in Ibague, Colombia. Arevalo lost his right leg in the volcanic mudslide that destroyed Armero, Colombia, in November.

who had been a math teacher at Armero and who lost his right leg above the knee in the disaster. When Southern Baptist missionaries James and Mary Nell Giles first visited Orozco at the Ibague hospital, they found him despondent and unresponsive, despite gifts of devotional books and other materials they brought. Finally she brought him an electronic calculator left behind months earlier

by a team of Baptist volunteers from the United States. When Orozco received it, he had "a smile from ear to ear, just like a light had been turned on," she says.

The missionaries gave him a Bible and continued to offer him a Christian witness. "We just saw a complete transformation in him," she says. "He is just a new person now and really knows the Lord."

The question has been raised of whether Baptists should be doing spiritual work or social work, she says. "To me, when a Christian does social work, it is spiritual work."

Two days before the center's opening reception, more than 20 people responded to an invitation to accept Christ as Savior after a religious film was shown at the center. The 75 people attending included not only refugees but also residents from the neighborhood where the center has been established in a rented house.

Missionary ministry to patients at Federico Lleras Hospital in Ibague opened the way to distribute Bibles to patients and staff, Mary Nell Giles reports, adding Baptists gave out hundreds of Bibles at the hospital and at refugee centers in the period following the disaster.

In her 27 years as a missionary in Colombia, she says, "I don't think I've ever seen the Lord open doors for us like he has since this time of Armero."

Baptists have been asked by local leaders to set up a rehabilitation center for amputees at the Ibague hospital. Caperton and Rafael Blanco, Colombian Baptist home missionary assigned to the Center of Hope, represented Baptists at a mid-February meeting of Red Cross, government and civic leaders to seek ways to get help more directly to survivors.

Church Building Conference

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February CP receipts climb almost 19 percent in one year

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—Southern Baptist Cooperative Program receipts for February climbed almost 19 percent beyond totals for the same period last year.

February contributions to the national Cooperative Program—the Southern Baptist Convention's unified budget—totaled \$10,883,413.90, announced Harold C. Bennett, president and treasurer of the SBC Executive Committee.

The February total represents an increase of \$1,667,623.32, or 18.10 percent, over contributions in February 1985, which were \$9,215,790.58, Bennett said. Cooperative

Program contributions for the first five months of the 1985-86 fiscal year are \$52,747,576.78, up 9.94 percent from the \$47,977,326.14 total for the same period in 1984-85.

The Cooperative Program gains stand opposed to an annual 3.9 percent Consumer Price Index inflation rate, said Tim Hedquist, Executive Committee vice president for business and finance.

"The Cooperative Program is the lifeline to world missions for Southern Baptists. We believe in and strongly support missions and evangelism," he said.

Bennett expressed his belief the convention's Planned Growth in Giving emphasis has helped to build the increases.

However, Bennett urged Southern Baptists not to grow complacent. "Reports of increased contributions can lead to the impression that we're doing well, causing us to slack off," he said.

National monthly Cooperative Program receipts must average \$11,036,060.46 if Southern Baptists are to reach the \$130 million goal for the 1985-86 fiscal year, which ends Sept. 30.

Gallup: 74 percent of Southern Baptists say religion 'very important'

WASHINGTON (BP)—Pollster George Gallup has reported that more Southern Baptists—74 percent—say religion is "very important" in their lives than do members of any other major denominational body in the United States.

Mormons follow closely, with 71 percent agreeing religion is "very important."

In a comprehensive survey conducted last year and released recently, the famed pollster reported further that 55 percent of Lutherans describe their religion as "very important," followed by Catholics (54 percent), Methodists (53 percent), Presbyterians (46 percent) and Episcopalians (42 percent).

Overall, Gallup reported for his Princeton Religion Research Center, 55 percent of the American people say religion is "very important," with 31 percent describing it as "fairly important" and 13 percent as "not very important." Those figures have been statistically identical for the past six years. As recently as 1965, however, 70 percent gave their answer as "very important," and in 1952 fully three-quarters of the American people so described religion in their lives.

Besides the 74 percent of Southern Baptists surveyed who responded with "very important," another 21 percent said religion is "fairly important" to them, with only 4 per-

cent describing it as "not very important."

