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Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine

11-15-1984

November 15, 1984

Arkansas Baptist State Convention

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Uniting for missions
at Fort Smith
pages 6-10

November 15, 1984

Arkansas Baptist

NEWSMAGAZINE

On the cover



Missions was the focus and messengers to the 1984 annual meeting of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention literally joined hands in support during the closing session Wednesday night. Marion "Bud" Fray, assistant director of the Baptist Mission in South Africa, was the speaker.

In this issue

13 volatile mixture

The fallout from mixing politics and religion is a threat to the credibility and witness of the church, say a trio of Southern Baptist ethicists. They warn Baptists against reaping present benefits from civil religion and ignoring the future consequences.

6 uniting at Fort Smith

Reports of the business and inspiration of Arkansas Baptists' annual meeting begins on page 6.

Next week

Reports on auxiliary meetings at the convention, plus persons elected to boards and committees and more photos, will be part of next week's issue.

Correction

In a Baptist Press story, "Statistics show Mega Focus City project successful," printed on page 11 of the Nov. 1 ABN, New York and Miami should have been identified as the first Mega Focus Cities.

Amendment 66 overwhelmingly defeated

Arkansas Baptists are to be commended for the decisive role they played in defeating Amendment 66, which would have legalized gambling in Garland County. Baptist churches and individuals not only provided the greatest monetary support but, also, played a unique role in making possible this landslide victory.

At the time of the writing of this article, there were 192,288 or 30 percent of the voters who supported the gambling amendment and 456,214 or 70 percent who opposed it. Twenty years ago, the last time the issue was on the ballot, only 60 percent voted "no" to casinos.

We believe this decisive victory should discourage those who are interested in

bringing casinos to Arkansas for some time to come. But our task is not complete because we still owe \$18,000. It is our hope that concerned individuals, churches and associations will go the second mile to assist in paying off all indebtedness.

In the event more money is received than is required to cancel the indebtedness, the money will be given to the Christian Civic Foundation. Checks should be made to the Christian Civic Foundation and marked "CUAG Victory" for proper credit. They should be addressed to the Christian Civic Foundation, 410 Medical Arts Building, 1120 Marshall Street, Little Rock, AR 72202—J. Everett Sneed, editor

Historians debate church-state separation

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)—Clashing church-state separation views were aired during the 14th biennial meeting of the Conference on Faith and History.

The interdenominational, international conference, in which 30 scholars presented papers, was held this year on Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary's Fort Worth, Texas, campus.

James Dunn, executive director-treasurer of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, Washington, warned conference participants of "a deliberate attempt to collapse the distinction between mixing politics and religion (which is inevitable) and merging church and state (which is inexcusable)."

Dunn said "hard evidence of a willful contempt for the First Amendment" includes efforts for a constitutional amendment "allowing government-prescribed prayer in public schools" and for private and parochial school tuition tax credits and the appointment of an ambassador "to the Roman Catholic Church."

Dunn criticized "an unprecedented revisionism regarding the American tradition of church-state separation," adding, "This trend threatens religious liberty."

However, Norman DeJong, professor of education at Trinity Christian College, Palos Heights, Ill., described the contemporary view of church-state separation as "a myth (that) was substituted for reality and was blessed by the judiciary."

The myth in church-state relations, according to DeJong, is contained in the words coined by Thomas Jefferson, "a wall of separation between church and state," in a letter to "a minority of religious dissenters" at the time.

The reality, said DeJong, a Christian Reformed churchman, is found in early governmental documents such as the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 and its third article: "Religion, morality and knowledge, be-

ing necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged."

But Dunn also looked to the past to make his case.

"If American history makes any eloquent appeal, it is for the separation of church and state," He quoted John Leland (1754-1841), noted Virginia Baptist and religious liberty advocate: "Experience has informed us that the fondness of magistrates to foster Christianity has done it more harm than all the persecutions ever did." And, Dunn said, James Madison joined Jefferson as an early voice for church-state separation.

James A. Patterson, associate professor of history at Toccoa Falls College in Georgia and a Southern Baptist layman, said evangelicals who supported Democrat George McGovern in 1972 and Republican Ronald Reagan in 1980 "implied that support for their candidates and programs was incumbent on all Christians, resulting in irritating airs of self-righteousness."

There is an "all too common tendency of some 'true believers' to wrap political ideology in holy garb," Patterson told the group of professional historians.

Evangelicals may express concern about social problems, but "they seem to be fumbling the ball," said Volie E. Pyles, a Champaign, Ill., author and former 25-year Conservative Baptist pastor. Evangelicals have not "demonstrated, on a broad basis, a sincere unselfish commitment to energetically work for social justice through political involvement in the here and now," Pyles said.

"The promise of eternal salvation through evangelism—the ultimate social justice—still coddles their souls and, in many ways, hinders their progress in social action. Evangelicals still face a crucial paradox—the promise of eternal justice versus temporal social justice, he said.



The 1984 annual meeting of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention at Fort Smith was one of the most harmonious and tranquil conventions that we have ever attended. Not one harsh word was spoken during the entire convention. Only three resolutions produced differing opinions. The mild excitement produced by these resolutions, perhaps, indicates a lack of understanding of Baptist polity and the purpose of resolutions. The harmony which our state convention is enjoying is a direct result of the excellent leadership being provided by Executive Director Don Moore, Convention President Jon Stubblefield and immediate past President of the Executive Board Jerry Wilson.

Although there was no controversy surrounding items of business, the decisions made by this convention were historic, indeed.

The Arkansas convention's endorsement of "Planned Growth in Giving" may be the greatest milestone in stewardship in many years. It is evident that the Bold Mission Thrust, our effort to carry the gospel to every person on earth by the year 2000, is lagging far behind schedule, primarily because individuals and churches are not providing the necessary funds.

Most state conventions are running well behind in Cooperative Program receipts, yet continuing to increase the percentage of giving to the SBC Cooperative Program. Arkansas is one of the leading states, increasing giving by three-fourths of one percent to the SBC Cooperative Program each year. It is obvious that the state conventions can not continue to increase gifts to world missions in the face of substantial deficits.

Planned Growth in Giving is a 15-year program, in which every church member is challenged to increase his percentage of giving to the church annually. The staff of the Executive Board agencies and institutions have already pledged to increase their percentage of giving each year. A tither who increased his giving by one-fourth of one percent each year, at the end of the 15-year period they would be giving 13.75 percent annually. The percentage of increase should be a family decision, after Bible study and prayer.

Another major Executive Board proposal, passed without dissension, is designed to increase the annuity benefits for church annuity recipients. This plan will become effective on Jan. 1, 1988 and will double the contributions given by the state convention in behalf of ministerial staff. The purpose of this change is to increase the retirement benefits so retirement income will meet the needs of today's economy.

Another event which produced rejoicing among the

messengers was a statement read by Pastor Stephen Davis, First Church, Russellville, in which he, on behalf of the church, apologized for any difficulty that the church had created through its previous practice of alien immersion. He assured the messengers that the church no longer practiced alien immersion and that they had been welcomed into the Dardanelle-Russellville Association. The messengers responded with a standing ovation as Pastor Davis and his associational Director of Missions Tom Lindley stood hand-in-hand on the platform.

During the 19 years that have elapsed since the first rupture in fellowship, the messengers of First Church, Russellville have been seated (allowed to vote and participate in the convention) most years. Messengers have occasionally refused to seat them. We commend the pastor and members of First Church, Russellville for healing this old wound.

It may be that a misunderstanding of Baptist polity intensifies the problem over alien immersion and the importance of resolutions. Southern Baptist associations and conventions are composed of messengers, not of churches. And each entity is autonomous in its own sphere. This means that when the messengers to an association or a state convention are convinced that a church has made a doctrinal error, they have the right to refuse to seat the messengers but can take no other action toward that church. It, also, means that a state convention or an association can take no binding action on a church. Nor can a church bind an association or a convention in any way.

