



Inside:

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'Running with purpose'

Movie promotes running for the glory of God

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Annual Church Profile Statistical Summary

Southern Baptist Convention Statistical Summary – 2015

Item/Statistic	2015	2014	2015-2014 Numeric Change	2015-2014 Percent Change
State Conventions	42	42	0	0.00%
Associations	1,139	1,157	-18	-1.56%
Churches	46,793	46,499	294	0.63%
Church-type Missions Operating ⁽¹⁾	4,648	4,595	53	1.15%
Total Members	15,294,764	15,499,173	-204,409	-1.32%
Total Baptisms	295,212	305,301	-10,089	-3.30%
Ratio of Baptisms: Total Members	1:52	1:51	—	—
Weekly Worship Average Attendance	5,577,088	5,674,469	-97,381	-1.72%
Sunday School/Bible Study/Small Group Average Attendance	3,605,303	3,723,679	-118,376	-3.18%
Undesignated Receipts	\$9,154,427,472	\$8,748,114,744	\$406,312,728	4.64%
Cooperative Program ⁽²⁾	www.sbc.net/cp/statistics.asp	www.sbc.net/cp/statistics.asp	—	—

Notes:

1. Some state conventions no longer use the designation of church-type mission to categorize congregations which are not self-determining, self-sustaining, and self-propagating. This practice has impacted the number of churches and church-type missions.
2. Cooperative Program as reported on the Annual Church Profile is not included in this table. CP, based on the actual amount given through the state convention, is provided in the SBC Annual in the Executive Committee Annual Report.

SBC loses members, increases churches

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) lost more than 200,000 members in 2015, which is the ninth straight year of decline for the nation's largest Protestant denomination.



SBC membership now stands at 15.3 million, down from 15.5 million in 2014, according to denomination statistics released June 7. Baptisms — an important measure for Southern Baptists because of their strong commitment to evangelism — also fell by more than 10,000 to just a little more than 295,000.

However, Southern Baptists have cause for hope in the latest Annual Church Profile (ACP) report. The SBC actually added more churches in 2015, due mostly to church planting efforts. Churches also experienced an increase

in total giving.

In addition to a decline in membership, other key measures such as average worship attendance, baptisms and missions giving declined, according to ACP compiled by LifeWay Christian Resources in cooperation with state conventions. A bright spot in the ACP data was the increase in churches. The number of churches affiliated with the SBC grew by 294 to 46,793, a 0.63 percent increase over 2014. This is the 17th year in a row the number of Southern Baptist churches has increased.

While the number of SBC-related congregations increased, reported membership declined more than 204,409, down 1.32 percent to 15.3 mil-

See **SBC** page 14

'Gospel video' seeks to reach culture

Micah Overstreet
Arkansas Baptist News

CLINTON — How can Christians creatively share the gospel with individuals who seem to have closed their hearts — and even their front doors — to an evangelistic witness?



Tanner

Through the Gospel Video Project (GVP), Gene Tanner, associational missionary for North Central Baptist Association in Clinton, is pioneering a way for today's Christian to gain evangelistic access into otherwise closed homes.

The goal of GVP, according to organizers, is to reshape the way in which Christians can spread God's Word worldwide.

"We want to use video to share the gospel of Christ

with the lost world. We want to use personal testimonies of real people to share the message of Christ in a way that is understandable for people in everyday situations," said Tanner.

The idea for the GVP started when Tanner served as pastor of First Baptist Church, Oppelo. Tanner and church deacons there are continuing GVP's mission with the release of resources for all churches.

"Understanding that in the United States, only 23 percent of the 80 million millennials are attending church, new outreach methods are needed to capture their attention to the gospel," said Bill Jordan, a GVP organizer.

"Since people of all ages are

not rushing into our churches to hear the Word, we must adapt to new outreach methods by taking the gospel to where the eyes and ears are tuned. God has blessed us with many technological methods of communication, and it is high time we put them to use."

North Central Baptist Association has produced six 30- to 60-second Christian videos, containing multiple testimonies, to be displayed on TV, YouTube and various social media outlets to reach people "where they are."

"Some people may not be open to someone coming into their home and sharing the gospel of Jesus, but because GVP will be through media in which they are already engaged, there is a greater oppor-

See **VIDEO** page 2

Tops \$165.8 million:

Record giving to LMC0

RICHMOND, Va. (BP) — Southern Baptists provided resounding support through the 2015 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions.

Finalized in early June, the 2015 Lottie Moon offering totaled \$165.8 million — the highest total in the 127-year history of the offering. The offering surpassed the previous all-time record of \$154 million in 2013 by \$11.8 million. The 2014 Lottie Moon offering totaled just over \$153 million.

"Southern Baptists have

exhibited their commitment to God's mission through these gifts to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering," said International Mission Board (IMB) President David Platt. "Especially after a year in which we have walked through many challenges together, the support Southern Baptists have shown through this offering will not only sustain but also encourage the thousands of missionaries sent from Southern Baptist churches

See **LMCO** page 8

ABN classifieds get results!

Read them on Page 12.

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

Classifieds

Real Estate, Services, and other classified advertisements. Includes a small graphic of the ABN logo.

ABN Digest

Stories of interest
to Arkansas Baptists

Baylor fires coach Briles, demotes president Starr

WACO, Texas (BP) – Baylor University stripped Ken Starr of his presidency and fired head football coach Art Briles May 26 after an independent investigation found “a fundamental failure” to protect students from sexual assault in a years-long scandal.

The Baylor board of regents announced the personnel changes in a press release posted on its website, based on the findings of an investigation by the law firm Pepper Hamilton, LLP.

“Key findings of the investigation reflect a fundamental failure by Baylor to implement Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX) and the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013 (VAWA),” the board said.

Subsequent to these actions, Baylor University’s vice president and director of athletics Ian McCaw, who had been sanctioned and placed on probation, resigned his position on May 30.

On June 1, in an interview with ESPN, Starr announced that he would step down as chancellor but continue to teach in the university’s law school.

The board of the largest Baptist university in the world also created a new position to report directly to the president’s office, fired additional members of the administration and athletics programs, clarified the roles of several staff and committed to institute training before the fall 2016 semester.

The Baylor sex scandal centered on the behavior of the university students, including football players and fraternity members, and university leaders’ handling of reports of sexual abuse and assault, including rape.

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

Sports camp opens door to church’s community

Micah Overstreet
Arkansas Baptist News

SHERWOOD – The sounds of basketballs bouncing and sneakers screeching across a gym floor signaled a new relationship being built with the community for Baring Cross Baptist Church in Sherwood.



Allen

Last summer, Derek Allen, Baring Cross discipleship pastor, invited Sports Crusaders to the church to conduct a basketball camp for boys and girls in the community.

During the second week of June, children were coached daily through hands-on individual and team basketball activities, all while learning about the love of Christ. In the camp’s first year, the number of participants topped out

at 76 athletes, with only two of those participants being Baring Cross church members.

Sports Crusaders began as a mission organization in Missouri in 1994, and it has since reached more than 40,368 campers, resulting in 4,964 professions of faith. For 20-plus years, the organization has been recruiting, training and sending out camp staffers to Missouri, Illinois and Arkansas to train youngsters in sports ranging from soccer to cheerleading, as well as to share the gospel with them.

“[As] an outreach to the community to teach the fundamentals of basketball, [Sports Crusaders instills] the positive values and character traits that are part of learning a team sport. Likewise, throughout the week, students learn biblical values and truth that will help them in their lives,” states the Baring Cross website.

“[Sports Crusaders] has opened a lot of doors and has allowed us to create a great



Children participate in Sports Crusaders camp at Baring Cross Baptist in 2015. The camp “opened a lot of doors,” according to Derek Allen, discipleship pastor.

rapport with the community,” said Allen.

Since the summer sports camp, Baring Cross has partnered with nearby Clinton Elementary School as well as the local homeschooling co-op, allowing both to practice sports and hold functions at the church.

Through the athletic camp, church members have begun building relationships with community residents.

The Sports Crusaders camp was held the week of June 13-17 at Baring Cross. Other Arkansas locations include Highland Drive Baptist Church in Jonesboro, June 20-24 (soccer camp), First Baptist Church in Walnut Ridge June 27-July 1 (swimming camp) and West View Baptist Church in Paragould August 1-5 (soccer camp).

Micah Overstreet is an intern for the Arkansas Baptist News.



VIDEO

continued from page one

tunity for them to hear the gospel of Jesus Christ and receive it,” said Tanner.

“The Bible says that faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God, so we want to get the Word out to as many people as possible.”

When people respond that they want more information about faith in Christ, they will be directed to contact someone through the GVP website at John1512.com. However exciting this evangelistic innovation may be, organizers acknowledge that the “digital missionaries” cannot undertake the outreach effort alone.

“We hope that churches across America will participate with us. We need Christians of

all races, ethnicities, ages and social backgrounds to [give their testimonies], workers to volunteer to help in the project and [donations] to pay for the spots on TV, social media, etc. We want to reach people everywhere with the gospel of Jesus Christ,” said Jordan.

“The growth of this project to both national and world levels depends on the participation of Christians and their churches. If at least half of the Southern Baptist churches will participate, we can take the gospel to the world in a very efficient way.”

What began as a heartfelt concern of a small Southern Baptist congregation can grow and reach untold numbers of individuals previously considered unreachable, believe GVP organizers.

Micah Overstreet is an intern with the Arkansas Baptist News.

Bobby Bowen named ABN ‘Father of the Year’ for 2016

AUGUSTA – Bobby Bowen, 60, member of First Baptist Church of Augusta, has been chosen as the Arkansas Baptist News (ABN) Father of the Year.

Bowen was nominated by his daughter Olivia Anderson as part of the ABN A Tribute to Godly Fathers essay contest.

“My father has chosen to share his love and his life with many people God has placed in his path,” wrote Anderson in her nomination letter. “My father is always sharing his time and talents with others and that is why I would love to see him honored as father of the year.”

