

ABN Digest

Stories of interest
to Arkansas Baptists

Missouri Supreme Court returns MBC Foundation

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (BP) - The Missouri Baptist Foundation is coming home to the Missouri Baptist Convention (MBC).

The Missouri Supreme Court declined Sept. 20 to hear the foundation's appeal of an appeals court decision ordering its return to governance by convention-elected trustees.

By letting a May 24 ruling by the Missouri Court of Appeals-Western District stand, the state Supreme Court ended 14 years of litigation that began in 2002 after the foundation's board broke away from the convention the previous year, changing its charter in violation of a charter clause requiring MBC consent. The amendments declaring its board self-perpetuating also violated MBC governing documents.

After months of seeking private reconciliation and even binding Christian arbitration - all rejected by the foundation's self-perpetuating board - the convention asked a circuit court for a declaratory judgment, seeking a judge's interpretation of the law and corporate documents as the only legal recourse to restore the foundation to the convention. The action was taken in accord with Missouri Baptists' vote in their October 2001 annual meeting to direct the convention to seek a judicial ruling. More than a decade of lower-court proceedings ensued.

In October 2014 the Circuit Court of Cole County ordered the restoration of foundation governance to the MBC-elected board of trustees.

The foundation, with \$150 million in assets, appealed the trial decision to the Missouri Court of Appeals.

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

Women 'Engage' in missions experience

LITTLE ROCK - More than 100 women gathered Friday-Saturday, Sept. 23-24, at Parkway Place Baptist Church, Little Rock, for Engage, a weekend missions experience for women jointly funded by Arkansas Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) and Arkansas Baptist State Convention (ABSC).

"Our goal was to equip women with resources, ideas, experiences and encouragement of how they can engage their communities for Christ," said Charity Taylor, who serves on the missions team of the ABSC.

"Throughout the event, we encouraged the women through general sessions, conferences, fellowship times and displays to engage in their com-

munities, state and world," she said.

On Friday evening Bit Stephens, metro Baptist Campus Ministries minister for University of Arkansas, Little Rock, spoke about conversations that lead to friendships, sharing personally about her ministry with internationals

and about how getting to know them as they are learning English opens the door for them not only to learn about American culture but also to hear the gospel. Later that evening participants were invited to put into practice

what they had learned as they enjoyed a time of fellowship with international women.

"Through this fellowship time, friendships were built



"more reasonable" because it "takes into account the value of the services provided by religious organizations and the impact religion has on a number of important American businesses."

Congregations included

To estimate finances and activities of U.S. congregations, researchers used two nationally represented data sources: the National Congregations Student cumulative dataset and the 2010 Religious Congregations and Membership Study.

Congregations included in the study were 217 Christian denominations, associations or communions (including Latter-day Saints, Messianic Jews and some Unitarian/Universalists groups); as well as counts from Jain, Shinto, Sikh, Tao and National Spiritualist Association congregations, and counts of congregations and individuals for Baha'i, Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Zoroastrians groupings. In all, 236 groups were surveyed, totaling 344,894 congregations and 150,686,156 adherents.

Findings and conclusion

The study noted that reli-



Berniece the Cleaning Lady, (above), played by Vickey Lloyd, University Baptist Church, Fayetteville, uses humor as she encourages attendees at the 2016 Engage women's missions experience to participate in a time of fellowship with international women on Friday, Sept. 23. Bit Stephens (below left), of the Metro Baptist Student Ministry at the University of Arkansas-Little Rock, speaks to the group.

among women with different backgrounds and cultures. They were able to share stories about their own cultures and learn from one another," said Taylor.

"My prayer is that these conversations will open doors to dig deeper so that friends will become sisters in Christ."

Amy Benson, who has served in church planting in Germany, spoke during two general sessions, explaining how Christians all have stories to share and challenging

women to use their stories to engage others with the gospel.

International worker in South Asia, Sarah R. shared her testimony of life in South Asia from the perspective of a wife, mother of three children and Christ-follower.

Participants also heard from Beth McGee, director of Christian Women's Job Corp of North Central Arkansas.

Arkansas WMU held its annual meeting/business session after lunch on Saturday, Sept. 24.

RELIGION

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other life needs."

3 estimates used

The Grim study undertook three estimates in an effort to determine the value of faith to American society.

The first "most conservative" estimate, which took into account only the revenues of faith-based organizations such as education, healthcare, local congregational activities, charities, media and food, totaled \$378 billion annually.

The second "mid-range" estimate, which took into account the fair market value of goods and services provided by religious organizations, and the contribution of businesses with religious roots, totaled more than \$1.2 trillion.

A third "higher-end" estimate, which was based on household incomes of religiously affiliated Americans, placed the value of faith to U.S. society at \$4.8 trillion, or the equivalent of nearly a third of the country's domestic product (GDP).

Researchers deemed the second estimate of \$1.2 trillion

gious organizations and affiliated charity groups:

- Tripled the amount of money spent on social programs from 1998 to 2012 - from \$2.3 billion to \$9 billion - in spite of overall decline of religious affiliation of Americans.

- Conduct 130,000 alcohol and drug abuse recovery programs.

- Attract more than three times as many visitors to their places of worship than do America's museums to view "architecture and art."

- Conduct 94,000 programs to support veterans and their families.

- Conduct one HIV-AIDS ministry (25,867) for every 46 people who are HIV-positive in the country (1.2 million).

- Conduct 121,000 programs to provide support and/or skills training for unemployed adults.

In conclusion, researchers stated, "the faith sector is undoubtedly a significant component of the overall American economy, impacting and involving the lives of the major-

ity of the U.S. population."

"The data are clear. Religion is a highly significant sector of the American economy. Religion provides purpose-driven institutional and economic contributions to health, education, social cohesion, social services, media, food and business itself," the summary article states.

"Perhaps most significantly, religion helps set Americans free to do good by harnessing the power of millions of volunteers from nearly 345,000 diverse congregations present in every corner of the country's urban and rural landscape."

Contact Tim Yarbrough at tim@arkansasbaptist.org.



Pastors' Conference to address church issues

LITTLE ROCK – Engage is the theme of the 2016 Arkansas Baptist State Convention (ABSC) Pastors' Conference to be held Monday, Oct. 24, at Immanuel Baptist Church, Little Rock.

The Engage theme of the Pastors' Conference follows the same theme as the annual meeting of the ABSC to be held Oct. 25-26.

"It appears that today we are facing the most significant spiritual challenge in the history of the United States. We are quickly moving from a post-Christian culture to one that is anti-Christian," said Manley Beasley, Jr., senior pastor of Hot Springs Baptist Church, Hot Springs, and president of the Pastors' Conference.

"In *Decision* magazine the editor states, 'The moral de-

scend of our culture has accelerated at a rapid pace over the past decade – e.g., same-sex marriage rulings, the trans-

cific issues facing the Church today.

"The leaders are uniquely equipped by the Holy Spirit

tions, Oklahoma City, Okla.; Willie Jacobs, a member of the ABSC church planting team; Larry Page, executive director

of the Arkansas Faith and Ethics Council; Mark Dance of LifeWay Christian Resources, Nashville, Tenn.; John Meador, senior pastor of First Baptist Church, Euless, Texas, and Ronnie Floyd, pastor of Cross Church northwest Arkansas and immediate past president of the Southern Baptist Convention.

In addition to preaching, the Pastors' Conference will include praise and worship, solos and congregational singing.

For more information contact Beasley at mbeasley@hotspringsbaptist.org.



Elliff



Jacobs



Page



Dance



Meador



Floyd

gender agenda, the decline of millennial participation in religion and a worldview that is increasingly hostile toward Christianity," said Beasley. "In addition to these, we cannot deny the challenge we face on the racial front. All of us need encouragement, informed guidance and a fresh Word from God."

Beasley said the 2016 Pastors' Conference has been put together to address these spe-

cial issues facing the Church today. We cannot run; we must not hide; we must be the grace of God – Engage," he said.

Larry White, pastor of First Baptist Church, Cherokee Village, will open the conference with a time of focused prayer.

Pastors' Conference speakers are Tom Elliff, former president of the International Mission Board and founder of Living the Word Publica-

ABN announces 2016 Christmas card contest

LITTLE ROCK – Have you ever thought it would be cool to see your art on a greeting card? Here's your chance! The *Arkansas Baptist News* (ABN) is conducting its fifth annual Christmas card contest.

"We are excited to invite *Arkansas Baptist News* subscribers to submit their artwork and photographs for consideration," said Tim Yarbrough, ABN editor/executive director. "We look forward to receiving each entry and the creativity each represents."

The design must depict a religious Christmas scene and be an original artistic design or

an original photograph.

The winning design will be published in an upcoming edition of the ABN and will be used as the newspaper's official 2016 Christmas card, which is mailed to Southern Baptist entities and colleagues.

All entries must be received by Nov. 9 and will be judged by the ABN staff. The person with the winning entry will receive a \$100 gift certificate.



Entries must be emailed in high-quality format to abn@arkansasbaptist.org. Art or photographs too large to be

emailed may be submitted via mail on digital media to ABN Christmas Card Contest, 10 Remington Drive, Little Rock, AR 72204. Submissions become the property of the ABN and will not be returned.

Contest submissions will be accepted from all ages. Each entry should be accompanied

by a brief biography (100-200 words) and photo of the designer/artist or photographer.

Art or photographs submitted must be the artist's own original work or creation and become the property of the ABN for reproduction and distribution.

Contestants must currently be a member of an Arkansas Baptist church and be an ABN subscriber (or the child of a current subscriber if the contestant is under age 18) through church or individual plans. For more information visit arkansasbaptist.org/contest.

SYATP

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during the week of Sept. 25, designated the Global Week of Student Prayer, allowing for school calendars and holidays that may fall on Sept. 28 in other countries.

Additionally, SYATP organizers partnered with the Pure Flix Faith and Family Alliance ministry and ad hoc partners to kick off the national six-week "I Am Hope" evangelistic and discipleship movement targeting students. I Am Hope is inspired by the Pure Flix film

"I'm Not Ashamed," which portrays the life of Rachel Joy Scott, a 17-year-old student shot to death by classmates at Columbine High School after she publicly reaffirmed her faith in Christ.

SYATP national field director Doug Clark said the film, opening Oct. 21, honestly communicates Scott's faith struggle and can be a model for students living out their faith around the country.

"I would love to see a Rachel on every campus," Clark said. "When there's a student like that on a campus it is catalytic."