In Baptist meetings, resolutions can speak to any subject imaginable. Obviously, a Baptist meeting can not impose its will on any type of government agency or institution. Since our Baptist polity makes it impossible for one entity in Baptist life to impose its will upon another, resolutions regarding activities within Baptist life have little or no meaning. When we understand that resolutions only express the opinion of those present and voting, they become much less significant.

Special commendation belongs to President Jon Stubblefield for his outstanding program and the masterful way with which he presided over the convention. Executive Director Don Moore is to be commended for the excellent leadership in Arkansas Baptist life. And past Executive Board President Jerry Wilson deserves our applause for the leadership that he has given in Executive Board matters. This year's outstanding convention should serve as a springboard for Arkansas Baptists as we move forward to serve our Lord during the coming year.

Arkansas Baptist

NEWSMAGAZINE

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

VOLUME 83

NUMBER 44

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Copies by mail 50 cents each.

Details of members of Arkansas churches will be reported in brief form when information is received not later than 14 days after the date of death.

Advertising rates on request.

Opinions expressed in signed articles are those of the writer.

Member of the Southern Baptist Press Association.

The Arkansas Baptist News Magazine (USPS 011-280) is published weekly, except the third week in April, at July 4 and Dec. 25, by the Arkansas Baptist News Magazine, Inc., Little Rock, AR. Subscription rates are \$5.35 per year (individual), \$8.40 per year (Family Resident Family Plan), \$9.00 per year (Group Plan) and \$18.00 per year to foreign addresses. Second class postage paid at Little Rock, AR. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Arkansas Baptist News Magazine, P. O. Box 582, Little Rock, AR 72203.



One layman's opinion

Daniel R. Grant

The very best news by telephone

Every time I need help in finding a telephone number that is not in the directory, I realize that telephones aren't what they used to be. In our age of modern technology, not only do we let the finger do the walking, but a computerized voice does the talking. Even with the automation that has taken over our telephones, there is still one strong traditional role of the telephone that remains unchanged. It is the bearer of news—some good, some bad and some neutral—neither good nor bad.

I can recall many telephone calls during my lifetime that brought good news. So many of these calls were from our children after they had married and moved out of the family nest. There was that excited voice at the other end of the telephone line telling of the birth of a grandchild, securing a new job, being given a promotion, singing "Happy Father's Day" or extending congratulations on reaching another birthday.

I can also recall a few telephone calls with bad news: the message that my father was not expected to live, urging me to come

quickly to his hospital bedside, and the message that my paratrooper brother was killed on D-Day of World War II, during the Normandy invasion. The latter call came while I was at the Siloam Springs Baptist Assembly with my mother and father.

One of the best telephone calls of all came recently when my eight-year-old grandson, Philip Tad Hardin, called on the telephone from Paragould to tell us that he has "accepted Jesus into his heart" and made his public profession of his faith during the Sunday morning church service.

After that joyful telephone conversation, Betty Joe and I reinforced our joy by counting the many blessings that we have, both as parents and as grandparents. We rejoiced at the time of birth of our three children, and rejoiced even more—if that is possible—at the time of birth of our four grandchildren. But there was something indescribably different about the joy that came from the telephone call describing the "new birth" of the first of our grandchildren.

I have never forgotten the pastoral warning from Dr. W.F. Powell, longtime pastor of the First Church of Nashville, Tenn., who described "religion in three generations." He said that all too often "Christianity is for the grandparents a great conviction, for the children a great tradition and for the grandchildren an awful nuisance!" How wonderful it is when the third generation has not lost the joy of Christian salvation.

These grandparents are grateful for a dedicated daughter and son-in-law, for a devoted pastor, Sunday School teachers and other adult Christian friends who had a part in leading Tad to this happy time of decision. All of this leaves me with one provocative question. If all newborn Christians used the telephone to share their newfound joy with a few friends, would we really have to wait until the year 2000 to share the Christian gospel with the entire population of the world?

Daniel R. Grant is president of Ouachita Baptist University.

Arkansas all over

by *John Gill* / ABN staff writer

people

Eunice Ellen Perry died in Little Rock Nov. 3 at the age of 82. She was the wife of William Perry, a retired Baptist minister. She was a member of Little Rock First Church and was a music school graduate of Union University in Jackson, Tenn., and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Other survivors are a daughter, Frances Crutchfield of Russellville; three brothers; two sisters; and two grandchildren.

Bob Berry has joined the staff of Benton First Church as minister of education and administration.

David McLemore began serving Nov. 11 as pastor of Russellville Second Church, going there from nine years of service as pastor of the Dermott Church. He is a graduate of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Marc McFarland has joined the staff of Mountain Home First Church as minister of music and youth.

Wayne Bandy has resigned as minister of music and youth at Northvale Church in Harrison to enroll in Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Paul Oxford died Oct. 30 in Stamps at the age of 90. He was a retired Baptist minister. Survivors are, Lennie Andrews Oxford; four sons, J. L. Oxford of Hot Springs, Jim Oxford of Dallas, Tom Oxford of Uniontown, O., and Ed Oxford of Waco; three daughters, Adolphus Beasley of Stamps, Margaret Burris of Los Alamos, Calif., and Marial Turley of Chattanooga; 16 grandchildren; and seven great-grandchildren.

briefly

North Little Rock First Church held a baptismal service Oct. 28 in which five members of a family were baptized according to Maurice Hurley, interim pastor. Those baptized were Dale Davis and his sons, Eric, Paul and Tal Davis, and Tal's wife, Sherry McKinzie Davis. Mrs. Davis was a member of the church.

Viola Church will celebrate 100 years of ministry Nov. 18 with all-day services, beginning at 10 a.m. Former members and pastors are to be special guests.

Salem Church at Benton ordained Carl Scott, James Summerville and Larry Szurgot as deacons Nov. 4.

Hot Springs Second Church observed "Christine Steuart Day" Oct. 14, recognizing her retirement from 12 years of service as media and library director. In addition to these services, she served for more than 40 years in other responsibilities, including director of the junior choir, a Sunday school and church training leader, member of the adult choir and president of Baptist Women.

Gethsemane Church in North Little Rock conducted a fall revival Oct. 28-Nov. 2 with Jack Hazlewood as evangelist.

Fayetteville First Church is showing the film series "Living Your Potential" by Zig Ziglar on Sunday evenings.

update

Don Moore

You'll be glad to know...

... God's recipe for wholesome, godly living is clear. Whatever is true, honest, just, pure, lovely and of good report, "think on these things" (Phil. 4:8). How contrary his instruction to our human nature. We love to know about and dwell on bad reports. For every positive, there is a negative. This is verified in physics and asserted in philosophy. So, God is not denying the reality of negative facts, but rather challenging us not to fill our minds with those.



Moore

A man who dwells constantly on the shortcomings of his wife is destined to be without her eventually. A parent who continuously magnifies the fault of a child is sure to be alienated from his own offspring. A church member who sees nothing but the shortcomings of the pastor, staff and membership, while overlooking the good things God is doing, is certain to end up a spiritual casualty.

Something about our nature enables us to see and remember the negative far better and longer than the positive. This is no doubt the reason for the Holy Spirit's instruction that we think on things pure, lovely and of good report. Let's do it!

... Another major ingredient that should be supplied in large amounts is "let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves" (Phil. 2:3). The unity of the Spirit and the harmony of the body of Christ are made possible by this truth being observed by believers. Apart from lowliness of mind, we are destined to strife within ourselves, within our families and within our churches. How God must yearn to find a people of such a disposition that his life can be powerfully manifested. God, make us such a people.

... What God expects, God produces! "Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" are the natural fruit of a Spirit-led person who has chosen that above the natural fruit of the flesh (Gal. 5:22-24).

Should these not be conscious goals toward which New Testament Christians move?

Don Moore is executive director of Arkansas Baptist State Convention.



