



Pilgrims Rest Pastor Chris Sims in front of the church's new multipurpose building in Batesville.

Come all ye ... 'whoever'

Caleb Yarbrough
Arkansas Baptist News

BATESVILLE - "God has sent laborers to work the field that He has been cultivating, all in a community that has a population smaller than our church attendance," said Chris Sims, pastor of Pilgrims Rest Baptist Church.

Located in the small rural area of Bethesda, a community inside the city limits of Batesville, Pilgrims Rest is shattering many stereotypes of what it means to be a rural church.

"It has been exciting to watch the Father work in this church family. Because of gifted strategic leadership and committed faithful membership, the Lord has used them to reach people that few churches do ... The church

is a testament of what God can do through a church family who follows Him," said Ronnie Toon, association missionary for Independence Baptist Association, Batesville.

Sims has been pastor of Pilgrims Rest for three-and-a-half years and is the 50th pastor in the church's 159-year history.

"One of the Scriptures we have talked about multiple times around here is Psalm 127, 'Unless the Lord builds the house, he who builds it labors in vain,'" said Sims.

The church took the passage to heart.

Today, Pilgrims Rest averages 150-200 in worship on Sundays - in a community of fewer than

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Ark. pastors comment on law

Churches left to decide rules for concealed guns

Caleb Yarbrough
Arkansas Baptist News

LITTLE ROCK - It's fun to watch old Westerns and relive a time when cowboys carried guns, settled disputes with duels and rode horses into the sunset.

The reality, however, is the Old West glorified in cinema is long gone. Yet, in 2013 a new Arkansas law has opened the door to allowing guns in the most sacred of all places - inside houses of worship.

Act 67, formerly Senate Bill 71, sailed through the Arkansas Legislature this month before being signed into law by Gov. Mike Beebe Feb. 11.

The new law gives churches and other places of worship the right to decide whether or not to allow concealed carry of guns on their property. The law changes a long-standing prohibition, much like that in place for government buildings and schools, of concealed weapons in churches.

'Corrects flaw in law'

The *Arkansas Baptist News* talked to a number of pastors about the "gun toting" issue for their reaction

and what it means for their congregations.

Doug Falknor, pastor of First Baptist Church, Fayetteville, believes on the surface the new law corrects a flaw in an old one.

"The initial law was the one that was in error, that it lumped churches in the exclusion list with government properties. I really don't think the government has much need to tell local churches what they can and cannot do on any matter," said Falknor.

He said the new law would be a "non-issue" for his church and does not anticipate members

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Christian Education Guide

Students thrive in college 'community'

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NAMB to start Baptist centers

Annie Armstrong offering up 1.9 percent

Joe Westbury
The Christian Index

SAN DIEGO - Southern Baptists boosted their giving to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions by 1.9 percent last year, resulting in \$57.2 million being channeled to the agency.

Carlos Ferrer, vice president and chief financial officer of the North American Mission Board (NAMB), said the agency "is in a very strong financial position, the strongest I have ever seen in my years with the agency."

Ferrer, along with NAMB President Kevin Ezell, thanked Southern

Baptists for their generous support and their affirmation of the agency's renewed emphasis on church planting.

The report led the agenda of the group's Feb. 6 board meeting held in San Diego.

In other business, NAMB trustees approved funds for the purchase "of up to \$1.5 million of land to establish a ministry center in Chicago."

The purchase is part of NAMB's national strategy to establish centers like Graffiti Church, which is located on New York City's Lower East Side.

The congregation and community center, founded in 1974, has

frequently been used as a model for what can happen in other inner city settings where few churches exist.

"We want to start ministry centers in all 30 of our SEND cities, and Chicago is certainly in the top five," Ezell said. The Chicago site, when established, will be the third such center along with those in New York City and Los Angeles.

Ezell said each SEND city may not need to have a similar cash outlay because NAMB could partner with a declining congregation that already has a church in a desirable location.

From the ministry centers NAMB plans to house at least one congregation and use the site to meet inner city needs through a Christian wit-

ness. He admitted that many such endeavors may never be self-supporting but Southern Baptists need a presence in areas where residents may not have the financial means to support a church.

However, he said the centers will be located in communities where there are the most people and reit-

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SEE RELATED STORY ON ANNIE ARMSTRONG PAGE 6

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GUNS

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having much of an opinion on the matter.

"I really don't expect us to have a large group of people all of a sudden want to pack (a gun) in church," said Falknor.

'Big decision' for churches

Chris Sims, pastor of Pilgrims Rest Baptist Church, Batesville, believes that, "each church will have a big decision to make," in regards to the new law.

"Should we tote guns into the house of the Lord in hopes of protecting those we love, or should we leave weapons away from the church and put our faith in the God we serve to provide for and protect us?" the pastor asked.

Sims said his church has yet to discuss the new law but in his opinion, if they were to decide to allow concealed carry in their church, it would be to provide security in the same way a father would protect his household.

"Just as a father would protect his family against an intruder, so should the church protect the sheep from the wolves of the world. If our church buildings are to act as 'sanctuary' from the broken and dark realities of the world around us, then this may be a step in the right direction," said Sims.

Jason Noel, pastor of East Side Baptist Church, Paragould, said his

church has had security procedures in place for a long time, including having deacons provide security during services. However, Noel plans to meet soon with current and former police officers and other experts to hold a security audit of East Side's policies and Act 67 will be one of the topics they discuss.

"It is an interesting piece of legislation. My first inclination before I read the bill was to say, 'That's a really bad idea,'" said Noel, adding he believes Act 67 requires churches to seriously evaluate whether or not to allow concealed guns.

The saving grace for the new law, in Noel's mind, is that it puts the power in the churches' hands. He believes that each church has different circumstances and that small rural churches have very different considerations to take into account than large metropolitan congregations.

At East Side Baptist, the church already has in place armed security in the form of members who are police officers and law enforcement agents who already carry guns and who are trained in firearm operation and safety, said Noel.

He added that he does not oppose the idea of other churches allowing concealed carry. However, in the case of East Side, he believes less is more.

"We are not going to put up signs around our building that say, 'This is a gun-free zone.' ... We are going to address our church body and tell

them that we have properly trained individuals in our church during every service who are armed so there is no need for you to bring a weapon into this church," he said.

Noel believes churches will be better protected if they limit the number of guns on their property and in their services. While all churches, small and large, should take the security of their congregation seriously, Noel believes guns are simply a last resort, lethal tools that, in the case of church security, are better left to a few experienced members.

"I just don't know that that's the intent of the gospel and the intent of the New Testament that we have churches with people who are armed," said the pastor, "We need to talk about our soul as a nation. ... The trend in our nation for the past 60 years has been to try to fix symptoms without addressing the real issue, and the real issue is the human heart."

Editor's Note: After signing SB71 and making Act 67 law, the governor proposed a legislation to accompany the new law. If passed, House Bill 1284 would require churches that allow concealed carry to post signs at all public entrances informing those in attendance of the possible presence of firearms in the building, according to an Arkansas Democrat-Gazette report.

Contact Caleb Yarbrough at caleb@arkansasbaptist.org.

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Pro-life law strengthened

LITTLE ROCK - Laws emerging from the Arkansas Legislature have the potential to dramatically strengthen the rights of the unborn, says a leader of one of the state's leading ethics organizations.

"These are exciting days for any Arkansan who prizes the sanctity of human life," said Larry Page, executive director of the Arkansas Faith and Ethics Council.

"Our state is poised to become the strongest pro-life state in the nation."

Page said the legislation is "significant" and accurately reflects the position of many Arkansans.

"If they do in fact become law, Arkansas will shoot to the top of the list of states that protect unborn babies to the extent that federal law permits," Page told the *Arkansas Baptist News* Feb. 8 prior to Gov. Mike Beebe signing one of the bills into law.

House Bill 1100, prohibiting insurance exchange policies from offering coverage for abortions, is now Act 72 after being signed by Beebe. Essentially, the law bars expenditures of public funds for abortions pursuant to new federal health care law, said Page.

The bill includes exceptions to save the life of the mother and for cases of rape and incest. The exchange, a marketplace for health coverage mandated by the federal 2010 Affordable Care Act, is set to begin in 2014.

Two additional bills working their way through the Legislature will most likely include amendments.

Page said House Bill 1037 prohibits abortions (except those genuinely necessary to save the life of the child's mother or to avert a serious and irreversible physical impairment to her) at the point when the unborn child is capable of feeling pain - around 20 weeks of gestational age. It cleared the House and is now pending in the Senate.

Additionally, Senate Bill 134 has been passed by the Senate and is now in the House where it is expected to be approved, said Page. The measure prohibits abortions at the point in time when the fetus has a detectable heartbeat with the use of ultrasound (at about 12 weeks of gestational age).

"The tremendous reception these measures have met in the Legislature is nothing more than an accurate reflection of how deeply most Arkansans feel about protecting and advocating for the most defenseless and innocent life - unborn children," said Page, adding he believes the support of Arkansas Baptists has been a tremendous help to protect the unborn in the state.

"Arkansas Baptists have had no little role in making this progress happen. We have consistently and tirelessly made the case for the sanctity of human life," he said.



Falknor



Noel

NAMB

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erated that NAMB will continue to do what it has always done in cities large and small, but with a special focus on the larger cities.

