



PROFILES IN FAITH

Eric Ramsey, 'Indiana Jones' of Ark. Baptists

Caleb Yarbrough
Arkansas Baptist News

HE HAS BEEN interrogated by police and caught in a war zone in Asia and beaten by an angry mob of Muslims in Africa. He is not an adventure film character, and his stories are true. He is Eric Ramsey, *Arkansas Baptist News* columnist, current president of the Conference of Southern Baptist Evangelists and president of Tom Cox World Ministries (TCWM) in Mountainburg.

As the son of a Baptist minister, Ramsey moved around a lot growing up but spent most of his formative years in and around Tulsa, Okla. His father was a pastor and church planter, and while Ramsey said that exposure to his father's call to plant churches was an early influence on his love of people and culture, it also caused him to vow that he would never enter full-time ministry.

Ramsey said belief in God was never the problem; his issue was with "the ministry." He did not like the impact it had on his family, especially the stress it put on his mother. He knew he was called to serve God, but could not imagine putting his future wife through the trials he had seen his mother face when he was a child and teenager.

"I remember the day when I was 16 years old and I told God, 'God, I love You, but if You love me, You will never ask me to be in full-time ministry,'" said Ramsey. "I loved telling people about Jesus; I just did not see myself doing that as a vocation."

As an adolescent, Ramsey



Team leader Eric Ramsey (above left) and assistant team leader Keith Plott, from Jasper, Ala., make final route adjustments before heading into one of the darkest areas of Southeast Asia. A TCWM oral storytelling team (left) backpacks into a deeply remote village in India, exposing the village to the gospel for the first time.

It did not take long before Ramsey decided to study communications and political science in order to prepare himself for what had become his dream - to be a foreign correspondent for a new cable TV channel called Cable News Network, or CNN.

"I was taking anthropology and modern political regimes classes. ... I was trying to understand different

See **RAMSEY** page 3

played in a Christian rock band, was a self-proclaimed "teenage Jesus freak" and was incredibly interested in electronics. It was not until he went to college at 17 that he fully fell in love with learning about different cultures and decided he wanted to pursue a career that would allow him to travel and experience them firsthand.

North Korea leads world in persecution

WASHINGTON (BP) - North Korea remains the most dangerous country in which to follow Jesus, and Islamic extremism continues to be a dominating factor in the persecution of Christians around the world, according to a new report.

The annual study by Open Doors announced Jan. 8 ranked North Korea as the world's top persecutor of Christians for the 12th consecutive year. Meanwhile, the report showed Islamic extremism is the driving force for Christian persecution in 36 of the 50 countries at the top of Open Doors' World Watch List.

Open Doors, which seeks to strengthen the persecuted Church overseas, named these countries as the top 10 persecutors of followers of Christ in 2013: (1) North Korea, (2) Somalia, (3) Syria, (4) Iraq, (5) Afghanistan, (6) Saudi Arabia, (7) the Maldives, (8) Pakistan, (9) Iran and (10) Yemen.

North Korea far outdistanced all other countries with a score of 90 on Open Doors' list. The other top 10 countries - led by Somalia, with a score of 80 as the runner-up to North Korea - all evidenced Islamic extremism as a source for their repressive treatment of Christians.

"Christians are facing irrational, hate-filled persecution just for being Christian," said Barrett Duke, the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission's vice president for public policy and research. "These are our brothers and sisters in Christ."

The list of 50 countries may be viewed online at www.worldwatchlist.us.

OUR CHURCHES

First Baptist Church, Eagle Mills, experiences revival

Jessica Vanderpool
Arkansas Baptist News

EAGLE MILLS - When Chris Morgan stood in front of the pulpit at First Baptist Church of Eagle Mills on his first Sunday as pastor, there were all of five people in the pews. Now, 30 years later, the church, which is located near Bearden, has 125 to 140 people on average in morning worship. The church experienced revival in 2013, baptizing 28 people and doubling their average Sunday

school attendance to encompass 65 to 70 people on a given Sunday morning.

"God is really moving. We don't understand. We hadn't really done anything. It's just Him. He's really blessed us," said Morgan. "People are coming and their lives are being changed, and we're just excited about it."

Don Phillips, became senior pastor of Calvary Baptist Church, Camden, 28 years ago, and

met Morgan around that time.

"I have told people for many years how, when I came to Calvary Baptist Church, that Eagle Mills was about to close the doors. Since then, they have built two new sanctuaries. Praise God," said Phillips.

"I have watched the ministry of the Lord grow and grow at Eagle Mills," he said. "Bro. Chris preaches Jesus and loves people. He is always laughing and loving on people. I don't think there

is any secret beyond that."

He said he has seen Morgan discouraged before, but the Lord brought him through the tough times and blessed him.

"Instead of taking off running, sometimes it's best to stay put," Phillips said.

Morgan is assisted by Jody Tillery, associate pastor, in ministering to the church, which was started as a mission of First Baptist Church, Camden.

See **REVIVAL** page 2



Morgan

Church has 'polar bear plunge' for Lottie Moon

CLARKSVILLE – What would it take for you to jump into a freezing-cold Arkansas creek in the middle of winter?

For members of Second Baptist Church, Clarksville, it helped the congregation meet its weekly giving goals for the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions.

As a fun incentive to give, Second Baptist members Bob Rider, Matt Howard, Cliff Sampley and Tom

Dicus, pastor of Second Baptist, offered to take a "Polar Bear Plunge" into Sprada Creek in Clarksville.

"The Second Baptist goal is \$981 multiplied by four weeks for a total of \$3,924. The average cost to support a missionary is \$981 a week. Our goal is to support a missionary for four weeks," according to the church's bulletin.

"This offering is to reach people around the world, some

of whom have never heard the name Jesus."

For each week in which the congregation met their giving goal, one volunteer from the church took a plunge into the creek.

Dicus was set to be the fourth and final jumper to represent the last week of giving. However, the church fell just short of their final weekly goal.

On Jan. 12, Rider, Howard and

Sampley took the plunge, one person for each of the weeks Second Baptist met their Lottie Moon offering goal.

Dicus said the Polar Bear Plunge was not only a lot of fun for the church's congregation, but helped increase their giving to the Lottie Moon offering as well.

"We had a great time and probably gave more than we have in years," said Dicus.

Ark. ministers to gather at evangelism conference

SHERWOOD – As one of the largest gatherings of evangelists, pastors and staff members in Arkansas, the 2014 State Conference on Evangelism and Church Growth Jan. 27-28 is a great place to fellowship, network, worship and pray with fellow ministers, said David Bond, a member of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention (ABSC) evangelism and church growth team.

Reaching Arkansas for Christ is the theme of the conference, which starts at 1 p.m. Jan. 27 at First Baptist Church, 701 Country Club Road, Sherwood. The conference will be preceded by the ABSC prayer leader workshop at 9:30 a.m. at the church.

The prayer leader workshop will be led by Henry Blackaby, founder and president emeritus of Blackaby Ministries International and the author of "Experiencing God: Knowing and Doing the Will of God."

The prayer workshop is free, but

reservations are required by contacting Gwen McCallister at gmcallister@absc.org or 800-838-2272, ext. 5103.

"We are expecting our largest gathering ever to spend time with one of the most loved and influential Southern Baptists alive (Blackaby)," said Bond.

He added that during the evangelism conference, "Speakers will bring a variety of perspectives on evangelism and the current state of reaching a lost world, ... all of which will inspire and challenge."

In addition to Blackaby, other evangelists, pastors and denominational leaders featured at the evangelism conference are Wade Morris, author and founder of The Journey, an expository Bible study and devo-

tional series; Robert Smith, a conference teacher and speaker who serves as professor of Christian preaching at Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham, Ala.; John Meador, senior pastor of First Baptist Church, Euless, Texas; Thom Rainer, president and CEO of LifeWay Christian Resources, as well as vocational evangelists Bill Stafford and Junior Hill. Worship will be led by Julio Arriola, worship pastor at Cross Church in Springdale.

J.D. "Sonny" Tucker, ABSC executive director, will share "Arkansas observations" during the conference.

Terry Bostick, team leader of the ABSC evangelism and church growth team, said the purpose of the evangelism conference is twofold.