Woman's viewpoint

Bonnie Margason

Missions education

Missions education is the task assigned to Brotherhood and Woman's Missionary Union by the local church however, they are not the only organizations to teach missions. They are to assume the role of giving all the people in the church the opportunity of learning about missions.

The regular, ongoing Baptist Men, Royal Ambassadors, Baptist Women, Baptist Young Women, Acteens, Girls in Action and Missions Friends offer the most complete opportunity with a balance of exposure to local, association, state, home and foreign missions. All members in a church avail themselves of these organizations.

Special church-wide events are planned throughout the year. These plans include foreign and home mission book studies, weeks of prayer for foreign and home missions and state missions emphases. Mission fairs, missionary speakers and first-hand exposure to actual mission points make lasting teaching impressions on children as well as adults.

Women in our association learned much about state missions as we made an overnight tour through Arkansas visiting mis-

sion points. Family mission vacations and Volunteers in Missions are excellent ways to become educated in missions.

I asked our married daughter to give me her first impression of missions. She recalled the time when she was five years old that our pastor and his family were called as missionaries to serve in Japan. Our church and family maintained contact and ministered to them through the years. "Sunbeams" (Mission Friends) and GA's became more than just meetings because of this direct involvement with missionaries.

Missions Education is a result of study about missionaries, where they work and the people with whom they work. However, study is incomplete until it is put into action where we live and around the world. This action comes to pass through representative and direct missions involvement.

We will next consider missions praying.

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.

Regional MSC consultants named for Arkansas

Four Arkansas couples have been recruited as regional consultants for Mission Service Corps, a Southern Baptist program which recruits self-supporting volunteers to serve one year or more on mission fields in the U.S. or abroad.

Jerry and Marsha Mitchell, Charleston; Maurice and Catherine Hurley, North Little Rock; Pete and Allie Mae Cragar, Perryville; and Herbert and Margaret Barnett, Fort Smith, reviewed the Mission Service Corps program with Gene Strahan, Home Mission Board MSC consultant, and Conway Sawyers, ABSC Missions Department director, in an Oct. 26 meeting in Little Rock.

The consultants are available for information and training regarding Mission Service Corps. They will seek opportunities to speak to church and associational groups about the

volunteer program.

Mission Service Corps was established as a part of Bold Mission Thrust goals adopted in the 1977 Southern Baptist Convention in Kansas City. Working on the assumption that Bold Mission Thrust will require a massive mobilization of the laity before becoming a reality, Mission Service Corps seeks to field full-time, self-supporting volunteers who can address mission needs in areas where a lack of funds prohibits career missionary appointment.

Arkansas is only the third state convention to recruit such consultants in a new approach at volunteer recruitment. Persons or churches interested in more information regarding Mission Service Corps may contact the consultants or Sawyers.

81 missionaries commissioned to 24 states

DALLAS (BP)—The Southern Baptist Home Mission Board commissioned 81 missionaries for service in 24 states and Canada Oct. 28. The commissioning climaxed a week-long orientation.

Carolyn Weatherford, executive director of Woman's Missionary Union, SBC, of Birmingham, Ala., led the prayer of dedication

and Home Mission Board President William Tanner challenged the 81 missionaries to understand and be sensitive to the needs of hurting people in the world.

"Our land is dying from a lack of compassion," Tanner said. "We've got to understand the needs of people who are hurting, and reach out to their needs in compassion."

First Church, Russellville, seeks healing of old wounds

Tuesday evening, Nov. 6

ABN photo / Millie Gill

A long-standing rift among Arkansas Baptists was healed in the Tuesday night opening session of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention meeting at Grand Avenue Church in Fort Smith as the body voted to seat all properly elected messengers from cooperating churches. The newly-constituted convention, then, included messengers from First Church of Russellville, whose messengers had been refused seating off and on since 1965.

Many speakers praised the action after Russellville pastor Steven Davis offered an apology to the convention for past actions: "Our church does not practice alien immersion and does not plan to practice alien immersion," Davis promised.

As he left the platform, the Russellville First Church pastor stopped to embrace Tom Lindley, director of missions for the Dardanelle-Russellville Association. Messengers of that association took the church back at their annual meeting last month.

The convention Credentials Committee reported they had received only one challenge to the seating of messengers from any Arkansas Baptist church. That did not pose a problem, however, since that church had chosen not to send any messengers, they reported.

In the last two decades, the alien immersion problem had come up at several annual sessions. The Credentials Committees those years had questioned the messengers challenged as to whether their church actually accepted members from non-Baptist churches without requiring a new baptism.

Article III of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention Constitution excludes messengers from churches which practice alien immersion.

The rest of Tuesday evening's session proceeded according to the order of business the body adopted at the beginning.

President Jon M. Stubblefield gavelled the session to order at 6:30 p.m. and moved on to the greetings. James Bryant, pastor of Grand Avenue Church, host for the annual meeting, brought words of welcome. Later in the evening, messages of greeting from other state conventions and other Baptist groups and recognition of representatives of several groups completed the ceremonies.

President Stubblefield, pastor at Central Church in Magnolia, announced the committees appointed to expedite the business of the convention.

A report from the convention Resolutions Committee identified seven resolutions submitted to them prior to the meeting. Three were brought from the floor. In addition, The committee immediately began to write the



Steven Davis, pastor of First Church, Russellville, embraces Tom Lindley, director of missions for Dardanelle-Russellville Association, after Davis addressed state convention messengers, seeking reconciliation in that congregation's relationship with other churches in the Arkansas Baptist State Convention.

resolutions in a form they could recommend to the messengers in a later session.

As a preliminary to later action, Constitution and Bylaws Committee Chairman Johnny Jackson introduced one proposed constitutional change. Messengers to the 1983 annual meeting already had approved changing the title "Executive Secretary" to "Executive Director", but the second vote is required to change the convention's constitution.

Former presidents, new ministers in the state, senior ministers and foreign missionaries were recognized in the session. One foreign missionary and special guest, Richard Walker of Brazil, told about work to be done through the Arkansas-Brazil Partnership mission project beginning in 1985.

A focus of the evening was an informational presentation on the ministries of Executive Board programs. Slides, recorded messages and live speakers interpreted the work that is carried on for Arkansas Baptists by workers based at the Baptist Building in Little Rock.

Arkansas Baptist Executive Secretary, Don Moore brought the evening message. He challenged pastors to work at building "significant" churches, explaining the difference between significant and "great" or "glorious" churches.

Moore focused on the church at Antioch,

looking at passages in the 11th chapter of Acts. He cited the Antioch church as one which made a great impact for the gospel.

He contrasted this to some churches today which seem bewildered and unable to seize opportunities to help with problems in the world.

Moore offered a model for the church that is significant. Besides being led by a servant who is an encourager rather than a merciless driver, the church must preach Jesus to all persons, under God's grace and power.

He noted one major shortcoming of some churches is their failure to teach discipleship. "The most obtuse phenomenon of our age is the church which does nothing but evangelize," Moore observed. He concluded that evangelism must be balanced by discipleship training.

Other criteria for a significant church were having members who were clearly about Christ's business in their lives and being committed to world missions. Moore asked whether any other organization in our communities ever schedules events around the activities of the church. He concluded that the church rarely impacts the rest of the community by laying claim to the time of large numbers of people. "The greatest indictment that could fall on this generation of churches would be that nobody noticed what we do," he maintained.

Wednesday morning, Nov. 7

The first full day of the convention began on a high note Wednesday morning as President Jon Stubblefield announced the overwhelming rejection of Amendment 66, the casino gambling proposal, by voters in Tuesday's general election.

An enthusiastic round of applause, punctuated by bassy amens, greeted the news of the proposition's solid defeat, with 70 percent of the balloting going against the amendment.

R.C. Meadows, minister of music at Calvary Church, Fort Smith, then rose to lead the congregation in singing "Grace That Is Greater Than All Our Sins."