The annual SYATP event grew out of a 1990 Disciple-Now weekend when a small group of students prayed at flagpoles at different schools on a Saturday night. Inspired by the small event, youth leaders across Texas organized SYATP in 1990 and drew 45,000 students to prayer meetings in four states. By the next year, an estimated one million students gathered in prayer at flagpoles across the nation, according to the SYATP website.

While international reports are spotty, among foreign countries and territories that

already have sent Clark photos documenting their participation this year, he said, are South Korea, Guatemala, the Philippines, Guam and the Dominican Republic.

The event does not violate U.S. laws against prayer in schools, as all prayer is student-led, before school hours and outside of any school building, according to the SYATP website. The site encourages students to pray off campus if school administrators object to the event.

This story was compiled from reports by the Arkansas Baptist News and Baptist Press.

ABN Digest

Stories of interest
to Arkansas Baptists

Polygamists appeal to US Supreme Court

WASHINGTON (BP) – Polygamy is knocking at the door of the U.S. Supreme Court.

A polygamous family featured in the reality television show "Sister Wives" asked the justices Sept. 12 to review a lower-court ruling that had reversed a federal judge's decision in favor of the polygamists. The high court will decide in the months ahead whether to grant review and rule on the case.

Defenders of the biblical and historic view of marriage already were following the case and will continue to do so to see if the court's redefinition of marriage will extend beyond its incorporation of same-sex relationships. The justices legalized gay marriage in 2015.

R. Albert Mohler Jr., president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, pointed out Sept. 13 there "isn't any great groundswell of support" for legalizing polygamy but that could change quickly.

"Ten years ago, indeed even less than 10 years ago, there was no public groundswell in support of same-sex marriage," Mohler said on "The Briefing" podcast.

"That's how a moral revolution works," he said. "The groundswell doesn't exist. Then it is created by forces in the culture, including the academic arguments of the elites, the legal arguments of the lawyers, and, of course, how it is all filtered down to the public through public conversation and, of course, the arts, culture and entertainment as well."

The case began with a victory for Kody Brown and his four wives in 2013 when a federal judge in Utah, invalidated a portion of the state law that prohibits bigamy.

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

Editorial & Opinion

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

1 Peter 3:15 (NIV)

Stand up and vote your faith in November

In an increasingly secularized society, people of faith – in particular, evangelicals – don't always get their way.

And the two-party political system in our country doesn't allow for a lot of options when it comes to support of a particular candidate or party. It seems you're either "with them" or "against them."

While there are good and decent people in both parties, the polarization that exists between Democrats and Republicans could not be more pronounced as the country heads into the Nov. 8 election.

What is the source of this division? As believers in Jesus Christ, we have a clear answer.

"For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:12, ESV).

Pressing On

Tim Yarbrough
Phil. 3:14

After close observation, Christians can make some general judgments to help determine whom to vote for.

There are politicians who support and empower secular humanists and the war on our culture, family values and our faith, and there are those who resist it.

Politicians exist who stand for religious liberty and traditional Judeo-Christian values. They're easy to spot. They are the politicians who find themselves being ridiculed

and mocked by the progressive left, calling them bigoted, racist and "in the pocket" of the religious right.

I am convinced the upcoming election – and, more specifically, the person we will elect as president – may impact the lives of millions of Americans for generations to come. That not only includes you and me, but also our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Think about it. Isn't it time that we turned off our TV sets, quit focusing on what is said by and about the candidates – and "get under the hood" so to speak – to determine exactly what each presidential candidate and his/her party represents? Our faith and the future of our country demand our utmost attention to this matter.

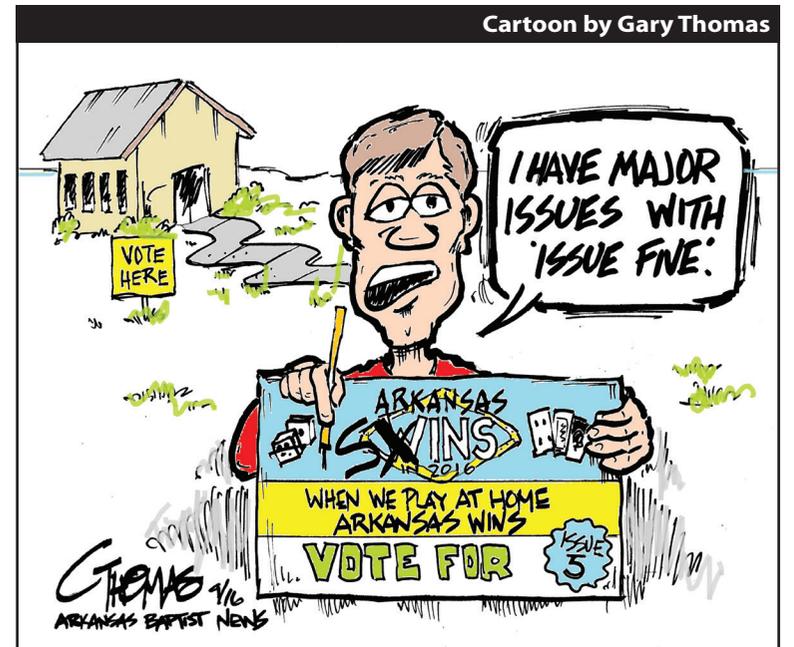
It's not hard to do. Both

the Democrat and Republican parties have published extensive party platforms outlining specifically what they champion and how they plan

to lead our country.

For the full text of the Democratic Party platform

See **VOTE FAITH** page 6



Government hostility for Christianity at unprecedented level

The phrases 'religious liberty' and 'religious freedom' will stand for nothing except hypocrisy so long as they remain code words for discrimination, intolerance, racism, sexism, homophobia, Islamophobia, Christian supremacy or any other form of intolerance," said Martin Castro, chairman of the U.S. Civil Rights Commission, as he introduced a report issued recently by the commission (See related story, Page 7).

The commission's report can best be summed up by its assertion that the protection

of the civil rights of groups it is charged with looking after, including the two "sexual minorities" (sexual orientation and gender identity) that it added without any constitutional or statutory

Faith & Ethics

Larry Page

authority, is of preeminent importance. The report then makes clear the implication that when those civil rights are in conflict with the fundamental, constitutionally guaranteed religious liberty rights – religious liberty rights must be surrendered.

Castro's commission is charged with reviewing fed-

eral laws and policies that have to do with discrimination and equal protection involving race, color, religion, age, sex, disability or national origin (again, it added illegally two new "sexual minority" groups). The commission submits its findings to the executive and legislative branches of government.

Castro added, "Religious liberty was never intended to give a veto power over the civil rights and civil liberties of others. However, today, as in the past, religion is being used as both a weapon and a shield by those seeking to deny others equality. We now see 'religious liberty' arguments sneaking their way

back into our political and constitutional discourse in an effort to undermine the rights of some Americans."

The first amendment to the U.S. Constitution was intended to require an even-handed treatment for people of faith and their churches and the government. The amendment's religious clause ensured that the government could not establish a state religion while at the same time guaranteeing the "free exercise" of faith.

Over the past six decades, there has been an erosion of religious liberties, as conventional wisdom regarding the proper role of the government regarding Christianity

has been twisted and recast. The loss of religious liberties is being driven by poorly reasoned and unsupportable federal court decisions. Too many jurists today have a strong compulsion to kowtow to political correctness, all the while diminishing well-established fundamental rights to religious freedom.

When myopic and agenda-driven agencies and bureaucrats like the Civil Rights Commission and Castro go rogue as they've done with this absurd report, real damage can be done. While the commission has no authority over the courts, Congress or

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Telling the story of
Arkansas Baptists since 1901

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

Toll-free 800-838-2272, ext. 5161
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How should Christians vote in this election?



Baptists Ask

Ken Gore

Voting is a fundamental and precious American right. If voting is something that model citizens do and if Christians are called to be model citizens (1 Pet. 2:12-17), then Christians should vote. However, how should Christians vote? While Christians must vote individually, believers collectively do well to consider the following ideas.

Christians should *mindfully* vote. Christians should research each candidate, regardless of office or party. They must cut through the rhetoric of the campaign and get to the main issues of the election. As they learn what these important issues are, they should consider what the Bible says on each issue. As best as they can, they should learn any incumbent's record and research any opponent's vision.

Christians should *prayerfully* vote. Prayer is more important than voting. Throughout the election season, Christians should pray for both incumbents and candidates that they may guide the country well in the positions they may receive. During this season of prayer, candidates and issues will often arise in a Christian's mind, and believers therefore can receive some further clarity when it is time to go to the polls.

Christians should *actively* vote. Once the election is over, the real work begins. If believers feel an issue needs further investigation, they should call, write or visit their elected officials. These officials will listen, and often they will respond. Christians might join a lobby, and others might run for office. It is a noble task to serve in government, and many fine Christians have done so.

Finally, Christians should *humbly* vote. Sometimes two believers in Christ, having researched, prayed and sought other wise counsel, can – and do – vote in entirely different ways in the same election. Such results are part of the democratic process, and Christians should be thankful for the opportunity.

Ken Gore is chairman of the department of Christian studies at Williams Baptist College.

Beauty in growth

Of all of my teenage years, I think I remember the first one the most. That year was one of awkward growth. My friends and I were caught up in the insecurities of being stuck between childhood and “grown.” Mentally, emotionally and physically, we were in-between, and we weren't quite sure how to handle it. For the most part, we were also each too absorbed in our own struggles to realize that we were not alone in our discomfort.

Looking back, I remember being surprised when my friends hinted at their insecurities and perceptions of themselves as being unattractive. I thought they were beautiful as they grew and changed and blossomed. In fact, I was often a bit envious of their beauty and stunned by the fact that they, too, were uncomfortable with where they were.

So, all together and yet individually, we marched toward that glorious status of “grown,” firmly believing that we could get past the growth process and claim the beauty, grace and security we thought we lacked.

If we had only known.

If we had only known that all of us shared the awkward insecurity. None of us were alone!

If we had only known that growth never ends. It just changes form.

If we had only known that we were beautiful, even in that in-between stage.

Perhaps if we had known, we would have handled that

awkward year differently. Perhaps we would have embraced the growth and taken the time to learn all we could in that strange phase of life. Or would we have?

Nearly three decades later, I am still growing, and I am surrounded by a body of believers who are also in the throes of continual growth. Yet, just like seventh grade girls, we still spend more time fussing about our insecurities than we do learning through our growth. We do not embrace the growing process. Instead, we shove our way through growth as if we just want to get past it – to be grown. Like insecure adolescents, we ignore the reality that true beauty lies in the growing itself.