"First, we want to focus on evan-

gelism, evangelism strategies, revival, prayer and church growth/health," he said.

"Second, we want this to be a time of encouragement."

Additionally, Bond said the conference offers the opportunity for affinity gatherings for vocational evangelists, student pastors and associational missionaries.

Ministers' wives will also have a special time of fellowship during the conference's afternoon break Jan. 27. Women are encouraged to RSVP to minwife@gmail.com.

Exhibits of ABSC and related ministries will be set up at the church, offering a great way to help pastors and ministers identify "ways to be involved in evangelism right here in our state," said Bond.

A LifeWay Christian Bookstore will be on hand. Child care is not provided.

For more information, visit www.arkansasbaptist.org/2014evangconf.



REVIVAL

continued from page one

Tillery said he was saved, baptized and ordained at Eagle Mill. He served as youth director at the church for a time before pastoring Salem Baptist Church, Stephens. He returned to Eagle Mills as associate pastor in 2010 at Morgan's request. Now, the duo works together, with Morgan preaching Sunday mornings and doing visitations and Tillery preaching on Sunday and Wednesday evenings and organizing and assisting with special events.

Tillery noted the church experienced many losses in 2011, including the death of long-time Sunday school teacher Randy Williams. Tillery said church member Dave King stepped in to teach Sunday school after Williams' death. Due to the deaths in their congregation around that time, Tillery said there was an increased bond and fellowship between members.

In 2013, the church experienced growth in attendance.

"In a year's time, our Sunday school attendance has gone from 30 to 75," he said. "This is not just because of the teaching; it is also be-

cause of the fellowship. It is not uncommon to come an hour early for any service and have 20-plus people just sitting around visiting. We have seen 28 baptisms in the last church year and are starting off 2014 with at least one baptism in January. We have seen a lot of our old youth who have left and had families return to serve alongside of us."

He said the revival in their church hasn't been a result of any notable change.

"We love God and love people," he said simply.

His wife, Joyce Tillery, serves as children's director at the church and as campus minister at the Baptist Collegiate Ministry at Southern Arkansas University Tech - Camden.

Regarding God's movement in the church, Joyce Tillery said she agrees with Morgan.

"We really have not done anything different other than pray for God to have His way," she said. "We have not implemented any new programs or done anything different. We have just followed the leadership of the Holy Spirit. I think that people really understand what it means to be the Body of Christ and not just a church. We are still people meeting others' needs and being the hands and feet.



Members of First Baptist Church, Eagle Mills, pose by Operation Christmas Child boxes they packed.

But that is nothing new."

And like her husband, she thinks they have seen the effects of the revival in "an increase in fellowship and wanting to know one another more."

"It used to be that you would have a certain few stay after and visit a moment or two after services," she said.

"Now, the church is bubbling an hour or so before services with people hanging out, singing in the sanctuary or gathered in the fellowship hall, sharing coffee and stories of life. We have always loved one another and loved our community, but it just seems like the love has grown

stronger and bolder."

Morgan's encouragement to churches that desire to experience revival is to "just bathe it in prayer."

"Really, to me, that's what has happened with our church. We had really been praying for revival and for people to be saved. And the key to any success is that we bathed it in prayer," he said, quoting Jesus' words in John 12:32, which say, "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."

"If I was to say anything - it's all about Jesus; it's not about us," Morgan said.

RAMSEY

continued from page one

systems of thinking, different systems of polity and policy development and political structure and what defined a people group and, Why are people the way they are and what makes them tick?" said Ramsey.

During his time in college, Ramsey worked within the broadcast industry in various capacities. He was audio director for a nationally syndicated TV program and promotions director for the second largest radio station in Oklahoma. At the age of 21, he was the featured speaker for the International Broadcasters IdeaBank Convention and spent time working in California.

After being reacquainted with his future wife, Gaye, whom he had known since second grade, he decided to transfer to Ouachita Baptist University, where she was a student, and became the host of the local morning radio show at KVRC-KVEL in Arkadelphia.

Eventually, he recognized that God was indeed calling him to vocational ministry, and he decided to surrender to the call. After graduating from Ouachita, Ramsey continued to work in broadcast but also began working in youth and singles ministries at local churches.

After entering vocational ministry, Ramsey continued to serve local churches and associations as a communications and public relations consultant, mostly as a hobby. He went on to continue his education at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, earning a Master of Arts degree in communications with a dual emphasis in theology and missiology.

In 1998, the newly formed North American Mission Board (NAMB) asked Ramsey to come on staff as a media strategist for church planting and strategic initiatives. His role included communications science and cross-cultural communications. After three years at NAMB, Ramsey became part of the organization's church planting team. He helped church planters better understand how to plant churches within specific people groups and cultural segments by using research and marketing tools.

After eight years at NAMB, Ramsey left to become president of TCWM, a ministry founded by his father-in-law, Tom Cox. At the time of Ramsey's arrival, Cox had been in poor health and TCWM was in a time of transition. Under Ramsey, the organization increasingly began to focus on providing churches throughout North America with the tools they needed to carry out God's missional vision for their congregations.

One aspect of the ministry of TCWM is cultural research. The organization sends teams across the globe to study people groups in remote areas, often areas that have

never been visited by Westerners, let alone Christians. The goal of their research is to gain the basic cultural understanding necessary to facilitate missionaries in reaching those newly found people groups with the gospel.

TCWM often works closely with the International Mission Board, providing them with demographics and information, which they can then use to mobilize Baptist missionaries to reach areas of the world inhabited by peoples that have never heard the name of Jesus.

Ramsey began participating in and leading cultural research backpacking expeditions with Tom Cox and his organization while still a student at Ouachita. By the time he became president of TCWM, he was an experienced world traveler with years of experience in communications and cultural research.

Today, when Ramsey is not consulting and leading missions strategy



Ramsey (center) leads a backpacking team across the Congo river to research the Yansi people for the International Mission Board. Read Ramsey's missions tips at www.arkansasbaptist.org/hownottodominions.

workshops at churches throughout North America, he can often be found on multiweek journeys to the farthest reaches of the world.

Over the years, he has traveled extensively throughout Asia, Africa, Europe and North and South America. Most of the time, the goal of his trips focuses on gathering geographic and cultural information to give missions organizations a better understanding of secluded peoples. Many of the countries in which he and his teams travel are unfriendly or even hostile toward Christianity, or Westerners in general, and yet at times, he and his teams have had the opportunity to share their faith either publically or privately.

Often the conditions Ramsey and mission teams - which include former military special forces personnel, extreme outdoorsmen, anthropologists and missiologists - encounter are physically and emotionally taxing.

Many of the villages they visit are located deep in jungles and other rural areas in countries known for corrupt governments, active and volatile war zones and unforgiving terrain.

A few years ago, after speaking to a group of nearly 15,000 people in an east African nation, Ramsey was beaten by a mob of Muslims while he and his team were attempting to

board their van to leave. The group of locals were enraged because following Ramsey's message, multiple imams, Muslim leaders, from the area accepted Christ.

During a trip to Southeast Asia, Ramsey and his team got lost while searching for a village deep in the jungle. After hours of walking, the team heard the consonant sounds of human voices. Their translator, in terror, quickly informed them they had stumbled into a war zone - the only way out being to cross a rice field that would completely expose their position in an area of the country where the military had been ordered to attack at will anyone who was not supposed to be there.

After escaping the war zone, the team made it safely to a nearby village, and while it was not the village they had originally intended to visit, its people were more receptive to the gospel than any the team had visited on that particular excursion. The team's Buddhist guide was so enamored by the miracle of their escape that he began asking Ramsey questions about God, opening the door for a presentation of the gospel.

On many other occasions, Ramsey and mission teams have been arrested and interrogated by police and members of government agencies. Once they were even arrested by federal officials in an Asian nation after accidentally uncovering a hidden munitions facility. Miraculously, on multiple occasions, members of Ramsey's teams have been able to have spiritual conversations with the very people who have interrogated them.

Ramsey said that while in Scripture God does not guarantee believers safety, He has consistently given the TCWM research teams grace in the midst of countless difficulties and trials. Through their work in equipping churches and researching people groups, TCWM saw about 15,000 professions of faith and 163 church starts in 2013.