Joel Gregory, assistant professor of preaching at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, delivered the first of three Bible studies on the convention theme, Strengthening Families."

Preaching from Matthew 19:3-6, Gregory told messengers marriage is an exclusive, permanent union, anchored not in the church or the Law, but in God's creation itself. Since marriage partners are intended to complement each other, Gregory argued the shortcomings of a mate are the very reasons to continue a marriage, rather than break it up.

Messengers heard reports from three Arkansas Baptist agencies: Family and Child Care Services, the Baptist Foundation and the Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine. The child care agency asked the assembly to join them in celebrating the 90th anniversary of their ministry, begun in 1894.

John Finn, executive director of the Christian Civic Foundation of Arkansas, took the platform to address the convention, reminding messengers gambling forces remain at work in Arkansas, despite the failure of lottery and casino proposals this last year. He told messengers that pressure exerted by CCF - organized pickets has already closed three of 10 Little Rock porn shops and left another on the verge of collapse.

Messengers also elected officers Tuesday morning, returning Jon Stubblefield to the president's chair by acclamation and electing Jerry Wilson of El Dorado as first vice-president, after a run-off with the incumbent, Jesse Reed.

Three recommendations were brought to messengers by the Executive Board. The first, an \$11.5 million budget, was unanimously adopted after a presentation by Executive Board President Jerry Wilson. The 1985 budget represents a 5.93 percent increase over 1984 and includes a three-fourths percent increase in the amount going to worldwide causes, now 39.91 percent of total receipts, Wilson said.

The second recommendation to the convention asked messengers to approve Arkansas Baptists' participation in Planned Growth in Giving, a 15-year Southern Baptist emphasis which encourages families to gradual-

ly increase their stewardship commitments to their local churches. The churches themselves, associations and state conventions will likewise be challenged to upgrade their contributions to missions causes.

Don Moore, executive director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, presented Annuity and Stewardship Director James Walker with a bundle of blue cards, representing commitments to increased giving on the part of Executive Board employees and institutional heads.

A third recommendation presented for consideration the new Church Annuity Plan of the Southern Baptist Annuity Board. When implemented in 1988, the new program will allow the state convention to make a contribution of up to \$420 each year on behalf of qualified ministerial staff members in the state. Five years later, church support staff members become eligible.

Both the Planned Growth in Giving emphasis and the new Church Annuity Plan were adopted unanimously by messengers.

Wilson also reported to messengers on two actions taken by the Executive Board during its Aug. 23 meeting. He explained changes in guidelines for the Ministerial Scholarship Fund, which provides financial assistance for

taken to preserve it.

Wilson also explained three changes in the loan fund which assists small churches desiring to build worship facilities. The modifications will establish a line of credit adequate to service several assistance requests which have not been met because outstanding loans left an inadequate balance. Criteria by which a congregation may qualify for support were also tightened, and the structure of interest rates was altered.

Glendon Grober, director of the Brazil-Arkansas partnership mission project, took advantage of a few extra minutes in the morning's agenda to tell messengers about the project. He explained travel costs to Brazil will run about \$1,300 per person and that mission participants should allow \$35 a day for expenses.

At the same time, Arkansas churches interested in contributing financially to fledgling efforts in Brazil could purchase property for \$2,000 and construct a building for \$7,000, Grober said. He announced a kick-off meeting in Little Rock March 15, 1985, at the Excelsior Hotel Convention Center. It was later announced Keith Parks, of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, and James Smith, of the Brotherhood Commission, would lead the kick-off program.

Newly re-elected President Jon Stubblefield assumed the pulpit to deliver his president's message. Taking Romans 1:16-17 as his text, Stubblefield addressed the question, "What is the gospel?"

He identified four aspects of the Christian message: it tells us (1) God is righteous, (2) man is a sinner, (3) we have peace with God and (4) Christian living is to be marked by right living as well as right belief.

While God allows man the choice of self-destruction, divine righteousness actively seeks to deliver him from sin, Stubblefield said. Only Christ can bind up the fragments of lives broken by sin and meld them back into wholeness and completeness. As a result, Christians must present their very selves to God as a living sacrifice, refusing to be conformed to the world's agenda and allowing God to transform them, he noted.

All that Jesus began to do and teach is now the responsibility of the church, Stubblefield concluded. Since the church is the continuing incarnation of Christ in the world, his work depends on his people. "Will we fail him?" Stubblefield asked.

Wednesday afternoon, Nov. 7

Joel Gregory continued Bible study dealing with the family to open the third session.

Dr. Gregory approached the sometimes thorny subject of submission in the third chapter of 1 Peter. Saying he believes these instructions for both men and women have sometimes been misinterpreted, he offered a historical perspective on the need for such guidance. A large proportion of early followers of Christ were women who were



Elected as officers were Jon Stubblefield (center), president; Jerry Wilson (left), first vice-president; and John McClanahan, second vice-president.

students and spouses preparing for ministry. The new guidelines will require that a ministerial student recruit a congregation to supplement the \$250 per semester contribution of the state convention scholarship fund by another \$100. The \$125 spouse's scholarship will be supplemented by a \$50 local church contribution.

Scholarship expenditures had been exceeding the fund's receipts, Wilson explained, and the scholarship pool would not have survived 1985 had such a step not been

Arkansas Baptist State Convention, 1984

taking a risk by changing their religion while their husbands were remaining pagan, he noted. Therefore, according to Gregory, Peter was writing to instruct the women how best to try to win over their husbands: by walk not talk, or example not discourse.

Peter was teaching submission within limits to the women, he noted, and then only to each woman's own husband. The husband was designated head of the household, Gregory explained, because a tie-breaking vote is needed in case of a standoff between husband and wife.

The scripture also directs women to place priority on developing inward, spiritual beauty before being concerned with outward adornment, he said.

Addressing the responsibility of husbands, Gregory warned men to take seriously the need to understand that wives are to be honored continuously, to be protected because of having less physical strength and to be recognized as having equal spiritual footing with men. If the relationship is not right, the scripture warns, the believer is in danger of having prayers cut off from God.

Business continued with the re-election, by acclamation, of John H. McClanahan as second vice president. The Pine Bluff First Church pastor was elected to the post at last year's annual meeting.

A report by Baptist Medical System generated a question by Bill Sutton, a Fort Smith pastor. Representatives of both BMS and

Baptist Memorial Hospital at Memphis explained their institution's policy on performing abortions in response to Sutton's query.

When the Resolutions Committee recommended the adoption of 10 resolutions, messengers needed more time for discussion than was available. The consideration of resolutions was continued to the miscellaneous business time later in the session.

Nominations to convention committees and boards were presented by committee chairman Jimmy Wallace. Messengers elected the persons nominated. Wallace announced several additions and deletions to the printed list distributed to the messengers. Also contained in the report of the committee were dates, places and speakers for annual meetings in 1985, 1988 and 1989. The Nov. 19-21, 1985, meeting place was changed to Ouachita Baptist University by the messengers, to mark the school's centennial.

A change in the convention's constitution and bylaws found easy second approval by messengers. The title of the convention's executive secretary becomes executive director since the body voted it two years in a row, which is required to amend the document.

Following the adoption of a motion to consider resolutions separately and in numerical order, messengers easily passed the first one. It commended those who participate in the electoral process and advocated informed voting and a Christlike spirit in case of disagreement.

ABN photo / Millie Gill



To emphasize the importance of Planned Growth in Giving, Executive Director Don Moore presented convention President Stubblefield with a handful of cards, representing commitments to increased giving by ABSC employees.



Of 10 resolutions considered by the convention, one on separation of church and state expressed support for the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs and Americans United for Separation of Church and State. A second resolution, affirming the equal

Arkansas Baptist State Convention, 1984

The second resolution, on separation of church and state, actually was adopted twice. Following the first vote on it, a messenger asked whether the consideration method allowed for discussion. Informed that discussion should be part of the process, President Stubblefield, suggested the oversight should be corrected by a reconsideration of the resolution.