As the bride of Christ, we are growing. We are becoming. We are being conformed into His likeness. In the process we may often feel as awkward, ugly and insecure as a brand new teenager. In reality, though, every day spent in growth is another day of beauty in Christ. Oh, may we never rush it. May we not fight it. May we not ignore the beauty of what God is accomplishing in us as individuals and as a body.

May we instead be hungry to learn all along the way, quick to applaud the beauty revealed in one another, bold to strengthen one another through the challenges, and quick to embrace the growth that comes directly from the hand of Christ Himself.

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



Uncovered Dish

Ann Hibbard

Effective use of announcement slides in church

Many churches across Arkansas utilize computer-generated slides made with programs such as PowerPoint and Keynote to promote events and special emphases. Slides can be a very effective means of communication, but only when properly constructed and properly utilized.

Here are some basic tips for effectively utilizing this form of communication:

1) **Never rely on slides as the primary source of communication.** They are a great way to get initial attention, but always use additional means of communication to go along with a slide. This does not mean that slides are not important; just make sure they have their proper place. This will make more sense in points to follow.

2) **Less is more.** A good rule of thumb for a slide is 12 words or less. The rule of thumb for outdoor billboard advertising is seven words or less. Direct people to a website, bulletin, newsletter, phone number or flier for more information.

3) **Promote a benefit more than the event.** Rather than the header saying, “Women's Retreat,” try something like “Ladies, it's time for a break!”

4) **Offer an immediate way to respond.** Say something like, “Register today at the welcome counter” or “Sign up by texting your name to 479-555-1212.”

5) **Reinforce the slide with a pulpit announcement.** While we all try to get away from pulpit announcements,

we have to remember that, when kept short and accompanied by a visual such as a slide, they really work well. A short 20-second announcement while showing a slide is eight times more effective than showing a slide alone and four times more effective than an announcement alone.

6) **Use good art.** If your slide looks cheesy, the event you are promoting will likewise be perceived as cheesy. Be sure that the digital images you use are high enough resolution that they remain crisp and clear when presented on the screen. Be sure that your color selections work well together. Make sure that you have enough contrast between your background and your words so it is not difficult to read.

7) **Keep it legal.** Remember that most of the images you find online are copyrighted. That means that you must get permission to use them. The safest and most convenient way to ensure that you do not break the law is to subscribe to an image service or find a service that offers free graphics for use. I use both a Christian service and a general marketplace service. This not only keeps us within the law but also saves a lot of searching time and helps to ensure that we use higher quality images.

As we raise the bar on the quality of our communication tools, we increase our effectiveness in equipping the saints and evangelizing the lost.

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



Leave a legacy through 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.



SERVING FLOOD VOLUNTEERS – Jerry and Jo Ann Starnes of Bellaire Baptist Church, Bellaire, serve red beans to Southern Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers at Zoar Baptist Church in Baton Rouge. Arkansas Baptist teams have been serving in Louisiana since flooding devastated much of the state. *Photo by Brian Blackwell, Louisiana Baptist Message*

VOTE FAITH

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visit democrats.org/party-platform. For the full text of the Republican Party platform visit gop.com/the-2016-republican-party-platform.

Key issues specifically identified in the party platform positions address human life, Planned Parenthood, judges, religious liberty, education/school choice, sex education, Obamacare, marriage, biomedical research and Iran.

While it isn't the policy of this publication to recommend a candidate, the platforms of the two major political parties are worthy of close inspection by believers committed to the cause of Jesus Christ.

The American Family Association has produced a helpful guide summarizing "10 key issues" from each party's platform. You may download the PDF via this link: afa.net/media/3618/party_platform_comparison.pdf.

While there is not enough space in this column to list all 10 key issues, here is an example of the differing positions each party lists regarding Planned Parenthood, along with a page number referencing where the subject is located in each party's platform:

Democrats: "We will continue to stand up to Republican efforts to defund Planned Parenthood health centers, which provide critical health care services to millions of people." (p. 37)

Republicans: "We oppose the use of public funds to perform or promote abortion or to fund organizations, like Planned Parenthood, so long as they provide or refer for elective abortions or sell fetal parts rather than provide health care." (p. 13)

Political pundits on TV often say when discussing the election, "Ask yourself, 'Am I better off today than I was four years ago?'"

In the past four years our country has witnessed a rise in many social ills, as well as the persecution of Christians, a redefinition of marriage, increased poverty, the growth of government, illegal immigration and frequency of domestic violence and terrorism.

Research, evaluate and pray. Then, "Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is" (Eph. 5:15-17, ESV).

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

We must be diligent in opposing these attacks on our religious liberties. Our energetic and robust witness for the gospel and our effective engagement with the culture are threatened by a curtailment of our God-given rights to proclaim His Word.

Larry Page is executive director of the Arkansas Faith and Ethics Council.

HOSTILITY

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the executive branch, it can influence them. The commission's findings can provide impetus to and cover for court decisions, executive orders and statutory enactments that chip away at our religious liberties.

Ouachita visit 'feels like home'

Each time I drive on to campus, I'm home." That's the sentiment many Ouachita Baptist University alumni share when they visit their alma mater.

Sometimes it may be to attend an event, to speak to a class or simply to drive through on vacation, but each visit feels like coming home no matter how many years it has been since their graduation.

I experienced this myself when my wife, Emily, and I moved to Arkadelphia to be closer to family in 2011. If my route of travel around Arkadelphia brought me anywhere near campus, I would have to take a quick drive around campus, windows down – taking in what I still believe is the most beautiful place on earth. Now, as I have the privilege of working at Ouachita, each day I'm home.

It may be the fact that 97 percent of our students live

on Ouachita's close-knit residential campus so they build deep, lasting relationships, or it could be the low 12-to-1 student-to-faculty ratio, creating strong learning and

mentoring relationships in the classroom, or it could be the hours that hundreds of students

spend practicing for Tiger Tunes each fall. Whatever the reasons, in four years Ouachitians become family.

As alumni director, I meet with other university alumni professionals in the state each year to share ideas and encouragement.

A couple of years ago, an alumni director at a large state school asked me how we received so many class note updates for our alumni magazine, sharing that they have to beg people to send them in.

I explained that our alumni are so close they can't wait to read and see what their classmates are up to and that they want to share their life updates, baby pictures, wedding

photos and job updates as well.

While some alumni have many reasons and opportunities to return to campus, homecoming is often the best time to see as many friends and classmates as possible.

Tiger Tunes, the homecoming football game, reunion dinners and more create space for our alumni to reconnect and enjoy being home.

This year, our alumni, former students and friends will gather on campus Oct. 12-15. For a full list of activities, including a featured concert by "The Voice" finalist Barrett Baber, a 2002 graduate, and special guest "Chewbacca Mom" Candace Payne, a 2001 graduate, visit www.ouachitaalumni.org.

Whether you're an alumnus, a longtime supporter or a future student, we invite you to come home to Ouachita.

Jon Merryman, a 2000 Ouachita graduate, is director of Ouachita alumni.



Ouachita Baptist

Jon Merryman

Lift up the servants of God

With October being Pastor-Staff Appreciation Month, I could not help but research the true

meaning of the term appreciation. The dictionary defines appreciation

as "a feeling of being grateful for something; an ability to understand the worth, quality, or importance of something; an ability to appreciate something."

Simply put, appreciation is having admiration for others and communicating your support to them. This can be done by taking the time to make them feel wanted and special, by using the fruit of God's work in you to encourage and uplift them. By valuing your pastor and staff, you take the focus off you and place it on God's purpose and direction for your rela-

relationship. Hopefully, this is fueled from our heartfelt thanks to God for what we have and for what He has done.



Baptist Foundation

Bobby Thomas

The act of appreciation ultimately allows us to give to and value others with

respect and honor just as God has intended.

On the heels of the statewide prayer gathering for pastors and all ministers, I was encouraged by reading this statement from the Arkansas Baptist State Convention Executive Director J.D. "Sonny" Tucker, who said, "The most important thing that you can do for your pastor/staff and their families is to pray for them." Surely, we can all commit to pray for our pastor and staff this month. As we pray, my hope is to do so in a way that honors the following Scripture: "We give thanks to God always for all

of you, mentioning you in our prayers, remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 1:2-3, ESV).

The Arkansas Baptist Foundation is committed to praying for and serving those who are in denominational service in our state. To show our appreciation, we'd like to remind those individuals that the foundation provides free estate planning to those in denominational service, including documents such as trusts, wills and powers of attorney.

Thank you to those in denominational service throughout our state. We are honored by the opportunity to serve you.

Bobby Thomas is president of the Arkansas Baptist Foundation.

New US government report may endanger religious liberty

WASHINGTON (BP) - Religious liberty as Americans have known it throughout their history will suffer a critical setback if a new report by the country's top civil rights panel is followed, say Southern Baptist and other advocates for the First Amendment freedom.

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (USCCR) declared in its Sept. 7 report protections to ensure nondiscrimination "are of preeminent importance in American jurisprudence" and religious exemptions from safeguards for such classifications as sexual orientation and gender identity "significantly infringe upon" those civil rights guarantees.

USCCR Chairman Martin Castro added to the concerns of religious freedom advocates when he wrote in a statement included in the report, "The

phrases 'religious liberty' and 'religious freedom' will stand for nothing except hypocrisy so long as they remain code words for discrimination, intolerance, racism, sexism, homophobia, Islamophobia, Christian supremacy or any form of intolerance."

With such language, the commission and its chairman indicated the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people should prevail when they clash with the rights of Americans who have religious conscience objections.

The legal and legislative advances of the LGBT and same-sex marriage movements have prompted debate for at least the last decade on how the conflict between religious liberty and what has become known as sexual liberty should be resolved. The USCCR is on record favoring sexual liberty.

Russell Moore, president of

the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, called the USCCR language on religious freedom a "logical, moral and political disaster."

"For this administration to argue that religious liberty is merely a euphemism for unlawful discrimination demonstrates how deeply entrenched our federal government is in a culture war mentality against religious dissidents," Moore told Baptist Press in written comments.

"Freedom of conscience isn't privilege or luxury: It is the first freedom, without which no other freedom can exist," Moore said. "This hostile attitude toward tens of millions of law-abiding Americans is tragic, and my prayer is that it would quickly give way to a recognition that soul freedom is worth defending for all."

R. Albert Mohler Jr., presi-



dent of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and a popular cultural commentator, described the report as a "bombshell" that constitutes "a moral revolution that is taking place right before our eyes."