Bowen and his wife, Joy Lynn, have been married for 40 years. In addition to Anderson, they have one other daughter, Kelly Thevenot, and five grandchildren: Kaitlyn and Carly Anderson, Hunter and Drake Thevenot, and Jordan Weeks.

Bowen, Woodruff County Farm Bureau manager, became a Christian at age 11, and he

has served the church as a deacon and Sunday school leader. On occasion, Bowen has filled in for his pastor when he could not be at church.

Many who know Bowen point to his servant’s heart and his willingness to do anything for his neighbor.

“When there is a need, my father is often the first to be called because he is trustworthy and kind,” said Anderson.

She added her dad is always quick to point others to Christ.

“My father lives his life in such a way that everyone around him knows there is something different, set apart, wonderful. He seeks to follow the words of Christ in Matthew 22:37-39,” said Anderson, “I am so blessed to have Bobby Bowen to love me and guide me in my Christian walk.”

Bowen will be officially recognized with a gift from the ABN.



Bowen

Graham statue moving to N.C.

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – LifeWay Christian Resources is moving a larger-than-life statue of Southern Baptist evangelist Billy Graham from its downtown Nashville location to a LifeWay retreat center in the North Carolina mountains, a few miles from Graham's home. The move is prompted by last year's sale of LifeWay's 15-acre Nashville campus.

The iconic bronze sculpture is scheduled to be dismantled June 25 and placed in storage until a new site is ready this fall at the entrance to LifeWay's 1,300-acre Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center, near Asheville, N.C.

"Ridgecrest is a perfect location for the Graham statue," said Thom S. Rainer, LifeWay president and CEO. "It is only a few miles from the home where Mr. Graham has lived most of his life, and it will welcome nearly 70,000 men and women, boys and girls who come to Ridgecrest every year for spiritual training and retreat."

The sculpture features a 7-foot-tall depiction of the world famous evangelist standing beside a 17-foot cross. Graham's arms are stretched wide, and an open Bible rests in his left hand. At the foot of the cross are three nails and a

stone inscribed with the words of John 3:16.

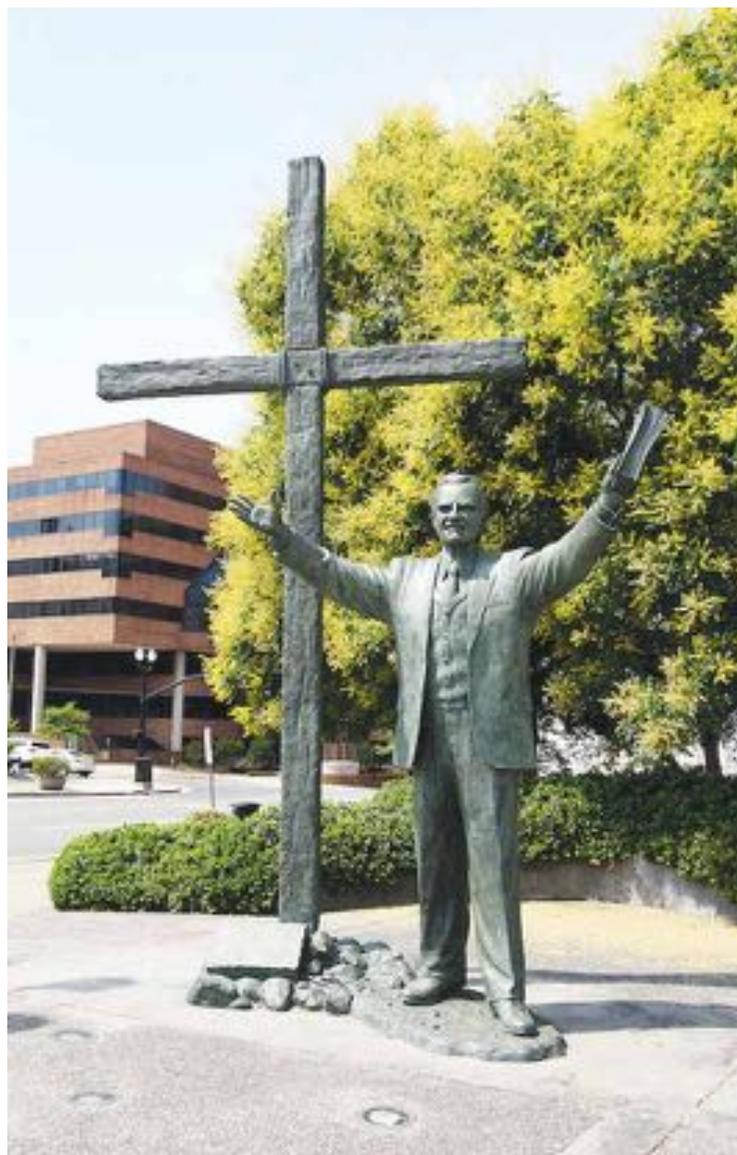
Sculpted by bi-vocational pastor Terrell O'Brien, the statue was donated to LifeWay in 2006 by two Southern Baptist businessmen from Atlanta, Chris Fryer and Matt Samuelson. It was unveiled at the 2006 Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meeting in Greensboro, N.C., and placed on the northeast corner of LifeWay's property that December.

At a dedication ceremony, O'Brien said his vision for the statue was to pay tribute to Graham and his life's ministry, but "my heart's desire is to also honor the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ."

During the dedication, Cliff Barrows, longtime music director for the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, said the sculpture captures Graham's passions for the Word of God, gospel preaching, the invitation and the cross.

The 97-year-old Graham has preached the gospel to an estimated 215 million people in live audiences in more than 185 countries and territories. Hundreds of millions more have been reached through television, video, film and webcasts.

Graham has written 33



LifeWay Christian Resources is moving a statue of Southern Baptist evangelist Billy Graham from its downtown Nashville location to a LifeWay retreat center in the North Carolina mountains, a few miles from Graham's home. The move is prompted by last year's sale of LifeWay's 15-acre Nashville campus.

books and has been listed as one of the "Ten Most Admired Men in the World" for more than 50 years. Now in frail health, Graham resides in

the home he shared with his wife, Ruth, who died in 2007, and their five children in the mountains of western North Carolina.

MBC wins appeals court ruling in Foundation case

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – The Missouri Court of Appeals – Western District ruled May 24 that the Missouri Baptist Foundation must return governance to board members elected by the Missouri Baptist Convention (MBC).

The Missouri Baptist Foundation is among five MBC entities – including The Baptist Home, *Word&Way* newspaper, the Windermere Baptist Conference Center and Missouri Baptist University – that changed their governing documents to allow each to elect its own trustees in 2000 and 2001. The convention filed a lawsuit in Cole County Circuit Court against the five on Aug. 13, 2002, in an attempt to regain control of the entities.

The convention lost a bid to reclaim Windermere Baptist Conference Center and dropped its case against the former convention news journal *Word&Way*. Lawsuits against The Baptist Home and Missouri Baptist University are pending.

The May decision, announced by Chief Judge Alok Ahuja, restores governance of the Foundation to the MBC after more than a decade of control by a self-perpetuating board.

The ruling upholds all facets of an October 2014 judgment by the Circuit Court of Cole County, which ordered the restoration of Foundation governance to the MBC-elect-

ed board of trustees.

The Foundation appealed the trial decision to the Missouri Court of Appeals, which heard arguments in September 2015 and then handed down its decision.

"We are so grateful for the Court's decisive ruling today," said John Yeats, MBC executive director.

"We are eager to welcome the Foundation back into the MBC family, and we look forward to a smooth transition in governance for the benefit of all investors."

The Appeals Court also left standing a lower-court ruling on attorney's fees and costs for the litigation. The trial court

had ordered the Foundation to pay the convention's legal fees and costs, finding intentional misconduct on the part of the trustees of the break-away board.

Church Mutual Insurance paid the MBC \$5 million to settle the fee claim in January 2015.

The Foundation may appeal the ruling to the Missouri Supreme Court – its final option after repeated setbacks in the lower courts.

In 2001 the board of the Foundation broke away from the MBC, changing its charter in violation of a charter clause requiring MBC consent. The purported amendments declaring its board self-perpetuating also violated MBC governing documents.

ABN Digest

Stories of interest
to Arkansas Baptists

Religious liberty for non-Christians as well

WASHINGTON (BP) – Baptists and other Christians should defend religious freedom for non-Christians, including Muslims, because it is morally right, as well as helpful to their own cause, says Southern Baptist religious liberty leader Russell Moore. Moore, president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC), advocated for religious freedom for people of all faiths in a blog post June 8, which came two days after Gerald Harris, editor of *The Christian Index*, the official state Baptist newspaper of the Georgia Baptist Mission Board, questioned providing such liberty for Muslims. Religious freedom is not a government benefit "but a natural and inalienable right granted by God," Moore wrote. "When someone makes such a claim, that person is not standing up for Jesus and his Gospel," he wrote. "To empower the state to command or to forbid worship is not fidelity to the Bible."

Clinton breaks barrier; Trump continues fight

WASHINGTON (BP) – A major American political party selected a female as its presumptive presidential nominee for the first time, while Donald Trump swept the final Republican primaries without any active opponents. Hillary Clinton easily won the California primary and three other contests Tuesday June 7 to cement the Democratic Party nomination, a nod she reportedly had clinched on the eve of her latest victories. If officially nominated at the Democratic convention, she will become the first woman to head a presidential ticket for a major party.

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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)

Let's do the best with what we have while we can

Well, not that it really surprised anyone, but the Southern Baptist Convention has experienced another numerical decline, according to Annual Church Profile (ACP) statistics released by LifeWay.

What surprised me perhaps the most was the size of this year's decline – 200,000 members.

Now let's put that in perspective a bit.

One year in the 1990s when I was serving as public relations director for the Missouri Baptist Convention I attended a meeting of the Religious Communications Council. I can't recall the city off hand, but I think it was in Chicago.

The meeting was the an-

nual gathering of religious communications professionals from the United States and a few other places across the globe.

