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IMB financial crisis draws broad debate

ONE THING is almost certain. If you are Southern Baptist, you most likely have a strong opinion about missions – especially international missions.

It's understandable. Southern Baptists have a long history of supporting domestic and foreign missions through sacrificial giving and the sending out of missionaries.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Since 1888, Southern Baptists have given more than \$4 billion to support the spreading of the gospel to other nations, according to records provided by the International Mission Board (IMB).

So when David Platt, the 36-year-old leader of the 170-year-old Southern Baptist international mission entity, announced recently what

amounts to a dramatic “draw-down” in its mission force in an effort to address financial shortfalls, it resulted in a firestorm of reaction of both supporters and opponents of the plan.

Platt, who was elected to lead the IMB last August, has been specific and open about the reasons for the dramatic move. He said the IMB has been overspending its budget each year to the tune of millions and millions of dollars in order to keep its missionary force on the field, which he said is simply unsustainable long term.

“In fact, when we stepped back and looked at IMB finances since 2010, we realized that IMB has spent a combined \$210 million more than people have given to us,” Platt stated in an open letter to

Southern Baptists Sept. 4.



Volunteers attend to dental patients at East Side Baptist Church, Paragould, during the Acts 1:8 One Day Mission Trip held in Greene County Baptist Association Oct. 3. Read the story on page 3. Photo by Tim Yarbrough

“By God’s grace, we have been able to cover these costs through reserves and global property sales. But we don’t have an endless supply of global property to sell, and our cash reserves are no longer at a desirable level for good stewardship going forward.”

You read that correctly.

Platt is saying that the IMB has been overspending its budget for years and has been dipping into reserves and selling some of its international properties to make up the deficit.

SBC financial realities

It is no secret these are trying times related to giving by all churches – not just South-

ern Baptist churches. Giving trends have changed dramatically, with designated giving by Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) churches continuing to increase.

Will Hall, editor of the (La.) Baptist Message, in an article titled “Designated receipts top

See **IMB** page 7

ABCHomes Thanksgiving Offering:

Memories Made Here!

CHILDREN MAY NOT remember to turn in their homework. They may even forget to clean their rooms. But just ask a child about his or her first Little League home run or favorite family vacation, and their ability to remember seems to magically reappear.

Some things in life just can’t be forgotten. Memories often last for a lifetime.

Helping hurting and needy children and teens make fond and lifelong memories is a goal of the ministry of Arkansas Baptist

Children’s Homes and Family Ministries (ABCHomes).

ABCHomes raises much of its support through an annual Thanksgiving Offering, traditionally observed by Arkansas Baptist churches since 1908. The theme for the 2015 offering is Memories Made Here!

“How often do we recall experiences from our past?” asked ABCHomes executive director David Perry. “I never go long without thinking about my wonderful

See **OFFERING** page 3

Eternity House witnesses with drama

Caleb Yarbrough
Arkansas Baptist News

EVANGELISM can take many forms. For the last 16 years, Eternity House Ministries has used drama as a tool to share both the wages of sin and the grace of the gospel.

Started in 1999 by Sunny Gap Baptist Church, Conway, the Eternity House is a walk-through, multiroom drama, which features a new play each year. Each production shares the basic message of the reality of God and the necessity of Christ for salvation.

“We started really small the first year. The first year I think we maybe had 500 people walk through – which we were overwhelmed with since we didn’t know what to expect,” said Kim Stubbs, children’s church director at Sunny Gap Baptist

and director of the Conway Eternity House.

In recent years, the ministry has expanded beyond Conway with a second location being started in Camden, sponsored by Grace Baptist Church, Camden. Travis Johnson, education and youth minister at Grace Baptist, is director of the Camden Eternity House.



Stubbs

According to Stubbs, together the two Eternity Houses have seen more than 3,000 people walk through during a given year. More than 130 volunteers are involved in the ministry’s two locations; and last year nearly 80 people accepted Christ as a result of the ministry.

For the past two years, the Conway Eternity House has been located at the Conway Ministry Center, the former location of Second Baptist Church, Conway, in the

city’s downtown.

“It’s a great location. ... We had a lot of walk-ins last year because it was so visible in the downtown area,” said Stubbs. “But normally, the majority of what we have are church groups and youth groups.”

Stubbs said that many churches have found the Eternity House to be a great ministry to bring non-Christian friends and family to in order for them to hear the gospel in a relatable, powerful and unconventional way. The result of such outreach is that not only are many individuals coming to the Lord, but many are connecting to a local church and getting discipled.

“(In) our church (Sunny Gap Baptist), as a matter of fact, just as an example, we had a family of five walk through last year. They weren’t going to church anywhere,” said Stubbs. “I believe it was the

See **ETERNITY** page 10

ABN Digest

Stories of interest
to Arkansas Baptists

Evangelist in Uganda killed after debate

NAIROBI, Kenya (BP) – Islamists upset by a Christian-Muslim debate are suspected in the killing of a longtime evangelist in eastern Uganda who led many Muslims to Christ, sources said. The body of Samson Nfunyeku was found close to his home in Kalampete village, Kibuku District early Sept. 23, after the latest in a series of organized debates with Islamic scholars at Tirinyi Trading Center ended prematurely due to flaring tempers the previous night. He was 59. At a previous debate, among those sponsored by Nfunyeku's Church of Uganda and other churches, Muslim leaders had threatened him and warned him to hold no more debates.

Sunrise CEO: Appeals court ruling a 'win'

MOUNT WASHINGTON, Ky. (BP) – The U.S. Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals has sent a case involving a Kentucky Baptist children's ministry back to federal district court for further review in a move the group's chief executive officer describes as a win for the nonprofit ministry that serves hundreds of abused and neglected children. "This case has been going on for 16 years and Sunrise is ready to turn the page," Dale Suttles, chief executive officer of Sunrise Children's Services, said. "We have 750 kids who have faced some of the most terrible things imaginable." A three-judge Sixth Circuit panel, in a 2-1 decision, vacated a 2013 ruling singling out Sunrise for monitoring by the American Civil Liberties Union and the Americans United for Separation of Church and State.

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

Salvations scored at Paragould Fields of Faith

PARAGOULD – Powerful things happen when the gospel is proclaimed. And the Paragould Fields of Faith event held Oct. 14 was no exception.

More than 200 significant decisions of some type were made as a result of the event, which was held at the Greene County Tech practice field in Paragould.

"Fields of Faith in Paragould was a student-driven, grassroots effort of people being intentionally evangelistic," said Warren Gasaway, member of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention (ABSC) evangelism and church health team. "All involved joined together to see life-change – not just another event, not to promote anything, just life-change. And lives were changed."

Fields of Faith, which drew a crowd of 2,000-plus, was led by the Fellowship of Christian Athletes directors and students from several schools. Several churches offered support as well. The ABSC also partnered to put on the event by providing financial support and evangelism training.

Long before the crowds gathered and the band started playing, Christians were pre-



Fields of Faith was held Oct. 14 on the Greene County Tech practice field in Paragould. More than 200 decisions were made.

paring for God to do mighty things.

Churches prayed, prayer walked and read Scripture over the field throughout the day, and student leaders prayed and had a devotional time in preparation.

Churches fed attendees at a "tailgate" event before the main event kicked off.

During the main event, Scott Dawson from Scott Dawson Evangelistic Association, shared the gospel;

and worship was led by a local, mostly-student-led worship band. Students shared testimonies via a video produced by Greene County Tech's technology department and via "cardboard testimonies." Cardboard testimonies involve students holding cardboard signs that depict something with which they have struggled; students then flip the signs over to show how God overcame that struggle.

As students made faith decisions, they were taken to the end zone of the football field for counseling.

"The Fields of Faith was a great evening for the students and families of Greene County," said Breck Freeman, assistant team leader for the ABSC missions team, noting that churched and unchurched people alike were able to "hear testimonies from area students and worship together to see life-change."

5-year-old accepts gift, finds mentor for life

Lisa Falknor
Special to the ABN

RUSSELLVILLE – It all started with a goatskin hat, a career missionary and a curious 5-year-old.

Fifteen years ago, Debbie Moore, former IMB missionary to Africa for 23 years, got a call from Lorna King, pastor's wife at Roland Baptist Church in western Pulaski County at the time.

"She wanted to know if I could start a Children in Action Woman's Missionary Union program," said Moore, women's missions discipleship consultant for the Arkansas Baptist State Convention since 2007.

Sarah, Lorna's 5-year-old daughter, attended that class.

"Debbie was the first missionary I'd interacted with," recalled Sarah, now a junior at

Arkansas Tech University and a leader at the Tech Baptist Collegiate Ministry (BCM). "She told stories. I remember being captivated by these, and I thought she was a cool person."

What happened next made a bigger impression than the stories.

"Debbie showed me a hat she'd been given by a local African chief," she said.

Moore put it on the child's head.

"It's yours," she told the girl. "You can have it."

Sarah placed the hat in her bedroom, and the family kept in touch with the missionary throughout their daughter's life. At Sarah's elementary school, for example, Moore led a unit about African culture; on furloughs, Moore spoke at their church.

Also, the two saw each other

at mission rallies. At Sarah's father's urging, during one particular rally, the then teenager told Moore of her own call to missions at 13.

"I expected her to be surprised and excited, but she just smiled and nodded," Sarah said. "I had a feeling," Debbie told me. 'I knew from the first time I met you.' That completely blew me away."

With the calling came questions. "Is it normal to be bitter toward people who don't have a passion for the nations?" she wondered, or, "How do I discern where God wants me to serve?"

