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December 20, 1984

Arkansas Baptist State Convention

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*The light shines
in the darkness,
and the darkness
has never put it out.*

John 1:9-11

December 20, 1984
Arkansas Baptist
NEWSMAGAZINE

On the cover



*The light shines
in the darkness,
and the darkness
has never put it out.*

Sunday School Board photo

As the Advent Star pierced the dark night of Jesus birth, so the birth of our Savior split the darkness which had settled on men's souls. Christmas is a time for us to open ourselves anew to the Light of the World, allowing him to shine on us and through us.

Troubled world needs Christmas message

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—In "tragic contrast" to the Christmas tidings of "peace on earth," Christmas 1984 comes on the eve of "a ghastly milestone in humanity's pursuit of the biblical ideal of peace," noted Foy Valentine.

The executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission pointed out that in 1985 the nations of the world will establish a new record in annual military spending, surpassing for the first time the one trillion dollar mark.

About 75 percent of the trillion dollars will be spent by the United States and the Soviet Union, together with their major allies.

In 1970 the global spending level on arms was approximately \$270 billion. Since then, however, the rate of military spending in the world's 28 "developed nations" has increased about five percent annually after inflation.

"This unconscionable arms race consumes an enormous amount of our world's limited resources and imposes a tremendous burden on our economies," Valentine said.

"The nations are inexorably destroying each other, even if the weapons we build and set in place are never used. Money spent

for bombs and missiles and submarines and warships and military airplanes cannot be spent to relieve the starving in Ethiopia, support food production in India, undergird economic development in Central America or develop better public education, health delivery systems, housing and criminal justice at home."

Valentine, who was recently in the Soviet Union at the invitation of Russian Baptists, pointed out that in 1982 the U.S. devoted 6.4 percent of its gross national product for military spending and the U.S.S.R. spent about 15 percent of a much smaller gross national product for military purposes.

He also noted "the tragic irony" that more than 40 percent of the \$36.5 billion in arms sold or given by the United States to other nations in 1982 went to the Middle East, "where the Prince of Peace was born almost 2,000 years ago."

"Nothing could be more in keeping with the spirit of Christmas and the flame of hope kindled by the birth of our Savior than for Christians to recommit ourselves to pray fervently and to work faithfully for peace with justice," he concluded.

In this issue

8-9 survival of the weakest

Famine takes its worst toll on the weak: the very young and the very old. The children of Ethiopia are fighting against death. Southern Baptist missionaries are fighting to keep the famine from overtaking more of the country.

12 dreaming and working

Southern Baptists have always been willing to "move out on a dream that this world needs Jesus Christ," said Lloyd Elder of the Baptist Sunday School Board. He declared recently that Southern Baptists need to recapture the dream of Bold Mission Thrust and throw themselves into the task of carrying the gospel to the whole world.

No issue on Dec. 27

No issue of the ABN will be published on Dec. 27, the last of three such skip weeks in 1984.

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Next month in Arkansas

January 6, Christian Wills Emphasis. Month-long emphasis on Christian stewardship through preparing a will which provides for family and Christian causes.

January 7-8, Media Library Workshop, Central Church, North Little Rock. Workshops will train workers in providing and promoting the church library and media materials.

January 10, ASSISTeam Faculty Training, Ozark, First Church; Jonesboro, First Church; Hope, First Church; Pine Bluff, First Church. An annual event to train Associational Sunday School Improvement Teams to teach the "Basic" series of books in spring 1985 associational training clinics.

January 13, Witness Commitment Day. A time for Arkansas Baptists to commit themselves to share the gospel.

January 14, Spring Registration at Southern Baptist College, Walnut Ridge.

January 15, Spring Registration at Ouachita Baptist University, Arkadelphia.

January 21, Area Youth / Adult Church Training Workshops, Elmdale, Springdale; First, Mountain Home; Walnut Street, Jonesboro; Immanuel, El Dorado; First, Blytheville. First of 15 area workshops

held from 7 to 9 p.m. to help leaders, church staff, adult members in organization, enlistment, curriculum selection and session planning for both youth and adults.

January 22, Area Youth/Adult Church Training Workshops, South Side, Fort Smith; Harrison, First; Batesville, First; Forrest City, First; Beech Street, Texarkana. See January 21.

January 24, Area Youth/Adult Church Training Workshops, Russellville, Second; South Side, Pine Bluff; Monticello, First; Hot Springs, First; Olivet, Little Rock. See January 21.

January 27, Baptist Men's Day. Suggested day for local churches to celebrate their Baptist Men organization's contribution to involving men in missions.

January 28-29, State Evangelism Conference, Geyer Springs, Little Rock. Annual event to provide information, inspiration and challenge in evangelism and evangelism outreach for pastors and laypersons.

January 30, Tax Workshop for Ministers, Life Line Church, Little Rock. Pastors, church staff and finance/personnel committees will get information on how to save on taxes for clergy.

The greatest gift

The editor's page

J. Everett Sneed



A radio speaker has declared for years that Christ was not born on December 25. "Therefore," he says, "we should not celebrate Christmas." The climax of his address is always reached as he urges his listeners to send the money they would spend on Christmas gifts to him and his organization. Although Christ most likely was not born on December 25, the date of his birth is not the most significant part of Christmas. The great truth that should be remembered 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 December 25. 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."

This statement coincides with the Bible account. Obviously, 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 tells us, "The Word was made flesh and dwelled amongst us..." (Jn. 1:14). Again the evangelist declares, "In him was life." (Jn. 1:4). Thus, the incarnation

establishes that Jesus was born of God and 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 perverted nature or 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 says, "For even here unto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow in his steps" (1 Pet. 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).

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

God's love 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 believers Paul said, "What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price..." (1 Cor. 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 own 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 the rich and to the poor. God originally delivered this message of joy to the shepherds, the poor and forgotten ones. In announcing the purpose of his ministry Jesus said, "... He (God) has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor..." (Luke 4:18). Christians should have the same interest that Christ had in preaching and providing healing for the poor.

Christmas should be a time of great joy: joy of being reunited with loved ones, the thrill of exchanging gifts, 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 human flesh and came to Bethlehem. As we capture the significance of Christ's birth we will know the true joy of Christmas.

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One layman's opinion

Daniel R. Grant

Every Christian a missionary

As a layman, I find it a little confusing that Christian people should spend so much time debating questions of ordination—who, when and for what. In recent months, I have been impressed with several strong messages, loud and clear, stressing that every Christian is a missionary. Only recently I heard these very words from Bud Fray, Ouachita's missionary-in-residence, on furlough from Johannesburg, South Africa. He made this bold assertion in the required chapel service at Ouachita and again at the annual meeting of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention.

Dr. Fray reminded us that the Latin word for sending is "missio," and that it is the root word for missile, missions and missionary. He pointed out that among Jesus' last words was the mandate, "... so send I you." What American child in 1984 is not familiar with the importance of obeying the commands

of "mission control" for all astronauts who have been launched in the missiles for a space adventure? With our command so clearly stated, and with obedience the requirement, there seems little doubt we are world Christians, sent to a world to witness.

Last summer, I heard for the first time of Johann Gerhard Oncken, who led in the establishment of the first Baptist church in Germany just 150 years ago. His evangelistic zeal is expressed in theme for which he became famous in Germany and Europe, "Every Baptist is a missionary". A member of our tour group from Kansas had an unusual testimony about the baptism of her grandfather by Rev. Oncken in the Elbe River in Germany. He later immigrated to the United States and helped to form the North American Baptist Conference, of churches with a common German heritage.

More recently still, representatives of the

Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention have begun to talk with some of us at Ouachita about a major missions emphasis during Quachita's Centennial year of 1985-86. Preliminary plans call for a "Global Focus Week" in March of 1986 and, although that is still more than a year away, it is easy to get excited about the many possibilities. If we are to help every Ouachita student to be an effective missionary, we need first to help them have a global focus on all of God's world. Of course, that goes not only for Ouachita's 1,400 students, but for the 450,000 Arkansas Baptists who own and operate Ouachita.