Ramsey's journey from being a pastor's son reluctant to pursue God's calling to a world traveler who utilizes his skills and passions to facilitate the spreading of the gospel to every corner of the world is an example of how God can mold His people into invaluable tools for the completion of His work, even when, at times, they are reluctant to be molded.

"I get a lot of joy out of utilizing all of those tools out of my tool box - exercising my passions, exercising my education, exercising years of experience both in market research and ethnographic research, community analysis, cross-cultural communications and my passion for missions and preaching the gospel," said Ramsey.

"For me, everything has come together in one huge package. I feel like God has given the whole world as a playground, and I am having a ball."

Contact Caleb Yarbrough at caleb@arkansasbaptist.org. Read Ramsey's column, "Answering the Call," on Page 6.

ABN Digest

Stories of interest to Arkansas Baptists

400 pastors join to pray Jan. 13-14 in Atlanta

ATLANTA - Twice as many pastors gathered for two days of focused prayer in Atlanta compared to the first such meeting last fall in Dallas, prompting the gathering's organizer, Ronnie Floyd, to say, "God is up to something special in America."

"As I leave our prayer gathering, I am convinced more than ever that the Lord is stirring up men of God all across this nation," said Floyd, pastor of Cross Church in northwest Arkansas, who organized the event.

Huckabee on religious liberty, 2016 campaign

NASHVILLE (BP) - Mike Huckabee says he won't be seeking the title of "America's pastor" if he decides to run for president in 2016. Instead, he would seek to be a servant leader who is both "salt and light" in today's culture.

Huckabee, the former governor of Arkansas who ran for president in 2008, said he won't make any political announcements until after the midterm elections. A busy speaker and the host of "Huckabee," the Fox News channel talk show, he said his concern for the nation's direction could be the deciding factor.

Justices skeptical on abortion clinic buffer

WASHINGTON - Members of the U.S. Supreme Court have expressed skepticism of a state law establishing a 35-foot buffer zone for pro-life counselors outside abortion clinics.

Some of the justices seemed to challenge the Massachusetts law in oral arguments Jan. 15.

"We need to pray the Supreme Court does the right thing in upholding freedom of speech for all, including for those of us who are convictionally pro-life," said Russell D. Moore, president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics and Religious Liberties Commission.

American Bible Society names new leader

NEW YORK - The American Bible Society has named a new president, Roy Peterson, who will begin his duties in February at the New York-based ministry.

Peterson currently is president and CEO of The Seed Company, a ministry based in Arlington, Texas.

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

A question of integrity

We are fortunate in Arkansas Baptist life to have quality institutions of higher education in our state that work hard to put the interests of churches and their members first.

While Arkansas Baptists typically enjoy harmonious gatherings at their annual meetings, this is not true in all state Baptist conventions.

I have taken note over the years that all it takes is one divisive issue or action by those in leadership positions to change all of that.

Offering a quality Christian education in today's age is difficult at best, but our two Arkansas Baptist institutions – Williams Baptist College and Ouachita Baptist University – do a great job of navigating the waters amid the diversity of the 21st century with a high degree of integrity.

That's why it is a bit disconcerting to see a college like Brewton-Parker College in Georgia, which would be the equivalent of Williams Baptist College in Arkansas,

owned and operated by the state convention, jeopardize its integrity.

In December, Brewton-Parker announced it had hired Ergun Caner as its 16th president. Caner, whose brother, Emir, is president of another Baptist college in Georgia, Truett-McConnell College, comes with an impressive resume as a Christian apologist and former dean and president

of the Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary and Graduate School in Lynchburg, Va.

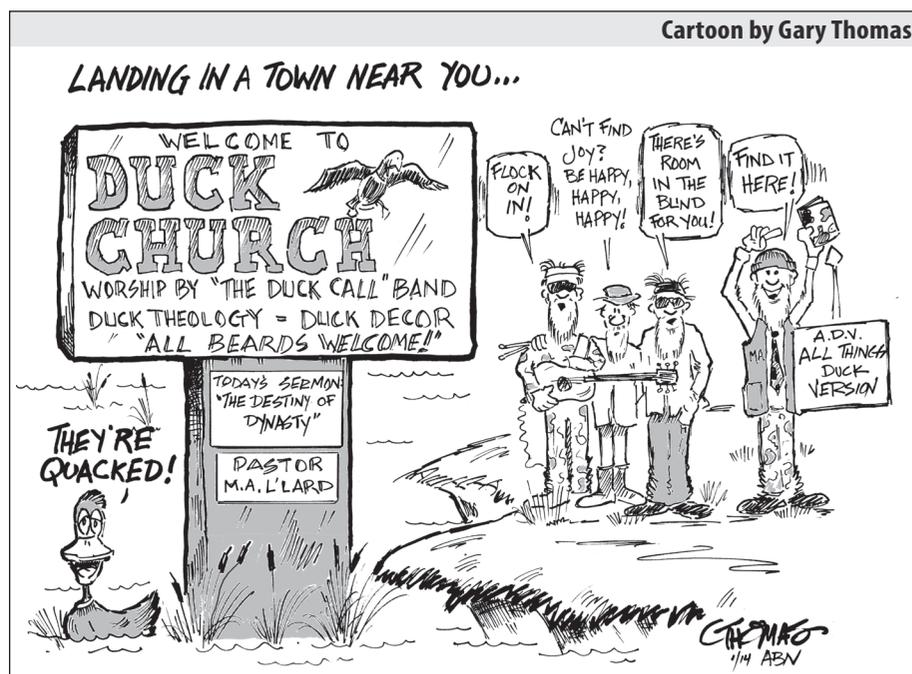
The problem, of course, surrounds a 2010 controversy in which Caner was accused of embellishing his background as a former Muslim who converted to Christianity.

It is not my place in this column to make a judgment based on those accusations, but a question must be asked if this was the best move for a college charged with educating the next generation of Christian leaders.

I was in the room on a number of occasions when Caner spoke, and I found him to be an inspiring

PRESSING ON

Tim Yarbrough
Phil. 3:14



and well-spoken preacher.

Following his messages, I felt challenged in my own faith, with the conviction that I should do more to reach Muslims.

However, when a leader gets caught up in a scandal amid numerous allegations – many of which are supported by video evidence plastered all over the Internet – should

the leader continue to be provided a platform of leadership in charge of influential young minds who will one day lead our country?

It boils down to integrity, not only of the ones chosen to lead – like Caner – but of those in the leadership roles who provide him a pathway to become an authority figure.

What is sinful? – Not 'ducking' the question

The patriarch of "Duck Dynasty," Phil Robertson, landed in hot water recently, initially suspended by the A&E network over comments made in an interview with *GQ* (*Gentlemen's Quarterly*) magazine. Controversy took flight when the Duck Commander was asked what he thought was sinful. Not one to "duck" questions, Robertson cited the Bible, paraphrasing 1 Corinthians 6:9-10.

This recent incident leads one to ask, "Who determines what is sinful? Who is worthy of defining sin for the world?" This worthy one would have to be perfect, uncorrupted by sin. This someone would have to be holy, with an

unchanging holy nature. For someone to define sin for the entire world, across all time, they would have to transcend both the world and time.

God alone is the perfect Being

VIEWPOINT

Bill McCall
South Highland Baptist
Little Rock

with the sovereign authority to define what is sin, what is an offense against His holy nature. As our transcendent Creator, God tells humans what is sin – not the other way around – and God has done so in His Word. In a culture so often concerned about someone being offended, how often is there concern about offending God?

Higher thought: Sin is not something that culture or time

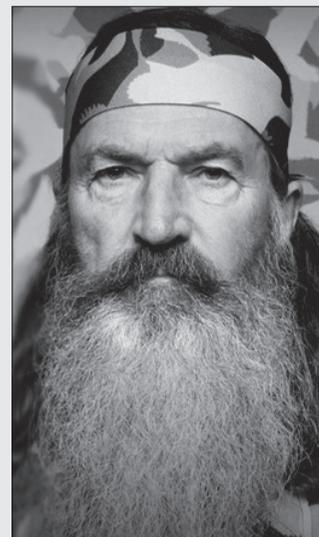
can redefine. As God does not change, God's holy nature does not change. Therefore, what is an offense against God's nature, what is sin, does not change. Consequently, God's Word is truthful and relevant yesterday, today and forever.