Answers to other questions showed little change in religious practices in recent years. Slightly more than four adults in every 10 (42 percent) attended church or synagogue in a typical week in 1985. Commenting on the figure, Gallup wrote: "Churchgoing has remained remarkably constant since 1969 after having declined from the high point of 49 percent recorded in 1955 and 1958."

Seventy-one percent of the adult population now claims membership in a church or synagogue. Such membership peaked in 1947, when 76 percent said they belonged to a church or synagogue.

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Study Bible release set for June 1988

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—The content of a new study Bible designed to interpret "great biblical doctrines" for laypeople, closed the planning stage and entered the writing stage as 25 writers headed for home to put pen to paper.

The Disciple's Study Bible will be published in June 1988 by Holman Bible Publishers in cooperation with the church training department, both of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

The 25 writers, who included Southern Baptist seminary professors, pastors and denominational workers, attended a conference at the Sunday School Board March 2-4 for orientation and specific assignments related to the study Bible.

Writers were invited to attend the three-day seminar "so everyone involved in the publishing process would be aware of overall goals and individual responsibilities," said Johnnie Godwin, director of Holman.

Some of the Bible's concepts include footnotes of biblical doctrines, an introduction for each Old and New Testament book, cross references for scriptures and a doctrinal index and summary.

"These writers are going to give comprehensive coverage to the doctrines of the Bible," Godwin said. "We want what they

are writing to interrelate, but we don't want any unnecessary overlapping."

"The idea of this study Bible is to build around the great doctrines of the Bible. This is a great concept. There's not anything like it in existence," said Roy Edgemon, director of the church training department.

The Disciple's Study Bible, which will be published in the King James version and the New International Version, is designed particularly to help laypersons study the great doctrines. It will provide pastors and other religious educators a new resource for leading doctrinal studies for lay audiences, Edgemon said, noting the Bible's target audience is "anyone who wants to study the Word."

Sunday School Board President Lloyd Elder told the writers attending the conference, "You are dealing with cognitive understanding and historical perception in your interpretation of Holy Scripture. It is possible you are doing an eternal work."

One of the important aspects of the Bible is it is to be "portable," Edgemon said. "We wanted a size that would be convenient for the pastor to take to the pulpit and which would be comfortable for anyone to carry to and from church. It's not designed to be a coffee table piece."

Preschool child care plans set for SBC annual meeting

ATLANTA (BP)—Atlanta Baptists will offer a model program of preschool child care when the Southern Baptist Convention meets in the Georgia World Congress Center June 10-12.

Total care will be offered for up to 450 children who have not yet entered the first grade. Child care will be provided for all SBC sessions on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, but not for pre-convention meetings on Sunday and Monday. Only children of messengers from churches outside the metropolitan Atlanta area will be accepted.

The center will be open 30 minutes before the music starts at each session and close 30 minutes after each session adjourns. A fee of \$5 per child per session will be charged, with maximum charge of \$25 for the full three days.

Parents wanting child care for their children must make reservations by May 1, giving names and ages of children needing care. Write to SBC Preschool Committee, 754 Peachtree Street NE, Atlanta, GA 30365, or call (404) 881-1221.

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by Gene Stacks, First Church, Star City

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Central truth: The hope Christians have in Christ leads them to accept Christ's provision for their sins, keep his commandments and follow his example of righteous living.

The Christian hope has as one of its major focal points the return of Jesus Christ. We know on the authority of his word that Jesus is coming again. And it is precisely because of this assurance that we Christians ought to be about the business of winning the lost world to faith in this soon-coming Savior.

Proper motivation is important in our task of sharing the good news with the unsaved. It is always good for us to reflect upon our own salvation. We need to remember Jesus had to die in our place under the burden of our sin in order for us to be saved. We need to remember we could never have deserved what he did for us in the last. We need to remember, somehow, someone did what was required to keep that story alive so we could hear it.

Further, we need to remember there are literally hundreds of thousands of people who still have not heard that story. And those who have not heard and have not turned to Jesus are still lost. It is the task of the redeemed to make sure every person has the opportunity to hear and respond to the good news of God's great salvation.

One of the major hindrances we have in winning the lost to faith in Christ is many who profess to be Christians do not demonstrate in their lives that Christ has made a significant difference for them. Many who profess to be believers still live much like they did before they "received Christ." The Word of God says clearly: "And by this we know that we have come to know him if we keep his commandments" (1 Jn. 2:3).