"I had no one to talk to about it," she said. "None of my friends were in the same place. I tried to talk to my parents, and they did not know how to help. They pointed me back to Debbie."

Today, the college student and discipleship leader meet two to three times a year.

"When I meet with Sarah and hear her talk, I feel like I am being mentored by her," said Moore. "It's an encouragement and an inspiration to hear how God is working, growing and using her."

As a mentor, Moore prays for Sarah regularly. She also reads Sarah's mission blog, which is a detailed account of a recent BCM summer trip to Canada and an entry mentioning her excitement about leading an Arkansas Baptist State Convention college and young leader's group to East Asia this December.

"You write like a seasoned missionary," Moore posted on July 8. "It blesses my heart."

Lisa Falknor is northwest correspondent for the ABN.

81 salvations at Greene Co. Acts 1:8 event

PARAGOULD - At first glance, the crowd gathered at East Side Baptist Church in Paragould could have been simply participating in a bit of old-fashioned Baptist outreach.

But there was much more going on behind the bouncy house, free food distribution and children's games in the parking lot of the church, which is located in a transitional community.

East Side was one of dozens of sites located throughout the Greene County Baptist Association Oct. 3 as a part of the second Acts 1:8 One Day Mission Trip held by the Arkansas Baptist State Convention (ABSC).

In all, more than 1,700 volunteers participated, with 81 people recording professions of faith.

But God was at work before the first snow cone was made or the first Bible was handed out.

Breck Freeman, ABSC community missions strategist and assistant team leader for the ABSC missions team, reported that a man was saved the week

prior to the one-day event as Arkansas Baptists helped put siding on his house.

In addition, preregistration for appointments with the dental and medical clinics filled up in the days leading up to the event and a second day of mammograms had to be scheduled. Almost 300 patients were seen in the dental and medical clinics Oct. 3, and one site didn't finish seeing patients until almost midnight.

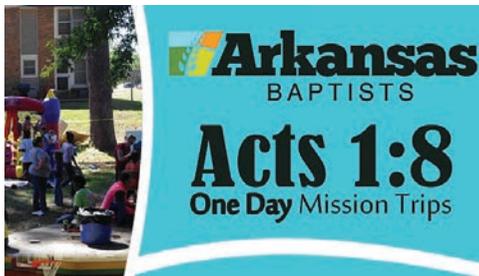
And while facilitating physical health is good, Amanda Holmes, ABSC medical/dental coordinator, stressed that it was patients' spiritual health with which they were concerned.

"Our main goal is that they hear about Jesus, and that is what they do first - they sign in, and then they hear the gospel, and then we triage and then we'll send them on through," Holmes said.

In addition to the medical team, there were cowboy ministries, a fishing derby, block parties, yard work, sports camps, evangelism teams and more.

These ministries took place in the communities of Paragould; Marmaduke; Rector; Oak Grove; Walcott; Stanford; Cardwell, Mo., and other surrounding areas.

One project was to partner with Habitat for Humanity to build a house. Habitat for Humanity provided the sup-



plies while Arkansas Baptists provided the manpower. The three-bedroom, two-bathroom house for a couple and their five children was framed from the ground up.

"(The) Acts 1:8 One Day Mission Trip in Greene County was a great success. Many lives were changed for eternity," said Freeman, describing the day as "another great example of Arkansas Baptists cooperating together and see-

ing kingdom ministry accomplished."

He said among the 81 salvations was a senior adult woman saved because of a last-minute job done by the home repair team. The woman said she had never been to church. Six other salvations - three women and three men - took place in the local jail.

In addition to blessing those on the receiving end of the missions projects, the one-day event makes a lasting impact on volunteers.

Volunteer Jessica Pennington, a freshman at the University of Arkansas at Monticello, wrote to Bob Harper, ABSC missions team leader, to express how serving had blessed her.

"We had the chance to minister to many young people," she wrote. "We also had the chance to hear you speak at the fairgrounds at the end of services. I just wanted to say thank you. You all truly changed my life that day."

The next Acts 1:8 One Day Mission Trip will take place in Fort Smith on Oct. 1, 2016.

OFFERING

continued from page one

parents and my childhood. Those are good memories.

"Those we care for will also have their memories - memories of people, of growing experiences and life changes. Thanks to the many churches and donors that give generously to the Thanksgiving Offering and for being a part of helping us provide good memories."

Through gifts to the annual offering, ABCHomes has helped create wonderful and happy memories for countless children and teens who live or did live at six statewide locations.

Claudette is one of these residents.

The Arkansas Baptist Home for Children alumna recently said, "This is the most loving, caring place! I grew up here. I still remember the loving and caring people. It is a blessing to be a child from the Home."

Fellow Baptist Home alumna Sandy said she won't ever

forget her "family" at the Baptist Home.

"When I tell others about my siblings, I don't just tell them I have a brother and a sister; I tell them I have 150 brothers and sisters," shared Sandy. "We were a family at the Baptist Home, ... and we always will be."

At the Baptist Home Alumni Day last June, as an ABCHomes staff member eavesdropped in on conversations, he heard dozens of wonderful stories of old.

He heard one former resident ask another, "Do you remember what we used to do under those trees over there?"

In response, his friend said, "Yea, that is where we played marbles. I remember when Pop Seafield use to ..."

Another recalled, "I won a prize at the local 4-H for my steer that I helped raise and feed."

In addition to the residents at the Baptist Home in Monticello campus, ABCHomes staff has been a part of helping children make memories at the Arkansas Baptist Boys Ranch in Harrison.

Ranch resident Jarrod * said he won't soon forget the many friends made while living at the Harrison ranch.

"I know when I leave the ranch for good, I'm going to miss it because it's my home. And it's the best home I ever had," he said.

Alysa*, who recently left one of the three ABCHomes emergency homes, left behind a memorable note for a future resident.

She noted, "Dear new girl, I was in this room before you with my sister. I know this is scary. What's happened to us is what no one should go through. Don't worry. Mrs. Dana and Shayne will help you like they helped me and my sister. I think you will have fun here. We did. Trust Jesus and the Lord. All the bad stuff is over. Now, be looking for good stuff."

Countless lasting reflections were made this past year for many single mothers and their children at the Jonesboro Family Care Home. Still others were made through ABCHomes' seven counseling locations.

ABN Digest

Stories of interest
to Arkansas Baptists

Could 'Woodlawn' be 'catalyst' to awakening?

DALLAS (BP) - Woodlawn, which recounts the true story of spiritual awakening at a 1970s high school torn by racial tension in Birmingham, Ala., is produced and directed by Jon and Andy Erwin. The Erwin Brothers are also the makers of "October Baby" and "Mom's Night Out." The Erwin Brothers say their purpose in releasing Woodlawn is to harness the power of the digital age to spread the gospel. Data indicates it could be possible to make a faith-based movie a blockbuster if Christians from different generations and backgrounds would unite for a kingdom purpose, the brothers say.

Golden Gate trustees praise transition plan

PHOENIX (BP) - The board of trustees of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary (GGBTS), meeting Oct. 12-13 in Phoenix, expressed appreciation for the seminary's faculty, staff and students for their "efforts, endurance, prayers and amazing positive approach to the entire transition project." After adopting the resolution of appreciation, trustees erupted in applause for the efforts of seminary personnel during the relocation effort. "They have displayed a remarkable spirit during this transition," Vice Chairman Larry Felkins said, "while moving one of the 10 largest seminaries in the world 400 miles across the state." "While we have worked hard to manage the transition, I cannot explain these results by those efforts," said Jeff Iorg, GGBTS's president, "except to say it is God's hand on Golden Gate Seminary."

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For additional information call 501-376-4791, ext. 5168.

*Names changed

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)

Why are you reading your state Baptist newspaper?

In case you haven't heard, newspapers are dying. That includes the state Baptist newspaper that you now hold in your hands or read electronically.

Just this year, the Georgia Baptist newspaper, *The Christian Index*, which happens to be the oldest continuously published religious newspaper in the United States of America, announced that it will no longer publish a print edition beginning in 2016. The *Index* is solely owned and operated by the Georgia Baptist Convention.

Many praised the decision of the *Index*, pronouncing it overdue for a medium that has long been dead anyway. After all, everyone watches their news on TV or reads it online, we are told.

So the obvious question in my mind that needs to be

asked is, "Why are you reading your state Baptist newspaper right now?"

Pundits say that you have to be an old (and old-time) Baptist to read Baptist news in print these days. For those who still do, they say you really don't know

what's going on in the world around you anymore.

They say that your numbers are so small that you are no longer a viable market anymore and that it is a waste of resources – and Cooperative Program (CP) dollars – to print a classic newspaper that is mailed to you. After all, the Post Office is dead and people just don't read print anymore.

Well, I can't speak for the action of other state conventions, but my experience as editor in Arkansas is that a market for old-time Baptists who still read a printed newspaper still exists. Yes, just like

other areas of Southern Baptist life, the audience is smaller, but there are thousands of readers and supporters of the state Baptist newspaper. To call them dead and insignificant is simply hogwash.

And what's more, the reality is there just aren't enough young and cool Southern Baptists out there yet to support a strictly online Baptist newspaper, and – honestly – I'm not sure there ever will be. The role of the state Baptist newspaper has changed over time, and will continue to change and evolve, but it is a long way from being dead – at least in Arkansas.