When the woman caught in adultery was before Jesus, He not only said, "Neither do I condemn you," but Jesus then commanded her, "Go and sin no more" (John 8:11). Would Jesus have required any less regarding other sins? No. God has defined sin and calls sinners to

repentance.

What is sinful? God has not just defined sin for the world, but "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son," Jesus Christ (John 3:16). God not only answered the definition of sin, but by His grace, God answered the penalty of sin. When Christians share God's Word, we are not bigots or phobic; we are ambassadors for Christ called to speak God's truth in love.

Bill McCall is pastor of South Highland Baptist Church, Little Rock, and founder of the Higher Thoughts Christian apologetics ministry.



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Baptists Ask

What is the significance of 'spirit, soul and body' in 1 Thessalonians 5:23?

It is not easy to interpret Paul's benediction to the Thessalonian church. Some scholars suggest that Paul described a trichotomy, where a human being is divided into three parts: the body (physical), the soul (psychological/emotional) and the spirit (spiritual).

Early Christianity believed in a person's dichotomy. This view proposes that humanity has two parts: the body (physical) and the soul (spiritual). The soul enters the person upon birth and departs to heaven upon death (Gen. 2:7; Ecc. 12:7).



Gore

Although this view is still popular, it is more akin to Greek philosophy than to the Bible. Philosophers like Plato and Pythagoras believed that the body was evil and the soul was pure. The true person could only be revealed upon death, when the soul would break free.

The Old Testament favors a monist belief: Persons are always comprised of the dust of the ground and the breath of God (Gen. 2:7). Thus body and soul are not contrasting terms, but are one and the same. Job, for example, believed that after his skin was destroyed, he would still in his flesh see God (Job 19:26). Job assumed that he would possess a body after death.

Although the monist view is plausible, Paul indicated that he would be "away from the body" but "at home with the Lord" (2 Cor. 5:8).

What seems to be possible, then, is that upon death, there would be a glorified body, one in which the person would be recognizable, both to himself and God. Jesus, for example, was fully recognizable after His resurrection, but His body was different.

Paul's statement in 1 Thessalonians 5:23 is probably a poetic understanding of the entire person, much like Moses' command to love the Lord completely (Deut. 6:5).

Ken Gore is chair of the department of Christian studies at Williams Baptist College in Walnut Ridge. Baptists Ask is reader-driven. Questions are welcomed and may be submitted for consideration to tim@arkansasbaptist.org.

PART ONE

Is it child abuse to require children to attend church?

In 2013, the impassioned atheist Richard Dawkins ignited religious fury by claiming that indoctrinating children of religious beliefs is tantamount to "child abuse" (*Daily Mail*, "Forcing a Religion on Your Child" (April 22, 2013)). He is not the only atheist to make such a claim. On his blog, *Why Evolution is True*, Jerry Coyne asserts a similar stance. Unfortunately, little clarification is given as to what Dawkins and Coyne mean by "indoctrination." It seems reasonable, however, to assume that both would claim it is child abuse to force a child to attend a weekly religious service. It also seems safe to assume they would claim it is abusive to teach children that fundamental doctrines of the faith are ultimate truth. But is this really child abuse? Are parents somehow harming their children by making them go to church?

I'm certain I was not the only son of a deacon that was told by his father, "As long as you live under my roof, you will attend church on Sunday mornings." I never understood my father's statement as mean, abusive or forceful (at least not in a draconian sense). I once heard an individual tell my dad that he hated going to church because, as a child, his parents made him go to church every Sunday. After the conversation, my father told me: "That man doesn't hate going to church because his parents made him go. He hates

church because his parents never lived out the teachings of Christ at home." Though it may sound radical, making your child attend church is not child abuse. In fact, I hold that taking children to a weekly worship service is a very important weekly activity for a family.

Active involvement within a local body is vital and healthy for anyone, including children. "Abuse," by definition, is an act that causes undue harm upon oneself or someone else. Being that Christian parents believe the gospel is important to the life of any individual, it would also be important to the life of a child. Thus, making one's child attend church is not harmful, but helpful to the child's well-being and life. Being involved in a local body, allows the child to hear the truth of the gospel continuously, in hopes that the child

will one day yield to its truth. A parent can never force a child to believe. In fact, due to the nature of salvation by grace, salvation by force is impossible (no conversion by the "tip of the sword"). One of the fundamental tenets of the evangelical faith is that one can only become a Christian through a personal experience of repentance and belief.

Editor's Note: This is the first installment of a two-part series. Chad Meeks is former youth minister of Cedar Heights Baptist Church, North Little Rock, and current Ph.D. student at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.



CHURCH ISSUES

Chad Meeks

Uncover the 'forgotten dish'

The dishes were all out and arranged. At any moment, the crowd would begin processing down the line, anxious to dive into the smorgasbord of delicacies spread out before them. Did Miss Molly bring her delightful casserole? What about Mrs. Barbara's delicious banana pudding? And, of course, everyone's mouth watered at the thought of Mr. Joe's baked beans.

About half of the congregation passed down the line before someone noticed one forgotten dish. It was the dish of a newcomer, a young lady who was not sure how her contribution would measure up to the longtime favorites. So, she simply left it covered. But eventually another sweet lady noticed. With an exclamation, she uncovered the forgotten dish, encouraging others to give it a try.

That scene could have happened in any Baptist church. In the hustle and bustle of laying out the potluck spread, a dish gets slipped in and left covered. The contributor is nervous and uncertain. She brought something because she felt like she should, but she now hopes it just slips by unnoticed. After all, there's plenty. Who will miss that one dish?

In truth, though, every dish is unique. That one covered dish is one person's absolute favorite or the very dish someone else loves but never makes at home. Yet because it remains covered, they miss the treat. They simply walk past without noticing.

I cannot help but wonder how many women in our

churches are like that covered dish. While so many others seem to have wide-open skills and talents, these women keep theirs hidden, uncertain that their contributions could ever measure up to the incredible talents around them. They simply do not know how to find their niche in the Body of Christ. So, they just choose to watch as the contributions of others bring great delight, much as mouths water when it is discovered that Mrs. Sally brought her famous chocolate cake again.

I have been both of these women in my life. At times, I have hidden in the background, keeping my skills hidden for fear of being a disappointment. In other situations, I have excitedly shared my talents, thrilled that others considered them useful. But through it all, my sensitivity has sharpened to spot other "covered dishes" in my path. I now

have a passion to help uncover the hidden skills and talents that I know can be useful to the Body.

Which woman are you? Do you boldly share your talents? Or do you nervously keep them covered? Regardless of your answer, please know that we have an incredible privilege as women of God to encourage and strengthen one another. We can seek out the covered dishes around us, encouraging them to use their talents. In the process, we might just discover we are useful as well! May we all strive to become uncovered dishes for God's glory in this new year.

Ann Hibbard is a pastor's wife and author living in Almyra. Read more at her blog at www.annhibbard.com.



UNCOVERED DISH

Ann Hibbard

Read any good books lately?

The Arkansas Baptist News (ABN) invites pastors, other church staff and members of Arkansas Baptist churches to submit reviews of religion-related books they have read.

Preferably, the book review

should be no more than 350 words and should be about a book released in the past six months.

For more information, email tim@arkansasbaptist.org, or call 501-376-4791, ext. 5151.

Read more news and commentary at

www.arkansasbaptist.org

Five myths about mass evangelism

After leading evangelism and missions efforts in 26 countries around the world, preaching at dozens of churches in the United States, leading conferences and lecturing on countless seminary and college campuses, I have heard myriad opinions and views regarding mass evangelism over the past several years. “Mass evangelism” is a simultaneous communication of the gospel to a group (or a mass) of hearers.

Common examples of mass evangelism are crusades or festivals (such as those conducted by Billy Graham or Franklin Graham), TV or radio broadcasts, webcasts, multimedia productions, concerts, theatrical productions, block parties, business seminars, sports clinics or other means of communicating to the masses. Below are five of the most common myths I have repeatedly heard from Christian leaders, pastors, church members and students.