The only way to take Bud Fray seriously is to take Christ's Great Commission seriously.

Daniel R. Grant is president of Quachita Baptist University.



Woman's viewpoint

Bonnie Margason

Missions response

When we become aware of missions to the degree that we desire to learn about missions in order to pray specifically, then we are faced with the choice as to whether this truth will cause us to respond. Support means to promote some cause or interest or to keep something going. Mission support then must be continuous if response is to worthwhile.

I'm so proud to be a Southern Baptist. Our denomination offers special opportunities for me to respond tangibly by giving to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering and the Dixie Jackson State Missions Offering. Each of these are effective because they built on the foundation of and undergird the Cooperative Program.

I was taught the importance of giving through these channels as a child in my home and church. We in turn taught this principle to our children, and now we are pleased to see our grandchildren being taught this same thing. Giving will not haphazardly be caught. It must be taught. Response does not come by chance, it is made by choice.

"Planned Growth in Giving" will

challenge churches and individuals to support missions as giving is increased in each area. In the long run, this method may be the easiest way to respond. Sending others where we cannot go results from this response.

The greater decision may be the "Here am I, Lord, send me" response: Respond to the opportunity to go to Brazil as a part of the AMAR effort; give a week or two in Indiana linkage or some area of pioneer missions; be a Volunteer in Missions in disaster relief ministries or other needed areas in our state; assume leadership in your own church to teach missions; have a lifestyle witness that will touch lives in your own community that will reflect the perfect revelation of God's love in Jesus.

As a Child of the King, we respond to his command, "Go ye into all the world." This then is mission response.

Bonnie Margason, a homemaker and mother of two, served as president of the Arkansas Woman's Missionary Union 1979-84. She and her husband, Boyd, are members of Mountain Home First Church.

Journeyman application deadline set at Jan. 15.

Those who want to be included in the next group of journeymen from the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board must have their applications postmarked by Jan. 15.

The journeyman program seeks four-year college graduates age 26 and under who are interested in using their skills on overseas mission fields for two years.

Applicants must be active Southern Baptists, U.S. citizens and qualified for specific mission tasks. If not single, they must be childless and married for at least one year. Also, they must be in good physical and emotional health.

More than 140 requests for journeymen have come from missionaries all over the world. Especially needed are teachers and youth and student workers. Other assignments are open for secretaries and business workers, nurses, agriculturalists, music workers and others.

Applicants selected will begin training June 13 at the Cauthen Missionary Learning Center in Rockville, Va., and go to the field upon successful completion of training, after a July 19 commissioning service.

This year the Foreign Mission Board commissioned 64 journeymen to work in 32 nations and selected 45 others for training to begin in January.

Those interested in applying for the 1985-87 journeyman program should contact the Foreign Mission Board immediately. Call Wendy Norville in the board's Personnel Selection Department at (804) 353-0151.

Don Moore

You'll be glad to know...

... You are remembered at this special time of the year! Those of us called to assist our churches in the ministry count it a high privilege to lift you up in prayer for a most spiritually refreshing holiday. The rest of the year brings some mixture of joy, sadness, success and defeat. We should expect the holiday time to be not too different!

While we wish you all joy, we know some of you are without companions, without children, without parents and without jobs. We know there will be many who will taste the bitter dregs of loneliness, disappointment and need. The holiday time may find bitterness and cynicism invading you. May God build his hedge high around your mind, shutting off such dreadful emotions. May his light shine bright in your heart so your focus is on the central truth of Christmas.

... How dark were the days when he came! Light, hope and purpose were so obscure. Four hundred years without revelation, without prophet or messiah left little reason for a positive attitude toward existence. Religion was empty form, politics was an unpredictable threat, while the healing arts and education brought little more than topical ointments, superstition and speculative philosophy.

No wonder the coming of Jesus was so exciting! His words were sure! His motives were pure! His kingdom would endure! From birth to ministry required those years of growth and maturity, but can't you see why Mark said, "They came to him from every quarter." And why an adversary said, "the whole world is gone after him." He was such a contrast to the dark, dismal and purposeless existence other leaders were experiencing.

... From a dozen directions darkness invades today! But, from above, his light, love and truth shines bright. All human failure, deception and disappointment are broken clouds through which Jesus will shine at Christmastime. If we will but let him in fact, he shines best in the darkness!

To all of you, from all of us, a Christ-filled Christmas!

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



Moore

Little Rock church tops study course awards list

Life Line Church, Little Rock, ranked 25th in the Southern Baptist Convention in church study course awards for 1983-84 with 548 awards, according to statistics compiled in the church study course records office at the Sunday School Board.

Other top ranking churches in Arkansas were Central Church, North Little Rock, 348 awards; First Church, Fayetteville, 288; First Church, Ward, 264; and Mt. Olive Church, Crossett, 242.

First Church, Montgomery, Ala., led all Southern Baptist churches in awards with 1,317. Texas led all states in total awards with 65,441.

For the year, persons enrolled in the study course system increased 58 percent, an increase from 370,930 to 586,734, according

to William R. Cox, church study course coordinator.

Cox noted that awards are up for the sixth consecutive year, following a 19-year decline from 1950 to 1978. This year, 659,108 awards were requested, a gain of 7,630 from last year.

According to Cox, one area which reflected significant growth during the year was the number of persons enrolled in the leadership diploma plan. This area registered an 88 percent increase, up to 256,167 from 136,291.

Top course award requests were for January Bible study, 84,658; MasterLife I, 54,563; Survival Kit for New Christians (adult edition), 40,031; MasterLife II, 28,698; and the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit, 18,039.

Church growth emphasized at conference

NEW ORLEANS—Church growth is "absolutely essential" and is based on "the very nature of God," according to Don Moore, executive director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention.

Moore was one of eight speakers Nov. 29-30 at the Louisiana Baptist Convention's sixth annual Church Growth Institute held this year at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

"Somehow or other our torch has begun to flicker," Moore said, referring to growth in the number of Southern Baptist churches.

He said church growth must be addressed and that it must not be based on tradition or ambition, nor strictly because of need. Moore said the real basis is found in the Bible.

One of the Old Testament names for God means "the God who makes fruitful or the God who multiplies," Moore said. As persons created in God's image, we therefore

"have no choice but to be a multiplier."

A God who is a God who multiplies expects his followers to multiply as well," Moore said. When we don't multiply, God's chastisement comes so that we will become fruitful again.

He listed four essentials in bringing about church growth: (1) have a new heart conviction for it no matter what the situation might be; (2) guard against wrong motives; (3) "theologically burn growth into your messages, into your heart and into your people;" and (4) develop a plan for missions and evangelism.

Moore warned against an attitude that expresses itself as "we're not into numbers" or that produces criticism of churches that are growing in numbers.

"God is a God who multiplies, and he can multiply in us and through us any time and any place," Moore said.

Music scholarship auditions set at OBU

Music scholarship auditions for the School of Music at Ouachita Baptist University for the 1985-86 academic year will be held Feb. 4-5 at Mabee Fine Arts Center at Ouachita, according to Charles Wright, dean of the School of Music.

Scholarships are available in voice, piano,

organ, strings, woodwinds, brass and percussion.

For more information or an application form, persons should contact Wright at Ouachita, P.O. Box 3771, Arkadelphia, AR 71923 or by calling (501) 246-4531, ext. 129.