The model we have embraced and grown since I have become editor is to work at decreasing the dependence of the *Arkansas Baptist News* (ABN) on CP dollars by growing the newspaper's advertising base. That means as long as Arkansas Baptists keep reading the ABN, we'll be fine, because advertisers

will find it to be a good way to reach faith-based readers while helping our bottom line. When Arkansas Baptists quit reading and supporting their state Baptist newspaper, I guess we'll need to look at other options, such as putting it exclusively online like Geor-

gia Baptists are doing.

In spite of changing times, the ABN ranks among the top subscription-based newspapers in Arkansas – secular or religious. The ABN is, without a doubt, the largest reli-

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Pressing On

Tim Yarbrough

Phil. 3:14

Cartoon by Gary Thomas



From Huntsville to Heafer

According to the United States Postal Service, I live in Tyrnza. Ask anyone in the community, though, and I most definitely live in Heafer (pronounced HAY'-fur). In fact, some folks get downright offended if we say "Tyrnza."

Whatever we may call it, this summer Pastor John Rhodes, from Huntsville, Mo., and 13 people from his church called it a "mission trip." First Baptist Church brought a group of strangers to our little church to turn a carport into a room, paint classrooms, install

lighting, give the outside of the church a face-lift, install new columns, install new cabinets and lead a vacation Bible school. Usually, I lead my church to go, but this

time another church came to us, and boy were we blessed! I've

always been on

the "giving and going" side of missions, so when my friend offered to come, I was reluctant to take up their valuable resources. Eventually, I gave in, and well, in the process, I learned a few lessons.

(1) Not everyone is ready for cross-cultural ministry.

Sometimes, we think that the only way to do "missions" is to go overseas. If that is the case, then many people are unqualified for mission work.

When we provide opportunities for our members to be involved somewhere closer to home, it helps them grow, even if they cannot do cross-cultural missions. The most difficult part of the trip for the group was an epidemic of mosquitos that we have in northeast Arkansas, but hey, it wasn't Africa!

(2) The givers and the receivers are blessed. During the week that the team was here, some of our church members joined in the work

and built solid relationships. Bro. John has been a friend of mine since college. This trip helped us reconnect, fellowship together and encourage each other. Everywhere we go, we touch the people around us. That week, we interacted with a group of people we otherwise never would have met.

(3) Children can help too. Three of the team members who came were children. What could they do? They played with my children. Yep. They played with my children, and my boys fell in love with the idea of ministry outside their hometown. Somewhere between the games of tag,

shooting water guns and playing on the waterslide, my boys realized that mission trips weren't just for grown-ups. When the team left, they started planning their own trip.

When I look at my new room, or the new paint around the church, I don't just see cosmetic changes. I see the results of a group of people who gave a week of their time away from home for people they had never met. I see more than wood and Sheetrock. I see acts of love in the name of Jesus.

Kim Reeder is pastor of Barton Chapel Baptist Church in Tyrnza.



Viewpoint

Kim Reeder



Volume 114, Number 21
USPS08021
Member of the Association
of State Baptist Publications
and the
Arkansas Press Association

Telling the story of
Arkansas Baptists since 1901
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Toll-free 800-838-2272, ext. 5161

Arkansas Baptist News (ISSN 1040-6056) is published bi-weekly except the last issue of the year (25 issues) by the *Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine, Inc.*, 10 Remington Drive, Little Rock, AR 72204.

SUBSCRIPTION rates are \$7.75 per year (Every Resident Family Plan), \$8.75 per year (Group Plan), \$15 per year (Individual). *Arkansas Baptist News*, 10 Remington Drive, Little Rock, AR 72204.; phone 501-376-4791; toll-free 800-838-2272; email: abn@arkansas-

baptist.org. Periodical Postage paid at Little Rock, AR. LETTERS TO THE EDITOR: Send Letters to the Editor to tim@arkansasbaptist.org or to our mailing address. Letters must be typed, doublespaced and 300 words or less (fewer words the better). Letters must be signed and marked "for publication" and may be edited to fit space requirements. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Arkansas Baptist News*, 10 Remington Drive, Little Rock, AR 72204.

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What is the most biblical worship style?



Baptists Ask
Ken Gore

Worship styles are varied and often correspond to personal preferences in music (traditional hymns or contemporary choruses), musical instruments (organ/piano or guitar/drums) order of service (liturgical or “free-flowing”) and target audience (church members or nonmembers). Although there are different styles of worship, the Book of Ecclesiastes shares four items that should be in every worship experience.

First, worshippers should “guard” their “steps” when they enter the House of God (Eccl. 5:1). Ecclesiastes refers to those who ascended the Temple steps. Their cautious and reverent approach into God’s presence created a sense of expectation and awe. As worship begins, believers today should tread carefully.

Second, worshippers should be silent (Eccl. 5:2). Modern worship contains a lot of noise; Ecclesiastes insists on the opposite. Because God is in heaven and worshippers are on earth, their words should be few (Eccl. 5:3). It is difficult to be silent, but it is rewarding.

Third, worshippers should be careful when they speak to God (Eccl. 5:4-6). Emotions often run wild during worship, and some may promise too much to God. Ecclesiastes urges believers to think before speaking. Worshipers who are careful will avoid regret in what they say – or promise – to God.

Fourth, worshippers should “fear God” (Eccl. 5:7). The Hebrew word “fear” has two opposing meanings: “to be afraid of” or “to be in awe of.” Those who are afraid of God are not normally in fear of Him; those who are in awe of God are not afraid of Him.

While favorite worship styles often reflect the worshipper’s personal preference, the most profound times of worship occur when believers are in quiet, reverent submission to a holy God. In those times, God reaches down to His followers and worship begins.

“The Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth be silent before him” (Hab. 2:20).

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

I’m sitting at my desk working, and I’m thirsty. But I’m on a roll, so I don’t stop to go get a cup of water. I just keep working.

Finally, my need for water exceeds my need to keep working. I reach for my cup to go refill it. When I do, I suddenly realize the cup is still half full! All this time, I have been thirsty while water has been right there waiting for me.

I wonder how often I live life like that? I need. I need deeply. But I’m so focused on just moving through life that I miss the provision that’s right in front of me.

Desperately needing rest, I push forward through each task, forgetting that God commanded rest. If He commanded it, then He will not demand anything of me that will keep me from obeying that command. I simply need to heed His guidance and accept the opportunities for rest that He provides.

The need for companionship floods my soul, but days, weeks and even months slip by without an intentional effort to reach out to the friends God has provided. He has placed them in my life. I must simply reach out to them. They probably need the companionship and encouragement as much as I do!



Uncovered Dish
Ann Hibbard

Wisdom and direction seem to elude me. Somehow I miss the Holy Spirit’s voice whispering to my soul. He fills me with the very wisdom I need, fully illuminating direction from God’s Word. But instead of listening to Him, I let my ears fill with the noise of daily life.

In the coming weeks, we will enter a season well-known in our culture for its busyness. We will hunger for the peace on earth that we claim to celebrate. We’ll long for the chance to truly connect with loved ones as we celebrate. And, we’ll crave wisdom as we head into the new year. But as we get caught up in the fullness of the season, we just might miss the Truth that God has already met our needs. We have to open our eyes to see the provision – and then receive it.

Are you thirsty? Do you long to be refreshed and energized as you walk through each day? Oh, my friend, don’t make my mistake.

Don’t miss the provision that is right there in front of you! Open your eyes to the Living Water right before you and drink deeply. Your need has already been met if you will just receive it!

Ann Hibbard is a member of East End Baptist Church in Hensley.

Change is in the air

While driving in our neighborhood, I noticed that change is in the air. Some leaves are turning and falling. That means that fall is just around the corner. On the downside, that means getting up leaves, seemingly like ocean waves, and getting them to the curb.

I’m so thankful Crossett has city workers to vacuum them up from the side of the road. On the upside, this means deer season is just around the corner. That means time at my grandparents’ old home place, our family deer camp, and getting out to enjoy God’s creation and wildlife. I know that fall is coming, but I don’t know how cool it will get, or how hot, in the next few weeks to come.

Another change is taking place at the Hern’s hacienda. The trim around the house is getting power washed and repainted. On the downside, it costs money! On the upside, it needs doing and will look nice.

I sense a real happening coming in our country and world. On the downside, I see the majority of society rejecting God and blindly pursuing things the Bible calls sin.



Viewpoint
Lyle Hern

On the upside, I see prayer emphasis and movements popping up like I’ve never seen before in my lifetime. Looking in the Bible, I see both the potential for God’s judgment and revival. I know that Jesus is coming again, and that means victory for all Christians. In the meantime, I’m uncertain about what we might witness in the near future of our nation. Perhaps we’ll see some of God’s judgment that causes us to cry out to God and experience a true revival in our nation.

Take part in the prayer gatherings, and take what you learn with you and utilize it in your personal prayer time. As in the days of Noah, get in the boat with our Lord, and trust in His goodness.

Pray for and anticipate what God is going to do in your life and in your church.

I’m praying for a great and might revival at South Main Baptist Church and in our country.

“Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble; He delivered them out of their distresses” (Psalm 107:6).

Lyle Hern is pastor of South Main Baptist Church in Crossett.

NEWSPAPER

continued from page 4

gious voice in the state – when measured by readers.

A few years ago while attending the annual conference of the Arkansas Press Association, a professional media strategist from up north somewhere took the podium in Eureka Springs where the meeting was being held and looked slowly around the room at 300 or so publishers, editors, photographers and other newspaper professionals in attendance.

He asked, “What are all of you doing here? The guys selling digital products said most of you would be out of business five years ago!”

The crowd roared with laughter and applause. The speaker had made his point.

A Southern Baptist pundit wrote recently that all state Baptist newspapers do anymore is publish news that you can find online elsewhere.

