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### Building & Facilities

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# 1,132 leave IMB in historic 'reset'

RICHMOND, Va. – In a historic move, the Southern Baptist International Mission Board (IMB) has decreased its mission force by 21 percent in an effort to cut overhead from years of self-imposed overspending, IMB President David Platt announced at the entity's Feb. 24 board meeting.

"IMB is now in a much healthier financial position," Platt said. "Due to increased giving from Southern Baptist churches, Cooperative Program and Lottie Moon Christmas Offering giving are trending upward."

Platt added that the IMB expects to operate a balanced budget for 2017 due to its 2015-16 organizational reset processes and the generosity of Southern Baptists who have given sacrificially since announcement of the entity's financial crisis.

The announced reduction of field personnel comes

following the elimination of 33 percent of IMB stateside staff Jan. 13 – many of whom are located in its Richmond headquarters. Among those losing their jobs in Richmond were 30 IMB communications personnel.

A total of 983 missionaries out of a worldwide force of about 4,800 accepted en-

hanced retirement incentives last fall. Another 149 stateside staff out of about 450 accepted similar packages based on age and years of service, said Platt. This brings staff downsizing totals to a staggering 1,132.

The massive "drawdown" brings the missionary force of the nation's largest evangelical denomination to around 3,800. That is a number not seen since the 3,954 reported in 1993.

To balance the IMB budget that has been overspent for years, Platt – who was named to lead the 170-year-old agency in August 2014 – announced last fall that the IMB would reduce staff by 600-800 positions by Feb. 22. The higher number announced reportedly came as a surprise to many members of the board.

"While this news is disappointing to all of us," said Ronnie Floyd, president of the Southern Baptist Convention and senior pastor of Cross Church in northwest Arkansas. "We know we have prayed for God's leadership; therefore, we will trust God in this season and with our future as Southern Baptists."

"This reset is not regress or retreat," Floyd said. "Southern Baptist churches must see this

See **IMB** page 7



Platt announces reduction in IMB mission force Feb. 24.

## ARKANSAS MISSIONARY REACTS TO FORCE REDUCTION – PAGE 4



**WATOTO CHILDREN'S CHOIR** – The Watoto Children's Choir perform their "Oh, What Love" production Feb. 21 at Geyer Springs First Baptist Church, Little Rock. The choir is based in Uganda and is composed of children who have lost their parents. The choir raises awareness about orphaned and vulnerable children in Africa. Photo by Jessica Vanderpool

# Hunters seek fowl, but find God

Jessica Vanderpool  
Arkansas Baptist News

ST. CHARLES – Instead of beer, there are Bible studies. Instead of cursing, there are spiritual conversations. Through their facilities and Christ-centered hunting retreats, High Plains Waterfowl is seeking to turn the hunting culture away from its "worldly" tendencies and create a place where God can be glorified and men can learn about Him.

"What we are as (a) mission and at heart is a hunting ministry designed to disciple and evangelize men through the outdoors," said Brian Womack, founder and executive director of High Plains Wa-

terfowl, which is located in St. Charles about 14 miles east of DeWitt.

"We are the alter ego to what happens in Vegas," he said.

At High Plains Waterfowl, hunters can relax in the 12,000-square-foot lodge, enjoy good food and learn about God. In addition to hunting, they go through a Bible study curriculum. Devotions are led in the field before hunting and at the lodge at the end of the day.

Womack said the lodge was made out of reclaimed material, which ties into the idea that God can take what is old and make it new again.

The lodge also features a

room that contains a silent walk-through of the Bible, depicting 17 Old Testament scenes and 17 New Testament scenes. Womack said visitors go through the room one at a time so they can take their time in experiencing and reflecting on the scenes.

Womack, an alumnus of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary who grew up in First Baptist Church, Benton, said the High Plains Waterfowl ministry combines his love of hunting with his "passion for the human soul."

A number of Arkansas Baptists and Southern Baptists have used High Plains Waterfowl, Womack said.

Donald Lee Ruffin, pastor of Faith Baptist Church,

See **WATERFOWL** page 2



Womack

## The ABN classifieds have a new, more readable design!

Read them on Page 12.

The ABN classifieds are a great way to advertise for your church or business. You can now submit a classified ad via the ABN website at

[arkansasbaptist.org/ad](http://arkansasbaptist.org/ad)

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**OTHER STAFF POSITIONS**  
New Hope Baptist Church, Little Rock, Ark. 72202, is seeking a **full-time pastor**. The pastor will be responsible for preaching, teaching, and pastoral care. Resumes should be sent to: [hr@newhopebaptist.org](mailto:hr@newhopebaptist.org).

**WOMEN & FAITH PAGE**  
Arkansas Baptist News is seeking a **part-time columnist** for the Women & Faith page. The columnist will write bi-weekly articles on women's issues. Resumes should be sent to: [women\\_faith@arkbaptist.org](mailto:women_faith@arkbaptist.org).

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## ABN Digest

Stories of interest  
to Arkansas Baptists

### Scroggins to nominate Greear for SBC president

ST. LOUIS (BP) – North Carolina Pastor J.D. Greear will be nominated for president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), Florida Pastor Jimmy Scroggins announced March 2. Greear, 42, “is leading his genera-



Greear

tion to live out a passion for the SBC, missions and the local church,” Scroggins, pastor of Family Church in West Palm Beach, Fla., wrote in a news release stating his intention to nominate Greear during the SBC annual meeting June 14-15 in St. Louis. During the 14 years Greear has pastored The Summit Church in Raleigh-Durham, N.C., worship attendance has grown from 350 to just under 10,000, Scroggins said. Total baptisms increased from 19 in 2002 to 928 in 2014, the last year for which statistics are available through the SBC’s Annual Church Profile. Scroggins said the 149 International Mission Board (IMB) missionaries currently on the field from The Summit mark the largest total of any church in the convention – a statistic the IMB has confirmed.

### Florida begins enforcing 24-hour abortion wait

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (BP) – A Florida appeals court lifted an injunction Feb. 26 against a 2015 law that forces women seeking an abortion to wait 24 hours before undergoing the procedure. According to *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* reports, “At least 26 other states have a waiting period before an abortion can be performed.”

For more ABN Digest, go to [arkansasbaptist.org/abn-digest](http://arkansasbaptist.org/abn-digest)

# Toon named ‘Missionary of the Year’

LITTLE ROCK – Ronnie Toon was named Arkansas Associational Missionary of the Year at a banquet held by Ouachita Baptist University (OBU) Feb. 23 during the annual Associational Missionaries Retreat, which was hosted at the Arkansas Baptist State Convention (ABSC) building in Little Rock.

The award – given by Ouachita for 44 years as a way of honoring the service of Arkansas Baptist associational missionaries – is the highlight of the retreat, which is sponsored by the ABSC.

Receiving the honor is “humbling,” Toon said.

“There are many more qualified and more gifted servants than I, and so I am very grateful to be recognized among my peers,” he said.

Toon has been associational missionary for Independence Baptist Association since 2003. He also currently serves as interim pastor of First Baptist Church, Mountain View.

“By selecting and recognizing one person as Associational Missionary of the Year, we seek to honor the outstanding work of all associational missionaries – because you’re all important. We understand and appreciate the important role that is played in the work of God’s kingdom by you who wear this title of associational missionary. We are thankful for your service – the service you provide to your local churches, to the pastors and to the Arkansas Baptist State Convention,” said Charles Wright, Ouachita’s interim president.

Toon earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in pastoral ministries from Williams Baptist College and a Master of Divinity degree from Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary. He has pastored numerous churches, including First Baptist Church in Luxora, Joyce City Baptist Church in Smackover and Temple Baptist Church in Fort Smith, where he served for 10 years.

Under Toon’s leadership, Independence Baptist Association revised its constitution and reorganized into leadership teams. In addition, it has been involved in day camps, summer camps, a student summer missions program and international mission projects



Ronnie Toon (right), speaks with Trennis Henderson, vice president for communications at Ouachita Baptist University, after being named Associational Missionary of the Year. Photo by Jessica Vanderpool

in Africa, Hungary and Haiti. Toon has also helped with stateside mission projects to Alaska, Louisiana, Texas and Wyoming and helped stage a Hurricane Katrina evacuation camp in 2006. His denominational service includes eight years as a trustee for the North American Mission Board. During his time as an Association missionary, five churches have been planted in the association.

“The man we honor tonight possesses the qualities that are typical of all of those who have been called to the important

tasks of associational leadership,” Wright said as he presented Toon with a plaque and The Baker Illustrated Bible Handbook, edited and largely written by two OBU faculty members, J. Daniel Hays and J. Scott Duvall.

“I thought a lot about what God has always wanted us to do in our lives, and we just want to honor Him,” Toon told attendees, noting that he loved being a pastor but felt God calling him to serve as an associational missionary. “So it’s just a fulfillment of God’s purpose and plan for our lives.

And we’ll always have a shepherd’s heart, but we truly love the churches that we serve. We believe God’s greatest work will always be through the local Church.”

Toon and his wife, Cheryl, have two daughters and a son.

Officers were also elected during the Associational Missionaries Retreat. Officers are David McCord, associational missionary at Calvary Baptist Association, president; Toon, president-elect, and Ray Dean Davis, associational missionary at Tri-County Baptist Association, treasurer.

## WATERFOWL

*continued from page one*

DeWitt, has used the ministry as a way of reaching youth.

“The youth that we’ve taken down we’ve had a phenomenal change,” Ruffin said. “Our problem youth are not a problem anymore. I had a mother come and tell me, ‘Thank you. My son is changed after just one night.’”

The church’s men’s group took five youth for the first time in December 2014 and one accepted Christ and all have since been baptized. The following March, the men’s group took fathers and sons for a time of bonding and relationship strengthening. The weekend opened the door for one youth to begin bringing his father to church.

“High Plains Waterfowl has helped revitalize Faith’s Fisher’s Of Men group by giving us a place to mentor each other

and young men,” said Ruffin.

He noted that through the past year, he knows of men from across the United States who have visited High Plains and been introduced to the gospel or renewed their faith in the Lord through the ministry.

The endorsements stretch beyond Arkansas. According to the ministry’s website, Paige Patterson, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, said High Plains is a place where “both body and spirit can be rejuvenated.”

Womack said they are hoping to expand their ministry to include five locations in the Midwest and Canada within the next five years.

Currently, they are working on a facility in Underwood, N.D. In addition to being a hunting facility, Womack said he is working with the Dakota Baptist Convention to make the facility available as a location for a church plant. He noted there isn’t a Baptist

church within 40 miles of Underwood.

