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August 25, 2016

Volume 115, Number 17

ABSC to move closer to historic 50-50 CP split

Tim Yarbrough
Arkansas Baptist News

LITTLE ROCK - The Arkansas Baptist State Convention (ABSC) has approved a recommendation to continue to increase the amount of Cooperative Program (CP) dollars sent out of state to Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) causes.

Members of the ABSC Executive Board approved a recommendation by the Budget Formula Study Committee Aug. 16 that would result in increasing the amount Arkansas Baptists send to SBC causes from 43.77 percent to 45.82 percent by 2022. The vote was 67-1.

If approved by messengers at the annual meeting Oct. 25-26 at Immanuel Baptist Church in Little Rock, the ABSC will join 23 state conventions in either achieving or moving closer to a historic 50/50 split in the portion of its CP receipts given to SBC missions and ministries versus what it keeps in the state.

Following adoption of rec-

ommendations by the Great Commission Task Force (GCTF) in 2010, state conventions - including Arkansas - began a movement to support Great Commission-related funding priorities among messengers to their respective annual meetings, even amid a downturn in receipts from local churches. Ronnie Floyd, immediate SBC past president and pastor of Cross Church northwest Arkansas, served as chairman of the task force.

In its recommendations, the GCTF developed seven components of a plan "to mobilize Southern Baptists as a Great Commission people" with the goal of "penetrating the lostness" in North America and around the world. Recommendations included urging churches "to increase the percentage of their Cooperative Program giving," encouraging state conventions to forward a greater percentage of CP funds to national causes, and asking SBC entities to maximize use of CP monies for taking the gospel to the nations and lead-



Manley Beasley, Jr., pastor of Hot Springs Baptist Church and a member of the Budget Formula Study Committee, addresses Arkansas Baptist State Convention (ABSC) leaders and members of the ABSC Executive Board Aug. 16 in Little Rock.

ing SBC churches to do the same.

Members of the ABSC Budget Formula Study Committee admitted the process of determining the percentage of CP

giving to send to the SBC versus what to keep in Arkansas was not an easy one.

"In Arkansas there is a tension between the desire to send more money to reach the

nations and a trust in the quality work of our Arkansas agencies," the committee stated in a letter to agency leaders. "We

See CP page 8

Statewide prayer meeting August 29-30 in Little Rock

LITTLE ROCK - Geyer Springs First Baptist Church, Little Rock, will once again host a statewide prayer gathering for Arkansas Baptist State Convention (ABSC) church leaders and ministers.

This year's prayer gathering will take place from 6-10 p.m., Aug. 29, and 8:30 a.m.-noon, Aug. 30.

This is the third year for

the statewide prayer event. Geyer Springs First Baptist hosted the first event in 2014. Last year's event was hosted by Immanuel Baptist Church, Little Rock.

There is no cost to attend the prayer meeting, but attendees are responsible for their own lodging and travel expenses.

For more information visit prayarkansas.com.

La. flooding activates Ark. DR teams

LITTLE ROCK - Arkansas Baptist disaster relief (DR) teams have joined other DR teams from across the country in deploying to Louisiana to aid victims of recent widespread flooding in the state.

Thirteen people have been confirmed dead and more than 40,000 homes have been "damaged or destroyed" as a result of flooding in southern Louisiana, according to Baptist Press (BP) reports.

At presstime there are four DR feeding units deployed to Baton Rouge, Hammond, La-

fayette and Walker, according to BP. The kitchens are being staffed by DR volunteers from Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Oklahoma and Texas. Other states including Alabama are currently preparing to deploy volunteers to aid in the efforts.

Arkansas Baptist DR teams have been deployed to First Baptist Church, Livingston, La., where they are providing an incident command center, according to Randy Garrett, Arkansas Baptist State Convention DR director.

Garrett said that he expects Arkansas to deploy both flood recovery and feeding units in the next couple of weeks as the need arises.

"Please pray for the people experiencing crisis as their property is severely damaged or a total loss. Please also pray for our volunteers who will serve in the area. We expect heat, humidity and critters," Garrett wrote in a message to DR volunteers.

To donate to disaster relief efforts visit absc.org/ministries/disasterrelief.

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ABN Digest

Stories of interest
to Arkansas Baptists

3,202 decisions made during Brazil Olympics

BELO HORIZONTE, Brazil (BP) – Southern Baptists returning from Belo Horizonte, Brazil, are sharing testimonies of widespread revival in churches, communities, prisons and schools, following an 8-day schedule of crusades, medical ministries and other outreach efforts in this South American country.

Wayne Jenkins, director of evangelism and church growth for the Louisiana Baptist Convention, said there were 3,202 recorded salvation decisions resulting from events conducted around the Olympics.

“God did exceedingly above all that we could think or ask,” Jenkins said.

GuideStone restructures to increase efficiencies

DALLAS (BP) – GuideStone Financial Resources has realigned certain job responsibilities and restructured its workforce as part of its effort to identify and implement new ways to become more efficient. It also announced last month three new executive officers promoted from within the organization.

The restructuring dovetails with GuideStone’s update to its long-range plan, GuideStone 100, and flows from the 2015 theme “Year of Efficiency,” when the Southern Baptist Convention entity sought new efficiencies in people, processes and policies. The changes come as the entity looks to carry the ministry to its centennial in 2018, and beyond 2020.

This past spring, GuideStone offered an early voluntary retirement option to qualified employees 55 years of age or older. Fifty-nine GuideStone employees chose early retirement.

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

Injuries teach what’s ‘really important’

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP) – Watching Laura Spradlin drain three-pointers and block shots, it's hard believe a car crash nearly took her life.

“I love that basketball is a game for tall people,” said Spradlin, who has played since she was 5 years old. At almost 6’-2”, not being able to play basketball was torture. “I couldn’t run for months because of my injuries,” she said.

“But I knew I needed to try my hardest because I really wanted to play again.”

Driving alone on her way to school, Laura was severely injured when her car collided with a pickup truck at a Memphis-area intersection Jan. 22, 2014. Despite doctors’ low expectations, she aimed to stay positive amid the rigors of her recovery.

“Rehab was my opportunity,” she said. “Whenever they told me to walk for five minutes, I asked if I could walk a mile.”

News of the accident initially devastated her parents. “On the way to the hospital, we prayed for God to spare her life,” said Mike Spradlin, president of Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary. “She was only 17, and I prayed she wouldn’t be in a wheelchair the rest of her life.”

Though the idea of losing their only daughter and youngest of their three children was heart-wrenching, Spradlin’s mother Lee Ann rejected fear that tried to set in. The Lord immediately reminded her “Laura was right with Him no matter what happened.”

Laura was in critical but stable condition when her parents first saw her.

Strapped in a neck brace, her left eye was swollen shut. Still in a coma, she suffered from massive brain bleeding and a fracture in which part of her face had separated from her skull. Her front teeth had been knocked out; a carotid artery, the major blood vessel carrying blood to the brain, had been damaged; and shattered glass was embedded in her face. Other injuries included a severed leg tendon and dislocated elbow.

“We knew things were pretty serious as soon as we saw her,” Lee Ann said. After several bad reports, family members prepared for the worst.



Laura Spradlin now turns her basketball passion to Ouachita Baptist University where Garry Crowder is the women’s head coach.

Laura’s parents refused to leave her alone at Regional One Health in Memphis. They initially split shifts during the day, while family and friends stayed nights. Known as the MED to locals, the hospital is staffed by highly trained trauma specialists, though her father admitted, “We had only heard horror stories about the MED. What we found was the complete opposite. The doctors and nurses were wonderful.”

“It was like the whole city of Memphis was taking care of our daughter.”

Although on heavy medication, Laura turned a corner just four days after the accident. “Dad, I think I’m in the hospital,” she said in a surprise early morning wake-up call that sent her parents racing to the hospital, anxious to see their daughter awake.

In subsequent days and weeks, word spread of the accident. “So many people wanted to visit Laura and help us,” her mother said. “We were overwhelmed by the support.” Laura’s aunt created a personal website to give updates. People around the world prayed and posted encouraging messages. Friends delivered hot meals and her basketball team even collected money to help with expenses.

“We are so grateful for the body of Christ,” her mother said. “The family of God was there to help us with whatever

we needed.”

Recovery was excruciating for the young athlete due to diet restrictions. “My jaw was wired shut and I had to drink all my food through a straw. I was always so hungry,” she said. “They brought me cream of mushroom soup for breakfast. It was horrible.” Rejecting sugary protein shakes and smoothies, she lost 32 pounds. “I was upset because they wanted me to drink all this sugar and I couldn’t move around or work out,” she said.

Even when the nutritionist threatened to insert a feeding tube, Laura wouldn’t concede. She wasn’t satisfied until she could eat her mom’s chicken tortellini soup. “It tasted so good, and I finally felt full.”

Mood and memory changes added to Laura’s challenges. Family members never knew if she would angrily lash out, cry uncontrollably or be joyful. In difficult moments when attempts to calm her failed, nurses had to restrain her.

Her parents remained hopeful that her brain would recover. “I know it was hard for them,” Laura said. “They had to keep repeating things to me because I wouldn’t remember what happened the day before. I still have bad brain days,” she said. “But compared to how they thought I would be, I’m so much better.”

After four weeks in the hospital, 11 surgeries and months of rehab, she returned to bas-

ketball with flair and vigor. She shocked everyone in her first game by shooting a three-pointer. Her game, now bolstered by a six-day-a-week workout regimen, had changed – and everyone could see it, especially intimidated opponents who don’t think she can shoot because she’s tall.

Her most striking change is her relationship with Christ. “God taught me to trust Him more,” she said, reflecting a joy in sharing her testimony. “When I was in the hospital, everything was taken away. I couldn’t walk, or play the piano or play basketball.”

With no guarantee she would recover, Laura focused on the Lord. “He was all I needed to be happy and fulfilled,” she said. “And once I got everything back, I realized I didn’t need those things as much as I thought.”

This fall, Laura will be a power forward for Ouachita Baptist University’s Lady Tigers in Arkadelphia, her spot on the team secured by an impressive tryout.

Despite her achievement, she cautions young people against becoming fixated on sports, friends and their social lives. “We can make those things our god and push our spiritual life to the side,” she said.

“In the scope of things, your soul is what really matters. When I almost died, I learned what was really important.”

The eternal impact of VBS across Arkansas

Micah Overstreet
Arkansas Baptist News

THIS SUMMER Arkansas Baptist churches across the state used vacation Bible school (VBS) to share the love of Christ in creative and innovative ways not found in traditional church settings.

VBS has been a staple of childhood evangelism for decades – reaching literally millions of children and their families with the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. In Arkansas Baptist churches alone, VBS had 49,640 participants in 2016, with more than 1,200 professions of faith being made by participants, according to the Arkansas Baptist State Convention (ABSC).

Nationally, LifeWay Christian Resources reported the number of people enrolled in VBS in 2015 was 2.7 million, with 72,925 making professions of faith and a resulting Sunday school enrollment of 56,386.