Cooperative Program report: November

Summary for Nov. 1984	Jan.-Nov. gifts		% increase over previous year
	Year	Over (under) budget to date	
Received	1979	\$ 5,730.83	10.77
Budget	1980	296,716.14	12.19
	1981	160,290.44	10.65
	1982	(179,172.44)	8.70
	1983	(118,594.20)	10.62
	1984	(411,988.81)	5.20

Reaching our budget for the year is not beyond the realm of possibility. For receipts to be counted for the year, 1984, they must be in the accounting office on or before Tuesday, Jan. 8, 1985.—L.L. Collins Jr.

by Millie Gill / ABN staff writer

people

Harrison Johns is serving as pastor of the Cherry Valley Church. He moved there from Conway where he had served for eight years as pastor of the Pleasant Grove Church, leading the congregation in weekly outreach Bible study ministries at a local nursing home and at a city housing authority complex.

Winford Callison is serving as pastor of the Hopewell Church at Mountain Home.

Jim Rawdon has resigned as pastor of the Lepanto Calvary Church to continue work on his doctorate at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Ron Moss has resigned as pastor of the Pine Ridge Church.

David Miller observed his fifth year of service with Russellville First Church Dec. 18. Now serving as associate pastor, he previously served as minister of education and administration.

Sam T. Cathey of Hot Springs will join the staff of First Southern Church in Del City, Okla., in January, serving as staff evangelist. A native of Camden, Cathey has served in both Arkansas and Oklahoma.

Christmas celebrated at Bartholomew center

The first of two Christmas programs at Bartholomew Migrant Center drew 250 persons Dec. 8. Kate Carter, WMU director for Bartholomew Association, coordinated the ingathering of gifts for migrant farm worker families. Area WMUs collected 180 gifts, were to be distributed at the Dec. 15 Christmas program.

Springlake Bible study set for February

The annual Mid-Winter Bible Study at Springlake Assembly at Lonsdale has been set for Feb. 18-20, 1985.

The event, Monday afternoon through Wednesday noon, will feature Old and New Testament studies and provide helps for growing an evangelistic church, friendship evangelism and strengthening the home.

Information on meals and accommodations may be obtained from Oscar Golden, pastor of Benton First Church.

James M. Moore of Marmaduke died Dec. 12 at age 65. He was a retired Baptist minister, having served Arkansas churches, including Third Avenue Church in Paragould. Survivors include his wife, Violet Moore; a stepson, Bob Evans Paragould; 43 foster children; two sisters; and two grandchildren.

Gregory Scott Gibbs of Vilonia died Dec. 11 at age 19. He was a member of Vilonia First Church and a student at Pulaski Vocational Technical School. Survivors include his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Wendell Gibbs; his grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. C. W. Shaw and Mr. and Mrs. L. E. Gibbs, all of Vilonia; and a great-grandmother.

Frank Harvey is serving as youth director at the Finch Church in Greene County Association.

Mr. and Mrs. Lester Turner of Hoxie celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary Dec. 7. They were married Dec. 7, 1919 in the Fender Community and have actively served for 39 years in the Hoxie First Church. Mrs. Turner, the former Flora Allison, has served as both a Sunday school teacher and as a leader in Woman's Missionary Union. Both were involved in the latest Hoxie church program. They are parents of seven children, two of whom are deceased.

briefly

Bentonville First Church held a deacon ordination service Dec. 9 to ordain Jerry Casey, Joe Haynie, Vee Hoyle, Marty Lutke, Don Rone and Jerry Stine.

Pulaski Heights Church in Little Rock held a service Dec. 9 to ordain Paul Spann and Brode Morgan as deacons. Tom Greer, interim pastor, and Jim Gattis, chairman of deacons, were in charge.

Piggott First Church honored its pastor, Clyde Spurgin, and Mrs. Spurgin and Alan Parks, minister of music/youth, with an appreciation day Dec. 9.

East Side Church in Fort Smith hosted an appreciation banquet Dec. 6 for city firemen, recognizing them for their services to both the church and religious community.

Central Church in Hot Springs held services Dec. 2 to ordain Harlan Walker, Jim Geurin, Frank Koenig and Mack Brown as deacons.

Elliott Church at Camden held a service Dec. 9 to ordain W. R. Eppinette, Alfred Key, James Jones and J. W. McElroy as deacons.

Barnett Church in Little Rock held a deacon ordination service Nov. 18 for Archie Hoesch, George Maghar and Don Pipkins. Pastor Carter Dey was speaker.

buildings

Crossroads Church at Portia recently broke ground to begin a building program. Marvin Reynolds, director of missions for Black River Association, and Floyd Tidsworth, director of church extension for Arkansas Baptist State Convention, were speakers.

Beech Street Church of Gurdon members voted Dec. 2 to construct a new church plant on a six-acre tract of land located on Red Springs Road, one mile east of the present location. The 17,395-square foot structure will include an auditorium seating 385, classroom space, an office wing, music facilities, library, kitchen and fellowship hall/recreation area. Construction is projected to begin in the spring of 1985. The project will be funded by direct gifts, pledges and bond sales, according to pastor Greg Stanley.

Alma First Church has begun construction on a building that will house a gymnasium, fellowship hall, eight classrooms, conference room and kitchen.

Geyer Springs First Church held a groundbreaking service Dec. 16 for an adult education building, the largest building commitment in the history of the church.

new work

Conway-Perry Association, in its annual meeting, voted to begin three missions in 1985, according to Refus Caldwell, director of missions.

Houston Church is beginning a mission at Sweet Home in Perry County. Refus Caldwell, director of missions for Conway-Perry Association, is serving as interim pastor.

Gravel Ridge and Bayou Meto Churches are jointly sponsoring a mission in Sycamore Trailer Park. They are providing both workers and finances for the new venture. Carel Norman and Bill Brown are pastors of the sponsoring churches.

Retiree finds meaningful ministry in hospital visitation

by Gene Herrington

Johnie Catlett, Little Rock's hospital visitor extraordinary, recommends the ministry as a retirement project with real purpose.

And Catlett, a deacon in Little Rock's Olivet Church, has the experience to make such a recommendation. He probably qualified as Arkansas' top hospital visitor during the last year.

His purpose is not to establish records, however, but to minister to people in the time of need.

Shortly after he retired in 1980, he became the "official hospital visitor" for Olivet.

He recalls that during one of his own stays in the hospital—a persistent back problem prompted early retirement from a computer job with the state that demanded eight hours a day standing—he gained a new appreciation for those who made meaningful visits.

Catlett tries to make daily calls on every Olivet member in the nine hospitals in the Greater Little Rock area. But his visits are not confined to the church's membership. He has become so well known to hospital personnel that he is called on to minister to "outsiders" who may not have a minister or friend "to lean on."

During the 12 months ending in October, Catlett made 1,426 visits in his 925 trips to hospitals. During this time he visited with 195 patients; on some days he visited as many as 16 patients. He estimated that he made about 200 visits outside the Olivet church family.

"Shortly after I retired, a deacon in the church asked what I was going to do with my time," Catlett recalled. "I replied that as

soon as I recovered from my back problem I was going to begin a hospital visitation ministry. My back improved, and I began the ministry about three years ago.

"Initially, I visited those having major surgery, but in time this desire to help others during such trying time grew into what has become a full-time ministry."

On occasion, Catlett has gone directly into intensive care units, in some cases to the point of scrubbing and putting on gown, gloves and mask to make a visit to those critically ill.

Catlett has a ready answer for those friends who question how he can tolerate constant association with sickness and death.

"The Lord has given me a heart filled with compassion and concern for this ministry," he explained. He has given me stability, calmness and a quietness to enter into these rooms and try to strengthen the faith in those people."

He admits that it was not an easy ministry at the beginning, but adds "every day it grows in importance."

"A few years ago I was not emotionally equipped to handle this 'job,'" he said. "But the Lord has solved that 'problem,' too."

He hastens to add that he feels that his ministry in no way lessens the importance of visits from the church pastor or other church friends.

