



Inside:

- Puerto Rico needs more vols, funds
- Seasons change; God still faithful
- Scripture for Christmas traditions
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- Sharing Christ with coupons, toys

Church safety takes forefront

Experts discuss how to prepare for the unthinkable

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Baptist Businessperson of the Year: J.D. Neeley

John David Neeley, 2017 *Arkansas Baptist News* Baptist Businessperson of the Year, stands in front of the headquarters of Neeley Forestry Service, the family business where he serves as president. Neeley's son, Daniel (background), also works for the company and represents the fourth generation of Neeley family foresters. See story, page 3.

Photo by Caleb Yarbrough

ABN classifieds get results!

Read them on Page 10.

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

Classifieds

RECTOR ... **THINK TANK POSITION** ... **WILLIAMSON** ... **ARKANSAS BAPTIST NEWS**

These are some of the classified ads featured in the November 30, 2017 issue of the Arkansas Baptist News. The ads cover a variety of topics, including church positions, business opportunities, and community news. The classifieds section is a key feature of the publication, providing a platform for churches and businesses to reach their target audience.

ABN Digest

Stories of interest
to Arkansas Baptists

Puerto Rico relief needs more volunteers, funding

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (BP) – Southern Baptists continue to serve Puerto Rico's residents after Hurricane Maria's devastation in September, creating a nationwide response from the ground up.

Sam Porter, national director of disaster relief for the North American Mission Board (NAMB), has spent several days in Puerto Rico in two separate trips to assist disaster response coordinator Jack Noble in facilitating the large-scale response by Southern Baptist Disaster Relief (SBD) and Send Relief. "Though the plight of Puerto Rico has started to fade from the headlines," Porter said, "there are still plenty of needs and places to serve."

NAMB's Send Relief outreach has attained warehouse space in Puerto Rico for the collection of food, water and other resources – items are then distributed to churches ministering to those in need in their region.

A part of the disaster relief strategy has involved equipping local churches across the island to serve as distribution centers.

Between Oct. 22 and Nov. 11, Send Relief and SBD teams from 11 state Baptist conventions distributed nearly 254,000 meals, including more than 19,000 hot meals as of Nov. 14.

Trained SBD teams and volunteers from Arkansas, Tennessee, Louisiana, North Carolina, Alabama, Florida, Pennsylvania-South Jersey, Maryland-Delaware, the Northwest Baptist Convention, the SBC of Virginia (SBCV) and the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention have served in Puerto Rico and are laying the foundation for future disaster relief efforts.

For more ABN Digest, go to
arkansasbaptist.org/abn-digest

Church safety:

Myths dispelled, critical tips shared

Lisa Falknor
Arkansas Baptist News

ROGERS – Three dominant myths regarding church safety were dispelled and various tips for enhancing church security were shared at a recent church safety seminar held Nov. 16 at First Baptist Church, Rogers.

People buy into three myths about church violence, said Tim Keck, retired Rogers police chief and keynote speaker at the three-hour seminar titled "Worship Safe: How to Prevent a Tragedy at Your Church" that attracted 150 people from northwest Arkansas.

The first myth is, "It won't happen to us." In 2004-07 there were 82 deadly force church incidents nationwide, and in 2014-17 there were 799 deadly force incidents, an 874 percent increase.

Examples of threats include domestic violence spillovers, attempted robbery and terrorism, he said.

"Talk to anybody in the know – what's coming is worse. I wish I had good news to tell you."

The second myth, Keck said, is, "Church violence can't be predicted." However, he said violent acts rarely occur without warning.

Church staff should know of any threats, Keck said, assess how dangerous those threats are, and keep a close watch on potential escalations.

Keck said myth three is,

"Church violence can't be prevented."

The retired police chief referenced the Nov. 5 shooting at First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs, Texas, where 26 people were killed.

"The knowledge that I have in my head could've prevented that tragedy," he said. "If you know what to look for, it can be prevented."

Keck said increased stress and violence, coupled with the godlessness of today's society, have resulted in more of these types of incidents occurring in churches.

"We're reaping the benefits of a society which wants to be free from God," he said. "This is the result."

If there's any place we should feel safe, said Keck, it should be in a church. Church security resembles a bullseye target. In the middle of the bullseye is deadly force, but "we should start in the outer rings."

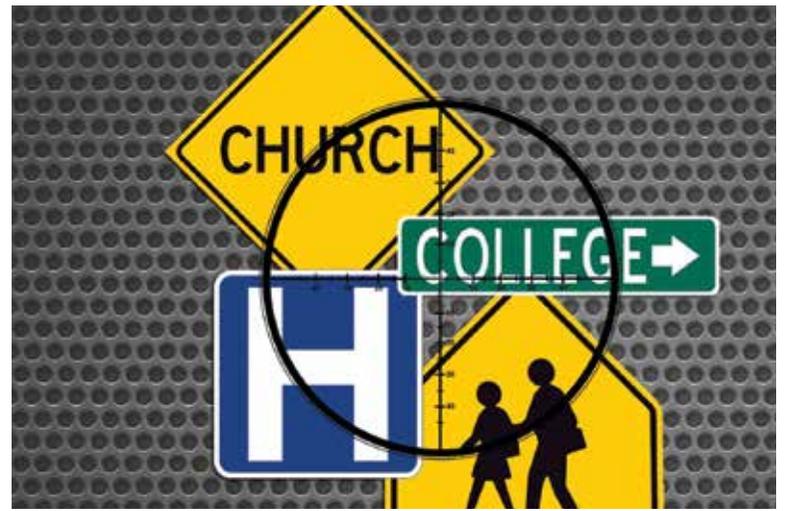
Jack Wassman, a former police officer and member at Immanuel Baptist Church, Rogers, agreed.

"A lot of people give a knee-jerk reaction, 'Let's just arm people and put them into church with no training or with minimal training,' like you get with conceal and carry – a decision which would cause chaos," Wassman said. "Like the chief says: 'There are other steps you can take.'"

Seventy-five percent of violence begins in the parking lot, so Keck suggested putting



Keck



Worship safety is like a ballistic vest with many layers of protection, said retired Rogers Police Chief Tim Keck. Keck spoke to a crowd of 150 at First Baptist Church, Rogers Nov. 16 about how to prevent a tragedy at church. Attendees took an informal test to grade their church's security.

trained volunteers among the cars and at every door. Give these attendants equipment – walkie-talkies and earpieces – and use a color-code language. For example, yellow can be caution, indicating a suspicious person on the property; code red can be shut the doors and call 911, and code green means all clear.

Also, because 61 percent of tragedies occur before or after a service, it makes sense to add not only ushers, but also observers. Observers should look for a person who does not fit the norm.

"Trust your instincts," Keck said. "You can call it training instincts or the Holy Spirit's prompting, but take it seriously."

Since violence is complex and churches vary, said Keck, church security also may differ among churches.

For example, some churches might lock their doors during

the week, while others might install a video doorbell.

A good idea for all churches is to ask police officers to drive their patrol cars to church, which can be a visual deterrent to a person wanting to cause harm at the church.

"You can even buy a used car and paint it to look like a police car. Be innovative!" he said.

Ernie McNair, a member of First Baptist Church, Pea Ridge, believes church security is important. He attended the conference to get ideas and to report back to his church's new security committee.

"I think it (church security) is like a spare tire," he said. "I never want to use that spare tire; but, if I need it, it had better be there."

Read what Arkansas law says about guns in churches on page 9.

Lisa Falknor is the northwest Arkansas regional correspondent for the Arkansas Baptist News.



Free safety training Dec. 7 at FBC, Mountain Pine

MOUNTAIN PINE – Civilian Response to Active Shooter Events (CRASE) training will be held from 6-9 p.m., Dec. 7 at First Baptist Church, 100 5th Ave., in Mountain Pine.

The training is open and free to the public, according to Darren Green, pastor of First Baptist.

The CRASE course training provides strategies, guidance and a plan for surviving

an active shooter, according to promotion materials.

Topics include "the history and prevalence of active shooter events, civilian response options, medical issues and consideration for conducting drills."

"After all of the recent shootings that have been taking place, we have been looking for a safety training to put our church through," said

Green in an email about the event.

"I came across the CRASE training that is being conducted by Jeff Crow, director of Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, who is a retired Arkansas State Trooper and from the U.S. Marine Corp., and Robert Tibbit, wildlife officer of Arkansas Game and Fish Commission and former member of the U.S. Marine

Corp.," said Green.

"We are inviting all of our sister churches in our association (Diamond Lakes Baptist Association), all of the churches in the Mountain Pine area, Mountain Pine public school faculty, Mountain Pine City officials (to attend)."

For more information about the training contact Green at 501-463-2400 or DGGreen@triumphgroup.com.

J.D. Neeley of FBC Camden named ABN Businessperson of the Year



Photo by Caleb Yarbrough

Caleb Yarbrough
Arkansas Baptist News

CAMDEN – John David Neeley, president of Neeley Forestry Service, is the 2017 *Arkansas Baptist News* (ABN) Businessperson of the Year.

Neeley was selected for the honor by ABN staff from entries across Arkansas. Other nominees will be featured in future editions of the ABN.