Womack, who now travels between Arkansas and North Dakota, said he has a heart for the people of North Dakota. He noted it is an agricultural area where people “see God through creation” but still have a disconnect between God as Creator and God as Savior.

“They will agree with you that there is a Creator God because they see Him, but they don’t really fully get why they need a relationship with Jesus,” Womack said. “And so if we can go there, even through something crazy like duck hunting, and live an authentic representation of who Jesus is, that will just open doors for us to share who He is and why they would need Him. And certainly we do have the dream for a church plant to use our facility and carry on the work through the local Church.”

Contact Jessica Vanderpool at [jessica@arkansasbaptist.org](mailto:jessica@arkansasbaptist.org).

# Bi-vocational challenges explored at WBC

WALNUT RIDGE – Being a pastor can be stressful, but for those who also have another job or who serve a smaller membership church, the job can be especially demanding.

That is why the Arkansas Baptist State Convention (ABSC) evangelism and church health team, Williams Baptist College and the associational missionaries of northeast Arkansas recently co-sponsored the Bi-vocational and Smaller Membership Church Conference.

The event targeted pastors and staff – and their families – who are currently serving bi-vocationally or in smaller membership churches.

Fifty-seven people from 20 churches attended the conference, which was held at William Baptist College on Feb. 20.

Lynn Riley, bi-vocational and smaller membership church consultant for the ABSC, said more than 1,100

Arkansas Baptist churches have an average attendance of less than 100 and about 600 bi-vocational pastors serve these churches, along with hundreds of volunteer and bi-vocational staff members.



Riley

“These churches and their leaders are vital to reaching Arkansas for Christ,” Riley said. “They are committed to their ministries and are meeting needs and reaching people that would otherwise be unreached and underserved, but

they deal with pressures and time issues on a daily basis.

“Through conferences like this, working with associational missionaries, online resources and direct contact with churches, we want to provide the kinds of support that will produce healthy churches, regardless of size. We are continually looking for better ways to connect and minister with them.”

The day consisted of worship, networking and minis-

try training. A conference for wives was led by Andrea Lennon, ABSC women’s ministry specialist, and the Williams Baptist Collegiate Ministry provided child care activities.

Bob Utley, president of Bible Lessons International and an internationally known Bible commentator, was featured during the training sessions. He led sessions on biblical hermeneutics and homiletics, sharing practical ways for pastors to be more effective in Bible study and sermon preparation.

Participants were also provided with demographic surveys of their respective church fields and were given tips on how to interpret and use the information to better impact their communities. Additional discussions were led by ABSC staff and the Christian ministries faculty from Williams.

“It was a wonderful event for pastors of churches of all sizes,” said William Vas-

sar, pastor of First Baptist Church, Hoxie, who attended the event. “Our pastors are both overwhelmed and undermanned and many times poorly equipped, leaving the men of God in peril. Through ministries such as this conference, we know that

we are not alone and that we are prepared to fulfill our calling of leading God’s people. Pastors, know that you have a friend in the Arkansas Baptist State Convention. I hope that this is just the beginning of revitalization for a vast majority of our churches in Arkansas.”

Charles Lewis, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church, Harrisburg, also participated in the event and said it helped him by answering some questions he was having as a pastor of a small membership church.

Mike McCoy, associational missionary for Black River Baptist Association, which was one of the sponsors of the conference, said it was the first year to have this type of conference in northeast Arkansas.

“My hope is that this will become an annual event in our area,” he said. “This would enable us to build momentum to assist our bi-vocational and smaller (membership) churches.”

“I have always had a great love and admiration for the smaller church,” said Ken Gore, chairman of the department of Christian ministries at Williams.

Gore said he grew up in rural northeast Missouri and was ministered to by smaller churches. In addition, he preached in those churches regularly when he was in college in that area. Then, as a student at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, he was a bi-vocational pastor in southern Oklahoma.

“So, basically, it’s in my DNA! These churches have an important, respectful ministry, and they reach a geographic group that the large church simply cannot. Often these pastors do the work of two – sometimes three – different people. Their ministries are precious, but often they are among the unknown heroes of ministry. Our department at Williams wants to serve them any way we can,” he said.



Gore

## 600 seek answers for generation

Lisa Falknor  
Special to the ABN

LITTLE ROCK – Millennials question. Not content to simply adhere to the status quo, they think through their own questions of faith and want to be equipped to answer nonbelievers’ questions about Christianity, too.

The second annual Lead/Defend Conference was held Feb. 27 at Geyer Springs First Baptist Church, Little Rock. The event was sponsored by the college and young leaders team of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention and the Baptist churches of Arkansas. The gathering provided a safe place for students to ask questions and find answers. Nearly 650 high school and college students and leaders attended the conference.

“The greatest moments of spiritual growth can come as a result of being open and honest about your questions,” said speaker Derek Melleby from Lancaster Bible College in Pennsylvania.

Throughout the one-day

conference, students considered questions such as: Are you spiritually ready for college? What is college for? What is Truth? How can we engage a skeptical culture? What do we do with a culture that not only accepts sin, but celebrates it?

“All of these questions to the Christian faith are not new,” Melleby said. “They’ve been around for thousands of years.”

Ages 18-25 he considers to be critical years.

“How will you approach this life chapter to be the kind of person you want to be, the kind of person God wants you to be?” he asked. “Be intentional. Think it through.”

Another speaker, Ricky Chelette, executive director of Living Hope Ministries, talked about seeking sexual wholeness in Christ.

He asked, “How many of you know someone struggling with sexual identity?”

Almost every hand went up. “Today’s culture says, ‘God must be OK with (me being) gay,’” Chelette said, noting this culture believes people

are oriented toward sexuality. “Our orientation is not toward sexual expression; our orientation is toward sin.”

Looking elsewhere for a false identity is not a 21st century problem as Chelette showed in the Matthew 19 account of the rich young ruler, a story about “who he believes he is versus what Christ knows him to be.”

“God gives us what we don’t deserve and didn’t earn to call us away from our identity to sin and into our identity with our Savior,” Chelette said.

In addition to hearing the main session speakers, students attended smaller breakout sessions.

An international student from South Korea, Gyuhan Park, said he’s excited to live out what he’s learned by taking it back to his campus at the University of Central Arkansas.

“I want to share the gospel with other international students – as many as I can,” he said. “I need to step

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## ABN Digest

Stories of interest  
to Arkansas Baptists

### ‘Awaken America’ reg. opens for SBC St. Louis

ST. LOUIS (BP) – Registration for the SBC’s “Awaken America: Reach the World” annual meeting, June 14-15 in St. Louis, has opened. Online registration for messengers and local hotels can be accessed at [SBCAnnualMeeting.net](http://SBCAnnualMeeting.net). Through online messenger registration at the [SBCAnnualMeeting.net](http://SBCAnnualMeeting.net) tab, each messenger will receive an eight-digit registration code to present at the annual meeting’s express registration lane in St. Louis, preferably as a printout for the church’s credential.

### Divided Supreme Court weighs abortion rules

WASHINGTON (BP) – The Supreme Court heard oral arguments March 2 regarding a Texas law that regulates abortion doctors and clinics. The division among the justices seemed clear on the measure’s dual requirements – an abortion doctor must have admitting privileges at a nearby hospital in case a woman needs emergency admission and an abortion clinic must meet the health and safety standards of other walk-in surgical centers. The typical breach on the high court over abortion is intensified and complicated by the absence of Associate Justice Antonin Scalia. Scalia’s death in mid-February appears to leave supporters of the Texas law with a 4-4 split as their best hope – an assumption the oral arguments did nothing to undermine. Russell Moore, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, said he is praying the court will rule “in favor of women and families by upholding laws that protect them.”

For more ABN Digest, go to  
[arkansasbaptist.org/abn-digest](http://arkansasbaptist.org/abn-digest)

# Editorial & Opinion

*"Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have..."*

1 Peter 3:15 (NIV)

## Why has political discourse taken such a nasty turn?

Not too many years ago what is happening in our presidential election would have been unfathomable.

While political discourse in our country has certainly become increasingly more crass over the years, the current presidential election cycle has been literally "over the top."

While a lot of nastiness in this election has been doled out by the leading candidate of the Republican Party, others have seen fit to jump on the bandwagon, resorting to name calling apparently to discredit or embarrass in an effort to gain votes.

I see something very interesting at play that directly points to recent leadership – or lack thereof – demonstrated in Washington.

I believe Donald Trump is simply the anti-establishment candidate who personifies everything many Americans see as wrong with politicians and Washington.

### Pressing On

Tim Yarbrough

Phil. 3:14



Trump is brash, confident, and powerful – everything enemies of the U.S. and the liberal elite (both Democrats and Republicans alike) hate about America.

Trump's potential election literally terrifies them!

Voters feel President Barack

Obama and Washington politicians made us weak and powerless in the world's eyes, and they want that changed – something they believe establishment politicians have proven over and over that they do not have the will to do.

While I did not vote for Trump on Super Tuesday, I am seeing his election as perhaps an unstoppable juggernaut fueled by widespread voter discontent.

Therein lies the problem: Some people are voting for Trump because they think that he is some kind of savior of the United States.

Conversely, as Christians, we place our trust and hope in the one true Savior, Jesus Christ. We already have a future and it's not predicated

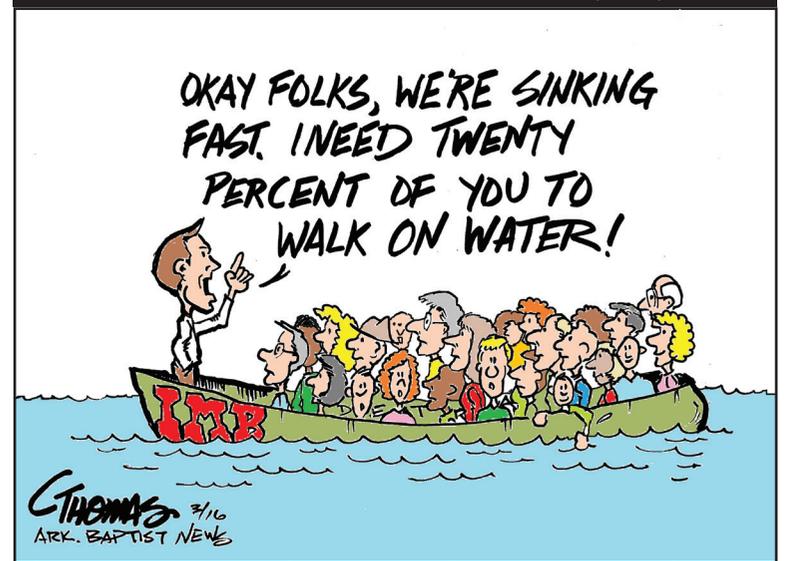
on Trump, or any politician for that matter.