The USCCR has issued "a report, with the federal government's authority, clearly stating that, contrary to the Constitution of the United States, religious liberty is going to have to take a back seat to erotic liberty or sexual liberty," Mohler said on his Sept. 15 podcast, "The Briefing."

When the USCCR's chairman "puts the phrases 'religious freedom' and 'religious liberty' in scare quotes, that's a clear indication that he intends to consign them, regardless of the U.S. Constitution, to the dustbin of history," Mohler said.

The USCCR released its report - titled "Peaceful Coexistence: Reconciling Nondiscrimination Principles With Civil Liberties" - more than three years after it held a hearing on the legal clash. The 306-page report followed a March 2013 briefing involving legal experts on different sides of the issue.

In its findings, the commission endorsed briefing panelists' statements in support of other findings undoubtedly of concern to religious freedom defenders, including:

- "A doctrine that distinguishes between beliefs (which should be protected) and con-

duct (which should conform to the law) is fairer and easier to apply;

- "Third parties, such as employees, should not be forced to live under the religious doctrines of their employers [unless the employer is allowed to impose such constraints by virtue of the ministerial exemption];

- "A basic [civil] right as important as the freedom to marry should not be subject to religious beliefs;

- "Even a widely accepted doctrine such as the ministerial exemption should be subject to review as to whether church employees have religious duties."

In addition to its findings, the USCCR made recommendations narrowing religious liberty protections. It said courts, legislators and policy-makers "must tailor religious exceptions to civil liberties and civil rights protections as narrowly as applicable law requires."

The commission also called for the federal government to consider clarifying that the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA) "creates First Amendment Free Exercise Clause rights only for individuals and religious institutions and only to the extent that they do not unduly burden civil liberties and civil rights protections against status-based discrimination." It also urged states to adopt similar amendments to their RFRA-like laws.

Letters to the Editor

Alcohol and the church pastor

I read your article in the ABN on alcohol. The younger generation of church planters stated the use of alcohol is a non-issue. I beg to differ. Ask those who struggle every day with this problem. I know firsthand what alcohol will do to lives, families and, yes, churches. One drink will not hurt, right? Well, can one match destroy a forest?

Proverbs 20:1 states wine is a mockery. Don't be fooled. God will not be mocked. Whatsoever we sow we will reap.

We, as Christians, seek God for guidance and strength. Who do the lost go to? The Church. If the leaders and members are partaking of the worldly things, where do the lost go for hope?

In Matthew, Jesus' disciples told Him He had offended the Pharisees by His words. Jesus said the Pharisees were the blind leading the blind into the ditch. How many lost are we leading astray by our blindness to the importance of God's Word? We are ambassadors for Christ and will be held accountable for those we lead astray. Whom should we

offend - man or God? We are supposed to be a holy people set apart from the world and not stumbling blocks. There's nothing holy about alcohol except the hole it places in people's lives.

God has chosen pastors as leaders. Read 1 Timothy 3:2-7. Pastors are not perfect, as none of us are. But their qualifications are specific. We need to pray for our pastors. Alcohol is a mighty tool Satan uses to destroy man and Christ's church.

Don't fall victim to his deceit. Read 2 Corinthians. Alcohol is an idol to many. Please pray about this. Allow the Holy Spirit to open your eyes to the truth. One wrong decision can ruin the lives of many Christians and many lost seeking help. Stay firm in God's Word.

Linda Nelson
Marmaduke

The choice of a president

The choice of our presidential support and vote reflects the health and outcome of our nation.

You may personally not really like either of the choices we have or you may be enthusiastic about one of our choices.

At least two times; once in our Baptist newspaper and at least once in our local newspaper, it told of Donald Trump's meeting with evangelical ministers.

The first meeting was at his invitation of, I believe it was, around 1,000 ministers. At the meeting Trump could ask questions and the visiting pastors could ask Trump questions.

I do not look at this as a political rally as was suggested in a recent letter to the editor published in the *Arkansas Baptist News*.

I see it as an opportunity for each to ask questions and learn other's thoughts.

It also was a way to invite God into this equation.

Maybe none measure up to your specifications but observe and see who you think may want to do their best for God and people and pray for that person to have the strength and courage to ask God's will and then to be our next president!

If the candidate agrees with Christian principles, then we as Christians will truly have a friend in the White House.

Imogene Hammond
Kensett

CALL

continued from page one

the city of Kenai. As they labored, the men “witnessed to people as they passed by to see what was being done,” pastor Brown said.

Still other men worked on an addition to College Heights Baptist Church in Soldotna, while others worked on homes of church members.

The mission trip was a “great adventure,” said the pastor, who added that he hoped members from his church could go on another mission trip to Alaska in the future.

First Baptist Church, Fordyce. Destination: Haiti

With a theme, Go Be Love, a team of missionaries from First Baptist Church, Fordyce, served for a week in July at Hope Rising Children’s Home in Haiti, “a place that you can never fully prepare yourself for,” according to team member Madeline Sisson, who was on her third mission trip to the tiny impoverished country. For the past three years, the church has sent six teams to serve at the children’s home.

“No matter how hard I try

to prepare myself – mentally, emotionally, spiritually – it never seems like enough. I still feel overwhelmed by the immense amount of poverty. Haiti is extremely broken. By going, I feel like I am able to slowly put tiny little pieces back together.”

This summer, the team worked on roofing the new school, painting classrooms, caring for infants and conducting children’s church during Sunday morning worship, a kid’s club in the community and door-to-door evangelism.

“God calls us all to serve. Of course, He doesn’t call everyone to every place, but where and when He calls, you just know,” said team member Rachel Graves, who took her 11-year-old daughter, Emily, with her on the summer mission trip.

“I see the need and the purpose for Hope Rising Children’s Home, and I feel honored that God chooses to use me there,” she said. “Children are my heart so Haiti is a natural fit with its multitude of orphans. They are God’s children, and He wants them to know His Son, Jesus Christ. We have to share the love with them.”

After three mission trips

to Haiti, Sission said, “I love Haiti. It is like a piece of me now.”

First Baptist Church, Rose Bud. Destination: Navajo, New Mexico

At 4 a.m. on July 23, a team of 32 First Baptist Church, Rose Bud, members – ranging in age from 8 years old to 80 years old – boarded the church bus for a 22-hour ride to Navajo, N.M., where they would “share the love of God with Navajo children and their families through a block party and a four-day vacation Bible school,” said Kathy Moss, ministry assistant at the church.

The team focused its efforts with Navajo Baptist Church, a congregation averaging an attendance of 40 to 60 on the Navajo Indian Reservation,



Navajo children smile enthusiastically as a member from First Baptist Church, Rose Bud, share God’s love with them.

where unemployment, alcoholism and suicide rates are high.

On Sunday evening, July 24, the team conducted a

block party, complete with a bounce house, volleyball, face painting, water games and food. “The block party gave



Eleven-year-old Emily Graves, from First Baptist Church, Fordyce, shows love to a child at Hope Rising Children’s Home in Haiti.

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us a chance to build relationships with the families and children and invite them to come back the next night to Bible school," said Moss.

During vacation Bible school, high attendance for the week was 163, with an average attendance of approximately 130. Some of the children attending had never heard about Jesus. By week's end, 40 children had prayed to receive Christ, according to Moss.

Additionally, the team worked in a food pantry and clothes closet at the church, providing donations from students to keep the food pantry stocked and adding clothing racks to the clothes closet.

"God truly blessed us to be able to be His hands and feet," said Moss. "We came home exhausted but full of love for the Navajo people we met and

full of joy for our new Navajo brothers and sisters in Christ."

First Baptist Church, Mayflower. Destination: Casper, Wyoming

A summer 2016 mission trip for a team of 21 members from First Baptist Church, Mayflower, actually first began to take shape in December 2015 when Danny Smith, pastor of Crosspoint Baptist Church, Greenbrier, accepted a call from God to plant a church in Casper, Wyo., where an estimated 90 percent of residents are not Christians.

Smith and his family moved to Wyoming, where he began serving as an apprentice in January 2016 at WindCity Church, Casper, in preparation for planting Providence Fellowship there. At WindCity Church, Smith has been work-



Volunteers from First Baptist Church, Mayflower, traveled to Casper, Wyo., where they helped former Arkansan Danny Smith in his church planting efforts.

ing alongside former Arkansan Chris Sims, who leads Forever West Church Planting Network, which seeks to raise up church planters for Wyoming.

A short seven months later,

the First Baptist Church, Mayflower, team - consisting of families and individuals, including children and youth - arrived in Casper to give Smith a helping hand.

Before arriving in Casper, however, the team made a stop in Denver, Colo., where they met with church planters Corbin and Allie Hobbs, formerly of Rogers, who are planting a church in Denver, and also John Howeth, church planting catalyst for North American Mission Board, who educated the team on church planting and various ways to partner with church planters.

Once in Casper, the team helped Smith through canvassing, surveying, trash pick-up,

prayerwalking and hosting a block party in the area where Providence Fellowship will be planted.

The activities gave the team a better understanding of church planting and difficulties endured by church planters as they fulfill their call, according to David Fox, pastor, First Baptist, Mayflower.

"Through our conversations, we were able to pray for hurting individuals and point them to Jesus. Relationships are key in church planting, and the Lord provided us with several relationships and contacts for Danny and his team to pursue," said Fox.

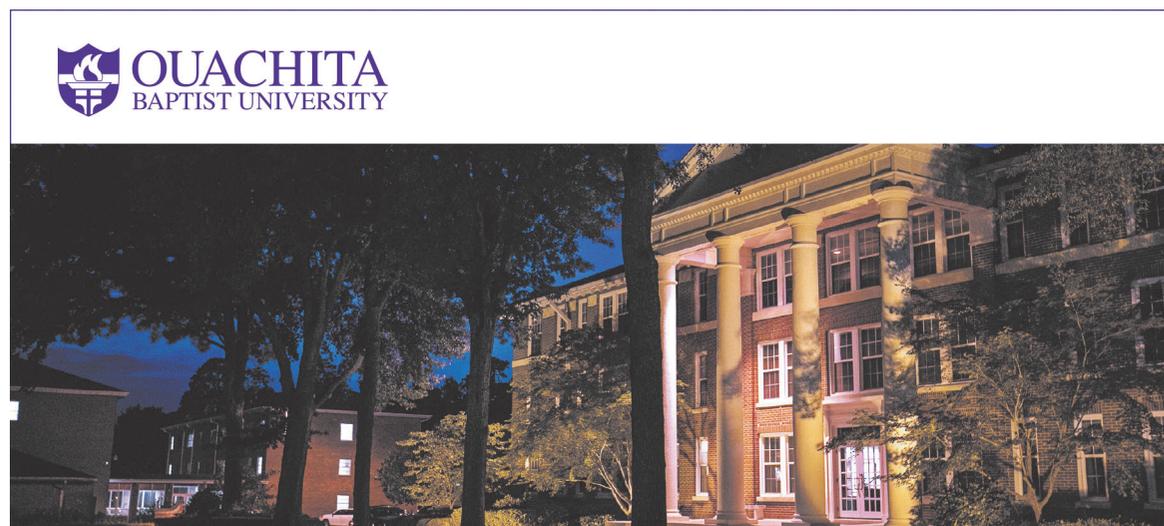
Contact Margaret Colson at margaret@arkansasbaptist.org.