Based in the heart of the timberlands of south Arkansas, Neeley Forestry Service is the definition of a family business.

Managed by three generations of Neeley family foresters, all believers and active members of First Baptist Church, Camden, the company has made its name through a focus on fair and ethical business practices and giving back to their community.

The main focus of Neeley Forestry Service's business revolves around overseeing all of the duties involved in maintaining and developing the Natural State's privately owned forestland. Other aspects of the company include real estate and appraisal services.

"My father started this company back in 1972. Even his father before him man-

aged property. He was not a degreed forester but what you would call a woodsman," said Neeley. "We're talking back in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s. ... You might say that forestry has been in our family going on 100 years."

In addition to a generational passion for good stewardship of God's resources, in the form of Arkansas' forests, Neeley said the most gratifying aspect of his company's work is in the relationships forged with clients.

"I find it very rewarding – both in educating clients on the resources that they have and also in how the Lord will use us from time to time, just as somebody to be an ear. ... There are times when you have opportunities and someone is lost and you can be open and ready," he said.

Neeley takes no credit for the company's prosperity. He gives all credit to God for any success that Neeley Forestry Service has enjoyed over the years – past, present or future.

"I've always felt passionate that the Lord was calling me into the business," said Neeley.

Another calling Neeley has felt in his life is to be an active and involved layman at his local church – First Baptist Church, Camden.

In addition to his role of deacon at First Baptist, Neeley is active in numerous capacities, including recently leading the church in worship and leading the church's choir for five months until the church called a new music pastor.

About five years ago Neeley sensed God put college students and young adults on his heart. He and his wife, Beth, went on to start a new Sunday school class called Basic Brothers and Sisters in Christ.

"It's really been a blessing. It's mostly young families now, but there are some singles too," said Neeley. "It has really been fun to mentor them."

When the Neeleys were a young married couple, they had an older couple from their church who invested in them. Whether it's during Sunday school classes at First Baptist, four-wheeler rides on their property or lake trips, the Neeleys pour into the lives of those they disciple, just as their mentors did for them.

Today, the Basic Brothers and Sisters in Christ class has grown to include around 30 young adults.

"J.D. is an ideal church member," said Casey Hough, pastor of First Baptist Church, Camden. "He is committed,

and he serves in all kinds of different ways.

"Not only is J.D. a successful businessman, but he is willing to get in there and get his hands dirty. ... He is willing to do anything he can do for anybody," he said. "I would also include his wife, Beth. He wouldn't be able to do everything he could do without Beth. They are quite a team."

"If there were any family that had the gift of generosity and hospitality, it's the Neeley family," said Hough.

"His job and love of nature have enabled him to connect and evangelize people that would rather spend their time in the woods than in a church pew," wrote Brittany Lindsey, a member of First Baptist Church, Camden, in nominating Neeley for the ABN Businessperson of the Year.

"If there is a church-wide meal, J.D. is grilling the meat, and other young men are right next to him helping," said Lindsey.

"The way that J.D. gives of his time and lives his personal, business and church life is the greatest testimony that someone can give, especially to the younger generations," she wrote.

Contact Caleb Yarbrough at caleb@arkansasbaptist.org.

ABN Digest

Stories of interest
to Arkansas Baptists

Church with woman pastor declined by TBC

HENDERSONVILLE, Tenn. (BP) – Messengers at the annual meeting of the Tennessee Baptist Convention (TBC) voted overwhelmingly not to seat messengers from First Baptist Church (FBC) in Jefferson City, which has a woman pastor, during its opening session Nov. 14.

First Baptist attempted to register seven messengers, including new pastor Ellen Di Giosia, who has been in the position since Aug. 1.

In mid-October, the TBC's Committee on Credentials met and agreed that a church with a woman pastor does not fit the definition of a "cooperating church" as defined by convention bylaws. The committee based its decision on Article VI of the Baptist Faith and Message 2000 declaring that "the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture."

Di Giosia and the FBC contingent met with TBC registration secretary Dan Ferrell Nov. 14 and were presented guest name badges and a bag of materials which included everything given to messengers except ballots.

Curt Wagoner, chair of the Credentials Committee, moved that messengers affirm the committee's decision not to register messengers from the church. Several messengers spoke for and against the motion.

Di Giosia and messengers met with the media following the vote. She also provided a statement.

The statement acknowledged that "a majority vote of the messengers speaks on behalf of the entire fellowship of churches, according to Baptist polity. Therefore, our church is no longer a part of the Tennessee Baptist Convention."

For more ABN Digest, go to 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)

Seasons change; God's faithfulness endures

Editor's Note: Recently, I ran across the first column I wrote upon arriving at the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission in 1989 after becoming editor of Baptist Young Men's materials at the men and boys missions entity. During this season of thankfulness, I was reminded through this column written 28 years ago of how God works actively in my life – which I know is true for your life as well.



Pressing On

Tim Yarbrough
Phil. 3:14

never entered my mind. It had many times. I have often prayed: "Dear Lord, show me your will for my life."

That prayer sometimes came during uncertainty. Sometimes it was uttered merely out of habit. But all along I knew my career in journalism was simply not a coincidence.

I know there is a lot of work to be done. The Great Commission is as real today as the day our Lord spoke it. The task of teaching missions to young men and telling others of the activities involved in missions is awesome. Much too awesome for one man. But the Lord gives us the ability to accomplish anything if we just follow and trust Him to give us strength.

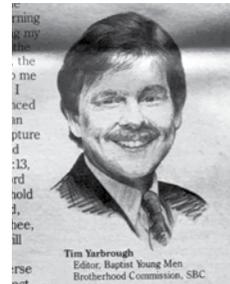
During Bible study this morning after accepting my new job at the Brotherhood, the Lord spoke to me as directly as I have experienced

in my Christian life. The Scripture passage I read was Isaiah 41:13, "For I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, 'Fear not; I will help thee.'"

Another verse was more direct as I contemplated the task before me. I found it in Joshua 1:9, "Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage: be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest."

Those Scripture passages calmed my heart as to how I would accomplish the task

that I had accepted. The Lord told me it wasn't going to be through my own strength. It would be only through and by Him.



Baptist Young Men is a tremendous challenge because ages 18 to 34 are years in which a young man makes decisions that impact the rest of his life and echo throughout eternity.

A young man of 18 is far different from a young man in his 20s, and a young man in his 20s is far different from a young man in his 30s. These are years filled with the joy of marriage and of starting a family. It is a time when a

young man enters the workforce and establishes himself in a lifetime career – a time of discovering the vast world we live in.

As a man at the center of this age group, I have experienced firsthand many of the challenges and influences heaped upon today's young men. There are so many directions, yet unfortunately, so few roads leading to the place where Christ would have a young man to go.

Our challenge is directing that path. Through His strength – and only His strength – will we accomplish this task.

Tim Yarbrough is editor/executive director of the Arkansas Baptist News.

Challenges. We would live a boring existence without them. They excite us and give us renewed purpose. They many times direct us toward the unknown on an entirely new path.

As the new editor of Baptist Young Men, I face many challenges – both professionally and spiritually.

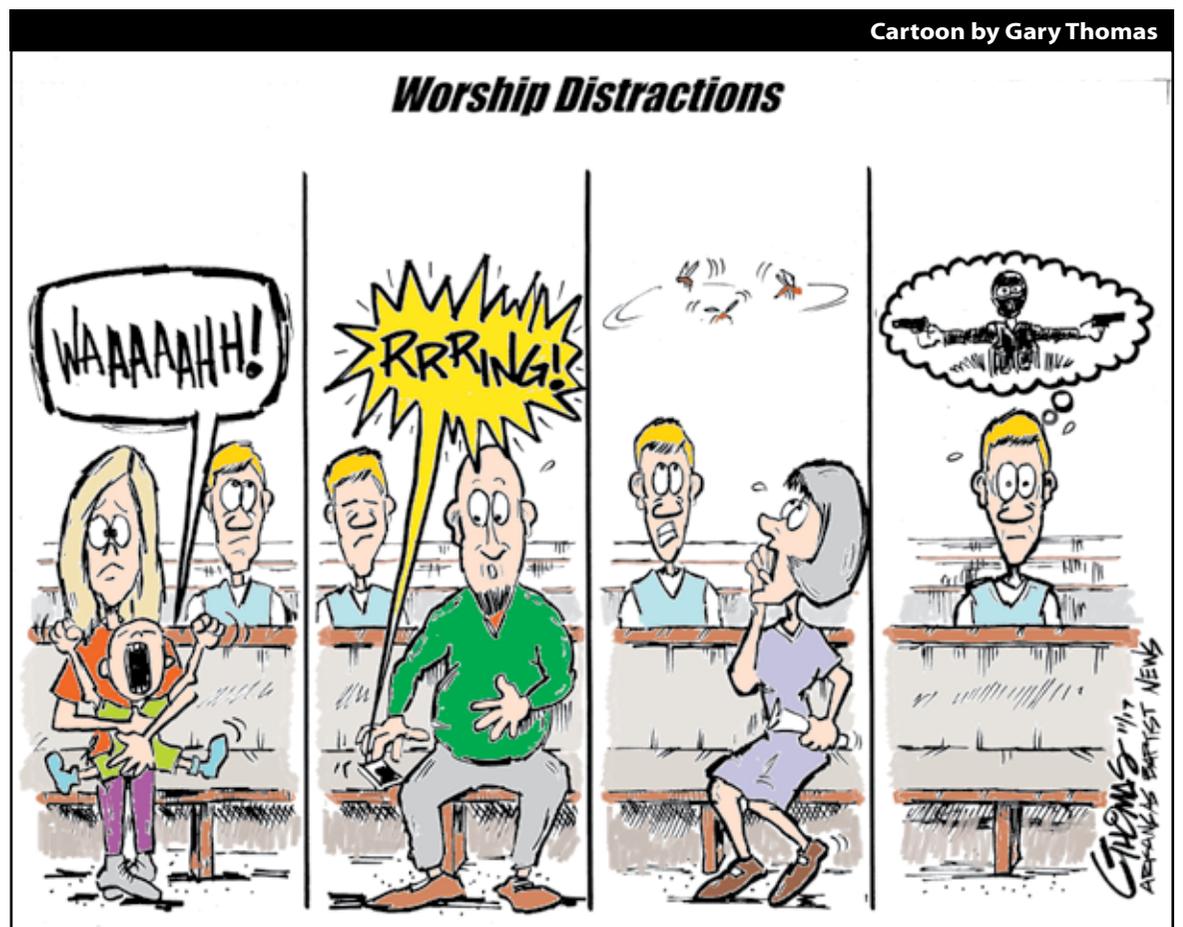
My professional career has been a journalist working for newspapers. It's not that full-time Christian service had