Pray now for God to heal our sick land and to bring sal-

vation to all who don't know Jesus!

Now that's hope and change I want to be a part of!

Cartoon by Gary Thomas



## Concerns and questions about IMB from an emeritus missionary

The Southern Baptist family was shocked last August when International Mission Board (IMB) President David Platt announced that, because of financial reasons, there would be a reduction in missionary personnel of up to 800 missionaries. In order to reach this goal, all missionaries over 50 years old with at least five years service would be offered an incentive to retire immediately. They had to decide within three months and then plan to return to the states within a few weeks.

My wife and I are retired IMB missionaries and happened to be serving as volunteers when the announcement was made. We were with many of our friends and former colleagues when

they received this offer. The response of many was deep grief. In our years of service, we witnessed many changes in leadership, strategy and resource management. We see change as necessary. However, as one person stated it, "This was a scenario no one ever admitted would or could happen."

### Viewpoint

Ron West



IMB missionaries have always been thankful that Southern Baptists provided us with a support system that we could depend on. We always knew our financial, medical, logistical and prayer support needs would be met. We would often watch friends in other mission organizations have to leave in the middle of a term or remain in the states in order to raise additional funds when a church or other

donors stopped contributing to their support. We were thankful this would never happen to us. But now it has, and we face a situation more drastic than any we have witnessed in other mission organizations.

Though it has been emphasized all retirements were voluntary – in a real sense they were not. The number of missionary retirements required to reach the goal was given. If it could not be accomplished through these "voluntary" opportunities, then it would be accomplished in other ways. No missionary I discussed this with would have chosen to retire in this manner and at this time. Some who were close to retirement accepted the offer, though they would have preferred to have more time to transition out of their assignments and ministry partnerships with national

co-workers. Others took the offer because they were made aware that if they remained, their future ministry, supervisors and retirement would be changing. Many of those who remained on the field were also grieving over the loss of colleagues, mentors and support personnel. The final number of missionaries and staff taking the retirement offer was 1,132 or approximately 20 percent of our Southern Baptist force.

Many reasons have been given for having reached our present circumstance. Some say it's a lack of giving by Southern Baptist churches. Others blame overspending by administrators and trustees of the IMB. It is true that giving patterns by Southern Baptist churches have changed greatly over the years. Percentage Cooperative Program giving by churches has decreased

and churches are offered multiple ways to spend mission dollars outside traditional patterns. Administrators and trustees continued to approve expenditures that could not be matched by receipts. For whatever reason, those making the greatest sacrifice are the missionaries and staff members who have served faithfully in answer to God's call. Some will find new avenues of service using their gifts and experience. Many have returned to the United States without a job, home, car or plan for their future.

I have been asked questions about this situation for which I do not know the answers. Why was the first option presented to ask those with the most experience to leave? Could there have been a way to combine fewer

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## Keeping children safe



### Family Matters

Ben Phillips

**W**olves (sexual predators) are abusing young sheep (children) at an alarming rate. The sobering statistics regarding sexual abuse in our culture are staggering. Conservative studies indicate that one-third of girls and one-seventh of boys will be sexually abused before reaching 18, regardless of religion or socio-economics – and 90 percent by someone they know and trust.

Engage your church to be more proactive in protecting children. MinistrySafe, an organization that the Arkansas Baptist State Convention utilizes to equip church leaders, provides a proven strategy to minimize the risk of abuse in your church. Affirm your church leaders as they make crucial changes to better protect children. MinistrySafe recommends a “5-Part Safety System” to protect children: (1) sexual abuse awareness training, (2) skillful screening, (3) appropriate background checks, (4) tailored policies and procedures and (5) monitoring and oversight. Many churches conduct background checks, which is necessary. However, only 10 percent of predators ever encounter the criminal justice system. Background checks alone still allow 90 percent of predators to have easy access. More resources are available at [ministrysafes.com](http://ministrysafes.com).

Sexual predators push boundaries and use secrecy to groom their victims. I have learned from Greg Love, attorney and founder of MinistrySafe, to ask the following questions to discern if my children are at risk. Question one: “Has anyone made you feel uncomfortable lately?” This helps you stay in tune with your child and helps you discover if they are potentially being bullied or abused. Question two: “Has anyone asked you to keep a secret lately?” Communicate with your children that your family does not keep secrets from one another. Regularly dialoguing with your children regarding these questions will help keep the lines of communication open.

We must become more vigilant in our homes and churches to understand that sexual abuse is a prevalent issue in our society.

*Ben Phillips serves on the ABSC evangelism and church health team.*

# Reaching this generation of ...

**A**rkansas Baptists have a rich history of prioritizing the next generation, as evidenced by several facts.

First, church camp, vacation Bible school and student mission trips dominate our churches’ summertime schedules. The time, money and volunteer base involved in these activities prove students are a top priority, and rightfully so.

Second, four of our six Arkansas Baptist State Convention (ABSC) agencies and institutions relate directly to the next generation – Camp Siloam, the Arkansas Baptist Children’s Homes and Family Ministries, Williams Baptist College and Ouachita Baptist University.

While the other two agencies do not focus specifically on students, they are heavily involved in ministry to the current generation of students. The *Arkansas Baptist News* reports extensively on student and children’s events across Arkansas. The Arkansas Baptist Foundation manages many funds given by wise and godly donors, distributing considerable financial resources to ministries targeting children, students and college students. The ABSC Executive Board staff manages Camp Paron, which hosts a great number of events yearly for students and children. I am extremely proud that Arkansas Baptists direct a great amount of their Cooperative Program mission dollars toward reaching the next generation!

Third, our local associations invest heavily in the next generation by hosting camps, rallies and training clinics, with several associations owning their own church camps.

Yet in the midst of these positives, we must face some heartbreaking facts. First, while there are more students in the U.S. than at any other time in our nation’s history,



### Executive Directions

Sonny Tucker

baptisms of children ages 9-11 are at an all-time low in the Southern Baptist Convention. Second, any church that baptizes 35 students in one year will be in the top 100 churches in student baptisms out of 46,000-plus Southern Baptist congregations in the U.S. and Canada. In the ABSC, only 18 out of 1,532 congregations baptize 10 or more millennials (ages 18-29) yearly. These facts should grab our hearts and move us to Spirit-led action.

I suggest the following. First, let’s stop making excuses and excusing ourselves. Now is the time to act. Second, let’s enter into extended times of prayer and fasting for revival and awakening among children, students, their parents and millennials. Third, be intentional and strategic in your evangelism and intense in your discipleship. Fourth, get involved personally in your church’s ministry to children and students.

Let your pastor and staff know of your desire to personally assist and support. Help educate your church on the impact of our Cooperative Program ministries. Fifth, after giving your tithes and offering to your local church, give generously to our ABSC agencies, institutions and your associational camps. Consider contacting the Arkansas Baptist Foundation to assist you in setting up a legacy that will bless ministry to students past your years on earth.

I hear a lot of rhetoric from individuals stating what their church “ain’t gonna do” in their effort to reach this next generation. It’s time to start discussing what “we are gonna do.”

*J.D. “Sonny” Tucker is executive director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention.*

## Here’s to our health, Arkansas Baptists!

**I** love Arkansas Baptists. What a high honor and incredible privilege it is to serve as your Arkansas Baptist State Convention (ABSC) president! Although assuming this role was not what I envisioned when messengers to the 2015 ABSC Annual Meeting at Hot Springs Baptist Church elected me as first vice president, I am grateful for the opportunity of working even more closely with our executive director, J.D. “Sonny” Tucker, the ABSC staff and leaders from across Arkansas who serve on our boards, institutions, agencies and committees. It does not take long to realize why Tucker labels the women and men who serve the ABSC as “top-shelf leaders.” Arkansas Baptists, we are blessed and the best days for the ABSC are yet to come!

Throughout this year, I plan to share some stories of my experiences and love for the Church and, in the process, highlight the impact that is being made for the kingdom through Arkansas Baptists. Let me start with this story. Recently, Martha and I enjoyed a Valentine’s Day weekend getaway including a horse-drawn carriage ride and dinner at a castle. It was an incredible weekend! By the way, one of the greatest investments a church can make in the life of her pastor is to make sure that he and his wife have some time they can get away by themselves. Now, back to the original story. What really made the weekend “special” was when I opened my Valentine’s card and read Martha’s note that really showed her love for me. She had purchased, just for me, a six-month “boot camp” experience with a personal fitness trainer who just happened to be a member at First Baptist Church, Stuttgart. With a smile on my face, I said, “I’m going to die!” as I thought about increasing my life insurance.

Honestly, I am grateful Martha loves me enough to be concerned about my physical health. As of the writing

of this article, I successfully finished my first day of boot camp. And, yes, I thought I was going to die! No doubt the next six months will be difficult, but I have confidence that at the end of the process I am going to be healthier and have more years to love my wife, enjoy my family and serve my God and His Church.

Research continues to indicate that 85 percent of Southern Baptist churches are at a plateau or in decline. This is a church health issue. Thankfully, Terry Bostick and the ABSC evangelism and church health team have developed some practical materials to help churches of all sizes become more effective for the kingdom. To date, more than 400 ABSC churches have registered for the Church Revitalization Process. If you are unfamiliar with these materials, I encourage you to visit [revitalizearkansas.com](http://revitalizearkansas.com). There you will find lots of valuable information designed for the pastor to lead

the church “from where you are to where God wants you to be.”

Church revitalization, like boot camp, is not easy. Church health requires continual effort to do the hard work, but in the end it’s worth it! When health is restored, the local Church is better equipped to love and serve God, her pastor, each other, the community and the world. Let me encourage and challenge you to pray and do the hard work for the kingdom. If you have questions about the Church Revitalization Process, please contact the ABSC evangelism and church health team. And if you are currently working through the Church Revitalization Process, or have completed a phase of the process, I would love to hear your stories. Email me at [sam.roberts@fbcstuttgart.com](mailto:sam.roberts@fbcstuttgart.com).

Here’s to our health, Arkansas Baptists!

*Sam Roberts is senior pastor of First Baptist Church in Stuttgart and president of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention.*



### President’s Perspective

Sam Roberts

## Camp Siloam: Until we reach the last tribe

In 1987, 20,000 boys fled for their lives in Sudan. Civil war destroyed their families and drove them into refugee camps in Ethiopia. In 2004, I read stories of these boys who had found sanctuary in America. Touched by their sad stories, I really began to ponder global issues of suffering: hunger, human trafficking, lack of water, corrupted governments stealing relief aid to the poor, orphans and disease.