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Ouachita President Ben Sells invites Arkansas Baptists to provide your input as we dream a larger dream for Ouachita.

As the university enters a new strategic planning process, help us evaluate what should not change about Ouachita and what should change.

Share your voice by completing the brief survey at www.obu.edu/largerdream by Monday, October 31.

Thank you for your partnership and support.



Fourteen members from Freeman Heights Baptist Church, Berryville, traveled on a mission trip all the way from Arkansas to Alaska so that they "could reach more Alaskans for Christ," said Alan Brown, Freeman Heights senior pastor.

ABN

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Two, four, six, eight! Who do we appreciate?

Kelly Jones
FBC, Harrisburg

GROWING UP in the Arkansas Delta town of Helena, I, like many kids, played every sport the local athletic association offered. One aspect of my pee wee football career I remember well (besides the time I was penalized on my very first touchdown because I spiked the ball!) was the cheerleaders. Yes, I was obviously drawn to them because they were cheerleaders; however, one particular cheer they would chant has stuck with me all these years: “Two, four, six, eight! Who do we appreciate?” As corny as that cheer is, it was special because the players knew someone appreciated them and was cheering for them.

Pastors, by virtue of being in leadership, get their fair share of criticism. Therefore, they need to be encouraged regularly, and they need to know they are appreciated. One of the ways our churches can show their appreciation to their pastors and other ministry staff is by how they take care of them financially.

Paul, in writing to Timothy about “how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God” (1 Tim. 3:15, NASB) gave instructions regarding the compensation of God’s servants. In 1 Timothy 5:17 (NASB), he wrote, “The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.” “Elders,” or pastors, are given a great responsibility of presiding over the ministry of God’s church. Those who do well at that task are worthy of “double honor.” Warren Wiersbe says this term means

“generous pay,” with “honor” being used in the sense of an honorarium.

When a church determines what level of compensation it can afford to pay to its staff, it is best to err on the side of generosity. I’m not saying a church needs to make its pastor the richest man in town, but a church should make sure he is adequately compensated. Sadly, many churches have adopted some pretty poor (pardon the pun) attitudes regarding how staffs are compensated. Some have the mentality of “Lord, You keep him humble, and we’ll keep him poor,” or “Preachers only work two days a week anyway!” I’m convinced many churches have absolutely no idea the amount of work involved in ministry. They have no idea of the hours spent preparing sermons/lessons, visiting hospitals, responding to calls/text messages or the hours they lay awake at night praying for those to whom they minister or worrying about a situation they are dealing with at the church.

I know a pastor who had to track down the church treasurer each week in order to get his paycheck. Sometimes this meant even having to go by the treasurer’s house. Before the treasurer would give him the check, he would ask the pastor if he felt like he had earned it. In 1 Timothy 5:18b (NASB) Paul wrote, “The laborer is worthy of his wages.” Church, your pastor is worthy of his wages. Please do not be the church that falls short in appreciating your pastor, especially financially. Two, four, six, eight! Who do we appreciate? Pastors and church staff!

Kelly Jones is pastor of First Baptist Church in Harrisburg.

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OCTOBER 2016

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140 attend first 'Women's Leadership University'

CONWAY - More than 140 women's ministry leaders from throughout Arkansas attended the first Women's Leadership

University at Second Baptist Church in Conway on Sept. 10. Sponsored by the Arkan-

sas Baptist State Convention (ABSC), the one-day event had a two-fold purpose. The first purpose was to equip

women's ministry leaders with cutting-edge strategies relevant to women of all ages and stages of life.

Topics for the day included: Generations: Ministry through the Ages, Developing Personal Time with Jesus, Defining Purpose and Casting Vision in Your Women's Ministry, Involving Other Women in Ministry, and Leadership as a Woman in the Local Church. Chris Adams, lead women's ministry specialist from LifeWay Christian Resources, served as keynote speaker.



Andrea Lennon (left), women's ministry specialist, Arkansas Baptist State Convention, spends times with Chris Adams, senior lead women's ministry specialist, LifeWay Christian Resources, at Arkansas Baptists' first Women's Leadership University, Sept. 10.

provide a time of networking among Arkansas Baptist women's ministry leaders.

Roundtable discussions were held throughout the day to allow women to process and apply the information to their ministry settings, said Andrea Lennon, women's ministry specialist, evangelism and church health team, ABSC.

Arkansas Baptists' 2017 women's ministry calendar is available at www.absc.org/women. For more information or to be added to the women's ministry distribution list, please email Lennon at alennon@absc.org.

The second purpose was to

at www.absc.org/women. For more information or to be added to the women's ministry distribution list, please email Lennon at alennon@absc.org.



Participants enjoy roundtable discussions at Arkansas Baptists' first Women's Leadership University held at Second Baptist Church, Conway.

2016 ABSC *Engage* Pastors' Conference

Monday, Oct. 24
at Immanuel Baptist Church,
Little Rock



Elliff



Jacobs



Page



Dance



Meador



Floyd



Beasley

Morning Session - 10 a.m.

Tom Elliff, founder, Living in the Word Publications (Oklahoma City, OK)

Willie Jacobs, Arkansas Baptist State Convention church planting team member (Little Rock, AR)

Afternoon Session - 1:30 p.m.

Larry Page, executive director of the Arkansas Faith and Ethics Council (Little Rock, AR)

Election of Officers

Mark Dance, LifeWay Christian Resources (Nashville, TN)

John Meador, Senior Pastor, First Baptist Church (Eules, TX)

Evening Session - 6:30 p.m.

Ronnie Floyd, pastor of Cross Church in northwest Arkansas and immediate past president of the Southern Baptist Convention (Northwest Arkansas)

Tom Elliff

For more information contact Manley Beasley Jr., 2016 Pastors' Conference president, at mbeasley@hotspringsbaptist.org.

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Obituaries

Herbert Holley, 89, of Pine Bluff, died Sept. 16.



He was born in Daviston, Ala.

Holley earned a master's degree in religion from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary in New Orleans, La.

He served in the U. S. Navy near the end of World War II.

Holley was a Southern Baptist minister for many years, most recently serving as a chaplain for the Arkansas Department of Corrections.

He was preceded in death by a son, three brothers and two sisters.

Survivors include his wife, Barbara Holley, a daughter, two sons, two step-daughters, a stepson and eight grandchildren.

A memorial service was held Sept. 21 at Ralph Robinson and Son Funeral Home in Pine Bluff.

Juanita Dadisman Sandford, 90, of Arkadelphia, died at home on Sept. 14.



Her husband, Herman Sandford, preceded her in death on July 11. She is also preceded in death by one grandson.

Sandford is survived by

three daughters, five grandchildren, ten great-grandchildren and two great, great-grandchildren.

Sandford is a graduate of Baylor University in Waco, Texas, where she also received a master's degree in sociology.

Both Sandford and her husband were on faculty at Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia.

Her passion for anthropology, as well as sociology, led her to offer a special class in physical anthropology at the family home to a small group of students.

Funeral services were held Sept. 20 at Ruggles-Wilcox Funeral Chapel in Arkadelphia, followed by burial in Rest Haven Memorial Gardens in Arkadelphia.

Ann Elise Kennedy of Little Rock died Sept. 1.

Kennedy was a graduate of Southern Arkansas University in Magnolia.



She began her teaching career in Temple, Texas and also taught in Ashdown.

In 1980, Kennedy returned to Little Rock where, over a 30-year period, she was employed at Global Manufacturing, Baptist Medical Center, Arkansas Children's Hospital and Immanuel Baptist Church.

More recently, she became

certified as a veterinary tech.

Kennedy was a member of Immanuel Baptist Church in Little Rock where she had worked with the single adult ministry and was a member of the sanctuary choir.

She is survived by her mother. She was preceded in death by her brother and father.

Burial took place Sept. 7 at Pinecrest Memorial Park in Little Rock, followed by a memorial service at Immanuel Baptist Church in Little Rock.

Pebble Miller Wallace, 85, of Little Rock, died Sept. 26.

Wallace received a master's degree in elementary education. She taught school in Pine Bluff and Little Rock.

Wallace was a member of First Baptist Church in Little Rock.



She was also a member of the Arkansas Retired Teachers Association.

Wallace introduced thousands of kids to Jesus through her work with GA's, Bible drills, more than 30 years of teaching at Baptist summer camps, Sunbeams, Sunday school classes, child care in disaster relief, mission projects in Guatemala and Switzerland and elsewhere.

Wallace was preceded in death by four sisters and two brothers.

She is survived by her husband, John J. Wallace, daughter, Linda Tapson, son-in-law, Mitch Tapson, three granddaughters, eight great-grandchildren, and one sister.

Funeral services were held Sept. 29 at Buie Funeral Home in Rison. Burial followed at Rowell Cemetery near Rison.

Church life

Kearney Baptist Church in Redfield will hold revival services Oct. 9-12. Harvey Hibner is guest speaker, and the Lisemby family of Kingsland will provide special music Mon.-Wed., Oct. 10-12. Everyone is invited to attend.

On the move

Keith Moore is serving as pastor of Southern Heights Baptist Church in Berryville, coming from First Baptist Church, Cushing, Okla.

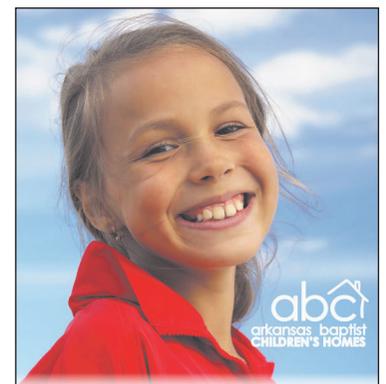
Mark Harris is serving as pastor of Southside Baptist Church in Hamburg.