Again, that might be true in some states, but not

in Arkansas. Nearly all of the content published in the ABN is about Arkansas Baptists. Articles and features published only in the ABN included: “From Satan follower to disciple of Jesus,” “Baptists reach bikers at BBB; 90-plus people accept Christ,” “Former student shares faith with dying coach,” “Community garden plants ‘seeds of faith,’” “Old style tent revivals touch Arkansas towns,” “80 saved, 1,500 participate in Acts 1:8 One Day mission,” “350-plus appeal for great revival to sweep nation,” “Arkansas pastor witnesses at Planned Parenthood” and “Catching fish and men on the Norfolk River.”

I’ve often said those who read the ABN are more engaged and supportive of the work of the Church, the Arkansas Baptist State Convention and their Southern Baptist denomination. And ABN surveys bare this out: ABN readers pray more, give more and go more! And that’s you!

So why are you reading your state Baptist newspaper right now?

The obvious answer is that you care about the lost condition of the world and want to see all come to know Jesus Christ.

It is as simple as that!

Tim Yarbrough is editor/executive director of the ABN.

Parker: Let's keep our IMB missionaries on the field

I AM THE PASTOR of a small Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) church in Little Rock.

When I heard the announcement that our International Mission Board (IMB) was going to bring 800-plus missionaries home because of a budget shortfall, I was shocked and concerned by this news.

One concern is that at least ten's of thousands of lost people in the world will not hear the good news of Jesus because of the absence of these messengers to tell Christ's story.

There are still multitudes

that need to hear of the saving power of Jesus; so how can we ask those whom God has called to be His messengers to prematurely walk away from this mission to tell the world of Christ?



Parker

Another concern is that we Southern Baptists would be asking our most faithful servants of the Lord, our missionaries, to cover this budget shortfall by them resigning and coming back to America. I personally find that thought unacceptable and shameful. These are our missionaries who have gone out in faith to serve our Lord. How

can we put this shortfall totally on them to cover by their resignations?

I can not in good conscience sit by and do nothing or stand by and debate the issue, saying, "Would of, could of, should of." So I have asked my church to give \$1,000 to the IMB to meet a part of this budget shortfall within 30 days. I thank God for my church's generosity to be willing to give the \$1,000. Also let me note, this is not coming out of our regular Cooperative Program giving or what we will give to our state missions offering or Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions at Christmastime or Annie

Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions in the spring. This gift will be beyond the regular giving of Lifeway Baptist Church.

The rationale for giving \$1,000 in this special offering is that we have been told that there are 45,000 SBC churches here in America. So, if every SBC church would give \$1,000 to this effort to meet this shortfall, that would be \$45 million given to help meet this missions need.

Therefore, I challenge all Southern Baptist churches to give \$1,000 to the IMB over the next several days or by Nov. 15, to meet this missions challenge.

God has generously blessed Southern Baptists through the years. I pray we will be as generous in our giving to spread the gospel message to the world. I call on Southern Baptists to stand up and give and keep our missionaries on the mission field telling the world about Jesus.

May God give us the courage to meet this challenge!

Freddy Parker has served as pastor of Lifeway Baptist Church, Little Rock, since January 2013. He and his wife, Gayla, served as missionaries to the Philippines from 1989 to 2002, after which they returned to the U.S. to serve with the Baptist Convention of Maryland-Delaware.

Cooperative Program Month

Where is the money?

THE SOUTHERN Baptist Convention is a convention of churches that partner together to reach the world for Christ. As we aspire to this biblical vision of presenting the gospel to every person in the world and to making disciples of all the nations, we must find a way to increase financial resources to this serious and grand vision.

I am often asked, "Where is the money to accomplish this vision?"

In this month of emphasis on the Cooperative Program, I think we must answer this question openly and honestly. As one Southern Baptist, I want to attempt to answer the question, "Where is the money?"

The money is in the pockets of God's people.

The most recent research by empty tomb inc. (emptytomb.org) reveals the following:

- Less than 3 percent of all Christians tithe, meaning they give at least 10 percent of their income to their churches.

- The median annual gift to a church is \$200.

- In 1968, Americans gave 3.1 percent of their disposable income; now Americans give 2.2 percent, which is less than they gave during the Great Depression.

- At the current rate of decline, by the year 2050, Ameri-

cans will give only 1 percent of their disposable income to the Church; if this occurs, a vast number of churches and missions will be forced to close.

I find this data somewhat disgusting. It shows the selfishness and narcissistic reality of millions of professing Christians today.



Floyd

The money to reach our towns, cities, regions, states, nation and the world is in the pockets of God's people. We need to repent now and call people back to God with boldness and compassion.

Pastors, Christian leaders and church leaders must lead the way in giving at least 10 percent of their income through their local churches. The professing Christians and members of our churches must also do the same.

This is not an option for us, but it is a biblical truth that our Southern Baptist Convention has practiced for years. In the Baptist Faith and Message 2000, we read this in Article XIII on Stewardship: "According to the Scriptures, Christians should contribute of their means cheerfully, regularly, systematically, proportionately, and liberally for the advancement of the Redeemer's cause on earth."

Once again, I want to ap-

peal to pastors to address the importance and necessity of biblical stewardship with your church. Be biblical, bold and convictional. There is no need to apologize for calling your people to give more. We give because we love Christ, want to walk in obedience to Him and desire to see our town, city, region, state, nation and world reached for Christ.

The money is in the pockets of our churches.

Each of our churches must evaluate continually what we are doing to partner with our Southern Baptist Convention in reaching the world for Christ. We do this through our gifts through the Cooperative Program. How much a church gives through the Cooperative Program is a church's decision. Each church is autonomous, and we honor their decision.

However, since we are Southern Baptist churches, we also believe in the value of partnership. I believe each church can do more to fund the vision of reaching the world for Christ. What we give through the Cooperative Program is important.

If we devalue the Cooperative Program, then we undermine the financial engine that impacts our work together statewide, nationally and internationally.

According to the most recent Annual Church Profile, our churches gave over \$500 million to causes outside our convention that they categorized as "mission causes." Therefore, thousands of our churches could give more



through our work together as Southern Baptists by a simple reallocation of monies their people are already giving.

Simultaneously, each church can find a way to do more and determine to give more through our Cooperative Program. If we truly believe our state, our nation and world needs the gospel, there is no greater way to impact this population of 7.2 billion people. Please go to your church now and ask them to pray and act with all of us to give more now through our Cooperative Program.

The problem is not our path, but our pace.

Please understand, while each Christian is under obli-

gation to obey the Scriptures through the giving of the first-fruits through their church, each church and each state convention is under the necessity to get the gospel to the entire world. This is not an option, but an act of obedience.

The problem is not our path, but our pace! Our path is set; we want to be a Great Commission people. Yet, our pace needs to accelerate with a deep sense of urgency.

I know each church faces different challenges and circumstances and each state convention is unique with its own opportunities and challenges. This is why my appeal has been continually: Each of us can find a way to do more!

We need to also remember: This is God's money. It is not our money personally, our church's money, our state convention's money nor our Southern Baptist Convention's money! It is God's money! He has entrusted to us His money to use for His purposes for His glory alone!

Yes, we can do more. We can do more together!

Now is the time to lead.

Ronnie Floyd is senior pastor of Cross Church in northwest Arkansas and president of the Southern Baptist Convention. This year the church has given \$1 million through the Cooperative Program.

IMB

continued from page one

CP gifts: The SBC ship of state is in peril,” said a trend in designated giving over Cooperative Program (CP) giving began in 2004, according *SBC Annual* records. The trend continues today with the designated gifts in 2014 of \$194,678,166 topping CP gifts of \$186,567,611.

Additionally, Hall wrote while overall per capita giving among Southern Baptists has increased from \$1,438 in 2010 to \$1,541 in 2014 (a per capita increase of 7.23 percent), Southern Baptist congregations experienced a loss of 520,980 weekly attendees during the same period (6,195,449 worshippers in 2010 and 5,674,469 in 2014).

Subsequently, the increase in gifting among existing Southern Baptists does not make up the “drastic drop in funding caused by the loss of 520,980 regular worshippers during this timeframe (an estimated \$803 million lost in potential contributions for 2014),” Hall wrote.

The decline in overall charitable giving comes at a time in U.S. history when Baby Boomers (those born between 1946 and 1964) – which include many top-earning Southern Baptists – are retiring, transitioning from earning salaries “to receiving Social Security payments and retirement disbursements, affecting what they are able to contribute,” Hall wrote.

Reaction to IMB crisis

The reaction to Platt’s announcement was that of disbelief among some Southern Baptists, who immediately wondered why the financial crisis at the IMB had come so quickly and unexpectedly.

However, in the letter, Platt pointed to no less than seven articles since 2008 being written about the coming crisis. Additionally, the chairman of the IMB trustees wrote in 2008, “I am sounding the alarm. The IMB budget is under strain to support growth in our missionary force.”

As it turns out, the IMB’s financial position not only did not support growth, but also did not maintaining its existing missionary force.

Platt recounted, “Just two months before I stepped into my role, one article read: ‘IMB

must soon come to grips with the demands placed on us by years of declining Cooperative Program receipts and Lottie Moon giving. We will be hard-pressed to continue supporting a mission force of our current number, much less see a greatly needed increase in the number of fully supported career missionaries on the field.”

Platt added, “I don’t blame the church for putting IMB in our current position,” nor should blame be “assigned to previous IMB leadership.”

