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12-19-1991

### December 19, 1991

Arkansas Baptist State Convention

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# Arkansas Baptist



*In the New Year*  
Page 5

Vol. 90, No. 26

December 19, 1991

## ***Blessed Christmas***

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urged to  
'hurry'**

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First feeds  
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# Arkansas Baptist

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### 4 Baptists urged to 'hurry'

"Doors of opportunity have opened so quickly that believers in those areas feel a sense of desperation lest the opportunity be missed," ABSC Executive Director Don Moore comments in his encouragement to Arkansas churches to support the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions. Moore says, "Now is the time for 'heroic measures' in Christian missions."

### 5 How a Christian prepares for the New Year

"No one can tell what the new year will involve or include," comments Rex Horne, pastor of Immanuel Church in Little Rock. Having grown up attending watch night services, Horne says, "As the dawn of a new year approached, we met the new year on our knees in prayer. I've never forgotten the experience." Horne gives both spiritual and practical guidelines for meeting the new year.

### 10 Fort Smith First feeds 4,000

First Church, Fort Smith, provided food for approximately 4,000 individuals Nov. 25. The food parcels were used to feed families on Thanksgiving Day. Baptists also participated in a recent Hunger In-gathering and were part of a group that fed 15,000 people in Little Rock.

### 15 Ruschlikon defunding stands

Trustees of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board decided in a 54-27 roll call vote Dec. 11 to take no further action on the controversial international Baptist seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland. The vote left in place an Oct. 9 decision to cut a \$365,000 allocation from the 1992 budget of the Swiss seminary.

## Cover story

Photo / Jim Voreman



### Blessed Christmas

"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Lk. 2:11).

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### Sermon availability

Those desiring a tape of Mike Huckabee's message and Rex Holt's sermon at the 1991 Arkansas Baptist State Convention should send \$5 to Geyer Springs First Baptist Church, 5615 Geyer Springs Road, Little Rock, AR 72209. Huckabee's text is available through the ABN by sending a 52 cent stamped, self-addressed envelope. Holt's message is not available in text form.

Next issue: Jan. 2



**A GIFT WITH  
 ETERNAL SIGNIFICANCE**

LOTTIE MOON CHRISTMAS OFFERING

**National Goal:  
 \$84 million**

# True spirit of Christmas

J. EVERETT SNEED

A radio speaker has declared for years that Christ was not born on Dec. 25. "Therefore," he says, "we should not celebrate Christmas." The climax of his address is always reached when he urges listeners to send the money they would spend on Christmas gifts to him and his organization. Although Christ most likely was not born on Dec. 25th, the date of his birth is not the most significant part of Christmas. The great truth that we should be remembering this Christmas season is that God gave the greatest gift of all, his Incarnate Son to live among men.

The time of Christ's birth cannot be dated with absolute accuracy. The speaker was correct in saying that Christ almost certainly was not born on Dec. 25th. There is, also, considerable error in the year of Christ's birth. Dr. A.T. Robertson, noted Southern Baptist theologian, in *A Harmony of the Gospels* observes, "If one has an opinion, it would be that the birth of Jesus occurred in the summer or early fall. . . . B.C. 6 or 5."

The statement coincides with biblical accounts; the shepherds would not have been in the field as late as the end of December. The December date for Christmas was adopted in the Fourth Century.

However, the time of the year is not as important as the spirit in which the celebration takes place. Unfortunately, all too many of us have forgotten that the purpose of Christmas is to remind us of the greatest gift ever given. Certainly, God is not honored when the season is a time for drunkenness or revelry. Others have made the season totally commercial in which they strive to obtain every penny possible.

What is the true spirit of Christ's birth? How should we, as Christians, celebrate Christmas?

Perhaps it is well for us to remember what happened on the birthday of our Lord. God took the initiative to give sinful man the thing most precious in the whole universe—his Son, the Incarnate Christ.

The incarnation establishes that Jesus was a historical person. Some contemporary theologians offer what they call the "Existential Incarnation" of Christ. According to this theory it is unimportant whether the events surrounding the birth and life of Christ are historically true. The only thing that matters is our personal encounter with the living Christ.

It is true that we do have a living Savior



and without him we would not have eternal life. His coming to us is now the extension of his coming to them. John tell us, "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. . ." (Jn. 1:14). Again, the evangel declares, "In him was life" (Jn. 1:4). Thus, the incarnation establishes that Jesus was born of God and of man.

The incarnation further shows man's capacity for God. In the Word becoming flesh, we do not find any indication that the presence of God kept him from being truly human. The relationship of God in Christ was natural. Thus, man has a capacity for fellowship with God which has its supreme expression in Christ.

The incarnation also reveals what man should be. In his flesh Jesus demonstrated exactly how we should live. Peter said, "For even here unto were you called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow in his steps" (1 P. 2:21). Jesus, himself, instructed his followers, "For I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done unto you" (Jn. 13:15).

There are many proofs of the incarnation. Perhaps the two greatest proofs are the miracles performed by Jesus and his resurrection from the dead. These events provide irrefutable evidence of Christ's incarnation and deity.

Above all, the incarnation declares God's love for man (1 Jn. 4:8). He loved us so much that he gave his Son as a sacrifice for our sins.

God also desires to possess man. Since man has alienated himself from God, it was necessary for God to provide a way by which man could regain a proper relationship with God. To the Christian believer Paul said, "What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is given you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For you are bought with a price. . ." (1 Co. 6:19-20).

The incarnation is a prelude to the atoning sacrifice of Christ. For every Christian this is a cause for great joy since we can know that God's own Son stands in our place and has borne our sinful doom. Since God has taken man into an intimate union with himself there is cause for great joy.

This joy is offered to everyone, to rich and to poor. Originally God delivered this message of joy to the shepherds, the poor and forgotten ones. In announcing the purpose of his ministry Jesus said, ". . . He (God) hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. . ." (Lk. 4:18). Christians should have the same interest that Christ had in preaching and providing hearing for the poor.

Christmas should be a time of great joy: joy of being with loved ones, the thrill of exchanging gifts, and the excitement of children as they view their new possessions. But our greatest joy should be experienced because the virgin-born, miracle-working, sinless, atoning, living, and someday returning Christ took upon himself flesh and came to Bethlehem. As we capture the significance of his birth we will know the true joy of Christmas.

## Arkansas Baptist

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# Southern Baptists urged to 'hurry'

by Don Moore

ABC Executive Director

Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board President Keith Parks recently said that world leaders with whom he talks are urging Southern Baptists to hurry. Doors of opportunity have opened so quickly that believers in those areas feel a sense of desperation lest the opportunity be missed. Having lived most of their lives under the domination and threat of a government that opposed the open spread of the gospel, they sense that the privilege could be lost as quickly as it was given.



Don Moore

Missiologists, those who study the movement of Christian missions, indicate that unusual opportunities come infrequently and seldom last more than five years. Believers in the United States have difficulty identifying with such urgency because they have not been subjected to such restraints.

It is doubtful that there has been an opportunity like the present in the last century. The opportunity is not chiefly the result of shrewd international diplomacy. The opportunity is the result of the dramatic work of God throughout the world. Examples of this are seen in the following recent reports.

Baptists have been given permission to open a theological seminary within walking distance of the Kremlin.

Twenty-five Massai tribes people were baptized in Tanzania within the last year. Water was carried for four miles to fill the canvas-lined hole that was dug to provide a baptistry.

Southern Baptists are helping to fund a school in London that is training Iranian Christians in how to evangelize their own people. More than 3 million Iranians have fled their homeland and many are open to receive the gospel.