Danny Griffin is serving as pastor of Corinth Baptist Church in Clinton.

Frank Henson is serving as pastor of Mt. Bethel Baptist Church in Arkadelphia.

David Bowen is serving as pastor of First Baptist Church in Prescott.

William Piercy has retired as pastor of Blackwater Baptist Church in Manila.



Baptist Home for Children, Monticello.

■ Case manager needed:

This full-time position includes salary, medical insurance, life insurance and paid leave. A bachelor's degree in a human services field or two years human services experience and a non-related bachelor's degree is required. Contact Randy Luper at 870.367.5358 or rluper@abchomes.org

Emergency Receiving Home, Judsonia.

■ Houseparent needed:

Contact: Derek Brown at (501) 455-8554 or dbrown@abchomes.org. This relief houseparent position includes salary, medical and life insurance and paid leave.



Read more news and features on our new website at arkansasbaptist.org

Classifieds

PASTOR

The congregation of Cross Keys Baptist Church is prayerfully looking for a **bi-vocational senior pastor**. We are poised to follow a godly and dynamic shepherd who understands and upholds 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 and are accepting resumes through December 1, 2016. Respond online at: pastorsearch@crosskeysbaptistchurch.org or send hard copies to us at 14255 New Halls Ferry Road, Florissant, MO 63033.

Potosi Southern Baptist Church is seeking a **full-time pastor** for a mission minded church affiliated with SBC and MBC. Please respond by November 1, 2016. Mail resume to: Search Committee, 10165 West State Highway 8, Potosi, Mo. 63664 or PSBCPastorSearch@gmail.com.

First Baptist Church, Vandervoort, in Ouachita

Baptist Association, is accepting resumes for **full-time pastor**. Email resume to beckie.apple@tyson.com.

Shilo 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 Southern Baptist Church, Bearden, AR, is seeking a **full-time/bi-vocational pastor**. Send letter/resume to PO Box 449, Bearden, AR 71720, or email Fsbcc@fsbccbearden.com. ATTN: Pastor Search Committee.

First Baptist Church of Heber Springs is in search for a **senior pastor**. Please send resume with references to: Search Team, First Baptist Church of Heber Springs, 201 N. 4th St., Heber Springs, AR 72543 Email: fbcheber@gmail.com.

Accepting applications for **bi-vocational**

pastor. Resume to Emmanuel Baptist, 4315 NCR 535, Blytheville, AR 72315.

FBC Bellefonte is searching for a **bi-vocational pastor**. We are a fundamental, conservative, traditional worship rural church in the Ozarks. Send resume to jpeslinger@icloud.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

YOUTH: FBC Siloam Springs, AR is seeking God's will for a **f/t salaried youth pastor**, licensed (preferably ordained) and Southern

Baptist. Please send your resume to FBC Youth Pastor Search Committee, 2000 Dawn Hill Road, Siloam Springs, AR 72761 or email to searchteam@fbcsiloam.com.

Union Baptist Church, El Dorado, is prayerfully seeking a **bi-vocational music minister**. Please send resume and DVD/link to Jonathan Morris, 144 Crain City Rd, El Dorado, AR 71730, or email jmorris.ubc@gmail.com.

Cornerstone Baptist Church is seeking a **full-time youth minister**. Please send resumes to 3900 Union Road, Texarkana, AR 71854 or e-mail to csbaptist@aol.com.

Beebe First Baptist Church is accepting resumes for a **full-time minister of music and education**. Please send resume to PO Box 67, Beebe, AR 72012 or email bhall@fb-beebe.com.

Cocklebur Baptist in Ward is seeking a bi-vocational church **worship leader**. Ap-

plicants would need to be available for Sunday and Wednesday evening worship services. All resumes need to be submitted by October 15, 2016, to: cbc4138@gmail.com.

Small church needs **music director**. Sundays only. Contact sulliglenda@yahoo.com if interested.

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@soaringwingsranch.com or visit www.swranch.org.

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.

Looking to fill a staff position at your church?

Visit arkansasbaptist.org/ad to submit your classified!

Parsons entertains at WBC's 3rd Golden Age Conf.

WALNUT RIDGE – Singer and songwriter Squire Parsons performed “Sweet Beulah Land” and other well-known songs from his repertoire at the third annual Golden Age Conference Thursday, Sept. 22. Nearly 500 senior adults attended the conference at Williams Baptist College (WBC).

“It’s been an extremely positive, encouraging day for our senior adults across northeast

Arkansas. I think Squire connected with our seniors, and it was a very enjoyable time for them,” said David White, associational missionary for Greene County Baptist Association.

The event was sponsored by Baptist associations across northeast Arkansas. Associations involved in the conference included: Black River, Current-Gaines, Greene

County, Mississippi County, Mt. Zion, Rocky Bayou, Tri-County and Trinity. The Arkansas Baptist State Convention and the Arkansas Baptist Foundation were also sponsors.

Parsons was the headliner of this year’s conference, performing in both the morning and afternoon sessions. The Southern gospel artist and Dove Award nominee was

a member of the Kingsmen Quartet before launching his successful solo career in 1979.

“The day has been a big success all around. The crowd was great, and Squire Parsons made it a very meaningful time,” said WBC President Tom Jones. “The Golden Age Conference is a joy for us to host, and we thank these Baptist associations for making us a part of it.”



Parsons

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WBC adds new athletic programs

WALNUT RIDGE – The Williams Baptist College (WBC) athletic department is growing, with four new varsity sports and one new junior varsity sport on the way for the 2017-18 school year.

Men’s and women’s swimming as well as men’s and women’s golf have been added to the varsity sports roster, with a junior varsity men’s basketball squad also set for development.

“We are excited about the opportunity to expand our athletic department. This will give 75 young people the opportunity not only to compete at the collegiate level but also to attend our college and re-

ceive a Christian education,” said Jeff Rider, WBC’s director of athletics.

Williams also welcomes two new head coaches to the athletic staff. Lee Moore will take the helm of the swimming program, and Ty Jones will serve as the head men’s and women’s golf coach.

Moore returns to Williams after serving as the head volleyball coach in 2014-15, compiling a 19-15 season. He will begin recruiting for the swimming programs immediately and will also serve as a professor in the physical education department.

“I am excited to be a part of WBC’s new swimming pro-

gram,” said Moore. “I hope to draw athletes from local schools as well as from across the state and country. Our focus will definitely be on pushing athletes to take care of the small things and let those pieces complete the big team picture. As always, the greatest value of an athletic experience at Williams is the chance to be able to see Christ at the center of all we do.”

The swim team will practice at the Pocahontas Aquatic Center in Pocahontas, located 11 miles from campus.

Jones is a 2010 WBC alumnus and will resurrect the Eagles golf programs. Williams participated in golf from 1993-2003, and Jones will be responsible for bringing back the once-promising program.

The team will practice at the Rolling Hills Country Club in Pocahontas, located about 14 miles from campus.

With the addition of the five programs, the Eagles athletic program will compete in 18 varsity intercollegiate sports and three junior varsity programs. Men’s programs at Williams will include baseball, basketball, cross country, golf, soccer, swimming, indoor and outdoor track and field, and wrestling, as well as junior varsity baseball and basketball.

WBC’s expanded roster of women’s varsity sports will include basketball, cross country, golf, soccer, softball, swimming, indoor and outdoor track and field, and volleyball, as well as junior varsity softball.

Williams competes in the American Midwest Conference of the NAIA in all the sports, except for swimming, which has no conference affiliation.

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Women & Faith

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

Proverbs 31:30 (HCSB)

Cornerstone to mentor at-risk women

NEWPORT - Cornerstone Transition Home, a faith-based rehabilitative facility, will soon house and mentor up to 30 eligible women on parole from McPherson Women's Prison.

Championed by Jennifer Smith, house coordinator of Cornerstone, and Bethany Davis, director, the mission of the ministry to at-risk women exiting the penal system began when God combined their two testimonies to reach the unmet evangelical need in Newport, the women said.

Smith went to McPherson as an inmate in 2000, uninterested in anything Christ had to offer. Not long into her time in prison, God intervened in her life, she said.

"A year into my 12-year sentence, the Lord met me on the floor in my prison cell. There, he changed the direction of my life. The next 11 years, McPherson became my mission field," said Smith.

As she continued serving the women of the prison while being incarcerated, Smith noticed an ongoing issue that was unknown and unaddressed by local Christians outside the prison walls.

"I continued to hear the stories of women who had no godly support system on the outside. They would leave and return because their familiar associations pulled them back into the old-world patterns of drugs. Seeing the revolving door open with unsuccessful re-entry, the Lord began to birth the desire for a faith-based transitional home."

In 2014, after her release, Smith began serving as an Arkansas Baptist State Convention (ABSC) chaplain in McPherson. In that role she met then-teacher Davis, and shared with her the vision of a transitional home for released women inmates.

Davis began working with the incarcerated population in 1998 as a pre-GED teacher. Her mission work for the penal system was sporadic and varied for several years until she began teaching English



Cornerstone Transition Home, a faith-based rehabilitation facility for women based in Newport, is set to open soon pending a license from Arkansas Community Correction. The facility will work with at-risk women exiting the McPherson Women's Prison.

for Arkansas State University Newport in 2011, giving her the opportunity to volunteer consistently at McPherson.

"Jennifer began to share the dream God placed on her heart for a transitional home. I thought that would be a great plan - for her," said Davis.

"However, the Lord soon began calling me out. Jennifer and I had our first meeting at my kitchen table in February of this year. We prayed for God's direction. From there, we shared the need with many others. In May, I turned in my resignation after 18 years in education and accepted the call to be



Davis

director of Cornerstone." After making a down-payment on the 7,000-square-foot home on June 2 of this year, Smith and Davis finally had an established place to minister to and mentor the women parolees from McPherson. Many of the members of Smith and Davis' church, Central Baptist Church in Diaz, have assisted in the ministry and are helping to prepare the building.

The goal of Cornerstone is to rehabilitate recently paroled women through ministry and mentoring in a godly environment so that they may become productive members of society rather than repeat offenders.

"Cornerstone Transition Home is a faith-based home for women who are re-entering society. Our vision is to see women's faith established in God's Word and their hope

for a successful future built as they follow God's pattern for their lives. We know that this is possible because of Christ's redeeming love that transforms lives," said Smith.