The purpose and mission of the Arkansas Baptist News

The Arkansas Baptist News (ABN) exists to assist Kingdom work by informing, inspiring and involving Arkansas Baptists through meeting needs of people, spreading the gospel, making disciples and growing God's work in Arkansas and beyond.

As the largest religious publication in the state, the ABN strives for journalistic integrity, fairness and balance in its reporting of Baptist and evangelical news.

We advocate for the cause of Jesus Christ.
We report the news based on our Christian worldview.
We uphold high standards of journalism and Christian ethics.



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Christmas traditions



Family Matters

Ben Phillips

Christmas music is already playing in most stores, and my daughter has multiple playlists of Christmas music that we listen to in the car while we travel. Most families put up Christmas decorations sometime over the Thanksgiving holiday weekend.

I enjoy Christmas and a variety of different family traditions that we celebrate. One of my favorite family traditions is reading through the Christmas story in chronological order. Our family then re-reads the key passages surrounding Jesus' birth again on Christmas morning utilizing "What God Wants for Christmas" produced by FamilyLife.

Below is a list of key Scriptures to guide you in starting a tradition in your own home. In the midst of the hustle and bustle of the Christmas holidays, I pray you will start a tradition to slow down and spend time in the Scriptures growing in your relationship with Jesus Christ – the Savior of the world!

The pre-incarnate Christ - John 1:1-5

The incarnation of Christ - John 1:6-18

Zechariah ministers in the temple - Luke 1:5-10

An angel announces the birth of John the Baptist - Luke 1:11-17

Zechariah is unable to speak - Luke 1:18-25

Gabriel announces Christ's birth - Luke 1:26-33

Mary miraculously conceives - Luke 1:34-38

Mary visits Elizabeth - Luke 1:39-45

Mary's Magnificat - Luke 1:46-56

Elizabeth gives birth to John - Luke 1:57-66

Zechariah prophesies of John's ministry - Luke 1:67-80

The genealogy of Christ - Matthew 1:1-17

The birth of Christ - Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 2:1-7

The angels announce Jesus to the shepherds - Luke 2:8-14

The shepherds visit Jesus - Luke 2:15-20

Jesus is circumcised - Luke 2:21-24

Simeon's prophecy - Luke 2:25-35

See **CHRISTMAS** page 6

To God be the glory!

Wow, just wow! What an amazing time we spent together at First Baptist Church, Russellville, for the 2017 Arkansas Baptist Pastors' Conference and the Arkansas Baptist State Convention (ABSC) Annual Meeting. I can't say that I've ever attended a gathering of Arkansas Baptists that was so encouraging, enjoyable and energetic as our three days in Russellville. Much of that is due to the preparation and meticulous attention to details of Greg Sykes and his team from First Baptist, Russellville. Thank you for sharing with us the beauty of your church campus, but more importantly, the beauty of the Body of Christ known as First Baptist, Russellville. I still believe I have the best staff and church in the state, but First Baptist, Russellville, runs a close second!

I hope you have taken the opportunity to watch the highlight video of our time together. It is such a difficult task to condense so much into three minutes, but Nick Burt and his team produced a video each of us should be excited to share with our congregations and through social media. You can access the highlight video and other resources shared at our Pastors' Conference and Annual Meeting at absc.org. While there, check out all the resources available at CP Share. You will find videos, screenshots and other resources that can be used in a variety of settings in the local church.

Tuesday night will be remembered as a night of "firsts" for our annual meeting. For the first time in the history of the ABSC, our session was live-streamed with more than 9,000 people viewing at least part of the session. Due to multiple shares on social media, more than 20,000 people were reached. Also, for the first time in the history, we held a church planter commissioning service. My eyes watered more than once as pictures of the church planters and their families were shared on the screens and we heard them speak of engaging their communities with the gospel.

No sweeter and more powerful time was had together than when the church planters spread across the worship center and messengers gathered around them and prayed. I have no doubt that this year will be filled with amazing testimonies from these men regarding the power and faithfulness of God in answering those prayers! A final "first" of the evening was making good on my goal to see J.D. "Sonny" Tucker, Arkansas Baptists' executive director, wear a bowtie. Not only did he look good, but I have heard numerous people say they have never heard him preach with such passion and energy. Credit it to the bowtie!

During our final session, messengers elected new leadership. Greg Sykes, pastor of First Baptist, Russellville, was elected president.

Arkansas Baptists, you did good; you did really good! Greg did an outstanding job leading this year's Pastors' Conference, as well as hosting our meeting, and I know that he will lead us well. Serving with Greg will be Wyman Richardson, pastor of Central Baptist Church, North Little Rock, first vice president, and George Goynes, pastor of Macedonia Baptist Church, Doddridge, second vice president. Elected to lead the 2018 Pastors' Conference were John McCallum, pastor of First Baptist Church, Hot Springs, president, and Chanson Newborn, pastor of Fellowship Community, Forrest City, vice president. Pray for these men!

Arkansas Baptists, thank you for an incredible journey of almost two years serving as president of the convention I so love. What an honor it has been to serve you! Thank you for your words of encouragement, your affirmation following my convention message, and especially your prayers. Let's continue encouraging one another to engage our communities, our state and the nations with the gospel of Jesus Christ! To God be the glory!

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



Past-President's Perspective

Sam Roberts



A blessed, exciting time!

In John 4:38 (ESV), Jesus told the disciples, "I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor."

That's exactly how I feel as I step into this role as the president of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention (ABSC). I am reaping where I have not sown.

I certainly understand that any recognition I have received among Arkansas Baptists actually comes from the exceptional reputation of my church, First Baptist Church of Russellville. And everything good about First Baptist is a result of our incredible staff and church members.

And, even beyond that, it's the result of a foundation that my predecessor, Stephen Davis, laid. He pastored this amazing church for 27 years prior to my following in his footsteps, and he certainly tilled the ground, scattered the seed and set us up for a harvest.

Of course, prior even to that, I was blessed by Jeff Paxton and First Baptist Church, Dover, when they took a chance on a young man who honestly had just fallen off the turnip truck and landed into ministry. I was young, naive and untrained, but they invested in me, and my life hasn't been the same since.

But what about all of us, as Arkansas Baptists? Honestly, there has never been a better time to be an Arkansas Baptist. I witnessed that firsthand this past week as my home

church had the privilege of hosting the annual meeting of the ABSC.

Under Sonny Tucker's leadership, the state convention has never been on firmer footing. The annual meeting was filled with multi-ethnic, multi-generational worship, and everything was anchored on the Word of God and a deep, abiding emphasis on evangelism, missions and church planting.

Yet, that did not happen overnight. We are all, in so many ways, reaping where we have not sown.

Oh, don't get me wrong. I'm not saying Arkansas Baptists have always been right or perfect. There's no mistaking the fact that we were on the wrong side of racism and segregation for far too many years. And in the 1970s and 1980s, we struggled with a tilt toward theological liberalism and a questioning of the inerrancy of Scripture. Yet, in both cases, the right men and women stepped forward to help us right our theological ship, and those course corrections are still bearing fruit.

Even in this office of president, I'm standing on the shoulders of those who have gone before me, including my most immediate predecessor and friend, Sam Roberts. I simply hope to celebrate what has already happened and steward the great move of God that is currently occurring. It is going to be a blessed, exciting time!

Greg Sykes is pastor of First Baptist Church, Russellville, and president of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention.



President's Perspective

Greg Sykes

Union settles lawsuit over HHS abortion mandate

JACKSON, Tenn. – Union University has settled its lawsuit against the U.S. government concerning the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' mandate that Union provide abortion-causing drugs as part of its employee health plans.