I began to wonder, "What kind of difference can I really make in the world?"

The human suffering issues seem so big, so beyond my ability. I felt helpless. What can one individual possibly do to help?

What I can do is what God called me to do: ensure the good news of

Jesus is shared at Camp Siloam with thousands of campers. Jesus' return is the answer. Sharing the gospel is the answer. Camp Siloam's vision – that our campers and staff would make an eternal, global im-



### Camp Siloam

Jason Wilkie

pact for the kingdom of God – is birthed, in part, out of these thoughts.

Jesus is going to solve the world's problems.

Matthew 24:14 says, "And this gospel of the kingdom will be

preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come."

The way I see it, the sooner the better.

Jesus says "And this gospel of the kingdom will be

preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come" (Matt. 24:14).

So the long-term answer to these big global issues that cause pain, suffering and tears is the gospel of the kingdom. The logical conclusion is inspiring more campers to carry the gospel to the ends of the earth. There is no greater honor than the invitation to participate in Christ's return by taking His story to the world.

What greater vision for a Christian organization than

to make God's mission part of its mission?

Camp Siloam's vision boils down to three easily remembered words: "eternal," "global," "impact." Seeing children saved and inspiring campers to make eternal, global impact is what has been happening at Siloam for 93 years, and it's what we are committed to for the next 100 years – unless, of course, one of our campers reaches the last tribe.

Jason Wilkie is executive director of Camp Siloam. Visit their website for events and updates at [campsiloam.com](http://campsiloam.com).

## ABCHomes: Hattie's heart

Many years ago, I ran across a 1927 newsletter from Walnut Street Baptist Church in Jonesboro. Inside that newsletter I found a beautiful poem written by 11-year-old Hattie Virginia Morris.

The first stanza goes like this:

*We are five little children,  
Left without a dad.*

*But we have a dear mother,  
But I'm sure she is very sad,  
To see us go and leave her,  
It breaks her heart we*

*know,*

*We are going to the Monticello Home*

*Where all the orphans go.*

Imagine a single mother in 1927 left with five children. If this situation occurred today, maybe Hattie, her siblings and her mother could have gone to one of our family care homes for single mothers with children.

Hattie identified herself as an "orphan." UNICEF and its global partners now define an orphan as a child who has lost one or both parents. We often think of the children we serve as those whose parents



### ABCHomes

David Perry

can't or won't take care of them. Hattie's mother was not a bad mother; she just needed a little help.

Hattie goes on to write:

*We know it's best for all of us*

*To go the Monticello Home.*

*Where we will be raised up right*

*We know*

*that's why we want to go.*

*We thank the Baptist people,*

*And all the others too,*

*And pray for us while we are gone,*

*Our duty we must do.*

We strive to "raise up right" every child we care for, whether they're in the Arkansas Baptist Home for Children in Monticello, Arkansas Baptist Boys Ranch or one of our emergency shelters for children.

Hattie thanked "the Baptist people." Arkansas Baptists are our greatest financial partners and prayer warriors.

I love this last stanza:

*And thank our God in Heaven,*

*For all His loving care,  
And when we go to our Heavenly home,*

*There will be no orphans there,*

*And there we will meet our daddy,*

*Upon the Golden Shore,*

*And there we will live with him forever,*

*And never part no more.*

Hattie and her siblings were eventually able to go back home to their mother. We love it when children can return to their family. Best of all, we love it when the children have confidence that they will someday "go to our Heavenly home."

David Perry is executive director of ABCHomes. Visit their website for updates at [abchomes.org](http://abchomes.org).

## Williams Baptist: A devastating fire, a new friend

It was a traumatic moment for our young college in Pocahontas. On Dec. 26, 1946, fire gutted the institution's principal building. Fortunately – and providentially – the college was able to shift operations to the recently abandoned military air base in Walnut Ridge. Yet, this new home for the college was also suddenly in jeopardy when a very forceful former Marine colonel arrived at the office of H.E. Williams, founder of Williams Baptist College (then called Southern Baptist College), with an order for the college to vacate the air base facilities.

The colonel was the representative of the War Assets Administration (WAA), the agency responsible for dis-

persing military property at the end of the Second World War. The colonel informed Williams that the regional office of the WAA had not yet received any official confirmation from Washington concerning the transfer of

the base to the college. Consequently, the college must leave the property. Williams was astonished by this news. His mind raced; he had letters and agreements from officials in Washington. What had gone wrong? The colonel was unmoved by Williams' explanation. He asserted that the WAA regional office required its own independent verification from



### Williams Baptist

Ken Startup

Washington. The college must go.

Williams stalled, hoping for some means of persuading the colonel to forestall the

eviction process. After all, where would the college go? The fire, now this; Williams

felt that the college's life was in the balance. Still stalling for time, groping for some way to avoid an imminent disaster for the college, Williams asked the colonel about his military career. This personal engagement seemed to soften the colonel's attitude just a bit. He mentioned that his career had actually begun in the Spanish American War. Williams commented

that his father had also served in that conflict. More discussion of the war followed, and suddenly the colonel realized that he had actually known Williams' father in Cuba.

This recollection of a long-ago comradeship prompted the colonel to apologize for his earlier brusqueness. Moreover, he supposed it would be acceptable for the college to remain on the base until Washington sorted matters out. In fact, the colonel said he would personally pursue the matter with Washington authorities. The crisis had passed.

To the end of his long life, Williams would recall that day and the remarkable, providential coincidence that had protected the college.

It was only one of the many times in the 75-year history of Williams Baptist College that a trial and challenge had been surmounted in a similar, remarkable, unexpected way.

Today, celebrating the college's anniversary, the friends and alumni of Williams are profoundly grateful to remember the divine grace, provision and protection of the college – across the lengthening decades.

During Williams' 75th year, post your personal memories to [75thmemories@wbcoll.edu](mailto:75thmemories@wbcoll.edu), our Facebook page or Twitter account. Go to [wbcoll.edu](http://wbcoll.edu) for event schedules and information.

Ken Startup is vice president for academic affairs and professor of history at Williams Baptist.

# IMB

*continued from page one*

as a fresh calling to reaching the world for Christ. Now is the time to go forward with a clear vision and an aggressive strategy to make disciples of all the nations for Christ.”

Though the IMB managed to cover its shortfalls through reserves and global property sales, in August 2015 Platt announced a critical need to balance the organization’s budget. Because 80 percent of the IMB’s budget is devoted to personnel salary, benefits and support expenses, leaders determined a need to reduce the total number of personnel by approximately 600-800 people to get to a healthy financial place in the present for sus-

tained growth and engagement in the future.

At that time, Platt outlined a two-phase process for reducing the number of IMB personnel. Phase one involved a voluntary retirement incentive (VRI) available to eligible retirement-age personnel, and phase two included a hand raising opportunity (HRO) available to everyone in the IMB.

Platt reported that the VRI and HRO have resulted in, at most, 983 missionaries and 149 stateside staff transitioning outside the IMB over the past six months. He reported 702 missionaries and 109 stateside staff took the voluntary retirement incentive, and 281 missionaries and 40 stateside staff took the hand raising opportunity. He noted it is possible the number of

missionaries who have taken the HRO may decrease, since missionaries can rescind their decisions through April.

“Even though a more involuntary process would yield more precise and predictable results, IMB chose a voluntary process that would leave as much decision-making as possible in the hands of IMB personnel,” Platt said. “Knowing that such a voluntary process would yield more imprecise and unpredictable results, we believed that we should trust God with this process and every individual within the IMB.

“This process remained entirely voluntary for all IMB missionaries,” he said. “No IMB missionary has been required to leave the field during this time. IMB missionaries have been encouraged to make a transition off of the field only if they sense the Lord leading them to do so.”

The same voluntary nature of this process has applied to stateside staff with the exception of 30 personnel in the IMB’s Richmond communications office whose positions were eliminated in the IMB’s new mobilization structure.

Platt said the IMB had a standing policy of increasing its Lottie Moon Christmas Offering and budgeting the entire amount, even though it regularly failed to reach the goal by

at least \$20 million – leading to the financial crisis. Over six years, that brought its deficit to \$210 million and severely depleted its cash reserves.

At a meeting of state Baptist newspaper editors in mid-February, Platt noted that the agency had taken the unprecedented step of lowering the 2016 offering by \$20 million – from \$175 million to \$155 million – to bring it more in line with expectations. While the offering had increased in recent years, it never met the goal on which the agency based its budget – thus causing overspending.

Platt encountered criticism in mid-January when he announced the shuttering of the agency’s communications department, eliminating 30 employees. No other department was affected by staff reductions in the entity’s “reset” – as Platt has termed the restructuring.

Regarding the elimination of the communications team, Platt said in January, “After examining the functions, capacity and workload, we determined that the functions performed by the Richmond communications center are no longer needed or can be adequately performed by others. The functions of the center will be performed in the future by overseas IMB missionary communication teams or through partnerships with

churches and outside vendors.”

At the editors meeting, Platt said cuts were not based on finances, but rather on an inability of the team to work in a highly digital world.

“This decision to remove various positions in Richmond was not driven by a financial need as much as it was driven by stewardship of responsibility,” he said.

The decision to close the Richmond communications center was made following internal and external audits of the IMB’s communications effectiveness and extensive meetings with stateside and overseas communications staff, Platt said.

The closure stemmed from the fact that “our mobilization efforts” – which presumably include the communications strategy – “have not kept up with our times,” Platt said. “We are way behind in the development of a digital mindset that builds on customization and flexibility, rather than predictability and uniformity. Our field and stateside communicators struggle with employing new methods for reaching a changing audience.”

*This article was compiled from reporting by the Baptist Press, The (Ga.) Christian Index, the Arkansas Baptist News, as well as other media reports.*

## VIEWPOINT

*continued from page 4*

appointments, changes in spending and a less sweeping VRI (voluntary retirement incentive) that would have reached our goal? This decision was largely made and carried out by new leaders who have not experienced long-term overseas mission service or involvement with the IMB.

Would more experienced leaders and a willingness to listen to others have resulted in a better solution?

We must not let this be a time where we reduce our commitment to the IMB. We must continue to urge churches and Southern Baptists to increase their giving to the Cooperative Program and to our mission offerings. We must do it for our missionaries who remain on the field and for the millions of

people around the world who have never heard the gospel. Southern Baptists remain the people with the greatest potential to carry the gospel to the ends of the earth, and the IMB remains our best resource for obeying the Great Commission.