During a meal one night while making small talk, everyone began to share about the denominations they served. I, of course, represented the largest evangelical/Protestant denomination with the Southern Baptist Convention – which I think claimed about 17 million members at the time. Additionally, the Missouri Baptist Convention alone claimed 2,200 churches and about 650,000 members.

As others shared, it became evident to me just how large the Southern Baptist denomination had become.

One of the individuals was a Methodist, which I believe said they numbered about 3 million at the time. Another denomination said they were about 800,000.

Then there was a man who represented one of the many black denominations in our country – I honestly can't recall the name – but I do recall how many members made up the denomination.

"We have about 50,000 folks," he said, proudly. I asked, "Is that in your state?" He replied, "No that's nationally."

So when you consider how large our Southern Baptist denomination still is comparatively speaking, it is really quite amazing.

However, it's not the size of denomination that matters, it is its impact.

The most disturbing statistic from ACP is our drop in baptisms – which is 10,000 fewer than a year earlier.

When the collection of churches that make up our

See **PRESSING ON** page 6

Cartoon by Gary Thomas

The Evangelical "Thinking Cap"

REPENT



G. THOMAS
ARK. BAPTIST NEWS

A 'potbellied' ballot

Forgive the pun in this title, but it seems to be an apt description of the state ballot we may see as we go to the polls in November. Three marijuana initiatives now have received the state attorney general's approval to gather signatures on their respective petitions in efforts to secure slots on the ballot for the fall's general election.

Two of those measures will allow so-called "medical marijuana," while the third proposal will legalize marijuana for recreational use, allowing individuals to grow, use and market marijuana. In addition, this third initiative

would mandate the release of all state prisoners serving prison sentences for marijuana-related offenses.

Back in 2012, we defeated a medical marijuana initiative by the narrowest of margins.

Those of us leading the effort against that measure were quite shocked by the small margin of votes by which we prevailed

in that election. As much as anything, it was a testament of how well the forces pushing for the legalization of marijuana were able to frame the issue as one of compassionate health care.

Compassionate health care doesn't include stupid and

dangerous health care, which is precisely what the smoking of marijuana entails. It may be (and I'm not conceding the point) that there may be some medical application of a component of marijuana.

If so, medical science should do what it did with opium, which was shown to have some ability to alleviate pain. But we did not legalize the smoking of opium-laced cigarettes, did we? No. Instead, scientists went to work developing pain relievers from opium, such as morphine, hydrocodone, oxycotin and others.



Smoked marijuana, by definition, cannot be real medicine because one prerequisite for being a bona fide medicine is that precise dosages

can be determined and prescribed. It is impossible to quantify exact dosages and set any kind of designated frequency of use when delivery of the "medicine" is by smoking joints.

Marijuana is a dangerous drug, fraught with all kinds of risks to physical, psychological and spiritual health. An abundance of solid, legitimate and sound empirical data illustrate clearly the harms I speak of.

As soon as it is clear that any or all of these marijuana initiatives have achieved certification for November's ballot, we will be providing the kind of evidence I am alluding to, and it will make a devastating case against the insane push to take such a dangerous drug and dress it up as real medicine or portray it as harmless recreation.

Stay tuned and watch for the fact sheets and compilations of the findings of the honest research that we will be sending along from time to time. We have the facts on our side, and we have an established grassroots network. If we will use those advantages, I am convinced that we

See **POTBELLIED** page 6



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Tim Yarbrough, editor/exec. director
Jeanie Weber, administrative assistant
Caleb Yarbrough, associate editor
Margaret Colson, writer/copy editor
Barbara Vick, circulation coordinator
Dewayne Tanton, field strategist
Advertising: ads@arkansasbaptist.org
Phone 501-376-4791, ext. 5161

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What does “be strong and courageous” mean?



Baptists Ask

Ken Gore

Be strong and courageous” is a well-known phrase from Joshua chapter 1. In that chapter, God used the phrase three times (Josh. 1:6,7 and 9). God commanded Joshua to enter the Promised Land, to meditate upon the Lord’s instructions and to be assured of God’s continual presence.

Although “strong and courageous” appears to refer to physical strength, the narrator demonstrated that this strength did not give them the land. Instead, God toppled the wall of Jericho, and He razed any kingdom that sought to defeat them.

“Inner strength” does not seem possible, either. Joshua and the Israelites fought with their faith. Their strength came from neither within or without; it came from above.

In chapter 1, Joshua was not some “20-something” leader who has just been handed the reins of power. Instead, he was a “60-something” faithful leader, who had worked with Moses for more than 40 years. He fought the Amalekites (Ex. 17), ascended Mount Sinai with Moses (Ex. 32), spied out the land with Caleb (Num. 13) and served beside Moses throughout the wilderness wanderings. God commissioned Joshua as Moses’ successor (Num. 27); Moses called Joshua to be “strong and courageous” (Deut. 31:7).

In Hebrew, the words “strong and courageous” basically mean the same thing. While the words may be redundant, they are used together for emphasis. Because the word “strong” implies physical strength in modern English, perhaps a better way to translate it is to be “bound and determined.”

By using this phrase, God encouraged Joshua. It reminded Joshua of his source of strength throughout the years, and it encouraged him to stay the course and continue the work. God calls all believers to do the same. His disciples should always be “bound and determined” to do what they’ve always done: follow the Lord.

Ken Gore is chairman of the department of Christian studies at Williams Baptist College. To submit your question, email tim@arkansasbaptist.org.

A good stretch

Occasionally, my husband and I subject our children to music from our childhoods. After all, we grew up hearing the music our parents grew up on. So, why should we not play that music for them, as well as the music of our own generation? There’s some good stuff there! It’s fun to see the looks on our children’s faces as we sing along.

Admittedly, we usually just play the music to be silly. But, like with many of the goofy things we do as a family, there is a growth that occurs when we play music that represented a childhood favorite – or a childhood torment.

Music is a trivial example, but it reflects a much bigger truth. When we share with our children, we give them a glimpse into the things that have made us who we are. We also help them stretch outside of their comfort zones a bit, discovering unfamiliar cultures and learning to embrace the differences between generations.

Stretching their boundaries also reminds me of my need to willingly embrace the times my heavenly Father stretches me.

It’s so easy to get caught up in our preferences in life, church and spiritual growth. Just like we enjoy stretching our children, though, our perfect Father sees the many

ways His children need to be stretched.

I cannot even begin to count the number of times the Lord has allowed people, circumstances or life changes to stretch me. Some days I want to give Him the same look my children give me when I play music they aren’t too sure about. Other days I just want to scream, “Why, Lord?” But, when all is said and done, I can look back and see that the stretching was always – yes, always – just what was needed to make my heart more submissive to the Holy Spirit’s work in and through me.

What is stretching you right now, my friend? Is it a new phase of life? Perhaps it is a change in the way things are being handled at church. Possibly, the challenge is private, reflected solely in the relationship between you and the Lord.

You won’t always like it any more than my children like a good portion of our ‘80s music (although it’s growing on them!). But, because our God is the perfect Father, the challenges He brings will always be for His glory and thus for your good. May that alone give you cause to rejoice in every single stretch.

Ann Hibbard is a member of East End Baptist Church in East End. Read her blog at annhibbard.com.



Uncovered Dish

Ann Hibbard

Camp sponsor – The third most powerful voice

If you went to church camp, there is no doubt that you have vivid memories of friends, special moments, hilarious stories and deeply spiritual times. If you think real hard, you might be able to recall the name of a camp speaker or musician. However, you will likely find it relatively easy to recall the name of a camp sponsor (or camp counselor, as we used to call them). Those memories of special conversations, goofy games, meaningful times of prayer and shameful pranks almost always include a camp sponsor.

Being a camp sponsor is an enormous responsibility, privilege and “call” that seldom is realized at the moment. But, years later, it becomes clear that God placed the right person, at the right time, in the right place to accomplish His work. Yet, as powerful of a role as this is, two other voices at camp are more powerful and influential.

First, the voice of the Holy Spirit – that still small voice – is the most powerful and distinct voice heard all week. He speaks during the preaching and teaching, during Bible study, during times of personal devotion and even at other most-unexpected times. This is the most important voice a camper will hear all week.

Second, the voice of “friends” – which is sometimes friendly and, other times, not-so-friendly – is the most

influential “human voice.” This voice influences attitude, participation, clothing, free-time activities and involvement with every other person and activity at camp. This voice is sometimes very helpful and, at other times, harmful or hurtful.

A good sponsor is there to be a translator, filter, referee, voice of reason and “safe place.” The sponsor is the one selected by God to help a student make sense of all the relationships, emotions, influences, voices and information. A good sponsor can be fun, serious, loving, laid-back and firm – sometimes all in a single moment.

The very best sponsor-camper relationships are those that last beyond the week of camp. Very often, a sponsor becomes a mentor, discipler, prayer partner and safe place in the life of a student for many years to come. Through the years, I have seen camp sponsors develop into some of the very best Bible study leaders for students or children.

Please pray for and encourage those in your church who are serving as camp sponsors this year. It is an incredibly vital role; and in many ways it is much more powerful than the camp speaker or musicians. Pray that each sponsor will go to camp being spiritually prepared to help students hear rightly from the Lord, and “make sense of it all.”

Eric W. Ramsey is an evangelism and mission strategist and serves as associate pastor of First Baptist Church, Fort Smith.



Answering the Call

Eric Ramsey



Support the ABN!

A fund for the Arkansas Baptist News (ABN) has been established at the Arkansas Baptist Foundation. Consider helping the official news journal of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention for years to come by including the ABN in your will or by making a contribution to the ABN. Contact the Foundation at 501-376-0732 for more information.

PRESSING ON

continued from page 4

great Southern Baptist denomination ceases to reach people, that's when we must pause and consider what we have become.

A lost and dying world doesn't care about the number of SBC churches or how many members we claim. They don't care about the SBC or your local church.

Most don't know they need a Savior because they are too caught up in the lies being spewed at them on a daily basis through our morally-bankrupt culture which is supported and promoted by the mainline media.

Southern Baptists have been blessed beyond imagination for too many years now to give up, tuck tail and focus on things that don't matter.