Christians are different. Christ is the difference. He gives us a new life-style! We are the children of the king. Our values, goals and priorities are different. We have discovered a new power for living that enables us to emerge victorious over every circumstance. The lost world must see that in us and hear about it from us.

Sin is still the only problem the human race has. Everything else is symptomatic. The justice of God requires that sin not be overlooked.

If we ever intend to tell the lost world about forgiveness of sin, now is the time.

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Life and Work

Hope from the cross

by C. Michael Anders, First Church, Sherwood

Basic passage: Matthew 26:47 to 27:66

Focal passage: Matthew 27:11,28-29,37-43

Central truth: By giving himself on the cross, Christ provided our salvation.

Jesus was a different kind of Messiah from that expected by the Jewish people. Many were hoping for a military Messiah who would overthrow the shackles of oppression placed on Israel by their Roman conquerors. The air was filled with dreams of such a military leader who would restore Israel to her former glory as in days of David. All they needed was God's Messiah who would come as king of Israel.

Jesus came to be a spiritual king, not a military leader. The prophecy of Isaiah about a suffering servant was uniquely fulfilled in Jesus. Throughout his ministry, Jesus had tried to get the people to understand what kind of Messiah he would be. He had always refused to use his miraculous powers to prove his own authority, and in death he would not use them to save his own life. On Palm Sunday, Jesus made his royal entry into Jerusalem, but this king came riding the donkey of peace, not the stallion of military might. He was a king, but a different kind of king.

During the trial and crucifixion of Jesus, God revealed Jesus was a king, but not of this world. Jesus had rejected the way of political power and violence in favor of God's way of self sacrifice. The king laid down his life so that we might become children of the king.

Pilate questioned Jesus asking, "Are you the king of the Jews?" Jesus replied, "You have said so." Later the soldiers would place a scarlet robe on him and anoint his head with a crown of thorns. The soldiers knelt before him mocking, "Hail the king of the Jews." Above him on the cross, they posted a sign in three languages, "This is Jesus, the king of the Jews."

The king became the suffering servant who poured out his life for others. He endured both physical and emotional torment with royal dignity.

The centurion was one of the first to recognize him by the way he died. After seeing the whole tragedy unfold, he concluded "Truly this was the Son of God." Today everyone who makes that same confession and accepts him as Lord and Savior will join the king in his kingdom.

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Bible Book

Right living

by Steve Kelley, Brumley Church, Conway

Basic passage: Titus 2:1 to 3:15

Focal passage: Titus 2:1-6,11-14; 3:1-7

Central truth: Because God has freely provided salvation, we must not fail to claim his gift or fail to live purified lives.

In our lesson this week, Paul teaches Christians should live righteously because Christ has redeemed them from sin. The love and grace of God we received through faith in Christ should inspire us to live holy lives. Paul's words challenge us to live distinctively as people who have experienced the transforming power of God.

The first focal passage instructs believers to practice moderation and self control in daily living. The words "sober" and "temperate" describe necessary elements of mature Christian character (2:1). A sober person practices moderation and is not prone to excessive behavior. A temperate person is characterized by self-control and discipline.

Older Christians have a responsibility to live exemplary lives which serve as models for younger believers (2:3-6). Elder believers should display a quality of life rich in Christian virtue that inspires younger Christians to live their lives in a godly manner. Younger believers should respect their elders by listening to their instruction and following their example. Paul knew the importance of Christian leadership from senior members of the congregation who were mature in wisdom as well as age.

In the second focal passage, Paul encourages Christians to live righteously because they have experienced redemption through Christ's sacrificial death on the cross (2:11-14). Our cleansing from the guilt and penalty of sin challenges us to practice a godly lifestyle that looks forward to the return of Christ. Forgiveness of sin and righteous living cause us to await with joyous anticipation the return of our Savior and Lord!

The last focal passage contrasts our former manner of life as servants of sin to our new lifestyle as servants of God in Christ (3:1-7). Paul instructs us to display a meek spirit to those who are lost because we, too, were once prisoners of darkness. The transformation from servant of sin to servant of God is not brought about by human effort, but by the grace of God through Jesus Christ (v. 5). God's grace through faith in Christ makes salvation a reality in our lives. Thus we are joint heirs with Christ to eternal life!