Housing for planters

Ezell said that the agency is purchasing either apartments or homes in the 30 SEND cities to house church planting apprentices who can be mentored by a church planter. Two apartments or homes could be bought at current distressed values and provide a much cheaper alternative to paying as much as \$3,000 a month for rent in some areas.

He added if a particular location does not work out, the agency can always sell the property and recoup its investment or generate a profit.

NAMB recently purchased one such home in Las Vegas, in one of the nation's hardest hit real estate markets, for \$140,000 and is negotiating for a second.

An additional home is being leased. The homes will not be permanent residences for church planting apprentices, but will serve as "boot camps" where they will train and then vacate for another couple

to move in and be mentored, said Ezell, adding he hopes the agency will have at least one such housing arrangement in each of the 30 SEND cities within the next three years.

NAMB goals

One of NAMB's primary goals in its church planting focus is to "increase the birth rate and decrease the death rate" of Southern Baptist churches. The goal is to have 15,000 new, nonduplicated (in how new plants are counted) in the next 10 years, "and we are hundreds ahead of where we expected to be at this point," said Ezell.

Ezell then stressed the need for church revitalization as part of the agency's overall objective.

"Many declining churches do not face their future until they come to the point of asking how they are going to pay the light bill. We want to help them before they get to that point. There are many who are willing to make the necessary change but just don't know how. We want to be there to offer them that assistance."

Ezell lamented the fact that the denomination loses 1,000 churches each year, adding if NAMB can help reduce that by only 20 percent, it would be tremendously helpful -

similar to starting 200 additional healthy churches each year.

Ezell admitted that some churches are beyond help and may decide to either close their doors or merge with another congregation. He added "a fair amount" are beyond being salvaged and would be better off to close.

"To be honest, there are some churches that we would not want to refer an unchurched person or family to because of dysfunctionality (sic) or practice or belief," he said.

Ezell said he is convinced that in those cases, a smaller but healthier Southern Baptist Convention, in terms of number of churches, would be far more effective in building the kingdom and impacting society.

"We want to infuse health into those that are struggling, and church revitalization is the approach we are using," he said.

Aaron Coe, NAMB's vice president of church planting, told trustees that the long-term goal is to have 10 percent of Southern Baptist churches actively involved in church planting. A total of 600 are already involved and another 2,200 are in the process of being involved - placing the agency much closer to that 4,500 goal.

Joe Westbury is the managing editor of *The Christian Index*.

COME ALL

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200 people. As a result, the church recently went to two services and expanded, erecting a new building that will hold more than 300 for services. The building houses Sunday school classrooms, a kitchen, a food pantry with handicap accessibility and a large room with a multipurpose floor that can be used for everything from vacation Bible school events to church and community fellowships and indoor sports.

Sims said the church's fellowship has tightened through the recent building project. More than 60 of the church's members devoted their time to help with the building and construction of the 7,100-square-foot structure.

Most of those attending Pilgrims Rest don't have a background attending church, and more than 70 of them are children and teens under the age of 18, said Sims. The "balance" of Pilgrims Rest's congregation is something of an anomaly in comparison to the average rural Southern Baptist church.

"We have fabulous youth leaders. The very small group that they initially began reaching out to did a good job of sharing the fun of being a part of this church family. Our youth group has grown from a handful to 35-40 students," said Sims. "We have a good nursery; we have a good kids church; we have a good student ministry. We are focused on making sure that we can reach whoever comes in the door and meet them where they are at."

Over the past three years the church has begun a transition due to its growth and changing demographics. Not only has the church nearly quadrupled in weekly attendance - with people from all walks and stages of life being represented - it has seen many come to know the Lord and move on to leadership roles in the body, said Sims.

"This last year as we had grown out of space, we decided to go to two services. ... It gave us the ability to grow some more. But what that did was it seemed to be an indicator to others that we were going to take serious the commission that we are under. So what started with (God) sending young families and unsaved has now attracted a handful of called leaders. They are not on the payroll; they are lay leaders.

"How does all that work? It ain't us," said Sims with a smile.

Everything that has happened at Pilgrims Rest during his tenure has happened because God has or-



Top left, members of Pilgrims Rest stain boards for a new building. Top right, the church's sanctuary and its new multipurpose building.

daigned it, Sims believes, not because the church made it happen. He said that the goal of the church has become to simply "attempt" to be obedient to what God would have them do. He added that the congregation often makes mistakes but that God has been gracious to bless its efforts to follow His lead, in spite of their shortcomings.

"Any work that we do, if we do it ahead of Him or without Him, we are just doing man-made stuff. But if we will just make everything about His commission, then He said that He will build His Church and the gates of hell won't stand against it," said Sims.

"Discipleship is really the phase that we are moving into now. Over the past three years, we have baptized over 100 people. It is allowing new growth, and we are now able to move into growing as disciples," the pastor added.

Sims said God has sent a small group of mature followers to Pilgrims Rest during the past year, not out of a disenfranchisement with other churches, but because they sensed God's holy Spirit moving and felt called to help disciple other believers.

According to Sims, Pilgrims Rest has been able to avoid problems that plague many congregations with members of such varied age. He said the church has had discussions but never encountered difficulties due to style of worship or issues of

tradition.

Sims said the church's ability to work together is due to their attempt to put Christ first.

"We are talking about worship. Our styles, while not unimportant, should be secondary," said Sims.



The pulpit in Pilgrims Rest's new building

Pilgrims Rest has also been attempting to find opportunities to blend people from different ages and stages of life together in small groups so

they might grow and learn from one another.

One example of this blending happened recently, said Sims, when the women's small group was joined by girls from the youth group for a book study. The youth girls originally joined the women because their teacher was sick one week but have since continued with the study, allowing for the two groups to grow together.

Pilgrims Rest is the first church Sims has pastored. As a first-time pastor, he said one of the most important things he has learned, and would like to teach other pastors called to rural and small churches, is patience.

Sims said it is important to give God time to move, within His time frame. After three-and-a-half years, Pilgrims Rest is moving full-steam ahead. They are growing both spiritually and in number of members, but only because they have allowed God to lead them where He wants them to go.

"We are a Bible church that is Southern Baptist in its core, but a person who has zero church affiliation needs to be able to walk in here and feel warm and accepted and be taught how the Bible is incredibly relevant to their life, no matter what stage they are in," said Sims.

Contact Caleb Yarbrough at caleb@arkansasbaptist.org.

ABN Digest

Stories of interest to Arkansas Baptists

Church bylaws need to be changed if law does

NASHVILLE (BP) - With the U.S. Supreme Court set to take up gay marriage and potentially legalize it this summer, churches that host wedding ceremonies or other events for traditional couples should examine their bylaws to shield themselves from the impact of possible litigation, says an attorney who specializes in religious liberty issues. "We're in a day where every church needs to have a statement in its bylaws of its doctrinal beliefs on marriage and sexuality," an Alliance Defending Freedom, a religious liberty legal organization, attorney said. The justices are scheduled in March to hear two cases concerning gay marriage and by June could either uphold the traditional definition of marriage or legalize gay marriage in all 50 states.

Great Britain set to legalize gay marriage

LONDON (BP) - British lawmakers have voted in favor of a bill to legalize same-sex marriage, putting the country on a path to become the 12th country worldwide to do so. Supporters celebrated the bill as a step toward "equality," but church leaders and conservatives warn, if implemented, the measure will bring serious social and cultural ramifications. Spearheaded by Prime Minister David Cameron, the bill still has to endure parliamentary debates and earn approval of the House of Lords before becoming law. If approved, it would allow same-sex couples to get married in both civil and religious ceremonies, provided the religious institution consents, starting in 2015.

US-Iranian pastor tortured in prison

TEHRAN, Iran (BP) - An Iranian-born pastor who is a U.S. citizen is undergoing physical and mental torture in a notoriously brutal Tehran prison while an international campaign for his release mounts, according to the American Center for Law and Justice. Saeed Abedini was sentenced to eight years in prison for establishing a network of Christian house churches years ago and for "attempting to sway Iranian youth away from Islam." Abedini has not been allowed to see his family since Jan. 27.

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

What will you be packing this Sunday?

Watching the debate over guns the past few months has fascinated me on a number of levels.

As a result of highly-publicized acts of gun violence by mentally unstable individuals, it appears the United States is poised to outlaw certain types of assault rifles and military-style guns in an attempt to keep them out of the hands of the general public – all in an effort to prevent another tragedy like the killing of children at Sandy Hook Elementary School from ever happening again.

What is ironic is that while our president has made a declaration that he will put the full weight of his office behind “taking action” that will change gun laws in America, he stands firm on family-eroding issues such as the support of on-demand abortion, same-sex marriage and allowing gays to take part in Boy Scouts.

My, my, are our priorities as a nation out of whack!

What’s more, the Arkansas Leg-

islature has leapt into action passing a new law allowing churches to make the decision whether or not to allow individuals to bring concealed weapons into worship centers (read related story, “Churches left to decide rules for concealed guns” on Page 1).

Until the proposed measure came up and was debated in the Arkansas Legislature, I did not know it was unlawful to carry a concealed gun into church.

In case you haven’t noticed, gun stores, gun shows and even Walmart are being sold out

of weapons and ammunition in the wake of all the commotion about guns in our country.