While China has become more strict in its efforts to control religious activity in the country, "the word of God is not bound." Christian teachers tell us that the churches in their area have two to four worship services each Sunday and have at least 1,000 people in each service.

A group of Southern Baptists ran out of Bibles to distribute in the Soviet Union and began to take names and addresses so that Bibles could be sent later. Over 17,000 names and addresses were received, according to James Smith, who was then presi-

dent of the Brotherhood Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention. The director of Religious Affairs of the Soviet Union told Harold Bennett, president of the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention, that they had decided that religion was good for their people. He requested that we send them 1 million Bibles to be distributed through the Soviet Union. The president of Romania, Iliescu, has requested that Baptists help them rebuild their country and to "restore the moral values in our people."

Kurdish leaders pled with Southern Baptist representatives for help. When asked what Southern Baptists might do for them, they replied, "Give us hope. We have no friends." Who can better offer hope than those who know the "God of hope"? (Ro. 15:13).

None of the examples listed above fall within the range of the normal operating procedures of foreign missions as we have known them for the past quarter of a century. We would have to say that all of this is non-typical missions. For such challenges there will have to be non-typical prayer and financial support. To fail to seize upon the opportunity created by God's mighty intervention would be akin to treason. Should we fail, we will have proven that we are unworthy of the trust committed to us.

The lack of funds to support our present mission efforts is very real. Radio broadcasts in India that were producing 400 to 500 requests per month for the gospel correspondence course have had to be discontinued. The \$80,000 per year to continue it is not available. The number of churches there was doubling each year when they could follow up on the inquirers. This is no longer true. What a price to pay!

If Southern Baptists have not given adequately to sustain their present missions efforts, what hope is there that they will rise to the occasion created by the new openness to the spread of the gospel? Last year, Southern Baptists gave \$853,000 less through the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering than they gave the year before. This was the first time in 50 years less was given than the year before.

At the same time, less was being given through the Cooperative Program than the years before. All of this seems to indicate that Southern Baptists have been blinded or distracted to what God is doing in the world. If the Christian leaders of the world are waiting on Southern Baptists to "hurry," it appears they may be disappointed. As life in the United States becomes less engaging, could there be

5,000 retirees who would choose to live in another country in order to work in evangelism that would result in new churches being started? Could there be 10,000 young adults who would train in careers that could be followed overseas in order to go there as "tentmakers" like the apostle Paul, paying their own way while spreading the gospel?

"Heroic measures" are procedures physicians take in efforts to save the patient. The time is now for "heroic measures" in Christian missions. It needs to begin with every Southern Baptist church increasing their Lottie Moon Offering by 10 to 20 percent. It needs to continue with every Southern Baptist sincerely asking if God would have them, their children or their grandchildren involved in going to a mission field. The price will not seem too great to have paid in eternity. "Hurry!"

## Letters to the Editor

### Lesson discussion

I lived more than 20 years in Washington state, near Seattle, and moved back to Arkansas where I was born and raised. We moved back here in 1980. There are a lot of things I like here better than in Washington state. However, the churches in Washington were a lot more missions oriented and more evangelistic (at least the churches I attended were.) I enjoyed adult Sunday School in Washington. We had a lot of discussion of the lesson.

I believe that adult Sunday Schools could increase their attendance if there was more class discussion. If you would pass out a questionnaire to the adult church members asking them to mark if they would come to Sunday School if there was more class discussion, and turn it in unsigned, it would be interesting to see the results.

Recently, I met a friend who had lived several years in the north central states. We were discussing churches and I told him that we had a lot of Sunday School class discussion in Washington state. His reply was, "We did up north, too, and I enjoyed every minute of it." So, you can see that it is not only me, but others feel the same way.

I expect that some teachers feel that they have failed as a teacher if they cannot think of enough to talk about the whole class time. They are very dedicated and sincere. Perhaps we older people just want to make a comment now and then.—Ben Fried, Mena

# How a Christian prepares for the New Year

by Rex M. Horne Jr.

Pastor, Little Rock Immanuel Church

The new year has always been special to me. I, like many of you, grew up with the Watch Night services held on New Year's eve in our churches. I remember particularly one of those services. I was in Bastrop, La., visiting my relatives. As the dawn of a new year approached, we met the new year on our knees in prayer. I've never forgotten that experience.

We owe our January first to Julius Caesar who changed the Roman New Year's day from March to January in honor of Janus (a god who is no god!). Romans pictured Janus as a two-faced god: one face looked back at the old year, the other looked ahead to the new. Janus served as the god of gates and doors and of entrances and exits. Christians have once again taken a pagan holiday and "sanctified" it with a good use. Surely it is natural at the beginning of a new year to look back then look ahead.

How can a Christian prepare for a new year? No one can tell what the new year will involve or include. Yet, there will be some expected things to occur... taxes will still be due in mid-April, some weight will need to come off many of us after the holidays, and there will still be needs in our spiritual lives. The new year generally includes a resolve by Christian people to begin or renew a devotional time. Too often a person determines they will do an "all or nothing" approach. May I suggest to you to do something. It is true that you can read the entire Bible in a year by reading just a few chapters a day. The fact remains, however, that a chapter a day is much better than falling to spend time with the Lord in a devotional reading of the Bible. You can start with a time, place, and plan, then building upon it as the experience becomes a vital part of your life.

In preparing for the New Year, plans are not out of order. All our plans should have a postscript of "if the Lord wills." One of the best plans we can make is to be more selfless next year. We begin the days in time with the Lord and use the day for others. Daniel Yankelovic in *New Rules* observed that there has been a shift in America from an ethic of denying self to a philosophy of one's duty to self. We no longer view life as an opportunity to serve others but to care for ourselves. Time is a precious commodity. It does not take long though to write a letter, make a telephone call, or listen, really listen, to a child for a few minutes. This will be a positive move for many of us.

In thinking of the new year, recognize

that the unexpected will also occur this year. The unexpected is not always bad, in fact, it is often good. I didn't know at this time last year that our fourth child and only son, Truett, would accept Jesus Christ as his Savior and Lord. What a great privilege was mine to go into the baptism at Immanuel last July with my son.

Some occurrences will not be pleasant. I certainly didn't imagine that 1991 would mark the last year that my Dad would live upon this earth. My Dad was only 59 years of age. He seemed to be the picture of health yet in a brief moment on Oct. 12, he left the presence of friends on his company's retreat and joined the great crowd of witnesses in heaven. My Dad was my friend, example, and hero. I thought there were many more years left. I envisioned the honor of being my Dad's pastor upon his retirement. One of the truths of God's Word that I treasure even more in the coming year is that we are promised a great day of reunion in heaven!



BSSB photo / Jim Veneman

*An appreciation of and devotion to the Bible will help in the new year.*

A choice can be made to live beyond life's disappointments and difficulties. The resolutions of Williams Sangster, one of Great Britain's most effective preachers, could become our own. When he was told he had progressive muscular atrophy and could not get well, he said, "I will never complain; I will keep the home bright; I will count my blessings; and I will try to turn it to good."

An appreciation of and devotion to the Bible will help in the new year. Psalm 90 is a good passage for the year that approaches. What wonderful truths and principles are found in such verses:

"For a thousand years in thy sight are but

as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night. Thou carriest them away with a flood; they are as sleep: in the morning they are like grass which groweth up... we spend our years as a tale that is told. The days of our years are threescore and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away... So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom."

The psalmist compares our life to a watch, food, sleep, grass and a tale. These pictures the brevity of life. The 70 years makes for an interesting thought. If you are reaching toward your "three score and ten" and are presently 60, then 87 percent of your life has been lived! If you are 45, then 64 percent of life has been lived. Even if you are only 25 you have enjoyed 36 percent of life if you are one of the fortunate ones to reach 70. I have used such figures on occasion and invariably a man or woman over 70 will ask, "What about me?" My reply is that they are living under grace, as we all are, regardless of their age.