(1) **Mass evangelism is out-of-date.** It is true that many of the methods of mass evangelism that worked well in centuries and decades of the past no longer work today. Mass evangelism methods are merely mass communication methods that carry the message of the gospel; so just as mass communication methods change to fit the culture, demands and technology of the day, so must mass evangelism methods. But, to say that mass evangelism is out-of-date is as ridiculous as saying mass trans-

portation is out-of-date. Stagecoaches, steam engine-driven trains and sailing ships are out-of-date because they are slow, inefficient and do not meet the needs of today’s traveler. But that does not mean that mass transportation is dead. Today, there are much more efficient and desirable ways to move people from one place to another. However, old trains do have their

own nostalgic charm – much like mass evangelism events of yesteryear.

(2) **Mass evangelism no longer works in America.** As mentioned, there are methods of mass evangelism that are no longer effective in many contexts in America. However, there

are many methods that are very effective. One of the difficulties lies in the fact that, more so than ever, our country is not “one size fits all.” This is demonstrated in the TV industry. Long gone are the days that ABC, NBC or CBS will carry a majority of the market share. Now there are several hundred networks available to most people – most of which are affinity, or special interest, based. Mass evangelism methods of today must be tailored to meet smaller and more diverse market segments.

(3) **Mass evangelism is irresponsible.** Sadly, I have seen many examples of irresponsible mass evangelism: inviting a mass of people to repeat a “sinners prayer” and then declaring to everyone that they now have a ticket to heaven,

asking people to raise their hand if they want to be saved or counting hands and reporting each hand as a “new Christian.” But, it does not have to be that way, and there are plenty of historical and contemporary examples of biblically and ethically responsible mass evangelism methods.

(4) **Personal evangelism is better than mass evangelism.** Neither personal nor mass evangelism is necessarily better than the other. The question is, “What will work best in a particular context at a particular time?” Actually, the very best mass evangelism is simultaneous personal evangelism that leads to personal discipleship. This is why the old “crusade counselor training” was and is so important. It trains people in “personal evangelism” for the “mass invitation.”

(5) **Mass evangelism is not biblical.** If mass evangelism is not biblical, then Jesus, Peter, Paul, Silas and others were “evangelizing in sin.” Of course mass evangelism is biblical and should be rightly practiced today.

Don’t be afraid of mass evangelism! Properly and contextually executed, it is very effective – and always has been.

But remember, it is not the methods that possess the power. The gospel is “the power of God unto salvation” (Rom. 1:16, KJV) and the Holy Spirit does the drawing. Let’s be obedient to Jesus and effectively get His message out there!

Eric W. Ramsey is president of TCWM, based in Mountainburg.



ANSWERING THE CALL

Eric Ramsey

EVANGELISM DIRECTORY



Young Family Ministries

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501-259-0704, youngfamilyministries@hotmail.com

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www.youngfamilyministries.com



Detra Thomas

Fort Smith

479-774-1435, detra.d.thomas@gmail.com

A Heart for Home Ministries (Fort Smith) is the speaking and music ministry of Detra Thomas. From experiences of struggle, applied truth and victory, Detra is available to share of the spiritual freedom that comes from the indwelling Christ.



Eric & Gaye Ramsey

Northwest Arkansas

479-369-4260, eramsey@tcwm.org

Eric, a preacher, conference leader, evangelist and mission strategist, and Gaye, a speaker and singer, are connecting churches to their neighbors and the nations. Their Fresh Vision events are more than “revival meetings” or “mission conferences” -- they are fun, interactive, inspirational and result in a customized concrete plan of action.

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Laura Macfarlan

Siloam Springs

479-524-9549

Laura.Macfarlan@cox.net

A keynote speaker for women’s events, retreats, leadership training, mentoring, and Bible study, Laura Macfarlan is also the director of women’s ministries at First Baptist Church, Siloam Springs, and a writer for *Missions Mosaic*.

www.CrossMyHeartMinistry.com



Rita Spillyards

Rogers

479-925-7800, rspillyards@cox.net

Drawing from real-life experiences of teaching high school communications courses, raising children, and serving on church staffs, Rita Spillyards will inspire your group with humor and a fresh approach to Bible study application. As a keynote speaker, trainer, conference leader, or Bible study facilitator, she desires to joyfully encourage others.



Sam Moore

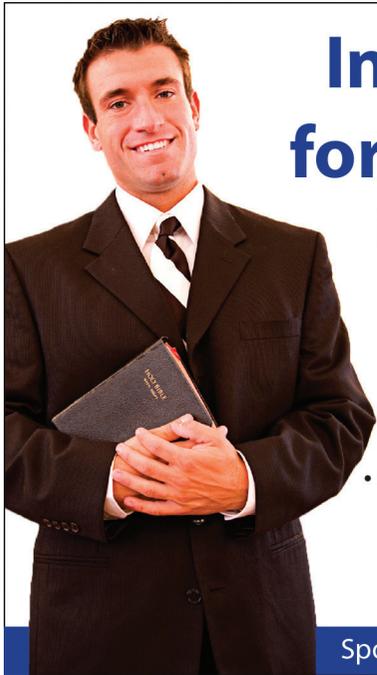
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479-381-1170, sam@evangelistsammoore.com

Sam Moore is a vocational evangelist and a native of Arkansas. He has the gift of an evangelist and the heart of a pastor. He is available for Revivals, Crusades, Harvest Days and Witness Training. Now scheduling for 2014.

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*But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
Romans 5:8*



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Charitable Giving Tip

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Many of us who desire to be good stewards forget that the decision we make about our estate distribution may be the single most important stewardship decision that we ever make. As we begin a new year, perhaps it is time for you to plan your estate distribution as well. That decision includes your minor children as you name guardians, your property and assets as you name beneficiaries, and your values and beliefs as you plan to leave this world with your affairs in order. Everyone leaves a legacy, either good or bad. Is it time to make sure your estate stewardship is in order?

If you need assistance in planning your estate stewardship, please give us a call.



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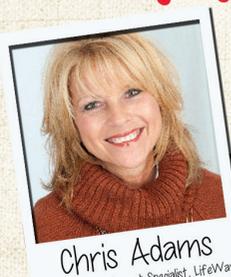
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All ages pack for Operation Christmas Child

FARMINGTON – Everything from candy, notebooks and toys to New Testaments, washcloths and sewing kits filled the boxes that members of First Baptist Church, Farmington, packed for Operation Christmas Child, a ministry of Samaritan's Purse.

Jamie Webb, the church's children's director, said it is the third year the church, as a collective group, has participated in packing boxes for Operation Christmas Child. This year alone, they packed 572 shoeboxes. Additionally, church members raised \$2,700 for shipping costs.

"It is part of our commitment to the families in our church to provide a variety of mission opportunities for them to use as a tool to learn about international missions, as well as a way to teach their children and the children in our community that one person can make a difference in reaching our world for Jesus," Webb said.

"I just thought it was a really good rallying project to bring our church together, of all different ages, to basically meet some needs and share the gospel with some folks," said Pastor Barry Smith. "That was the neatest thing for me – the number of boxes was really cool, but I think the greatest thing was seeing all the different people of all ages come together,



Barry Smith, pastor of First Baptist Church, Farmington, packs a box for Operation Christmas Child.

bringing their stuff and packing the boxes. It was a really neat experience."

In the past, Webb said their shoeboxes have been delivered to Madagascar and Mexico, as well as to Native American children.

According to the Samaritan's Purse website and material, children receive gospel storybooks with their shoeboxes and are invited to enroll in a 12-week discipleship program, at the end of which they receive a New Testament in their language.

"Working with an organization like Samaritan's Purse and the Operation Christmas Child shoe box campaign just made sense to the families at First Baptist Church," said Webb. "This organization has done all of the hard work and has made the delivery of the gospel of Jesus as

easy as possible for anyone who wants to reach a child and family across the world. Because of the groundwork that has already been paved, we are able to do the fun part of collecting a variety of needs, as well as toys, all throughout the year."