Under the terms of the settlement, the U.S. government agreed that the mandate was a violation of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) and that under the Supreme Court's decision in the *Burwell v. Hobby Lobby* case, it imposed a "substantial burden" on Union's free exercise of religion.

"We rejoice over this outcome, in which the government acknowledges that the contraception mandate would impose a substantial burden on our exercise of religion and violate the Religious Freedom Restoration Act," Union University President Samuel W. "Dub" Oliver said.

"We believe, based on the Bible, that life begins at conception," he said. "We went to court to defend religious liberty (the right to believe and to live according to those beliefs), and we are glad that religious liberty prevailed. Rights of conscience were enshrined in

the U.S. Constitution as the first freedom. I hope Union will always be a place that stands for such God-given rights."

The agreement between Union and the U.S. government specifies that Union's employee health plans are permanently exempt from the HHS contraception mandate.

Union filed one of 56 lawsuits involving 140-plus faith-based plaintiffs against the federal HHS mandate in 2014 that sought a judgment declaring that the abortifacient mandate of the Affordable Care Act violated the university's rights, not only under RFRA but also under the First and Fifth Amendments of the U.S. Constitution and the Administrative Procedures Act.

"Causing the death of the embryo conflicts with Union University's beliefs based on Scripture," the Union lawsuit stated, adding the "mandate forces Union University to choose between its sincerely held religious beliefs and the government-imposed adverse consequences" of non-compliance.

As part of the settlement, the government agreed to pay the bulk of the legal fees that Union accrued.

Letter to the Editor

Thanks, Sam Roberts!

I want to express appreciation to Sam Roberts for doing such a great job presiding over the past two Arkansas Baptist State Conventions. His joy, love and respect for people and love for the Lord made

our conventions a joy to attend.

Thank you, Bro. Roberts! Arkansas Baptists owe you a debt of gratitude.

Gary Henson
Wynne

CHRISTMAS

continued from page 5

Anna's testimony - Luke 2:36-38

Visit of the wise men - Matthew 2:1-12

Flight to Egypt - Matthew 2:13-15

Herod kills the children -

Matthew 2:16-19

The return to Nazareth - Matthew 2:19-23

The childhood of Jesus - Luke 2:39-52

The baptism of Jesus - Matthew 3:13-17

The gift of salvation in Jesus - John 3:16-17

Ben Phillips is a member of the ABSC evangelism and church health team.

A legacy of global impact

Camp Siloam was very, very important and impactful in my decision to pursue missions," said Frednesha "Freddy" Whitting.

A senior at Henderson State University, Whitting had taken a Perspectives course in the spring semester before she came to work at Camp Siloam in 2015. While at Siloam,



Camp Siloam

Jason Wilkie

Whitting met an International Mission Board (IMB) Journeyman who told her about Christmas in China. In 2016, Whitting went on a Christmas in China IMB mission trip, and she is now applying to be an IMB Journeyman herself.

"I kept pursuing God, and opportunities for missions kept coming," she said. Whitting said she is now praying and asking God, "What is the next step?"

Seek What Is Next is our slogan for the Summer 2018 theme, "Dojos and Dragons." Camp Siloam is writing a drama about ninjas and

samurais that will illustrate that God's plan is rarely laid out clearly for a follower of Jesus Christ. God wants us to be dependent upon Him, so He often gives us only what is next. Often people make excuses when they sense a call from God because they don't

feel qualified or they are afraid of the unknown.

Camp Siloam is using a conversation between God and Jeremiah to illustrate the summer theme. God's Word came to Jeremiah, and he responded, "I am too young."

"Don't say you are too young. Go where I tell you to go and say what I tell you to say," God said in Jeremiah 1:7.

God then said, "Go and I'll tell you what's next." Commenting on this passage of Scripture, Vernon McGee said, "Have you ever noticed that the man whom God uses is the man who doesn't think he can do it?"

Camp Siloam's goal is to

help campers see that no one is too young to be used by God. Today, God is asking people of all ages to take a message (a much more hopeful message than Jeremiah's) to the ends of the earth. It is our hope that many campers this summer will assess whether they are being called by God into missions or full-time ministry and to seek what God has next for them.

Camp Siloam's vision is to see our campers and staff make an eternal, global impact for the kingdom of God. This has been its legacy. Camp Siloam's mission is that campers would understand their identity in Jesus Christ, their purpose in God's kingdom and God's mission for the world. Each summer Camp Siloam emphasizes one of these concepts. In 2018 we are emphasizing our teaching on God's mission for the world. It is our hope that campers will agree, like Freddy, to pray and seek what is next for them.

Jason Wilkie is executive director of Camp Siloam.

Annual stewardship checklist

At the Foundation, we seek to serve as a resource for Arkansas Baptists concerning stewardship. The Foundation believes stewardship has a broad definition that goes beyond tithing and encompasses everything God's blessed us with — our time, talents and material possessions.

This all-inclusive understanding of stewardship should compel us to take a disciplined and systematic approach to these resources. As the year comes to a close, it is a good time to do some end-of-year planning to ensure you are being a good steward of your assets. The following list includes some things that can help you and your church or favorite ministry:

Required Minimum Distributions (RMD) – Generally, if you have a tax-deferred Individual Retirement Account (IRA) or retirement plan account, you must begin taking withdrawals out of those accounts when you at-

tain the age of 70 1/2. Check with your retirement account custodian to ensure that you've taken out your RMD for 2017.

IRA Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) – Congress passed the Protecting

Americans from Tax Hikes Act of 2015 (PATH) making the QCD or Charitable Rollover

a permanent way to make charitable gifts to ministry. A QCD allows an individual to gift directly from their IRA to a charity, and up to \$100,000 will not be counted in the individual's ordinary income while simultaneously satisfying the RMD. Contact your IRA custodian to obtain the necessary forms to make a QCD. Additionally, you can send the QCD to the Foundation designated for your church or favorite ministry.

Minister housing allowance – A minister can exclude housing allowance from gross income for ordinary income tax purposes but not for self-

employment tax purposes. The Housing Allowance must be determined and documented prior to receiving your first paycheck of the year. Consult with your CPA to ensure this is calculated correctly.

Charitable giving of appreciated property – Instead of realizing capital gains tax from selling appreciated assets, you should give appreciated assets, like stocks, to your church or favorite ministry. This method of giving is mutually advantageous because ministry is funded, and you bypass any capital gains taxes.

Annual estate plan review – It is essential that you review your estate plan at a minimum of every five years. Additionally, any time you open a new account, buy a new house, or for any other major life event, you should review how that asset is titled and if a beneficiary is listed.

Dillon S. McClain, an attorney, is vice president of the Arkansas Baptist Foundation.



Baptist Foundation

Dillon McClain

Sharing Christ through couponing and toys

Jennifer Bryant
Arkansas Baptist News

BATESVILLE – Couponing and woodworking may not be typical evangelistic outreach techniques, but for two members of First Baptist Church of Batesville, those hobbies are just the tools to reach hundreds of people for Christ.

For years Denise Gatlin has used coupons to help her fam-

ily acquire a few extra items like toothpaste, soap and toothbrushes for Operation Christmas Child shoeboxes and Angel Tree.

Thinking “more is better,” Gatlin asked her fellow church members to bring their coupons to a coupon mailbox at the church.

Her church family came through in big ways. With so many coupons, she decided

she needed to begin sharing coupons and sharing Christ.

“God can use ordinary, everyday things to reach people,” explained Gatlin. “I have coupon classes, and I share coupons in the stores as I shop. It is a great conversation starter when you give people a coupon.”

“Most people don’t understand how God can use a simple coupon to share His love,” said Gatlin. “I make friends with the employees in the stores where I shop,” adding that she was able to tell one local store employee that she had been praying for her through some marital troubles.

“Because of the relationships I have with employees, they let me know about clearance items,” said Gatlin. “They give me great deals on clothes, shoes and school supplies. I am able to tell them about Jesus, Operation Christmas Child and Angel Tree.”

First Baptist Church has a goal of 500 Operation Christmas Child shoeboxes this year, and Gatlin has bought all of the soap for these boxes with her coupons. She has also purchased many pens, pencils and trapper keepers with the coupons. She purchases food for her church’s food pantry with her coupons, and she purchases items for Angel Tree and Prison Fellowship families so that children in Independence County who have parents in prison will receive Christmas gifts and back-to-school items.

Additionally, Gatlin clips and sorts all the coupons, earmarking some for the church’s senior adults and others for church members who work at the humane society. Church members can look in coupon folders and take coupons they will use.

Church member Don Lemley decided he needed to be involved in Operation Christmas Child this year. He loves to work with wood and con-



Bill Gatlin of First Baptist Church in Batesville works with children to pack shoeboxes at the church. Photo by Denise Gatlin

sidered making toy cars to go in the boxes.

With encouragement from a friend, he began his project on August 24, with a goal of 500 wooden cars. Quickly realizing he needed 2,000 wheels for 500 cars, he began scouring the Internet for toy car wheels, finally locating a Maine business that would sell the wheels in bulk.