We must include in our preparation for the new year the fact that the past can't be brought back and relived. We can't bring back days that have been lived, bad decisions that have been made, a day with a loved one who has entered eternity. Yet we can learn, live, forgive, and be forgiven. We can make the most of today, this year, and the opportunities that will be ours. John Wesley is reported to have said, since we pass this way but once, we ought to do all the good we can, in all ways we can, to all the people we can.

I have been blessed by the statement of Maithe Babcock, "Be on the lookout for mercies. The more we look for them, the more of them we will see. Blessings brighten when we count them. Out of the determination of the heart the eyes see. If you want to be gloomy, there's gloom enough to keep you glum; if you want to be happy, there's gleam enough to keep you glad. Better to lose count while naming your blessings than to lose your blessings by counting your troubles."

We have more to look forward to in the new year than 365 blank days to be lived and filled. We have the assurance of the presence of Christ. We have the certainty that the Bible will be sure and trustworthy as long as there is this measurement we know as time. There will be the expected and unexpected but God will not be surprised.

Happy New Year!

## Arkansas All Over

MILLIE GILL

## People

**Bill Pitchford** is serving as part-time music and youth director at Midway Church, Melbourne. He and his wife, Cindy, and their son, Tyler, reside in Mammoth Spring.

**Troy Gramling**, who began serving Oct. 27 as pastor of Mount Zion Church in Walcott, was ordained to the ministry Dec. 1. Participating in the ordination service were Junior Vester, N.J. McMillon, David Downs, Harold B. Ray, Mary Poe, Betty Cupp, Dean May, and Judy Monroe. Serving on the ordination council were Vester, Jackie May, Dean May, M.D. Statton, McMillon, Downs, John Cleaves, John Steward, and Don Vuncannon.

**Mark Groves**, a student at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, was recently ordained to the music ministry at Immanuel Church in Little Rock, his home church. Groves, a graduate of Oklahoma Baptist University, is a former member of First Church in Blytheville.

**David Warpen** has resigned as minister of music and youth at Nettleton Church in Jonesboro to serve as minister to students and evangelism at First Church, West Plains, Mo.

**Mary Ruth Haltom** of Shannon Hills died Nov. 26 at age 67. She was the wife of Homer W. Haltom, a Southern Baptist minister. Other survivors are three sons, Lary W. Haltom of Conway, Leslie R. Haltom of Little Rock, and Gerald L. Haltom of Clarksville; three brothers; two sisters; and nine grandchildren. Memorials may be made to the American Lung Association.

**Joe Tom Worblington** of Monticello, a retired Baptist minister, died Nov. 27 at age 86. Survivors are a son, Kenny Worblington of Monticello; two daughters, Genella Henry, and Mavis Barnes, both of Monticello; a brother; four sisters; 10 grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren.

**Earl Cumble** observed 10 years of service Dec. 1 at Wynne Church as minister of education and senior adults.

**Hal Womack Dixon** of Arkadelphia has received the Rice-Judson Scholar Award at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in

Louisville, Ky., on the basis of leadership, scholarship, and commitment to ministry. Womack, the son of James E. and Linda W. Dixon of Arkadelphia, is a May graduate of Ouachita Baptist University.

**Fred M. Wyatt** of Rosie died Nov. 6 at age 94. He was a retired farmer and member of the Rosie Church. Survivors are his wife, Ethel Stewart Wyatt; four sons; and two daughters.

**Bethany Russell** of Dayton, Ohio, a former member of Second Church in Jacksonville, recently received special recognition at East Dayton Church for receiving the Queen Regent in Service Award, the fourth and highest level of the Queen steps within the Acteens Mission Organization of Woman's Missionary Union. Having completed this just prior to her 15th birthday, she holds the honor of being the youngest Queen Regent in Service in the state of Ohio.

**Al Fowler**, who has been serving as interim pastor, began serving Nov. 24 as pastor of First Church in Pea Ridge.

**William J. Cook** has joined the staff of Second Church in Forrest City as minister of youth and music.

**Barry Morgan** is serving as pastor of Pine Tree Church, Colt, coming there from Cabot.

**Elson Herndon** of Overland Park, Kans., died Nov. 30 at age 78. A retired Southern Baptist minister, he formerly pastored Hillside Church in Camden. Survivors are his wife, Opal Herndon; two sons, Gene Herndon of Overland Park, and Doyle Herndon of North Little Rock; a daughter, Dorothy Jones of Broken Arrow, Okla.; three sisters; seven grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren.

**Jerry Starnes** is serving as pastor of Greenhill Community Church, a newly organized church near Wilmar.

**Zan Pierce Jr.** is serving as pastor of Macedonia Church, Monticello.

**Joe Morris** is serving as part-time minister of music and youth at Berry Street Church, Springdale.

Photo / Nelson Wilhelm



Mount Zion Church in Huntington dedicated a new building Nov. 19. The facility is 3,800 square feet upstairs, consisting of a 200-seat sanctuary with baptistry, pastor's study, new nursery, and two classrooms. The basement is 2,200 square feet and houses a fellowship hall. The congregation built the facility without going into debt; the only outside contribution it accepted was from the Oldbarn Little Church Foundation which contributed \$4,500 for pews. The total cost of the construction, which took about a year, was \$125,000. Bill Lynch was pastor during the construction; Ken Hamilton is the building committee chairman.

## Briefly

**East Side Church** in Osceola is experiencing growth through professions of faith, baptisms, and transfer of membership.

**Mount Gilead Church** at Norman dedicated its renovated auditorium Nov. 24. Pastor Lewis Newcomb preached at the morning worship service that was followed by a noon fellowship meal and afternoon musical program.

**Pearcy Church** recently ordained Jimmy White, Larry Fincher, Robert Wright, and Mike Dixon to the deacon ministry.

**Monticello First Church** recently hosted a musical concert featuring Wes Kent of Birmingham, Ala., Brandon Willey of Fort Smith, Bill Waller of Paragould, Lynn Robertson of Camden, and Tom McCone of Monticello, a group that performed in Russia the past summer.

**Marshall Road Church** of Jacksonville was in a revival Nov. 17-21 led by William Blackburn of Fort Smith. Pastor Cliff Hutchins reported 117 decisions that included 95 professions of faith.

**Park Hill Church** in North Little Rock music ministry presented a Christmas Celebration Dec. 15. The performance featured more than 200 individuals, including the Sanctuary Choir, Young Musi-

cians Choir, handbell choirs, a 27-piece orchestra, drama, and pageantry.

**Springdale First Church** presented its fourth annual Living Christmas Tree performance Dec. 14-16 for the residents of northwest Arkansas.

**Hughes First Church** ordained Ken Dawson, minister of music and youth, to the ministry Dec. 1.

**Mountain View First Church** Royal Ambassadors, counselors, and parents recently conducted a three mile walk at the high school football field to raise funds for World Hunger. The group also collected aluminum cans. A total of \$133.29 was collected through the two efforts.

## Williams recovering

H. E. Williams, founder and president-emeritus of Williams Baptist College, recently was diagnosed with a malignancy commonly found in older men. The malignancy has not spread into any bones or lymph nodes.

Williams is recovering well from recent surgery. After Christmas, he will undergo several weeks of radiation therapy to arrest the cancer development.

## Correction

The Arkansas Baptist Foundation report in the Dec. 5 ABN, page 11, should have read that the agency "was strengthening families and family estates by distributing \$700,000 quarterly to undergird Baptist work . . ." The ABN regrets the error.