In response to friends who question the giving up on his retirement free-time for this ministry, Catlett replies: "During the summer months and on warm winter days, I golf three or four mornings a week, so I don't

start my visitation until about 10 or 11 a.m.

"One of my hobbies is outdoor cooking, so often I cook our evening meal on the grill. After the evening meal is over I go to the mall and walk four miles about five times a week.

"I try to keep physically fit as well as spiritually and mentally alert.

His experiences have prompted suggestions on hospital visitation: (1) Be as cheerful as possible. (2) Don't stay too long. (3) Don't worry about "what to say." The Lord will provide. Some just a hug, or holding a hand or shedding a tear is all that is needed. (4) Don't put it off. "The more you get involved in this ministry to others the more the Lord increases your compassion and joy."

Catlett's vision for others is that they might get involved in a similar ministry.

High on his things-to-do list is providing leadership in helping others get involved in this type ministry. He is seeking the Lord's leadership in what avenue this help should take.

His commitment is clearly visible as he shares, "Just think if one retiree in each of Arkansas' Baptist churches would make one hospital visit each day that would total to more than 400,000 visits each year. If this caught hold in only one in every 10 churches, 40,150 visits would be made each year in the name of Jesus.

"It would change a lot of lives—the visitors and those visited."

Gene Herrington, member of Olivet Church, works in communications for a Little Rock corporation.

Southwestern Seminary graduates nine Arkansans in December



Bannert



Sanders



Taylor



Cude



Lineberger



Massey



McKown

Nine Arkansans were among 332 persons receiving degrees from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, Dec. 14. Included in the total were 30 doctoral degrees, the largest number ever in a Southwestern commencement.

Receiving the master of arts in religious education were Karen Lynn Bannert, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Bannert of North Little Rock; Donald Ray Sanders, son of Mrs. Naomi Sanders of Pochontas; and Tina Marie Taylor, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. J.A. Taylor of Paragould.

Jonathan Gayle Cude, son of Mr. and Mrs. Jesse Willis Cude of Walnut Ridge, received

the master of arts in marriage and family counseling.

Receiving the master of divinity degree were David Richard Lineberger, son-in-law of Mr. and Mrs. Max Yazza of Little Rock; Robert Mark Massey, son of Mr. and Mrs. Loy Massey of Mountain View; and Stanley Earl McKown, son of E.E. McKown of Fort Smith.

Willis Trueman Moore, pastor of Fort Smith East Side Church received the doctor of ministry degree. Keith Rosenbaum, professor of psychology and director of counseling at Southern Baptist College, Walnut Ridge, received the doctor of education degree.



Moore



Rosenbaum

Children fight against death in Ethiopia famine

by Robert O'Brien

WOLETA, Ethiopia (BP)—Naked children, underweight but lively, scampered after a Southern Baptist relief vehicle bumping and bouncing down a dusty bush road in this parched area of southern Ethiopia.

Their joyful cries and sparkling eyes struck a sharp contrast to the silent, vacant-eyed children from northern Ethiopia the world has watched die on the nightly TV news.

Earlier, a farmer approached the vehicle during a rest stop to tell Southern Baptist missionary Lynn Groce what missionary feeding and medical assistance had meant to 40 families where he lives.

Heartened by intermittent rain which briefly moistened the earth, he had planted three different crops. Each failed when the rain failed, leaving no food for the families and little or no forage for his dying animals.

He told in excited Amharic how he drives his precious oxen on a four-hour round trip to find water. "Some people have two oxen," he said. "Some have one. Most have none." The drought continues to take its toll.

Then he spoke of the missionary feeding centers which have made the difference between survival and starvation for his people. "Our only hope is you," he told Groce.

The team headed on, this time with even more appreciation for the children along the road who had found hope in what Christians could do to aid their desperate situation.

At a feeding center farther down the road, more underweight children crowded the serving lines, awaiting bowls of "fafa," a mixture of vitamin-enriched grains, soy beans and milk. Eyes, once dull but now coming to life, riveted on the hot meal as they licked the last taste of food from their bowls.

Five months earlier at least 10 of these children died each week from hunger and malnutrition-related causes. Now the toll has dropped to nearly zero. In the north, where 20 to 50 children die each day, conditions often force medical personnel to select only the hardest to receive food and medical care, rather than those beyond hope.

The FMB gave \$50,000 in hunger funds through the Baptist Mission of Ethiopia to assist a feeding project sponsored by the Sudan Interior Mission. Another \$150,000 will fund startup costs for a program of short-term relief and long-term development. Southern Baptists will operate in Menz-Gishe in central Ethiopia, where conditions are worse than in the south five months ago.

That five months of feeding and medical care has moved hungry people from the brink of starvation to the edge of health. It proves the value of erecting a first line of defense against famine, rather than pouring all resources only into completely deteriorated areas.

The SIM team's work isn't done. A number of children, eyes vacant and lusterless, still need help. The team must stay until rains come and crops grow properly or their results will fade away. But they have weathered the worst.

The Southern Baptist survey team drove away, pointing toward other areas of Ethiopia where the denomination can use its resources in physical and spiritual ministries.

Children scampered after the car, and SIM worker John Stillwell's words came to mind.

He had looked proudly at a skinny little boy waiting to be fed. The boy verged on death when he first came to the center.

"Now, he chases my car when I drive by his home," Stillwell said. "I don't like for these kids to chase cars. But this little fellow can chase me anytime."

Other images of Africa also flooded together—scenes of children who represent whatever hope the troubled continent has for the future.

A thought prevailed. The world's response will determine whether they die as emaciated skeletons in their mothers' scrawny arms or grow up full of the life, enthusiasm and love so typical of African children.

Even in times of good harvest, they live in countries where infant mortality is high and average life span short. Death is an ever-present reality. But the children's love of life and each other sends a message to us.

The Southern Baptist relief survey team had watched this love in action at the feeding center. A six-year-old Ethiopian girl cuddled her tiny brother in her arms, carefully spooning "fafa" into his mouth and wiping away his tears as tenderly as a mother would. She was hungry, but her helpless little brother came first.

The Southern Baptist team remembered the small tuft of hair on her little brother's head and recalled an Ethiopian tradition.

Ethiopian parents often shave all of their children's head, except for that little tuft near the front. Tradition says that's done so that if they die the angels will have something to grab onto to pull them into heaven.

Heaven would have to wait for one little boy in this parched land where children die.

Robert O'Brien is overseas news coordinator for the Foreign Mission Board.

Photo by John Cheyne

If you want to help relieve the African famine...

There are two ways you can contribute through the Foreign Mission Board to hunger relief in Ethiopia and other African nations ravaged by famine and drought:

(1) Give through your church. It's the easiest way and the FMB recommends it. Contributions must be designated for "Ethiopia hunger relief" or "Africa hunger relief." Gifts will be sent to the Foreign Mission Board and on to Southern Baptist missionaries in Africa.

(2) Send gifts directly to the Foreign Mission Board, designating them as explained above. Mail contributions to the FMB, Box 6767, Richmond, VA 23230.





Photo by Robert O'Brien

Photo by John Chynoweth



Photo by Robert O'Brien



(Left) Southern Baptist agricultural missionary Lynn Groce surveys a parched cornfield in southern Ethiopia which he predicts will be a dustbowl in six months if rain doesn't come. Most world attention has been focused on already desitute areas in northern Ethiopia, while marginal areas in the south, which will soon deteriorate, have been largely ignored. (Top left) A tiny baby, recovering from severe malnutrition, lies in his mothers arms at a relief center near Woleta, Ethiopia, where feeding and medical care salvaged his life. (Top right) An Ethiopian girl, grateful for her brother's returning health, feeds him at a center near Woleta. (Right) A long-suffering Ethiopian child, once on the verge of starvation, is weighed at a Woleta feeding center. (Above) Southern Baptist nurse practitioner Sharon Smith of Darlington, SC., checks the progress of a child recovering from near-starvation at Woleta.