*Ron West is a member of Immanuel Baptist Church, Little Rock. He and his wife, Elinda, served for 40 years on the mission field for the International Mission Board.*

# Is your church disabled accessible or disabled friendly?

**Mike Thompson**  
Mike Thompson Ministries

IN 1998, I was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis (MS). Over the years, MS has progressed in my body, causing my ability to walk to decrease. I have moved from weakness in my legs to a cane, forearm crutches, a manual wheelchair, to currently being in a power wheelchair. During this time, I have come to realize that while some buildings may be considered disabled accessible, they are not disabled friendly, as they do not think through how the accommodation benefits the disabled or if it helps at all.

With this in mind, I would like for you to consider some areas in your church facilities and determine if they are accessible or friendly.

(1) **Have you made any reasonable accommodations to your facility?** Many times churches will make accommodations to their building or grounds to make it easier for their aging members to access the building. Remember, even though you solved one person's issue, it may be a hindrance for others. For example, installing a ramp so members can avoid the steps is a hindrance to someone in a manual wheelchair if the pitch of the ramp is too great.

(2) **Do you have adequate disabled parking for guests?** While the size of your parking lot may only require you to have three disabled spaces, if they are always full, then where is the disabled guest to park?

(3) **Do you have parking for a wheelchair accessible ve-**

**hicle?** This is a disabled space with the wider striped zone for a landing spot for a wheelchair ramp. I know the thought is, "Why do we need this? No one in our church is in a wheelchair." Remember, the thought process should not be focusing on who you have, but on, Who might God bring?

(4) **Are your bathrooms accessible?** I have been invited to preach in a church in which my wheelchair could not even fit through the door of the bathroom. I mean, really? Here is a great example of the difference between acces-

sible and friendly.

(5) **Where are the soap and hand towel dispensers located?** Are they all up high toward the back of the sink, or is there at least one that is located near the front of the sink and lower for individuals in wheelchairs? As you can see, becoming disability friendly does not have to be expensive. Just think through some things from the view of the disabled.

(6) **Is there space for a wheelchair in your sanctuary?** I have visited many churches over the years, and most do not have room for a wheelchair. Well, they believe they do as they place me in front of the first row. I have only been

in one church that had half-size pews toward the middle of the sanctuary. I was so excited that they had actually thought about the disabled - that is until I was told that the space was reserved for a longtime member. So to the front I went.

These are only a few examples of disabled accessible versus friendly. My hope and prayer is that you will begin thinking through how you can make your facil-

ity friendlier to the disabled. Trust me, when someone with a disability visits your church, they will notice what you have done and be most thankful.

*Mike Thompson served in churches in South Carolina for 15 years and has been coaching and consulting pastors and staff for the past five years. In 1998, he was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, which has allowed him to have a unique view of the Church.*



Thompson



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# Russellville church regenerates through construction

Jessica Vanderpool  
Arkansas Baptist News

RUSSELLVILLE – You might not expect a study of Genesis to result in a construction project, but that’s exactly what happened at First Baptist Church, Russellville.

The church is in the midst of its Genesis: The Next Beginning capital stewardship campaign and is in the process of building a new sanctuary and completing various renovations to its current facilities.

Pastor Greg Sykes explained the concept behind the name of the church’s Genesis project.

“We’ve learned a lot about

God’s story by studying the Book of Genesis since the fall of 2014. We’ve begun to see a familiar cycle: God does something new, and then, either through sin or just natural decline, He has to step back in and author regeneration – generation, degeneration, regeneration,” Sykes said, noting that all of creation experiences this pattern, even individuals, families, communities and churches.

“And our church family is in the midst of an exciting arch in our great story,” he said. “The door to reach future generations hinges upon our ability to rise to the task ahead of us. We stand upon a rich his-

torical foundation, but God is doing something new – something that will take a move of unity and faith unlike any we have experienced.”

Sykes said this is a good time for the church to enter a building campaign, as is evidenced by a number of factors. These include that the church’s financial position is good, there is continuity among the ministerial staff following a time of transition and the church has been experiencing growth.

“From the very beginning, corporate worship has been crucial to not only the greater Church, but also to FBC,” said Sykes, noting that since its founding in 1873, there have been four significant construction projects related to the worship center.

“The reason we worship corporately hasn’t changed; however, the buildings and atmosphere have,” he said. “Improvements in sound, lightning and technology will be used in the new sanctuary to create an atmosphere that fosters both community connection and the fellowship, worship and spiritual growth of FBC – with the public proclamation of Scripture as the centerpiece.

“The new worship center will help us each move toward maturity in the Word of God so that we might be His ambassadors in the (Arkansas) River Valley and beyond.”

Among other things, the new worship center will increase seating capacity by about 70 percent; will provide



First Baptist Church, Russellville, is in the process of building a new sanctuary and completing various renovations to its current facilities.

more rooms for preschool and nursery ministries that are in close proximity to the new worship center, and will allow for larger projection/video screens, new lighting and an off-stage area for worship preparation and rehearsal.

Current sanctuary renovations will provide a space for youth, college and international ministry. It will include new flooring, reshaping of the stage, a cafe/lounge area where students can build relationships and relax, upgraded sound and lighting and additional educational classrooms. It will also create a practical space for smaller weddings, funerals and meetings.

The construction project will also result in a welcome area/foyer, as well as a new preschool desk and children’s

ministry check-in, along with other improvements to the nursery, preschool and children’s area.

In addition, general campus improvements will be made, such as adding more parking lots and reworking existing ones, adding handicap accessible parking immediately in front of the worship center, adding directional signage, renovating interior and exterior spaces to provide a cohesive design between the new and old buildings and installing a comprehensive security system throughout the campus.

The church voted in April 2015 to proceed with the building project, not to exceed \$11 million for the entire scope of the Genesis project.

Sykes noted that between the fundraising campaign and funds on hand, they should be able to pay about half of the project off within the first three years. He said they have no other church debt, and they fully funded their church budget in 2015, exceeding all missions goals, and “still launched the Genesis project strongly.”

The church broke ground in November, and the goal is to complete construction in spring 2017.

Sykes explained that the building campaign is simply

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# 'Depression' conf. equips health professionals, ministers

Rachel Gaddis  
Ouachita Baptist University

ARKADELPHIA - Examining the issue of depression and its impact on peoples' lives was the topic of the sixth annual Conference on Issues in Christian Counseling at Ouachita Baptist University Feb. 26.

Ouachita's Pruet School of Christian Studies hosted the conference, which is sponsored by the university, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and the Arkansas Baptist State Convention. The one-day conference brought together a total of 160 mental health professionals - counselors, nurses and social workers - and pastors from around the state.

Frank Page, president and chief executive officer of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee, focused on depression and suicide - sharing his family's personal experience with both issues - in the opening session. He encouraged conference participants to adopt "a theology of life" in their faith walks and practices. Page is the author of several books, including "Melissa: A Father's Lessons from a Daughter's Suicide."

"We know suicide is a horrible experience. The pain that is left behind for family and friends is a pain that may deaden over time but never heals completely," he explained. "Normally suicide has one of the presenting symptoms as overwhelming depression.

"We need a Christian theology of suicide and a Christian theology of mental health and illness from a Christian response," Page said. "There are many people who are not darkening the doors of your church because of depres-

sion. Some feel like people in the church don't understand. Guess what? Many don't."

Page said the Bible deals with depression and suicide, referencing the depressed psalmist in Psalm 42 and seven biblical examples of suicide: Abimelek (Judg. 9), Samson (Judg. 16), King Saul and his armor-bearer (1 Sam. 31), Ahithophel (2 Sam. 17), Zimri (1 Kings 16) and Judas (Matt. 27).

Citing 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, Page said, "The theology of life begins with a recognition that we do not belong to us. In our culture today, everyone teaches, 'You belong to you.' Well, that's not what we believe. A Christian

theology promotes a stewardship of God's ownership of everything, including our own lives."

Page stressed the need to confront negative responses and bad theology and challenged mental health professionals and pastors to "minister the Word of God and God's comfort to those who are depressed and hurting."

"Practice the ministry of presence," Page said. "Our Lord does not leave us, but sometimes that ministry is best performed by those in the helping community - in church and in the medical

professions and psychological professions. You are the hands and feet and heart of Jesus reaching out to those around you."



Page

Following Page's address, participants had the opportunity to choose from a variety of breakout sessions related to their fields or interests. Session topics included ethical considerations with therapy-resistant clients, child sexual abuse, depression and counseling people of faith, pastoral care of the depressed person, cultural and social influences on depression and pharmacotherapeutic management of

depression, among others.

During the conference's lunch session, Bill Viser, coordinator for the conference and professor of Christian ministries at Ouachita, reminded counselors of the importance of self-care. Titled "When Helping You is Killing Me," Viser's session distinguished between burnout and depression and provided strategies to combat burnout.

"All we want to do is highlight something that can happen to any of us," Viser said. "If we don't practice good strategies ... it can and it will happen to us."

Rachel Gaddis is a senior mass communications major at Ouachita Baptist University.

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Most taxpayers who itemize know that a gift of \$10,000 to their church costs them less than that amount. Because of the tax savings, the real cost of the gift might be \$7,000 or \$8,000, depending on their tax bracket. Making that gift with an appreciated asset can be even more powerful, even for non-itemizers, because the capital gains tax is avoided. Our tax laws encourage charitable giving and the "releasing" of appreciated assets to charities where the asset is converted into a useful service. The Foundation even has a way to sell appreciated stocks at no cost.

If you want assistance in knowing how to use a charitable lead trust give us a call or visit our website.

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ARKANSAS BAPTIST  
**Foundation**

## CISM Critical Incident Stress Management

**April 13-16** Baptist Building,  
10 Remington Drive, Little Rock, AR

### Two ICISF-certified courses available (both are two-day courses; lunch provided)

**April 13-14**

- Emotional and Spiritual Care in Disaster Operations (offered twice this week - April 13-14 or April 15-16)
- Individual Crisis Intervention and Peer Support (offered once this week)

**April 15-16**

- Emotional and Spiritual Care in Disaster Operations

**Registration deadline: April 4**

Pre-registration and pre-payment required

Register at [www.absc.org/2016cismtraining](http://www.absc.org/2016cismtraining)

Events sponsored by the  
Arkansas Baptist State Convention  
Missions Team  
For more information,  
call 501-376-4793, ext. 5249, or visit  
[www.absc.org/2016cismtraining](http://www.absc.org/2016cismtraining)

### We are offering Critical Incident Stress Management classes for:

- Chaplains
- Church staff
- First responders
- Anyone in a position to offer emotional first aid to victims of a critical incident
- Disaster relief personnel
- Medical personnel

**Missions**  
ARKANSAS BAPTISTS

# Exhibit highlights 'open road' through photography

BENTONVILLE - There are few activities more iconoclast in American culture than the road trip. Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville aims to highlight the art of the American road trip through its first large-scale photography exhibition.