Pastors across the Natural State agree that VBS is one of the greatest ways to get involved in their community. Pastor Tim Reed of the Connection Church of Sherwood said that, after the church distributed 1,000 door-hanger invitations and hosted a neighborhood block party to kick off VBS registration, two new families made the church their home.

Derek Miller, children's minister at Sylvan Hills First Baptist Church, Sherwood, said the best way to reach entire families of "churchless individuals" is through showing love to their children during VBS.

"Many of the kids who attend don't go to church or are not in a very spiritual family and will attend only on holidays," said Miller.

"When they go home to their parents, they talk about their experience with us and their parents start thinking, 'Well, that's Sylvan Hills FBC,' and perhaps they come and visit us or perhaps they don't, but it's making a spiritual and hopefully eternal impact on these kids' lives."

Though VBS is influential to the children through the lessons, crafts and songs it teaches, VBS also serves as a ministry to those who staff it.

Chris Reed, student pastor of Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, Bauxite, took the church's youth to two different churches to help lead VBS this summer to allow them to push their boundaries as young Christians, as well as grow closer as a group.

"I think my youth get a greater perspective than what is offered to them in their limited worldview from doing these Bible schools. I believe it's showing them that there are kids out there who not only have it worse than they do in simple day-to-day life, but who are also not being raised in godly homes to know Who God is," said Reed.

"I think it gives them a little bit more of a serious mindset of their faith in seeing that the ministry is bigger than them. They put all of the emphasis on what needs to be done to further the gospel. For these students, they get beyond themselves to see that if it is going to move forward, they have to become less so that Jesus can become more."

Many workers return to VBS annually to serve because of the simple joy it brings to the children to be shown Christ's love for a week.

"My favorite part of VBS is the small groups with the children because you really get to know them and their problems and needs," said Mary Kirchner, a member of Sylvan Hills First Baptist Church, Sherwood, who has served in



Children pause during craft-making activity during vacation Bible school held at First Baptist Church, Sherwood. Photo by Micah Overstreet

VBS for 50 years. "Some of the children come to know Jesus Christ. We had a number of them come forward when we presented the plan of salvation.

"To see the children really know and understand how much God loves them is so exciting!"

First-time VBS staffer Dale Lester, a member of Pine Grove Baptist Church, Little Rock, said his favorite aspect of VBS was seeing all of the attending children so happy and playful in worship and recreation.

VBS proponents agree that it is important to remember why it is that Arkansas Baptists take a week out of their summer each year to serve in such a way.

"I believe our mission is the Great Commission. We are told to go and to teach and we to make disciples. No matter how old or young your church is, that should be everybody's mission," said TJ Strickland, pastor of Pine Grove Baptist. "We want to show the younger generation that there is a place

See **VBS** page 7

Renewed assoc. VBS emphasis yields results

MENA – How would you feel about being a primary Bible teacher in five separate vacation Bible schools (VBS) in one summer? That's exactly what Dan and Becky Riner, First Baptist Church, Mena, did this summer.

"There is no better way to spend the summer," said Becky Riner.

The Riners were part of a VBS team put together by Ouachita Baptist Association's (OBA) discipleship development team. The VBS team's mission was to serve as short-term missionaries helping other churches in the asso-

ciation with their VBS efforts. At least 14 missionaries helped in five churches, with several missionaries serving in multiple churches.

This team was one facet of a renewed associational emphasis on VBS over the past couple of years.

"Vacation Bible school had been an effective gospel tool for many years, and we believed that it could continue if we gave it a little more emphasis," said Steve Ellison, associational missionary for OBA.

In 2015 and 2016, the association hosted VBS training sessions with Arkansas Baptist



Ellison

ABN Digest

Stories of interest
to Arkansas Baptists

Union University tops 25 best colleges list

DURHAM, N.C. – Leading Christian higher education resource, Christian Universities Online (CUO) has published a ranking of the 25 Best Christian Colleges and Universities in the South 2017.

Union University in Jackson, Tenn., claimed the top spot on the list, while Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tenn., and Asbury University in Wilmore, Ky., came in second and third, respectively.

Two universities in Arkansas made the list: Harding University in Searcy and John Brown University in Siloam Springs.

To arrive at this ranking, CUO collected publicly available data for these schools in the following categories: 1) faculty-to-student ratio, 2) percent of full-time beginning undergraduates receiving grant or scholarship aid, 3) selectivity, 4) overall retention rate and 5) overall graduation rate. Each category received equal weight in calculating the final ranking.

DEA underscores lack of medical pot use

WASHINGTON (BP) – Despite medical marijuana's legality in most states and the District of Columbia, the Obama administration announced Aug. 11 the drug will continue to be classified by the federal government as having "no currently approved medical use" and "a high potential for abuse."

Kim Jones, a pharmacy professor at Union University, said the decision may appear "somewhat surprising" in light of American culture's increasing acceptance of marijuana use, but it is "not surprising" from a scientific standpoint.

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)

A five-year strategic plan impacts mission of Christ

I wasn't looking for a job in the fall of 2010 when I met with the editor search committee of the *Arkansas Baptist News (ABN)*.

However, I'll have to admit after working as a professional journalist for various weekly and daily newspapers in Missouri and Arkansas before entering vocational ministry in the late 1980s, the opportunity intrigued me.

Years earlier during the tumultuous years of the Southern Baptist conservative resurgence, and later during my experiences serving the Missouri Baptist Convention, I often thought and verbalized to friends on numerous occasions, "You couldn't pay me enough money to be the



Pressing On

Tim Yarbrough

Phil. 3:14

editor of a state Baptist newspaper!"

Well, times change, as do hearts and minds.

Residing in Alpharetta, Ga., and serving as the Acts 1:8 national coordinator and strategist for the North

American Mission Board, I was privileged to travel the U.S., working with numer-

ous state conventions, associations and churches to further missional engagement.

It was a satisfying and meaningful ministry.

But over the years as I watched various state Baptist newspaper ministries on the sidelines, I sometimes said under my breath, "I might want to try that someday. I have some ideas I think

will work."

Long story short, I was called to Arkansas by the ABN board of directors, beginning my ministry on Jan. 1, 2011.

In the nearly six years since I took the helm at the ABN, practically everything about your Baptist newspaper has changed.

A five-year strategic plan has resulted in the newspaper being marketed differently, designed differently, deployed to various Arkansas Baptist audiences differently, printed differently and supported differently (additional revenue from advertising sales).

And there's another thing.

As I evaluated the ABN and its potential, I knew it could do more than just be a typical state Baptist newspaper that seemed to take more and

more Cooperative Program (CP) funds with each passing year to subsist.

I thought, "By committing the work of the ABN to God's purposes, perhaps one day this small newspaper ministry could give back."

Well, that day has come.

Beginning in 2018 the ABN will move forward with substantially less income from CP than it has received for many, many years.

That's because for the first time in many, many years, the ABN is on solid financial footing due to the accomplishment of a strategy that actually worked and continues to fuel its ministry.

We sell more advertising than perhaps ever before, resulting in an important injection of revenue that comes – in some instances – from

sources outside Arkansas Baptist life.

Editorially, the ABN team is passionate about supporting the cause of Jesus Christ among the various ministries of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention and its churches.

While still its "bread and butter," the reach of the ABN has been expanded well beyond the printed page. The newspaper now has a broad reach online and into various social media platforms – expanding the influence Arkansas Baptists well beyond the Natural State.

As in personal finance, it's never easy to take less, but with God's guidance I am confident the ministry of the ABN will succeed in ways not yet imagined nor conceived.

Tim Yarbrough is editor/executive director of the ABN.

Legal pot in the Natural State? Arkansans are smarter than that

Arkansas voters will be asked to legalize so-called medical marijuana in November's general election. Two measures attempting to legalize pot will appear on the ballot. I say so-called medical marijuana, because the medical component is really a ruse.

Should either or both of the medical marijuana initiatives be approved, it will really be the recreational use of marijuana that is legalized. Why is that so? One of the measures will permit 60 medical conditions to qualify "patients" for using marijuana, while the other will allow 20 conditions. Many of those conditions, such as chronic pain which



Faith & Ethics

Larry Page

both measures provide for, can neither be confirmed nor invalidated by medical professionals. In short, anyone who wants to smoke marijuana legally can lie about their health and be granted permission to puff away.

And be certain that if Arkansans OK medical pot, they next will be asked to give full-blown approval to recreational use, and then one won't even have to lie about personal health. Pot will be marketed with scant or no effective regulations and scrutiny. In Colorado, which began with medical marijuana and then moved to recreational pot a few years ago, the marijuana

business is so loose some of the Mexican cartels relocated to that state. They have found it easier and more cost-effective to cultivate, harvest, and ship their marijuana with a Colorado base of operations.

Let's stay with Colorado and look briefly at just a few of the problems legalized marijuana has caused in that state. A majority of patients in Colorado allowed to use marijuana for medical reasons cited chronic pain as the only qualifying condition. Almost one-half of patients there admitted using marijuana for recreational, not medical, purposes.

The unregulated dispensaries in Colorado, where medical marijuana is sold, look nothing like a pharmacy and more closely resemble candy

stores and tobacco shops. Not only is smoked marijuana allowed where legalized for medical reasons; the pot can also be sold in edible forms, such as candy, cookies, brownies, sodas, lollipops, etc.

The potency of marijuana has more than tripled since the mid-1990s. Average potency of marijuana flowers/buds in Colorado is over 17 percent THC (the psychoactive ingredient in pot), and the potency for concentrated forms of ingestible marijuana is more than 62 percent. Potency rates of up to 95 percent have been recorded. After studying the negative impacts from higher THC concentrations in Holland, a team of health experts concluded that THC potencies above 15 percent should be considered hard drugs.

The presence of high-potency pot, especially in edible forms, has caused dramatic increases in emergency room visits, hospital admissions and poison center calls. Many of those affected are unsuspecting children who simply thought they were eating a treat, but instead were ingesting a dangerous drug.

The above doesn't even scratch the surface of all the reliable and well-documented reasons for Arkansas to send both medical marijuana initiatives to the trash bin. As the campaign season plays out, we will continue to provide ample evidence justifying the rejection of these terrible proposals.

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



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Rubik's Cube share



Family Matters

Ben Phillips

As a Christian parent, I believe I have a responsibility to equip my children to share the gospel. Training children at home further clarifies the gospel for them and prepares them to lead others to Jesus. There are a variety of ways to share the gospel, such as drawing a picture on a napkin, sharing your personal testimony, giving a gospel tract and many others all centering on God's Word. Discover some creative ways where you can utilize your passions or hobbies to share the gospel in a meaningful way. My youngest son has learned how to solve a Rubik's Cube in the blink of an eye. We've been discussing how he can utilize something he enjoys as a tool to share the gospel.