## Judge Roy honored

Judge Elsjane T. Roy, a member of Immanuel Church in Little Rock, was honored Dec. 6 when her portrait was hung by the federal officials at the federal courthouse in Little Rock. Roy who is in her 14th year of service as a federal judge, took senior status in 1988.

Participating in the hanging service, a rare honor for those still living, were Rex Horne, pastor of Immanuel Church in Little Rock, Roy's son, James M. Roy Jr. of Fayetteville, who practices law in Springdale, and her grandchildren, Allyson James Roy and Thomas Clark Trimble Roy, who unveiled the portrait. Other participants included a number of distinguished federal judiciary and elected state officials.

Roy is a former member of the *Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine* Board of Trustees.



Judge Roy

## ADCF retreat held

A fall retreat for Adult Children of Dysfunctional Families (ADCF) was recently held at Heifer Project International near Perryville. The organizer and leader was Larry Pillow, pastor of Conway Second Church. The theme for the retreat was "Living Beyond" with lectures and small group sessions focusing on issues such as anger, codependency, and forgiveness.

Several professional counselors were on hand to speak and lead small groups. There were 43 participants from as far away as Fort Smith and Texarkana. The next ADCF retreat is scheduled for May 15-17 at the Heifer Project. For information, call 327-6565.

## ISC assignment

An Arkansan was among the 45 people recently assigned by the SBC Foreign Mission Board to work overseas through the International Service Corps (ISC).

Mona Johnson, a Little Rock native, has been assigned to publications coordination in Ghana for one year. Johnson, a graduate of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, attends Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and is employed as a graphic artist in Fort Worth, Texas.

## RA Counselor Fellowship

January 11, 1992

9:00 a.m.—3:00 p.m.

Immanuel Baptist Church, Little Rock  
10th and Bishop

Conferences leaders from Brotherhood Commission:  
Tim Seanor, Tim Bearden and Jeni Smith

Lunch will be served — \$5.00



To make reservations, contact:

Brotherhood Department  
P.O. Box 552  
Little Rock, AR 72203  
501-376-4791, ext. 5158



## Joint foundation loans offered

Harry Trulove, Arkansas Baptist Foundation president, and Robert L. Ross, president of the Baptist Foundation of Oklahoma, recently announced that the boards of the two foundations had approved a plan where the two agencies will participate in a joint program to provide long term financing for Arkansas Baptist churches. Loans will be offered for new construction, the renovation of present facilities and the purchase of new properties. Refinancing of existing loans is also possible under this new program.

Loans will be considered for any amount with a maximum term of 15 years. The loan balance may be paid at anytime without penalty. Advance payments to principal reduction will also be received.

Churches may choose either a fixed or variable interest rate. Variable interest rate loans have an annual cap and a maximum cap for the life of the loan.

The most attractive feature of the new

program is that the interest paid by the churches will be distributed as endowment income to Baptist causes. Monthly payments, accomplished by automatic bank withdrawal, will also assure that churches pay only the minimum amount of interest each month.

Trulove indicated that the Arkansas Baptist Foundation Board had for some time been interested in a church loan program. "Each time the project was studied, we faced the problem of having sufficient operating funds since additional staff would be needed. The problem has now been solved as the Baptist Foundation of Oklahoma already has a staff in place. Thus the Oklahoma Foundation will be the lead lender and will service all loans. The Arkansas Baptist Foundation will participate in the funding of the loans,"

Trulove said.

"The Oklahoma Foundation has been making church building loans since 1954," Trulove continued. "During these past 27 years, they have developed a great deal of expertise and have an enviable record." Of the more than 1,065 loans made to Oklahoma Baptist churches, totaling approximately \$94 million, only three loan defaults have occurred with losses fully recovered without foreclosure actions.

For additional information or loan applications please contact Ron Fannin, The Baptist Foundation of Oklahoma, 3800 North May Avenue, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73112; telephone 405-949-9500 or Harry Trulove, Arkansas Baptist Foundation, 402 Superior Federal Bank, Box 552, Little Rock, AR 72203; telephone 501-376-0732.

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## Roaten to head Hope Center

Paul Roaten was appointed to serve as the director of the Hope Migrant Mission Center in October. He also will be working with churches in Southwest Arkansas Association as time permits, assisting with church outreach and community ministries. Betty Roaten will work in family and church service.

Roaten is a graduate of Blue Mountain College in Blue Mountain, Miss., and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. He is a native of Houlika, Miss., and has served as a pastor in Mississippi and Louisiana.

Mrs. Roaten is a graduate of Union University in Jackson, Tenn. She left a position as a Spanish teacher for the Atala County Schools in Kosciusko, Miss. The Roatens served as foreign missionaries to Uruguay, South America, from 1970 to 1990.

Roaten's primary responsibility is working with the Migrant Mission Center at Hope that is directly across the road from the government migrant labor center. In 1990, there were over 46,000 migrants that registered at the labor center. Each individual who registers at the labor center is a potential visitor for the mission center.

The mission center, whose primary purpose is evangelism, provides numerous articles and services for those who come there. Among these are: clothing, literature (both in Spanish and



Paul Roaten

English), recreational facilities for youth and children, health kits, refreshments, and Bibles.

Services are held each evening. Roaten is considering two services since each family is limited to only 12 hours at the labor center. Theoretically there could be two groups using the facilities of the labor center each day. Since the Roatens are fluent in Spanish

the services will be held in both languages.

When one of the migrants makes a profession of faith, the decision is registered in a computer. Contact is made with churches and associations in the Great Lakes area where the migrants will be working. Information also is sent to south Texas where the migrants have permanent addresses. Follow-up must be done by churches in the Great Lakes and south Texas areas.

Roaten is contemplating developing a study course, to assist in the followup, that would be sent to those who make decisions.

The Roatens have three children, Dawn Roaten of Brownsville, Tenn.; Lois Ann Roaten, and Eddie Roaten, both of Fort Worth, Texas.

Roaten said, "I am very excited about the opportunity to serve as the director of the migrant mission center. This provides a great opportunity to reach many people for the Lord."

## State bivocational fellowship

There is a growing sensitivity across both our state and national conventions to the unique needs and importance of bivocational pastors. According to the 1990 Uniform Church Letter, 40-50 percent of our churches in Arkansas are led by bivocational pastors. Bivocational pastors include those men who have a second job, are student pastors, or who are retired, but pastoring.

In 1990, the Southern Baptist Bivocational Ministers Association was formed and the first meeting was held in Memphis, Tenn., in the spring of 1991. Dale Holloway, consultant for the Home Mission Board, serves as advisor to the new organization. James Greer of Pineville, La., is the first president of the organization.

The Arkansas Baptist Evangelism Conference on Jan. 27-28, 1992, will provide the context for the organizational meeting of Arkansas' bivocational pastors. A dinner for bivocational pastors and their wives will be served at Geyer Springs First Church

in Little Rock after the Tuesday afternoon session. Don and Shirley Moore will be special guests. Meal time will be 5 p.m. and reservations are required by Jan. 17, 1992.

For information, please call 376-4791, ext. 5148. To make reservations, send your name, spouse's first name, address, church name and check for \$5 per person to L.B. Jordan, P.O. Box 552, Little Rock, AR 72203. Make the check payable to the Arkansas Baptist State Convention.

## Bold Mission Prayer Thrust

*"Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know" (Jr. 33:3 NIV).*

Answered prayer

Thank you for praying for a van that has been given to transport people to a new church, Sunny Gap Church, Conway.