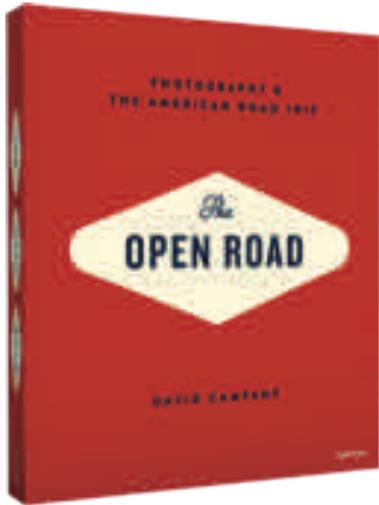
Titled "The Open Road: Photography and the American Road Trip," the exhibit is open Feb. 27-May 30 and was organized by Aperture Foundation of New York.

The exhibit features more

than 100 photographs by 19 photographers. The various images were taken all across the United States and highlight America from the 1950s to modern day.

In addition to the general exhibit, patrons are also encouraged to take their own road trip photos and post them using Twitter or Instagram and the hashtag "#OpenRoad-Trip." Photos with this hashtag will

be featured in a digital map and photo display allowing visitors to participate in the exhibit.



The description of "The Open Road" on Crystal Bridges' website states that the exhibit "presents the story of the American road as inspiration."

"Visit roadside motels, Mt. Rushmore, the Grand Canyon, Las Vegas, Route 66, the Pacific Coast Highway, theme parks, and everyday America. The images provide offbeat and personal reflections of the photographers' journeys, including the people they encounter, car culture, roadside attractions, and more," according to crystalbridges.org.

There are more than 30 programs related to "The Open

Road" exhibit that have been scheduled throughout its run. The programs include live music performances, workshops, guided gallery tours, programs specifically for children, discussions with special guests, culinary events, film screenings and more.

"Also in the exhibit are the different camera formats and films used by the photographers. A fun hands-on cropping activity lets you explore the impact of including or excluding information from an image. Another section shows how the road has been an inspiration to authors, musi-

cians, and filmmakers," wrote Jill Rohrbach in a piece about "The Open Road" exhibit for Arkansas.com.

Guided tours of the exhibit are held each Monday and Thursday from 1 p.m. to 2 p.m. The current tour takes guests through the gallery and discusses the photography of especially significant work by some of the featured artists and how their personal road trip experiences inspired their photos.

For more information on "The Open Road" exhibit or Crystal Bridges museum, visit crystalbridges.org.

## LEAD/DEFEND

*continued from page 3*

forward because I can be shy and in-going; but with this conference, I feel like I became more positive and more confident and more brave about sharing my faith."

Abigail Aguilar said she can now explain her faith better after sitting in on an afternoon apologetic session, "Spot the Lie," given by Bill

Newton from First Baptist Hot Springs. "I've always known I believe in God, and I know why I believe in God," said the Southeast Arkansas College student. "I just haven't been able to express it - until now."

Also, more than 25 booths were set up in the church with representatives from the International Mission Board, Baptist collegiate ministries, Camp Siloam, seminaries and Christian colleges. If the students

visited five booths, they received free books. High school scholars took home "Make College Count" by Derek Melley and collegiates received "Live Life On Purpose" by Claude Hickman.

The 2016 Lead/Defend conference is Feb. 25 at Second Baptist Church, Conway.

Lisa Falknor writes for the college and young leaders team at the Arkansas Baptist State Convention and is northwest regional correspondent for the ABN.

## REGENERATE

*continued from page 9*

a part of the ongoing story of the church's mission to "know Him and to make Him known."

He was careful to note that members are encouraged to give "over and above" their current giving so that the church can continue its support of the Cooperative Program and missions.

"The building project will not interfere with our mission giving or budget," said Sykes. "If at any time the budget or missions fund is not going to be funded, money will be removed from the building project to fund it. Missions and ongoing ministries are the No. 1 priority."

Missions and ministry is not new to First Baptist. Sykes said the church has been "on mission" ever since it was founded. The church gives to missions; goes on mission; provides local ministries, such as Celebrate Recovery and Awana, and has provided

leadership and financial support for seven additional missions, churches and numerous preaching stations around the Arkansas River Valley.

"We are passionate about what God is passionate about, and that is seeing the lost come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and bringing glory to the Father," Sykes said, adding that he hopes members will get involved not just in building a facility, but in all aspects of the church. "We are convinced that our congregation - with God's direction and blessing - has the financial means to complete this project and, even while doing so, donate a portion of the receipts to other missions-minded ministries, both local and abroad."

Contact Jessica Vanderpool at jessica@arkansasbaptist.org.

### Sam Moore Evangelistic Ministries



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Sam Moore is a vocational evangelist and a native of Arkansas. He has the gift of an evangelist and the heart of a pastor. He is available for Revivals, Crusades, Harvest Days and Witness Training. Now scheduling for 2016.

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## Lock-in focuses on missions

BENTON – Thirty giggly fourth- and fifth-grade girls spent the night at First Baptist Church, Benton, as part of the church's annual lock-in.

The event was about more than fun and games. It was also about missions.

Debbie Payton, who helps lead fifth-grade girls ministry at the church, said the church has been having a missions lock-in for about 20 years. This year's event took place Feb. 19-20.

During the evening, the girls went to the Churches Joint Council on Human Needs where they packed rice, folded clothes and made file folders. Then, they went to Target to buy items for Operation Christ-

mas Child shoe boxes before going to the local crisis pregnancy center to learn about the ministry and how they could help. The evening ended back at the church where they had a devotional time focusing on missions, packed shoe boxes and watched a movie.



Girls take part in a missions-focused lock-in.

The following Wednesday, the girls made refrigerator magnets that the crisis pregnancy center can give to women.

"We had a great night and lots of fun just being on mission," said Payton.

"Hopefully the girls leave there having a heart for going out and telling people about Jesus and doing it by meeting their needs," she said.



**JENNINGS RETIRES** – A retirement celebration and reception for Norma Strait Jennings was held Feb. 28 at First Baptist Church of Sherwood. Jennings served as church and pastor's secretary for 50 years. She also played piano and organ for the church for many years during the same time frame. Her husband, Jimmy, is a deacon and has been chairman of several church building committees. The couple enjoyed working with the youth and went on many youth choir trips. "Norma is a wonderful servant of the Lord," said senior Pastor Richard "Ricky" Lee. "She served faithfully with all her heart."




WE CAN  
**Pray**

**Fellowship of Retired Baptist Workers**  
 Tuesday, April 19, 2016, 9:00 a.m.–1:00 p.m.  
 Park Hill Baptist Church, North Little Rock

Deadline to register: April 8  
 \$12 per person (includes lunch and morning refreshments)  
 Reservations required. Contact Connie McCall  
 at 501.376.4791 ext 5101 or cmccall@absc.org

**Arkansas BAPTISTS**



**Houseparents needed: Boys Ranch, Harrison.**  
 Contact: Bill VonderMehden at (870) 741-5784 or bvondermehden@abchomes.org.

**Houseparents needed: Children's Homes, Monticello.**  
 Contact: Randy Luper at (870) 367-5358 or rluper@abchomes.org.

*These full-time positions include salary, housing, medical and life insurance and paid leave.*

# Classifieds

## PASTOR

First Baptist of Perryville accepting applications for **full-time pastor**. P.O. Box 328, Perryville, AR 72126. Email patrick-wsims@yahoo.com.

Maple Grove Baptist Church in Trumann is seeking a **full-time pastor**. Please send resume to Maple Grove Baptist Church, 13509 Maple Grove Lane, Trumann, AR 72472, Attn: Pastor Search Committee or to ronnieye33@gmail.com.

Is God calling you to rural Missouri? First Baptist Church, Gainesville, Mo., is seeking a **full-time pastor**. Please send resume with internet link/CD/DVD of sample sermons to pastor search committee, P.O. Box 627, Gainesville, MO 65655 or email to fbc-gainesville@centurylink.net.

**PASTOR:** Rural church southwest of Crossett, near the Louisiana state line, is searching for a pastor with a vision for outreach and church growth. Please send resume to Meridian Baptist Church, Attn: Pastor Search Committee, 4593 Ashley 703, Crossett, AR 71635.

26th Street Baptist Church in Rogers is seeking a **bi-vocational pastor**. Please submit resume to twenty-sixthstbaptist@yahoo.com or mail to P.O. Box 517 Lowell, AR 72745.

Rural church seeking **pastor**. Generous part-time salary and parsonage. Email resumes to odenbaptist@yahoo.com.

Central Baptist Church of Hot Springs is accepting applications for **pastor**, deadline March 22. Applications can be mailed to 1035 Central Ave., Hot Springs, AR 71901 or emailed to centralbaptist1035@att.net.

Highland Hills Baptist Church is seeking

a **bi-vocational pastor**. Email resume to hhbc.search@gmail.com (preferred) or mail resumes to Search Committee, HHBC, 4106 E. 9th St., Texarkana, AR 71854.

**Pastor:** First Baptist Church, Muldrow, Okla., is seeking a full-time pastor. Please send resumes to Pastor Search Committee, P.O. Box 1857, Muldrow, OK 74948 or muldrowfbc@gmail.com.

**Bi-vocational senior pastor** position at Reynolds Park Baptist Church, P.O. Box 1828, Paragould, AR 72451, reynoldsparkbaptist@gmail.com. Mail or email resume to Attn: Search Committee.

First Baptist Church, Gillham, is seeking a **full-time pastor**. Please send resumes to Pastor Search Committee, c/o Vona McKinley, 332 Pendergrass Road, Horatio, AR 71842.

Keo Baptist Church, a small church, is seeking a **full-time pastor**. Housing available. Send resumes to Keo Baptist Church, P.O. Box 87, Keo, AR 72083.

Due to resignation, New Hope Baptist Church of Pollard is seeking a **full-time pastor**. Please send resume to Pastor Search Committee, New Hope Baptist Church, P.O. Box 80, Pollard, AR 72456.