Next, Lemley realized he would need dowel rods for axles, so he ordered 100 rods. Next, he had to work on the actual size and design of the car – a process that involved an initial design and several re-designs. One of the re-designs involved Lemley changing the rear end of the car he was working on, and his sports car evolved.

Soon Lemley enlisted a friend to help with the toy car project.

By Sept. 14, Lemley, his wife, and a friend got all 500 cars assembled and ready to go. But he didn’t stop there. He has since made a total of 815 cars and shared them with other churches to include with

their shoeboxes.

“Thinking about all the children that will get a toy from my shop has really been an inspiration to push on,” said Lemley. “I am truly grateful to (my friend) for helping. It is sure nice to have company and have some fun during the process.”

“Operation Christmas Child is a ministry near and dear to the hearts of our First Baptist family,” said Stacy Reed, pastor of First Baptist.



“From our children to our senior adults, our church family loves participating in packing these shoeboxes and praying

over them. Denise and Don are two examples of how our folks are invested in this great ministry opportunity.”

The church held a community-wide packing party Oct. 21 where churches, individuals and other groups came to learn all about shoeboxes. A girl who received a shoebox as a child living in the Ukraine was the special guest.

Jennifer Bryant is the southeast regional correspondent for the Arkansas Baptist News.

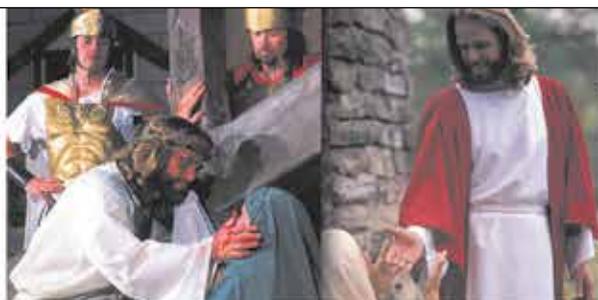


Denise Gatlin and Don Lemley. Photo by Dawn Reed

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WoP/Lottie Moon Offering undergird missionaries

RICHMOND, VA. – How can you take the gospel to Japan, Russia, Nepal, Mexico, Central Asia, England, refugee camps in Europe and beyond – without even leaving home?

You can take the gospel to the world as you pray during Southern Baptists' Week of Prayer for International Missions, Dec. 3-10, and as you give to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering (LMCO) for International Missions.

Just ask Debbie Moore, Arkansas Baptists' WMU executive director.

"As an Arkansas Baptist serving with the International Mission Board, between 1982 and 2007, I experienced personally the faithful prayer support of Arkansas Baptists. God's call sent me and kept me in West Africa and Northern Africa, but He



Moore

used Arkansas Baptists to pray for my air travel and language learning, for growing relationships with African ministry partners, for safe travel around Liberia and Algeria, for gospel seeds to be sown among the lost, for good health, and for so many other things ... and those prayers mattered," said Moore, who serves on Arkansas Baptists' missions team.

"I experienced personally the financial support of Arkansas Baptists who helped provide funds for a reliable vehicle to drive on not-so-good roads, for food to eat (and share with others), for thyroid surgery bills, for ministry supplies, and so many other things ... and those dollars (converted to

euros and dinars) mattered," she added.

Every prayer and every penny make a difference, she said.

"Every single penny given to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering goes directly to missionary support. Every single prayer prayed for our global partners makes an eternal difference," Moore said.

Week of Prayer/LMCO

The scriptural focus for this year's Week of Prayer is 2 Corinthians 5:14 (HCSB), "For Christ's love compels us, since we have reached this conclusion: If One died for all, then all died."

This year's LMCO goal is \$160 million, representing a \$10 million increase from the 2016 goal.

Through the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, you and your church: support more than 3,600 missionaries, enable disciples to be made and churches to be multiplied around the world and continue Southern Baptists' 172-year commitment to missions.

The offering, in tandem with Cooperative Program gifts from Southern Baptist churches, supports interna-

tional missionaries seeking to fulfill the Great Commission.

Gifts to the LMCO are received online through local Southern Baptist churches or online at imb.org/lmco.

Some of the missionaries featured in the 2017 international missions emphasis are:

Bagby Family, Nepal

The streets that line the city where Radford and Sarah Bagby* live are the kind people in the United States would find to go four-wheeler riding. "Get outside of that, and it's so much worse," Radford says. And outside of that is exactly where they're trying to go.

Getting to the 28 people groups in the mountains of Nepal takes a journey of weeks by car, plane, and trekking on foot – and that's if everything goes just right. "It's a relationship-based, long-term type of work," Radford said. "It will be a lot of thankless work for a few years, but I do think we will see a lot of progress in our lifetime. It's just very slow. The fields are hard."

Jones Family, Japan

Jared and Tara Jones knew that God could do a lot with something little. But they

never imagined just how many doors He would open through their infant son, whose adoption people had told them was almost impossible in Japan.

In the East Asian country, 40,000 children live in orphanages, but parents rarely give up their rights so that a child can be adopted. But the Joneses knew God had placed a baby on their hearts, and they prayed. "We serve a God who makes doors where doors don't exist," Jared said.

"Fast-forward a few months from when their son Ezra was placed in their arms, and his pediatrician was the key to another door – a church plant they had been praying

about for years.

One day, the doctor told Tara out of the blue that she wanted to start a church at her office and asked if Jared could lead it. Tara described it as a divine appointment. The first Sunday 70 people came. They've seen hearts changed and people keep coming.

Arkansas WMU and the ABSC missions team provide promotional materials to help your church observe the Week of Prayer for International Missions and the LMCO. Please contact the missions team at 501-376-4791, ext. 5137 or 800-838-2272, ext. 5137, if you need more materials.

*Names changed

Sam Moore Evangelistic Ministries



479-381-1170,
sam@evangelistsammoore.com

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 2017.

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What Arkansas law says about guns in churches

LITTLE ROCK – The murder of 26 churchgoers ages 18 months to 77 years old – almost half of them children – at First Baptist Church, Sutherland Springs, Texas, Nov. 5 has thrust the question of church security into the public spotlight.

Earlier this year the passage of Act 859 by the Arkansas Legislature made it legal for an individual with an enhanced concealed-carry permit to carry a concealed handgun into any church or place of worship effective Sept. 1 – that is unless church administration takes appropriate steps to prohibit them and provides notice that complies with the law’s provisions.

The steps include placing the appropriate signage with the proper wording (a picture prohibiting guns is not sufficient) at each entrance of the church and providing written or verbal notice to enhanced

concealed-carry licensees that they are prohibited from possessing a concealed handgun at the physical location where a church meets.

Signed April 4 by Gov. Asa Hutchinson, the new concealed-carry in churches bills made several revisions to existing Arkansas laws regarding standards and restrictions on the carrying of concealed firearms, according to Larry Page, executive director of the Arkansas Faith and Ethics Council.

“The new laws deal with standards with regard to the carrying of firearms by concealed-carry permit holders in a number of venues, such as at colleges and universities, in bars, in publicly owned buildings and facilities, courtrooms, public school (K-12), in churches, and other places,” Page said in a special email alert to churches.

“Prior to the revisions made by Acts 562 and 859, the law: 1) Prohibited a concealed-carry permit holder from carrying a firearm into a church or on church grounds; 2) But the law also provided that a church could grant a blanket approval for concealed-carry permit holders to carry firearms in church or designate specific individuals or members of a security team or detail to carry handguns, provided those individuals possessed current concealed-carry permits.”

While the new laws have not changed those two prior provisions, a person who obtains an enhanced concealed-carry permit after receiving up to eight hours of additional training may carry a firearm

into a church, unless the church has provided notice that it does not allow firearms on its premises, Page said.

In summary, according to Page, “Holders of the standard

safety team to carry handguns, provided those individuals or team members hold current concealed-carry permits.”

He continued, “It will be lawful for the holder of the enhanced concealed-carry permit to be armed with a concealed firearm at a church whether the church has or has not granted specific or general approval, but only if the church has not posted signs at each church entrance advising firearms are not allowed there or

has not given direct written or verbal warning to the armed enhanced permit holder stating firearms are not allowed at the church.”

For additional information on how the new Arkansas law impacts your church, email Page at llp@arfaith.org.



Page





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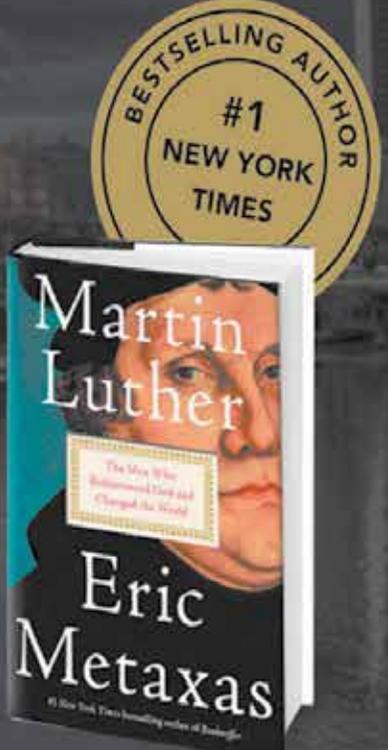
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Church life

First Baptist Church of Ashdown will present Wonder and Glory, a worship experience for Christmas, at 6:30 p.m., Dec. 10, by the adult choir, First Company student choir and First Five children's choir.