Financial realities resulted in Platt and IMB leadership proposing a two-phase process of reducing its mission force by 15 percent: 600-800 people. The process would include a period of time when IMB employees would be given the opportunity to voluntarily retire. Following this period, additional decisions will be made, he said.

Platt announcement

Reaction to Platt’s draw-down announcement was swift.

Wade Burleson, an Oklahoma pastor and former IMB trustee who has criticized the mission entity for its actions in the past, praised Platt on his website.

Burleson wrote that he believed “fiscal irresponsibility” of past IMB leadership “who believed Jesus was returning soon and it mattered not whether or not bills could be paid” led to the crisis.

“In other words,” he wrote, “David Platt was handed a Platt-full of fiscal trouble when he became IMB President.”

Burleson added that the sale of capital assets by the IMB and using the funds for operational expenses was “outside the radar of average Southern Baptists.”

“The IMB owned hundreds of millions of dollars of land, office buildings, homes, hospitals, and other hard assets (capital) in foreign countries which the board had accumulated over decades,” Burleson wrote, the adding, “When the philosophy of the IMB turned from its historic and traditional missionary care (e.g. leprosy colonies, hospitals, shelters, food centers, etc.) into solely ‘church planting,’ the IMB began to ‘sell’ their hard assets and use the proceeds for operating expenses.”

Rodney Hammer, a former IMB missionary who now

serves as an associational director of missions in the Kansas City area, wrote in a guest blog at *sbcvoices.com* that he believes the IMB is going about the “reset” incorrectly.

“While one of the most extensive, tragic refugee flows in history presents massive need and provides great gospel and humanitarian opportunity, human trafficking is overtaking drug trafficking as No. 1 global crime, and over 1 billion people have yet to hear the gospel ... we Southern Baptists have sent Voluntary Retirement Incentive notices to 1,500 or so IMB missionaries.” (Hammer used the 1,500 number because many of the 600-800 number used by IMB are actually “missionary units” comprised of husband and wife teams).

Hammer offered suggestions to address budget shortfalls, including: (1) stateside reorganization and streamline global support, including staff related budget cuts before asking any missionary to come home; (2) freeze new missionary appointments for three years; (3) allow field/affinity group leadership to provide input and involvement into what personnel needs in their respective areas, and (4) challenge all Southern Baptists to double their gifts to the Lottie Moon missions offering and state conventions to adjust their Cooperative Program split in 2016 to a true 45 percent kept in state and 55 percent split forwarded to SBC missions.

In an article published in *The (Ga.) Christian Index*, Robin Dale Hadaway, professor of missions at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo., and former international missionary, applauded Platt’s leadership after he initially admitted “having some reservations” about his election.

“I believe only an outsider could have taken a fresh look at the procedures, positions, and roles that have evolved over the organization’s 170-year history. I applaud David Platt for examining missions through different eyes and adjusting strategy, structure, and personnel to fit the 21st Century,” Hadaway said.

Some missionaries and Southern Baptist leaders have a different assessment following Platt’s election as IMB president.

Bob Terry, editor and presi-



David Platt, president of the International Mission Board, speaks at the Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meeting June 17 at the Greater Columbus Convention Center in Columbus, Ohio. Photo by Bill Bangham

dent of *The Alabama Baptist*, in an opinion article titled “Financial Responsibility, Missions Strategy,” said past giving trends by some Southern Baptist churches have led to the IMB’s fiscal crisis and required shift in strategy.

“At the same time there is irony that Platt is the one who must direct IMB through this reduction in the missionary force,” Terry wrote. “During his days at Brook Hills (where Platt pastored in Birmingham) the church gave \$25,000 annually to Baptist work through the CP out of its multi-million dollar budget. That kind of pattern helped create the situation he must now remedy. Thankfully Platt now urges listeners to support missions through CP as often as he presses for personal involvement in missions.”

Proposed solutions

Jeff Iorg, president of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, writing in an article in *The (Okla.) Baptist Messenger*, said he believes the root cause of the crisis at the IMB was that “Southern Baptists, like most American evangelicals, are undisciplined (at best) or selfish (at worst) with their money. Multiple surveys from different sources reveal the same fact – Southern Baptists give between 2.5-3.0 percent of their household income to Christian ministries.”

“The basic problem causing up to 800 IMB missionaries to be called home is the failure of rank-and-file Southern Baptists to discipline their finances and adequately steward the resources God has given them,” he said.

Iorg added that he feels the solution is simple, and that pastors and other leaders should model generosity through giving, and that pastors should implement “a

sound financial discipleship program” in their church.

“This won’t solve the problem this year, but it will fix it – really fix it – over the next few years,” Iorg said.

Proposing an immediate solution to the fiscal crisis at the IMB is Arkansas Pastor Freddy Parker, a former missionary to the Philippines (see related story, Page 6).

Parker, who is pastor of Lifeway Baptist Church in Little Rock, said he was “shocked and concerned” by the news of the proposed drawdown of career missionaries with many years of service with the IMB.

One concern is that “tens of thousands of lost people in the world will not hear the Good News of Jesus because of the absence of these messengers to tell Christ’s story,” said Parker.

Additionally, Parker said, “Southern Baptists would be asking our most faithful servants of the Lord, our missionaries, to cover this budget shortfall by them resigning and coming back to America. I personally find that thought unacceptable and shameful.”

Parker said Lifeway Church has decided to send \$1,000 immediately to the IMB over and above the church’s Cooperative Program, state, national and international mission giving.

He challenged all Southern Baptist churches to do likewise.

Parker said if all 45,000 Southern Baptist churches would give \$1,000 to meet the shortfall, it would result in “\$45 million given to help meet this missions need.”

“I call on Southern Baptists to stand up and give and keep our missionaries on the mission field telling the world about Jesus,” Parker said. “May God give us the courage to meet this challenge!”

104-year-old woman member of church 86 years

Jessica Vanderpool
Arkansas Baptist News

STAR CITY - Lottie Conner Russell, who turned 104 in August, has been a member of Hickory Grove Baptist Church, Star City, for almost 90 years.

Born in 1911, Russell was saved and joined Hickory Grove Baptist in 1929.

Russell has seen a lot of life happen in the past century.

She grew up with five brothers and four sisters - a fifth sister died in infancy - long before the days of video games and iPhones. She and her siblings climbed trees, played ball, chased each other and played lots of made-up games.

She remembers her brother building a small wagon and fashioning a harness for their goat.

"We just had a good time playing with the goat," she said.

She recalls seeing her first car at age 7. When her family heard the automobile would be coming by, they lined up and waited to see it. She found the automobile to be very noisy. A few years later, the Russells bought their own car - one which had to be started with a crank. Prior to that time, their mode of transportation was a team of horses and an iron wheel wagon.

She also remembers the not-so-good times, like the Great Depression and the near-starvation many Americans experienced.

She said she grew up attending church, thinking that was all she had to do. And yet, she still felt something wasn't right. She was saved and baptized in 1929 by E.E. Grevier, who was pastor of Hickory Grove at the time.

She expressed her gratitude for Hickory Grove Baptist.

"It has been a life-saver to me," she said. "That church

has really been good to me; every time I have a problem, they are right there to help me."

She was married to Carvil Russell for more than 60 years, and they had one son, Ross. Both her husband and son have since died.

Her daughter-in-law, Betty Russell, still lives nearby, and she claims Lottie Russell as her own mother, rather than mother-in-law, explaining her own parents died many years ago.

"She's just another mother to me, and that's just the way it's been with us. Her husband, Carvil, was just like another daddy," Betty Russell said.

Lottie Russell also has two grandchildren, two great-grandchildren and two great-great-grandchildren.

As she grows older, Russell has a way of celebrating in style.

She said she has experienced at least two-dozen modes of transportation in her life, ranging from a sled to a bicycle to a car; and she has wracked up some of these experiences on her birthdays. For her 99th birthday, she rode on the back of a motorcycle for the first time, and when she turned 100, she took a helicopter ride.

For her 103rd birthday, her granddaughter, great-grandson and great-granddaughter took her to see an Arkansas Travelers baseball game.

Living through the past century has given Russell a unique perspective on life.

She noted the importance of respect. She grew up being taught to respect those in authority, such as teachers, parents and presidents. She said one of the changes she has noticed through the years is the decline of children's respect for their parents, grandparents and others.

She also noted changes like the speed of cars.

"The way people move going so fast now - I don't see how they don't kill each other on the highway," she said.

Similarly, she noted the speed at which people live, observing that everyone is so busy and goes through life so fast that they "don't have time to have a good time."

She mentioned eating a piece of pie with her neighbor.

"That's what I call living," she said, noting that she misses the days when women would have "quiltings" or would crochet while talking.

As far as the biggest change in technology, she considers it to be electricity because it affects so many important things.

Her life has also been marked by service to her church. She served for many years as a Sunday school teacher at Hickory Grove.

Because Russell is mostly homebound now, Mary Hilburn, wife of interim Pastor Bill Hilburn, goes to Russell's home every Sunday to have Sunday school.

"I think it's a great mission for her to come do that," Russell said.

Bill Hilburn has been serving as interim for the church for more than a decade, and Mary Hilburn has been going to Russell's house for Sunday school for the past several years.

Mary Hilburn described Russell as "well-grounded," "conservative" and a "born-again believer." She noted that Russell studies the upcoming lesson all week and is actively involved in their discussions.

"Really she's just a character," Mary Hilburn said. "She likes to laugh and is funny."

For her 104th birthday, several family members and friends celebrated with Russell on Aug. 19.

On Aug. 16, Hickory Grove members celebrated her birthday by holding a church service in her home. During the service, Lottie was asked to

share her testimony and to lead the closing prayer.