Webb said church members Chantal Bunn, Kelly Jansson and Devonna Harp are to be credited with carrying out the church's vision for its 2013 Operation Christmas Child initiative. She said the three women worked from January to November



Church members of all ages take part in First Baptist Church, Farmington's Operation Christmas Child initiative. From left: Dryston Carney, Noah Disheroon, Tim Disheroon, Titus Disheroon, Allie Lipford and Karen Lipford.

collecting items and working with retailers, hotels, fast-food restaurants and individuals to get donations. The women have been instrumental in the church's Operation Christmas Child projects in previous years as well.

Bunn is no stranger to Operation Christmas Child. She said her family got involved with it through her son's preschool almost a decade ago.

"And it really has just caught on with my family," she said, explaining that her sons, now 5 and 12 years old, always ask about buying items for the "shoe box kids" whenever they are at the store or see a yard sale.

Her family packs boxes every year and invites friends to join them in their "Happy Birthday, Jesus, Parties."

So when Webb asked her to help with the church's participation in Operation Christmas Child, Bunn's

thought was, "Sure, why not?"

"I love how people who were never exposed to the ministry are now around it, and they donate items," she said. "It's not just us shopping the clearance aisle anymore"

Webb said she hopes church members take several things away from their experience participating in Operation Christmas Child.

She hopes they take away "that we are the hands and feet of Jesus Christ today; that the local church is the best investment of time and money as a way to share the hope of salvation to people around us, as well as around the world; that blessing others is fun and, although we may never know what impact our shoeboxes may have had on a family, we will one day worship in heaven together and will know that, while we were on earth, we fulfilled our part of the Great Commission."

Classifieds

PASTOR

First Baptist Church, Dumas, is seeking a **full-time pastor**. Send resumes to First Baptist Church, Pastor Search Committee, 200 East Waterman, Dumas, AR 71639 or email to FBCdumas@centurytel.net.

Kern Heights Baptist Church is seeking **full-time pastor**. Send resume to 822 N. 9th, De Queen, AR 71832, Attn: Pastor Search Committee or khbc@windstream.net.

Ridge View Baptist Church, Wynne, is seeking a **full-time pastor**. Send resume to Ridge View Baptist Church Pastor Search Committee, P.O. Box 555, Wynne, AR 72396.

Sylamore Baptist, Mountain View, is seeking a **bi-vocational pastor**. Call 901-351-1040, email to kenw@mvtnet.net or mail resume to P.O. Box 1596, Mountain View, AR 72560.

First Baptist Church of Star City is seeking **full-time senior pastor**. Please prayerfully send resume to Pastor Search Committee, FBC, P.O. Box 368, Star City, AR 71667 or email to detrimgchee@yahoo.com.

First Baptist Church of Manila is seeking a **full-time pastor**. We are a two-service, mission-minded church. Please send resumes to calebfinley@hotmail.com or they may also be sent to Manila First Baptist Church Pastor Search Committee, P.O. Box 1304, Manila, AR 72442.

Leachville Second Baptist is seeking **bi-vocational pastor**. Please send resume to Leachville Second Baptist Church Pastor Search Committee, P.O. Box 565, Leachville, AR 72438.

OTHER STAFF POSITIONS

Graves Memorial Baptist Church in North Little Rock is prayerfully seeking a **youth minister** and a **worship leader. Part-time or full-time dual ministry**. Please send resumes to 4617 Oak Grove Road, North Little Rock, AR 72118 by Oct. 15. For job descriptions: 501-851-1493.

First Baptist Church of DeWitt is prayerfully seeking a **bi-vocational youth minister**. Resumes can be sent to 321 W. 1st St., DeWitt, AR 72042 or emailed to brojimmyalbrecht@yahoo.com.

The First Baptist Church of Mayflower is currently seeking a **full-time associate pastor of children/youth programs**. Send resume with cover letter to FBC Mayflower, Attn: Search Committee, P.O. Box 5, Mayflower, AR 72106. They can also be emailed to mayfbc@sbcglobal.net.

Oak Ridge Baptist Church is seeking **part-time worship leader**. Send resumes to 11998 State Highway 9E, Eufaula, OK 74432, Attn: Search Committee or oakridgedesk@yahoo.com. www.oakridgesbc.com.

Located in one of the fastest-growing areas of

central Arkansas, Wooster First Baptist is receiving resumes for a **full-time family pastor**. A detailed job description and prerequisites are located at www.WoosterFBC.org. If interested, send a resume with cover letter and references to Search Committee, P.O. Box 218, Wooster, AR 72181. Or email the above to pastor.pryor@hotmail.com. Receiving until Feb. 24.

Barcelona Road Baptist Church, Hot Springs Village, seeking **part-time organist** Wednesdays and Sundays. Salary range: \$10,000 – \$11,000 for quality person. 501-922-0692. brbc3music@att.net.

First Baptist Church of Sherwood is seeking a **full-time associate pastor of music/worship**. Resumes received through March 7, 2014. Send to First Baptist Church, Music/Worship Search Committee, 701 Country Club Road, Sherwood, AR 72120 or email responsefbc@swbell.net.

Full-time position associational missionary wanted for North Arkansas Baptist Association located in north central Arkansas, covering four counties and consisting of 59 churches. Resumes accepted until the end of February 2014. Send resume to NABA, Attn: Search Committee, 319 N. Chestnut St., Harrison, AR 72601 or email to dalewg@windstream.net. Phone: 870-741-3806. See website – www.nabaptist.org – for additional information.

Formosa Baptist in Clinton is prayerfully search-

ing for a **part-time worship leader** who can lead a blended service. Please send resumes or questions to billytreece@hotmail.com or Formosa Baptist Church, P.O. Box 1530, Clinton, AR 72031.

First Baptist Church in Bells, Tenn., is seeking a **full-time minister to students (K-12)**. Parsonage is provided. For more information or to apply, email ddavisfbc@bellsouth.net.

The Jefferson Baptist Association, south of St. Louis, Mo., is looking for a **full-time director of missions**. Requirements: degree from an SBC-affiliated seminary and senior pastor experience. Full salary and benefit package. Send cover letter and resume by Feb. 28, 2014, to domsearchteam@gmail.com.

MISCELLANEOUS

Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, Hot Springs, is sponsoring a **Family Revival Weekend** Jan. 24-26, featuring Bert and Jan Harper of American Family Association. To register, visit www.phbchurch.org or contact 501-463-4200.

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Williams Baptist College to offer online degrees

WALNUT RIDGE – Williams Baptist College (WBC) has announced that it will offer online degrees starting in coming weeks.

Williams is launching online degree completion programs in both psychology and pastoral ministries in March, with a program in business set to begin in May. The programs will allow students to complete their bachelor's degrees through entirely online classes.

"In order to accomplish our mission completely, we have developed strategies that will expose us to a broader range of students," said Williams President Tom Jones. "The WBC online degree program will make our Christian college experience available to those who are not able to attend the Williams on-

campus program."

The online program has been developed during the past 13 months under the direction of Eric Turner, dean of adult education. Turner said the program is for adult students, 23 years of age and older, who have successfully completed at least 45 hours of college.

Both Turner and Jones said that adults compose a sizable majority of today's college students. Some 80 percent of the current college market is 25 years of age or older, and they typically have a learning style that differs from traditional college students.

"Typically, an adult learner is older and has significant responsibilities in their community, church, family and job," Turner said. "These

experiences have provided them knowledge and experiences that impact the way they learn. Their lifestyles often require a learning environment that is compact, intense and accessible."

Turner pointed out that while the content of Williams' online classes is the same as what is offered in the classroom, the online courses are better suited to the busy schedules of adult students.

"The format is asynchronous. In other words, students do not have to log in at set times," he said. "While there are certain class participation requirements and due dates, students can accomplish these things at their convenience."

The adult online program is designed to be an extension of Williams

in every facet, and Jones emphasized that the online format is not a "sidebar" activity for the college.

"Our online program will have the same high standards, personal approach and Christian basis for which Williams is known. Students will receive personal attention through an administrative and educational process that will accommodate their busy lives," said Thomas.

The program is fully accredited through the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), the regional accrediting agency for higher education in this part of the nation. The HLC extended its approval to the Williams online program following a site team visit last fall.

For more information, visit www.williamsbaptistcollege.com/online.