The traditional Rubik's Cube has six colors: red, white, orange, green, blue and yellow. We have colored the orange side black in order to share a gospel presentation using the different colors. He solves for one particular color side and explains what that color represents. Black represents sin, which separates us from Jesus (Rom. 3:23). Red represents Jesus dying on the cross for our sins (Rom. 5:8). White represents being cleansed and forgiven of our sins when we place our faith in Jesus (Rom. 10:9). Blue represents baptism and our relationship with Jesus (Matt. 28:19-20). Green represents growing in our relationship with Jesus (1 Pet. 2:2). Yellow represents heaven, where we will be with Jesus (Rom. 6:23). After he has shared about what each side represents, he then solves the entire cube and discusses how Jesus takes our messed up lives and makes us whole into a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). Jesus is in the process of making us holy where we will one day be whole in heaven.

We are practicing sharing the gospel in our home by memorizing key verses that will help him share the gospel (Rom. 10:17) with friends and neighbors. If you don't discuss and share the gospel at home, then it's unlikely you will share it outside your home. Prayerfully ask God for creative opportunities to share at home, with friends, neighbors and co-workers ... and then share.

Ben Phillips serves on the ABSC evangelism and church health team.

Do we need more churches?

This is a question we are often asked, and it is a good question that is worthy of consideration. The answer is debatable with proponents on both sides. Consider our state compared to Mississippi. Though both have approximately the same population, the Mississippi Baptist Convention has 700 more churches with \$10 million more given to missions through the Cooperative Program.

However, there is one fact that is not debatable: we need more churches to rise up and be the church of Jesus Christ! These are churches that are gospel-centered - where believers are discipled, worship is passionate, evangelism is aggressive, ministry is contextualized, missions is a way of life, and all people are actively sought and warmly welcomed.

There are multiplied tens of thousands of people in our state who can be reached and need to be reached immediately. The biblical mandates call for us to respond to the spiritual truth that they are only one heartbeat away from eternity apart from God. Jesus said, "The harvest is plentiful," and that is enough proof that there are many who can be reached by your church.

Many believe we have church buildings on every corner and, therefore, we do not need more churches. While

that may be true, there is still not enough space to hold all those who can be reached with the gospel in one worship service in all of those churches. Thus, if we are to have no more churches, then we need hundreds and hundreds of churches to move immediately to multiple worship services to ensure adequate space. It may be that God will not give us more spiritual babies until we are ready to care for them.

If your church is not ready to aggressively reach people and grow, would you please consider two things? First, start a massive prayer initiative calling on God to touch your church with revival and your community with spiritual awakening. Second, call on the Arkansas Baptist State Convention evangelism and church health team, an associational team or a growing church to assist your church with revitalization efforts.

There are massive numbers of people in your area who can be evangelized. We need to avoid jealousy and turf issues and go all-out reaching these great numbers of people. Would you join me in praying for a great number of churches, whether new or revitalized, to respond immediately to the urgency of the hour?

J.D. "Sonny" Tucker is executive director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention (ABSC).



Executive Directions

Sonny Tucker

'Toto, we're not in Kansas anymore'

Toto, I've a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore," said Dorothy as she stepped out of her black-and-white-tornado-tossed Kansas farmhouse into the technicolor world of the Land of Oz.

What's a person to do; hey, what's a church to do, when we find ourselves "not in Kansas anymore"? Now, we can argue if "Kansas" really ever existed or if it was just our perception of reality, but the truth is, Bob Dylan got it right, "The times, they are a-changin'." And the times continue to change at an incredible rate of speed. And here we are as the church, the redeemed people of God, and what are we to do? How are we to respond as the tectonic plates of culture are constantly shifting? Just like an earthquake, the shifting of the culture can frighten us, throw us off balance and knock us to the ground. So how do we, as Christians, respond to our culture?

In the sixth century B.C., the people of God found themselves in a strange land with strange people and strange customs. They found themselves in a place where they did not belong. There, by the rivers of Babylon, they sat and wept as they remembered their homeland. Their captors wanted to hear one of their songs, but no song formed on their lips; no music filled the air, just weeping and wailing as they remembered life as it once was. "How can we sing the songs of the LORD while in a foreign land?" (Psa. 137:4, NIV).

Imagine their reaction when they received a message from God through the prophet Jeremiah. "Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce.

Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper" (Jer. 29:5-7, NIV).

God reminded me of an important truth as I read this story. How we respond to our culture speaks volumes about our faith. The apostle Peter reinforced this truth when he encouraged the first century church to "live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us" (1 Pet. 2:12, NIV). It's no surprise that Peter referred to the church as "foreigners and exiles." That's who

we are, church. We are "not in Kansas anymore." We are citizens of another kingdom whose King is sovereign over all kingdoms. We are different. Our faith in Jesus sets us apart. We have been called out of "darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Pet. 2:9, NIV). And when we understand our identity, we have but one option. We engage our culture in prayer, with the gospel, for the kingdom.

Arkansas Baptists, I encourage you to join me Oct. 25-26 at Immanuel Baptist Church, Little Rock, for the annual meeting of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention. The theme for our time together is Engage. Make your plans now, and let's celebrate how Arkansas Baptists are engaging the least, the lost and the last!

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



President's Perspective

Sam Roberts



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.

Camp Siloam: 'Create something beautiful'

Walnut trees are strange trees. They are ugly and gnarly in their appearance – the last to receive their leaves in the spring and the first to lose them in the fall. Each summer there's a moment, during the afterglow of a golden sunset, when a soft warm breeze blows through the trees at Camp Siloam causing a yellow snowstorm of walnut leaves. In these perfect summer moments, I pause to savor the natural beauty of God's creation, but the wind is a harbinger that the summer is coming to an end.

During the last two weeks of camp, when we find ourselves "poured out like a

drink offering" for Jesus, we talk about savoring all that God has done during the summer; how this is the last time this group of people will hunt the "Crobster," perform the opener, eat pigs-in-a-blanket, rap Ephesians 5:8 or worship together.

The college summer staff is Camp Siloam. It's not the buildings, the grounds, the equipment or the program. God works through people. This summer, our college staff, most coming to us through our campus Baptist Collegiate

Ministry (BCM) directors, served Jesus with all of their hearts and souls.

I told the staff that what I love about summer camp is that I see a micro-version of

Acts 2 play out among them. After Pentecost, Acts 2:42-47 says, the believers continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in prayers. They saw God do signs and wonders through the apostles. They shared their possessions and goods as anyone had need. They met

daily in the temple and ate together with gladness and simplicity of heart. They praised God, having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

While we teach that summer camp is not the church, many of these elements of the early church are present at summer camp. Our summer staff devoted themselves to teaching; they ate together; they saw God do amazing things; they lived in close quarters together; they prayed together, and they ministered alongside one another. They met twice daily in the worship center; they had fun together,

and they saw God save people daily. In fact, He saved 346 people at camp this summer. We saw 125 commitments, 18 campers express an interest in missions or ministry and 86 campers express an interest in baptism.

Like a breeze through strange trees, God takes strangers (talented, unique, weird, caring, broken), and He brings them together. Then He uses them to shine His golden Light upon the world and create something beautiful.

Jason Wilkie is executive director of Camp Siloam. Learn more about Camp Siloam at camp-siloam.com.



Camp Siloam

Jason Wilkie

ABCHomes: Restoring broken lives

At Arkansas Baptist Children's Homes, we believe that all lives matter. "Red and yellow, black and white, all are precious in His sight." We especially focus on families and children in crisis, those marginalized by society.

What makes our role in society unique is our focus on restoration. We believe that the gospel is a message of new beginnings. The prophet Joel wrote that the Lord "will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten" (Joel 2:25, NKJV).

One by one, lives are being

rebuilt by God. Little children come into our emergency homes afraid because of what they've been through. They leave with a joy that only comes from the Lord as evidenced by little notes of encouragement and love they leave for the next resident.

Our counseling offices are filled with hurting people, and our counselors specialize in restoration. More and more people in our state have

traumatic events in their lives. We are equipping our staff to address these outcomes with trauma-informed care.

For example, one of our counselors specializes in a program called Mending the Soul. This ministry helps women

who have come from abusive homes or relationships. We live in a time when at least one in four women and one in five men are abused as

children, which is a conservative ratio since many do not report or seek help.

Several of our counselors have been trained in trust-based relational intervention. This helps us focus on repairing the relationship rather than just trying to change bad behavior.

In our residential homes, God is restoring children and families to Himself. For example, in the Jonesboro family care home, we have seen moms and children be baptized and begin to grow in the Lord together. It's for the

purpose of restoration that we are preparing to open a new family care home near Cross Church in Springdale.

The Lord is restoring broken lives and hearts in our communities. In our partnership with the local church, we are a piece of that mosaic.

There is hope because God is the Lord Who Restores (Psa. 126). Thank you, Arkansas Baptists, for the work you do in people's lives.

James Barham is a Christian counselor and the director of Jonesboro office of Arkansas Baptist Children's Homes.



ABCHomes

James Barham

Williams Baptist: Pray for returning students

Williams Baptist College is now welcoming a brand new class of first-time college students. Freshmen are experiencing their first hours of true independence, and parents are realizing that life is passing faster than they planned. Faculty members are putting the final touches on their lectures, and the staff are planning for every unforeseen possibility. It is an intense time of change and excitement.

It is also a wonderful opportunity for church members to pray for all these as they encounter new challenges and build their relationships with one another. Here

is a quick, one-week prayer guide to help:

Day one: Pray for college freshmen to adjust to new surroundings and friends. These experiences can provide unique opportunities to discover and grow in a dynamic relationship with Jesus Christ.

Day two: Pray for parents who are experiencing life without their sons or daughters. They need wisdom on when "to let go" as they navigate new relationship levels with their college students.

Day three: Pray for faculty members who will introduce freshmen to the rigors of academic life. Ask the Lord to use these men and women to reveal Himself to the students through the courses they administer.

Day four: Pray for staff members who deliver the administrative and physical needs of first-time college students. The kindness and care in which they are delivered provide unseen comfort during a time when many students experience homesickness or

insecurity.

Day five: Pray for new connections that develop between students, families and college personnel. Many of these relationships will develop into lifelong friendships expressing the goodness of the Lord.

Day six: Pray for local churches as they minister to all those in their memberships who are experiencing the first week of college. Ask God to make them attentive to students in their communities who are away from home.

Day seven: Pray that God will use the next four years to shape students into men and women who will serve Him faithfully. Pray that He will

empower and bless the parents, faculty and staff for their parts in that endeavor.

Williams Baptist College has been praying for and welcoming new students to campus for 75 years. It is not a new enterprise for us or the other Cooperative Program ministries of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention that minister to collegians daily. Thank you for your prayers as we prepare students to competently engage local and global cultures with the good news of Jesus Christ.

Tom Jones is president of Williams Baptist College. Learn more about the activities of the college at wbcoll.edu.



Williams Baptist

Tom Jones

VBS impacts not only children's lives, but leaders too

Micah Overstreet
Arkansas Baptist News

VACATION BIBLE school (VBS). The name brings into the mind's eye of the beholder a flurry of silly songs and accompanying dance moves, goofy themes and typically, for most adult workers, an impressive lack of sleep. Whether it stirs memories of childish love or grumpy anguish, it is certain that, for many, it serves as the testimony of how they first heard of Jesus and accepted His Word as truth.

VBS

continued from page 3

for them where they can come and be a part of a family, accept them and what they can to help them."