Your state convention at work

Christian Life Council Things that bug

As a W.A.S.P. (Oop! Cross out that P), as a W.A.S.B. — White Anglo Saxon Baptist — citizen of this country there are



Parker

two things lately that really bug me: E Pluribus Unum and Justice. I have no problem with the Unum, it's the E Pluribus that bothers me. There's no big problem with the concept of religious liberty. Justice is another thing. Our pledge of allegiance concludes "...under

God, with liberty and justice for all."

We really should dust off our dictionaries and U.S. history books and do some serious reviewing about what's on our National Seal of State and in our oft-quoted pledge of allegiance.

Better than that, we must more prayerfully and seriously consider what the Hebrew prophets and Jesus taught about love and justice for all.

You know, what really bugs me the most is that the one we profess as Savior and Lord taught about practicing what we preach. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." — **Bob Parker, director**

Evangelism Christmas evangelism

The message of Christmas is pure and simple evangelism. Evangelism is sharing the Good News of Christ.



Shell

When Joseph found that Mary was expectant of child out of wedlock, he gave serious thought to the action he would take. As he thought, he decided to put her away privately. The message of the Lord came to him in a dream saying, "Joseph, thou son of

David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife; for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. She shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins." The message of Christmas is, "A Savior is born."

The angel of the Lord appeared again on the night of Jesus' birth. This time the angel came to the shepherds saying unto them, "Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all

people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." Again, the message of Christmas is that of a Savior.

The shepherds came to visit with the Lord personally and found him lying in a manger. They realized that he truly was the Savior. They began to share the message of evangelism as they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. Christmas reminds us to sound forth the message that a Savior was born. — **Clarence Shell, director**

Missions It can happen again

Christmas reminds us of the time when God came into the world with Good News for all people. God has continued to seek to deliver that message of love to every person in every place in every generation.



Tidsworth

Starting a new church is so much like Christmas! It is someone who has the Good News going to a new community or group with the Christmas message. I remember a Christmas program in a home when I was a pre-school boy. How delightful were the popcorn balls and presents. The singing of Christmas Christmas songs brought real joy.

The program was in a home because Forest Mission Church was starting (north of Cedarville, Ark.) but had no building. As that church developed, my mother, father, sisters and I became developing disciples. I am glad God is ever extending the Good News. Merry Christmas! — **Floyd Tidsworth Jr., church extension director**

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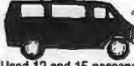
Family and child care I was a stranger and...

"What do a six-month-old baby, a 17-year-old South Vietnamese refugee girl, twin three-month-old sisters and an active 13-year-old boy have in common? They were each placed in our Family Foster Care program last year. These children, and others like them, needed loving Christian families that could help heal their hurts and meet their needs.

"We are thankful for Baptist families that open their homes and hearts to provide foster care for children in need."—David Perry.

"Foster parents are needed: There are opportunities to influence the life of a child that many of you can provide. If you have wondered whether God would have you share your home temporarily with a child in need, but have just not gotten around to inquiring about the opportunities, please contact the associational office for information. Arkansas Baptist Family and Child Care Services often needs Christian families to provide temporary care, love and stability for children. This ministry can be a blessing not only to a child but also to the family who is willing to minister in this way. 'I was a stranger, and ye took me in.' (Matthew 25:35)"—Gary York.

These words from two of our staff speak so well of the opportunity for families to become involved in meeting these needs. Our agency provides financial assistance, medical coverage and professional supervision to foster parents. If you are interested in more information, please get in touch with one of our area directors. "Help a child: God will bless you!" — **Johnny G. Biggs, executive director**



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Witness training now required at New Orleans seminary

NEW ORLEANS—In the past, a seminary degree did not necessarily guarantee training and experience in personal witnessing. In the future, a degree from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary will.

As of this semester, the "field education" requirement in the seminary's basic studies curriculum will be fulfilled by completing the Southern Baptist Convention's Continuing Witnessing Training (CWT) program. All students must take it in order to graduate.

The course involves both classroom training and actual experience in witnessing. Plus, the witnessing is done in cooperation with New Orleans area churches.

"Every single student will contribute to evangelizing the city in some way, and he will do it through the local church," said Charles S. Kelley, Jr., assistant professor of evangelism and director of field education.

During the first four weeks of witnessing, 16 persons made professions of faith and were kelly in contact with a local church. Kelly said most people have "a certain amount of fear" of personal witnessing. "The

only way to overcome it is to do it," he said. "It is important at this point (while in seminary) to make people face the issue" of personal evangelism.

CWT is a program developed by the Home Mission Board with a two-fold intent: (1) to teach people how to witness; and (2) to train people to teach others how to witness.

The semester-length course includes two hours of classroom training and two hours of witnessing experience weekly. Students are divided into teams of two or three to work with one of 18 participating churches.



A CHURCH IN THE CITY, REACHING THE WORLD

This is the title for the history book about First Baptist Church, Houston, Texas. This beautifully bound volume will include all aspects of the Church's history from its beginning in 1841 to the present.

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Candles glowed in memory of victims of drunken driving Dec. 10 as state chapters of Motorists Against Drunk Driving sponsored a vigil on the steps of the state capitol in Little Rock. Seventy persons who had been killed or injured by drunken motorists were named as the candles were lighted by family members or friends. The vigil took place during National Drunk and Drugged Driving Awareness Week. The MADD groups also sponsored a poster contest on the theme "One for the Road Is One Too Many," and the posters were displayed inside the capitol building. The citizen groups seek to keep the public aware of drunken driving as a continuing problem despite legislation adopted in the state in 1983.

ABN photo / GRI

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Elder urges recommitment to Bold Mission Thrust

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—A ringing challenge to Southern Baptists to "recapture the dream" and commit themselves anew to the achievement of Bold Mission Thrust has been sounded by Baptist Sunday School Board President Lloyd Elder.

Speaking to state convention leaders in Nashville, Tenn., to attend annual planning meetings, Elder emphasized, "The best thing we can do is put Jesus Christ back in the Baptist headlines. We would like, along with you, to help Southern Baptists to recapture the dream of sharing the gospel with every person in the world by the year 2000."

"It could be that Southern Baptists have spent far too long trying to resolve the issues of our diversity and too little spiritual energy on our God-given Kingdom assignments," said Elder.

Harry Piland, director of the Sunday school department, said he believes it is still clearly possible for Southern Baptists to reach a Sunday school enrollment of 8.5 million by Sept. 30, 1985. The projected

1984 enrollment, with a one-year gain of 31,000, stands at an all-time high of 7.84 million after five consecutive years of growth.

"We are on the road to victory, but we are not there," said Piland. "There are 298 more days, 42 weeks and 43 Sundays (until Sept. 30, 1985). We intend to use every one of those days working, praying and believing God will give us victory," pledged Piland.

Elder listed seven challenges to the achievement of Bold Mission Thrust: reach people for Christ, teach the Bible, develop believers, strengthen families, build up the churches, support bold missions and be a servant institution. He cited the board's satellite telecommunications network, BTN, as an example of the board's commitment to serving the denomination.

"Baptist Telecommunication Network is not yet a great strength in the midst of Southern Baptist life," Elder acknowledged. "Any new program has a development phase, brings about necessary changes, lays burdens on people already working diligent-

ly and demands valuable resources. But I would hate to think a denomination of 14.4 million Baptists would enter the telecommunications age with a commitment only to the print medium."

Emphasizing his belief the SBC has dependable agencies directed by faithful leaders, Elder urged denominational support of a world-wide mission.

"We are Southern Baptists. We are cooperating Southern Baptists. We are Cooperative Program Southern Baptists. We are missionary Southern Baptists," he said. "The agencies are dependent on the Baptist people who gave them birth."