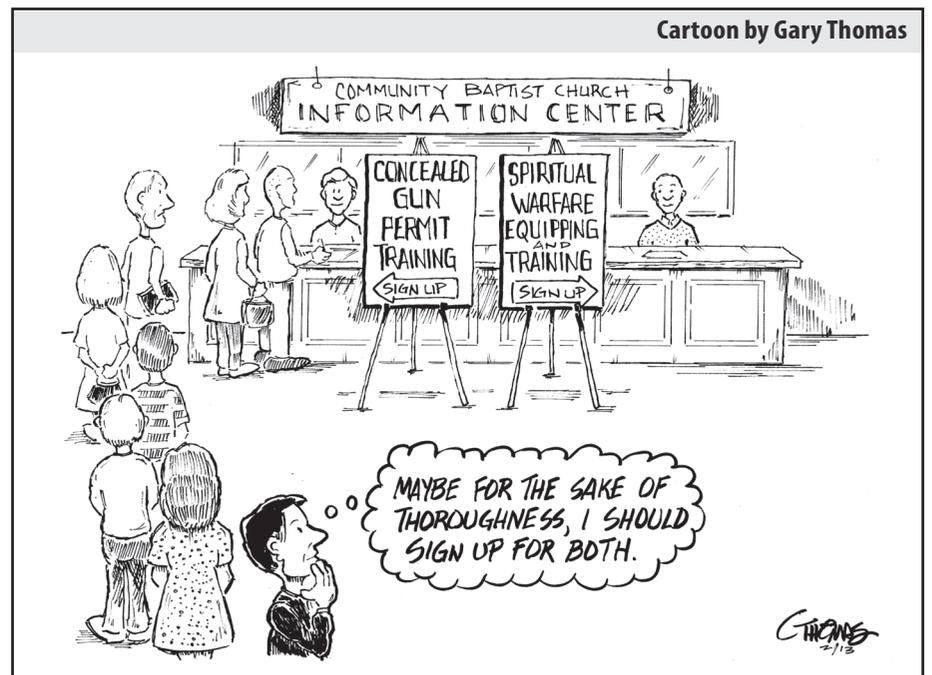
Recently, I was at a gun show in Conway where organizers said they were expecting up to 7,000 to attend over a two-day period.

Unfortunately, we live in a violent world, the result of fallen man’s hardened heart toward the things of God.



PRESSING ON

Tim Yarbrough



It certainly makes sense to me for guns in churches to be allowed, considering houses of worship are where many people gather at an appointed time each week, therefore opening the possibility of being targeted by a individual with violent intentions in mind.

The law is correct to allow

churches to make the decision within their own autonomy. However, while guns may be allowed in church, my weapon of choice remains the holy Word of God, which is sharper than any sword and more powerful than any gun.

Tim Yarbrough is the editor of the Arkansas Baptist News.

Dispatches from Bitter America

By Todd Starnes, B&H Publishing, 2012

In his second book, Todd Starnes, host of the radio show “Fox News & Commentary” and frequent political contributor, asks the question, “Is the average American bitter?”

Starnes’ inspiration comes from a speech given in 2008 by President Barack Obama, then a U.S. senator, in which he claimed that conservative Americans hold on to their guns, religion, aversion to people who are different from themselves and economic ideals as a way to rationalize their frustrations.

“So it is not surprising then that they get bitter,” Starnes quotes Obama as saying.

In order to test what he perceives as a “liberal” theory and a “culture war,” propagated by

those in our country who want to see traditional values fall, Starnes embarks on a quest to find out if America really has become a nation where enlightened secularists have taken the upper hand and where vehemently angry religious

BOOK REVIEW

Caleb Yarbrough
Arkansas Baptist News

people populate a decidedly powerful, yet less “evolved” mode of thinking.

Starnes’ travels take him north, south, east and west. He eventually concludes, through the observations of his gallivanting, that most Americans share his same general values, values that contradict those claimed by the mainstream media and progressively minded social pundits but to Starnes, are essential to the “American” identity.

During a visit to a New Hamp-

shire diner, Starnes writes that he had a “political epiphany” that there is a general thread that binds most Americans, regardless of their location, a thread defined by love of God, country and traditional American ideals, ideals that are ingrained throughout our country’s history and have only recently become taboo.

“Dispatches” is written with essay-like chapters composed of Starnes’ opinions and is interwoven with interviews and conversations with prominent figures of the American political right wing. Starnes speaks with Mike Huckabee, former Arkansas governor, Fox News host Sean Hannity and Fox News contributor and political commentator

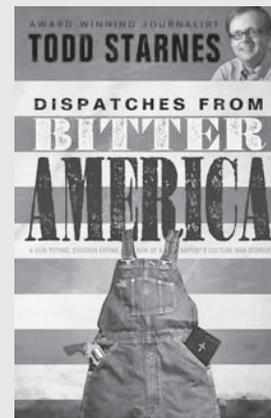
Michelle Malkin, to name a few.

Often tongue-in-cheek, mostly satirical and always keen, Starnes argues that most Americans, 78 percent according to a Gallup poll he mentions, proclaim to be Christians, even in a culture moving hastily towards modernism.

Starnes is idealistic, which makes the reader want to hear what he has to say. And while he often glosses over issues that don’t fit nicely into his argument and overly “Southernizes” America’s varied viewpoints on faith, politics and morality for the sake of his cause, his words are thought provoking.

Overall, the book’s best quality is Starnes’ honesty and humor.

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Member of the Association
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Tim Yarbrough, editor
Jessica Vanderpool, assistant editor
Caleb Yarbrough, staff writer
Gayla Parker, administrative assistant
Becky Hardwick, business manager
Nelle O’Byran, advertising representative

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Family Matters

'High-Low' game

Eating meals together with the TV off and eyes, minds and hearts focused on others around the table provides a great environment to connect relationally with your family. Studies show families that regularly eat together around the table at home have reduced incidences of abuse, addictions and other aberrant behaviors.



Phillips

One way our family regularly experiences meaningful table moments and builds healthier family relationships is by intentionally rejoicing and mourning with one another around the dinner table by playing a game called "High-Low."

Romans 12:15 says, "Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn."

We take turns asking each other what was the high point of their day and what was the low point of their day. It's a great opportunity to connect at a heart level, celebrating together and comforting one another.

We rejoice and celebrate with one another by sharing phrases like, "That's great," "I'm proud of you," "Way to go," "That's awesome," etc. You can also celebrate through a high-five, fist bump or a hug.

We mourn and comfort one another by sharing phrases like, "I'm sorry you've been hurt" and "I'm here for you if you would like to talk more," etc. Don't provide advice, correction or instruction at this time. Listen and then comfort.

I asked my kids about the "High-Low" game. They said: "It's fun sharing together." "You get to learn about what is happening with everyone; everyone focuses on listening to you." "You learn about what each other likes and doesn't like." As a parent, it opens a window to their world, their likes and dislikes, their joys and their sorrows.

Our family will regularly play this game even when we have guests in our home. The point is to engage in meaningful conversations around the table. I doubt my kids will remember specific high-low experiences, but they will cherish the meaningful relationships we share together with one another.

Ben Phillips leads the Arkansas Baptist State Convention family ministry team.

Finding help in all the wrong places

I was stunned the first time an attorney from the Arkansas Securities Department shared how often a financial scam in Arkansas is "Christian" in nature. Typically, the scam involves a new church member who becomes heavily involved in the church's ministries. As a financial advisor, he or she happens to tell a new church friend about a wonderful investment opportunity which, for example, yields 10 percent annually for a two-year term. He invests a small amount and receives the interest and principal back, just as promised.

The friend is actually considered a "mark," and the problem comes when he reinvests and tells his friends about this incredible investment. Soon the small amount originally invested becomes a large sum from numerous investors, and the advisor "skips town" when he has met his goal. The investors are left without interest or principal!

A few years ago, I attended a "free" dinner sponsored by an advisor who promoted an investment to help churches build their facilities. I was immediately suspicious when the advisor said that he had told his mother she should put all her money into this program. (You have heard about diversification, haven't you?) It was an investment that promised a 9 percent return over a five-year term by an organization that "helps build churches." I asked about their business plan, and the response was that the company used the money to make 10 percent construction loans for less than one year to churches that were unable to secure traditional

financing. (Does anyone see a problem in making a five-year commitment at 9 percent to investors while providing numerous one-year-or-less construction loans at 10 percent to churches with poor credit ratings?) The potential investors were told they would be doing a good thing by providing resources for church buildings and would also happen to benefit personally with a way-above-the-market yield. Have you heard about opportunities that are "too good to be true"?

After the seminar, I checked the company and discovered they had a penny stock listing on a remote exchange, which allowed them to propose this investment in our state without normal registration. Again, early investors received their money with interest and told their friends. Soon, however, the company defaulted and the remaining investors lost their money.

Personally, I believe God has a special punishment for those who would use His name for their personal gain and fraudulent activities. It is bad enough for investors to be defrauded of their money, but much worse, in my opinion, when the name of Christ is involved. Luke 16:8b (NKJV) reminds us "the sons of this world are more shrewd in their generation than the sons of light." This is why we should "be wise as serpents and harmless as doves" (Matthew 10:16b, NKJV). Be sure to find help in the right places, or as Will Rogers put it, "I am more concerned about the return of my money than the return on my money."