As the numbers show, the younger generation seems to be catching on.

Micah Overstreet served as a summer intern for the ABN.

As both a seasoned veteran in the art of staffing VBS and routine attendee from my earliest memory, I have seen the impact that VBS can leave on the lives of all involved in the process. This summer I was blessed with the opportunity to lead worship as well as assist in teaching a small group at my church's Egyptian themed VBS in Bauxite.

Though admittedly a struggle at times to get everything done as life inexplicably continued to happen even during the hours of 6-8 p.m., the reason behind doing it all would come into focus during the moments when I could see the love of Christ reflected in the faces of those children in attendance. It happens when:

- A 12-year-old child who was too cool to participate in our group activities - excitedly hugged me at the end of the second evening and proclaimed that she would return the following evening.

- The children battle with

raised hands and hopeful eyes to be the one to lead the closing prayer.

- The children all gather around the front of the stage and dance with abandon to songs praising their King, and I would look up from my anxieties about online homework and internship deadlines and realize that what everyone volunteering that week was doing was so much more eternal than our everyday hardships.

As we go about our lives wrapped up in our own circumstances, it is important to remember why we were placed here in the first place: to live a life of service as we do everything as unto our King. Vacation Bible school, through the silliness of its songs and costumes, allows us as Christians to do just that as we serve the future Church with the boundless love of Christ. It is because of this, and the huge impact that it brings on both the lives of children and workers alike, that I believe that VBS is one



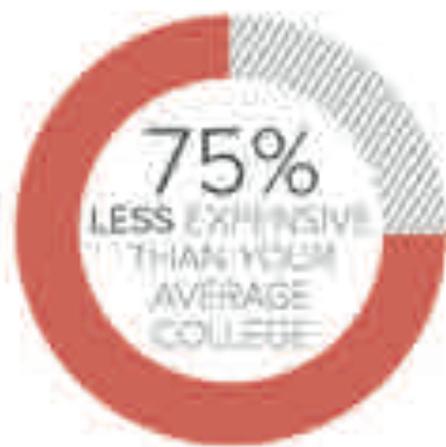
Micah Overstreet (center), who served as a summer intern for the *Arkansas Baptist News*, performs during vacation Bible school held at her church, Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, Bauxite.

of the best programs we as Arkansas Baptists have for our churches.

So give up a week of your summer. Get ridiculous and march like a submarine captain or strut like an Egyptian for your kids. Revel in their laughter as they giggle at your expressions and sit enraptured

by your tales. Do all of these things and know that the time you are spending away from the craziness of life is not wasted, but rather, is making an impact that just might be eternal.

Micah Overstreet served as a summer intern for the *Arkansas Baptist News*.



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CP

continued from page one

spent days in study and prayer. In the end, the call of 3.5 billion people with no access to the gospel is too great for Arkansas Baptists to ignore. We felt a responsibility to send more for the spread of the gospel around the world.”

The committee said it worked to “develop a formula that focuses all ABSC work to its highest missional impact and limits as much as possible the impact on our agencies.”

While the previous ABSC five-year budget formula (2013-2017) resulted in \$658,000 in “real dollars” being directed to SBC causes, the new formula (2018-2022) results in \$1,730,155 sent to SBC – an increase of more than \$1 million.

SBC, state causes

The new five-year formula will result in a 2.05 percent increase to SBC causes, with 1.05 percent of the increase coming immediately from the ABSC Executive Board staff budget in 2018. The committee recommended the remaining increase come from ABSC agencies, with .50 percent of the increase from the *Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine* (ABN) and the other .50 percent allocated by an equal percentage reduction to the other ABSC agencies and institutions. The increase from the agencies and institutions amounts to a .2 percent increase to the SBC each year of the five-year budget formula period.

In real dollars, the annual budget impact of the new formula to ABSC and related entities beginning in 2018 is as follows (based on an anticipated \$21 million budget): Executive Board ministries, \$220,031; ABN, \$21,000; Arkansas Baptist Children’s Homes and Family Ministries (ABCHomes), \$2,307; Arkansas Baptist Foundation, \$1,355; Camp Siloam, \$1,005, and Christian Higher Educa-

tion in Arkansas (Williams Baptist College and Ouachita Baptist University), \$16,333.

According to the proposal, if the state distribution to agencies and institutions – including Christian Higher Education – increases, then CP allocations will receive an equal percent increase. If the state distribution is a decrease from the prior year, all agencies and institutions will receive an equal percent decrease to their state portion of CP distribution.

The committee said state CP funds for Christian Higher Education are based on 50 percent of their 2017 CP budget. The balance of Christian Higher Education budget funds will be pooled and allocated on the number of full-time students determined at each institution, known as Full Time Equivalency (FTE) and as reported to the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).

CP overages

The committee proposed in its recommendation that CP funds received in excess of the annual budget be divided equally between the International Mission Board and the state convention at the end of the fiscal year.

The state portion of the funds will then be distributed to each ABSC entity in the budget formula at the same ratio as funds distributed from budgeted receipts.

New programs-ministries

Additionally, the recommendation states that ABSC entities and institutions will share in the funding of new or additional programs or ministry changes approved by annual meeting messengers, as the cost of the new program or ministry will be subtracted from the overall convention budget.

Consequently, this results in all ABSC agencies and institutions, the Executive Board and the SBC portion of the CP sharing proportionally in the cost of the new program or

ministry, the recommendation states.

Discussion

During discussion of the committee’s recommendation, ABSC Executive Director J.D. “Sonny” Tucker reminded board members of the responsibility they have to allocating CP funds for maximum mission impact – both inside and outside Arkansas.

“(In Arkansas) we don’t walk around wondering what the SBC does,” he said, adding that strategies within the SBC change “every few years” so it would not be wise to do that.

Tucker added, “We all have competing passions. No one is completely happy with this formula,” he said. “SBC leaders have a passion for people in the world who have no access to the gospel. We have a passion for what we do in Arkansas.”

He said the decision by Arkansas Baptists to send more to SBC causes is nothing new.

“You, as a convention, have voted twice to increase the amount that goes to the SBC,” said Tucker, adding that Arkansas currently has the lowest percentage going to SBC causes of any of the state conventions with “legacy agencies and institutions.”

Tucker thanked the Budget Formula Study Committee for its work.

“I want to commend the great leaders on the Budget Formula Study Committee for their diligent work and for their passion for our work both in Arkansas and on the national/international level. I also want to express deep appreciation for the ABSC agency/institution leaders for their support of this budget and for their commitment to teamwork within the Arkansas Baptist family.”

Joe Statton, chairman of the Budget Formula Committee and executive pastor at Geyer Springs First Baptist Church, Little Rock, told board members “I’m proud to be an Arkansas Baptist,” and that “it

was inspiring” during the committee’s meetings with entity leaders to learn of work they are doing in Arkansas.

“(The committee) was encouraged by the strong support of the Executive Board action to approve our recommendation to double the amount of funds sent to SBC causes through our 2018-2022 budget formula. The committee prayerfully concluded that we must continue to fund worldwide efforts to reach the nations, while still providing very strong support for the ministries of our effective agencies and institutions here in Arkansas,” said Statton. “It is our prayer that each church will move toward even stronger commitment in their giving to missions in Arkansas, the United States and the world through the Cooperative Program.”

Members of the Budget Study Formula Committee were Manley Beasley Jr., pastor of Hot Springs Baptist Church; Doug Falknor, pastor of First Baptist Church, Fayetteville; Nick Floyd, teaching pastor and Fayetteville campus pastor of Cross Church, Springdale; Ricky Lee, pastor of First Baptist Church, Sherwood; Archie Mason, pastor of Central Baptist Church, Jonesboro; John McCallum, pastor of First Baptist Church, Hot Springs; Jeff Williams, pastor of Second Baptist Church, Conway, and Joe Statton, executive pastor of Geyer Springs First Baptist Church, Little Rock. Sam Roberts, convention president and pastor of First Baptist Church, Stuttgart, and Greg Sykes, pastor of First Baptist Church, Russellville, and president of the Executive Board, served as ex officio members.

In other business, the board:

– Approved a Finance Committee request to recommend for presentation to messengers attending the fall annual meeting a \$21 million unified CP budget for 2017 “that accurately reflects the current Cooperative Program income of the ABSC,” according to Tucker.

In the past the convention had proposed a budget that had fallen short of projections.

– OK’d a Program Committee request to approve 2017 goal recommendations for all ABSC teams, as well as a recommendation to amend the articles of incorporation of the Arkansas Baptist Foundation to reflect the agency’s change in address and a change in nomenclature of officers and a standing committee.

– Heard a report from the ABSC Operating Committee regarding the convention’s annual audit, which was performed by the accounting firm of Thomas and Thomas of Little Rock. The audit cited no problems.

– Recognized the following outgoing board members: Jeff Paxton, First Baptist Church, Dover; David Richey, Immanuel Baptist Church, Warren; Paul Reams, Central Baptist Church, Bald Knob; Tom McCone, First Baptist Church, Greenwood; Stan Ballard, Nettleton Baptist Church, Jonesboro; Johnny Hutchison, Highland Drive Baptist Church, Jonesboro; Joe Baker, Village Baptist Church, Bella Vista; Mike McCauley, Bella Vista Baptist Church, Bella Vista; Gary Thomas, First Baptist Church, Lowell, and Claude Ramey, First Baptist Church, Hatfield, were recognized for completion of two terms (2011-2016). Rick Porter, Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, Bauxite; John Lane, West View Baptist Church, Paragould, and Eddie Brawley, First Baptist Church, West Memphis, were recognized for the completion of one term (2014-2016).

– Announced the next meeting of the board will be held immediately following the Tuesday, Oct. 25, afternoon session of the ABSC Annual Meeting at Immanuel Baptist Church in Little Rock. The final meeting of the board for the year will be held Thursday, Nov. 10, at the Baptist building in Little Rock.

Contact Tim Yarbrough at tim@arkansasbaptist.org.




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Five things I wish I had known before starting college

Micah Overstreet
Arkansas Baptist News

AS A FRESHMAN, I had heard many theories on what to do upon leaving the arms of my parents for the gates of the university, but none quite prepared me for the reality of college once I arrived. If I could go back in time and tell myself anything to make my freshman year run more smoothly, this would be my top-five list:

One: Choose your roommate carefully.

In college, when professors say that you will have two to three hours of homework per hour that you spend in their class, they mean it. Because of

this, you will often find yourself in a nest of your textbooks and water bottles as you hunch over your laptop and fight the carpal tunnel you feel is certain to come with every essay. Often, you will probably want to do this in the comfort of your own pajamas, which probably means in your own dorm room.

You will be sharing a vast amount of time with the person with whom you share a 12 x 12 breathing space called a dorm room. Typically, the system works out, and you get placed with someone who will eventually be in

your wedding. However, when this is not the case, things can go horribly awry. One of my best friends from high school told me of her freshman roommate who would hang air fresheners on the vents instead of showering for days at a time.

Take the time to answer those roommate compatibility questionnaires honestly, and try to meet up with your roommate at least once before the year begins to talk about expectations.