First Baptist Church of Lockesburg is seeking a **full-time pastor**. Please send resumes to Pastor Selection Committee, FBC, P.O. Box 53, Lockesburg, AR 71846 or fbsecretary@outlook.com.

First Baptist Church, El Dorado, is prayerfully seeking to fill the position of **senior pastor**. Email resumes to fbc-el-dorado201@gmail.com or mail to Pastor Search Committee, 100 E. Peach St., Suite 350, El Dorado, AR 71730.

## OTHER STAFF POSITIONS

First Baptist Church of Dover is looking for a **full-time minister of music and media technology**. A job description can be found at our website www.fbcdoover.com and resumes can be sent to office@fbcdoover.com. Deadline June 1.

First Baptist Church of Green Forest is seeking a **bi-vocational youth minister**. Please send resumes to P.O. Box 550, Green Forest, AR 72638, Attn: Pastor.

Central Baptist Church in North Little Rock is seeking to hire a **part-time receptionist** and is now accepting resumes for this position. Please send resumes to centralbaptistreceptionist@gmail.com

Highland Drive Baptist Church in Jonesboro is seeking a **full-time children's minister**. Send resume and cover letter to Johnny Hutchison, 515 E. Highland Drive, Jonesboro, AR 72401. Or email both to johnny@hdbc.org.

First Baptist Church, Columbus, Miss., seeking a **full-time minister of students**. Experience preferred and seminary degree desirable. Salary range: \$50,000 to \$55,000. Please email resumes by March 29 to jlautz@cableone.net or mail to First Baptist Church, Attn: Minister of Students Search, P.O. Box 829, Columbus, MS 39703.

Immanuel Baptist Church, Newport, is seeking a **part-time associate pastor**. Primary duties in the area of youth. Contact church at 870-523-3852 or pastor cell at 417-372-1791 or email billychambers24@yahoo.com.

First Baptist Church of Dumas is seeking a **full-time youth pastor**. Those interested should send a resume to FBC Dumas,

200 E. Waterman, Dumas, AR 71639.

Old Austin Baptist Church of Austin is seeking a **bi-vocational youth minister**. Send resume to bromark71@yahoo.com.

First Baptist, Searcy, is seeking a **full-time minister of music/worship**. Experience and a bachelor's degree in a music-related field are required, and seminary training is preferred. Email resumes to linda@fbsearcy.org or mail to FBC Searcy, Attn: Linda Stake, 105 S. Spring St., Searcy, AR 72143.

Southern Heights Baptist Church, Berryville, is seeking a **full-time worship leader**. Please send resumes to Personnel Committee, 279 Highway 221 S., Berryville, AR 72616 or shbc@shbc.arcoxmail.com. Website: http://www.myshbc.net.

Armored Baptist Church is seeking a **conservative music director** (no rock and roll). The position is part-time. Send resume to P.O. Box 68, Armored, AR 72310. You may also send it to Linda@Armoredbc.com.

Bear Creek Springs Baptist Church is seeking a **full-time student pastor**. Those interested should send a resume to Bear Creek Springs Baptist Church, Attn: Senior Pastor, 179 Devito Loop, Harrison, AR 72601.

Soaring Wings Ranch (SWR), a nonprofit, Christ-centered children's home, is seeking to hire a **social worker for a full-time, salaried position**. The ranch is located 15 minutes northeast of Conway on 195 beautiful acres. Minimum of a bachelor's degree is required. Duties will include but are not limited to: outreach and communications to all referral sources. Evaluation of referrals and admission of SWR children. Keeping children's files and working with state licensing.

Close collaboration with campus director and with house parents. Advisement for house parents on behavioral issues and needed services. Full job description at www.swranch.org/employment. Please send resumes to jessica@soaringwing-ranch.com or P.O. Box 1670, Conway, AR 72033.

Send resumes for **full-time music pastor** to EHBC, 703 E. Walters, Harrison, AR 72601 or email to ehbcadmin@eagle-heightsharrison.org.

## MISCELLANEOUS

Searching for **J.Q. Williams**, former U.S. Army chaplain. Served with Bob Maples at Fort Polk, La., from 1967-1968. Call 575-910-5845.

Davis Church Pew Upholstery, 30-plus years experience. Melton and Sandra Davis, Quitman, Miss., 601-776-6617.

For sale: **Allen Organ**, Renaissance Model #R-320. \$18,000 or best offer. Please contact South Side Baptist Church, Fort Smith, at 479-782-5041 or southside@mynewroads.com for information.

**ABN**  
ARKANSAS BAPTIST NEWS

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**NOTEURNING AT FIRST BAPTIST, JACKSONVILLE** — First Baptist Church, Jacksonville, held a noteburning ceremony Feb. 21. The church relocated in April 2000 and has completed a 40,500-square-foot building that includes a worship center, an administration area, Sunday school classrooms, a choir room and a fellowship hall and kitchen. They made their last payment on the \$5 million project in December. The next phase of their building project will include a family life center, children's education space and children's worship area, with additional shelled-out educational space for youth and others. From left: Thad Gray, Judith Hankins Douglas, Buster Smith, Pastor Mark Smith, Chuck Winer, Mary Alice Cole and Gene Marak.

## Obituaries

**Skip Wofford**, 76, of Alma, died Feb. 19. He was a graduate of Ouachita Baptist College (now Ouachita Baptist University) in Arkadelphia with a degree in music education and served in the United States Army. He served as a music and youth minister for 60 years. He began directing music in churches at age 16 in Shreveport, La., and went on to serve churches in Georgia, California, Hawaii, Louisiana and Arkansas. For the past 13 years, he served as minister of worship at First Baptist Church, Ozark. He retired in October. He also served as a



disaster relief unit leader for the Ozark Shower/Laundry Unit. He was preceded in death by his parents. He is survived by his wife of 54 years, Nancy Magby Wofford, a son, a daughter, two sisters and five grandchildren. A celebration of life service was held Feb. 23 at First Baptist Church, Ozark, with burial at a later date in Fort Smith National Cemetery, Fort Smith.

**Dorothy Wall Medlin**, 95, of El Dorado, died Feb. 26 at her home following a brief illness. She was baptized at age 9 in First Baptist Church, El Dorado, and served in various capacities at the church most of her life. She served as a Sunday school teacher of young married adults, sang in both the adult choir and senior adult choir, directed the children's choir and played handbells. In addition, she was a founding member of the church's prayer ministry. She also served in the Baptist Women organization (now Women on Mission) within the church and at the state level. She was a graduate of Baylor University. She was preceded in death by her husbands, Julius Kelly Sheppard III and T. Shad Medlin, and a granddaughter. Survivors include four sons, three daughters, 14 grandchildren and 21 great-grandchildren. A memorial service was held March 1 at First Baptist Church. A reception and visitation was held following the service.



of Arkansas legislative session as her husband, W.R. "Bud" Rice, was serving 18 years as Arkansas State Representative. Her husband was also elected delegate to the Arkansas Constitutional Convention. The couple enjoyed working on numerous mission construction projects with Arkansas Campers on Mission. Thelma Rice was preceded in death by her husband of 64 years, a sister and a grandson. She is survived by two daughters, two sons, eight grandchildren and 19 great-grandchildren. A celebration of her life was held Feb. 6 at First Baptist. Interment followed in Square Rock Cemetery near Waldron.

## Church life

**Psalms Camp in Kingsland** will host a spring getaway April 22-24 for girls and women 13 years old and older. For more information, visit [wherejoyis.com](http://wherejoyis.com).

## On the move

**Wayne Martin** is serving as pastor of First Baptist Church, Grubbs.

**Rodney Rogers** is serving as pastor of Philadelphia Baptist Church, Jonesboro.

**Bryce Holmes** is serving as pastor of Bowman Baptist Church, Lake City. He formerly served as the church's youth pastor.

**Gene Tanner** is serving as associational missionary for North Central Baptist Association.

**Allen Elkins** is serving as pastor of Central Community Church, Harrisburg.

**Jimmy Meek** is serving as pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church, El Dorado.

**Bill Kenner** is serving as pastor of White Oak Lake Baptist Church, Chidester.

Send your news to  
[jeanie@arkansasbaptist.org](mailto:jeanie@arkansasbaptist.org)

SAVE THE DATE

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Fashion Show & Dinner

April 29, 2016 • Noah's Event Venue,  
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Arkansas BAPTISTS

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Get info for short-term and long-term mission opportunities!

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The same event is offered at THREE different locations for your convenience.  
All locations: Registration is at 9:45 a.m., and you're on the road at 3:30 p.m.

<b>Thursday, April 7, 2016</b>	FBC Benton
<b>Friday, April 8, 2016</b>	FBC Bentonville
<b>Saturday, April 9, 2016</b>	FBC Cabot

The event cost is \$10 per person with lunch provided. **PRE-registration is required online at [www.absc.org/missionconnection](http://www.absc.org/missionconnection) or call Ashley at 1.800.838.2272 x5137.** YOUR church can get involved. See you at Mission Connection! Please pass this information to folks in your church! Thanks.

A ministry of the Cooperative Program and the Dixie Jackson Arkansas Missions Offering.

Missions ARKANSAS BAPTISTS



**Thelma Lee Crutchfield Rice**, 91, of Waldron, died Feb. 3. She was a longtime member of First Baptist Church, Waldron, where she was involved in many church activities. She also worked as a clerk for the State



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& Family Ministries

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# Women & Faith

*"Charm is deceptive and beauty is fleeting, but a woman who fears the Lord will be praised..."*

Proverbs 31:30 (HCSB)

## 50 voices from past convey marriage counsel

Annie Corser  
Southern Baptist Seminary

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP) – Although marital problems may pose seemingly unprecedented challenges for husbands and wives, a new book offers timeless reflections on marriage from major figures in church history.

Professors Robert L. Plummer and Matthew D. Haste include biblical reflections and personal application with each of the 50 historical selections in "Held in Honor: Wisdom for Your Marriage from Voices of the Past."

Plummer is professor of New Testament interpretation at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.; Haste is associate professor of ministry studies at Columbia International University Seminary and School of Ministry in Columbia, S.C.

The idea for the book began with Plummer's interest in collecting the main ideas from other marriage books he was reading.

"My thought was, 'I wish I could just take one paragraph

out of that because that's the main point and just read that because I don't really have a whole lot of time.' I just really wanted the meat of something," Plummer recounted.

"When I would read something like (Martin) Luther's famous essay on the estate of marriage, I would realize that it was written 500 years ago, but it was really good. ... I really liked the feeling of being connected to the historic witness to the Church."