Prayer requests

—Pray for the Feb. 13, 1992, Church and Community Ministries Workshop to be

held at Second Church in Little Rock. Pray that God will use this event to equip Arkansas Baptists to do ministry.

—Please pray for a growing spirit of trust and cooperation between our pastors, staff and churches. Ruptured fellowship destroys credibility in the community, out reach to the lost and untold suffering to the pastors/staff families as well as to churches.

—Pray for "Green Alert" the plan to expand mission work in the former Soviet Union especially on Dec. 31.

—Continue to pray that "Hope for the Home" will be a catalyst to cause Arkansas church members and families to renew their commitment to make their family the kind of family God intends.

## 'Green Alert' prayer requested

At the 1992 Arkansas Baptist State Convention, a motion was passed to support the Green Alert Response of the SBC Foreign Mission Board with a day of prayer on Dec. 31 to kick off 1992 as an international year of prayer for Eastern Europe and the former states of the Soviet Union.

The Green Alert project, intended to expand mission work in the region, could involve hundreds of Southern Baptist workers, including the assigning of 116 missionaries in 1992 alone to work throughout the 15 republics of the former Soviet Union.

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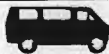
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## Fort Smith First feeds 4,000

by J. Everett Sneed  
Editor, Arkansas Baptist

First Church, Fort Smith, provided food for approximately 4,000 individuals Nov. 25. The food parcels were used to feed families on Thanksgiving Day.

Approximately 1,000 attended the service at First Church. Each of the 650 parcels that were delivered at the church contained a turkey or baking hen, a can of corn, a can of beans, instant potatoes or dressing, and a can of fruit.

Each individual who came to the church was registered and the food was distributed in five areas of the church. This process made distribution smooth and quick. Everyone that registered then received a color card, indicating the area in which they were to receive food.

Immediately following registration a worship service was held that included music and a message delivered by Staff Evangelist William Blackburn. His message, based on Matthew 7:13-23, was entitled "Five Awesome Facts Concerning Salvation." He emphasized that not everyone is going to be saved, more people will be lost than saved, many people who expect to be saved will not be. No one will be saved after death, and today could be the last chance for you to be saved.

There were 26 professions of faith and 20 rededications.



Members of Fort Smith First Church distribute Thanksgiving food parcels to the needy.

The church also distributed 650 parcels of food to individuals in housing areas. Altogether the church estimates that 4,000 people were fed from the distribution.

In addition to the annual Thanksgiving feeding, the congregation has a weekly program of providing food parcels for people in the Fort Smith area.

Assistant Pastor Bob Lever said the distributing of food in the housing areas was exceedingly positive. One woman, who has cancer, called to tell him that she was extremely depressed prior to receiving the food basket. She said, "One of the men of your church knocked on my door and gave me a grocery basket and said, 'Happy Thanksgiving from First Baptist Church,' you'll never know how much this meant to me at this time in my life."

Lever said next year it is probable that the food baskets will be delivered door to door rather than having a church service.

## 15,000 receive food in Little Rock

On Nov. 26, the Union Rescue Mission, Little Rock, conducted a service similar to that held by First Church, Fort Smith. Paul Stevens, director of the men's work for the mission, said that the mission obtained the idea for the feeding from First Church, Fort Smith.

In the Nov. 26 worship service there were 2,139 boxes distributed to households. On Nov. 27 an additional 861 boxes were delivered to the elderly. It is estimated by the mission that 15,000 people received food assistance for Thanksgiving Day from these efforts.

The food used in the distribution came from 69 churches and businesses. Among those participating were the Rice Depot, Baptist, Methodist, and Assembly of God churches. Baptist churches participating included Archview, Bayou Metro, Central, Cross Roads, Highland, Ironton, Levy, Natural Steps, Otter Creek, Pulaski Heights, Rosedale, Tyler Street, West Rock, Markham Street, Martindale, and Immanuel.

Mission Business Administrator Roy Brown said, "We particularly feel that in this time of unemployment this project had a dramatic and positive impact on our community for the Lord."

ABN photo / J. Everett Sneed



Needy receive food at Barton Coliseum.

## Baptists participate in Hunger Ingathering

More than 1,000 people participated in the 14th annual Hunger Ingathering, called the "Festival of Sharing" Nov. 23 at the State Capitol in Little Rock.

A trailer load of hygiene and necessity kits were collected for distribution overseas. A truckload of food and clothing was gathered for a local hunger agency.

Several persons related to the ABSC Mission Department were on the program. Tommy Goode served as co-chairperson for the event. Diana Lewis hosted a booth

displaying Southern Baptist involvement in hunger relief, and played the piano for the celebration service which closed the program of activities by acknowledging God's blessings. Pete Petty taught the children lessons in compassion through illusion with a moral message. John Lewis taught the children about God's blessings through the medium of art.

The Puppets for Christ from Benton First Church entertained participants with skits on caring and sharing.

## 1992 marriage enrichment retreats

Hope for the Home will be the 1992 priority emphasis for the Arkansas Baptist State Convention. The intent for Hope for the Home is to encourage and assist every Arkansas Baptist church to strengthen families through a variety of family life activities.

The initial Hope for the Home activity will be Marriage Enrichment Retreats the week of Jan. 13-18, 1992. Pastors, church staff members, and other ministers are encouraged to attend a retreat for their personal and marriage enrichment. A consensus of a special Family Ministry Task Force is that church leaders involved in strengthening their own personal family relationships provide exemplary leadership for church families to strengthen their

family relationships.

Retreats will be held at the Walnut Street Church in Jonesboro and East Side Church in Fort Smith on Jan. 13-14; at Mountain Home First Church and Hot Springs First Church on Jan. 16-17; and at the Parkway Place Church in Little Rock and Immanuel Church in El Dorado on Jan. 17-18. Each retreat will begin at 1:30 p.m. on the first day and adjourn by 3:30 p.m. the second day. A small registration fee for each couple will cover the cost of materials used in the retreat. Each couple will make arrangements for their lodging and meals.

The retreats will provide the pastor, church staff member, and other ministers and their spouses a positive growth experience for their marriage and equip them to lead other couples in marriage enrichment. Churches are encouraged to enable their pastor/staff to attend the retreat convenient to their schedule and/or location.

Each retreat will be led by an experienced leader couple who are involved in marriage enrichment in their own marriage. The retreat agenda will be the same in each location, enabling couples to choose the retreat site most convenient for their schedule.

Detailed information about the retreats and registration procedures can be requested by writing Marriage Enrichment Retreats, Arkansas Baptist State Convention, P.O. Box 552, Little Rock, AR 72203; or calling 501-376-4791, ext. 5160. Couples need to pre-register for the retreat they plan to attend.

## Foundation open during holidays

Although the Baptist Building will be closed from the afternoon of Dec. 23, 1991, through Jan. 1, 1992, the Foundation office will remain open.

Several years ago, the Executive Board determined that because of the lack of activity in the local churches, utility dollars could be saved by closing the Baptist Building the week following Christmas. This step is not only economical, but also it provides an opportunity for repairing and refurbishing some areas without interfering with staff time. While this schedule works well for the Executive Board staff, it is not practical for the Foundation staff.

Harry Trulove, president of the Foundation, noted, "Often the last week of December is used by individuals to make year-end gifts. Therefore, it is imperative that the staff be present to assist the development officers in this vital area of stewardship." Trulove continued, "Over the past several years, gifts have been received ranging from several hundred thousand dollars to over one-half million. During this time, our staff is also working on the fourth quarter distribution of investment income, annual audit and making tax season preparation."

The Foundation is located in Suite 402 of the Superior Federal Bank Building next door to the Baptist Building and may also be reached by phone at 376-0732 or 376-4791, extension 5180.