Two: Choose your friends wisely.

Your friends are going to in-

fluence your attitude and decisions. The last thing you need as a freshman is a wild group to drive both you and your grade point average (GPA) into the ground. The average college student needs a small mountain of scholarships to attend the school of their choice. Most of those scholarships are based on the student's GPA. Sure, you are living on campus for the experience, but that's not why you're in debt. You are in school for an education and a future; don't let anyone or anything stand in the way of that. If others don't care for your emotional, academic or physical well-being, then they aren't your amigos. Find people to hang out with who make your sides ache with laughter, who you can one day tell your children stories about you as a college student, and who might even help you make harmless, yet questionable, decisions from time to time.

Three: Do your homework.

As a person who has perfected both the art of procrastination and the formula for how much coffee can be consumed at midnight to allow optimum performance and crash time, I understand how important this is. My dad once described it to me like this: "When you go to school, it's your job; that means you work 9 to 5." Go to class; take notes. When you go home, do what has been assigned to you then, rather than later. You're off "work" at 5 p.m.; make sure your time counts. Rather than push that huge paper until the last minute, just do it in small chunks throughout the week.

Four: Sleep.

Don't test your body on this issue, I promise it will win — be

it in the middle of a lecture or in the middle of the road. A quick nap can do just as much revitalization as a cup of coffee can. However, it is important that you only nap in 20- to 90-minute segments. Anything else will have you waking up in the middle of a sleep cycle and leave you groggier than you were before napping. It's true that some nights you simply can't get enough sleep, so it's always important to have a backup plan. Find caffeinated beverages that help you achieve the highest performance. I personally found that a quickly downed iced espresso drink was the most effective in reviving me after an all-nighter of studying. For those who detest coffee, tea or soda also has been proven to work during desperate situations.

Five: Use your God-given common sense.

Always keep in mind — and this may sound overly dramatic — but you can die. This one should go without saying. However, based on personal experiences, I feel I must touch on it. As someone who was raised by overprotective parents, I knew the risks. With every student-legal weapon my dad added to my glove box, I was reminded of the dangers of being a single female out on the roads at night. But even with my cautious upbringing, I managed to land myself in some sketchy situations during my freshman year. Have fun, but just remember to also have common sense.

College can be a wonderful experience if you play it right. So go out there, and experience life! Just remember to be smart while you're at it.

Micah Overstreet is a student at Ouachita Baptist University.



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Inaugural RECHARGE camp held at Camp Paron

PARON – Framed around the idea of newness and the reviving power of Christ, a new summer church youth camp, RECHARGE, premiered at Camp Paron this year with 23 students and seven sponsors.

“We built the theme RECHARGE around how we felt like the camp was on a big recharge with new staff, new direction, trying new things out here, so we built the theme for the kids to be able to come and have a week where they could literally just spiritually recharge,” said Samantha Tischer, director of RECHARGE and assistant manager of Camp Paron.

“We feel like kids are just so strung out on activities and what’s going on in the world and families, and we wanted a week where they could come to just hear the Word of God preached and feel relaxed and

focus on nothing else but that.”

One student made a profession of faith on the camp’s first evening, and several rededications and decisions for godly change were made during the week.

“We saw some kids from our youth group get right with God, and they’re changed, fundamentally. It’s been awesome,” said Jared Schindler, youth pastor, Beckspur Baptist Church, Forest City.

The overarching lesson of this year’s camp focused on the various ways in which the Holy Spirit works in Christians’ lives.

“The biggest impact this camp has made on my life is that it’s really helped me to understand the Holy Spirit,” said Brody Murphy, a 17-year-old camper from Beckspur Baptist Church. “We learned

from 1 John 4:14 that there are many spirits that battle in our lives, but the way you can tell the Holy Spirit from the other spirits is if you test it and it automatically comes back to the glorification of Christ. That’s how you can tell if it’s the Holy Spirit working in your life.”

The camp impacted not only student’s lives but also the lives of the staff as well.

“I think I went into RECHARGE thinking that it was a program for the kids, and while it has been, I’ve seen so much more come out and be beneficial to the adults, the staff, myself and even the band,” said Tischer. “You don’t



Sharing popcorn and conversation, RECHARGE camper Brody Murphy and his youth pastor, Jared Schindler, lounge in the Camp Paron Snack Shack during free time.

ever think about the program reaching the people putting on the program as well as the students, so it’s just been really cool to see God work in everybody’s lives.”

“It has been very evident

that the Holy Spirit has been here, and people are in tune with that and responding to that.”

For more information on RECHARGE, visit campparon.com.



RA TRAINING AT WILLIAMS – Hayes Howell, director of campus ministries at Williams Baptist College, leads RA (resident assistant) training session on campus prior to the start of classes. Freshman move-in day was Aug. 19, and all other students moved into residence halls on Aug. 21. Classes for all students began Aug. 23, with the college’s 75th anniversary Convocation Chapel held Aug. 24. “It is always rejuvenating to see the students arriving on campus for the fall semester as the campus comes back to life after summer break,” said Jeremy Dutschke, WBC’s vice president for enrollment management and student services.



Kyle Thurman
Hot Springs

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OBU earns honors in #MyTopCollege competition

ARKADELPHIA — What’s the top university in the nation in school spirit? The answer is Ouachita Baptist University, according to Forbes’ 2016 #MyTopCollege social media competition.

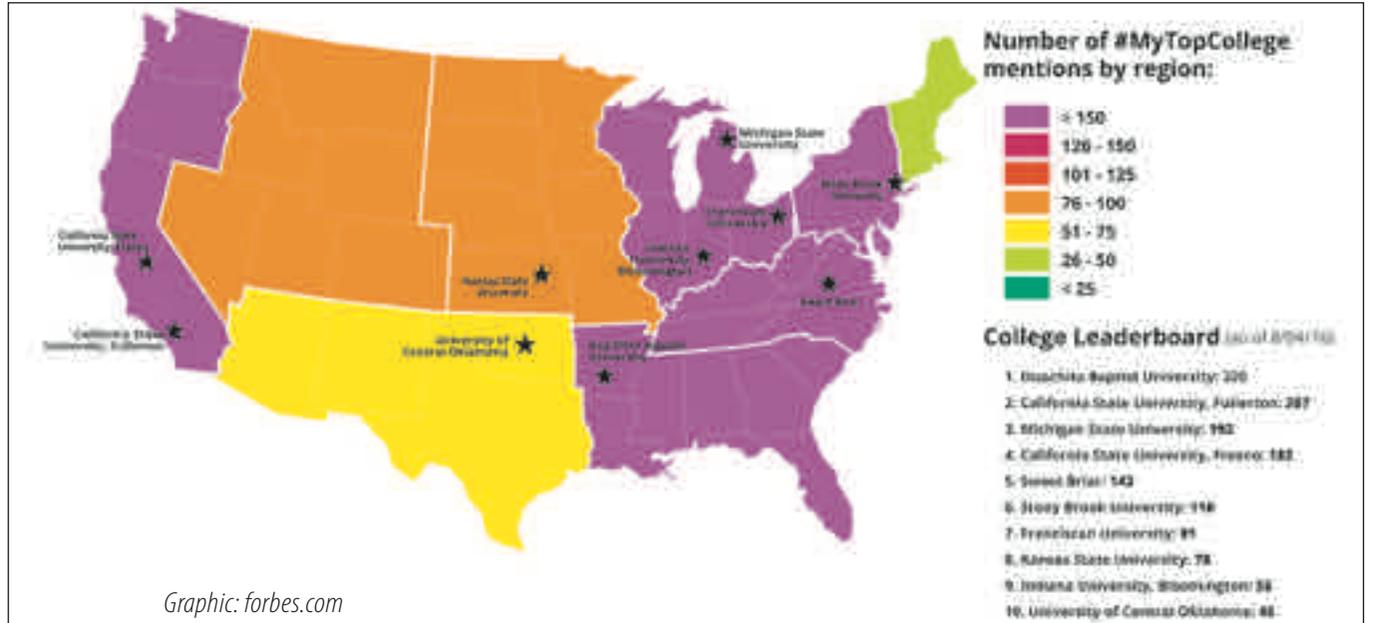
Ouachita was named the nation’s No. 1 university in school spirit, outdistancing runners-up California State University in Fullerton and Michigan State University, with student enrollments of 40,000 and 50,000 respectively, compared to Ouachita’s enrollment of 1,500.

“Being crowned national champions in school spirit is an incredible feat,” said Trennis Henderson, Ouachita vice president for communications. “For those who know Ouachita, it is no surprise that our students and alumni rose to the challenge to tell the nation what makes Ouachita such a special place.

“It’s particularly significant that we outpaced major state universities with enrollments

25 to 30 times larger than Ouachita,” Henderson added. “Congratulations to each of our students, faculty, staff and alumni who helped tell the Ouachita story in such an outstanding way.”

The annual competition invites students, alumni, faculty and staff to post comments and photos on social media highlighting why their university is #MyTopCollege. This marks the third year in a row that Ouachita has earned a national Top 10 finish in the annual competition. Ouachita finished fifth nationally last year and eighth in 2014, the first year



Graphic: forbes.com

of the contest.

Ouachitonians posted a total of 320 comments during the four-week competition. A sampling of posts includes:

@Ouachita is so beautiful. The light of Christ shines so brightly at #MyTopCollege!

@Ouachita is #MyTopCol-

lege because of profs who invest deeply in students both in and out of the classroom.

Reflecting on God’s blessings today @Ouachita is one of those. It not only helped me reach my dreams, it prepared me for life. #MyTopCollege.

@Ouachita is #MyTopCol-

lege because its past is cherished, its future is inspiring and its present is lived to the fullest.

A rare environment where lasting friendships are forged with gifted classmates preparing to be true change agents. @Ouachita #MyTopCollege.

A Two-Day Intensive Prayer Gathering

A Call to Pray for Revival and Awakening

Monday, August 29, 6:00-10:00 p.m.
Tuesday, August 30, 8:30 a.m.-12:00 noon
breakfast will be served 7:45-9:15 a.m.

Hosted by Geyer Springs First Baptist Church
Little Rock, Arkansas

Register online at prayarkansas.com
Or call 501-378-4791 ext. 5103 (toll free 800-838-2272 ext. 5103) or email gmccallister@absc.org

Who’s invited to this FREE prayer gathering?

Pastors, ministry staff members, staff members of one of our ABC agencies or institutions, recreational missionaries, students training for ministry, ordained ministers, retired ministers, ABC staff members—all invited!



A ministry of the Cooperative Program



arkansas

STATEWIDE PRAYER GATHERING FOR PASTORS AND ALL MINISTERS

Obituaries



John Carl Bunch, 100, of Jonesboro, died Aug. 7, at a Jonesboro healthcare facility.

He was preceded in death by his wife of more than 69 years, Alice, and a son.

In 1949, Bunch became director of missions of Mt. Zion Baptist Association.

With the exception of the years of 1951-1955, he remained Mt. Zion's director of missions for 28 years.

He was passionate about local church missions.