"Through structure, accountability and responsibility, women will have the chance to have their fundamental needs met as they learn life skills and re-engage in society. Character development, money management, parenting classes, substance abuse, anger resolution and Bible teaching will be some of the many things they are taught during their two-month to 12-month stay."

To qualify as eligible for Cornerstone, women approved for parole from McPherson Women's Prison will undergo screening through a careful application process. Cornerstone does not accept sex offenders because of its proximity to local schools.

More than 40 percent of inmates released from Arkansas correctional facilities return to prison within three years because of repeat offenses. Because of this disturbing trend, many inmates eligible for parole choose to forego the process and remain in prison.

"They have nowhere to go and no source of support once they are released. They could go home, but many of them already have, only to re-offend and return to McPherson. Without major changes, home brings with it old friends, pat-

terns and lifestyles.

"Our calling as Christians demands that we act to address this problem," said Smith, "The mission of Cornerstone Transition Home is to be a bridge between life in prison and a successfully reintegrated life into communities."

The Cornerstone home is currently awaiting a license from Arkansas Community

Correction to begin operation. Volunteers from across the state have worked to get Cornerstone to where it is currently, and more are encouraged to volunteer as it opens its doors. Along with various project

needs, Cornerstone has a goal to raise three months of operational expenses prior to opening. Once fully operational at its maximum capacity of 30 women, Cornerstone will be able to self-sustain at almost 75 percent. They will rely on the partnership of other ministries through monthly donations for the other 25 percent.

"Each time I go to the prison, the Lord gives me the opportunity to hear the heart of yet another lady who needs a new family in Christ. Cornerstone can be her family," said Davis.

"Our prayer is to see a great host of women build their lives on the solid rock - Jesus Christ, THE Cornerstone."

For more information on the Cornerstone ministry in Newport visit cornerstonetransition.com.

Moms group calls for end to 'sleazy' commercials

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) - Two television commercials using graphic and raunchy sexual innuendo to sell frozen food dinners are inappropriate for family viewing and should be discontinued, One Million Moms is urging the Kraft Heinz Company.

In protesting the Devour microwave meal ads that have become more visible this football season, One Million Moms Director Monica Cole said Kraft Heinz has gone too far and likely will lose loyal, conservative customers.

"The commercials [are] extremely perverted in nature [and are airing] during family viewing times," Cole said. "The vulgarity is extremely unnecessary and these sleazy type commercials are turning off parents from buying their products - not just Devour, but the entire line of ... the Kraft Heinz Company products."

The Devour campaign includes two commercials using innuendo and suggestive language to insinuate a wife having sexual relations with a scantily clad pool boy, and an employee engaged in apparent sado-masochistic relations in the office breakroom, all in efforts to sell microwaveable frozen entrees. The campaign continues on Facebook with a sexually suggestive hashtag supposedly describing the food.

"We don't want to give our hard-earned dollars to companies that cannot just advertise the food and the quality of the food," Cole said.

"They have to pretty much hit the rock bottom and use these indecent ads to sell their food products."

"There are still conservative families and wholesome families that will not buy into this type of advertising. ... If anything, it's going to push them farther away," said Cole.

OCTOBER 16, 2016

My family is a bit strange. Simply being a homeschooling family has often set us apart. Add to that our atypical family routine, passionate love of books and learning, tendency toward the nerdy side of life and enjoyment of being together as a family, and it is no surprise that we stand out in a world where many of the activities and relationships we hold dear are increasingly disdained.

But what about our community of faith? Interestingly enough, in most secular social circumstances, we would never connect with the people who make up our church's congregation. Yet, here we are, blended in with a variety of other personalities who would probably never "click" with us in any other social environment. We are brought together under the common bond of our relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. This bond does not mean we always understand one another, but our goal is to constantly work toward unity in Christ even while embracing

our differences.

This is the message of 1 Peter 4:1-11 – and truly all of 1 Peter. Peter knew churches would be filled with people misunderstood by the world. He also knew they would be filled with people who possessed a wide variety of gifts and personalities. The world outside would press in, causing suffering. But

banding together with the community of faith would be a challenge as well, as each member of the community had to learn to be fervent in love for one another, be joyfully hospitable to one another and use individual gifts to serve one another.

The miracle of Christ reveals that it is in the

very hodge-podge of personalities that we find all we need to live godly lives. Christ equips us, not in spite of our differences, but because of them. When we learn to live in love, hospitality and service, we truly are equipped to live, even in this hostile world of suffering.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE Equipped to live

1 PETER 4:1-11 (NASB)



Ann Hibbard
East End

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE Unstoppable mission

ACTS 1:4-8, 12-14



Doug Hibbard
East End

The unstoppable mission of the people of God began with Jesus' ordering the disciples to stay put and wait. Stay put and wait. We struggle with this, because we are people of action. We want to see decisive moments, strong actions, powerful deeds. The disciples had been with Jesus for 40 days since the resurrection. They were ready for action, as we can see in the question about restoring the kingdom to Israel.

Yet, they were commanded to stay put and wait. Think on this one with me for a moment. For the next 10 days the disciples were together. We're not talking about just the 12, either. Acts 1:15 tells us we are dealing with more than 100 people. In those 10 days, think of the fellowship that was strengthened among them. Think of the unity that such togetherness must have built.

Consider whether or not we have that in the church today. Schedule 10 straight days of prayer meetings, and see if 12 people show up every day,

much less 120 people! This is how Jesus commanded the church to begin in Acts 1.

After that, though, we see that sitting and waiting came to an end. The disciples were commanded to wait, but only until the Holy Spirit came upon them. At that point, they had the power to be effective witnesses for Christ.

Once the Spirit came, they had to get out and go. When the time comes for action, staying put and waiting are no longer helpful. Doing so becomes sinful.

We have an advantage over the disciples. The Holy Spirit indwells us from the moment of salvation. His presence allows us to be effective witnesses from the first day we are born again. Let us not neglect, though, our need to gather together and build unity within the body. We need the times of sitting, waiting and growing together to help us go forward on the unstoppable mission God has given us.

OCTOBER 23, 2016

I love learning directly from God's Word, but I also learn so well from music. Occasionally, a song comes along that completely stops me in my tracks. It resonates powerfully with my thoughts, experiences, emotions or growth at the time. The most recent song to capture my attention so profoundly was "Thy Will" by Hillary Scott. The song describes a journey through obedience into pain, leaving behind a heart and mind that could utter no words other than, "Thy will be done."

What struck me most profoundly about the song was the presence of a solid faith in the constancy and sufficiency of Christ that resonated almost as loudly as the pain. It was not a joyful exclamation in the midst of suffering, but it did ring of rejoicing. The lyrics expressed a sense of exultation in the perfection of God's will.

When I have read 1 Peter 4:12-13 (NASB) in the past, I've always wondered how it was possible to "keep on re-

joicing" and "rejoice with exultation" in the midst of pain and suffering. The rest of the passage has always made sense to me: don't be surprised by testing and don't suffer because of sinful behavior. But, how was I supposed to be joyful in the suffering?

Yet, right there in the midst of our suffering, we get to experience some-

thing we might never experience in a life without suffering. We get to share in Christ's sufferings and experience His strength through that sharing. But we also get to see relationships strengthened as we share suffering with one another. All of Peter's admonishments to live in relationship come down to this: when our suffering comes because we are

persecuted and ridiculed by the world, our community of faith will allow us to strengthen our love for one another and our joint dependence on the sufficiency, constancy and perfect provision of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In that we rejoice – yes, even in the midst of our pain.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE When ridiculed

1 PETER 4:12-19 (NASB)



Ann Hibbard
East End

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE Unstoppable message

ACTS 2:22-24, 32-33, 36-38



Doug Hibbard
East End

"The truth is out there." This was the tagline for a long-running TV program that played on people's suspicions of conspiracy and hidden truths. The premise was that truth, real truth, was tucked away from the world. A lucky few knew it was there without knowing what it was.

Fortunately, the gospel message does not belong in the same file cabinet as that show. The truth of the gospel is not some hidden secret that only few know. Instead, it was known fully to the disciples by the end of Acts 1, and Peter and the disciples made it clearly known to people in Jerusalem on Pentecost. In fact, Peter pointed out that the crowd already knew the truth about Jesus, and executed Him anyway.

While there is always room for growth for Christians, the basic truth about Jesus has always been clear and open. From this, the first sermon of the church, until today, the truth is plain. Jesus died for our sins, rose from the

dead and reigns forever as Lord of all. His death was no accident but was the predetermined plan of God. He lives forever because death has no power over Him. And He has poured out His Holy Spirit on believers, that we would carry this message to the world around us.

We must remember that the truth is not "out there," but it is plainly given to us in the Word of God. We as Christians have the truth and are charged by God with carrying it around the world. The message is unstoppable. Had Peter not preached, there were dozens more who knew the truth already. Had this crowd rejected the message, the disciples

would have moved on to the next one. The message is unstoppable, because the truth is not "out there" waiting for someone to decode the map, finding where the spot is. Instead, the truth is "right here," in the Word of God about the work of God in Jesus Christ, our Savior.

Motherless, designer babies possible with new technology

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) – Two developing reproductive technologies – one that could facilitate motherless babies and another that could open the door to so-called designer babies – have drawn warnings from Christian ethicists.

In one experiment, researchers at the UK's University of Bath altered unfertilized mouse eggs so they took on properties like "ordinary" cells, such as skin cells, the BBC reported. Then they created mouse embryos by fertilizing the altered eggs with sperm cells, leading scientists to speculate that two human men, or even one man, may one day be able to conceive a child with similar technology using sperm and another donated body cell.

A separate experiment in Sweden has achieved genetic modification of "healthy human embryos," which were then destroyed, NPR reported. Lead researcher Fredrik Laner said he is seeking to help treat infertility, prevent miscarriages and treat diseases. But critics say the research could lead to genetically made-to-order babies and the introduction of new diseases into the human gene pool.

Both experiments have troubling ethical implications, Union University bioethicist C. Ben Mitchell said.

"The biblical ideal for procreation is one man, one woman, in a one-flesh relationship, in which children are received as a gift," Mitchell told Baptist Press (BP) in written comments. "Every violation of that ideal results in human trauma and heartache, whether through adultery, divorce or death.

"The use of reproductive technologies that end up destroying unborn human beings is a clear harm. If we defy the procreative relationship by creating parentless babies, there is likewise clear harm. Even if we could justify the outcome, think of the human carnage on the way to the goal. Countless human beings – generated at the hands of researchers – would die in the process of trying to perfect the techniques. The end does not justify the means when the means are immoral," said Mitchell, Union's provost and Graves Professor of Moral Philosophy.