David Moore is president of the Arkansas Baptist Foundation.



FINANCIAL TIMES

David Moore

Top 10 list?

I have been a Christian for almost 28 years. I enjoy and appreciate *Arkansas Baptist News*, but words can't express the sorrow I felt after reading the front page of Volume 112, Number 1. Of the 2012 top 10 stories chosen by ABN staff, "100 saved" came in dead last, while No. 1 goes to "Tucker elected." Really?

Jesus said that He came "to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). Have we forgotten that? I'm sure there was more joy in heaven over the 100 saved than someone being elected. I'm not even 40 years old yet, and even I can remember a time when seeing souls saved was the most important thing there was. Now I don't know. Am I jumping to conclusions? Or

maybe I just don't have the facts or I just don't understand. Here is a fact: Lost souls came in dead last! Not five or even seven, but last.

There will be some explaining to be done at the judgment seat of Christ over this one, and I am praying that

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

God in wrath will remember mercy (Hab. 3:2). I don't know if all this is "for publication" or not; doesn't

matter. What matters is that this article was a stark reminder of the direction we are headed in. Nothing but nothing should come ahead of lost souls. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

Kevin McDaniel
Crossett

Editor's Note: Articles for the annual ABN "top 10" list are judged based

on overall impact to Arkansas Baptists and their work in the state, and saving souls should be (and I pray is) our No. 1 priority. That being said, we had other specific "salvation" articles that didn't make the list, such as the hundreds of people saved in Haiti as a result of the work of Arkansas Baptists and the dozens saved during revivals on various Arkansas college campuses throughout the year. In fact, every article could have been about folks being saved across Arkansas in churches, large events, small events, etc. The top 10 list is designed to be more of a collective snapshot of the year. Regarding the "100 saved" article that made the list, I believe the staff chose this event because it illustrates the collective work – that of sharing Jesus Christ – that Arkansas Baptists do every day. I appreciate your passion for Jesus! It is the same passion the staff of the ABN shares as we seek to make Jesus Christ known in Arkansas and around the world.

BITTER

continued from page 4

Toward the end of Chapter 35, he makes the most poignant statement of the book.

"The Bible calls us aliens in this world. Aliens are people who have placed their hope and trust in Jesus Christ. There's a song made famous by R.E.M. called 'It's the End of the World as We Know It.' ... And you know something? I feel fine," writes Starnes.

As believers, it is so easy to forget we are aliens living in a world that

is not our own and that, in it, we are not called to create for ourselves gated communities with signs reading, "Believers only."

Starnes does not mean his claim that most Americans are God-fearing people to be taken as a beacon of hope for believers. It is a challenge.

While he loves his country and believes it was founded with biblical Scripture in mind and continues to be home to millions of Christ followers, Starnes argues that the only truly "Christian nation" is heaven, its citizens being the Body of Christ.

At times "Dispatches" is discon-

certing. However, Starnes' conclusion seems to be that Christians should never accept sin, yet they should also never expect nonbelievers to act like they are saved – and that our country's destiny is ultimately up to Christ.

Until the Lord returns, the world will embrace sin and consider Christians "bitter" because of their beliefs, which is to be expected.

According to Starnes, in the end, our fight should not be a "culture war," but a war for the hearts of men. Christ will take care of the rest.

Contact Caleb Yarbrough at caleb@arkansasbaptist.org.



The Valley Church's launch team (above). Right photo: Kent Baker (left), elder at oneChurch, Conway; Matt Rothacher (center), pastor of The Valley Church, Vilonia, and Paul Hudson, pastor of oneChurch. The Valley Church will hold preview services in March.

Week of Prayer March 3-10

Annie, Dixie offerings fuel Vilonia church start

Jessica Vanderpool
Arkansas Baptist News

VILONIA - "That God will move, lives will be changed, captives will be set free and disciples will be made" - that's what Matt Rothacher said his hope is for The Valley Church - a new church plant he will be pastoring in Vilonia.

The Valley Church, affectionately known as "The Valley," will begin holding preview services in March and will launch on Easter Sunday. Rather than call it a "new church," Rothacher said he prefers to call it "a move of God in Vilonia."

A number of entities partnered with The Valley to make the church plant happen, and among them was oneChurch, Conway, a fairly young church itself - having launched in 2010.

"We have adopted the mindset that when God brings us someone who is ready and willing, we will support them on their journey. We hope there are many more in the future, both in Arkansas and in the uttermosts," explained Paul Hudson, pastor of oneChurch.

The *Log Cabin Democrat* recently reported that, according to U.S. Census Bureau information, Faulkner County, where Vilonia is located, was named one of the nation's 100 fastest growing counties.

"Vilonia has seen unbelievable growth over the past five years or so," Rothacher said. "The population has expanded so quickly that there's a need for churches to reach new people."

He shared one statistic that "drove home why we need new churches."

He said studies show that "the majority of churches 10 to 15 years old or older get 80 percent of their

new members from transfers from other churches. So in other words, the majority of those churches are simply 'swapping sheep.'" He further explained the studies show that 60 to 80 percent of the new members at new churches are lost or unchurched people.

"That's why we came to Vilonia - there's a need for a new expression of church to come alongside the churches that have been faithfully serving Vilonia for years. Together I believe that we can see God move in a big way through Vilonia," Rothacher said.

He said his vision for the church is to follow Jesus' command in Matthew 28:18-20 to "go and make disciples."

"The Valley is going to do that through authentic community, biblical teaching, gospel-centered lifestyles and mobilizing to reach the world," he said.

Among others, he particularly desires to reach those he calls the "dechurched."

He explained he served as a youth pastor for more than a decade and one of the struggles of youth pastors is the fact that many people "walk away from church" after high school. He said the trend was for people to return when they had their own children. Yet now that happens less and less. These are the dechurched people - those who have been involved in church but aren't anymore.

"We really feel like we get to go chase them with the gospel," Rothacher said. "As a guy who let a bunch go, I'm really excited to get another shot at this generation."

But he did have one concern about the church planting endeavor.

"My initial hesitation in following God on this adventure was, 'How in the world can I provide for my

A Gift to Annie

- \$1 Pack of door hangers promoting a new church start
- \$4 Hygiene kit for a homeless person
- \$10 One day of food and shelter for someone who has been rescued from human trafficking
- \$15 Bible for a new believer
- \$20 Backpack full of school supplies for an inner city child
- \$50 Month of transportation for a church planter
- \$100 Facilities costs for a month of worship services at a new church site

family?" he said. "I have three little ones, and I knew that church planting didn't pay very well. The support that comes through the Annie Armstrong missions offering helps alleviate some of the fear of, 'How will we support ourselves?' And for me that was a big push out the safe boat and onto the sea with Jesus.

The Annie Armstrong Week of Prayer for North American Missions is set to be observed by Southern Baptists March 3-10.

Rothacher explained he receives monthly support from both the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions and the Dixie Jackson Arkansas Missions Offering, and that support allows them "to meet the needs of our family."

Hudson said oneChurch has also benefited from the Annie Armstrong offering by receiving support during its first two years.

"Annie Armstrong was a huge part of helping oneChurch to get started by ensuring us a consistent and dependable base," he said. "In our first year, it was used to help make sure we had a place to meet."

And to those who have donated to the Annie Armstrong offering, he says, "Thank you."

"Thank you for giving to the vision of seeing people come to know

Christ and follow Him in authentic life change," Hudson said. "Thank you for being faithful to give to reach people you don't know but that Jesus loves. Thank you for partnering with us to be a reproducing church that see people the way God does."

Easter offering facts

- The purpose of giving to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions is to help the missionary force reach an estimated 260 million lost people in the United States and Canada for Christ.
- The national goal for the offering is \$70 million.
- One hundred percent of gifts given to the offering are used to support Southern Baptist missionaries serving in the United States, Canada and their territories. The offering represents 47 percent of the North American Mission Board's total income.
- Missionaries supported by the offering start new churches, engage in student evangelism on college campuses, serve the physical and spiritual needs of people through ministry evangelism and serve as church planting catalysts.

The small college advantage

Williams Baptist offers students 'community'

Grace Stolz
Williams Baptist College

WALNUT RIDGE - For high school seniors and their families, choosing a college is no easy task. With about 4,500 colleges in the United States, it's a decision that can be overwhelming.

That's where small colleges come in.

A small, Christian liberal arts college, like Williams Baptist College (WBC) in Walnut Ridge, offers advantages that can make a world of difference in the life of a student and his ultimate success.

So what is it that sets a small college apart from large universities? One theme which comes up again and again on the Williams Baptist College campus is community.

"A small, Christian college has what many large universities try to replicate: a sense of community," said Susan Watson, dean of students at Williams. "By its very nature, community calls for unity, purpose, investment, responsibility,

See **COLLEGE** page 10



**Christian
Education
Guide**

Pages 7-10

Seminary education choices abound for Baptist students

SOUTHERN BAPTISTS have a plethora of opportunities in order to pursue and receive a seminary education.

For example, the estimated 45,000 churches that comprise the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) pool their resources to support no fewer than six theological seminaries in various geographical locations across the United States.

Listed from the West Coast to East Coast, the seminaries are Golden Gate Theological Seminary in Mill Valley, Calif.; Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas; Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo.; New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, New Orleans, La.; Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.,

and Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C.