Central Baptist Church in Magnolia will give a multi-generational Christmas worship presentation at 6 p.m., Sunday, Dec. 3, featuring the Elements' choirs, Collide choir, Hands of Grace, Celebration choir and orchestra.

On the move

Jon Norvell is serving as pastor of Bull Shoals Baptist Church in Bull Shoals.

Louie Heard is serving as pastor of Second Baptist Church in Arkadelphia.

Randy Rushing is serving as pastor of Linwood Baptist Church in Pine Bluff.

Randy Sikes is serving as associate pastor and minister of music at First Baptist Church in Dumas.

Ark. Baptist communicators honored at inaugural ARcom Awards ceremony

NORTH LITTLE ROCK — Arkansas Baptist communicators representing Ouachita Baptist University and Arkansas Baptist Children's Homes and Family Ministries (ABCHomes) were honored recently at the inaugural ARcom Awards ceremony held at the Arkansas Regional Innovation Hub in North Little Rock.

The awards competition and ceremony were organized jointly by the Arkansas chapter of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA), the Arkansas chapter of the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC) and AdClub Little Rock, the central Arkansas chapter of the American Advertising Federation.

"I am so inspired by the outstanding work of this year's finalists and winners," said Sarah Kinser, APR, chapter president for Arkansas PRSA. "PRSA is delighted to partner with IABC and AdClub to recognize the best in local com-

ing Offering Video" and in a public relations category for its 2016 Thanksgiving Offering campaign.

Ouachita Baptist University was honored in a nonprofit marketing communications category for its Perfect Fit recruiting campaign; in a print periodicals category for The Ouachita Circle and in a social media category for "Experience Ouachita in 360°."

"I was delighted to be recognized by my public relations and communication peers. It is an honor to be associated with many talented professionals in the public relations field in Arkansas," said Stella Prather, APR, director of communications, ABCHomes.



munications work."

In total, Arkansas Baptist communicators walked away with five awards for excellence in communications. ABCHomes was recognized in a multimedia category for "#YOUare! 2016 Thanksgiv-

STAFF WANTED

Houseparents:

Boys Ranch, Harrison. This full-time position includes salary, housing, medical and life insurance and paid leave. Contact: Russell Draper at (870) 711-5784 or rdraper@abchomes.org.

Baptist Home for Children, Monticello.

This full-time position includes salary, housing, medical and life insurance and paid leave. Contact: Debbie Mills at (870) 367-5358 or dmills@abchomes.org.

Paragould Family Home.

The part-time position includes salary, medical and life insurance and paid leave. Contact: James Barham at (870) 935-5134 or jbarham@abchomes.org.

abchomes.org



ARKANSAS BAPTIST CHILDREN'S HOMES & FAMILY MINISTRIES

Classifieds

PASTOR

McLester Baptist Church of Pangburn, AR, is seeking a **bi-vocational pastor** starting January 1, 2018. Please send resume to: Attn: Pastor Search Committee, P.O. Box 309, Pangburn, AR 72121 or e-mail to jason111145@gmail.com.

Pleasant Grove Baptist Church, Conway, AR, is searching for a **full-time pastor**. Send digital resumes to Searchpgbc@gmail.com. Paper resumes to PGBC, 3255 Prince St., Conway, AR 72034.

Big Fork Baptist Church of rural Mena, AR, is seeking a **bi-vocational or retired pastor** starting January 1, 2018. Please send letter of intention, or resume to: Attn: Pastor Search Committee, 105 Polk Rd. 67, Mena, AR 71953.

Pastor: First Baptist Church Broken Bow, Oklahoma is seeking a **F/T senior pastor**. Please send resume to Pastor Search Team: P.O. Box 370 Broken Bow, OK 74728 or email to info@fbcbrokenbow.com.

FBC Pangburn, AR, is seeking a **full-time pastor**. Please mail resumes to FBC Pangburn, Attn: Search Team, PO Box 250, Pangburn AR, 72121, or email jonj3390@hotmail.com.

Lambrook FBC seeking a **bi-vocational pastor**. Send resumes to: Johnny Williamson, PO Box 544, Elaine, AR 72333.

Floral Baptist Church of Floral, Arkansas, is seeking a **full-time pastor**. Send resumes and references to Floral Baptist Church, P.O. Box 96, Floral, AR 72534.

Cedar Grove Baptist Church of Arkadelphia is seeking a **bi-vocational pastor**. Send resumes and references to Cedar

Grove Baptist Church, 825 Cedar Grove Road, Arkadelphia, AR 71923.

Chicot Road Baptist Church is seeking a **bi-vocational pastor**. Send resume to 13301 Chicot Rd, Mabelvale AR 72103 or email chicotroadbaptist@att.net.

OTHER STAFF POSITIONS

Pleasant Grove Baptist Church is looking for a **bi-vocational youth pastor** to love on & lead our youth as we continue to grow for God's glory and our good! Please send resumes to Pastor Chris Kinzler @ www.ckinzler@pleasantgrovel.org.

Crossgate Church of Hot Springs, Arkansas, is prayerfully seeking a person to fill the **full-time position of pastor (or director) of children's and preteens** ministry (depending on qualifications). To obtain more information about this ministry position please visit www.crossgate.org/employment. To send resumes electronically, or to contact us, please email us at childrensministry@crossgate.org. Resumes may also be mailed to Ministry Search Team, Crossgate Church, 3100 East Grand Ave, Hot Springs, Arkansas 71901.

Wanted: **Part time worship leader** for blended service, Central Baptist in Bald Knob. Send resume to cooleybf@hotmail.com.

First Baptist Church of Joplin, MO, is accepting resumes for the **full-time position of pastor to children and families**. First Baptist has experienced consistent growth in this area and with our upcoming relocation and new education/ children's facility we are poised for even more kingdom growth. For information

and to send your resume please visit firstjoplin.org/jobs.

McCarthy Baptist Child Development Center in Saint Joseph, Missouri, is looking for a **center director** who will lead using approved curriculum and will adhere to Missouri rules for child care. Applicant must be organized, responsible, spiritually mature Christian who loves children, self-improvement and staff development. Degree required and experience preferred. Resumes will be reviewed immediately. Send resumes to cdc@mccarthybaptist.org. Position open until filled.

First Baptist Church of Bay, AR (located just outside of Jonesboro) is seeking a **part-time minister of music** who is committed to leading a blended worship service. Resumes may be mailed to First Baptist Church, PO Box 190, Bay, AR, 72411 or submitted to www.bayfbc.org.

We are seeking God's man to serve as the full-time student minister or **part-time youth pastor and part-time children's pastor** for Trinity Baptist Church Benton. Send resumes to: trinitybenton@gmail.com or to 702 Church Street, Benton, AR 72015.

Associate pastor of worship. Grace Baptist Church in Belleville, AR, is seeking to hire a worship leader who can lead God's people into a greater worship experience. Grace is a growing church and duties will include administrative skills as well as music skills. The pay package is negotiable and does include a parsonage. Please mail resumes to PO Box 27 Belleville, AR 72824, or email Logan Ferguson at revlferg@yahoo.com.

Judsonia First Baptist Church is in search of a **youth director**. All who are interested

please contact Blake Moffett at Blake.moffett@enbridge.com or 501-283-4187.

Perryville FBC is seeking a **bi-vocational music director**. Send resumes to pvfb.church@gmail.com.

Seeking **full-time children's ministries pastor or director**: East Side of Paragould is seeking the Lord's qualified candidate to lead a thriving children's ministry and to assist our families in parenting and disciple making. We are a loving and serving church in a growing community with quality schools. Send resume to Phillip Miller: pmiller@connect2east-side.com.

First Baptist Church of Wake Village, Texas, is searching for a **full-time minister of music/worship**. Blended worship style using a choir, praise team and praise band. House and utilities provided along with a competitive financial package. Submit resumes to FBC, 820 Wake Ave, Wake Village, TX 75501, or sneathery@fbcwakevillage.org.

FBC Prescott is seeking an energetic **part-time music/choir director**. Please send resume to: FBC Prescott Personnel Committee, PO Box 447, Prescott, AR 71857.

First Baptist Church of El Dorado, AR, is seeking to hire an **associate pastor of worship**. This full-time position is responsible for developing and leading a church-wide worship ministry, which promotes the development of fully devoted followers of Jesus. Interested candidates can submit a resume with cover letter by mail (200 W. Main El Dorado, AR) or email jonathan.kelley@fbceldorado.org.

Cocklebur Baptist, Ward, AR, is prayerfully seeking **part-time youth leader**. Accept-

ing resumes through Nov. 30, 2017. Email resumes to cbc4138@gmail.com or mail to Attn: Youth Search Committee, 4138 Cocklebur Road, Ward, Arkansas 72176.

Full-time minister to youth and families, Graves Memorial Baptist Church, North Little Rock, AR. The church is prayerfully seeking to hire a godly man to lead the youth ministry and assist our families in parenting and discipling kids of all ages. Email resumes to nick@gmbclife.com.