Bunch served on the Executive Board of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, the Southern Baptist 10-year planning commission and the board of directors of Williams Baptist College.

As director of missions, Bunch set out to develop the Mt. Zion Baptist Camp near Walcott State Park.

His support of Mt. Zion Camp remained one of his greatest passions for the remainder of his life.

Bunch retired from leader-

ship in northeast Arkansas in 1982.

In 1984, after relocating to Mt. Ida, he assumed the part-time position of director of missions for the Caddo Baptist Association, a position he held for another 12 years.

Bunch returned to Jonesboro in 1997.

He is survived by three daughters, two sons, 14 grandchildren, 27 great-grandchildren and nine great-great grandchildren.

A celebration of his life was held Aug. 11 at First Baptist Church in Jonesboro. A private burial preceded the service.

Church life

First Baptist Church, Lockesburg, will hold revival services Sept. 11-14, with evangelist Phil Glisson of Memphis, Tenn., speaking.

Geyer Springs First Baptist Church, Little Rock, will host an Arkansas Baptist State Convention statewide prayer gathering for pastors and ministers Aug. 29-30. For more information email Gwen McCallister at gmccallister@absc.org. Register for the event at prayarkansas.org.



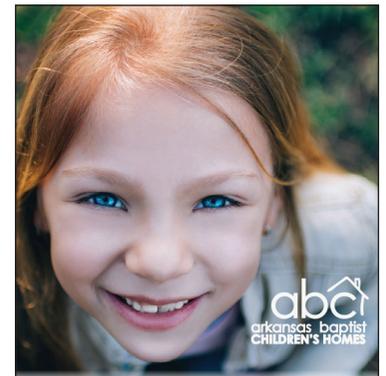
WEE WORKSHOP — Susie Shumaker (left), of Geyer Springs First Baptist Church in Little Rock, and Joan Hubbard of Tendercare Preschool, a ministry of First Baptist Church in Siloam Springs, are shown at the WEE Workshop, a faith-based early childhood conference sponsored by the Arkansas Baptist State Convention at First Baptist Church in Rogers, Aug. 1. Other Wee Workshop conferences were held Aug. 4-5 at Geyer Springs First Baptist Church. *Photo by Hannah Yarbrough*

Elaine Baptist Church, Elaine, will celebrate its 100th anniversary at 10:30 a.m., Oct. 16. Lunch will be provided. All former members, pastors, friends and family are invited. For more information, call 870-827-3401.

Immanuel Baptist Church, Little Rock, will host the Victory Car Show from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 10. Registration and admission is

free, with numerous awards to be given during the event, as well as goody bags and door prizes. Contestants may register at ibclr.org or email philip@ibclr.org for information.

Park Hill Baptist Church, North Little Rock, hosted a missions conference Aug. 24 with Michael Cloer, senior pastor of Englewood Baptist Church in Rocky Mount, N.C., speaking.



■ Houseparents needed:

Baptist Home for Children, Monticello.

Contact: Randy Luper at (870) 367-5358 or rluper@abchomes.org. These full-time positions include salary, housing, medical and life insurance and paid leave.

Emergency Receiving Home, Judsonia.

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

Check out the new and improved ABN website at arkansasbaptist.org

Classifieds

PASTOR

Accepting applications for **bi-vocational pastor**. Resume to Emmanuel Baptist, 4315 NCR 535, Blytheville, AR 72315.

Portland Baptist Church, Portland, AR, is seeking a **full-time pastor**. Send letter/resume to Emory Austin, 779 Montrose, Portland, AR 71658 or e-mail to jimmiesadler@att.net. ATTN: Pastor Search Committee.

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

FBC Canton (TX), a growing congregation with a Christ-centered vision, needs

full-time youth minister. Seeking a man with 3 yrs. experience (preferred) to be part of our vision for growth. Send resume/references to libby@firstcanton.com. Open through Sept. 30, 2016.

Full-time associate pastor of youth. Eastern Heights Baptist Church in Bartlesville, OK is accepting resumes for a f/t Associate Pastor of Youth who will help the church fulfill its mission by leading the Youth Ministry Team. A seminary degree is preferred. Compensation includes a competitive salary and full benefits including family insurance. Resumes can be sent to pastor@ehbc.net.

Bald Knob Central Baptist Church needing **part-time music minister**. All inquiries and resumes are to be addressed to jamiem@weaverbailey.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@fbcbeebe.com.

First Baptist Searcy is seeking a **full-time minister of music/worship**. Experience, a bachelor's degree in a mu-

sic-related field and seminary training are preferred. Email resumes to linda@fbcsearcy.org or mail to FBC Searcy, Attention: Linda Stake, 105 S. Spring St, Searcy, AR 72143.

Elliott Baptist Church, 4189 Hwy. 376 South, Camden, AR, is seeking a **part-time worship leader**, to lead our congregation in blended music services. Resumes can be mailed to address above with attention: Search Committee or emailed to elliottbaptist@gmail.com. You can also visit our Facebook page for more info about our church or phone 870-231-6411.

East Main, El Dorado, is seeking a **part-time student pastor** to shepherd and disciple a growing, ethnically diverse youth group. Contact bthomas.embc@sbcglobal.net.

Cocklebur Baptist in Ward is seeking a bi-vocational church **worship leader**. Applicants would need to be available for Sunday and Wednesday evening worship services. Please submit resume to cbc4138@gmail.com.

Geyer Springs First Baptist is accepting resumes for **children's minister**. Email

resumes or suggested candidate information to Curtis Barnes, cbarnes@gfsbc.org. Minimum 5 years experience in a church with 700+ attending.

Worship Leader - First Baptist Church Dardanelle is seeking a **part-time worship leader or full-time worship leader** with other ministry duties. For more information, call 479-229-3727 or email fbcddardanelle@gmail.com.

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

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

Springs, AR, 72543. Call Tony Criswell at 501-362-2448.

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

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

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

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

Looking to fill a staff position at your church?

Visit arkansasbaptist.org/ad to submit your classified!

Everybody needs an 'attaboy'

By Butch Riddle

ASHDOWN - I have played sports for most of my 60-plus years of life. The smell of fresh-cut grass and 100 degree days make me dread football two-a-day practices. On hot summer nights I think I might go to the ballpark and take batting practice and shag a few flies and skippers. I see the basketball goal in the church parking lot, and suddenly I am shooting game-winning free throws. I drive by the high-school stadium and see the track and the pole-vault pit, and my mind takes me back to the thrill of vaulting, high jumping and long jumping. Playing sports

has long been a major part of who I am.

Lately, I have relegated my sporting life to the golf course and the deer stand where spectators are few and far between. I don't belong to a hunting club, and I usually golf alone. There is nobody around to cheer me to greater accomplishment or encourage me when I miss a putt or my arrow misses the mark. That's OK because I choose to enjoy my "alone time" with the sports I can still play.

But there are times when I miss hearing the coach say,

"Attaboy, Riddle!" Or hearing my family in the stands with a few dozen or a few thousand yelling, "Attaboy!" You see, when I was young that's what people yelled when you did something spectacular. I got a few hits in baseball that made a difference. I struck out the other side to win the game. I threw a touchdown pass. I cleared the bar. I made the free throw. But I also missed a few. And they still yelled, "Attaboy!"

Now, I am a pastor. I've been a pastor for nearly 35 years. People applaud for the choir, soloist, pianist or special music. But they don't applaud much for the sermon. And that's OK. In Colossians 3:23 (NIV), Paul wrote, "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord," and in 1 Corinthians 10:31 (NIV), he wrote, "Do it all for the glory of God." But it sure is nice to get an "attaboy" every now and then. Give your pastor and staff an "attaboy" every once in a while. I think you will see a difference in them ... and you.

Butch Riddle is senior pastor of First Baptist Church, Ashdown.



Riddle



TEN COMMANDMENTS MONUMENT - First Baptist Church, Augusta, recently erected a Ten Commandments monument in front of the church in response to many places not welcoming such a display. Joy Lynn Bowen, a member of the church, suggested that the church "have a monument erected on church property to tell the world what God commands of us. I had seen a picture very similar to the monument FBC chose. I brought the idea to our memorial committee and they agreed it would be a visual way to show what we believe. The church approved in January and we placed the order with Bible Monument in Searcy." The monument was placed at the church Aug. 10 and soon will be lighted at night as well. "I would love to see other churches do the same or similar ideas. God told us to tell the world ... this is one step in obeying," said Bowen.

Sam Moore Evangelistic Ministries



479-381-1170,
sam@evangelistsammoore.com

Sam Moore is a vocational evangelist and a native of Arkansas. He has the gift of an evangelist and the heart of a pastor. He is available for Revivals, Crusades, Harvest Days and Witness Training. Now scheduling for 2016.

www.evangelistsammoore.com

Sherman retires from Ridgeway Baptist

NASHVILLE - Larry Sherman retired July 31 after serving as pastor of Ridgeway Baptist Church in Nashville since 2009.

Sherman is one of six in his immediate family to serve as a pastor.

His father preached for 60 years and his grandfather for 40 years.

In addition, his father-in-law preached for 50 years, and his son and son-in-

law are currently serving in Arkansas Baptist State Convention (ABSC) churches.



Sherman

His son, Robby, is pastor of First Baptist Church in England and his son-in-law, Allen Morton, is pastor of Chenal Valley Baptist Church in Little Rock.

Sherman previously served in the ABSC Sunday school department (now evangelism and church growth).

Central Arkansas
imb
Alumni Group

Welcoming all who have ever been affiliated with the International Mission Board: retired (including VRI), resigned, short-termers, Journeyman, adult MKs, etc.

You are invited
to join in a time of fellowship & lunch
Saturday, September 10, 2016 * 12:00 - 2:30 pm
Markham Street Baptist Church
9701 West Markham Street, Little Rock 72205

Cost: \$12.00 per person
Registration Deadline: September 1st

Visit absc.org/imb alumni for more information!

"...but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint." -Isaiah 40:31

Soaring Wings Christian Home and Ranch in Conway is seeking a **HOUSEPARENT COUPLE** to serve children who have been abused, neglected, orphaned or are otherwise in need of a chance to **SOAR**.

Learn more at www.swranch.org/employment.
Send resumes to jason@soaringwingsranch.com

Women & Faith

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

Proverbs 31:30 (HCSB)

Olympians' love for teammates anchored by faith

RIO DE JANEIRO (BP) – Christa Dietzen comes by the "Mom" nickname her teammates have given her naturally. She's the oldest in her extended family, and she's one of the oldest players on the U.S. women's Olympic volleyball team.

For Dietzen, the captain of the U.S. team in Rio, her interest in caring for those around her comes not just from any mothering instincts she might have, but from what she believes is required of her as a Christian.

"What does it look like to be a Christian athlete?" Dietzen asked. "I think the first piece for me is, 'How do you love your teammates?'"

A Pennsylvania native, Dietzen said the answer to that question is in getting to know them. She and her husband regularly have teammates over to dinner – especially younger and newer players on the U.S. national team.

Dietzen wants to know her teammates, their families and their backgrounds – what excites them and what scares

them. Doing that helps her minister to them and love them well.