The six seminaries are funded in part through the Cooperative Program (CP), the denomination's mechanism through which SBC churches contribute to their respective state conventions to fund missions and ministries at home, throughout North America and abroad.

In addition to offering on-site classes, SBC seminaries support the convention's Seminary Extension program, allowing students unable to relocate to pursue a seminary education. Through seminary extension, students are able to attend classes in closer proximity to their field of ministry, as well as pursue coursework through correspondence and distant (online) learning environments.

In addition to seminary extension, many SBC seminaries provide a college experience through accredited pre-baccalaureate and baccalaureate programs for

students who have not completed their college degree.

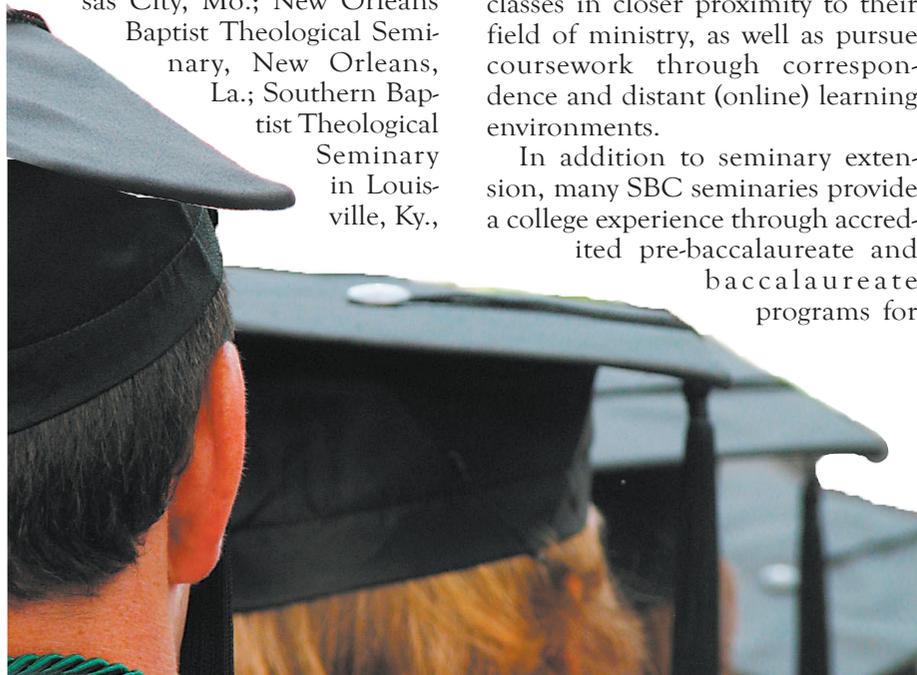
While the largest programs offered at SBC seminaries are master's level theological education for ministers and other Christian workers, many offer doctoral degrees as well.

Some seminaries, such as Golden Gate Seminary in California, employ a strategy to "contextualize" their ministry by opening various ministry centers that function as

full-fledged seminaries.

Jeff Iorg, president of Golden Gate, recently told a group of SBC editors that even with the centers, "Our five campuses are 500 miles apart. It's a necessity. We feel people should be trained closer to the field where they are more likely to serve."

In addition to CP-supported seminaries, Southern Baptists receive theological education at Baptist colleges or independent seminaries.



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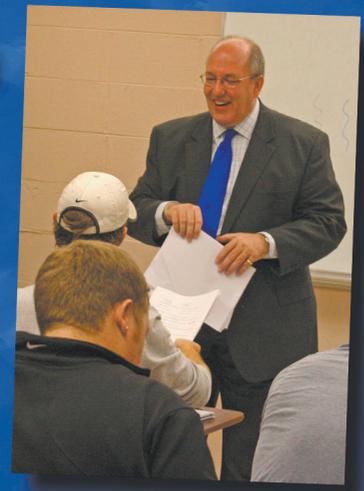
A Williams education gives you more than a degree. It equips you academically, socially and spiritually for the journey of life.



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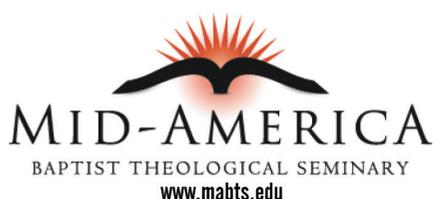
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For example, Arkansas Baptists have had a long relationship with Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, which is now located in Cordova, Tenn.

Mid-America is an independent seminary, which does not receive CP funds. The seminary was originally chartered in Louisiana, later moved to Arkansas in the 1970s and was for a number of years located in the old Olivet Baptist Church in Little Rock (now Lifeway Church). In the 1975-76 academic year, the seminary relocated to Memphis, Tenn., and later Cordova, where the current campus of 500 students now resides.

Seminary officials say more than half of Mid-America's students are Arkansas Baptists - perhaps due to its close proximity of the campus to the state.

A seminary education, whether through an SBC-related or independent seminary, affords students the ability to be trained in extraordinary ways through study of the unchanging Word of God, preparing them to lead the charge of Jesus Christ given in the Great Commission.

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Students connect in and out of the classroom at Williams Baptist College.

COLLEGE

continued from page 7

ownership and reciprocity.”

Such a distinct kinship comes naturally on smaller campuses like Williams. From the administration to the students and everywhere in between, those connected to the college feel a part of the school’s mission.

“Williams’ expectation is that everyone has the opportunity to make a notable difference on and off campus by learning, growing and serving for the greater good,” said Watson.

Williams senior Jon Pucik knows the advantages of a smaller college like Williams well.

“Williams is a unique campus where your friends become your family and your professors become mentors,” said Pucik. “Nowhere else have I found such a community that has instilled in me a sense of belonging and purpose. I will never forget WBC for that reason.”

With small student-to-teacher ratios, students receive the attention

they need to better themselves academically and personally. Professors take interest and invest in their students outside the classroom as much as in the classroom, say current and past students.

Ashley Newman, another Williams senior, cites a case in point. When she had a flat tire, Steven Harthorn, assistant professor of English at Williams, came to her rescue.

“I did not even ask him to change my tire,” Newman said. “It was just something he was happy to do. The intentionality and heart of the professors is one of my favorite things about Williams.”

There’s another lesser-known advantage to smaller colleges as well. Christian liberal arts colleges consistently rank high in college guides, such as *US News & World Report*.

Faculty, staff and students point to such rankings as largely being attributed to the family atmosphere surrounding small schools and an atmosphere where students are not simply a number, but a name.

Grace Stolz is the coordinator of public relations at Williams Baptist College.

ABN announces scholarship

LITTLE ROCK – A new scholarship designed to encourage students to pursue a career in Christian communications has been announced by the *Arkansas Baptist News* (ABN).

“The ABN wants to do all it can to encourage students in Arkansas to pursue a career that forwards the cause of the gospel of Jesus Christ through journalism, advertising and/or public relations,” said Tim Yarbrough, ABN editor.

“The idea was first presented to our board of directors last year, and they wholeheartedly endorsed it,” Yarbrough added.

The scholarship is primarily being

made available to Williams Baptist College and Ouachita Baptist University students. The two colleges have agreed to provide matching funds for a scholarship to be awarded at each of the schools.

“We are looking for students who have a passion for Jesus Christ and have the desire to use their career – either through vocational ministry or in the secular marketplace – to further the cause of Christ,” said Yarbrough.

The scholarship is being administered through the Arkansas Baptist Foundation. More information is available at www.arkansasbaptist.org/scholarship.

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ABSC calendar

- Feb. 26-27: Interim Ministry for Today's Church - Camp Paron, Paron
- March 2: Hispanic WMU Conference - Harlan Park Baptist Church, Conway
- March 3-10: Week of Prayer for North American Missions/Annie Armstrong Easter Offering - Nationwide
- March 5: Preparing for Retirement Seminar - First Baptist Church, Newport
- March 8-9: State Handbell Festival - Hot Springs Baptist Church, Hot Springs
- March 9: Families on Mission Day - Little Rock Zoo
- March 18-22: Mission Siloam - Camp Siloam, Siloam Springs
- March 22-23: Galatians 6:6 Marriage Retreat - Crowne Plaza, Little Rock

For more information on events, go to www.absc.org, or call 800-838-2272.



ABSC honors Turner

Sonny Tucker, newly elected executive director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention (ABSC), presents Emil Turner, retired ABSC executive director, with a book of letters from convention staff. The convention marked Turner's retirement with a reception in his honor Feb. 8 at the ABSC convention building in Little Rock. More than 200 guests from across Arkansas attended.

Disaster relief training dates

- March 2: Geyer Springs First Baptist Church, Little Rock
- March 23: Immanuel Baptist Church, Warren
- April 6: First Baptist Church, Mountain Home
- April 20: First Baptist Church, Hope
- April 27: Walnut Street Baptist Church, Jonesboro
- June 1: Cross Church, Springdale

Disaster relief training dates set

DISASTERS can happen without warning, but when they do, there is a group of believers ready to help - Southern Baptist disaster relief (DR) volunteers.

Ministries provided by DR volunteers include feeding, showers, chain saw, communications and more.

The Southern Baptist Convention partners with entities such as the American Red Cross, Convoy of Hope and The Salvation Army, among others.