"Held in Honor" embodies the Ephesians 4 concept of God raising up leaders and teachers throughout history as personal witnesses of the challenge and beauty of a God-centered marriage.

"Most people in this life will be married," Plummer said. "And I think that as people approach marriage, and as they are married, most people are woefully unprepared for that. ... This is a way to provide

accessible, interesting, real advice and quotes regarding marriage," he said.

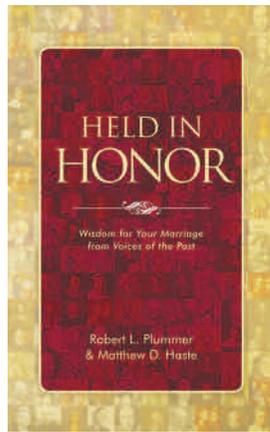
Marriage reflects the relationship between Christ and the Church, Plummer added. Therefore, honoring the testimony of the Church and the stance it has held throughout time is an important facet of the book.

Haste said he and Plummer "focused on what the Church has said about marriage and, ideally, demonstrated the

definition of marriage that has been consistent for two millennia."

"There has been an appreciation of and an honoring of marriage since the ascension of Christ, and before, of course, among the people of God," Haste said.

The relationship between the two authors began when Haste was a Master of Divinity distance learning student enrolled in Plummer's online

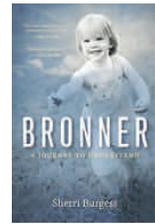


## From the Shelf

### 'Bronner: A Journey to Understand'

– Sherri Burgess

Sherri Burgess leads readers on her journey to understanding the purpose



behind pain through the story of her son Bronner's earthly death. Using her experiences

of God's works since her son's death, she provides comforting assurance that God truly is everything a person needs in this life.

### 'The Best Yes: Making Wise Decisions in the Midst of Endless Demands'

– Lysa TerKeurst

Lysa TerKeurst will help readers replace the "disease to please" with a



better understanding of the command to love, escape the shame and guilt of disappointing others

by learning the secret of the "small no," overcome the agony of hard choices by embracing a wisdom-based decision-making process and rise above the endless demands to discover the power of their "best yes" today.

### '5 Conversations You Must Have with Your Daughter'

– Vicki Courtney

Vicki Courtney helps mothers pinpoint and prepare the discussions that should be ongoing in



the formative years – discussions such as, "You are more than the sum of your parts," and, "Don't

be in such a hurry to grow up." The book also includes tips on having each conversation across the various stages of development: 5 and under, 6 to 11 and 12 and up.

## MINISTERS' WIVES

### Are you a quitter?

By Vickie Lee

I KNOW CHOCOLATE in large quantities is not good for my body. I am really trying to cut back on caloric consumption. There are days when I will completely deny myself of my favorite sweet treat, but I eventually return to my favorite food. Why do I do what I do? Because God made chocolate and I am not a quitter!

As a minister's wife, are you a quitter? Over the years, I have visited with many discouraged ministers' wives. They are burned out, frustrated, overwhelmed and struggling emotionally. Basically, they want to throw in the towel and call it quits.

Sisters, we cannot quit! The harvest is plentiful and the workers are few. You cannot quit! If your husband has truly been called and anointed by the Father to serve His kingdom through some role in ministry (pastor, worship leader, youth/children minister, missionary, administrator, etc.), you are called too. We must

be willing to walk beside our husbands in whatever roles they serve and be their biggest cheerleaders. You simply cannot wake up one morning and decide you quit, because who would support and encourage your husband?

What about those of you whose husbands were called from one profession into the ministry? Sure, you may have married a lawyer or a farmer; however, God has called your husband to serve His kingdom. Sisters, this means you and even your children are called.

You cannot say, "That's great, Honey. You go ahead with ministry, and I will just keep doing what I have always done."

No, you must be willing to get dirty in the trenches too.

Have I ever wanted to quit and throw in the towel? You bet!

Several times in our ministry, I have stood sobbing in my kitchen screaming at my husband and God asking, "Why do we keep doing ministry?"

My husband replies quietly, "Because God has called us to do His work

even in the hard times."

God's response is the gentle reminder that He is always with us.

God has called us at this time in history to do His work. Our world is full of false teachings, apathy toward the church and the "I'm okay; you're okay" mindset. Our Christian rights are slowly being stripped away. Sisters, we cannot quit. We need to stop and reflect on God's Word and promises. Then, we need to pick up our towels and get back into the battle to win lost souls for Christ.

Vickie Lee is the wife of Richard Lee, pastor of First Baptist Church in Sherwood.



MARCH 20, 2016

I have lived in community before – and loved it. Growing up on the mission field, I experienced the community of a mission group bonded together as family. Later, a similar community experience was repeated in college and again in seminary housing. We didn't always get along. We weren't always in unity. But, in each situation, we were a community with a common goal.

I have always thought that, if I could just find that community experience again, unity just might follow. Surely common goals breed common experiences, drawing people together.

But, looking at Acts 2:41-47, I realize I might have it backward. The early Church had the unity first.

Look at Acts 2:41-43: "So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles."

The brand-new believers, together with those upon whom the Holy Spirit had first fallen at Pentecost, were unified in three ways.

First, they devoted themselves to teaching. "Devoting to" does not just mean that they listened to a sermon. They were hungry to learn how to live out their new relationship with Christ. So, they listened and heeded.

Second, they devoted themselves to fellowship. They agreed that it was important to get to know one another!

Finally, they devoted themselves "to the breaking of bread and to prayer" (Acts 2:42).

Their focus was on the things of God. The community of Acts 2:44 resulted from that focus: "And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common."

Unified! What a beautiful concept! But we cannot expect community to automatically produce unity. Unity can only form when God's children obey through focus on the Word of God, fellowship and prayer.

## EXPLORE THE BIBLE

## Unified

ACTS 2:41-47



Ann Hibbard Hensley

I am a chicken when it comes to severe thunderstorms or tornadic activity. I pile pillows, blankets and a flashlight in our half bathroom just in case. When the siren goes off, I hunker down. Somehow this spot makes me feel more secure than being exposed in my living room surrounded by windows.

Humans like to feel secure. We need protection from storms, lawlessness and life in general. More importantly, we need security concerning what follows us after our physical death. For Christians, we have a Savior who provides that security through eternal life.

In John 10:7-15, Jesus describes Himself as "the gate for the sheep." Unlike a servant who has no investment in the job, Jesus sacrificed His life for us so that we could be heirs to the kingdom of heaven. Jesus came to seek out lost lambs of the world and bring them into His fold.

This Scripture makes another point. Jesus makes it clear that there is only one way to the Father. It is through

Jesus Christ the Savior. Many people claim that there are many ways to eternal life. They say everyone worships the same god. However, that is not true.

Jesus said in John 14:6, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Can you imagine the sadness of Jesus' heart when people would question Him about His identity? How many times had He performed miracles or told who He was? Jesus told them He and the Father are one (John 10:30). Sadly, no amount of miracles or teaching would ever convince the doubters of that day.

For us today, we can find these truths in this passage:

(1) Jesus speaks through His Word (Bible).

(2) Although we may face earthly harm, the Great Shepherd protects us in our eternal home.

(3) A true believer in Christ will know the difference between truth and deception. They only need to listen for Jesus' voice.

## BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

## Our need for protection

JOHN 10:7-15, 27-30



Vickie Lee Sherwood

No matter how often I hear the story of Easter, somehow the thrill never fades. In 1 Corinthians 15:12-19, Paul reminds us of the critical nature of Christ's resurrection. Without it, we have nothing. In fact, without it, we would be "of all men most to be pitied" (1 Cor. 15:19).

Yet, we do have the Resurrection. We can walk through the story again and again, feeling the thrill of discovery right alongside those who walked with Jesus during His time on Earth. But is it just a story, or is the Resurrection a personal revelation in our hearts?

As I ponder this question, a contrast stands out to me in Luke's version of the Resurrection. First, look at Luke 24:8: "And they remembered His words."

A handful of women, faithful followers of Jesus during His earthly ministry, had listened to His words all along. But in their grief, they had forgotten His eternal promises – until this moment.

In Luke 24:11, though, we are told that, when the women went to tell the

apostles what they had seen, "these words appeared to them as nonsense, and they would not believe them."

While I hesitate to stretch this comparison too far, I am struck by a powerful picture here. Acting in love to minister to Jesus even in death (Luke 24:1), the women were present at the tomb. As a result, they had a personal encounter with the reality of the Resurrection. This experience revived the words Jesus had spoken earlier – words tucked into their minds for the opportune moment.

The apostles, on the other hand, received second-hand news at first (Luke 24:9). Until their experience with the risen Lord became personal, both the unbelievable tale of the women and the older words of Jesus remained "as nonsense" (Luke 24:11) in their minds.

Jesus is resurrected! It is true! But, unless the Resurrection is truly personal in our lives, it will remain just a story. Which will it be this glorious Easter?

## EXPLORE THE BIBLE

## Resurrected!

LUKE 24:1-12



Ann Hibbard Hensley

As a child, I had a great desire for a dog. Every birthday and Christmas I hoped my gift would be a soft bundle of puppy fur. However, due to childhood allergies, my hope was dashed every time. Finally, at that the age of 17, I adopted my first dog, and my precious Heidi was everything I dreamed she would be.

In our Christian walk, we often pray for certain things or situations, but those prayers may go unanswered. Sometimes God wants us to see the bigger picture and that He has our best interest at heart.

Our Bible passage found in John 11:17-27 is the story of Lazarus' death. Although Mary and Martha, Lazarus' sisters, had sent word to Jesus that their brother was gravely ill, Jesus chose to wait and teach a bigger lesson (John 11:3-15). The sisters had hope that Jesus would come immediately to heal their sick brother; however, the lesson Jesus was going to teach was of a hope that was eternal.

Upon Jesus' arrival, He was met by

Martha. Verses 21 and 22 reveals how strong her faith was because she believed that "even now" Jesus could heal her dead brother. However, although her faith was strong, Jesus wanted to stretch Martha's faith.

In verse 25-26 Jesus declares, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?"

Martha answered firmly, "Yes, Lord" (John 11:27).

Martha knew that whether Jesus chose to raise Lazarus from the dead right then or not, she would most definitely see her brother in the resurrection. Martha's strong faith showed her

trust and her hope were firmly placed in Jesus as the Messiah, the One who gives eternal life.

The application for the lesson is simple. We have a need for hope. For followers of Christ, we live in the assurance that our salvation and our future are in Christ the Lord.

## BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

## Our need for hope

JOHN 11:17-27



Vickie Lee Sherwood

MARCH 27, 2016

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