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Golden Gate names Graves as interim president

MILL VALLEY, Calif. (BP)—President Emeritus Harold Graves has been named interim president of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary as the executive committee of the school's board of trustees searches for a successor to President Franklin Pollard.

The trustees' executive committee met Feb. 26 to begin its work as presidential search committee and in that meeting named Graves, who was president of the Mill Valley, Calif., seminary from 1952 to 1977, as interim president.

Pollard resigned the Golden Gate presidency effective March 1 to become

pastor of First Church of Jackson, Miss.

Trustee Chairman O.Q. Quick said Graves' election as interim president by the executive committee was unanimous. It was effective March 1.

Since his retirement in July 1977, Graves has been interim pastor of several churches and was acting president of California Baptist College in Riverside from February to July 1984. During February, Graves spent three weeks as a consultant to the International Baptist Theological Seminary of Eastern Africa in Arusha, Tanzania, at the request of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

Crowders respond to criticism over lawsuit

by Dan Martin

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)—Robert and Julia Crowder have responded to four associations and two churches who were critical of the Birmingham couple for filing suit against the Southern Baptist Convention and its Executive Committee.

In December, the Crowders and a Windsor, Mo., layman—Henry C. Cooper—filed suit in U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Georgia, claiming their rights had been violated during the 1985 annual meeting of the SBC because of what they claim were violations of the SBC Bylaws during election of the Committee on Boards, Commissions and Standing Committees.

The Crowders later were joined by a Vero Beach, Fla., layman, H. Allen McCartney. In January, a parallel lawsuit was filed in Fulton County (Atlanta), Ga., by five laypersons from five states, who were represented by the Crowder's attorneys, Bondurant, Mixson and Elmore, and which sought the same relief as the federal suit.

Crowder said four associations and two churches have taken official action, citing scriptural admonitions against Christians suing Christians, which have been communicated to him. The actions ask that the lawsuit be dropped, he said.

The retired Birmingham layman told Baptist Press he has "tried to stay as low key as I can, without ignoring them (the associations and churches). I have answered because I do not feel I have the right to ignore them."

In the letter, which also was sent to state Baptist newspapers in Tennessee, Florida, Alabama, Georgia and Kentucky, the Crowders note they "share your desire to resume our emphasis on Bold Mission Thrust and see our home and foreign mission efforts grow as souls are won to Jesus Christ."

"We feel the lawsuit is indeed a tragedy," they write. "Unfortunately, if the inappropriate and illegal actions which occurred in Dallas are not corrected, a greater tragedy will take place: the Southern Baptist Convention will be ruled by the whim of the person who holds the gavel and those who advise him.

"The history of the world is replete with tyranny of well-meaning religious groups," they wrote.

The letter adds: "Tragically, during the 1985 convention the will of the majority was ignored and tyranny was the result. Just as Martin Luther was willing to incur the wrath of the Catholic Church when he asserted the just are saved by faith, Julia and I feel we have no choice but to encounter the disapproval of those who have not personally heard or seen the tyranny that transpired in Dallas."

The Crowders, the letter says, "totally subscribe to 1 Corinthians 6:1-8... and prayerfully considered our actions for 145 days while we tried to get this matter resolved within the SBC." It adds the Executive Committee and its president "not only refused to deal with the violation of the bylaws but also chose to release the news of the possible suit to the press."

The letter quotes from an editorial written by R.G. Puckett in the *Biblical Recorder*, newjournal of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina which says:

"... Likewise, Matthew 5:40 enjoins that the one being sued is to yield, giving not only what the courts may award, but more than that." In other words, if the Crowders press their case, Charles Stanley (president of the SBC) is instructed by the words of Jesus to give not only the coat but the cloak as well. . . ."

The Crowders conclude their letter by noting they have, to date, received no response from convention officers, the Executive Committee or the Peace Committee "to settle this injustice. Julia and I continue to agonize as we pray that those who committed the violations will bring forth meaningful proposals to resolve this matter."

They ask those who have been critical of their action to "join us in prayer for our convention and in the commitment to do all within our power to retain the grassroots support of the local church and the strength of a denomination led by the Holy Spirit."

Dan Martin is news editor for Baptist Press.