Southern Baptist DR volunteers respond to floods, hurricanes, torna-

does, fires, earthquakes and terrorist attacks.

Among other locations, Arkansas DR volunteers have ministered in New Orleans and New York, providing services and sharing Christ's love in the midst of people hurting from the results of disasters.

If you would like more information on being a DR volunteer, contact Bill Cantrell at bcantrell@absc.org or 501-376-4791, ext. 5249. Or plan to attend one of the training sessions available in the upcoming months (see box on left).



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CONNECT 2013 is a ministry of the Cooperative Program and the Missions Support Team of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention

Mission Connection event planned

MISSION CONNECTION, a ministry of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention (ABSC) missions ministries team and the Cooperative Program, is set for April 11 at Second Baptist Church, Jacksonville, and April 13 at North Main Baptist Church, Jonesboro.

The one-day event is for anyone interested in connecting with state, national and international mission partners. Missionaries from Beverly Hills, Botswana, South Dakota, and other locations will be present.

"It just made sense to bring everyone to one location ... to hear multiple missionaries share their story," said Bob Fielding, ABSC missions ministries team member and coordi-

nator of the event.

Participants will gather to worship and hear missionaries' stories. After an on-site lunch, participants can choose three sessions, during which they will hear how they can be part of God work in each of the missionaries' fields of service.

Terry Sharp, of the International Mission Board, will speak in the general session and lead a conference on the church and missions involvement.

"I hope to show that missions can be at the center of what the church does, an expression of church, rather than just a sidebar," Sharp said.

Registration is required. To register, call 800-838-2272, ext. 5149.



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For more information visit: absc.org/childhood or e-mail Charity at cgardner@absc.org

A Cooperative Program ministry of the Missions Support Team, Arkansas Baptist State Convention.





Reunion

Grand Avenue Baptist Church, Fort Smith, sent more than a dozen of its members to Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (SWBTS) in Fort Worth, Texas, in the 1970s-80s. During those years, Don Moore, a SWBTS graduate, was pastor of the church. Recently, a reunion was held at Second Baptist Church, Russellville, for those associated with both Grand Avenue Baptist Church and SWBTS.



Seminary graduate

Cody H. McNutt, formerly of West Memphis, graduated May 18 from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., with a Doctor of Philosophy degree. McNutt received his Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Arkansas in 2003 and his Master of Divinity degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in 2006. McNutt is currently serving as pastor of New Heights Baptist Church in Louisville, Ky., and is adjunct professor of Christian preaching at Boyce College. McNutt and his wife, Sally, have three daughters.

Ark. Baptist Foundation assets top \$200 million in January

LITTLE ROCK – As anticipated, assets at the Arkansas Baptist Foundation topped \$200 million for the first time in January, David Moore, Foundation president, told the organization's board of trustees Feb. 7.

"There were several new gifts received during the month, and the markets increased as well," Moore said at the board's regular meeting, adding, "While we are pleased with this milestone, we do know that the markets can cause us to dip below that level at any time. Nonetheless, it is a time to celebrate all that God has done through the Foundation."

Moore said distributions for 2012

to various charitable beneficiaries exceeded \$10.7 million and another \$3.1 million was paid out to or for the benefit of various donors as income or expenses.



Moore

Bobby Thomas, the Foundation's institutional consultant from Merrill Lynch, shared an annual report to the Foundation's investment committee and board. Thomas said the Spending Plan Fund, the Foundation's largest common fund where most endowments are invested, earned 10.28 percent in 2012. Additionally, various total return-oriented common funds earned between 7.62 percent and 11.34 percent, he said.

Moore told the board following

the report, "The Foundation would be very pleased if those numbers could be achieved each year."

On the operations side, the Foundation was able to operate again "in the black" or in a strong positive condition, said Moore. The board expressed its appreciation to staff and to God for an excellent year at the Foundation.

In other business, the Foundation:

- Approved several grants totaling \$60,000 from the Ezra Amos Fund to International Mission Board (IMB) projects in Israel, South Africa and France. Moore said in past years, most of the grants have gone to specific projects in Israel. Herbby Geer, leader of IMB's Jewish-Israeli Team, requested that some of the funds this year be used in two other

countries where the work in evangelizing Jewish individuals has been very fruitful.

- Heard a presentation from Jeff Steed, Foundation vice president, on educational emphasis on charitable remainder trusts. Later in the meeting the board expressed "deep appreciation" to Steed for his years of service to the Foundation. Steed announced in January that he had accepted a new position at the University of Texas at Arlington.

- Heard a statistical update from Tim Dockery, Foundation attorney, on the various charitable gifts that were established or which matured in 2012.

- Welcomed Mike Seabaugh, senior pastor at Central Baptist Church, Magnolia, as a new board member.

Classifieds

PASTOR

Eastside Southern Baptist Church of Cave City is seeking a **bi-vocational pastor**. Send resume to P.O. Box 25, Cave City, AR 72521, Attn. Pastor Search Committee.

Otter Creek First Baptist Church is seeking resumes for a **bi-vocational pastor**. Resumes will be taken through the month of March 2013. Mail to Pastor Search Committee, 13000 Quail Run Drive, Little Rock, AR 72210, or email to ocfbcmembers@gmail.com.

Three Creeks Baptist Church is currently accepting resumes for the position of **pastor**. Seminary degree is preferred. Please email resumes to threecreeksbaptistchurch@gmail.com or mail them to Pastor Search Committee, 8772 Haynesville Hwy., Junction City, AR 71749.

Elliott Baptist Church, Camden, is seeking a **full-time pastor**. Send resume to Elliott Baptist Church, Pastor Search Committee, 4189 Hwy. 376 South, Camden, AR 71701. Phone: 870-231-6411.

First Baptist Church of Crane, Mo., is seeking a conservative **full-time pastor**, who supports the SBC/MBC, to serve our congregation. Send resumes to FBC, P.O. Box 414, Crane, MO 65633 or email fbclindah@centurytel.net.

OTHER STAFF POSITIONS

Pleasant Grove Baptist Church is looking for a

part-time worship pastor to join our team as we strive to make a big deal about the BIG God we serve. Send resume to ckinzler@pleasantgrovelr.org.

West View is seeking a **full-time children pastor**. Mail resumes to West View Baptist Church, 701 West Morgan, Paragould, AR 72450 or email dwilcox@grnc.net.

First Baptist Church, Farmington, is seeking a **full-time minister to students** grades six through 12. FBC is a growing church with great facilities, a youth ministry built on personal discipleship and evangelism and volunteers that are willing to invest in youth ministry. Resumes will be received until March 8 and may be emailed to brobarry@fbc-farmington.com or sent to FBC Farmington, 589 Rheas Mill Road, Farmington, AR 72730, Attn: Youth Minister Search Committee.

FBC, Alma, seeking an experienced, educated, creative, flexible and passionate **student pastor**. Email bshelton@fbcalma.org or call Harlin Brewton at 479-632-2020.

First Baptist Church, Seagraves, is accepting resumes for **full-time minister of music/education**. Main responsibility is to lead a blended worship service and choir. Education responsibility, work alongside Sunday school teachers. A parsonage is provided. Send resume to First Baptist Church, P.O. Box 7, Seagraves, Texas 79359 or email to fbcseagraves@valornet.com.

FBC, Sallisaw, Okla., is seeking a **full-time di-**

rector of family/outreach ministries. FMI, visit www.fbcallsaw.org. Please send resume to bzinck@fbcallsaw.org or FBC, P.O. Box 278, Sallisaw, OK 74955.

Calvary, NLR, is seeking a **part-time minister of music, as well as a pianist**. All those interested, please call 501-945-4174.

Martindale Baptist Church in Little Rock, is accepting resumes for a **part-time youth minister**. Please submit resumes via email to pastor.mbc.lr@gmail.com, or by U.S. mail to Pastor, 18900 Colonel Glenn Road, Little Rock, AR 72210.

Russellville Baptist Church, Russellville, Mo., is seeking a **bi-vocational music minister/worship leader**. Please send resume to Russellville Baptist Church, P.O. Box 388, Russellville, MO 65074 or email rbcpastor@embarqmail.com.

Beech Street Baptist Church, Gurdon, is seeking a **student minister**. Please send resumes to BSBC Personnel Committee, P.O. Box 408, Gurdon, AR 71743.

Star City First Baptist Church is seeking a **full-time associate pastor of students and worship**. Prayerfully send resume: First Baptist Church Search Committee, P.O. Box 368, Star City, AR 71667 or email to detrimcghee@yahoo.com. Fax 870-628-4184.

Camp Paron is seeking a **married couple** willing to work flexible hours and varied tasks. Housing may be included as part of pay package. Call 501-837-7362 for more information.

MISCELLANEOUS

The FCC will soon accept applications for **LPFM stations**. Expand your church ministry. 318-428-4664 or buzzdavis@hughes.net.

T-211-1 Series HAMMOND Organ. Contact: Donna Faulkner – 501-993-8391.

Grace Fellowship Scholarship available: Orphaned, abandoned, neglected student/prospective student – OBU or Williams (Christian vocation). Applications on Arkansas Baptist Foundation's website: www.abf.org/scholarships.html.

Church bus for sale. 1991 Blue Bird, 106,000 miles, good condition, \$9,000. Contact Lake Hamilton Baptist Church in Hot Springs, 501-525-8339.