First Baptist Church in Forrest City, AR, is seeking a **full-time minister of music**. Submit resume to: dianne@fbcfc.org Attn: Music Search Committee or by mail to 507 North Rosser St, Forrest City, AR 72335.

Levy Church, NLR, seeks **full-time worship/executive pastor**. Send resumes to: steventiner@levybaptist.com.

MISCELLANEOUS

Part-time band director needed to work 4 hours a week in a school. Must hold an Arkansas Teacher's License. Please send resumes to doug@arkansasregionalbands.com.

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DECEMBER 10, 2017

I visited with a man in the hospital who invited me to attend one of his church's unique Sunday night services. He described a typical worship service, which included Scripture reading, singing and preaching. He told me I would be responsible for bringing my own chicken, but the church provided the snakes. Misguided worship is the proclivity to exchange the glory of God for a lie, to worship and serve the creation rather than the Creator (Rom. 1:18-23).

In Lystra, the Apostle Paul healed a lame man who had never walked. The man stood, walked and jumped around (Acts 14:8-10). It is important to note that this man's healing followed his hearing Paul speak. Our worship of God must be informed at every point by the Word of God, or our worship will be misguided.

The crowd reacted to the healing but not the words Paul spoke. They said, "The gods have come down to us in the form of men!" (Acts 14:11). They thought Paul was Hermes and Barnabas was Zeus. The priest from the temple of

Zeus brought oxen and garland to offer a sacrifice on their behalf. There was a legend Zeus and Hermes disguised as men visited 1,000 homes, and only one couple took them in and provided a banquet. Their humble cottage was turned into a temple, and they were appointed priest and priestess. The homes of all the rest of the people were destroyed.

Paul had to do some redirecting. Paul and Barnabas tore their robes and attempted to redirect the people's focus on the one true living God. Jewish outsiders won over the crowds and stoned Paul, dragging him outside the city and leaving him for dead. His disciples surrounded him, and he got up and went back into the town.

As a church, we must keep sight of the sacred and not the secular; the uncommon, rather than the common, and the holy, rather than the profane. Our worship must glorify God, give Him honor, and be according to His will.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Misguided worship

ACTS 14:8-20 (HCSB)

Parables make up about 35 percent of Jesus' teaching. The most popular definition of a parable is "an earthly story with a heavenly meaning." This definition is helpful but needs more depth. Although parables used simple illustrations and everyday language, Jesus seemed to have a deeper purpose for choosing parables as His teaching method.

Every parable had two levels of understanding: the physical and the spiritual (Mark 4:11-12). All those who listened to His teaching received the parable on a physical level. Only His disciples received the parable on a spiritual level. Disciples would include all believers then and now. If one has not accepted Christ and His message, the full spiritual meaning of the parable will not be apparent.

The key word is the first word, "Listen!" (Mark 4:3). Jesus used this word to gain His hearers' attention and to draw them into the story. In most parables, we ask, "What does it mean?" In this parable we ask, "What does this

mean for me? Where am I in this parable?" Jesus used a familiar scene of a farmer sowing seed on different types of soil to describe their spiritual condition.

Some of the seed sown would fall on the path, which the birds would eat (Mark 4:4). Seed that fell upon rocks would be scorched by the sun and die (Mark 4:5-6). The seed that fell among thorns would be choked out (Mark 4:7). Some fell on good ground and yielded an increase of 30, 60 and 100 times what was sown (Mark 4:8). It is the good ground that is a sign of the kingdom of God (Mark 4:8). There is a glorious return on sowing the Word of God in the world (Mark 4:14,20).

This parable has a special ending, "Anyone who has ears to hear should listen!" (Mark 4:9). Each hearer of Jesus' teaching must evaluate his or her own response. In essence, each hearer must ask, "What kind of soil am I for the reception of the Word of God?"

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

Jesus teaches

MARK 4:1-9 (HCSB)

DECEMBER 17, 2017

Several church councils have convened throughout church history to settle disputes about doctrine and church practice. The Jerusalem Council was the most important church council because it answered the most important question, "What must a person do to be saved?"

The dispute began in Antioch when Judaizers, legalists from Judea, taught that the Gentiles would need to submit to circumcision and adhere to the Mosaic Law to become Christians. From their perspective, Christianity was just a messianic branch of Judaism, and one would basically need to become a Jew to become a Christian. Paul and Barnabas taught that salvation was completely by grace through faith in Christ alone.

Three defenses were given during the council. Peter explained how he preached to the Gentiles and that God gave them the Holy Spirit as evidence of their salvation. Paul and Barnabas reported on God's work among the Gentiles during their missionary trip (Acts 15:12). James gave the last defense. He

agreed with the others that God was saving Gentiles through faith. James made the point that Gentiles wouldn't have to become Jews in the age to come so they would not need to do so in the present age (Acts 15:15-18).

A two-fold decision was made. The first was a doctrinal decision about salvation. Jews and Gentiles both are saved by faith in Jesus Christ alone. Jewish believers should not place legalistic burdens on the Gentiles. The second decision was about how to live the Christian life. The Gentiles should abstain from food offered to idols, blood, anything strangled, and sexual immorality since Jews found these things to be very offensive. James advised the church to write to the Gentile believers and share the decisions of the conference.

There are those today who would impose some requirement or ritual in addition to faith for a person to become a believer. This ignores the finished work of Christ on the cross. Because of Christ's sacrifice, salvation is available to all who put their faith in Jesus alone.

After a full day of teaching, Jesus and the disciples got into a boat to cross the Sea of Galilee to the other side. Jesus could not even get away from the crowds by crossing the sea. Other boats joined them on the water.

The geographic conditions surrounding the Sea of Galilee can produce sudden and severe squalls. The disciples didn't know they were headed into a storm. They were completely caught off guard by this fierce storm, but Jesus was not. Jesus orchestrated the storm to increase their faith and to teach them that He is the sovereign and all-powerful Lord.

We can learn several lessons from the disciples' experience in the storm. First, God is in all the storms of our lives. He is teaching us Who He is, who we are and that we need Him. Second, Jesus' humanity is seen in this story. He was asleep in the stern of the boat. Third, when we don't have faith, we panic. The disciples woke Jesus up

and asked, "Teacher! Don't you care that we're going to die?" (Mark 4:38). Fourth, Jesus has authority over nature. Jesus is all-powerful. With just a simple command the storm stopped, "Silence! Be still!" (Mark 4:39). This is a display of His full deity. The fifth lesson we can learn is that storms are for our benefit. When the disciples should have been trusting Jesus, He rebuked the wind. He asked the disciples, "Why are you fearful? Do you still have no faith?" (Mark 4:40).

The disciples heard Him teach and watched Him perform miracles. They should have had greater comprehension and an increase in their faith. They had not come to grips with Who Jesus was. They asked, "Who then is this? Even the wind and the sea obey Him!" (Mark 4:41). Jesus was teaching the disciples that He is the sovereign Lord and they don't have to be afraid when the storms of life come. He is in control of every situation.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

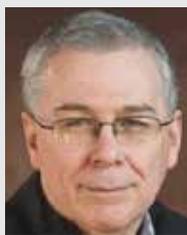
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ACTS 15:6-11; 24-31 (HCSB)

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

Jesus rules

MARK 4:35-41 (HCSB)

**Featured
commentary
writer****Gerald Nash**

Gerald Nash is a registered respiratory therapist at Saint Mary's Regional Medical Center in Russellville. He is a member of Second Baptist Church, Conway, where he serves as a Bible teacher, small group leader and member of the men's ministry. He also serves as a clergy-chaplain at Baptist Memorial Hospital in Conway. He has attended several universities and seminaries, including Williams Baptist College and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has earned a bachelor's degree in Christian ministries, master's degrees in pastoral studies and theological studies and a doctorate in pastoral studies. He volunteers on the Cairo Geniza Princeton project analyzing and sorting undeciphered Hebrew, Greek and Arabic manuscript fragments (10th-13th centuries) of the Jewish diaspora in Egypt. His goal is to be an adjunct professor and return to the university to work on a master's degree in archaeology with an emphasis in paleography.

Amid RVers in the Arizona desert, church offers faith

QUARTZSITE, Ariz. (BP) – At least 400 vendors for the nation’s largest RV show plus nine major rock/gem/mineral shows and 15 general swap meets gather each balmy winter in the Sonora Desert of southwestern Arizona.

The vendors see more than a million visitors between December and March who park recreational vehicles, campers, fifth-wheels, vans and sometimes just tents on the flat desert floor around the former mining town of Quartzsite and its 4,000 people.

The Arizona Bureau of Land Management permits camping on its lands in the desert for \$180 for six months, according to its website. This makes for an economical – and pleasant, weather-wise – winter base for those seeking relief from the cold and snow in northern parts of the United States and Canada.

And it makes for an extraordinary mission field for Quartzsite Southern Baptist Church of mostly senior citizens.

To hear the story of seniors starting, nurturing and expanding a church when nearly everyone is on a meager retirement income, and establishing a ministry that could reach more than a million people a year, is to hear of a God who does amazing things with obedient and faithful Christians, said Lou Ella Ayers, the sole living original member of Quartzsite Southern Baptist Church.

“God has blessed our church,” said Ayers, whose husband Lloyd died in 2002. “It’s been one miracle after another.”