FBC, WARD, HONORS GRIFFIN – Mack Davis (right), pastor of First Baptist Church, Ward, presents a plaque to Mike Griffin, who recently retired as the church's music minister. The church honored Griffin Jan. 12. Griffin surrendered to music ministry in a revival at First Baptist Church in 1974 and has served several churches in Caroline, Calvary and Little Red River Baptist associations over the past 39 years.



AFRICA MISSIONS – Stacy Reed, pastor of First Baptist Church, Batesville, does village evangelism during a mission trip to Lesotho in Africa. Reed was part of a team of 13 from Watson Chapel Baptist Church, Pine Bluff, and First Baptist Church, Batesville – two churches partnering for a second time – that recently traveled to Lesotho to serve with missionaries. In addition to holding services in various villages, the group hosted a youth conference, taught a discipleship course and ministered to the children through singing, games, Bible stories, personal testimonies and crafts. They distributed pillowcase dresses for girls and T-shirts and Upward Sports basketball uniforms for boys. Nineteen salvations were recorded.

Obituaries

Royce Christmas, 78, of Hamburg, died Jan. 4. Christmas attended junior college at Walnut Ridge. He graduated from Ouachita Baptist University and also attended Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He

received his doctorate in Mississippi. He was a Southern Baptist minister for more than 49 years, having served churches in Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Texas and Alaska. He started two mission churches and made two mission trips to Africa. His last pastorate was at Eudora Baptist Church, Eudora, where he had previously served. He was a member of Mount Olive Baptist Church in Crossett. He is preceded in death by his parents and two brothers. He is survived by

his wife of 58 years, Betty Rodgers Christmas; two sons; a daughter, and a sister. Funeral services were held Jan. 7 at Mount Olive Baptist Church, Crossett. Burial was at Hollis Chapel Memorial Garden near Hamburg.

Milestones

Three students claiming Arkansas as their home state graduated Dec. 13 from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. **Amanda Ozment**, preschool and children's minister at First Baptist Church, White Hall, received a Master of Arts in Christian education. **Adam Hughes**, whose home church is South Side Baptist Church, Pine Bluff, received his doctorate and is now serving in New Mexico. **Christopher McIlravy**, whose home church is East Side Baptist Church, Mountain Home, received his Advanced Master of Divinity degree and is now serving in Texas.

On the move

Bill Berry resigned as pastor of First Baptist Church, Star City, Dec. 31 to serve as chaplain for the 4th Cavalry Brigade at Fort Knox in Kentucky.

Mack Davis resigned as pastor of First Baptist Church, Ward, effective Jan 26.

Ted Grove is serving as bi-vocational pastor of Forty-Seventh Street Baptist Church, North Little Rock.

Share your church news with the
Arkansas Baptist News!
Email abn@arkansasbaptist.org

Happy Birthday!

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

- ◆ Feb. 3: Nathan Hall, OBU Box 3590, Arkadelphia, AR 71998-0001; South Africa.
- ◆ Feb. 12: Carlos Owens-Hughes, WBC, Box 3283, Walnut Ridge, AR 72476; South America.
- ◆ Feb. 14: Bekah Hall, OBU Box 3588, Arkadelphia, AR 71998-0001; South Africa.
- ◆ Feb. 16: Sean J., OBU Box 4297, Arkadelphia, AR 71998-0001; Central Asia.

FEBRUARY 2, 2014

EXPLORE THE BIBLE:

Our King: condemned!

JOHN 18:33-19:3, 9-11

Modern technology provides instant, constant, worldwide communication. I wonder what differences technology would have made to the events of the New Testament.

Would “tweets” come from Jerusalem? Who would use news coverage to sway public opinion or boost their career?

Let’s examine those who encountered our King. First, the Jewish religious leaders maintained that Jesus had broken their laws and wanted to condemn Him to death. All were in a rush-to-judgment mode with Passover approaching. Since only Rome could execute legally, they brought Him to Pilate; however, to avoid being ceremonially unclean, they refused to enter the Gentile palace.

The Romans created the royal image to match an earthly kingdom for King Jesus as they gave Him a title, crown, robe and verbal acclaim. Pilate recognized innocence, but his indecision descended into compromise with delaying tactics.

On that day, enemies became col-

laborators when they encountered a King like no other. They rejected Him and failed to recognize divine deliverance.

In contrast, Jesus stood willing and true to His mission (John 18:37). After preparing Himself in the garden, we sense Jesus was aware of all that was to come (John 18:4) and that it was in fulfillment of Scriptures (John 18:9) and under divine authority (John 19:11). Jesus was the Word – the greatest form of communication.

One day we, too, will encounter King Jesus. We also face a death sentence (Rom. 3:23; 6:23). But because of Jesus, our

Righteousness, who took our place, we have been declared “not guilty.”

The crowd that day made their choice, saying, “We have no king but Caesar” (John 19:15, NIV).

The voice of Pilate still echoes across the centuries: “Here is your king” (John 19:14, NIV).

What do you want to do with Him? Can you say, “He is My King, and I am His Child” (John 3:16-18)?



Janice Ramsey
member
Second Baptist
Arkadelphia

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE:

What about people who’ve never heard about Jesus?

ROMANS 1:16-25; ROMANS 10:15

In college, I went on a mission trip to Panama. I remember focusing on multiple passages in Romans for encouragement. Romans 1:20 reminds me of that trip.

We flew into a big cities and later headed toward a nearby mountainous rainforest region.

Once we arrived, we split into smaller groups and traveled to remote villages to share the gospel. As we journeyed deeper into the rainforest, the scenery could practically take your breath away. It was so beautiful! It inspired genuine moments of prayer and worship, glorifying our Creator.

Paul speaks to this in verse 20 (NIV), saying, “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.”

Paul is talking about seeing things that only eternal power and divine nature could have created. When we saw the mere size of the rainforest in Panama, we were in awe of God’s

creativity. It was obvious no man could have ever created such an intricate landscape.

Paul reminds us that we need to be inspired to worship the Creator when we see His creation. Our worship should not be devoted to created things, as He warns against throughout the rest of the passage. Our worship should be directed to the Creator, who formed the earth and the sky and who created us.

We have a special calling and blessing, as believers, to share the good news of our Creator. Paul reiterates the need for people to go and preach this good

news later in Romans 10:15, saying, “And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!’”

While Christians must become familiar with acknowledging God throughout creation, we also must be willing to share His story. What can you do, today, to share the good news with those who haven’t heard yet?



Sherrill Moffett
member
First Baptist
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FEBRUARY 9, 2014

EXPLORE THE BIBLE:

Our Savior: crucified!

JOHN 19:23-30, 38-42

It seems many baby boomers have embraced social media as a way of connecting with family and friends across distances and decades. We “like” pages created for sharing memories of growing up in hometowns, or we “post” updates in groups formed for high school classmates. We “upload” photos as a means of connecting past and present generations.

Similarly, God’s Word, offers written and visual connections across time and generations. From beginning to end, the Bible, God’s Love Story, has been pointing to Jesus and the cross. Passages in the Old Testament (Ex. 12, Psa. 22, Isa. 53) are connected with John 19. Let’s celebrate fulfillment – fulfillment of Scriptures and earthly mission.

Theologically, we recognize what Jesus did on the cross by using the terms “justification,” “redemption,” “propitiation” and “reconciliation” – visuals from courtrooms, slave markets, sacrificial systems and relationship mediations. It is interest-

ing that Billy Graham recently chose the cross as the topic for the sermon honoring his 95th birthday.

While on the cross, Jesus thought of others. He heard the thief’s plea for mercy, and He offered forgiveness for His enemies. We rejoice that He is a personal Savior. At all times and in all circumstances, He still thinks of those needing immediate assurance of His care, provision and love.

Jesus – the perfect Sacrifice – paid the price willingly, dying in my place.

“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the right-

eousness of God” (2 Cor. 5:21, NIV).

“But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). God “posted” a Valentine’s Day story, connecting our past and present with our future! “Like”?

How should we respond? Believe! Then serve Christ, just as Nicodemus and Joseph did in John 19:38-42, by obeying and doing whatever is needed (Luke 9:23).



Janice Ramsey
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Second Baptist
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BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE:

Why should I trust the Bible?