A motion to amend the resolution was made. It would have deleted references to supporting Americans United for Separation of Church and State and the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs. By a 172 - 214 vote messengers declined to make the change and then voted to adopt the original resolution.

Adopted without dissent were a resolution urging response to the problems of malnutrition short of starvation and one commending the Christian Civic Foundation of Arkansas and director John Finn for work during the past year.

Likewise, messengers passed unanimously a resolution identifying alcohol as the state's number one drug problem and urging increased efforts by government to fight the problem. One to advocate more effort to deal with child abuse, spouse abuse and incest also was adopted without dissent.

Resolution number seven, on the "equality of men and women before God", was tabled after an attempt to amend it. The amendment would have deleted the final para-

graph, which resolved "that we affirm that men and women share equally in carrying out the Great Commission of our Lord."

The eighth resolution, which generated extended discussion when the resolutions were first considered, was replaced by a substitute resolution. The original would have requested the SBC Executive Committee to reconsider the plan to hold the 1989 Southern Baptist Convention in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Victor Gore, pastor at DeQueen First Church, offered the substitute, committing Arkansas Baptists to joining with other Baptists to make an evangelistic impact on Las Vegas. This would be done by spending extra days there to witness as they attend the SBC annual meeting. The substitute was adopted.

The ninth resolution passed affirmed commitment to the sacredness of life and called on Baptists to provide more alternatives to abortion and more information on the issues involved.

The final resolution expressed appreciation to the host church, the Program Committee, the officers and executive secretary and to First Church of Fort Smith for use of their building for auxiliary meetings.

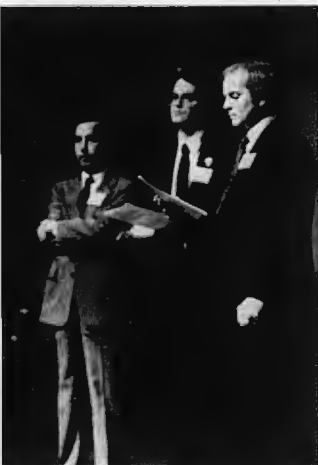
Three items of miscellaneous business were then considered by the messengers. They voted to dedicate the 1984 convention annual to the late H. Lee Lewis, long-time Arkansas pastor; to thank Sheffield Nelson

for his leadership of Citizens United Against Gambling; and to instruct the planners of the 1988 annual meeting to change the dates to avoid conflict with the general election. (Action already had been taken by the body when they adopted the Nominating Committee's report, which contained a change of dates.)

John Holston delivered the convention sermon, titled "The Half Has Not Been Told." Holston, pastor at Nashville First Church, noted many ways that believers know only half as much as they need to know about God and his work and do only half as much as they could if they were in proper relationship with God.

He based the sermon on 1 Kings 10, illustrating with the Queen of Sheba, who said she would not have believed half of what she observed of Solomon's greatness, had she not seen it for herself. Many who serve the Lord have accomplished such a small portion of what they could with his help, Holston said. He quoted Dwight L. Moody as realizing that "The world is yet to see what God can do with a fully dedicated life." Moody wanted to be that man, Holston noted.

He challenged the messengers to give God their best every day and make every day count. "Have an attitude of 'Lord, I want to know the other half which has not been told,'" he admonished.



...sponsibility of men and women before God, was tabled to avoid an amendment which would have moved a paragraph declaring men and women are equally responsible in carrying out the Great Commission given by Jesus to his disciples.



Since resolutions are intended to reflect the opinions of messengers present and voting at an annual meeting the opportunity to voice feelings and ideas is an important part of every state convention. With resolutions in the mill dealing with the Las Vegas SBC meeting separation of church and state and the spiritual equality of men and women before God, aisle microphones were busy. An extension of time was required to allow messengers to express their thoughts.

Arkansas Baptist State Convention, 1984

Wednesday evening, Nov. 7

Wednesday evening, Joel Gregory counseled the 974 registered messengers on responding to trials in their lives. He told them the key to "turning trials into triumphs" is a prior decision about how one will respond to a difficulty.

Life's testing times are the worst times to make up your mind how you are going to face them, Gregory pointed out. Making a "radical prior decision" to allow God to be your strength will prove how genuine and durable your faith really is, he concluded.

Arkansas' two Baptist schools brought their annual reports to the assembly Wednesday evening. Southern Baptist College President D. Jack Nicholas told messengers a fall enrollment increase had placed the college in second place for percentage increase among Southern Baptist schools.

Daniel R. Grant, president of Ouachita Baptist University, thanked messengers for their decision to hold their 1985 annual meeting on the OBU campus in Arkadelphia, when the school will be celebrating its centennial anniversary.

Doug Dickens, pastor of First Church, Hot Springs and one organizer of Citizens United

Against Gambling, rose to announce final returns on Amendment 66. A freewill offering, taken to help defray remaining CUAG expenses, amounted to \$2,500. One pastor rose to challenge others to take similar offerings in their churches.

The Wednesday evening session was primarily devoted to an emphasis on foreign missions. The Vietnamese and Laotian choirs of Grand Avenue Church provided special music in their native languages. Flags of the nations were carried in while the names of 105 countries with Southern Baptist foreign mission work were read.

Bud Fray, assistant director of the Baptist Mission in South Africa, brought the evening message. Now serving as missionary-in-residence at Ouachita Baptist University, Fray stepped in to take the place of Baker James Cauthen, former head of Southern Baptist foreign mission efforts, who had suffered a mild stroke and was unable to attend.

Fray reminded the congregation that God's "unswerving purpose" for the church is the redemption of lost humanity. Recalling that the church in Jerusalem had tried to "lock up the life of God" and keep it to themselves, he declared that God's Spirit "will not

ABN photo / Mike Gill

rest until all nations have heard the gospel!"

Asking messengers to evaluate their missions commitment, Fray compared ratios of preachers to population for the United States; Mali and India. While the U.S. boasts one preacher for every 3,500 people, Mali can claim only one for 7.3 million. India has one preacher for every 10 million people, he said. Fray told messengers that Christians committed to missions prayed for laborers to be sent to mission fields.

Cooperative Program and Lottie Moon foreign missions offering shortfalls this past year have hurt mission efforts seriously, Fray told messengers. His voice filled with emotion, Fray said his own mission would not be able to build even a single Sunday room next year, much less church buildings or hospitals, because of cutbacks.

"The world is more lost and more winnable than ever in history," Fray declared. God's priority is that his people get on with his work, he added, challenging the messengers to "be the people of God" to the world on their doorstep.

President John Stubblefield closed the convention with a personal prayer that "we will give more than we have ever given to mission offerings because of our commitment to God and our love of Jesus Christ."



A major emphasis of the convention was the approval of Arkansas' mission partnership with two Brazilian conventions. Above, Glendon and Marjorie Grober set up a display detailing aspects of the approaching project.

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Brotherhood Commission approves program changes

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP) — Major changes in the Royal Ambassador and Baptist Men's programs were approved by the Brotherhood Commission during its semi-annual meeting in Memphis, Tenn., Oct. 24-27.

Acting on recommendations from a committee which has studied Brotherhood programs for two years, the commission voted to divide Royal Ambassadors into three age

groups — Lads, for boys in grades 1-3; Crusaders, for boys in grades 4-6; Pioneers, for boys in grades 7-9.

The vote also changed older Pioneers to High School Baptist Young Men and created three new divisions in the Baptist Men's program — Collegiate Baptist Young Men, ages 18-29 who are college students; Baptist Young Men, ages 18-29 who are not college

students, and Senior Baptist Men, ages 55 and up.

Missions Impact 2000, a select committee of state Brotherhood leaders and Brotherhood Commission staff, began a study of Brotherhood work in 1982. They identified 12 concerns and proposed action plans to the Brotherhood Commission for implementation.