Elder said a five-year plan for language publishing and support of an effort to train one million Sunday school workers as witnesses are only two ways the board supports reaching people. "I wish we could grow up a new generation of pastors who believe building great Sunday schools is the way to build great churches," said Elder.

Also, he noted, "We must develop believers as Christians, as church members, as leaders, as witnesses and as Southern Baptists. There are thousands... who need to hear convincingly about our Baptist distinctives—about the competency of the soul, salvation by grace alone, priesthood of the believer and religious liberty."

Elder called for stronger efforts to support existing churches and to start new ones. "We need new lighthouses, and we want to care for the churches we have now," he said.

He said he believes Southern Baptists are willing to work to make dreams happen.

"Southern Baptists have been willing through the decades to move out on a dream that this world needs Jesus Christ. We are the kind of people who dream and work at it consistently. We must accept the challenge and commit ourselves anew to Bold Mission Thrust."



Training leaders challenged to continue discipleship

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—State church training directors and associates meeting at the Baptist Sunday School Board for annual planning sessions heard reports from state leaders and were challenged to continue the task of discipleship in the local church.

Roy Edgemon, director of the church training department, introduced plans for a 1985-90 emphasis on Developing Believers. "We must never let up on our responsibility of enlisting and enrolling people for training," Edgemon said. "Discipleship isn't an easy task, but our churches will not grow numerically unless we help them to grow spiritually."

Edgemon noted church training projects included in the developing believers emphasis include new member training, in-depth discipleship, doctrine study and leadership training.

The church training and Sunday school

departments, along with the Home Mission Board's evangelism section, are cooperating on a five-year emphasis from 1985-90 to train one million Sunday school workers in evangelism in preparation for the 1986 "Good News America" revivals.

Piland noted the combined effort is the "fulfillment of a dream to reach people with the gospel of Jesus Christ. We need to reach and teach persons and involve them in the mission of reaching others for the Lord."

The church training department has developed an equipping center module, Training Sunday School Workers in Evangelism, to be used during the training emphasis. Edgemon said church training will support the Southern Baptist Convention's 1985-90 Bold Mission Thrust emphases on reaching people, developing believers and strengthening missions.

State directors from Arkansas and Missis-

sippi shared how their states were supporting the training emphasis on developing believers.

Robert Holley from Arkansas said developing believers conferences to train associational leaders were held in the spring and summer of 1984.

"We have had an enthusiastic response to the emphasis," he said. "The resources help Southern Baptists know who they are, what they believe and why. In addition, church training is helping to develop leaders who provide a good foundation for other church programs."

Mississippi director Mose Dangerfield said the concept of developing believers was introduced in the state at combined conferences for pastors and associational leaders. In the past two years, 60 such conferences have been held in Mississippi. An additional 25 conferences will be held in 1985.

'Call' erred in crediting source; Parks says, 'Must speak truth in love'

by Bob Stanley

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)—President R. Keith Parks said the editor of *The Call: Dallas '85*, a new independent publication, had apologized for using one of Parks' articles from the agency magazine, *The Commission*, without crediting its source.

But Parks told the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board Dec. 12 he believes the content of the article is correct and his responsibility requires him to continue "speaking the truth in love" whenever necessary for the good of foreign missions.

He said Editor Larry Dipboye of *The Call* had promised to run a clarification in its next issue indicating the article had been reprinted from the October-November issue of the foreign mission magazine.

A printed notice in *The Commission* gives permission to reprint non-copyrighted articles from the publication, "if credit is given" to the magazine.

Parks' article was reprinted on the back cover page of the new publication, which describes itself as the voice of "loyal Southern Baptists." The newspaper contends recent conventions have elected a series of leaders "who have lost touch with what it means to be a Southern Baptist."

While he was not notified that the article was being reprinted, Parks said this is not too unusual because his writings frequently are reprinted without advance notification. "And I don't object because I think what I have written is correct and maybe it will help those who read it," he said.

Board member Mark Corts of Winston-Salem, N.C., at the close of the board meeting, suggested that a "simple, low-key, non-defensive statement" be released to Baptist Press. He said he felt this was necessary because the article appeared in the context of a partisan paper that had been given wide and unsolicited distribution. Corts said the paper made the inference that those "in that party" were pro-cooperative missions and those not in the party were not pro-cooperative missions.

The Parks article, entitled "Gospel Mis-

sions' or Cooperative Missions," said there are still some remnants today of a controversy which raged almost a century ago over whether missions should be supported directly by individuals and churches or through the united efforts of the denomination and its mission board.

Parks noted in the article that at the same time missionary Lottie Moon was rallying Southern Baptist women to support the board's efforts, a breakaway group of 12 North China missionaries headed by T.P. Crawford led a strong attack on the board from 1884 to 1893.

"Crawfordism," Parks wrote, got support from landmark Baptists who already distrusted the convention and its boards. Later in the article Parks stated: "Some Southern Baptist descendants of 'Crawfordism' are at work today. . . . Their approach is to solicit support from churches or other groups and carry on missions outside the way we Southern Baptists have committed ourselves to work."

Parks said he has received five letters and two phone calls since the article appeared in the new publication. One letter interpreted his article as an attack on "our newly elected officers" and said Parks should apologize to them or "resign immediately and do your politics outside the office. . . ."

The board president said he had reviewed the article carefully and saw nothing in its content for which he should apologize. Parks said he was troubled by "a growing tendency to categorize and to react emotionally rather than to evaluate content and react in the way that we have functioned as a denomination."

One question he asked those writing him was whether they would have questioned the article's content had they read it first in *The Commission*.

Parks asked why the position taken in the article, one that Southern Baptists have traditionally held and to which they are committed, should be viewed as "being in defiance of our newly elected officers and an apology

due them."

But he strongly defended his duty to speak out even in times of controversy when anything is said or done which would erode confidence in the board or Southern Baptists' foreign missions program.

Parks said he is frequently asked whether the current controversy in the convention is affecting foreign missions. "My answer to that question is 'yes,'" he said. "I am not trying to assign blame as to who is responsible for the controversy. The fact of the controversy is apparent, and the fact that it does affect foreign missions and all that we are doing as a denomination is also apparent."

Another point raised in two or three of the letters and in other circles is whether an agency executive should speak out on controversial matters when he is responsible to all Southern Baptists.

Parks said he'd told some of the board members in committee discussions that "if the day ever comes when I or any other elected official of any Baptist agency declines to speak what we feel to be right and true and best, then you ought to fire us, but not because we've said something controversial some of our constituency may not like."

"I hope none of you in your pulpit would simply speak what you think all of the members would be pleased to hear, fearing that you might say something controversial or might step on some major contributor's toes," he said.

Parks told board members he assumes he is in his position and they are in theirs "to try to speak out on the causes for which we are responsible in a responsible way, speaking the truth in love and certainly disagreeing when we need to, but disagreeing in a spirit of love and harmony."

The mission executive said he has felt affirmed as he has discussed with "other groupings of the board" his resolve to speak out whenever the cause of missions is threatened. But he noted it has never been his intention to polarize Southern Baptists or to try to take sides.

First Church, Atlanta doubles Cooperative Program gifts

ATLANTA (BP)—Fulfilling a pledge made earlier this year by Southern Baptist Convention President Charles Stanley, First Church of Atlanta voted to double its gifts to Southern Baptist missions through the denomination's Cooperative Program.

The congregation adopted a 1985 budget of \$4.75 million, which is identical in total amount to the 1984 budget, but allocates \$250,000 instead of \$122,000 to the SBC Cooperative Program.

Earlier this year in a meeting with Baptist editors, Stanley, pastor of the church since

1971, said he had challenged the church's budget committee to increase Cooperative Program giving to at least five percent.

Fred Powell, senior associate pastor of the church, confirmed that the church had responded favorably to Stanley's challenge. Powell said the church budgets its Cooperative Program allocation on a dollar amount rather than a percentage basis.