It's time we all evaluated ourselves, our churches, our denomination and started making a difference for Jesus Christ with what we do have.

Indeed, let's do the best with what we have (for the glory of God) and don't worry about the rest!

Tim Yarbrough is editor/executive director of the *Arkansas Baptist News*. Email him at tim@arkansasbaptist.org.

POTBELLIED

continued from page 4

can keep Arkansas from joining the sad fraternity of states that have bought the big lie that smoking marijuana has health benefits and is harmless – it is neither.

Larry Page is executive director of the *Arkansas Faith and Ethics Council*. For more information about the work of the Council email Page at llp@arfaith.org.

Letters policy

We want to hear from you! Send Letters to the Editor to tim@arkansasbaptist.org or to our mailing address. Letters must be typed, doublespaced and 300 words or less (fewer words the better). Letters must be signed and marked "for publication" and may be edited to fit space requirements.

ABSC Agencies

OBU and ABSC share vital partnership

Thank you, Arkansas Baptists, for preserving and perpetuating Ouachita Baptist University (OBU). It's especially noteworthy when considering the state of American higher education. Why?

There are 4,000-plus colleges and universities in this country but probably only 150 decidedly Christian institutions among them. There are even fewer, like Ouachita, that are primarily residential and undergraduate, focused on the liberal arts and committed to integrating faith and learning.

That choice continues to make all the difference for OBU graduates; for their families, churches, communities and vocations and for the advance of the gospel and the kingdom of God. Thank you!

As Ouachita prepares to begin its 130th year, we do so amid a disruptive time for higher education and a pivotal moment for Christian colleges, given the swirl of issues – financial, educational, social, political and more.

However, precisely because there are challenges, I can't imagine a better time or opportunity for Ouachita to lead the way in creating a more viable, substantive and durable model of what it means to be committed to academic excellence in a Christ-centered learning community.

We can do so because of the historical and crucial partnership with the Arkansas Baptist State Convention (ABSC). We are not and can-

not be an institution separated from ABSC churches. You send us your students, and you send resources to support those students. In turn, Ouachita's vocational work is given back to ABSC churches as our graduates

leave here and make lives in the communities and churches of their future.

I believe this deeply because the trajectory of my life and that of my wife, Lisa, was forever changed by our experience at a sister school, Southwest Baptist University in Bolivar, Mo., where we made a commitment to serve the purposes of God in our generation (Acts 13:36).

That commitment led

us to serve with the International Mission Board, at two Christian colleges and now at Ouachita. As a result, it's our deep desire to see OBU graduates serve the purposes of God in their generation in our state, nation and world.

Therefore, it's a privilege and honor to come alongside, to learn from and to help shepherd this special community, with its rich heritage and enduring commitments, to dream a larger dream that honors God, advances Ouachita's mission, helps Arkansas Baptists and serves the common good.

Your partnership and prayers continue to make all the difference. Thank you.

Ben Sells began serving June 1 as Ouachita Baptist University's 16th president. For more information about Ouachita visit obu.edu.



Ouachita Baptist

Ben Sells

Protect your loved ones and create a legacy

Your loved ones need you, but what would they do if you were not there? Though we know where we are going, we are all still called to be good stewards of what God has blessed us with.

With just a little planning, you can have peace of mind knowing you have taken care of your family and provided for their future.

First, are your plans up to date? One of the most effective ways to care for your family is with a current estate plan. Here are some questions to consider:

1) Who is dependent on you for financial support? Are you married? How many children and grand-

children do you have? Do you have any heirs with special needs?

2) What significant life changes have occurred with your family (marriages, divorces, births, deaths, etc.) since you last updated your will or trust?

3) How much is "enough," and what is an appropriate inheritance for each heir?

4) Who will receive your assets? Will your assets go to the people you intend, or will your assets be unintentionally distributed to someone else?

5) What else do you really desire for your heirs beyond money – college education, social responsibility, etc.? and

6) What churches or ministries have been most important to you, and do you want to include them in your estate plan?

Second, how do you get started?

While each family's situation is different, there are some planning strategies

that can help you provide for your heirs, give to your favorite ministries and leave your legacy. It's easy to get started. To assist you with making or updating your future plans, we can provide you with our free Planning Your Legacy guide. Many ministry supporters have found this guide useful in helping them think

through their goals. To obtain a copy, please contact us at 501-376-4791, or email us at info@abf.org

A current estate plan is vital to making sure your wishes are carried out and can help you with this final act of stewardship. As a reminder, the Arkansas Baptist Foundation provides free estate planning for any Arkansas Baptist in denominational service. Additionally, the Foundation will provide free estate and gift planning assistance for all Arkansas Baptists, including drafts for those looking to make a kingdom gift.

Dillon McClain is an attorney and vice president-legal at the Arkansas Baptist Foundation in Little Rock.



Baptist Foundation

Dillon McClain

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Williams Baptist sells Ridge Center, clears path for Tractor Supply Co.



Tom Jones, Williams Baptist College president, expresses his gratitude to those involved in the selling of the Ridge Center June 6. Proceeds from the sale will help fund a residence hall on Williams' campus.

WALNUT RIDGE – Williams Baptist College (WBC) announced June 6 that it is selling the Ridge Center in Walnut Ridge, paving the way for a new business in the city. With the signing of the papers, an investment group is taking over the shopping center and is preparing to move Tractor Supply Co. into part of the retail space.

“Williams Baptist College is proud to be a part of anything that is good for our community,” said Tom Jones,

president of Williams.

Jones said that the college received the Ridge Center property six years ago and has been “blessed with extraordinary tenants over the years.” He added that proceeds from the sale would help fund a residence hall on the WBC campus, which he called a “major step forward for the college.”

About 15 to 20 jobs are expected to come with the new business. Tractor Supply will occupy a vacant retail space that was the former site for

Wal-Mart in Walnut Ridge.

“The announcement that Tractor Supply Co. will be remodeling a portion of the Ridge Center in Walnut Ridge will provide a huge boost to our local economy. Jobs will be created, and a new tax base will be established. That tax base will provide support for all the residents of Lawrence County,” said Walnut Ridge Mayor Charles Snapp.

Construction is expected to begin later this month, said Snapp.

Mission:Dignity aids ‘folks like us’ – pastor retiree

Editor's Note: Mission:Dignity Sunday is June 26 in the Southern Baptist Convention in support of GuideStone Financial Resources' benevolence ministry for retired pastors or their widows.

TOCCOA, Ga. (BP) – After 45 years of ministry, Reginald and Claudia Pressley retired much the way they began – serving small churches in the southeast. They were there for births, baptisms, weddings and funerals as they marked the milestones and the passage of time in the lives of their members.

And they wouldn't take anything for the memories.

The couple met in their teens at Toccoa Falls Institute (now Toccoa Falls College), a faith-based school in the mountains of north Georgia. He was attending on the advice of a pastor where he lived in Talladega, Ala., after surrendering to the ministry; she was the daughter of an instructor.

His memory is that it was “love at first sight” for Claudia.

Her story differs.

“He chased me all over the place.”

Regardless, they struck up

an acquaintance before he returned to Alabama for his senior year of high school. Then he was drafted by Uncle Sam; entering the Marines, he shipped off for the Korean Peninsula.

The relationship continued halfway around the world, and when he returned home he went to Toccoa to visit Claudia. Soon they were married and, after his discharge, settled back in Toccoa. He took Bible classes at the school and then moved the family to Florida where he studied at the Baptist Bible Institute (now the Baptist College of Florida).

“Times were tough being newly married, having a son and wife, and trying to support them; money was scarce,” Reginald said.

His first pastorate, at Bellwood Baptist Church in Geneva, Ala., taught him and Claudia a lot about human nature, such as the squabble that was just being solved when they moved to town.

“The church had a very heated question over whether to add air conditioning,” Claudia recounted. “Most folks didn't have it back then, and couldn't afford it, so they

could not see taking on the expense of higher electric bills just for an hour or two on Sunday morning.

“Well, the church was split on the vote, so they went ahead and air conditioned the sanctuary, and that created a very unique worship experience,” Claudia said. “The half in favor of air conditioning sat on one side with the cool air blowing, and those who opposed it sat on the other side with the windows open.”

That was just the first of a lifetime of experiences that Reginald and Claudia look back on with lightheartedness.

Throughout the next several decades, the couple moved around the southeast, always serving small churches and living in parsonages.

Reginald's favorite part of the ministry was preaching.

“The Lord just seemed to speak through me and give me what the people needed to hear at the time,” he reflected.

Reginald also credits his ministry with good discipleship and a strong missions education program through Woman's Missionary Union and the Brotherhood, which he described as the backbone



Reginald and Claudia Pressley, over 45 years of ministry, “never had much money to put away for retirement,” as he described it, “though the churches helped where they could.” The Pressleys are among 1,800 individuals aided by Mission:Dignity, the retiree benevolence ministry of GuideStone Financial Resources.

of the church that kept it focused on missions.

Now retired, the Pressleys are not far from where they first met. They live in Toccoa and are members of Old Liberty Baptist Church, just 15 miles across the state line in Westminster, S.C. It was the last church he served and where he retired at age 70 in 2001. Claudia plays the organ each Sunday.

One of the blessings Reginald and Claudia have in retirement is Mission:Dignity, the benevolence ministry of GuideStone Financial Resources by which Southern

Baptists' gifts supplement the couple's limited income to help them make ends meet.

“We never had much money to put away for retirement, though the churches helped where they could,” Reginald said. “I think many of them put about \$35 a month away toward our retirement, which is what the Annuity Board (now GuideStone) recommended as a minimum.

“Of course we didn't have anything to contribute because I rarely made more than \$300 a month in my early days, and not much more than that later.”



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LMCO

continued from page one

who are spreading the gospel right now. As an IMB family, on behalf of unreached people around the world, we are deeply grateful for the generosity of Southern Baptists who have given for God's glory among the nations."

Platt noted, "Our times are too urgent, our opportunities are too great, and our gospel is too glorious to settle for anything less than wholehearted abandon as a convention of churches to seeing Christ proclaimed in every place and among every people group in the world."