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News analysis

98th Congress enacts major church-state legislation



by Larry Chesser

WASHINGTON (BP)—Two milestones—passage of “equal access” legislation and the lifting of a long-standing ban against diplomatic relations with the Vatican—highlighted the 98th Congress’ church-state record.

Apart from these actions, this Congress followed the pattern of recent ones by rejecting numerous controversial proposals on prayer in public schools, tuition tax credits and abortion.

By lopsided margins in both houses, the 98th Congress declared voluntary student religious groups have the same access to before- and after-school meetings as other student-initiated secondary school groups. Through this action, the nation’s lawmakers took their first substantive step toward defining the proper role of religion in public schools since the historic 1962-63 school prayer decisions by the Supreme Court.

For two decades following the high court ban on state-written and state-sponsored prayer and Bible reading in public schools, Congress considered dozens of proposals to overturn the decisions. But none of these proposals—ranging from constitutional amendments to court-stripping bills—ever cleared both houses. In fact, before the passage of equal access this year, the only measures to clear were meaningless riders on appropriations bills.

Sponsored by Sen. Mark O. Hatfield, R-Ore., and Reps. Carl D. Perkins, D-Ky., and Don Bonker, D-Wash., the equal access measure drew broad bi-partisan support as well as nearly-uniform backing from the U.S. religious community.

The equal access measure faced earlier competition from President Reagan’s proposed constitutional amendment to restore state-sponsored religious exercises in public schools. But the president’s proposal, after a lengthy struggle to clear the Senate Judiciary Committee and a two-week floor debate, was soundly rejected by the Republican-controlled Senate. The 56-44 vote was 11 short of the two-thirds majority needed for passage as 18 Republicans joined 26 Democrats in opposing the measure.

Like recent congresses, this one attached riders to the Department of Education’s spending bills to bar use of its funds to prevent implementation of programs of voluntary prayer in schools, but these efforts have been purely cosmetic because the language merely keeps the department from an activity it has never pursued.

Late in its first session, the 98th Congress quietly reversed a 117-year ban against diplomatic ties with the Holy See after Sen. Richard G. Lugar, R-Ind., attached an amendment to a State Department authorization bill lifting the prohibition. The action occurred without hearings or debate, prompting criticism of the process as well as the action.

In efforts to secure Senate confirmation of William A. Wilson as U.S. ambassador to the Vatican as well as funding of the new embassy, administration officials repeatedly insisted the relationship would be with the Vatican city-state rather than with the Roman Catholic Church.

But administration claims were soon contradicted by Wilson’s counterpart, Apostolic Pro-Nuncio Pio Laghi who charged: “Some mistakenly tried to justify the American government’s action by implying it was entering into a diplomatic relationship not with the Roman Catholic Church as such, the Holy See, but rather with the sovereign Vatican City-State.” Contrary to official claims, Laghi stated in a speech at Catholic University of America that papal diplomacy “rests essentially upon the spiritual sovereignty of the Holy See and not upon dominion over a few acres in the heart of Rome.”

A lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of the congressional and administration action has been filed by Americans United for Separation of Church and State. Despite a strongly-worded resolution opposing the Vatican move adopted at the 1984 Southern Baptist Convention in Kansas City, the SBC Executive Committee last month put off a decision on whether to join the suit.

Although the president got his way with Congress on the Vatican ambassador issue, two other Reagan requests—tuition tax credits for parents who send their children to private and parochial schools and a constitutional ban on abortions—were defeated in the Senate.

Near the end of the first session, the Senate easily turned back the president’s tuition tax credit proposal, 59-38, and repeated calls by the president to pass the measure during the second session drew no response from the Republican-controlled Senate.

A constitutional amendment to overturn the Supreme Court’s controversial 1973 abortion ruling came no closer to passage. Sponsored by Sen. Orrin G. Hatch, R-Utah, the measure never failed to emerge from the Judiciary Committee and was defeated 49-50 during the first session, thereby falling 17 votes short of the necessary two-thirds.

The Congress did maintain restrictions on federal funding of abortions except to save the mother’s life. At one point, the Senate voted to expand the exception to include rape and incest, but the Senate later yielded to the House position which kept the single exception.

Several tax law changes in Congress had implications for churches and clergy.

A nearly two-year effort to overturn by statute a 1983 Internal Revenue Service ruling that reversed a long-standing policy of allowing clergy to take normal mortgage interest and real estate deductions in addition

to receiving a tax-exempt housing allowance ended short of its goal. However, a delay in implementation of the ruling for clergy who owned or had a contract to purchase their residence by Jan. 3, 1983, was enacted as part of the Deficit Reduction Act of 1984. Congressional opponents of the IRS position vowed to continue legislative efforts in the 99th Congress.

Early in 1983, Congress made wholesale changes in the Social Security system, sharply raising rates paid by self-employed persons, including clergy who by law participate in the nation’s retirement system as self-employed workers.

The 1983 reform package also for the first time mandated Social Security participation for non-ministerial church employees. But the next year, Congress voted to permit churches who opposed such participation for “religious reasons” to make a one-time, irrevocable decision not to pay into the system on behalf of their employees. Employees of churches taking this election must then participate as self-employed persons.

Another provision of the Deficit Reduction Act passed this year makes it more difficult for IRS to investigate and audit churches.

During both sessions, the 98th Congress held the line on non-profit postal rates, rejecting Reagan administration requests to slash the subsidy which reimburses the Postal Service for reduced rates charged a variety of non-profit mailers.

In other actions, the 98th Congress:

—Designated the first Monday in January as a national holiday in honor of black civil rights leader and Baptist preacher Martin Luther King Jr. The new holiday observance will begin in 1986.

—Killed the Civil Rights Act of 1984 when the Senate rejected the measure, despite a lopsided 375-37 passage in the House and 63 co-sponsors in the Senate. Reaching the Senate floor during the closing days of the second session, the measure was designed to overturn the Supreme Court’s 1984 ruling in the Grove City College case that only the particular program or activity of an institution receiving federal funds, rather than the entire institution, is subject to federal anti-discrimination laws.

—Decisively passed a new drunken driving law which rewards states going along with its recommended drinking age of 21 and punishes those that do not with loss of up to 10 percent of federal highway funds.

—Approved tougher new warnings for cigarette packages and advertisements.

—Passed a \$158.1 million child abuse prevention program.

Larry Chesser is information assistant with the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs in Washington, D.C.

Mixture of religion and politics threatens church, ethicists say

by Michael Duduit

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)—A "secular authoritarian ideology" has infected many churches and contributed to their manipulation by politicians, according to a trio of Southern Baptist ethicists.

Glen Stassen, Henlee Barnett and Paul Simmons, all professors of Christian ethics at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., believe politics used religion in this campaign year, and the results could be damaging to the mission of the church.

This authoritarian ideology, explains Stassen, argues "there's one view, my view, and everyone else ought to agree with my view, or else you don't belong. It's an authoritarian view of the nation, that there should be one view instead of several views, and that takes away from freedom."

He illustrated by citing a popular evangelical author who, while being interviewed on television recently, would characterize each position that differed from his own as "the un-Christian position."

"It's intolerance. It's the opposite of religious liberty," Stassen declares.

Not all the exploitation is one-way, however, Simmons contends. He sees a new group of religious figures on the scene who are using the political process to promote religious goals. On issues such as tuition tax credits, a right-to-life amendment (anti-abortion) and a prayer-in-schools amendment, "both traditional Roman Catholicism and Fundamentalism seek political leverage to accomplish religious goals."

If either of these groups has its way, its "doctrinal and moral concerns would be promoted through law," Simmons argues.

One reason for the growing power of this authoritarian ideology is access to mass media and money to finance their appeals, according to Barnett. "They reach many, many people now. These people are organized—clearly the far right has a network. Instantly, they reach millions of peo-

ple. The goal is to make this the model for our kind of democracy. These people have never learned to deal with pluralism."

The ethicists cite several reasons for this authoritarian ideology's attraction.