Powell said earlier reports the church gives 2.1 percent to SBC missions through the Cooperative Program were in error. The percentage is actually 2.6 percent for 1984,

and 5.2 percent for 1985, Powell explained.

He added that this year First Church is giving an additional \$75,000 through the SBC Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions and \$25,000 through the SBC Annie Armstrong Offering for Home Missions as part of \$600,000 total mission giving.

He said total gifts through the church in 1984 would be about \$4.2 million, almost \$500,000 less than the budget because of redistribution of some income for building purposes.

International

The Word of Life

by Randy Maxwell, West Church, Batesville
Basic passage: John 1

Focal passage: John 1:1-18

Central truth: Jesus, who is the divine Word, was made flesh so he could offer life to all who would believe in him.

Years ago, a young medical missionary in China was baffled by a horrible disease that he could not diagnose or treat. So he purposely took the disease in order to return to America for treatment and study. At Johns Hopkins Hospital, the cause and cure for the disease was finally determined. He then returned to China with the knowledge to treat those who were afflicted.

The people in China knew without any doubt that missionary's great love and concern for them when he was willing to take their sickness into his own body that they might be saved from it.

This is the very message that we find in the glorious doxology of John's Gospel. Jesus, the eternal Word of God, the creator of the universe, gave up his glories in Heaven and became flesh. God so loves us that he took upon himself man's disease—sin—and paid the price for our sin through his death upon the cross.

The miracle of Christmas goes beyond the angels singing to shepherds in the field or wise men bringing gifts to a newly born king. John clearly reveals the real miracle is that God himself visited mankind in the form of a helpless baby. Through that baby born in a manger on the star-lit night in Bethlehem, man was finally able to know God in his fullness.

Before Christ was born, man could only know about God. Through Jesus we can now know God. We can have an intimate relationship with that first-mind, the master-creator of the universe.

"And we beheld his glory..." The departed glory had returned, and this time it was full of grace and truth—grace to forgive us from the penalty of sin and truth to set us free from the bondage of sin.

Yet, what were the results of that visit? For the most part, he was rejected. Sadly, so many are rejecting his love and grace even today.

"But as many as received him, they shall receive the power to become sons of God." Let us come in faith this Christmas and adore him, Christ the Lord.

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Life and Work

The shepherds

by Leroy P. Stringfield,
First Church, Jacksonville

Basic passage: Luke 2:8-20

Focal passages: Luke 2:10, 20

Central truth: No one can evangelize others unless he has been evangelized.

A person who has lost a childhood excitement about the Christmas season possibly views December in a mundane manner. To lose one's capacity for excitement may allow a materialistic view of Christmas. The result is a concept of Christmas as candy, recreation, individualism, sensuality, temporalness, money, agitation and showiness. Likewise, one should avoid reading Luke 2 merely as the historical account of the birth of Jesus.

Verse 20 states that the shepherds, after personally confirming the birth of Christ the Lord, returned to their sheeptending. But, in contrast to their former quietness (v. 8), the shepherds were now glorifying and praising God. Verse 17 says these men earlier had begun spreading the word about Jesus.

The change in the shepherds was due to the fact they had been evangelized. The King James Version says, "I bring you good tidings of great joy" (v. 10). Wycliff translates it "I evangelize to you a great joy."

To evangelize is to do more than simply make someone aware of truth. The fact of Jesus' birth was told to the shepherds (v. 20). But the shepherds had experienced that which was a testimony from others. What they had seen and heard was tremendous.

Among the events accompanying the announcement were a glory light, fearful trembling, a herald angel, a description of a specific sign about the baby, a heavenly choir and the manger scene. All of this means God overwhelmed the shepherds. The result was a return to faithful service and a glorifying and praising of God for all that the shepherds had experienced. The shepherds had become evangelists.

Any Christian today also can come more alive in faith and action by paying closer attention to God's revelation. Some may wonder as did those to whom the shepherds witnessed (v. 18), and some may ponder as Mary did (v. 19). Lacking in evangelism today may be those announcement-events a less reverent mind may label "theatrical!" But a changed life is notable physically. Any Christian can be an evangelist by remembering his own experiences and by telling others what God had done in Jesus Christ.

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Bible Book

Jesus' birth and childhood

by Tom Smith, First Church, Bentonville
Basic passage: Luke 2:1-52

Focal passage: Luke 2:7-14, 25-32, 52

Central truth: Our first Christmas comes when Jesus is born into our hearts.

What can be said about Christmas that has not already been said? We too often minimize its true meaning because of our over-familiarity with it. I've written the following poem to help us be refreshed as we share it with others:

The most precious gift

The night was still, the stars were gleaming as the couple eased into the town,

They asked for rooms, but there were none, only a little hay on the ground.

Into the stable they made their way, the carpenter and pregnant virgin;

They would not sleep for very long because the child's coming was too certain.

While others slept the night away and dreamed of days gone by,

The Christ-child was born in Bethlehem, as the scriptures testify.

Outside of town were shepherds attending to their sheep,

When suddenly an angelic choir did sweep them off their feet.

"Be not afraid" the angel said as the shepherds knelt there trembling,

"For unto you is born this day your Savior, Lord and King.

Arise and go to Bethlehem and worship the lowly baby,

Then go out and spread it abroad," which they did so very quickly.

As the child grew older in Nazareth, he was filled with grace and wisdom;

In fact, he astonished the temple teachers as he taught about the Kingdom.

Although his birth and childhood occurred so long ago,

He continues to live and reign on high and love us poor sinners so.

Oh, my dear friend, now is the time to let Jesus be born in your heart.

He'll forgive your sins, make you clean within by giving you a brand new start.

Do not delay; accept today the most precious gift you'll ever receive:

It's paid-in-full and will be yours the moment you believe!

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International

Believe and receive life

by Randy Maxwell, West Church, Batesville
 Basic passage: John 2:1-11; 3:16-18

Focal passage: John 2:1-11

Central truth: As we study our Lord's first miracle, we find evidence in his miraculous power to convince people to trust him for salvation.

Whenever studying John's gospel, one must always keep one fact in mind. Beyond the simple, surface story that anyone can understand and re-tell, there is a wealth of deeper meaning to grasp.

Most of us are familiar with the story that is conveyed in this second chapter of John. The occasion was a wedding feast in Cana, a village quite near Nazareth. The obvious significance of the event was our Lord's first miracle. Unfortunately, we often spend so much time arguing over the exact content of the wine that we miss the real significance of the account.

Please note there were six stone waterpots which held the water that Jesus turned to wine. According to the Jews, seven is the number of perfection or completion and six is the number of imperfection. Thus, those six stone waterpots stand for all the imperfections of the Jewish law. Jesus came to fulfill the Jewish law as he states in Matthew 5:17. By his coming, Jesus turned the imperfection of the law into the perfection of grace.

I believe John's account also indicates that our Lord's grace is enough and more to meet our every situation. Jesus probably provided them that day with 180 gallons of wine. No wedding party on earth could drink that much, just as no need on earth can exhaust the grace of Christ.

The Greeks had stories and ceremonies where they believed their gods provided wine at certain festival times. John was saying to the Greeks, "Jesus has come to do what you have always dreamed your gods could do. He is the one you have hoped for and longed for in your mythological accounts."

Today, we can see in this passage that whenever Jesus comes into a life there comes a new quality which is like turning water into wine. Without Jesus, life is dull, flat and drab. When Jesus comes into a life it really becomes exciting, thrilling and wonderful. If you want a new exhilaration, become a follower of Jesus and there will come a change in your life like water turning into wine.

Life and Work

The wise men

by Leroy P. Stringfield,
 First Church, Jacksonville

Basic passage: Matthews 2:1-11

Focal passage: Matthew 2:7-8

Central truth: The real meaning of Christmas is known only in faith and belief.