Wanda Lee, executive director/treasurer of Woman's Missionary Union (WMU), which promotes the offering in partnership with IMB, expressed her gratitude for the gifts.

"With the inception of the first offering for international missions in 1888," Lee said, "Southern Baptists were challenged to pray and give sacrificially so those who had not heard the gospel might have that opportunity. When Lottie Moon saw the depth of lostness in China and pled

for help, churches responded with increased giving and prayer support. This year, we are grateful Southern Baptists responded once again at a critical time when increased resources are needed for our international outreach. How thankful we are for every person who gave and prayed, proving that together we can accomplish so much more than any one church or individual can alone."

IMB's vision for the future includes "limitless" missionary teams – healthy groups of "sent ones" who partner together with the goal of each team making disciples and multiplying churches. Ultimately, IMB's work is focused on the unreached, "doing all of this because we love the glory of God more than our own lives," Platt said.

Full-time missionaries are essential as leaders who continue to be the key strategic workers in some of the most difficult places on earth. More than 3,600 IMB missionaries depend on the Lottie Moon offering and regular missions giving by churches through the Southern Baptist Convention's Cooperative Program for missionary salaries, housing, medical care, children's



Haylee Holeman (top left), teenage daughter of International Mission Board (IMB) missionaries Jeff and Liesa Holeman, often accompanies her mother to minister to the children at the Casa Hogar children's home in Oaxaca, Mexico. Southern Baptists provided resounding support through the 2015 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions. *IMB Photo*

education, field transportation and other expenses. Supporting one fully funded missionary overseas costs an average of \$141 per day, or about \$51,000 per year.

The 2015 offering will account for more than half of the total 2016 IMB budget of \$278,755,000, said Rodney Freeman, IMB treasurer and vice president of support services.

Billions unreached

Of the world's 11,000 people groups, more than half – billions of people – are unreached with the gospel. This means there are those among whom Christ is largely unknown and the church is relatively insufficient to make Him known in its broader population without outside help. More than 3,000 unreached people groups are also unengaged, which means there is no one working to share Christ or plant churches among them.

The Lottie Moon offering enables missionaries to make a difference.

Consider the refugee crisis in Northern Africa and the Middle East. While images and reports of beheadings,

cruelty and pure evil continue to shadow refugees – numbering in the millions – from any light of hope, there is hope in the good news of Jesus Christ.

Christian worker Peter Matheson* works tirelessly to bring God's hope to refugees. But his work comes at great cost to the many he serves and to him, personally, as he ministers in the midst of tremendous suffering. Through the support of Southern Baptists, Matheson has been able to work along the Syrian border, distributing boxes of food and other critical necessities.

"We are able, through the Cooperative Program and Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, to focus 100 percent on the ministry that God has given us as workers ... as laborers in the field," Matheson said. "We're able to give all of our attention to people who are hurting by ministering to their physical, emotional and, most importantly, their spiritual needs."

Across the ocean, missionary Liesa Holeman found an unlikely inroad into difficult-to-access indigenous communities in Mexico right where she lives in the city of Oaxaca. During years of volunteering at the Casa Hogar children's

home in Oaxaca, Holeman has met dozens of families from indigenous villages that would have been too difficult for an outsider to access. Many of the families travel as many as 12 hours over steep, winding hills by bus to bring their children and sometimes adult family members to the children's home for physical and emotional care.

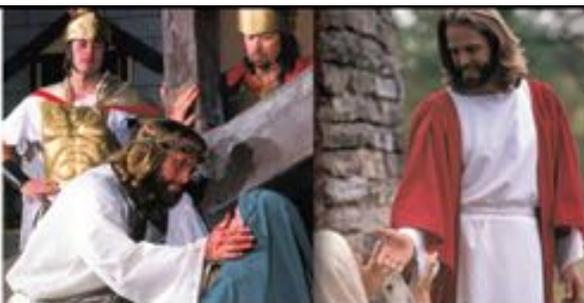
Southern Baptists' gifts enable Holeman to purchase the ministry supplies she uses at the children's home, where partnering U.S. churches, including her home church, First Baptist Church of Oxford, Miss., send groups to share the gospel. There are still at least 10 unengaged, unreached people groups in Mexico alone, totaling more than 300,000 people who don't have continual access to the gospel. And there are more than 30 unreached people groups in the country, representing nearly 1.5 million people.

For more information about the missionaries supported by the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, additional financial information and other questions related to IMB, visit IMB.org/FAQ.

**Name changed.*



Syrian refugees cross the border from Syria to Jordan. "They come, they arrive with little children just with the clothes on their back, because back in Syria their homes are destroyed, their businesses are destroyed," says Christian worker Peter Matheson (name changed). Giving to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions set an all-time record in 2015. *IMB Photo*



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Questions linger for IMB leaders after historic 'reset'

IN THE WAKE of the International Mission Board (IMB) outlining an institutional reset in August 2015, with emphasis on addressing a multi-year budget shortfall primarily through personnel reduction, about 1,100 IMB missionaries and staff have either voluntarily terminated their employment with the agency or have been laid off.

As reported in the August 27, 2015, issue of the *Arkansas Baptist News*, IMB President David Platt said that the urgency of the personnel reduction plan was based on the reality that while Southern Baptist giving through the Cooperative Program and the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering had increased in recent years, the IMB projected it would fall \$21 million short of its current annual budget, marking several consecutive years of budget shortfalls for the 170-year-old organization. Platt said over the past six years the organization's expenditures totaled \$210 million more than its income.

At the time of the announcement regarding the institutional reset, Platt projected that the IMB would need to reduce the total number of IMB personnel between 600 and 800 order to balance the budget.

With the final personnel reduction count of about 1,100, Will Hall, editor of the *Louisiana Baptist Message*, published an editorial in the June 6 challenging IMB leaders to answer questions about the effect "this exodus of trained soul-winners means spiritually to our efforts to share the Gospel

around the world."

"While it (IMB) made the point that it had analyzed the financial impact of these moves, the IMB did not mention what it projected the impact would be on reaching the lost," he wrote.

According to Hall, "There was not a single assessment about losing certain specialties that are needed on the field - linguists in critical languages; individuals with long-term relationships with key government leaders who allow

us entry in key areas; and soul-winners who are catalyzing a revival movement.

"Nor did IMB offer any reassurance to Southern Baptists that it was not jeopardiz-

Hall concluded.

In his far-reaching editorial, Hall also questioned a dramatic drop in baptisms reported by the IMB in 2015, an anonymous social media report about transitions in field leadership, institutional ties and theological persuasions of field personnel and future plans regarding possibly inviting terminated personnel to rejoin the IMB, among other questions.

While the IMB is not "planning a formal response to the (Hall's) editorial," said IMB public relations leader Julie McGowan, "we are continually updating our Frequently Asked Questions (imb.org/faq) page according to all sorts of questions we receive from Southern Baptists, including various ones that the *Baptist Message* mentions."

Regarding the impact of IMB's recent personnel reductions on gospel work around the world, the website page highlighted by McGowan explains, "Without question, IMB's recent personnel reductions have had an effect on gospel work around the world. Obviously, fewer people on the field means a shift in our work on the field. IMB leaders, including our Global Research Team, continually monitor our personnel and work in different places in order to determine our strategies for planting churches. Consequently, from the beginning of this process, IMB has worked to monitor all the effects of our reduction in personnel, and to adjust our strategies accordingly. Such monitoring continues, and necessary adjustments are

ongoing as we discern the best stewardship of our personnel and resources for the spread of the gospel."

With the 2015 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions totaling a record \$165.8 million (see story page 1), Platt said, "We as an IMB and SBC family look forward to exploring in the days ahead how our cooperative giv-

ing can fuel an ever-increasing mission force taking the gospel to those who have never heard it."

This article was compiled from reporting by the Arkansas Baptist News, along with information from Baptist Press and two websites: imb.org/faq and <http://baptistmessage.com/editorial-why-are-imb-leaders-not-answering-questions>.



Platt



Hall



IMB President David Platt recognizes Wanda Lee, executive director of Woman's Missionary Union, for her partnership in missions as she plans to retire.

NEWS ANALYSIS

ing decades of efforts to gain entry into restricted countries and acceptance among resistant people groups."

Extrapolating numbers IMB provided, based on the departure of 600 personnel, Hall concluded, "Now, it would seem IMB is cash rich but people poor."

While the IMB would "enjoy a cash windfall," he said, as a result of cost savings related to the personnel reductions and other financial pledges and gifts, it would "have a void of field-experienced missionaries."

Southern Baptists' "soul-winning efforts overseas will suffer because of these terminations for at least a decade,"

IMB recognizes Lee, Meador for service

RICHMOND, Va. (BP) ~ The International Mission Board is ready to move forward into a future of partnership with churches that empowers limitless missionary teams who are making disciples and multiplying churches among unreached peoples and places for the glory of God, International Mission Board President David Platt told the agency's trustees May 11.

In addition to hearing this vision for the future, IMB trustees also approved the appointment of 29 new missionaries; recognized the longtime service of two faithful missions servants as they retire; and elected new officers during their May 9-11 meeting near Richmond, Va.

During the plenary session May 11, trustees also recognized Wanda Lee, who has announced her retirement by the end of this year after serving for 16 years as executive director of national Woman's Missionary Union. Lee and her husband Larry are former IMB missionaries who were appointed in 1979 to the Windward Islands. The recognition included a gift of \$15,000 from the IMB to The Wanda Lee Joy Fund, which benefits a solid financial foundation for the operational expenses of national WMU.

The trustee meeting included a luncheon honoring Clyde Meador and his wife Elaine. Meador retired May 13 after 41 years of service with IMB.

JOHN 12:24

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Historic run comes to an end for WBC Lady Eagles

THE WILLIAMS Baptist College (WBC) Lady Eagles softball season came to end on May 31 after a 7-1 loss to the top-ranked and tournament champ Oklahoma City University in the NAIA World Series.