Stassen recounts an interview with Charles Colson, former White House official under Richard Nixon, who called religious leaders "the easiest group to manipulate. They'd invite them into the White House, and the religious leaders were so flattered by attention from the president that they'd end up... making favorable noises toward the administration. They were naive about how they were being used; they would come wide-eyed and excited about attention from Caesar."

Simmons differs somewhat, arguing that, unlike the religious leaders of the late 1960's and early 1970's who were vulnerable to being used by political forces, today's Religious Right is itself seeking to exploit the political scene for its own religious agenda.

Another attraction of authoritarianism, Barnett believes, is its reduction of difficult issues to simplistic solutions.

"People really don't care to face the complex issues of reality. They prefer escape mechanisms, style not substance," says Barnett. When such a secular authoritarian ideology becomes a dominating force in religion, church-state separation is in serious danger, the Baptist ethicists argue.

"The authoritarian view unites the whole society, and church and state become part of one organism," explains Stassen. "If you look at Jerry Falwell, his rallies are 'I Love America' rallies; his college is not Calvary College, but Liberty College; the colors are red, white and blue. The central symbols in his rallies are not Christian symbols but nationalistic symbols. That's dangerous. If his kind of people get appointed as Supreme Court justices, separation of church and state is in trouble."

Simmons believes this authoritarian view has resulted in a "crusade mentality" and an "incestuous wedding of Far Right politics and Fundamentalist religion."

Such a relationship between church and state also poses a threat to the mission of the church, Stassen argues. When the state is in a position to hand out favors to the church, the church may be tempted to support "politicians who give favors rather than politicians who stand for biblical justice. It can seduce churches and their members. It can change a church's own perception of what it's supposed to be doing; it can distort the gospel."

Stassen also believes the future of evangelism may be affected by the church's excursion into politics. A reaction against the authoritarian trend could become a reaction against Christianity if the two are linked in the public mind, the ethicist indicates.

"In Germany, the church did not speak out against Hitler, and now people there have little confidence in the church. Christianity cannot let itself get sucked in by Caesar," Stassen says.

According to Simmons, leaders of the Religious Right tend to avoid the ethical teachings of Jesus and center instead on Old Testament theocratic themes because of the dispensational theology.

"They turn to a type of civil religion, or theocracy, along Old Testament monarchical lines. It is highly moralistic because of the pietistic tradition in Fundamentalism; thus, its stress on things like pornography, which should be banned, but its easy compatibility with a strong defense and militaristic posture toward 'atheistic communism.'"

All three scholars urge pastors to teach a biblical ethic to their congregations so they won't be so easily manipulated.

"I think the pastor can preach from the pulpit certain basic ethical principles. Meeting human need is the basis of Christianity, and we haven't taught our people that," Barnett declares, adding, "We spend more time arguing about what kind of carpet to put on the floor than talking about peace."

Michael Duduit is director of communications for Southern Seminary.

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Evangelism

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All through the centuries, God has taught his people, "Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord." In Psalms 51:10-13,



Shell

David prayed, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I

teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee."

There are some great truths related to God's use in this scripture. Repentance is emphasized in the statement, "Create in me a clean heart, O God;" There is the renewing of a right spirit before one can be useful. There is the restoring of a joy of God's salvation so that one can overflow with joy unspeakable and full of glory. The result is experienced as one is able to teach transgressors God's ways and see sinners converted unto God.

This scripture pierces the heart of the issue. The condition of a person's life has a great deal to do with the effectiveness of his witness. The lost world will listen more readily if we measure up to Christian moral standards. — Clarence Shell, director

Annuity/Stewardship

A tithing formula

Jim Adams, pastor of Beech Street First Church in Texarkana, recently challenged his members with a fantastic formula. He warned his readers of a surprise.

"Write the year you graduated from high school. Now, double it. Then, add 5 to it. Multiply this last figure by 50. Add your age. Subtract 250.

"The first four numbers of the six digits will be the year you graduated from high school. The last two will be your age."

Pastor Adams then encouraged his members to work another formula. Write down the amount of your last paycheck. Subtract ten percent, the titha. Notice the balance.

"It will surprise you how well you can get along on the balance when you give the titha for the Lord's work. My own personal testimony is that the balance goes further than it would if I kept it all for myself. Have you ever really, sincerely tried tithing? The best motive for trying tithing, or for tithing regularly, is love. Try love and tithing together."

Many Arkansas Baptist churches recently

observed "Prove the Titha Day." Materials, including envelopes, are still available from the Stewardship Department. — James A. Walker, director

Missions

Who can sponsor?

One of the keys to developing healthy new churches is good sponsorship for missions. Some would think of the ability to mother a mission as primarily involving money.



Tidsworth

However, experience indicates that financial support may be one of the least important factors for sponsorship.

The thing a new congregation needs most is a loving mother church who will nurture the "baby church" in Christian growth. It is wise for the sponsor to provide what financial support it can in order to love "in deed."

The state convention provides assistance for churches who don't have the financial strength to sponsor missions. Help is available for site purchase, pastoral assistance, and some loan money for a first unit building.

If your church wants to become a sponsor but cannot come up with all of the finances, let us help. — Floyd Tidsworth Jr., church extension director

Christian Life Council

Ethiopian belly fighting

Two, huge men with stomachs greatly enlarged by beer or food were recently seen on television fighting only with their bellies. Like great mountain goat rams, they charged repeatedly at each other until one, the loser, was knocked out of the ring. There was no echoing sound as of ram horns colliding, just grunts of the combatants and cheers of the crowd.

Such "fun" is one form of American entertainment that many Third World countries like Ethiopia can't import. There are few big stomachs over there because of the current terrible famine. If there's any fighting it's to get anything at all into their bellies. Millions on the verge of starvation are too weak to move, much less fight.

Jesus depicted the basis of judgment on our response to human need. "Inasmuch as you did it not to the least of these my brethren, ye did it not to me." Yes, the poor, starving, emaciated blacks, browns, yellows and whites of this world represent Jesus. The way we treat them is the way we treat the one we call Lord. One wonders if such a famine was occurring in England, France or

even Germany how the response from our country would be to those not considered "least." James taught that Christians are not to be impartial, "but the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy" (Jas. 3:17). Has your church or you responded this year to world hunger? — Bob Parker, director

Family and Child Care Caring and sharing

During Thanksgiving, many people take more time than usual to look around and see all for which they have to be thankful for.

We are thankful that for 90 years, Arkansas Baptists have responded to the special needs of children through participation in the annual Thanksgiving Offering. We have deep feelings of appreciation and gratitude for your interest, concern and your sharing.

We are grateful that Arkansas Baptists have always been concerned about the hurts of children. Our children need more than the basic food, clothing, shelter and education. They need Christian love and professional care to help them understand themselves and to develop a Christian foundation to enable them to better cope with life.

Arkansas Baptists have a history of sharing. This year the need is greater and we must reach a little farther in helping meet the needs of these children. The Thanksgiving Offering provides one of our greatest opportunities to reach out to meet these needs. About one-third of our support comes directly from churches, mostly through the Thanksgiving Offering.

We are asking that every church in Arkansas take this offering and have a part in our ministry to children. If every church would meet its goal, Arkansas Baptists could meet the goal of \$420,000 from direct gifts. — John A. Ross, director of development

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International Getting ready

by Dennis Smith, First Church, Camden
Basic passage: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-23

Focal passage: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-2, 6-15
Central truth: The Christian should always be prepared for the Lord's coming.

This week, Paul continues his discussion of the Lord's return. In this passage, he deals with a problem that is ageless—laziness or complacency. People were so excited about Jesus' return that they had quit working and begun to sit, waiting for the big event. They saw no need to work if Jesus was coming back soon.

Paul reminds them that they have to be ready but that the Christian life must go on. Christians are responsible for carrying out the Great Commission even up to the day of his return. They should be "self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate" (v. 8). Work had to go on as usual, the idle must be encouraged back to the task.