## Burnout: Managing Stress, Self, Enthusiasm In Ministry

**Audience:** Pastors/Church Staff

**Leader:** Fred McGehee, *BSSB Consultant*

**Purpose:** To identify personal and professional factors in ministry burnout, assess coping mechanisms, and learn redemptive means for dealing effectively with burnout.

**Place:** Camp Paron

**Schedule:** January 23—Dinner—6:00 p.m.

*Conferences—7:00-9:00 p.m.*

January 24—Breakfast—7:00 a.m.

*Conferences—8:00-11:30 a.m.*

**Cost:** \$42 per person

**Deadline:** January 13, 1992

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## Across the Country

### Southeastern given probation

WAKE FOREST, N.C.—Being put on probation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools does not indicate a loss of accreditation to Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. The Wake Forest, N.C., seminary was put on probation by SACS during the agency's annual meeting in New Orleans Dec. 4-6.

The school has one year to answer all questions presented to it by SACS regarding problems in such matters as faculty selection and long range planning.

Seminary President Lewis Drummond was notified by phone of the commission's decision late Dec. 5 at his home by David Carter, the assistant director of SACS. Carter said the commission had cited the seminary on four criteria and had felt probation would give the school the additional time it needed to clear up these final difficulties.

### Stewardship Commission elects vice presidents

NASHVILLE—The executive committee of the Southern Baptist Stewardship Commission elected two new executive vice presidents and took two economic measures to offset losses experienced in the last fiscal year.

Meeting in Nashville Dec. 2 for its annual audit review, the committee elected Carl Hoffman as Executive Vice President of Endowment and Capital Giving upon the retirement of Leon B. Patterson, effective June 1992. Also, Ruben Swint was elected Executive Vice President upon the retirement of Harry Bonner, effective September 1992.

The committee voted to discontinue furnishing automobiles to any employee whose business use does not exceed 20,000 miles per year, according to A. R. Fagan, President. Also, health insurance premiums paid by the commission for employee dependents have been frozen at the present level.

## November CP rebounds

NASHVILLE (BP)—Southern Baptists gave \$12,204,115 to the SBC Cooperative Program in November, exceeding the monthly budget requirement and receipts for the same month a year ago.

Still, the year-to-date total for 1991-92 fell short compared to the same two-month period a year ago: \$22,897,708 to \$23,123,281. The November 1991 monthly percentage increase over last year was 1.30 (156,349) while the year-to-date (two months) shortage from the similar period last year was 0.98 percent (\$225,573).

Designated gifts were up 6.10 percent in November compared to a year ago: \$2,292,921 to \$2,161,026. That kept designated gifts for year-to-date above last year: \$3,772,442 compared to \$3,616,667 or a 4.31 percent increase.

## Cooperative Program has hotline number

NASHVILLE (BP)—Have a question, want some information or would like to express an opinion about the Cooperative Program?

Beginning Jan. 2, the Southern Baptist Stewardship Commission will provide a toll-free, Cooperative Program hotline for Southern Baptists. Commission personnel will operate the hotline for three months.

The toll-free number is 1-800-722-9407, and is reserved for callers who want to order CP promotion materials, to ask questions about the CP, or to express their personal thoughts about the program.

The hotline will operate Monday through Friday, 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

## Special CP study group announced

NASHVILLE (BP)—Twenty-three leaders from across the Southern Baptist Convention have been named to a special Cooperative Program study group with a Jan. 20-21 meeting planned, according to David E. Hankins, chairman of the SBC Executive Committee.

Hankins, Lakes Charles, La., pastor, appointed the individuals in response to action of the Executive Committee in September. Hankins said the group will review the history of the Cooperative Program, analyze the nature of it as it is now being interpreted, and develop proposals for the future enhancement of the CP.

The group includes two Arkansans: SBC Executive Committee member Ronnie W. Floyd, pastor of Springdale First Church and ABCS Executive Director Don Moore.

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## Convention Uniform

*A song of God and man*

by Carroll Evans, First Church, Hughes

Basic passage: Psalms 8:1-9

Focal passage: Psalms 8:1,4-5

**Central truth:** Compared to the majesty of God and the greatness of his creation man seems insignificant, but God has made insignificant man the lord of creation.

Here is a song celebrating a dual theme—God's majesty as revealed in creation and the God-given dignity of man. It easily divides into four parts: God's incomparable majesty (vv. 1-2), man's comparative insignificance (vv. 3-4), man's conferred dignity and rule (vv. 5-8), and in verse 9 a return to the theme of God's incomparable majesty.

The limitless majesty and glory of God is manifested in the night sky and in the songs of children God has clothed his creation with a glory like unto his own. The presence we detect in nature and the starry heavens is his presence, for his Spirit and power pervade the entire creation and energize every atom. This is borne out by the praise accorded to God in verse 1 where the author declares "how majestic is your name in all the earth!"

The mention of "babes and infants" in verse 2 reminds us that God often chooses that which seems weak to reveal his glory. God's use of what man hardly notices is an oft recurring theme of Scripture (1 Co. 1:27-29; Jg. 7:1-25).

In verses 3-4 the writer turns from contemplating the glory of God to the comparative insignificance of man. Compared to all of this "what is frail man" (Hebrew, *enosh*) that Yahweh should remember, miss or care for him? All of these ideas are included in the word "visitest" (v. 4). And yet God has made human being only a little bit diminished from *elohim*. This Hebrew word can be translated either God or angels (divine beings) depending on the context. Not only has man been created with a noble nature, but he has been invested with great glory and honor by God.

The psalmist speaks of the delegated authority God has entrusted man, and begins to list the subjected creatures (v. 7-8), but he stops because his mind is overwhelmed by the creator's generosity. He returns to the thought in verse 1, beginning and ending with the glory of God. Do we? The dignity God has given us should be used for his greater glory.

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## Life and Work

*Flexible obedience*

by Bob Berry, First Church, Benton

Basic passage: Matthew 2:13-16, 19-20, 22-23

Focal passage: Matthew 2:13-16, 19-20, 22-23

**Central truth:** Obedience requires faith and flexibility.

Put yourself in Joseph's shoes for a moment. His ambition was to be a carpenter in Nazareth, a respectable family man just like any other Jew. Suddenly his life was turned upside down. He had not known that God planned for him to be the earthly father of the Son of God. His virgin wife-to-be had become miraculously pregnant. The son was born in a stable, of all places. Magi travelled far to bring Jesus gifts. It was a lot to take in, a lot of adjustments to make.

Jesus' birth did not end Joseph's odyssey. Three times he was instructed by angels in dreams (Mt. 2:13,19,22). Three times he moved his young family. Scripture was being fulfilled, but Joseph was not conscious of it. He was merely being steadfast in his obedience.

Prophecies concerning the Messiah came true throughout Jesus' life. Jesus was totally obedient. However, the prophecies related to his birth and childhood were fulfilled by the obedience of Jesus' parents. Jesus' childhood progressed according to God's plan because his parents obeyed God despite the inconvenience. Mary and Joseph were people of integrity.

Every time Joseph came face to face with the will of God he obeyed without question. He was probably not a Bible scholar, but he was a man of faith. Joseph had no outward confirmation to back up God's instructions. Yet, Joseph obeyed without complaining.

God had a plan. Joseph lived it out. His faith was flexible enough to accept God at his word, even if it did not seem logical. After all, he was under God's care, under God's guidance, and in God's plan, raising God's Son. That justified obedience at any cost. No wonder God selected Mary and Joseph!

God wants the same obedience from us. He gave his son, his Spirit, and his Word. He may not always do the expected, and there may be inconveniences along the way. But, isn't it great to be under God's care, under God's guidance, and in God's plan?