Another component that comes with being a Christian athlete, Dietzen said, is having a humble heart. That means being willing to listen to teammates and coaches, being willing to take feedback – whether praise or criticism – and being willing to learn from others.

A third element in her conduct as a Christian athlete is "always knowing that you have eyes watching you," Dietzen said, "from what you're saying to people, how you carry yourself on and off the court, what you're posting on social media and how you treat others."

Her outlook on her sport and how she interacts with her teammates has changed considerably in recent years since Dietzen became a Christian. Though she grew up in a home where she went to church on Sundays and had a family built upon Christian values, Dietzen said she didn't have a relationship with God.

"I actually taught Sunday

school in college, but all the same, I didn't know what a relationship with God looked like," she said.

After finishing her first professional season in China, she began attending some Fellowship of Christian Athletes events in southern California. She was volunteering at one such event where various athletes were sharing their testimonies when a pastor gave an invitation, asking anyone who wanted to give his or her life to Christ to stand up.

"I was in the back row, and what I now know as the Holy Spirit tried to throw me off my chair to stand up," Dietzen recalled.

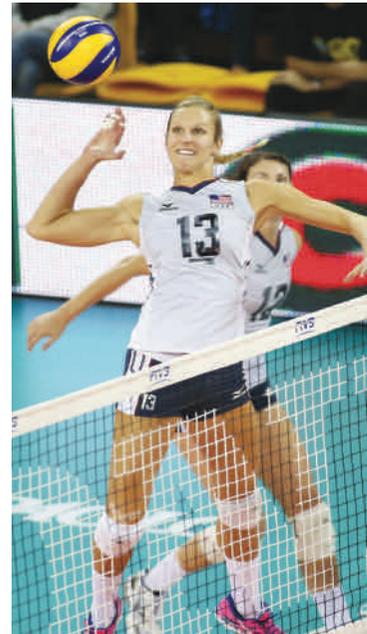
She resisted, thinking that since she was a volunteer, she already should have made that decision, even though she didn't know what it meant.

While she did not become a Christian that night, a few weeks later, in June 2010, Dietzen committed her life to Christ.

She and her husband are part of Rock Harbor Orange Church in Orange, Calif. Though Dietzen travels a lot and isn't able to attend there regularly, she said she's look-



Dietzen



U.S. team captain Christa Harmotto Dietzen spikes volleyball during game with Turkey. Photo courtesy of FIVB

ing forward to being more plugged in there when her volleyball career is over.

In Rio, Dietzen expected to spend her time in the Olympic village interacting with athletes from all over the world.

"I really enjoyed that in 2012, having those Bible studies and having those spiritual connections off the court, too," she said.

Daigle tops list

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) – Lauren Daigle, named New Artist of the Year at last year's Dove Awards, tops the list of this year's artist nominees with six nominations.

The Dove Awards are sponsored by the Gospel Music Association to honor the best in all genres



Daigle

of Christian music. This year's awards show will be Oct. 11 in Nashville, Tenn.

In addition to a nod for Album of the Year and two for Song of the Year (one each for songs "First" and "Trust in You"), Daigle also is nominated for Songwriter of the Year, Contemporary Christian Artist of the Year and Artist of the Year.

"Our theme this year is 'Love. Amplified,'" said GMA executive director Jackie Patillo in a press release. "(It's) a phrase we believe encompasses ... our music. At a time when so much of the world is divided and hostility is in the air, we will turn up the volume of love and the hope that can only be found in Jesus Christ."

Wholeness, healing for women goal of drama ministry

RICHMOND, Va. (BP) – A ministry leader receives a troubling medical diagnosis. A preteen is sexually abused by a grown man her mother had introduced as an uncle. A married mother considers adopting until she learns she's already pregnant with her second child.

These female characters expressing pain are among more than 20 personalities presented in original monologues of Morgan Avery McCoy, a 29-year-old Christian speaker, author and actress in Richmond, Va. McCoy offers the love of Christ as the answer to challenges many women face in contemporary life.

"It's one thing to hear somebody talk, but it's another thing to see it played out on stage," said McCoy, who

performs at various venues including colleges and churches, many of them Southern Baptist. "It pulls on your heart a little bit more, hopefully."

McCoy is not able to rely on personal experience to create most of her characters, who might have been orphaned, sold into slavery, trafficked for sex, domestically abused, sexually immoral, or might be an elderly widow and sole caretaker of children whose parents are not available. Instead, McCoy relies on godly inspiration, research, her education and the advice of experts in crafting the engaging characters who at times draw empathy and commiseration born of shared or similar experiences.

"I hope that the women will walk in wholeness, to ex-



Morgan McCoy portrays one of her many characters in her "She's Got Issues" series of monologues. Photo by Diana Chandler

perience healing, deliverance and encouragement. That's my prayer," McCoy said, "that every woman I meet, every woman I speak to ... will be

encouraged to walk in wholeness and recognize that she is God's daughter."

Saved at age 6 and originally hesitant to accept God's call to Christian ministry at age 16, McCoy now sees her youth as an asset in reaching younger audiences perhaps resistant to instruction from older adults.

"What's so amazing to me is God made Himself real to a 6-year-old girl, and I'm really grateful that God doesn't care about our age," she said. "He doesn't look at us as insignificant because of our gender, or because of our age, or because of our background. He loves us, and it (salvation) was real for me."

She has learned much since accepting her call to ministry at age 18, she said, and now

serves on the staff of Kingdom Pursuers Ministries in Chesterfield, Va., as a women's and children's minister.

"The best life you can have is with Christ, so it doesn't make sense to wait until you've gotten older to then try God. The best thing to do is to walk with Him now," she said. "My main desire then and now, when I accepted my call to ministry, is for people to know how much God loves them and understand His desire to be an aspect of every part of our lives."

"I love seeing people walk in wholeness, being set free and knowing that no matter what happens, you know that God is there. Everything that I do is all about showing God being bigger and better and greater than anything."

SEPTEMBER 4, 2016

Hope is the second of the three great theological virtues; faith, hope and love (1 Cor. 13:13). Like faith and love, hope is essential for living. Hope is to life as gasoline is to a car. Without hope people lack the ability to keep going on in life.

Psychology teaches that hope is simply the attitude of perceived capability to choose or create pathways to achieve desired goals.

When a dead end or a hopeless situation develops, hope rises up in us and drives us to choose or create another path to our desired goals. Because this process is dependent on human effort, it will ultimately fail.

Biblical hope is not dependent on human capabilities. In 1 Peter 1:3, hope has a distinctive meaning: “confident expectation.” The word “hope” is preceded by the verb “living.” This is a living or dynamic confident expectation. This living hope is tied to the new birth by the Holy Spirit and personal faith in Christ (1 Pet. 1:3). A true living hope is only possible with true salvation in Christ.

Peter was addressing Christians who would suffer various trials. He reminded them that their hope in Christ would give them the strength to live joyful lives even in times of suffering (1

Pet. 1:6). Often God allows His followers to face hopeless situations in order to test and try their faith. It is these situations that drive us to seek God where our

strength, hope and joy reside. The hope we find in Christ is for living now and for the assurance of eternal life (1 Pet. 1:9).

A sense of hopelessness prevails in this world even among Christians. As a minister and clinician, I see many of the victims that hopelessness leaves in its wake. Many are plagued with anxiety,

depression, abuse, addiction, suicide and homicide, failed relationships, joblessness, and many other destructive behaviors.

True hope is only found in Christ. Christians should exemplify this hope in their lives and be eager to share the living hope of Christ with hurting people.

When I read Psalm 33, I cannot help but think of the creative nature of God. The psalmist writes that “For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm” (Psa. 33:9, ESV).

I’ve known some pretty powerful speakers in my lifetime. Certainly during this heated political season, we zero in on every word the candidates say, analyzing and interpreting over and over again. But not even the most skilled or charismatic public speaker can begin to come close to the psalmist’s description of our God.

Just as the Genesis account of creation explains, God spoke, and order came from chaos. In the chaos and discord of our own lives, isn’t it good to know that we serve a great Creator? As the Apostle Paul wrote, “He is before all things, and in him all things hold together” (Col. 1:17, ESV).

A cursory read of Psalm 33 could lead one to believe that God is merely a cosmic figure Who observes His creation from afar. However, such a treat-

ment of this passage misses the beauty of a personal interest and intimate relationship the Creator desires to have with us all.

This time of year, as the leaves begin to change colors, I’m amazed at the wonder of it all. There’s absolutely nothing that escapes God’s notice, because He is omniscient, and He is omnipresent. More than that, He is the Creator and ruling sustainer of life.

Whether it’s a leaf on a tree, a ladybug on a fern, a cow in a pasture or a star in the sky, our Creator is aware. And He cares. Sometimes in this broken world, it’s easy to feel all alone. It’s possible to think you’re all alone in your problems and complaints.

Take some time to meditate on these two encouraging verses:

“Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear him, on those who hope in his steadfast love” (Psa. 33:18, ESV).

“Our soul waits for the Lord; he is our help and our shield” (Psa. 33:20). Stand in awe of Who He is.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

A living hope

1 PETER 1:3-9 (NKJV)



Gerald Nash
Conway

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

One great Creator

PSALM 33:6-9, 11-15; COLOSSIANS 1:15-17



Garrick D. Conner
North Little Rock

SEPTEMBER 11, 2016

First Peter 1:3-9 concentrates on the hope we have in Christ. In this section, Peter said, “Be holy, for I am holy” (1 Pet. 1:16, NKJV). Hope and holiness go hand-in-hand. First John 3:3 (NKJV)

says, “And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.” Those who have their hope in Christ, should pursue holy lives. In attempts to be culturally relevant and not offensive, the church has been mediocre in its pursuit of holiness.

The Greek word for holy is “hagios” and it means “separated.” In holiness, we are separated from something and to someone. This indicates that holiness has both moral and spiritual significance. Morally, we are to be separated from sin and spiritually we are consecrated for God’s purposes.

We know we will never reach sinless perfection in this life but God wants us to pursue holy lives.

Peter provides motivations for us to live holy lives in this pagan world. First, “the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet.

13). A Christian who is living with the anticipation of heaven will be motivated to be obedient.

Second, we should live holy lives because God is holy and we are partakers of His divine nature (1 Pet. 1:14-15; 2 Pet.1:4). It is in our spiritual DNA to be holy.

Third, we should be motivated by the authority of Scripture, “It is written” (1 Pet. 1:16).

Fourth, the judgment of God (1 Pet. 1:17). God is a Father who disciplines His children. He is merciful and forgiving, but we are to conduct ourselves in fear of His judgment.

Last, but definitely not least, the love of God should motivate us to be holy (1 Pet. 18-21). It was

by the precious blood of Christ that we were redeemed (1 Pet. 1:19).

This should make us want to live holy lives to bring Him glory and honor.

It should be our aim and goal to pursue holiness as we look forward to the coming of the Lord.