The loss ends a historic run for the Lady Eagles, as they won the American Midwest Conference Tournament before sweeping through the LSU-A Opening Round Bracket and winning two games at the World Series tournament played in Sioux City, Iowa.

Many milestones were reached during the season, including finishing sixth in the NAIA World Series. The Lady Eagles reached the 40-win mark for the third time in program history, finishing with a final record of 40-21. Head coach Laura Tucker won more games in her first year than any other WBC softball coach.

"It definitely was a lot of fun," said Tucker. "I learned a lot about myself and the team this season. It was really special to me this first year to go this far."



Tucker

Four Lady Eagles played their final game for WBC with the loss.

Callie Brooks finished her career with a .335 batting average. She had 181 hits, scored 123 runs, hit 26 home runs, drove in 152 RBIs and stole 33 bases. She also had a career slugging percentage of .615.

Andrea Drake finished her two-year career at WBC with a .354 batting average, 103 hits, 59 runs scored, 15 home runs, 66 RBIs and four stolen bases. She finished with a .560 slugging percentage.

Hayley Overbay of Jonesboro finished her career as a Lady Eagle with a .262 batting average, 48 hits, 26 runs scored, one home run, 23 RBIs and two stolen bases.

Susannah Pugh finished her career at Williams with a .321 batting average, 94 hits, 68 runs scored, eight doubles, seven triples and six stolen bases.

On her four graduating seniors, Tucker noted: "They have come together, and they



Williams Baptist College senior catcher Haley Overbay hits the ball May 31 in a losing effort against top-ranked and tournament champ Oklahoma City University in the NAIA World Series. Williams finished the season 40-21.

have really led the way. As far as family, they just love each other. They believed they would have a great senior year, and they did."

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Bednar to lead Baptist Prep school starting July 1

LITTLE ROCK – The Baptist Preparatory School's board of trustees has announced that Laura Bednar, current deputy

superintendent of the Pulaski County Special School District (PCSSD), was voted unanimously as the next head of

school, effective July 1.

"We are excited about Baptist Prep's future as we move forward under the leadership

of Dr. Bednar," said Clayton Vaden, chairman of the board of trustees. "Baptist Prep is recognized for providing our students with an excellent college-preparatory education in a Christ-centered environment. Dr. Bednar is recognized as an educational leader, and she has a deep abiding faith in Jesus Christ. We see this as a great fit."

"Our trustees know that Dr. Bednar will build on the successes that Baptist Prep has enjoyed. We are blessed with a dedicated and talented faculty and staff who carry out our mission every day. While this is a time of transition, it is an exciting time as we begin a new chapter at Baptist Prep," Vaden added.

Bednar has been an educator in Arkansas for 29 years. She began her teaching career in Stuttgart, serving as a building and district-level administrator prior to becoming superintendent of the Stuttgart School District in 2005.

In 2005, she was appointed to the Arkansas Association of Curriculum and Instruction Administrators board of directors, and since that time has continued serving Arkansas educators in numerous leadership roles. She has served on the ACT State Council as chair and on the Arkansas ACT Advisory Board; on the AdvancEd (formerly NCA) board of directors; as president of the Arkansas Association of Curriculum and Instruction Administrators; on the Economics Arkansas board of directors (currently serving as board chair); and on the Arkansas Activities Association (AAA) board of directors. In 2010, Bednar was appointed by then-Arkansas Commissioner of Education Tom Kimbrell to serve Arkansas as the assistant commissioner of education in the Learning Services Division. She served in that capacity until 2013, when she accepted a position as deputy superintendent of PCSSD. She has worked under PCSSD Superintendent Jerry Guess to help bring the PCSSD out of fiscal distress and work to obtain unity.

Bednar currently serves as president of the Arkansas As-

sociation of Supervision and Curriculum Development. She has also served as an adjunct professor at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock in the College of Education and Administration Supervision and as a state council member for the Southern Region Educational board of directors (SREB).

Bednar has provided numerous professional development opportunities for educators in Arkansas and across the United States. She is known for her collaborative leadership style and unwavering commitment to helping all students reach their full potential. Bednar says the most important (and also most difficult) job in a school is that of a classroom



Bednar

teacher. She is often found in classrooms helping teachers and/or serving as a substitute teacher in order for teachers to watch and learn from colleagues.

She is an avid supporter of Arkansas Kids Read and the Arkansas No Child Hungry campaigns. She is also a member of the Little Rock Rotary Club.

Bednar said she enjoys spending time with family and friends. She is an avid reader who can be found in the library or playing the piano for cancer patients at the UAMS Cancer Institute. The Bednars are members of First Baptist Church, Little Rock. She and her husband, Rick, have been married for 30 years.

They have a son, Trey, daughter-in-law Leslie, and 3-month old grandson, Drake Henry Bednar. Their daughter, Mari, a 2013 graduate of Baptist Prep, will be a senior at Ouachita Baptist University this fall.

Bednar teaches a women's Sunday school class at First Baptist, and her favorite Scripture is Proverbs 3:5-6. Her career and philosophy resonate with Baptist Prep's core values and vision of glorifying God by assisting families in the Christ-centered, biblically-directed education of their children.

The Baptist Preparatory School is a Christian, college-preparatory school that has educated students from central Arkansas for 35 years.

Faith, Family, & Freedom Crusade

Evil is powerless if the good are unafraid - Ronald W. Reagan

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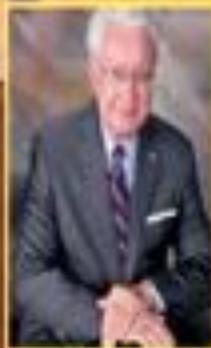
HERB WILSON

Herb Wilson is a full time evangelist for The Kevin Wade Johnson Foundation. Herb has served as an evangelist for several years and is also involved in hospital, nursing home and jail ministry in and around his local community and Arkansas.



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One of the most distinctive voices in all of gospel music and regarded as one of the preeminent gospel songwriters of our generation. His songs have been recorded by several of today's most popular gospel music groups.



ANDREW S. PHIPPS

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SUNDAY, JULY 3RD

Evangelist Herb Wilson - 10:45 am
Ivan Parker - 5 pm

MONDAY, JULY 4TH

Ivan Parker - 6:30 pm
Doors open at 5:30

TUESDAY, JULY 5TH - FRIDAY, JULY 8TH

6:30 pm Nightly Service

CALL

For FREE tickets for Monday, July 3rd only

Patti Swinford: 870-740-1152

Obituaries

Bobby G. Kessinger, 84, of Little Rock, died May 30.



He was preceded in death by his wife of 52 years, Rebecca Padgett Kessinger, one son, one

sister and one brother. He is survived by one sister.

Kessinger was a graduate of Conway High School, Conway, and served in the U.S. Army as a radar specialist during the Korean War and received two bronze stars. After returning from Korea, he graduated from Arkansas State Teachers College (now University of Central Arkansas) in Conway.

He was a chief engineer in the Department of Materials and Research at the Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department for 37 years before his retirement in 1994.

Kessinger served in many leadership roles at Pleasant Grove Baptist Church in Con-

way. After moving to Little Rock, Kessinger was active at Lakeshore Drive Baptist Church, where he served as a deacon, teacher, finance chairman, general handyman and pastor before his death.

Funeral services were held June 4 at Lakeshore Drive Baptist Church. Interment followed at Crestlawn Memorial Park in Conway with full military honors being rendered by the U.S. Army and Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 2259 of Conway.

Jim L. Black, 74, of Cave City, died May 19 at White River Medical Center in Batesville.



Black was a Southern Baptist minister serving at Ruddell Hill Baptist Church in Batesville for 16

years. He also served at Sage Baptist Church, Sage.

He served as the chaplain at White River Medical Center for 16 years before retiring. His

ministry also included serving as chaplain for the police department and prison.

Black served in the Army National Guard.

He was preceded in death by his parents and a sister. He is survived by his wife of 53 years, Sandra, two daughters, three grandchildren and a sister.

A memorial service was held May 28 at Roller-Crouch Funeral Home Chapel in Batesville.

Church life

Linwood Baptist Church, Moscow, held a deacon ordination service May 29 for Lucas Mitchell.

Reach a statewide audience with the ABN!

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Baptist Prep adds Chromebooks

LITTLE ROCK - The Baptist Preparatory School is supplying all fifth- through 12th-grade students with their own Google Chromebooks beginning in fall 2016.

"The Baptist Prep Chromebook program is the next step in providing students with an engaging learning environment that extends beyond the bounds of the physical classroom," said Brian Mashburn, Baptist Prep's director of technology.

Chromebooks are laptop-style devices specifically designed to integrate with Google Apps for Education, which Baptist Prep has incorporated into the classroom experience since 2011. A cloud-based security system will protect the computers from malware and viruses.

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

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

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

Visit arkansasbaptist.org

Classifieds

PASTOR

Seeking **bi-vocational pastor**. Send resumes to cornerstone.cabot@gmail.com or P.O. Box 935 Cabot AR 72023.

Mount Vernon Baptist Church at Mount Vernon, Arkansas, is seeking a **full-time pastor**. Letter/resume to: MVBC Pastor Search Team, P.O. Box 71, Romance, AR 72136 email: mtvernonpastorsearch@gmail.com.

First Baptist Church of Marion, Arkansas, is prayerfully seeking God's man for the position of **senior pastor**. Applicant must have substantial leadership/ministry experience in a mid-size to large Southern Baptist Church. Qualified applicants should send resumes to: firstmarionsearch@yahoo.com.

Shiloh Baptist Church (SBC), Rover, Mo., 17 miles east of West Plains, seeking **bi-vocational pastor**. Worship attendance about 70, median age about 35. Send resumes to: Lyndell Huddleston, HC 61, West Plains, MO 65775.

First Baptist Church, London, AR seeks **full-time Southern Baptist pastor** after former pastor served 23 years. Accepting resumes now through August 1 by e-mail (fbclondon.com) or mail (17 Southern Baptist Rd., London, AR 72847) Attn: Pastor Search Committee.