To place a classified ad in the Arkansas Baptist News, call Nelle O'Bryan at 501-376-4791, ext. 5153, or email nelle@arkansasbaptist.org.

SBC President Fred Luter to speak at River Valley Rally

FORT SMITH - Fred Luter Jr., pastor of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church in New Orleans and the first African-American president of the Southern Baptist Convention, will be the featured speaker at the inaugural River Valley Rally sponsored by the churches of Concord Baptist Association.



Luter

The River Valley Rally will be held from 7 to 8:30 p.m., Wednes-

day, March 6, at Grand Avenue Baptist Church, located at 3900 Grand Ave. in Fort Smith.

A breakfast and Q-and-A time with Luter for area pastors will be held from 8 to 9:30 a.m. March 7 in the fellowship hall of First Baptist Church, Fort Smith, located at 1400 Grand Ave. in Fort Smith.

RSVP online at www.Concord-BaptistAssn.org.

Church life

Ouachita Baptist University (OBU) will host the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra at 7:30 p.m. March 8 for a performance of music written by former OBU professor and Arkansas composer William Francis McBeth.

Walnut Street Baptist Church, Jonesboro, sent a mission team to Chile Jan. 11-18. The team partnered with a Southern Baptist Convention missionary working with Temple Baptist Church in San Felipe. The church has an average of 50 attendees in a city of 70,000. The team went to train members in outreach, missions and discipleship. After the training, the team took the attendees out for practical experience. The group led 10 people to the Lord.

First Baptist Church, Beebe, will host The Kingsmen Quartet in concert at 7 p.m. March 1.

First Baptist Church, Pine Bluff, celebrated Boy Scout Sunday Feb. 3 with Troop 106. Leaders and Scouts took part in leading portions of the morning service. Using the Boy Scout motto "Be Prepared," Pastor Kenneth Thornton preached about being prepared to meet Christ.

Fellowship Bible Church, Star City, will hold a revival March 3-6 with Eddie Douglas as speaker and

the Lisemby's leading music. Services will be held each evening.

Valley Baptist Church, Searcy, is partnering with White County Fair Grounds hosting Hank Parker, two-time winner of the Bassmaster Classic, on March 2. The evening will include a dinner, door prizes, an autograph session and hearing Hank share his testimony. For tickets, visit www.valleybaptistchurch.com.

Obituaries

Dale Howell, 68, of Norman, died Jan. 27. He was serving as pastor of Murphy Baptist Church, Norman. He had served other Arkansas Baptist churches, including Mount Gilead Baptist Church, Norman, and Big Fork Baptist Church, Mena. He is survived by his wife, Charlotte Howell; two siblings; two daughters; a son; eight grandchildren; two great-grandchildren; two aunts; four nieces, and many friends. Funeral services were held Jan. 30 at Murphy Baptist Church. Burial took place at the Liberty Cemetery.

Gerald Forrest Cole, 83, of Downsville, La., died Feb. 4. Cole pastored churches in Arkansas,



Blankets donated

Sixty-five volunteers serving in the Foster Grandparent Program at Ouachita Baptist University gave hand-tied fleece blankets to the Pregnancy Resource Center for Southwest Arkansas as their service project for Martin Luther King Day of Service. Shirley McMillan, Foster Grandparent Program director with the Elrod Center for Family and Community, along with several of the grandparents, presented the blankets to Beverly Hankins, chair of the board of directors of the Pregnancy Resource Center. Funding for the project was provided through a grant from the Cone Foundation of Arkadelphia High School.

including First Baptist Church, Evening Shade, and First Baptist Church, Omaha, as well as churches in Louisiana and Alabama. He is survived by his wife, Rosie; five children; nine grandchildren, and 10 great-grand-



children. A celebration of life was held in Louisiana. He was buried at Harper Springs Cemetery in Huttig.

Peter Nortier, 88, of Grand Rapids, Mich., formerly of Little Rock, died Feb. 12. He served as a pastor in Arkansas, including as pastor of Hilldale Baptist Church, Alexander. He was preceded in death by his wife, Rainey. He is survived by two sons, a granddaughter, two siblings and multiple nieces, nephews and friends. A celebration of life service was held Feb. 16 in Michigan.

On the move

Carl Rider is serving as pastor of House of Prayer Baptist Church,

Maynard.

Gene Murdock is serving as pastor of Matthews Memorial Church, Pine Bluff.

Ordinations

Eastside Baptist Church, Osceola, ordained Frank Snyder to the gospel ministry and Tommy Carter as deacon Jan. 13.

Milestones

Deidra "DeeDee" Williams, of Van Buren, recently graduated from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, with an Master of Divinity in Biblical languages.

Submit church news to the **Arkansas Baptist News** by calling 800-838-2272, ext. 5153, or by emailing gayla@arkansasbaptist.org.

Happy Birthday!

to all the missionary kids attending college who are celebrating birthdays in the month of March.

- ◆ **March 9:** Reece Franklin, OBU Box 3874, Arkadelphia, AR 71998-0001; Japan.
- ◆ **March 22:** Jared Carlin, OBU Box 3366, Arkadelphia, AR 71998-0001; Turkey.

"Doing the work of an evangelist." II Tim 4:5

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.

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To advertise, call Nelle at 501-376-4791, ext. 5153.

MARCH 3, 2013

EXPLORE THE BIBLE:

Follow sound doctrine

1 TIMOTHY 1:3-17

Controversy does not always indicate heresy, for even church leaders and theological heroes can let their personal agendas and sinful motives propel them. This is especially seen in the history of confrontations between what I call “private” and “public” Christians.

Private Christians focus the majority of their efforts on evangelism and personal holiness. A mistrust of the “world” and separation from it characterizes this group of Christians. They may partake in activities such as feeding the hungry, but the criterion for this kind of action is the potential for converting individuals. The inherent weakness of this group is that their experience of the gospel has been powerful, but thin. The focus on personal conversion has led to an underdeveloped sense of the fullness of salvation.

Public Christians, on the other hand, have understood their calling as a mandate to meet the physical needs of the poor. While private Christians deal with the issue of pov-

erty through personal evangelism, public Christians focus their efforts on the root causes of poverty and setting up institutions to provide for people in need. Public Christians are more concerned with pragmatic results than precise doctrine, which has led to a weakening of their theological distinctions over time.

It is interesting that both find themselves engaged in the “culture war,” shouting past one another with hate-filled comments. But if the goal of calling out heresy is love and requires a pure heart (1 Tim. 1:5), we should examine our motives when declaring the errors of others.

The real issue is us. We struggle to put skin on the message that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1 Tim. 1:15) with anyone who thinks differently from us. Too often, we demand conformity prior to relationship. When we approach one another as brothers and sisters and celebrate what we all have in common, we will find ourselves following sound doctrine.



Michael Carpenter
church planter
The Church at Argenta
North Little Rock

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE:

Tradition or God’s Word?

MATTHEW 15:1-11, 17-20; PROVERBS 28:24

“We ain’t never done it that way before!”

Somebody once suggested that this is the true Baptist mantra. I have, in weak moments, toyed with the idea of putting this on the church letterhead! Mostly, though, we laugh at this statement because we know what is really behind it: an unhealthy exaltation of our own customs and habits above what God is truly doing and saying to His people.

One church historian drew a distinction between “tradition” and “traditionalism.” He defined “tradition” as “the living faith of the dead,” and he defined “traditionalism” as “the dead faith of the living.” Maybe there’s something to that. The Pharisees in our passage today were steeped in traditionalism, which we can define as the “lifting of traditions above God’s Word.”

Traditions become dangerous when they blind us to the reality of our own hearts. For instance, the Pharisees were offended that Jesus’

disciples did not wash their hands, but they were not offended that they had worked a loophole in the Law whereby children could declare certain things as sacred and thereby justify the withholding of aid from their parents – a practice condemned in Proverbs 28:24. But caring for your parents is much more important than washing your hands, for not caring for your parents reveals an unwashed heart, whereas not washing your hands is just an external manner (Matt. 15:19-20).

Are you more concerned with the fact that the person next to you is dressed in a non-traditional manner than the fact that you have come to justify gossip in your life? Is the style of music a bigger issue to you than the reality of what God is doing in the life of your church? Are you focusing on externals more than on the true matters of the heart?

Healthy traditions can be good, but beware of the traditionalism of the scribes and Pharisees!



Wyman Richardson
pastor
Central Baptist
North Little Rock

MARCH 10, 2013

EXPLORE THE BIBLE:

Please God in your worship

1 TIMOTHY 2:1-15

Having denounced the idle speculations of the false teachers, Paul turns to expounding in specific terms what truly living out the gospel looks like. That is, God desires all to be saved, and therefore our lives should reflect this. But how? By making “supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings” for everyone (1 Tim. 2:1). This includes praying for those in authority. Unfortunately the tendency is to criticize or ridicule. We expect a hearty, “Amen,” when we speak ill of President Obama. Although we may not agree with many of his policies, this paragraph in 1 Timothy should cause us to examine our attitude toward our leaders. This pleases God.