It’s also been one challenge after another, Ayers wrote in an unpublished history of the church. “Often we think we’re doing God’s will, and perhaps we are,” she wrote. “But God allows us to be caught in the web of the world perhaps to remind us that He is the only one in the church who isn’t expendable. We must look to Him for help rather than our assets.”

From its first exploratory meeting, Quartzsite Baptist has been the combined effort of local desert diehards and

visiting winter snowbirds.

At the initiative of River Valley Baptist Association, locals Bud and Betty Boto-roff met with visitors Ed and Edna Bond from Georgia in the spring of 1987 to consider starting a Southern Baptist mission. The first service took place that November. A month later, 11 people organized the mission with a commitment to give 10 percent of undesignated income to missions through the Cooperative Program and another 5 percent to the River Valley Baptist Association.

In 1994, the mission constituted as a church and, in 1999, began meeting year-round. Today, attendance retracts to 30 in the summer when temperatures can hover in the triple digits between June and September and expands to 300 in the winter when temperatures moderate to the mid-70s.

Quartzsite Baptist’s ministry at two nationally prominent events during the third week of January – the Quartzsite Sports, Vacation & RV Show and the adjacent Tyson Wells Sell-A-Rama, which together are called “the largest gathering of RVers in the world” – started in 1996 as a weeklong series of revival meetings, which have become an ongoing outreach spanning 21 years.

In booths at both events,



A yearly revival is part of Quartzsite Southern Baptist Church’s outreach among thousands who trek to the Quartzsite Sports, Vacation & RV Show and adjacent Tyson Wells Sell-A-Rama in Arizona’s Sonoma Desert each January. Photo courtesy of Quartzsite Southern Baptist Church

“Project Quartzsite” volunteers from the church, other churches in River Valley Baptist Association and Campers on Mission from Arizona and Colorado distribute cold water and warm smiles, plus evangelistic tracts and Bibles, while



Desert diehards and winter snowbirds -- through a Baptist church launched by seniors -- take their witness to the nation’s largest gathering of RVers in Quartzsite, Ariz. Photo from quartzsiterivshow.com, used by permission

offering the use of chairs for weary shoppers and visitors.

Darla Farella, president of the Arizona chapter of Campers on Mission, a Southern Baptist fellowship, said, “We man the booth, hand out water, tell them about the Gospel and about the revival [at Quartzsite Baptist].”

About 4,500 water bottles were distributed last January, each with the ABCs of salvation printed on the label, Farella said.

“We’re there to project the love of Jesus to the people we talk with,” Farella said. “We want to share the gospel with them and to invite them to a church that would mentor them.”

Retired pastor Dale Kronemeyer, a longtime volunteer from Mesa, Ariz., who is coordinating this year’s revival services, noted, “We’ll have a million or more people here that week who might need to hear about Jesus. When you have that many people, it behooves us to have a ministry to try to reach them with the message of the gospel.”

Larry Walker, president of the Colorado chapter of Campers on Mission, said the 12-person team he worked with for eight days last January talked with about 400 people, three of whom made professions of faith in Jesus.

“We’ll talk with people

we’ve never seen before in our lives,” Walker said. “They’re all kind of happy because they’re on their own time. Most of them are retirement age. It’s not a youth festival.”

However, a contingent of nomadic “rainbow people” perhaps 40 or more years younger than senior adults often are seen at the Quartzsite venues, said Farella, a four-year event volunteer.

“They’re today’s hippies,” Farella said. “These kids are searching for answers to life. We have a lot of discussion at times with these young adults, who are 25 to 30 and sometimes younger.”

The acres of displays at the Quartzsite shows include parts for RVs as well as the newest gadgets and, for that matter, entire RVs of varying sizes and luxury levels. Booths display knickknacks aplenty, kitchen, garden, auto and motorcycle tools, handmade and imported jewelry, items related to health and wellness, a wide variety of clothing from head to toe, mining equipment and an unending variety of multi-colored rocks, gems and minerals, especially quartz, the second-most abundant mineral – a combination of silicon and oxygen – found on earth.

“A lot of us will walk around the shows and swap meets doing prayerwalking, asking God to guide us during that week of ministry to touch the lives of people while we’re there,” Kronemeyer said.

“One of the things I have

found is that people who don’t want to talk to you about God would love to have you pray for them,” he added.

“Lots of time they’re at a turning point,” Farella said. “Maybe it’s health issues, losing a loved one or being far from their kids and grandkids. They’re open to pray, so you give them the gospel in the midst of the prayer.”

Jan. 18-27 are the dates for Project Quartzsite 2018. For the first time, the church will sponsor an antique and classic car show on Saturday, Jan. 20. This, like the revival services – to become known in 2018 as “Celebrations” – will take place on the church’s five-acre property at the west end of town, 100 N. Kofa Ave. This year’s revival speaker will be retired pastor Byron Banta, former acting executive director of the Arizona Southern Baptist Convention.

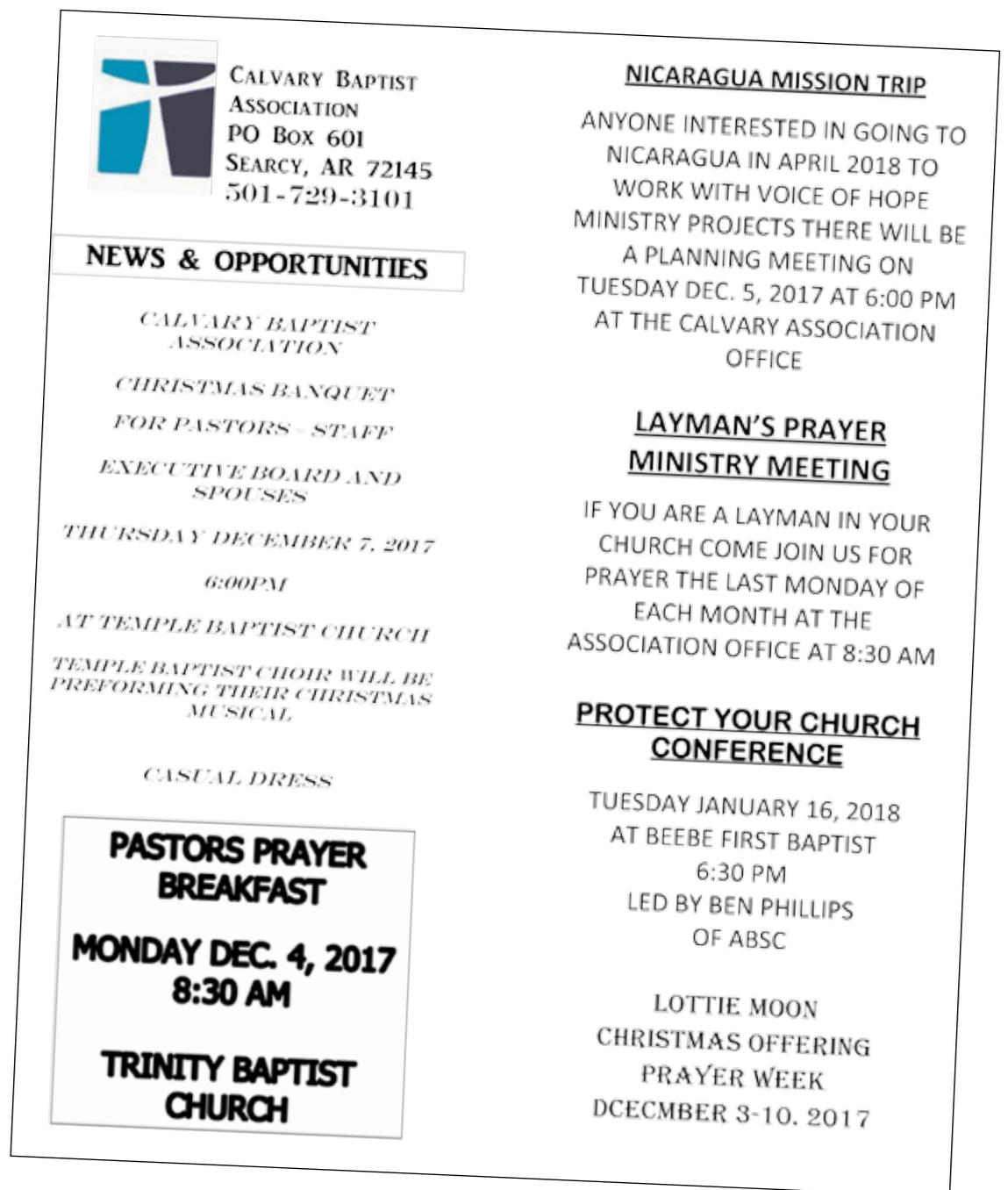
“Basically we become a huge outreach event and encouragement for the saints who are traveling and away from their home church,” Kronemeyer said. About \$6,000 for Project Quartzsite comes from the church budget. Another \$3,000 comes from Cooperative Program dollars distributed by the Arizona convention.

“This is a small church project with limited resources,” Kronemeyer said, “but in my six years serving as a volunteer, I have seen and heard of many wonderful blessings that have resulted from Project Quartzsite.”

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