PSALM 119:1-8, 137-144

“Faith” is often defined as “believing in that which you cannot see.” We see stories of faith scattered all throughout Scripture. People in the Old and New Testaments alike saw evidence of God in their lives and in situations around them. This led them to believe in God’s promises and trust that He was faithful and His Word was good. The psalmist is no different.

If you read through the Psalms in their entirety, you will find songs of praise, lamentations, celebrations, questions to God and many more reflections on God and His mighty

acts. In the passages we are exploring, the psalmist delivers insightful reflections on God’s Word. The psalmist also makes proclamations of obedience, giving instructions for God’s people to follow suit.

In Psalm 119:1-2, the psalmist repeats an incentive for following the instruction of obeying God’s Word. He uses the phrase “blessed are those” before giving the instruction of being blameless and obeying

God’s Word with integrity. The Israelites needed hope that joy would come from following God’s Word, and to be counted as “blessed” meant to have joy and happiness.

Have you ever been indecisive about something or just taken an extra-long time making a big decision? I have always had trouble making final decisions. Humanity can be that way, especially when it comes to surrendering our lives to Christ daily. Even though we may need that extra push or encouragement to make that decision sometimes, God reveals Himself to us through

His Word.

The psalmist reminds us that God remains steadfast and faithful in verses 137-144. Though the psalmist mentions frustrations with enemies ignoring God’s Word, feeling small and even despised and having sudden troubles come upon him, he still praises the Lord. This is the kind of testimony God desires for us to find hope in. We must allow ourselves to have faith in God’s promises.



Sherrill Moffett
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New Hope Baptist Mission serves community

Eva Wilson
The Baptist Digest

MARION - Participants in the 2013 Christmas party at New Hope Baptist Mission, Marion, were urged to accept Christ, the ultimate Christmas Gift.

Torrential rain that hit the area held off long enough for more than 100 people to gather for the annual event on Saturday, Dec. 21. It was promoted as a "birthday party for Jesus."

New Hope is located in Lakeshore Estates, a mobile home community on the west side of Interstate 55, just north of the junction with Interstate 40.

Most of the community's approximately 800 residents live in poverty.

New Hope seeks to bring Christ's hope to the mobile home communities on the east side of Interstate 55. First Baptist Church, Marion, the sponsoring congregation, serves as its partner.

Pastor John Rech and his wife, Cathy, marked their 10th anniversary at New Hope in October.

As a bi-vocational pastor, Rech also works as a landscaper. Until recently, he was also juggling classes at Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary near Memphis. He received his bachelor's degree in Christian studies in May.

New Hope's facilities consist of three double-wide mobile homes. One serves as the worship center,

and the other two house classrooms and a kitchen and fellowship area.

During the 2013 Christmas party, the crowd gathered in the worship center building. The children sang "Silent Night," and Pastor Rech brought a short message focusing on the wise men.

Rech urged the crowd to look beyond the "baby Jesus" and accept Christ as their Lord and King.

The wise men returned home by a different way after they presented their gifts to the baby Jesus, Rech said during his message.

"Their whole direction in life changed after they met the King," Rech said.

After the message, the crowd filed into the classroom building where the donated gift bags had been sorted by age and gender.

Then the group went into the kitchen and fellowship hall building for cake celebrating Christ's birthday.

Torrential rain returned immediately following the conclusion of New Hope's festivities.

Despite the gloomy setting, pink flags on the lot south of the church building symbolized a huge new opportunity for New Hope. The flags mark the location for a new building. Construction is scheduled to start this spring.

A local business offered to donate a 50-by-150-foot metal building if New Hope could raise the money to pour the slab and install the rough-in utilities.



The flags on the lot adjacent to New Hope Baptist Mission, Marion, mark the location for a new building. Construction is scheduled to start this spring.

The church had raised about \$2,000 before money for the project began pouring in during late July of last year.

"The money came from all over the region," Rech said.

Plans are calling for the new building to be attached to the south side of the present worship center. The new building will consist of a 130-seat worship center, six classrooms, a fellowship hall and a kitchen, plus bathrooms with showers to accommodate volunteer teams.

When the building is completed, volunteer teams will be able to stay on site.

Constructing the new building will be the major priority this year.

But New Hope invites volunteers to help with outreach, both in the summer and throughout the year, as they seek to reach their community.

"We want to lead people to the Lord and disciple them because we know they're going to move on pretty soon," Rech said.

Summing up New Hope's ministries, Rech cited renowned spiritual leader Henry Blackaby: "We just continue to work where we see God working."

For more information, contact Rech at johnrech58@yahoo.com.

Eva Wilson is associate editor of The Baptist Digest, news journal for the Kansas-Nebraska Convention of Southern Baptists.



NEW TRUSTEE ORIENTATION - Barry Smith (front right), pastor of First Baptist Church, Farmington, and Vicki Bedford (front left), wife of Jack Bedford, who serves as pastor of Rocky Branch Baptist Church, Rogers, were among those attending trustee orientation for new board members of the six Arkansas Baptist State Convention entities.

Gov. sued for same-sex Missouri tax exec. order

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (BP) - Four Missouri taxpayers filed a lawsuit on Jan. 8 challenging Gov. Jay Nixon's executive order to permit some same-sex couples to file a Missouri combined income tax return as "husband" and "wife" for 2013 in spite of a 2004 state constitutional amendment which defines marriage as between one man and one woman.

The lawsuit challenges Executive Order 13-14 as being unconstitutional and alleges that the governor is trying to thwart the will of the people of Missouri, with 71 percent of the voters having adopted "Amendment 2" in 2004. The amendment, now codified as Article 1, Section 33 of the Missouri Constitution, says simply, "That to be valid and recognized in this state, a marriage shall exist only between a man and a woman."

Nixon's executive order was issued last November and directed the Department of Revenue to accept combined returns from same-sex couples who properly filed a federal joint return with the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). The IRS has decided to permit same-sex couples

to file a joint federal return if the parties were married in a state that permits same-sex marriage. The IRS decision did not bind state governments and did not mandate that states like Missouri, where same-sex marriage is unlawful, permit joint returns under state law.

"The governor took an oath to uphold the Missouri Constitution, which includes our marriage definition," said Michael Whitehead, a Kansas City attorney for the plaintiffs. "When he issued this order, he said he hoped the people of Missouri would take another look at recognizing same-sex 'marriage.' That is putting his thumb on the scales of justice. His job is to enforce the constitution as it is, not as he wishes it to be."

The case was filed in Cole County Circuit Court in Jefferson City, Mo. The plaintiffs ask the trial judge to declare the executive order unconstitutional and to declare that, in view of the state constitution, the Department of Revenue must not interpret tax laws to permit Missouri combined income tax returns from same-sex couples who were "married" elsewhere.

Support the ABN Endowment Fund

An endowment fund for the *Arkansas Baptist News (ABN)* has been established at the Arkansas Baptist Foundation. Consider helping secure the future of the official news journal of the state convention by including the ABN in your will or by making a contribution to the ABN Endowment Fund. Contact David Moore at the Foundation at 501-376-0732.



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Taking a plunge

Church ups Lottie giving with 'polar bear plunge'

PAGE 2

Eric Ramsey

Ark. Baptist travels globe sharing the gospel

PAGE 1



Scan QR code with your smartphone app to view ABN website.



Missions and revival

Members of First Baptist Church, Eagle Mills, take part in the Acts 1:8 One Day Mission Trip Oct. 5 in Harrison. The church experienced revival in 2013. From left: Stephanie Greening, Derek Williams and Homer Purifoy. See story on Page 1.

Modeling *for a Miracle*

I have no greater joy than to hear my children are walking in the truth
3 John 1:4

ABCHomes Fashion Show & Dinner

6 p.m. dinner
7 p.m. Fashion Show

Showcasing Spring collections and modeled by ABCHomes children/teens.

For sponsorship and ticket information, contact John Ross, 501-658-5293 or Stella Prather, 501-376-4791, ext 5168, or sprather@abchomes.org

March 7, 2014
Immanuel Baptist Church
Little Rock

March 8, 2014
Park Hill Baptist Church
North Little Rock
(Two nights, same show)



ALL PROCEEDS WILL HELP CONSTRUCT A NEW ABCHOMES FAMILY HOME IN MONTICELLO

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