The breadth of the activity (“supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings”) and the number of those for whom it is made, illustrate pleasing God in worship is serious business. The world and its governments are the arenas of God’s activity. While it is true many of our

world’s leaders are far from God’s ideal, turning governments toward Him is not the goal. Neither is the goal simply to live quiet, peaceful, godly, dignified lives. By implication, the goal is for all people to be saved (1 Tim. 2:4). This pleases God.

The instructions contained in this text are focused on accomplishing the goal of making prayer purposeful rather than haphazard. The good of the church, its community and the nation is to be kept in mind with the broad acceptance of the gospel, the larger goal. God takes no pleasure in people dying without sal-

vation. We are a people convinced that Jesus is the only Way. But how we declare this in today’s world can move people either toward or away from the gospel. Without compromise, we must declare a narrow way, but we must also show there is a way. The love of God has provided that way and Jesus became the Way through His sacrifice on the cross making God’s grace available to all. This pleases God.



Michael Carpenter
church planter
The Church at Argenta
North Little Rock

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE:

Halfhearted interest or total commitment?

LUKE 9:20-26, 57-62

I once passed a man who was carrying a huge wooden cross along the side of the road. You’ve probably seen that kind of thing before. It impressed me. But then I looked at the bottom of the cross and noticed that he had something like training wheels on the bottom, no doubt to make the journey a little smoother.

I am not judging this man. He was no doubt sincere. But I could not help but think, “We all put training wheels on the cross we are called to carry, don’t we? We would all like this cross-carrying business to be a little smoother.”

It is hard carrying a cross, but that is precisely the image Jesus used to describe true discipleship.

Luke 9:23-24 says, “And he said to all, ‘If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.’”

In these verses, Jesus explained the elements of true discipleship:

We must decide to follow Jesus, deny ourselves, take up our cross, follow Him and lay down our lives for Him. This is a life-changing decision that demands a total change of course. This is why Jesus pointed out that we can use even good things to avoid following Him. Burying your father is a good thing, but the father of the one who asked Jesus to let him bury his dad may not have even been dead yet. It was a delay tactic that Jesus rightly rejected in Luke 9:59-60. Saying goodbye to your family is a good thing, unless you are using it to avoid following Jesus.

So Jesus rejected this dodge in Luke 9:61-62.

I once read about people who stole a huge plaster Jesus off a crucifix hanging outside a church in Manhattan. The headline read, “Thieves Take Jesus but Leave Cross.”

If we are not careful, we can be guilty of the same crime! You cannot have Jesus without the cross. Have you taken up your cross to follow Him?



Wyman Richardson
pastor
Central Baptist
North Little Rock

'Passion Play' informational meeting held

Jessica Vanderpool
Arkansas Baptist News

LITTLE ROCK – An informational meeting regarding the revitalization of “The Great Passion Play” in Eureka Springs was held Feb. 5 at First Baptist Church, Little Rock.

The attraction had closed in December 2012 following years of declining attendance and mounting debt, until Randall Christy, president of the Gospel Station Network and pastor of Union Valley Baptist Church, Ada, Okla., and others led the charge to save the play by raising the \$75,000 interest payment needed to satisfy a bank foreclosure. With short-term efforts to save the play successful, its new leadership is looking forward to how to preserve the event for future generations.

“We have a slogan we’ve adopted at ‘The Great Passion Play,’ saying, ‘The “Passion Play” is not just surviving, but it’s thriving by the grace of God,’” said Dick Kelsey, executive director, chief operating officer of the play. Kelsey previously served as a Kansas state senator.

“Basically, we believe that God is reviving the ‘Passion Play’ in a way that will make it better and more meaningful than ever,” Kelsey added. “Obviously, our vision and

our mission, which we have defined very crisply, is that we are ‘touching the lives of people around the world with the greatest message in the world – the message of Jesus Christ.’ And people are moved; people are saved; ... their lives are affected by this.”

Kelsey shared their plan, which includes dramatically increasing fundraising and seeking donors, enlisting volunteer groups to provide labor for upgrades and repairs and increasing publicity. He said they are committed to paying off the debt as soon as they can in order to operate debt-free.

Kent Butler, assistant executive director for “The Great Passion Play” and cast member, explained they “weren’t late on any loan payments,” but rather “simply didn’t have enough money to continue.”

Kelsey called it the “slinky effect,” where decreased money leads to decreased advertising and more cutbacks, which in turn make the situation worse until a company or business is “at the bottom of the steps.”

“God saved the play at the last possible moment, at the last possible second,” Butler said. “There’s no other credit that can be given except to Him, and I think that’s what

we’re all about is that we’re trying to draw people to the Lord.”

Butler, whose father served on the play’s old board of directors and now serves on its new board, shared his experiences growing up with the play.

“I really built my life around the play,” Butler said. “My wife ... (has) been in the play since she was 5 years old, so it’s just a part of my whole process. I turned 16, got my driver’s license, became a Roman soldier, so it’s been something that’s just been near and dear to my heart.”

Mike Bishop, president and CEO of the Greater Eureka Springs Chamber of Commerce, addressed attendees at the meeting and shared the city’s support of the play.

“We just want to show everyone that our city and our chamber’s in full support of the ‘Passion Play,’ he said. “We love it, we want it to be there and we welcome you all.”

He encouraged attendees to spread the word that the play is not closing.

Contact Jessica Vanderpool at jessica@arkansasbaptist.org.

Church celebrates life of officer

SEARCY – He was a hunter and a ballplayer. He was gentle and kind. He was a respectful son and protective brother. He was police Officer William Michael “Will” McGary, and everyone loved him.

Senior Pastor James Hays of Valley Baptist Church, Searcy, had known 26-year-old McGary, of Searcy, for the past 14 years – ever since he had come to Valley Baptist Church with his parents, Harold and Tonya McGary, and sister, Lindsey Erin McGary. Hays even recommended McGary for a job at the Conway Police Department, where McGary served until his death earlier this month.



McGary

Hays explained being a policeman was McGary’s dream job because of “the fact that he could help people, that he just felt like there was a need for Christian ... people to be in the law enforcement profession and (it was) something he had always wanted to do.”

“He just knew that was God’s plan for his life,” Hays said.

McGary was struck by an intoxicated driver Jan. 31 while he was directing traffic. He died Feb. 1. Yet, even in death, he was helping others. Hays explained McGary “wanted to be an organ donor.”

“He was living on not only in heaven, but here on earth through the lives of other people and giving them a quality of life that they would not have otherwise had,” said Hays, who added between McGary’s accident and his burial, fellow police officers never left his side.

“That’s the kind of guy he was – they weren’t going to leave him alone,” he said. More than 1,500 people attended McGary’s Feb. 6 funeral at Valley Baptist Church. Hays said more than 100 police officers and dispatchers were present. The United States Honor Flag – a flag used since 9/11 to pay tribute to those who serve the nation – was also present.

“There was a lot of special things about yesterday (Feb. 6) that was very unique, but he was a unique, special young man,” Hays said.

He pointed to the strong faith of McGary’s parents and sister and said the church has “rallied around them” and will continue to be there with them “in the days to come.”

“The reason he was an excellent policeman was he was an excellent person; and the reason he was an excellent person was because he had excellent parents,” Hays said.

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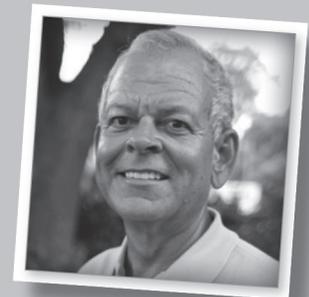
Friday, March 1

Dinner: 5:30 to 6:45 p.m.
Conference: 7-9 p.m.

Sponsored by Harmony
Baptist Association and
Watson Chapel Baptist
Church

Saturday, March 2

Conference: 8:30-11 p.m.



Led by **Dr. Johnny Hunt**, pastor and former president of the SBC

\$28 per man (includes Friday dinner, conference notebook, and Saturday morning

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If your church is not a member of Harmony Baptist Association call to make reservations at 870-534-1021.

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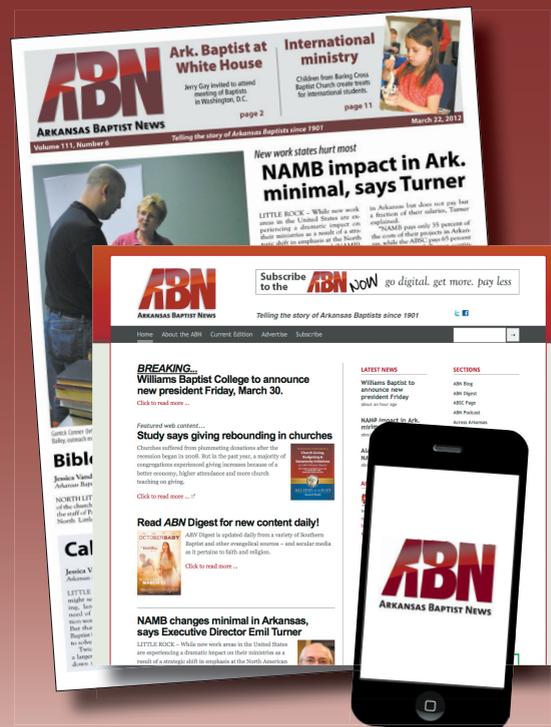


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Small colleges offer students 'community'

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Historic church reaches Bethesda community

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Pastor
Chris Sims

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