It is a day that we will truly never forget: Sept. 11, 2001. In a matter of moments the world went from a seemingly beautiful and sunny place to one of fear and terror. As Americans began to realize the horror and grasp the gravity of the attacks on our nation, they turned to churches as places of comfort, safety and hope.

In times of desperation, it is important to understand God’s purpose for all humankind: We were created to glorify God and enjoy Him forever, regardless of the circumstances we may face.

I’ll never forget the phone call from my wife, Michelle, on that fateful day in 2001. I had an early meeting that day and left the house just after 7 a.m., having given her and eight-month-old Jackson a kiss. Like the rest of the watching world, our office staff stared at television screens in disbelief as life as we knew it changed before our very eyes.

While Isaiah 43 does not speak specifically to the events of 9/11, it does offer believers some powerful encour-

agement and hope that can be applied to every situation we face.

I particularly love the second half of verse one: “Fear not ... for I have called you by name, you are mine” (Isa. 43:1b, ESV). How does it feel to know that God knows you by name and claims you as His own?

Of course, the next passage is quoted often, even finding its way into a variety of popular songs through the years: “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior” (Isa. 43:2-3a, ESV).

Because God is faithful to His Word, we can live our lives for His glory, knowing that there is nothing that can separate us from His love (Rom. 8:35-37, ESV).

Hold on to the One who knows your name.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Be holy

1 PETER 1:13-25 (NKJV)



Gerald Nash
Conway

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

One great purpose

ISAIAH 43:1-7 (ESV)



Garrick D. Conner
North Little Rock

DR volunteers continue to aid La. flood survivors

BATON ROUGE, La. (BP) – Southern Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers continue flood recovery efforts across south Louisiana, coping with intermittent rain as they tear out insulation, sweep mud from houses and carry buckets of sodden clothing to curbs.

Few areas were left unscathed last week when nearly 7 trillion gallons of rain fell, killing 13 people and damaging more than 60,000 homes in 20 parishes. State officials estimate the damages will exceed \$20 billion, making the 500-year flood event one of the worst disasters to strike the United States since Hurricane Sandy in 2012.

The damage begins in Hammond, La., and extends 160 miles west toward the Texas border. Along Interstate 12, once lush foliage is withered and gray. Trash flanks fences. Advertisements for home guttings become more numerous with every mile.

Neighborhoods and side streets tell a heartbreaking story. Clothes, mattresses and household furniture lay strewn across wet lawns in hopes that the sun will shine long enough to dry them. Everything that was not salvageable is piled high along the roadways, transforming shady lanes to narrow pathways, children's toys providing the occasional jolt of color.

Even some of the most seasoned volunteers were surprised by both the scope and intensity of the damage. A few weeks ago, Southern Baptist Disaster Relief (SBDR) chaplain Roy Christy, a member of Northern Hills Baptist Church in Holt, Mo., was tearing out walls in flood-damaged Texas. This week, he is assessing homes and offering emotional support to flood survivors in Baton Rouge, where more than 19 inches of rain fell in 15 hours. In Watson, La., northeast of Baton Rouge, more than 31 inches of rain fell.

"The damage is impressive, very extensive," Christy said. "But the people here help each other out a lot. They're very focused on the community, not just themselves." Christy and his team are working out of Zoar Baptist Church while as-

sisting local homeowners.

Flood survivor Fay McDowell, 82, has been a member of Zoar since 1962. Her home, located on a busy inland highway, has never flooded, but when the water began rising, she knew she had to leave. She had just enough time to pack a few clothes and place her terrified cat, Mimi, in her attic. Then she grabbed her suitcase and her dog, Honey, and opened the door. Water poured into her kitchen, and it was continuing to rise. So she fled to the only place she knew she would be safe – her beloved church.

When she was finally able to return home, the sight brought her to her knees. Everything in the house below waist-level was ruined.

"Oh, God, how do people make it that don't have God's help," she said Monday morning, crying as she recalled how bleak things looked. Her husband died three years ago, and she wasn't sure how she would get the help she needed to begin piecing her home – and her life – back together. Hope arrived wearing gold shirts and carrying shovels.

"God brought me to my knees, and I want to tell you, y'all made me stand back up," McDowell said as she stood



Homeowner Fay McDowell hugs Southern Baptist Disaster Relief volunteer Gary Tracy, a member of Northern Hill Baptist Church in Holt, Mo., following a prayer meeting at her house, Aug. 22, in Baton Rouge, La. McDowell is one of tens of thousands of Louisiana residents whose homes were damaged by floods in mid-August. Skinner, along with other SBDR volunteers from Missouri, is helping tear out sheetrock and spray fungicide to prevent mold from growing in McDowell's home. Photo by Carmen K. Sisson

and they are scrambling to get the house gutted and sprayed with Shockwave, a disinfectant designed to kill and prevent mold.

McDowell is currently living in her 12-by-18-foot sunroom with her dog and cat but hopes she will soon be back

"Thank the Lord," she said, when the first wafts of cool air began flowing from the vents. "I'll never again doubt God and His miraculous work. These people are like angels. God has some special people doing this work."

But the blessings go both ways, said volunteer Sheila Gatlin. She and her husband Roger Gatlin attend Pisgah Baptist Church in Excelsior Springs, Mo. The couple began volunteering with SBDR several years ago.

"We feel very blessed as a couple that we can serve the Lord and communities in need," Sheila Gatlin said. "Fay has such a spirit of knowing that the Lord is in control and He's going to provide."

Emotions after the flood run from one extreme to the other, Christy said. Some, like McDowell, draw comfort from their faith. Others are struggling. Christy carries orange pens bearing the words, "Jesus loves you." When he said those words to a flood survivor during Sunday services at Zoar, she wrapped her arms around his neck and began crying. Minutes passed as he held her, absorbing her pain as she sobbed.

She never spoke.

"She needed to get that out," Christy said. "We are here to give people hope and help. We always feel when we go home that we were the ones who were blessed."

Disaster relief efforts are ongoing as assessors traverse the state, looking for people in need. So far, more than 96,000 individuals and households have registered for assistance with the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

As for McDowell, she said she knows now that she will be okay. She renewed her flood insurance, just in time. And SBDR is on the scene to provide not only labor but also the emotional and spiritual support she needed.

"My faith was strengthened beyond belief when I saw those yellow shirts," McDowell said. "They gave me hope the minute they came in and said, 'Jesus is with us. We came to help.'"

Those wishing to learn more about disaster relief efforts can contact the Baptist convention in their state or donate to the cause by going to donations.namb.net/dr-donations. Or, call 1-866-407-NAMB (6262) or mail checks to NAMB, P.O. Box 116543, Atlanta, GA 30368-6543. Designate checks for "Disaster Relief."

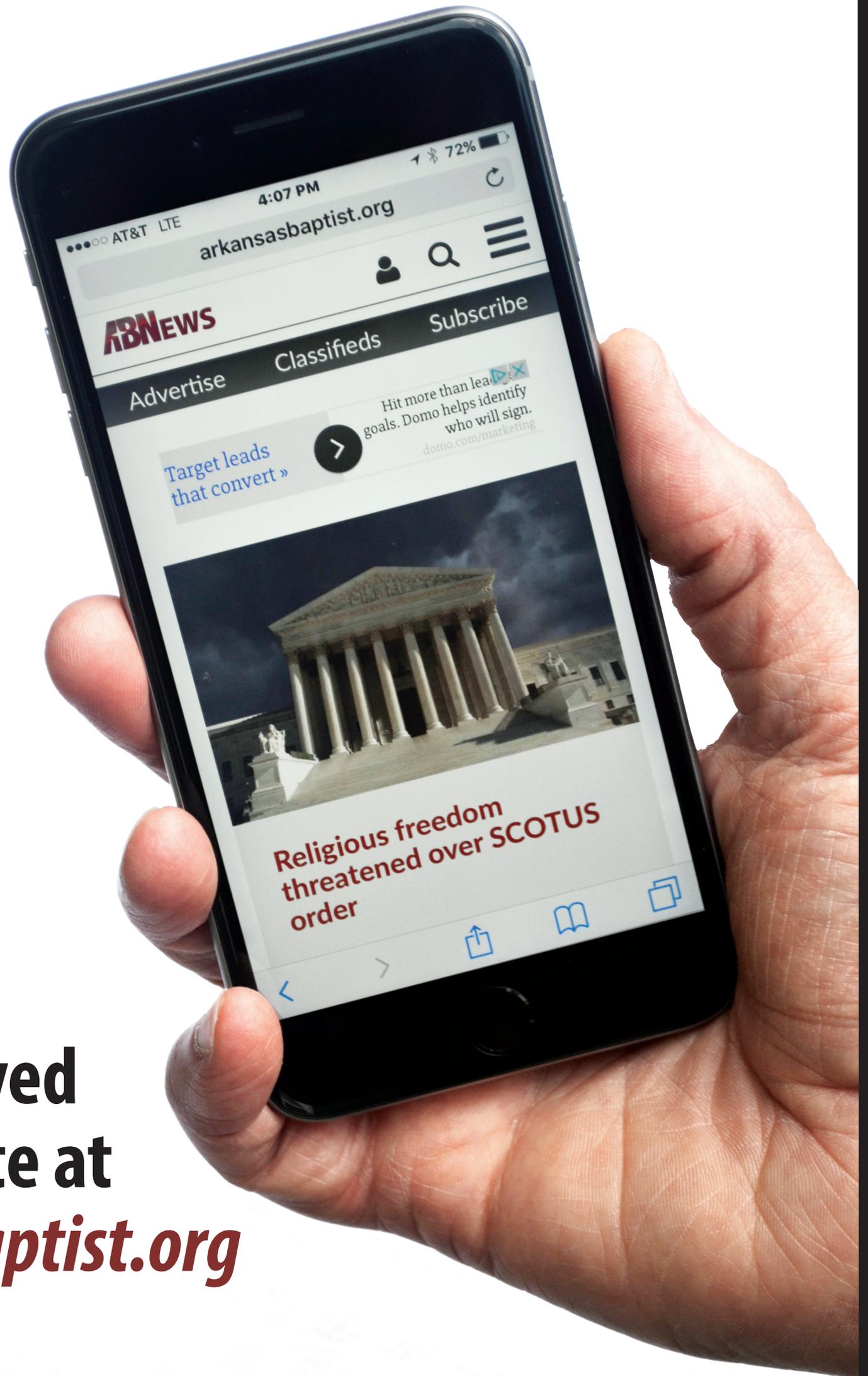


Southern Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers Gary Tracy (left), and Roy Christy, members of Northern Hills Baptist Church in Holt, Mo., examine homeowner Fay McDowell's kitchen in Baton Rouge, La. McDowell, 82, is a member of Zoar Baptist Church and evacuated to the church building when floodwaters overtook her home. Photo by Carmen K. Sisson

in a prayer circle with Christy and the other SBDR volunteers. "God sent me angels."

Their work is a race against time. They have already removed most of the sheetrock, baseboards and flooring, but mold is beginning to appear,

in her three-bedroom house. She is appreciative for the little things. While one group of volunteers set up a dog kennel in her back yard, filling it with cushions and a bucket of fresh water, others struggled to get her air conditioner running.



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