"It was an amazing prayer," Mary Hilburn said.

Through Russell's testimony and prayer, she challenged people to evangelize.

"She challenged the people to continue to witness and reach out to people in the community," Bill Hilburn

said. "(She has a) real strong faith."

Mary Hilburn added, "And she even told them if we don't start reaching the people and praying that God will deal with the hearts of people in the community, the church is going to die."

Contact Jessica Vanderpool at jessica@arkansasbaptist.org.



Russell

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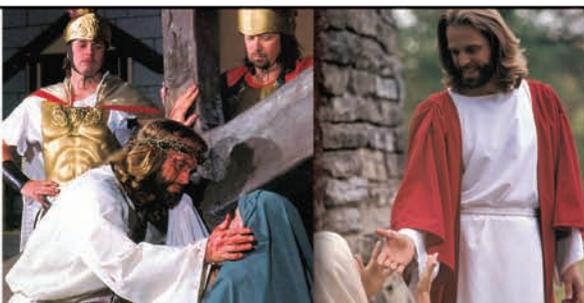
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Couple 'pays it forward' during association missions day

NEWPORT - When members from churches around Black River Baptist Association held their third in a series of monthly Acts 1:8 evangelism/missions days in August, they had no way of knowing that the recipients of their ministry at that event would be volunteering right beside them at their September event. But that's exactly what happened.

During the August missions day in Williford, one of the service projects was to help repair a fire-damaged house. The volunteers put a floor in the house and removed the remaining drywall

for the entire dwelling. The construction work provided the owners, who had been sleeping in a tent near the house, with a sturdy structure in which to live while continuing to rebuild the house.

Jim Swinford, pastor of New Song Baptist Church in Williford, said the owners of the house were overwhelmed with the task of rebuilding the house and were amazed that a team of strangers would come and help them for free. He added that this expression of Christ's love has since so impacted the couple that they have begun regularly



Swinford

attending morning worship services at New Song Baptist. In fact, he said the woman recently received Christ as her Savior.

"That's what Acts 1:8 is all about. Changing lives one at a time through the love of Christ," said Mike McCoy, associational missionary for Black River Baptist Association.

Swinford shared that the couple was so grateful for the ministry of the Acts 1:8 teams that they couldn't wait to go on the next mission trip to "pay it forward."

So when churches gathered in Newport, the couple joined in right alongside everyone else, ready to serve.

The missions event took place on Sept. 12, and Immanuel Baptist Church in Newport served as host.

Also helping out in the missions day were churches from across the association, along with partners from Marmaduke First Baptist Church, of Greene County Baptist Association; Bethany Baptist Church in Manila, of Mississippi County Baptist Association, and Cord Baptist Church in Cord, of Independence Baptist Association.

Matthew Collier, with the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, and a team from Marmaduke First Baptist partnered with Black River Baptist Association to provide equipment for a block party.

A total of about 60 participants came ready to serve the community of Newport.

After a morning orientation meeting, teams began to fan out to serve the community.

Marvin Reynolds, member of First Baptist Church in Newport and retired associational missionary for Black River association, led a prayer team. Members of this team stayed at the church all day and prayed for all the ministry teams.

"This ministry has been a vital part of every one of the Acts 1:8 mission days. Bro. Reynolds has been faithful to lead this ministry at every event," said McCoy.

A service team worked at a local women's shelter to rebuild a fence, replace windowsills and help with cleaning and painting.

Pastor Jake Guenrich, pastor of First Baptist Church,

Walnut Ridge, led the three evangelism teams that went into the nearby neighborhoods. Greg Dills, the new pastor at First Baptist Church, Newport, and his son were one of those teams.

All the evangelism teams reported they had various opportunities to share the gospel with people at their homes, said McCoy.

"What an exciting experience to see these teams go out in the community and return with great stories of lives touched by the sharing of the gospel," he said.

McCoy added that out of the four missions days, three have resulted in at least one salvation each.

"It gets us out of the church and into the streets, and it has brought the churches together in a way that many say is 'phenomenal,'" he said about their series of missions events.

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AT&T awards \$20,000 to Baptist Health College of Little Rock

LITTLE ROCK - Thanks to a \$20,000 award from AT&T, 20 minority and/or low income students enrolled at Baptist Health College Little Rock (BHCLR) will receive a \$1,000 scholarship to help offset school costs.

"We never want to have to turn away a potential student

who has the calling and desire to help others through a career in health care, especially if it's a matter of financial need," said Judy Pile, Baptist Health College Little Rock chancellor.

The Baptist Health Foundation, the fundraising and development arm for Baptist Health, was awarded the scholarship money through AT&T Aspire, the company's signature education initiative focused on making a transformational impact on learning. AT&T Aspire invests in students today to prepare them for success tomorrow.

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ETERNITY

continued from page one

wife that walked through first, and she came back the next night and brought her whole family. And four of those five people accepted Christ, and they are still coming to our church.”

Stubbs admits that by choosing to hold the Eternity House during the fall, close to Halloween, many people ask if the Eternity House is some kind of Christian haunted house.

“It’s not really like a haunted house at all. People get that impression of it, but it’s really not. One of the reasons we do it this time of year is because fall is a fun time. People are looking for fun stuff to do in the fall, and they are looking for things like haunted houses to walk through,” said Stubbs. “It’s more like a play. It is a drama, but it is a room-by-room drama.”

“It is a walk-through presentation of the gospel. We try to focus the first five scenes on life situations. We present the

gospel (in) probably five out of the eight scenes,” said Stubbs. “We have three scenes this particular year where you are actually going to see the gospel being presented, and someone accepts Christ in that scene.”

Stubbs said that each year the Eternity House’s drama includes a tragedy scene meant to highlight the harsh reality of human mortality.

“Ultimately, there is some kind of tragedy that happens, and you (the audience) realize that this life is not going to last and eventually one day you are going to pass away. You are going to die. And so then, the people that this happens to find themselves at the throne of judgment,” said Stubbs. “We do judgment, and then we do a hell scene and then we do a heaven scene. ... Our last scene that we do is just a room of invitation. We call it the ‘room of choices.’”

Stubbs said that the Eternity House’s room of choices is filled with pastors and ministers from various sponsor churches throughout Faulkner Baptist Association, including Sunny Gap Baptist; oneChurch, Conway; Point

of Grace Baptist Church, Vilonia, and Woodland Heights Baptist Church, Conway.

“After they’ve (the audience) walked through and seen all of these things unfold, they actually go into that invitation time and they are met by a local pastor, or youth pastor, and they share the gospel with them. They just bring it all together,” said Stubbs.

“We then have some counselors that are waiting, that if they made a decision, to visit with them and make sure that they understand what they did and ... are not just making a decision on emotions,” said Stubbs. “That is where the Holy Spirit really gets to work.”

Stubbs said that many people have asked her if she feels that the Eternity House’s use of drama, and the emotions that it creates in the audience, are detrimental to lost individuals being able to make real decisions for Christ as opposed to making decisions purely as an emotional response.

Stubbs said she believes the Eternity House ministry’s goal is to simply share the Truth with their audience – the fact



Actors portray heaven during an Eternity House Ministries performance.

that all have sinned, fallen short of the glory of God and are, apart from the grace of Jesus, destined for an eternity in hell.

“We don’t want to scare them. We just want to tell them the Truth, and the Truth is that if you don’t accept Christ, you are not going to go to heaven. And it is our job as Christians to tell them that,” said Stubbs.

“I always tell people that

coming to Christ is an emotional decision. ... All we do is try to tell them the Truth and that God loves them and cares about them and that He sent His Son to die for their sins and make a way for them to not have to spend an eternity in hell and also to give them the opportunity to live the life that (they) deserve to live in Christ,” she said.

Contact Caleb Yarbrough at caleb@arkansasbaptist.org.

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Epoch Church was planted 10 years ago in the heart of downtown Little Rock. The church recently relocated to a new, larger, more conducive building. Renovations to the building were completed, in large part, thanks to church members or friends and partners of the church. Nathan James and Grant Harrison, the church's co-pastors, hope the building will allow the church to better connect with their community and see lives changed by the gospel of Jesus Christ. *Above photo by Caleb Yarbrough. Photos below by Grant Harrison highlight Epoch Church's new facility and renovations to it.*

Epoch Church: new building, new chapter after 10 years

Caleb Yarbrough
Arkansas Baptist News

LITTLE ROCK – A proper facility can go a long way in helping a local church minister to their community. For Epoch Church, Little Rock, the right building was long in coming but part of God's timing.

Nathan James and Grant Harrison are Epoch Church's co-pastors. The long-time friends started the church 10 years ago, in July 2005, in an effort to bring the gospel of Jesus Christ to the heart of downtown Little Rock.

Over the past few years, the church began to outgrow their storefront location and began seriously searching for a larger space. However, finding an affordable location on Main Street in the state's largest city was easier said than done.

The church first looked at the building that they now occupy in December 2013.

"We had been working for over a year trying to get that building. And through numer-

ous miracles, ... what looked like an impossible task from every front turned into an awesome opportunity to receive a blessing," said James.

"The timing couldn't have been more perfect," said Harrison. "We were just waiting on Him (God), and He lined everything up perfect for us."

"We'd been blessed for 10 years, and we knew there was some change that needed to take place on a lot of different fronts. It was kind of just the perfect transition to allow us to change and be transformed for the next chapter we believe God has for our church," said James.

James said God used the process of finding and renovating a new church facility to bring the congregation together and strengthen their faith.

"We knew God was really trying to grow us up in some areas, and He did. And He is still in that process," said James.