The story of the wise men is an excellent opportunity to examine the accuracy of what Christians believe. Much of what is thought about the wise men is more legendary than biblical. For example, the visitors probably were not philosophers. Apparently, they were "magi"; the word from which English gets "magician." The men maybe were astrologers who would be aware of the stars.

Again, "from the east" (v. 1) literally is "from the risings of the sun." Such general directions could include any country. No nationality is suggested.

The notion that the men were kings is based on an interpretation of Isaiah 60:3 and Revelation 21:24. "Three" kings is based on the naming of three gifts. Caspar, Balthasar and Melchior are non-biblical names. Moderns likewise continue to speak of the apple in the sin-story, the whale in the story of Jonah and the pitchfork of Satan. Myth, English literature and other influences continue to plague those whose knowledge is based on secondary sources instead of the Scripture itself.

When verses 7 and 8 repeat the word translated in the King James Version as "diligently," a modern may suppose an intense, labor-oriented, pain-staking effort. The text suggests, however, that the meaning of the word is "accurately." The idea is that Herod wished to correlate his data from the Jews with that information being gathered from the Magi. Herod let no one know of his deceptive purpose.

The misconceptions held by contemporary Christians who sing about "the three kings from the Orient" are lessons of great importance. An older preacher once admitted, for example, that he thought the expression, "Every tub must set on its own bottom," was from Proverbs. But a deacon who knew the Bible challenged his young pastor, and the error was corrected.

When will people start paying more attention to what the Bible actually says instead of quoting secondary sources? An attempt to make a more accurate examination of the biblical text itself would be an excellent new year's resolution for any person who would seek the truth about the Lord.

Bible Book

The light shines

by Tom Smith, First Church, Bentonville
 Basic passage: Isaiah 60:1 to 66:24

Focal passage: Isaiah 60:1-3; 61:1-3; 65:17-19, 23-25

Central truth: The Kingdom of God is both present and future and those who enter into it become "Children of Light."

There is nothing more beautiful than a golden sunset. The multi-colored aura that paints the western sky has been the subject of more than one picture and poem. Yet, the most exciting time of the day is sunrise. The ever-lightening eastern sky conveys the imagery of newness—"A land of new beginnings."

It is not coincidental that Jesus, the promised Messiah, was called "the light of the world" (Jn. 1:9) who had come to "light up our lives" (Jn. 1:9b). The prophet Isaiah had predicted this over 600 years before when he forecast that "the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee" (Is. 60:1). John, the Revelator, knew Isaiah's prediction when he talked about a time when we'd no longer need the sun and moon (Rev. 21:23; Is. 60:19-20).

Isaiah laid out one of the main themes of the Gospel of John when he talked about the future Kingdom being the victory of light over darkness (60:2). He equated this light with the "glory of God," which is consistent with Old and New Testament theology.

The "glory of God" is essentially the summation of the attributes of his character. It carries with it the idea of "weight." When man sinned and fell short of "the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23), this "in-breathed image of God" became distorted. We become unclean and all of our good works are "as filthy rags" when compared with God's glory (64:6). We are but a "fading flicker" of what God wants us to be (64:6; Ps. 1:3-4).

The new Kingdom of God is both present and future. Jesus' teachings are full of this reality. One day the Kingdom will be fully consummated, the lion will lie down with the lamb (Is. 65:25) and the roses will have no thorns!

Let us praise God that the Kingdom is also present. It is inward (1 Cor. 6:19-20). When the King of Kings reigns on the throne of our hearts, we "walk in the light as he is in the light" (1 Jn. 1:6-7). We do this because we've received a new name (62:2), a robe of righteousness (61:10) and a reason to praise (61:1). Let us tell others of God's mercy (63:7) and "whosoever will may come (60:3).

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Scriptures ordered for mass distribution

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)—The Southern Baptist dream of mass Scripture distribution is taking a giant step toward reality with the production of five million New Testaments.

Holman Bible Publishers, a division of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, placed the order for printing with Kingsport Press, Kingsport, Tenn., for two million King James, two million New American Standard and one million Spanish New Testaments.

The printing of five million Good News America New Testaments is the largest single order ever undertaken by Kingsport Press, which is the world's largest printer of Bibles.

To acquaint Southern Baptists with the New Testaments, a free copy is being mailed to every pastor in the Southern Baptist Convention, according to Johnnie Godwin, director of Holman.

Godwin said Holman has worked closely with the Sunday school and church training departments of the board, Home Mission Board and state convention leaders to make the Good News America New Testaments

available for the Oct. 20-26, 1985, Scripture distribution and prospect discovery. The Scripture distribution is in preparation for national simultaneous revivals planned for the spring of 1986.

Printing the New Testaments will require presses to run for 82 days, 24 hours per day. An average of 2,600 of the Good News America New Testaments are printed every hour the press runs, which equals approximately 44 per minute. Printing started around the first of November and is expected to conclude in mid-January.

Godwin said the New Testaments will be made available by Holman at cost for churches beginning in January by ordering from the materials services department of the Sunday School Board. Quantities will be monitored carefully by Holman and additional copies will be printed when supplies are low.

Ordering information for the Good News America New Testaments was included with the free copy to pastors or may be obtained from the Sunday School Board.

Vocal care hints can lengthen ministry

WACO, Texas (BP)—A retired speech professor at Baylor University is offering ministers 10 extra years in the pulpit—just by showing them how to take care of their voices.

George Stokes has been begging preachers to care for their voices during his 25 years as professor of speech. Now retired, he is devoting himself to helping ministers reclaim what he calls "the most abused part of the human body."

During a recent voice workshop for ministers, Stokes told them, "I can give you 10 extra years in the pulpit if you faithfully observe several guidelines which are so sensible, you'll wonder why you didn't think of them yourself."

Unfortunately, most ministers ignore such common sense advice, not realizing that the human voice actually can wear out with continued misuse, Stokes said. "You're in this sad shape vocally because the Spirit lit a fire in you," he said. "Now, let the Spirit lead you to use the right muscles. It's not too late to reclaim your voice, if you start today. Remember, if you break your body through misuse, the Spirit is going to follow suit."

Dehydration is the chief enemy of the voice, Stokes said. Membranes in the vocal folds rub together and need lubrication. Traveling on airplanes can cause vocal damage, both because of the dryer air and the need to talk above the sound of the plane's engines, he said. Emotional strain also can dry up the vocal folds, as can the common cold or allergies.

He recommends avoiding medication or lozenges, using natural remedies instead to restore moisture to the vocal folds. To increase saliva, he recommends softly biting

the tongue between each of the rear molars, 10 seconds on each side.

Ministers should use a scarf to protect the throat against cold wind, and always wear a hat and a light coat to keep body temperature constant, he said. Light clothing is better than heavy clothing, because the skin can set its own temperature, he said. When breathing outdoor air, take in air through both the nose and the mouth, because the nose regulates humidity.

The common cold and allergies can be controlled by taking several precautions, Stokes said. Limiting starch in the diet will cut down on mucus and phlegm in the throat. He also recommends clearing the sinuses by natural methods whenever possible, by standing over a pot of steaming water. Antihistamines and decongestants dry the nose and throat and promote irritation of the vocal folds, he said.

Most of all, Stokes warns ministers to avoid straining the voice. Shouting can break blood vessels, and continued misuse of the voice can lead to contact ulcers, polyps and eventual voice failure, he said.

Since the voice is the tool through which the gospel is proclaimed, ministers must place a higher value on it, Stokes said.

"Your voice should express your inner being and sincerest thoughts. Clear articulation and proper breathing will bring souls into the kingdom in a way that shouting may fail to do. Your audience will heed your thoughts and not be sidetracked by a dislike for a strained and unnatural voice."

It often takes many sessions of practice to move from an artificial and damaged vocal sound to a natural voice, Stokes said. But that extra 10 years in the pulpit may be worth it!