Due to retirement of our pastor of 30 years, First Baptist Church, Flippin, AR is accepting resumes for a **full-time pastor** who is spirit led, loves all ages, and ready to serve God in north central Arkansas. Send resumes to Search Team, PO Box 637, Flippin, AR 72634 or fbclippin@hotmail.com.

FBC accepting applications **full-time pastor**. Letter/resume to First Baptist Church P.O. Box 789 Marshall, AR 72650 email: mfbcoffice@gmail.com.

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

OTHER STAFF POSITIONS

First Baptist Church of Bay, Arkansas (just outside of Jonesboro) is seeking a **part-time associate pastor of music and worship** to lead our growing congregation. Resumes can be mailed to First Baptist Church, P.O. Box 190, Bay, AR. 72411 or emailed to fbcbay@suddenlink.net. You can also visit our website at www.bayfbc.org for more info about our church.

Hillcrest Baptist Church in Lebanon, Mo., is accepting resumes for **minister of youth/family life**. Send resume to pveanes@lebanon.k12.mo.us or call David

Veanes at 417-532-1021.

LR area - Col. Glenn - 5 mi. w of I-430: Small country church seeking **part time music leader**: Send resume to Martindale Bapt Ch, 18900 Col. Glenn, LR, AR 72210 or Email harrisw12@yahoo.com.

First Baptist Church, Pea Ridge is looking for a **part-time children's ministry director** to lead Children's Ministry, birth - 6th grade. Please submit resumes to cody@prfbc.org.

Sugarloaf Baptist Church in Heber Springs is currently accepting resumes for position of **full-time student minister**. Person will be responsible for students 7th-12th grade. Send resumes to: sugarloafbaptistchurch@gmail.com or mail : Attn: Youth Search Sugarloaf Baptist Church, 699 Wilburn Road, Heber Springs, Arkansas, 72543. Call Tony Criswell at 501-362-2448.

Praying for a **part-time youth minister!** Send Resumes to South Main Baptist Church, PO Box 430, Crossett, AR 71635; or email at SMBCSecretary@windstream.net Visit our website at Southmainbaptist.net.

Westside Baptist Church, Natchitoches, Louisiana is seeking a **full-time student pastor** to lead & disciple Middle School and Senior High Students. Submit resume to Steve McAlister, Pastor at steve@westside.life.

Mountain Top Cowboy Church, Heber Springs, is looking for a **bi-vocational worship leader** to play the acoustic guitar and lead our congregation in singing country flavored old hymns. Interested candidates may contact church office, call 501-365-3690.

Eagle Heights Baptist Church is accepting resumes for a **full-time student pastor**. Send resumes to EHBC, 703 E. Walters, Harrison, AR 72601 or email to ehbadmin@eagleheightsharrison.org. Job description is available at ehbharrison.org.

FBC McRae seeking **bi-vocational minister of youth**. Interested parties please submit your resumes via email to kfowler2123@yahoo.com or by mail to FBC McRae, 703 E Second St., McRae, AR 72102. Person applying needs to be available Sundays (morning and evening), Wednesday evenings and other times for various youth activities, including camps in the summer.

Tallowood Baptist Church, Houston, Texas, is seeking a dynamic **minister to serve a diverse, metropolitan, student community**. Responsibilities include leadership and supervision of associate staff and development of a creative and biblically based ministry to students. A minimum of 5 years experience in student ministry is required and experience

serving multiple high schools is strongly preferred. Formal theological training required. Resumes may be sent to smsearch@tallowood.org.

Soaring Wings Christian Home and Ranch seeks a Christian couple as **full-time house parents** to provide long-term care for seven to 10 children, including own, in a Christ-centered home. For more information, email jason@soaringwing-ranch.com or visit www.swranch.org.

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

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

MISCELLANEOUS

For Sale: **AmeriGlide Hercules II 600 Vertical Wheelchair Platform Lift**. 110 volt. 36 inch vertical lift. Installation, operation manual included. Barely used. \$4,000.00. 870-863-3336.

Looking to fill a staff position at your church?

Visit arkansasbaptist.org/ad to submit your classified!

Christian Entertainment

"But if your eyes are unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. ..."

Matthew 6:23 (NIV)

Movie promotes 'running with purpose'

"EVERYBODY needs a purpose in life, and one simple verse in the Bible provides the direction we all need," said Dave Christiano, director of "Remember the Goal," an inspirational dramatic movie about a girls' cross-country team. The film, coming to theaters later this year, follows the story of a new coach, fresh out of college, who takes over the girls' cross-country program at a private Christian school and attempts to lead the team to a state title.

"The coach has great wisdom for her young age and imparts this to the girls by covering many situations and issues in the story," said Christiano.

"Allee-Sutton Hethcoat plays the lead role of coach Courtney Smith-Donnelly. She is terrific in this role and a strong role model and leader with high character. We need more people like her in real life, and my hope is that she will be a positive influence to many."

Christiano, an Arkansas State University graduate and a former Jonesboro resident, was a cross-country runner in high school and college, in addition to coaching two high school cross-country teams. He insists he produced his running scenes accurately and realistically. His passion for the sport ensures this movie is authentic.

The theme of the movie is based on 1 Corinthians 10:31 (ESV), "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." The phrase, "whatever you do," includes running, according to the movie's producers.

"Remember the Goal" will speak to many important issues, according to a news release about the movie.

"For example, the movie is a visual example of the humility and the character of Christ. It will encourage teens to obey their parents instead of disobeying them behind their back. The drama will show you one way to deal with a friend



Cast members of "Remember the Goal" from left to right: Allee-Sutton Hethcoat, Quinn Alexis, Sydney Marks, Margaret Tant, McKensie Miller and Jayla Palmer.

who struggles with the problem of smoking weed (marijuana). It will forever solve the self-image problem so many people deal with. It also gives teens something Christiano feels everyone desperately needs: a purpose in life," the news release states.

"The movie has a message for adults as well. It will make parents think about the way they address their children and



what should be a priority in life. It even has an example for coaches and will make them consider changing the way they lead their teams, with this particular principle applying to any sport," states the news release. "A common phrase in the film, 10:31, could change a youth group or sports team. The entire movie is based on 1 Corinthians 10:31 and that one verse can be life-changing."

The film is set to open in theaters across 10 southeastern

states, including Arkansas, on Aug. 26 when cross-country season rolls around again.

Four actresses from Nashville, Tenn. – Quinn Alexis, Jayla Palmer, Sydney Marks and McKensie Miller – had to train for their roles as runners. Margaret Tant, the other actress who rounds out the top five runners at "Orange Hills Academy," is an active member on her school's cross-country team.

"I had never run before this film so I definitely had to train," said Palmer, 16, who is cast in the role of Shelby, one of the runners. "I started training about two months before we started filming. I met with a cross-country coach, and she gave me some tips, and then I ran at home with my brothers."

"I met the director, Dave Christiano, not long after being cast," said Alexis. "At our initial meeting, Dave gave me instructions on how to train. Because I wasn't a runner prior to this film, I started with a five-minute jog and built up to 20 minutes and then 30 minutes non-stop."

Marks, also a non-runner, said, "I started walking for five minutes and then jogging 10 minutes around my street."

Christiano said the five

actresses actually could be a pretty decent cross-country team if they kept at it. They all became quite good and are very believable in their roles as runners, he said.

"I didn't know much about cross-country before I was cast in 'Remember the Goal,'" said Palmer, "but now I have a lot of respect for cross-country runners."

Alexis added, "I think cross-country is a beautiful sport because it combines the individual beat-your-own-best mindset with a united team effort."

"The girls and I have formed such a strong bond. They are some of my best friends," said Marks.

Tant added, "The cast and crew were so fun to work with, and the girls and I are best friends now."

Christiano said the movie will only come out in theaters and not be released on DVD.

"The big screen makes an impact and is the way movies were meant to be shown," he said. "These girls worked very hard on this movie and 'Remember the Goal' can have a positive effect on teens, athletes, youth groups and parents all across the state. I hope people will go see it."

The trailer for the movie and other information are available at FiveAndTwoPictures.com. The movie also has a Facebook page.

Beware of Hollywood's politics

Phil Boatwright
Baptist Press

KANSAS CITY, Kan. (BP) – Throughout the years, whenever I have viewed politically themed dramas such as "The American President," "Talk Radio," or "Born on the Fourth of July," I questioned, "Will the protagonist be a conservative, Bible-toting, Republican good guy?"

My question has always been rather tongue-in-cheek, as I already knew the answer – No. Long before I began analyzing films, liberalism had replaced conservative politics in Hollywood.



Boatwright

Unlike Washington D.C., it appears the pendulum in the entertainment capital will never swing back.

Some are overjoyed with that prospect, while others worry about an entire medium governed by one prominent social and political viewpoint. Always, there is an exception to the rule, but a conservative proclamation from Tinseltown is indeed always the exception.

Even with a checks-and-balances formula that allows citizens a voice, over the years a mix of greed, ego, fear and constitutional reinterpretation has turned our near-perfect political system into a corruptible machine. We need to be aware, vote ... and pray for our leaders.

And there's one other thing – beware the media's political persuasion.

"I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone – for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior" (1 Tim. 2:1-3, NIV).

SBC

continued from page one

lion members. Average weekly worship attendance declined by 1.72 percent to 5.6 million worshippers.

Southern Baptists also experienced a decline in baptisms, down 3.3 percent to 295,212. Reported baptisms have fallen eight of the past 10 years. The ratio of baptisms to total members decreased to one baptism for every 52 members.

“God help us all! In a world that is desperate for the message of Christ, we continue to be less diligent in sharing the good news,” said Frank Page, SBC Executive Committee president and CEO. “May God forgive us and give us a new passion to reach this world for Christ.”

“The ACP report shows many faithful Southern Baptists continue to worship, share the gospel, give generously and live in community with other believers,” said LifeWay President and CEO Thom S. Rainer. “We praise God for these efforts every year.

“While a decrease in baptisms is very disappointing, we don’t take for granted 295,000 baptisms,” he said. “We should rejoice with each

of those individuals who chose to follow Christ.”