See **EPOCH** page 12



EPOCH

continued from page 11

James said that the new location is more visible to the surrounding community, provides much needed space to host services and children's ministry activities and has lots of room for the church to expand in the future. Since they began meeting in the location about a month ago, the church's Sunday morning worship attendance has already grown by 20-30 people.

"There is no way we could have 100 people in our other place, and we do it here. ... We have had a lot more guests show up," said Harrison. "Nothing wrong with our place. We loved it. It was a great place for us for so many years. But we were really limited to what we could do."

One of the major challenges Epoch Church was facing in their previous storefront location was a lack of space and security for their children's ministry. James said that the new building has allowed the

church enough room for their current children's ministry to thrive and to grow.

"Already - we've been in this place for a month - my kid is coming home and telling me the stuff that he has learned at church. And the teachers are so excited. Their 3-, 4- and 2-year-olds are actually learning about the Lord. We're able to do that now," said Harrison.



Harrison

"In a way, this building is allowing us to invest in the next generation in a way that we really couldn't do at the other place, at least very well," he said.

"Our kids are going to be able to have a safer, more conducive environment. We are too for our corporate gatherings. And guests will now feel like there is a place for them," said James. "Outside of these walls, we're just now scratching the surface of how we can use this place to reach into the community and let them use our space and then use our space to serve them."

Epoch Church held an open house Oct. 17 in which they invited the surrounding community, including surrounding businesses, to come

see the church's new home.

"They (local businesses) are interested in the fact that we purchased a building that was vacant for so many years and we've renovated it and we are using it. ... We try to say that this is a place that we want to be community-focused and for people in the community to be able to use as a service to them," said Harrison.

In addition to providing a way for the church to purchase the new building, God also provided Epoch Church with ministry partners including the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, North Pulaski Baptist Association and numerous partner churches and individuals throughout the greater Southern Baptist Convention who helped make the renovations to the facility possible.

"Partnering churches, our people and individuals who believe in the church have either worked or given of their time, energy and money," said

James. "Comparing what was done to our budget, it's night and day."

"It's really humbling to us as pastors to see people willing to do this for our community," said Harrison. "Epoch' means 'a memorable time of change,' and we are focused on a spiritual change that happens in people's hearts."

The church has nearly completed the first of three phases of development planned for their new building. Phase one consisted of exterior paint and renovation and interior renovation of the building's first floor. Phase two will consist of the renovation of the building's second floor, which will be a multiuse area. Phase three consists of future additions to the church through the renovation of the building's attached warehouse space.

"The Lord is doing some fun stuff, and we are just really

trying to keep up. And that is kind of our motto right now - 'Let the Lord work, and we are just trying to keep up,'" said Harrison.

"We want to see people's lives changed and people come to know Jesus. That needs to be clear," said James.

"Throughout our renovation process, I think it is safe to say, with some of the people that we were able to work with, that typically a pastor doesn't get to cross paths with, we have been able to see some lives being changed. And that is something that people can pray for. ... It is worth it just for those kind of things," he said.

"That's what we are praying for - the wind and breath of God's Spirit to come in power and for us to just pull up a seat ... and be faithful as we know He is," said James.

Contact Caleb Yarbrough at caleb@arkansasbaptist.org.



James



Nearly all the labor for Epoch Church's recent building renovation was provided by unpaid volunteers. Photo by Grant Harrison

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Williams Baptist College breaks ground on Belle Hall

WALNUT RIDGE - Construction of a new \$2 million residence hall is about to start at Williams Baptist College (WBC). A groundbreaking ceremony for the 43-bed Belle Hall was held Friday, Oct. 9, with completion expected next fall.

"We have reached capacity and are currently utilizing overflow housing for our men, and we are nearing capacity in our women's residence halls. This new facility addresses those issues and allows WBC's resident student population to keep growing," said Williams President Tom Jones.

The new facility is made possible in part by a \$500,000 gift from the Jim Tom Butler

family, of Harrisburg. Butler is a member of the Williams board of trustees, and his family has supported the college for many decades.

The name for Belle Hall comes from his wife, Connie Belle Butler, and her family. The name Belle extends back several generations and has a rich history in her family, she said.

"Our family is honored to be a part of the ongoing progress at Williams Baptist College, and we are humbled that the Lord has allowed us to be the vehicles of this blessing," Connie Butler said. "We are simply the messengers the Lord chose to deliver this gift to Williams, and we



Williams Baptist College broke ground on the \$2 million, 43-bed Belle Hall residence hall Oct. 9. Image above is a rendering.

are thankful for that opportunity."

Jones said women will be housed in Belle Hall, while Nicholas Hall, which currently houses women, will become a men's residence hall next year.

"This arrangement addresses our most immediate need, which is residential space for

our male students. Then, we will move female students into the new facility when it is completed later next year," the president said.

The new facility is to be built just south of Nicholas Hall, which is located on Fulbright Avenue. Of the nearly 500 students enrolled on Wil-

liams' main campus, more than 75 percent live in the college's residence halls and apartments.

Clark General Contractors, of Walnut Ridge, is constructing the facility, while Brackett Krennerich and Associates Architects, of Jonesboro, designed the building.

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NEW CONSTRUCTION — Mount Pisgah Baptist Church, Jacksonville, recently completed the Curtis A. Green Community Life Center, a multipurpose community and activities building down the street from their sanctuary and main campus. Mount Pisgah is one of the largest African-American churches in the Arkansas Baptist State Convention. The church's pastor, Craig B. Collier, recently celebrated his 15th anniversary at Mount Pisgah. Photos by Caleb Yarbrough

Sonshine Retreat Center undergoes renovation

MOUNTAINBURG - The Sonshine Mountain Retreat Center, located atop Cartwright Mountain about 7 miles north of Mountainburg just off of Arkansas Scenic State Highway 71, recently was remodeled.

"A remodel was long overdue," said Gaye Ramsey, the new manager of the center who is a member of First Baptist Church, Fort Smith, where her



Ramsey

husband, Eric, serves as associate pastor for church ministries.

"Sonshine Mountain Retreat Center is a single-building facility that sleeps 42 people. In addition to the men's and women's bunk rooms, there are four beautifully redecorated private rooms with new beds (and) private baths," said Gaye Ramsey.

"The commons area features a new 65-inch television, new furniture throughout, new windows, new cedar ceiling and trim, a newly enlarged deck and the priceless mountaintop view overlooking the Boston Mountains and Fort Smith Lake," she said, adding, "The (Lake Fort Smith) State Park is only a 5-6 minute drive, and Devil's Den State Park is less than a half-hour away."

The Sonshine Mountain Retreat Center, established in 1994 by Tom Cox World Ministries, was built to provide housing for church groups and families to experience spiritual and relational renewal.

Over the past two decades, hundreds of groups have enjoyed the beauty and serenity of the mountain setting, said Ramsey.

"If you have never been to Sonshine Mountain, you need to give us a try. If it has been a while since you have been to Sonshine Mountain, you've got to come back - you'll be amazed," she said.



The recently remodeled Sonshine Retreat Center is located 7 miles north of Mountainburg on the campus of Tom Cox World Ministries (TCWM).

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Geyer Springs celebrates history, dedicates new space

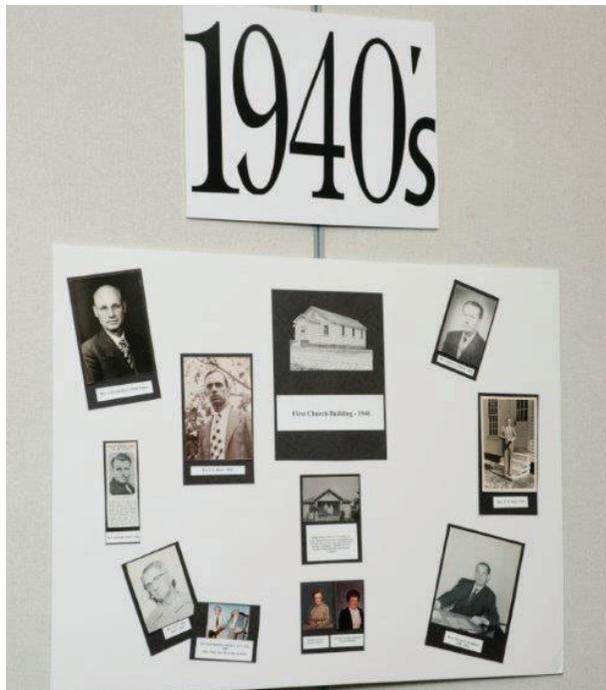
LITTLE ROCK – About 1,800 people flooded the grounds of Geyer Springs First Baptist Church (GSFBC), Little Rock, on Sunday, Sept. 27, for a joint celebration of the church’s 75-year history and the dedication of a new building addition, which will help launch the church into the future.

Joe Statton, executive pastor, explained that although the church’s actual anniversary took place on July 14, the festivities were postponed in order to celebrate the anniversary with the dedication of the new children’s space.