We have heard the statement "too heavenly-minded to be any earthly good." This is the problem in this passage and in our own day. It is easy to get in this frame of mind when we consider the return of Jesus. It is simple to just wait. But the problem is not new. Even Paul had to fight it. Christians must continue the work, both secular and sacred, even though we know Christ is returning.

Of course, we do not know God's timetable for the return. In this light, we cannot simply wait but are commanded to continually tell others of Jesus and his return. At the same time, we must live our lives as if he was coming today. Christians have the responsibility to encourage one another in the hard times while we wait to go to our heavenly home. We are also commanded to live in anticipation and victory, not sitting idly by waiting for Savior to return.

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GOOD NEWS AMERICA



March 16 -
April 6, 1986

GOD LOVES YOU

Life and Work Obeying Christ's commission

by Billy White, Second Church, Little Rock
Basic passage: Acts

Focal passages: 1:8, 5:42, 8:4, 9:31, 10:34-35, 13:48, 16:10, 28:30-31

Central truth: Christ's commission commands our commitment to its completion

There's a story told about a woman who was concerned because she was getting up in years and had not found a husband. Upon visiting with her pastor about it, she was told, "Well, in the Lord's program there's one woman for one man and one man for one woman. You can't improve on that." To which she responded, "Preacher, I don't want to improve on it, I just want to get in on it!"

God's program for winning our world to Christ is much the same way. It doesn't require our improvement. It commands our involvement in accomplishing the task.

In Acts, we learn how the early believers committed themselves to God's program and, by God's power, rocked the Roman Empire for Christ. Luke traces the establishment and expansion of Jesus' church from Jerusalem (ch. 2-7), through Judea and Samaria (ch. 8-12), and on to Gentile world missions (ch. 13-28).

The great climax of the book is reached as the good news of Christ's Kingdom is preached without hindrance in the heart of Caesar's kingdom, the imperial city of Rome (28:31). By this time, the gospel has proven its power through the lives of believers in the crucible of real human experience.

In their commitment, the early Christians provide a continuing model for us as we obey Christ's commission. (1) They showed courage in the face of coercion (5:42). (2) They demonstrated conviction when persecution threatened (8:4). (3) When times were good, they exhibited constancy in outreach and growth (9:31). (4) When the gospel challenged them to new perspectives, they responded with open hearts and minds. Exercising creative faith, they emerged from the restrictions of Judaistic religion and extended the reach of the risen Christ across social, economic, religious, racial and political barriers (10:34-35, 11:20-21, 13:48, 16:10).

The lesson is one of obedience and responsibility. And Christian responsibility, as Andrew Murray said, is actually no more than "our response to God's ability." God is able. The gospel is alive. Are you committed?

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Bible Book God's deliverance

by Joe Statton, Central Church, Magnolia
Basic passage: Isaiah 32:1-8

Focal passage: Isaiah 32:1-8; 33:17-22

Central truth: Joyous hope in Christ is best experienced in the remembrance of our need for a savior.

When do you really appreciate a cool drink of fresh water? The answer: When you are extremely thirsty. When do you truly recognize the necessity of effective law enforcement? The answer: when your very life is being threatened and you need protection. This week's study finds its foundation in the fact that man must always recognize his need for a savior before the Savior can do his work.

The people of Isaiah's time lived every day in the fear that the next possibly would be their last. Isaiah's message was one of hope and anticipation for a people who lived with uncertainty and hopelessness every day of their lives. Is this description so far-fetched to us today? Do the unsaved masses of today's world have any hope for tomorrow?

Isaiah's words provided some very positive hope for his people, as well as for us today. He spoke of a future king who would reign with justice and integrity. His leadership would be marked by fairness and an understanding of people's basic needs. He would stand for honesty and be unshaken in his stand for what was right. To top it all off, Isaiah says that this future king will even forgive our sins (33:24). Though we don't know how much of this prophecy is directly referring to our Savior, we do know that each detail vividly describes our risen Christ.

So, what is our responsibility as Christians today who know this Savior? The answer is obvious. We must never be guilty of turning our backs on hopelessness. We do enjoy eternal security, but others also need the "shadow of the rock." We cannot close our eyes and ears to the needs of the world. All we need to do is look back. A single glance back toward our separation from God's protective care should thrust us out into the world shouting, "Come and drink of the water of life. Come and hide in the cleft of the rock!"

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ACTS designs 'Olympic Flame' as outreach tool

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)—Testimonies by Carl Lewis and other world-class athletes, highlighted in the ACTS broadcast "An Olympic Flame," will be used in Southern Baptist churches as an outreach tool to youth during November and December.

The one-hour television special, video taped during the XXIII Olympiad in Los Angeles, will be shown on the American Christian Television System twice Nov. 25 and once Dec. 2. The Sunday night broadcasts are designed for after-church fellowships for youth.

"An Olympic Flame" can be used to reach young people both for salvation and Christian growth," said R. Edward Gilstrap, vice-president of counseling services for the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, which sponsors ACTS.

Gilstrap said the commission is offering churches guidelines for setting up the fellowships, as well as discussion guides for youth and youth leaders. "The leader's discussion guide points toward a time of decision when the leader will encourage the youth to accept Christ personally or re-educate their lives to him."

To prepare youth for the presentation of

Hunger experts urge response to Africa crises

WASHINGTON (BP) — The striking contrast between African hunger and American apathy was underscored as church leaders from across the nation met to discuss ways to respond to the worsening famine in Africa.

The meeting was convened by Bread for the World, a Christian citizen's movement against hunger. Sixty persons representing a broad spectrum of church bodies, voluntary organizations and hunger relief and mission agencies attended the meeting.

Two of Southern Baptists' leading hunger experts urged the government to respond quickly with increased aid to Africa and challenged Southern Baptists to redouble their support of hunger education and relief.

"The contrast between U.S. military aid and aid toward human hurt is appalling," said John Cheyne, human needs ministries consultant for the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board. "Yes, Africa needs to be strengthened but in most areas it is the malnourished child, the milkless mother and the desperate father who are in need of this strengthening."

Approximately 150 million people in sub-

the gospel, a TV program features testimonies from six athletes, most of whom were in Los Angeles to compete in the Olympics. The program was taped for ACTS Aug. 7 in a special service at First Church, Van Nuys, Calif. All the athletes who participated are members of Lay Witnesses for Christ, a ministry to athletes headed by Sam Mings.

"Our objective isn't to be a role model to young people," said Lewis, winner of four gold medals in Los Angeles. "It's just to show who our role model is... Jesus Christ in our hearts." In his testimony, Lewis tried to turn attention away from his achievements and toward his faith in Christ. "That's the one element that's going to be there today, tomorrow and forever."

Lewis was joined on the program by track stars Willie Gault, Valerie Briscoe Hooks, Calvin Smith, Madeline Manning Mims and basketball star Joe Ward.

The program will be aired on ACTS at 8:30 p.m. and midnight Nov. 25 and at 10:00 p.m. Dec. 2 (all times Eastern). It can be received over cable TV systems and television stations carrying ACTS or directly from the Spacenet 1 satellite.

Saharan Africa are suffering from severe food shortages created by the worst drought in a century. At least five million are expected to starve to death by the year's end. Many observers believe the famine will worsen in 1985 without massive increases in foreign aid.

David Lockard, director of organization for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, said the need for greater public awareness of the Africa crisis was illustrated in the recent presidential debate on foreign policy.

"I think it was deplorable that issues related to U.S. aid to Africa were not even mentioned in the debate," he said. "The situation in Central America, which was discussed, proves graphically that the chronic and structural problems of these African nations cannot be answered solely through military aid."

Lockard urged the president and Congress to respond with a "far-sighted, comprehensive program of hunger relief and economic development" for Africa. Such action, he said, "is not only humanitarian, it is in America's own best interests."



**GOOD NEWS AMERICA,
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March 16 - April 6, 1986