An increase in the number of churches, aided by Southern Baptists’ church planting efforts, is also something to celebrate, Rainer said.

“People underestimate the importance of momentum,” he said. “It only takes a few people in each church being intentional about sharing their faith for some new momentum to build.”

Giving & mission expenditures

Southern Baptists increased giving in 2015. Total and undesignated church receipts reported through the ACP increased 3.51 percent and 4.64 percent respectively.

Total missions expenditures declined by 2.03 percent to \$1.2 billion, but the report shows four Baptist state conventions — Alabama (for the first time), California, Georgia and Oklahoma — did not ask churches for this data. Great Commission Giving, which represents total giving to denominational causes, was down 3.81 percent to \$613 million, with five state conventions — Alabama, Arkansas, Missouri, Oklahoma and Southern Baptists of Texas (for the first time) — not reporting that data.

Giving through Southern



Wendy Curry, director of Hope Place in Warren, stacks diapers at the crisis pregnancy/family resource center. Hope Place has been awarded a grant for \$1,000 in baby supplies from Entergy Arkansas.

Baptists’ Cooperative Program (CP) mission initiative is not included in the ACP annual report. Those totals are more accurately available through Baptist state conventions and the SBC Executive Committee, which processes the mission gifts. CP gifts forwarded

from state conventions for SBC causes in fiscal year 2014-15 were 1.39 percent more than the previous year. CP gifts received by the SBC Executive Committee for the first eight months of the 2015-16 year were reported to be 6.13 percent above the year-to-date

budgeted projection.

Individual congregations report statistics for the national ACP to their local associations and/or state conventions. National totals are compiled and released after all cooperating state conventions have reported.

Rachel Gaddis joins ABSC as director of publications

LITTLE ROCK — Rachel Gaddis, a 2016 graduate of Ouachita Baptist University (OBU), has joined the Arkansas Baptist State Convention (ABSC) as publications director.

Gaddis has a degree in mass communications and a minor in English writing. While at Ouachita, she served as a student writer for the OBU news bureau, office assistant, associate editor of the *Ouachita Scope* literary magazine and a public and corporate relations intern for the Easter Seals in Chicago, where she spent a semester working through Ouachita’s Chicago Semester Program.

As publications director, Gaddis will write communications pieces for the ABSC teams and coordinate their

social media networks.

“(We will be) telling the stories of what the Lord is doing in Arkansas — through believers going about their daily lives, churches, ministries, and the collaborating teams of the ABSC,” said Gaddis, adding she feels she is right where God wants her for now.

“Honestly, I have no concrete future plans because the Lord has given me peace that this is where I am supposed to be, and at this point that’s all I know,” said Gaddis. “I just want to embrace every aspect of this job — serving the Lord by telling His stories and serving the convention in all that they do.”

Gaddis is the daughter of Greg and Jan Gaddis of Cabot.



Gaddis



The **generation revitalization** event will provide basic youth and children/preschool ministry training.

Dates & Locations

August 8	August 9	Conference Schedule
FBC Lowell	FBC Lavaca	FBC Lowell
FBC Mountain Home	FBC Pochahontas	FBC Mountain Home
FBC Manila	FBC Batesville	FBC Manila
FBC Dover	Southside BC Stuttgart	FBC Dover
FBC Beebe	Crossgate Hot Springs	FBC Beebe
Salem BC Mena	FBC White Hall	Salem BC Mena
FBC Nashville	Highland Drive BC Jonesboro	FBC Nashville
Cullendale FBC Camden	FBC Maumelle	Cullendale FBC Camden
FBC Hamburg	Eagle Heights BC Harrison	FBC Hamburg
Ridgewood BC Forrest City		Ridgewood BC Forrest City

For more information and locations, go to

www.absc.org/genrev

JUNE 26, 2016

In our day we are accustomed to divisive politics. Many believe that we must have change but cannot agree on what needs to be changed or on who should affect the change. A similar dilemma existed toward the last days of Samuel the prophet. He was by then an old man, and his sons were unworthy to lead the nation. The people cried out that they wanted a king so they could be like all the other nations.

Not everyone agreed that a monarchy was the best idea. Both Samuel and God passionately objected. "But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, 'Give us a king to govern us.' And Samuel prayed to the Lord" (1 Sam. 8:6, RSV). God offered solace to Samuel, saying, "They have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them" (1 Sam. 8:7, RSV). God had become Israel's King in the exodus. This defection, God said, was another in a long line of rejections.

To be like other nations was an apparent strong desire among the people of Israel. Yet Israel was never supposed to be like other nations. Israel was to be distinct among the nations. Israel's pur-

pose was missional from the beginning. In Genesis 22:18, God promised Abraham that, through him, all the nations of the earth would be blessed. Insisting on having a king, to be like other nations, is a repudiation of Israel's reason for existence. It is very near idolatry. Not wanting to have Samuel as their prophet any longer was one thing. Not wanting God to be their God was

another.

But God allowed the decision to be made. The question remains as to how much freedom God allows God's people. Surely God is sovereign. But just as surely, God limits His own authority each time we are allowed to make a decision – and to live with the consequences. "And the Lord said to Samuel, 'Hearken to their voice, and make them a king'" (1 Sam. 8:22, RSV). We can hardly imagine the hurt in God's heart. As parents we allow our children freedom, and we understand that with freedom come consequences. We also know that as parents we will share some of those consequences, often hurtful consequences.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE King?

1 SAMUEL 8:4-9,19-22



Lee McGlone
Arkadelphia

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE Transformed in my plans

MATTHEW 6:25-34



Melissa Kirk
Pocahontas

When I was young, my grandparents lived a full day's drive away. We'd arrive after the long trips to see the stocky woman with a twisted gray bun, usually watering the grass. Her solid footing in bare feet while bees swarmed around her astounded me. She didn't flinch.

We'd always enter the house through the wood-framed screen door that squeaked loudly in complaint as it stretched back. Once everyone was inside, the door was released, and with a loud pop, it sealed us inside.

Everything Grandma needed seemed to be outside. I'd watch her go in and out that door, every pop reassuring me I was safe, away from the bees.

Grandma had a beautiful rose-covered bowl. She served warm potato salad in it, which I didn't love, but ate, because it was in that beautiful vessel. Afraid the fragile bowl might slip from her hands while the dishes were washed, I'd cringe while she masterfully twirled it in her sudsy fingers.

She masterfully handled Grandpa, too. One day, he kept insisting that

she call a relative to come visit us. She patiently responded each time that this person was out of town. He was hard of hearing and persisted. Without blinking an eye, she picked up the old rotary phone and dialed. After a minute, she put the receiver back in its cradle. "No answer, Jess," she said. I was sitting close enough to see that she held the connector

button down the entire time. The call was never made, but Grandpa was content after that. I was content, knowing that Grandma had everything under control.

Those memories remind me of our Father in heaven. He handles the stings, opening and closing of doors, and life's most fragile moments. And, Yes, He occasionally pacifies us to settle things down.

Matthew 6:27 (NIV) says, "Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?"

Whatever your plans are, watch for God. He'll show up in the most unique ways to prove He is in complete control.

JULY 3, 2016

Ever have a near-death experience? Maybe you almost stepped out into traffic or had something heavy fall next to you. It's amazing how that moment of terror both heightens your senses to the world around you while simultaneously giving a clearer perspective on life.

All too often, when we read passages that tell us to fear the Lord, we hear people try to soften the blow by commenting that "fear doesn't really mean fear." But when we see someone come face-to-face with the glory of God in the Bible, they respond with very real fear. Think of Moses near the burning bush (Ex. 3:6), the apostles at the transfiguration (Matt. 17:6), Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:4) or John on the island of Patmos (Rev. 1:17).

In his parting address to the people of Israel, Samuel hoped that they and their king would return to fear and follow the Lord (1 Sam 12:14). The fear of

the Lord includes a right understanding of His majesty and our frailty. Upon seeing God's glory, Isaiah responded, "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!" (Isa. 6:5, ESV). Samuel knew that it was only from this humbled vantage point that Israel would avoid chasing after "empty things that cannot profit or deliver" (1 Sam. 12:21, ESV).

We are just as prone to wander and need a holy fear of the Lord if we are to follow Him faithfully. We don't follow the Lord on our own terms. If we "serve him and obey his voice and not rebel against the commandment of the Lord ... it will be well" (1 Sam. 12:14, ESV).

His holy standard is to be the pattern of our lives. It is then that "it will be well" with us.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE 'It will be well'

1 SAMUEL 12:12-22



Cole Penick
Fayetteville

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE Transformed in my actions

MATTHEW 7:1-12



Jennifer Bryant
Fordyce

My oldest son was telling me about a friend who constantly wanted to be moved to another position on the baseball team. He would ask to pitch. The coaches would let him pitch. Then, he would ask to play first base. He would play first base, etc. My son was complaining about his friend never being satisfied with where he was playing.

After my son had shared his thoughts, I asked him why this situation with his friend was different than all the times my son had asked if he could pitch. In his mind, it was different because he was only asking to try pitching. He wasn't asking to change to all the other positions.

I explained he shouldn't be judging his friend when he was doing the exact same thing. In Matthew 7:1-5, Jesus explained we should not judge others or we will be judged accordingly. We should not be concerned about the speck in our friend's eye while we ignore the plank in our own eye.

If we examine ourselves, we will commonly find the traits that bother us most about others are likely the same ones we struggle with as well. As believers, we are called to be transformed in our actions. If we are holding others to high standards and excusing the same behavior in our own lives, we need more work.

Another important transformation occurs when believers learn to trust that God has our best interests at heart. In Matthew 7:6-12, Jesus explained to us that if we ask, seek and knock, God will answer. We need to constantly be pursuing God. He will not forsake us.

The bottom line can be found in Matthew 7:12 (NIV), "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you." When they are in trouble I ask my kids, "If they had done that to you, how would you feel?"

Treat others the way you want to be treated.



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The GVP is a project initiated by the First Baptist Church of Oppelo, Arkansas.