Conception without eggs?

The British experiment, reported Sept. 13 in the journal *Nature Communications*, is only a first step toward motherless human babies, with researcher Tony Perry calling such a prospect "speculative and fanciful" at present, according to the BBC.

Still, Charles Patrick, a Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary vice president who holds a Ph.D. in chemical and biomedical engineering, warned of skewing God's plan for procreation described in Genesis 1-2.

"Just because we can develop a reproductive technology does not mandate that we must develop the technology," Patrick told BP. "It seems unwise to develop reproductive technologies that preclude the use of sperm or eggs."

"First, and to be scientifically honest, much of what occurs when a sperm and egg unite continues to be a mystery. There are potential errors with dangerous consequences that may occur when cells are 'tricked' into functioning in a manner not natural for them," he said in written comments. "Second, reproductive technologies that remove either the egg or the sperm open the cultural door further to a genderless society."

Additionally, creating babies without either egg or sperm cells "would provide childless couples yet another 'extraordinary means' distraction from adoption. Adoption is clearly espoused and modeled throughout Scripture," Patrick said.

R. Albert Mohler Jr., president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, said the University of Bath research illustrates society's quest to redefine "everything about sex and reproduction and marriage and gender."

The sexual revolution, Mohler said Sept. 22 on his podcast *The Briefing*, has necessitated "a technological revolution" whose proponents seek reproduction "without marriage, and in this case ... without women."

Genetically made to order?

The Swedish research uses a genetic engineering innovation to "edit" healthy embryos' DNA for what NPR deemed

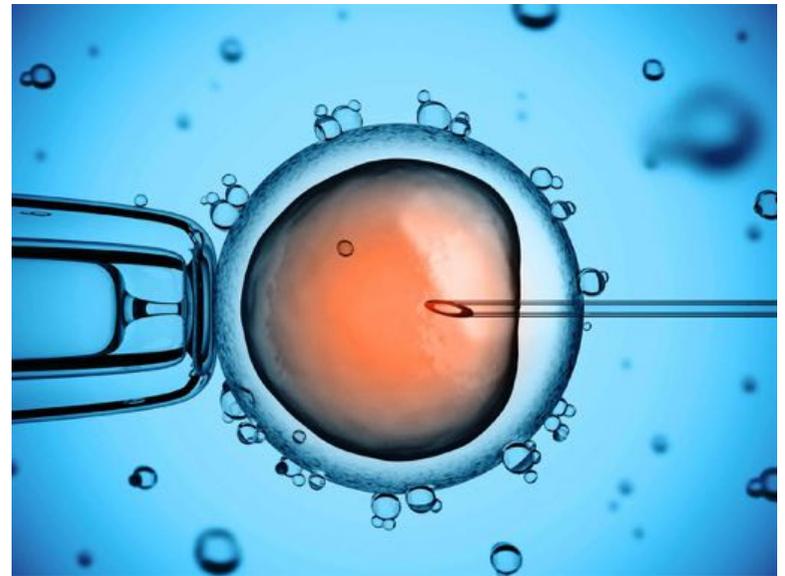
the first time ever. British scientists have said they will begin similar experiments later this year.

Thus far, at least 12 embryos – which were donated by couples who generated them as part of the in vitro fertilization process – have been modified, and researchers have vowed to destroy all modified embryos no later than their 14th day of life.

Patrick called any "use and destruction of human embryos" unethical because it "does not preserve the worth, dignity and value of human life defined in Genesis 1-2." Yet "even if there were not a sanctity of life issue, there are other issues to consider in opening the epigenetic black box."

"For instance, although there is the promise of correcting devastating diseases, there is equally the specter of creating designer babies or other non-therapeutic modifications and of introducing unintended consequences in the human germline," Patrick said.

"Man was mandated in



Genesis to be a steward of creation, and emphasis throughout Scripture is placed on restoring what God originally purposed in His creation. Hence, there is a general biblical warrant for scientific advances and technologies that restore," he said.

"However, there is not clear biblical permission to manipulate genes toward perfection. Gene editing cannot reverse what sin and resulting

human depravity wrought to God's perfected creation. There is a flesh-spirit aspect that gene editing does not and cannot incorporate," Patrick said.

Mohler wondered aloud Sept. 23 in *The Briefing*, "How long will it be before the bumper sticker on the back of the SUV says, 'My child is genetically enhanced?' ... That day might after all not be so far in our future."

CP ends fiscal year 4.95% over projections

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) – The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) ended its fiscal year \$9.23 million over its 2015-2016 budgeted goal and \$6.57 million over the previous year's Cooperative Program (CP) Allocation Budget gifts, according to Frank S. Page, president and CEO of the SBC Executive Committee.

The SBC received \$195,730,508.04 in Cooperative Program Allocation gifts for the year. This amount is \$6,570,276.63, or 3.47 percent, more than it received during the last fiscal year, and is \$9,230,508.04, or 4.95 percent, more than its budgeted goal of \$186.5 million.

"Our Southern Baptist churches have responded powerfully to the call for missions support and ministry support through the Cooperative Program," Page said.

"I would say two factors are present here – sacrifice and strategic decisions," he noted. "We thank God for the sacrifice of thousands of churches who truly believe we can collaborate together and do more

for the gospel than we can do alone. This sacrificial giving will minister on the mission field, in theological education and other areas stronger than ever before.

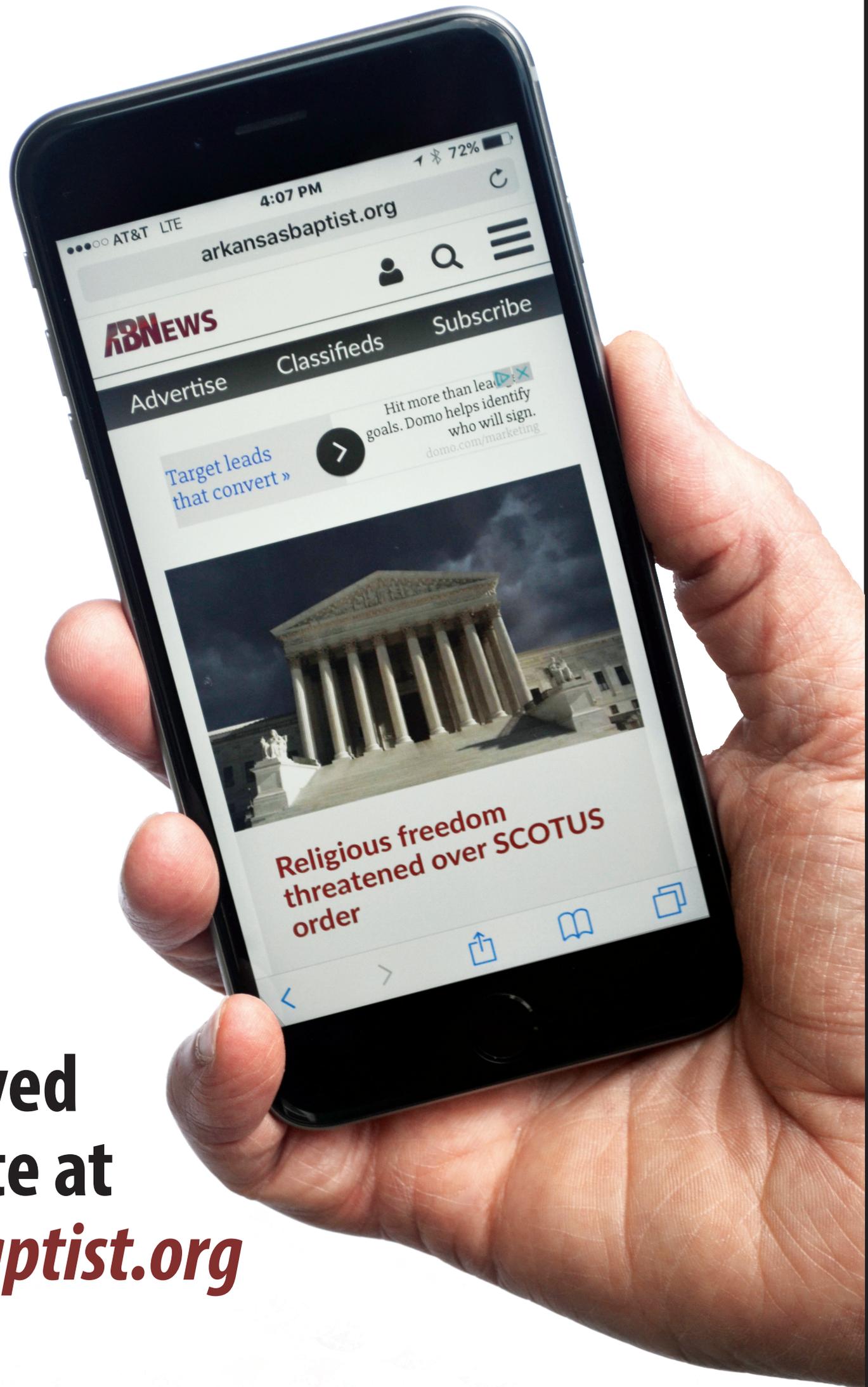
"We are also thankful for the strategic decisions of many of our state conventions who are forwarding more and more to the national level," Page said. "We have just finished five years of increase [from the states], only the third period of time in our history when national CP forwarded from the states has reached or exceeded 38.75 percent. We are thankful for our state partners and thankful for the strategic decisions that many have made."

In designated giving, the fiscal year's total of \$204,671,725.92 is 4.95 percent above the previous year's \$195,013,412.58. Of this designated amount, \$204,135,367.21 was disbursed to International Mission Board (IMB) and North American Mission Board (NAMB) through the seasonal missions offerings and Global

Hunger Relief. The balance was designated for other SBC entities or the SBC Operating Budget. Combined designated gifts to SBC causes and CP Allocation Budget gifts showed a 4.22 percent increase over the same time last year.

The convention-adopted budgeted amount was distributed as follows: 50.41 percent to international missions through the International Mission Board, 22.79 percent to North American missions through the North American Mission Board, 22.16 percent to theological education, 2.99 percent to the SBC operating budget and 1.65 percent to the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission.

Of the amount received that was over the budgeted goal, IMB received a full 51 percent of the \$9.23 million overage, while the SBC operating budget received only 2.4 percent of the overage. Other SBC entities received the same percentage of the overage as the allocation formula in the 2015-2016 adopted CP Allocation Budget.



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