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## Bible Book

*The resurrection of Christ*

by Zane Chesser, First Church, Malvern

Basic passage: 1 Corinthians 15:3-8, 16-26, 55-58

Focal passage: 1 Corinthians 15:16-26

**Central truth:** The resurrection of Christ brings hope to all of life.

The most significant fact of Christianity is the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Paul was the first New Testament writer to record in Scripture what had been preached concerning the resurrection. His words here were written about 15 years before the earliest gospel. Someone in the Corinthian Church had no doubt questioned the fact of the resurrection and Paul responds with a powerful affirmation of the event and its meaning for Christians.

Paul underscores three vital facts in the gospel message he had received (1 Co. 15:3-4). In stating that Christ died for our sins the reason for his death is put forth. The fact that Christ was buried shows the reality of his death. And in being raised from the dead our hope of eternal life is established.

Paul augments the fact of Christ's resurrection by living eyewitnesses. Most of these were still living at the time of the writing of this epistle. Paul includes himself as a witness to the living Lord. Far from fabricating the resurrection, these believers were so convinced that they went out with such a bold witness that they turned their world upside down.

For those who questioned the resurrection, Paul pulls back the imaginary curtain to reveal the dark scene in a world without Christ's resurrection (1 Co. 15:16-19). Such a reality would make void believers' faith, forgiveness of sins, and any hope beyond this physical life. Facing such a despairing scenario, Paul turned quickly to give a mighty affirmation of Christ's final victory over death (1 Co. 15:20-26). To be sure death continues to be an enemy of mankind, but it is a conquered enemy for those who place their faith in Christ.

It's amazing that Paul could possess such hope and joy considering that death seemed to rule in his world. He could even look into the sinister face of death with taunting words (1 Co. 15:55-56). He knew, as all Christians can know, a vivid sense of ultimate triumph because of their relationship with the risen Christ. Such an experience gives positive consequences and meaning to all of life.

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# LESSONS FOR LIVING

## Convention Uniform

### *The joy of worship*

by Carroll Evans, First Church, Hughes

Basic passage: Psalms 84:1-12

Focal passage: Psalms 84:1-2

**Central truth:** The first priority of a child of God is worship and the one supreme purpose of worship is to realize the presence of the living God.

The occasion of this beautiful psalm was probably the annual autumn festival called Tabernacles, which marked the beginning of the Jewish civil year. The words are those of a pilgrim making his way toward Jerusalem. The joy in his heart is partly a joy of memory and partly that of anticipation. And what is that memory and anticipation which so thrill his heart? The presence of God in his holy temple on Zion's hill. Psalms 84 is a pilgrim's testimony to the beauty of the place where God is.

The psalm begins with praise for the temple as a symbol of the God who is worshipped there (vv. 1-2). Then the writer speaks of the happiness of those who are privileged to live there. He envies even the little birds who make their nests in and around the temple (vv. 3-4). Next he extols the happiness of those who make the pilgrimage (vv. 5-7). Next there is a prayer for Israel's king, which was always appropriate at the Feast of Tabernacles (vv. 8-9); and finally, the psalmist proclaims the superiority of life devoted to worship to any other kind of life (vv. 10-12).

Many are the applications of this psalm. The practice of the presence of God should be the goal of every godly soul. The world is certainly no place for God's people to build their nests, but rather we should remember that God's grace shelters all who seek refuge in him (vv. 2-3).

This psalm also reminds us that sorrows and hardships can be transmuted into blessing. Faith can find a source of refreshment even in the deepest, driest valley of life. God gives fresh strength day by day so that every pilgrim can reach his destination (vv. 6-7).

Worship is the recognition of God's worth and is a function and expression of love. Love thrives and grows in the soul that is conscious of the true source of its blessings (v. 4). God is indeed our sun and our shield, the great benefactor and defender of our lives. When we make him the ultimate goal of life, our success is assured (vv. 11-12).

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## Life and Work

### *Coronation of the King*

by Bob Berry, First Church, Benton

Basic passage: Matthew 3:1-6, 11-17

Focal passage: Matthew 3:13-17

**Central truth:** Jesus chose baptism to signal the start of his ministry.

Baptism by immersion is a testimony and symbol of conversion is so important to Baptists that the practice gave us our name. It is so precious that many believers lost their lives for carrying out this scriptural duty. Baptism was so important to Jesus that he used it as his coronation inaugurating his ministry.

The baptism of John was not the believer's baptism Baptists practice today. John himself stated that a greater baptism was coming (Mt. 3:11-12). His baptism was only a sign of repentance (Mt. 3:6). Cleansing from sin represented by washing with water was a common practice at that time.

So why did Jesus come to John for baptism? Jesus did not need to repent of sin, and John knew it. In fact, John tried to talk Jesus out of baptism (Mt. 3:14). Here was the very one he had been prophesying about, a man far greater than John. Baptizing Jesus seemed both unnecessary and inappropriate.

Yet, Jesus insisted on being baptized. He wanted to identify himself with John. John was called by God to announce the coming Messiah. He himself was foretold in Old Testament prophecy (Mt. 3:3). Jesus' baptism was approval and validation for John's ministry. Identifying with John linked Jesus to both Old Testament prophecy and the prophecy John had been announcing.

The first words of Jesus which Matthew records are, "Let it be so not; it is proper for us to do so to fulfill all righteousness" (Mt. 3:15). Right from the start, in the first act of his earthly ministry, he set out to do everything the Father intended. Not one detail in God's plan was to be overlooked. It might not make sense to John, or be noticed by those around him, but Jesus needed to be baptized for one reason: to do God's will.

So John baptized Jesus. A voice sounded and a dove descended. This was the coronation of the King. The gospels differ describing who heard the voice and saw the dove, but the purpose was unmistakable: God the Father was validating Jesus' ministry and identity as Son of God. No one else ever carried that seal of approval. The Kingdom of God was at hand.

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## Bible Book

### *All speak of judgment*

by Rex Holt, Central Church, Jonesboro

Basic passage: Amos 1:1-3; 2:1-8, 11-14(a)

Focal passage: Amos 1:3; 2:1-8

**Central truth:** God will judge his people for their sins.

What do earthquakes, lions and prophets have in common? They all speak of judgment and give clear messages of impending doom and disaster. Those of us in northeast Arkansas near the New Madrid fault understand the realities of earthquake warnings. Earthquake predictions send chills down the spine of even the stoutest souls. Amos spoke God's Word to earthquake men, "two years before the earthquake." The warning sounds—it's earthquake time again.

Amos connected the earthquake of his day with judgment. He heard the lion's roar of God's wrath and the tremors of the earth which signaled impending doom.

The crowd assembled at Bethel. It was a sacred feast day. The multitude had no appetite for a blistering sermon of judgment. The wilderness preacher wisely began with the sins of neighboring Damascus. He quickly caught their sympathetic attention. He then turned his guns on Philistia, bitter enemies of Israel. In machine-gun fashion he lashed out at Phoenicia, Edom, Ammon, Moab and even his homeland of Judah. I can imagine the chorus of "amens," and "preach it brother" coming from a frenzied crowd. With bated breath they hung onto every word. Amos had carefully drawn a circle around Israel boldly denouncing their specific sins (Am 1:3-2:5).

Amos then took aim at Israel (2:6-8). Their basic offense was a ruthless oppression of the poor. They sold human beings as slaves. Money was more important than men to these greed-filled religionists. The wealthy, ruling class walked on the poor grinding them to the ground (Am 2:7a).

Insensitivity and exploitation of the poor, the weak and the helpless of our society will bring severe and swift judgment upon our nation. God's people are especially accountable to raise their voice against oppression and injustice. Individual Christians and churches must take the initiative and begin to compassionately care for the helpless and weak of our communities.

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## Ruschlikon defunding stands

*Trustees vote no further action in controversial decision*

by Robert O'Brien  
SBC Foreign Mission Board

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)—Trustees of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board decided in a 54-27 roll call vote Dec. 11 to take no further action on the controversial International Baptist seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland.

The vote left in place an Oct. 9 decision to cut a \$365,000 allocation from the 1992 budget of the Swiss seminary.

The Oct. 9 vote has drawn a storm of protest from across Europe and the United States—and complaints from trustees that their side of the story has not been made clear in news reports.

Several trustees said their action, although taken without consultation with the seminary three months before the 1992 budget year, was not a quick one based only on the presence of visiting professor E. Glenn Hinson at the seminary. They said it also was based on a longstanding concern over the seminary's theological direction.

Trustees voted 35-28 on Oct. 9 to defund the Ruschlikon seminary after learning Hinson, whom they perceive to be liberal, was teaching there for four months on sabbatical leave from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

Hinson, several trustees said, was the "straw that broke the camel's back," not

the main reason for the defunding.

Trustee debate seemed to boil down to two positions: some urging restoration of funds because of a promise to fund the seminary through 1992, and others opposing continued funding because the seminary has not lived up to what they feel was its pledge to move the seminary in a conservative direction.

Karl-Heinz Walter, general secretary of the European Baptist Federation, said following the vote that he "grieves" over the judgment of the trustees and its implication that the seminary and its graduates, who include many European Baptist leaders, are liberal. The unilateral defunding by FMB trustees breached trust between equal partners, he said.

Walter, who will relay the action to European Baptists, said he personally does not see a way to rebuild trust between the FMB and European Baptists. FMB President R. Keith Parks also said the vote will undercut the partnership approach, which he said is the basis of everything the FMB does overseas.

Wiard Popkes, chairman of the Ruschlikon seminary trustees, said neither the seminary nor the European Baptist Federation had considered taking the defunding action to court. That would be contrary to Scripture, he said.

When the FMB trustees defunded the

seminary in October, they asked for a review of the legality of the action in face of earlier agreements by the mission board that it would fund the seminary through 1992.

Board attorney Lewis Booker counseled agency officials not to comment on his legal opinion. But a Richmond city newspaper quoted an anonymous source as saying the opinion concluded the board had broken its contract with the seminary.

In the face of questioning from the floor Dec. 11, trustee John Simms, an attorney from Virginia, said the legal opinion was no longer secret in light of the newspaper report.

"The report in the newspaper was that an opinion had been rendered that if a suit was brought in Virginia we might expect to lose," Simms said. "That report, albeit from an anonymous source, . . . was correct."

Trustee John Jackson of California said he was grieved that European Baptist leaders rejected rather than negotiating a compromise proposal by Hancock at the Dec. 5-6 meeting. He also cited the high cost of education at the seminary compared to the small number of students.

Trustee Jack Bledsoe of Arkansas said the issue is not cost or theological stance but the integrity of the FMB's promises—although he believed they erred in 1988 when they did not stipulate to the seminary "what would be an acceptable response to 10 propositions."

In 1988 trustees asked European Baptist and seminary leaders to respond to 10 points prior to the Foreign Mission Board's May 1989 transfer of ownership of the Ruschlikon seminary, now valued at over \$12 million, to the European Baptist Federation. The points included a request that they put a statement of European Baptist beliefs in writing.

European Baptists responded to each point, but many trustees continued to be displeased with a statement of beliefs that was a part of this document.

Several trustees warned that the vote would seriously damage the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions. Some churches protesting the action have vowed to send their Lottie Moon offering—intended for worldwide Southern Baptist missions—directly to Ruschlikon if the defunding action stands.

In closing the meeting, trustee chairman Hancock noted: "It is a strange feeling to be caught in a controversy where there is no movement."

If there had been more movement and response on part of trustees, seminary leaders, European Baptist leaders and FMB staff, he said, the vote might have been different.

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## WORLD

# WMU leaders fear Ruschlikon issue will detract from offering

by Susan Todd Doyle  
SBC Woman's Missionary Union

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP)—At the time of year when Southern Baptists traditionally focus on their support of foreign missions, some missions leaders are concerned the focus this year may be divided.

Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union leaders don't want to see Southern Baptists focus all their attention, energy and efforts on recent action taken by Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board trustees to defund the Baptist Theological Seminary in Ruschlikon, said Delanna O'Brien, WMU executive director.

They especially don't want the Week of Prayer for Foreign Missions and the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions to get overshadowed by this issue.

"While the recent action by FMB trustees to discontinue funding to the Ruschlikon seminary is a critical issue, we cannot allow it to sidetrack us from the greater issue of unconditional support for our foreign missions force," said O'Brien.

In a Dec. 11 meeting, FMB trustees left in place an Oct. 9 decision to cut all funding slated for the Swiss seminary. Trustees had earlier agreed to continue contributions to the school through 1992 and then begin a gradual decrease of funding. The action taken by FMB trustees will cost the seminary \$365,000 during 1992 — about 40 percent of the seminary's total budget.

"The most important thing for Southern Baptists to remember right now is that we have committed to support more than 3,900 foreign missionaries in 121 countries around the world," she said. "We have promised to them that we will hold the ropes. We're not doing it if we don't provide for them financially.

"We cannot allow the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering to be overshadowed by our family disagreements," O'Brien said.

This year's Lottie Moon Christmas Offering goal is \$84 million.

"This is not a self-serving plea," O'Brien said. "Our concern is for our missionaries." The Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions is used entirely to support the work of foreign missions. None of the offering is received or used by WMU or the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission.

"Never before have I seen such a groundswell of response by Southern Baptists about a missions issue as I have seen in recent weeks. I am convinced that people are responding — both pro and con — about the FMB trustees' action because they care

about missions," O'Brien said.

"I just hope Southern Baptists won't direct all their focus on this one issue, because there is a greater one at hand — a whole world without Christ. We cannot not think about the rest of the world."

The receipts for last year's offering fell short of the \$86 million goal. But perhaps even more significantly, the receipts in 1990 were less than the receipts for 1989. This downfall in giving was the first time since 1937 that the gifts to the Lottie Moon offering were less than the previous year's offering.

"If we don't meet this year's goal of \$84 million, it will be the 10th consecutive year the goal has not been met," O'Brien said.

"God forbid that we celebrate this 'anniversary' because our energy and attention were focused on Ruschlikon only."

This year's call for Southern Baptists to remember a commitment to support foreign missionaries is not a first. Pleas for support first began happening 103 years ago.

Lottie Moon, one of the best-known of all Southern Baptist foreign missionaries, was the first woman missionary to be fully appointed by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board. The year was 1873. Working in China without furlough, often alone, for 11 years, Moon requested the women of WMU to take an offering at Christmas time in 1888 to send two women missionaries to relieve her.

Receipts for that offering, taken in 1888, surpassed the goal of \$2,000. The final offering of \$3,315.26 was enough to send three women missionaries to China.

Within four years, the observance of the Week of Prayer was connected with the offering for foreign missions and became a yearly event in SBC life.

Today, the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions is a churchwide observance which provides about 45 percent of the total FMB budget. WMU leaders no longer participate in the allocation of the offering. However, WMU remains a primary promoter of the offering, along with Brotherhood and the FMB.

A GIFT  
WITH  
ETERNAL  
SIGNIFICANCE



National Goal: \$84 million

LOTIE MOON CHRISTMAS OFFERING