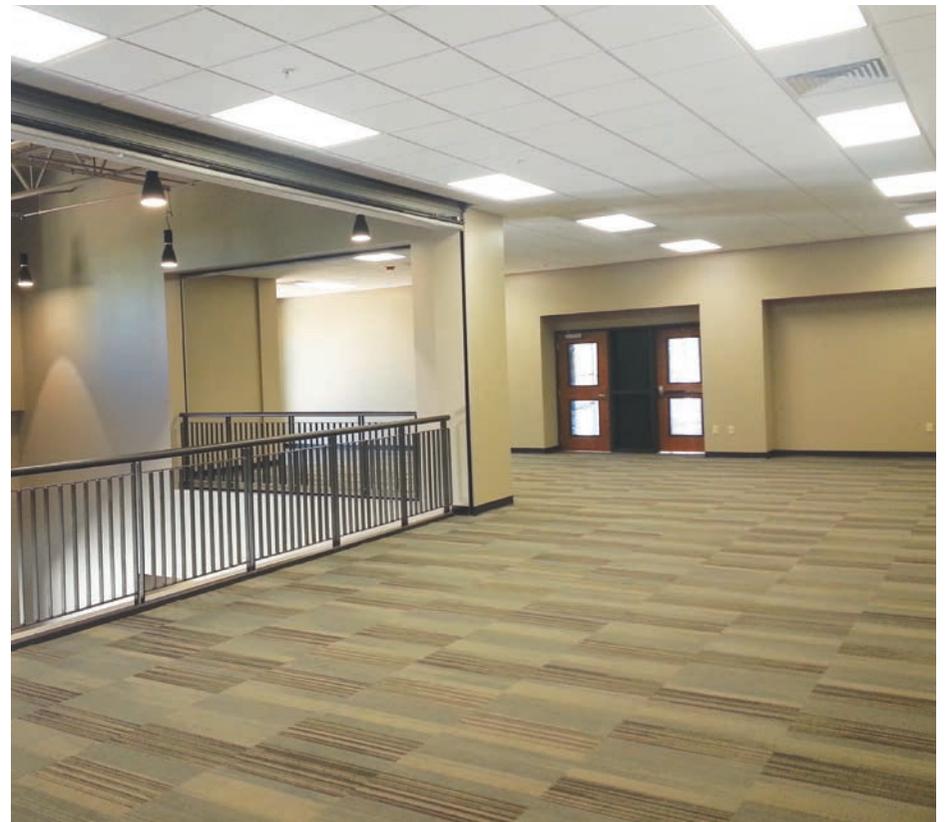
On the day of the event, one large worship service was held, along with a churchwide meal, tours of the new addition and the opportunity to walk through a room full of photos and memorabilia commemorating the church’s history.

“It was a great weekend of reconnecting with familiar faces and celebrating all that God has done in the past 75 years,” said Paige Shepard, ministry event coordinator. “But most importantly, it was a time of looking forward, with anticipation for what God will do in and through His church in the years to come.”

She said that among those



A collage of photos (above) commemorates the first decade of Geyer Springs First Baptist Church, Little Rock. Geyer Springs First Baptist dedicated their new building addition during their anniversary celebration.



who attended were several former staff and members. The day before the celebration, the church hosted a dinner for all current and former staff members and their families.

According to Toni Blackwell, assistant to Statton, when the church was established in the 1940s, it had 37 charter members. Through the years,

the church has actively sought to spread God’s love through a variety of ministries. Among such endeavors have been a 30-minute Sunday morning radio broadcast begun in the 1940s, a kindergarten and day care ministry begun in 1970, an annual Christmas party for the children at the Arkansas Baptist Children’s

Home in Monticello begun in the 1970s, Hispanic ministry begun in the 1980s and new community ministries and churches begun this decade.

“Geyer Springs has always been about the gospel,” said Statton. “For 75 years, this family we call ‘GSFBC’ has reached beyond its walls to love others and share the good news of Christ. More than ever before, we are focused on reaching our community with His love. Our people have decided not to squabble over anything that would distract (from) our focus on Him.”

In addition to celebrating their history, Geyer Springs members marked the completion of the first of a two-phase building project, which included the renovation of current children/preschool/preteen space, as well as an addition onto the current

children’s facility.

Renovated space included the children’s Sunday school rooms, preteen auditorium, large children’s auditorium, children’s welcome center, preschool security check-in stations and preteen game room. New space will provide for seven new children’s classrooms, an indoor preschool playground, a new children’s game area, children’s restrooms and an extended student hangout area. There is also new growth space for students, preschool, offices and future recreation space in preparation for the second phase of the building project.

The second phase will be to build a multipurpose space including two gyms.

“It is our prayer that we can continue to reach more young families and disciple their children in a safe and inviting space,” said Statton.

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Hitt retires after more than 40 years in ministry

FLIPPIN - Maurice Hitt, associational missionary for White River Baptist Association, has announced his retirement effective July 1.

Hitt explained in a letter to pastors and executive board members that he made the announcement prior to the association's annual meeting so it would not detract from the association's 175th anniversary celebration.

"Everyone God calls to ministry desires to glorify God through growing His Church, impacting lostness and finishing strong. Maurice has done exactly that through his 43 years of ministry," said Robby Tingle, associational missionary liaison for the Arkansas Baptist State Convention. "It is a blessing to have served with him on ministry projects and a joy to call him 'friend.' There is no doubt he will continue to make a difference for Christ beyond retirement."

Hitt surrendered to the ministry in March 1973 and began active ministry a few months later on July 1 as bivocational pastor of Rivervale Baptist Church in eastern Poinsett County. In the 40-plus years since then, Hitt has served churches in Arkansas, Ohio and Texas in a variety of capacities, ranging from

supply/interim pastor to staff member to pastor. As of Feb. 1, Hitt will have served 25 years as an associational missionary - 11 1/2 of which he will have spent serving with White River Baptist Association.

"God has indeed blessed Sandy and I and our family through the wonderful folks we have had the honor to serve and serve with," Hitt wrote. "And White River Association is no exception: God has blessed me with your friendship and the privilege to serve here."

Although he is retiring from the position of associational missionary, he is not retiring from ministry. He said he looks "forward to opportunities to assist churches through preaching, teaching, consulting, and simply serving."

"My belief is that the best days for White River Baptist Association are in the future as God expands the vision for the ministry he has given," Hitt wrote. "I believe in the mission of White River Baptist Association: 'to Engage Churches to Reach All People in a Changing World with the Unchanging Gospel of Christ.' Simply stated, White River Baptist Association has its mission 'from the Ozarks ... to the world!'"



Hitt



VICTORY CAR SHOW - Harry Fielder (right) and Joey Maggio chat about Fielder's 1948 Dodge pickup truck at this year's Victory Car Show at Immanuel Baptist Church, Little Rock, Oct. 10. Photo by Caleb Yarbrough



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How church members have expressed appreciation to my family

Melvin York
First Baptist, Des Arc

PAUL EXPRESSED his gratefulness to the Philippian believers for their continued support that was sent to him by Epaphroditus: "I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God" (Phil. 4:18).



York

Paul uses the three phrases together - "I have all, and abound: I am full" - to express that he was completely overwhelmed with the Philippians' generosity. The use of the sac-

rificial image from the Old Testament communicated to the Philippians that their gift was viewed as an act of worship to the Lord.

The Philippian gift went far beyond what anyone would have expected. It has been my privilege to serve a church with the same giving and loving spirit that the Philippian church demonstrated. Not only has the church always given special recognition during

October's Pastor Appreciation Month, but they also recognize all of my family's birthdays, Christmas, ministry anniversary dates and special occasions such as my children's wed-

dings, graduations and births of my grandchildren.

Through the 21 years of ministry here, my family has received innumerable cards and letters of appreciation from the membership. Some of my favorites are handwritten notes from some of the children, often with a picture they have drawn. Their personal words are very uplifting. My wife and I often receive texts, emails or messages of encouragement.

My office is full of special objects given as gifts: plaques, pictures and figurines, all showing thought and insight by the givers. One very special gift is a model Trans Am that the youth gave me at my 50th birthday; they marked

out "Smokey and the Bandit" and wrote "Bro. Mel and the Bandit." The youth had remembered an illustration in a lesson I gave about coveting and cars. Each gift reflects a conversation, illustration or experience shared with a church member.

The church has taken special love offerings and sent my family on multiple vacations. Individuals have given money in cards. Birthday gifts have included cameras, a hunting rifle, a recliner, gift cards and special baked goodies. The ladies of our church take my wife out for dinner and give her gifts on her birthday. Members have given gifts to my four daughters when they graduated from school. When

my youngest twins were born, they had an extended stay in the hospital. Our church family gave special offerings, gas cards and a group of my members even went together to purchase a new minivan for my family.

The list above only scratches the surface of the generosity that our church family has extended to us. I can truly say with Paul that I have experienced generosity beyond any expectations. I have been blessed by individuals, groups within the church and the entire church fellowship. I am grateful to serve as pastor of such a giving and appreciative membership.

Melvin York is pastor of First Baptist Church, Des Arc.

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Girls learn creative ways of sharing Bible stories, such as by using movement (left) and by using "storying stones" (right), during the Missions GetAway event held Sept. 18-20 in Lonsdale.

Camp-O-Rama, Missions GetAway teach children about missions

LONSDALE - Two missions events - one for girls in grades one through six and the other for boys in grades one through six - were provided by the

Arkansas Baptist State Convention (ABSC) missions team at Spring Lake Baptist Assembly in Lonsdale the weekend of Sept. 18-20.

Almost 100 students and adults took part in Missions GetAway, the girl's camp, and just over 100 students and adults took part in the

boys' Camp-O-Rama.

The Missions GetAway theme - Gotta Tell It - focused on sharing the gospel, said Charity Taylor, member of the ABSC missions team. Girls heard Bible stories about sharing the gospel, learned different methods of sharing the gospel and were encouraged to share their own faith stories in their spheres of influence.

Girls also visited Spring Lake Baptist Assembly's People's Village, which has several small model homes from around the world.

Lynn Lanthrip, of Shepherd Hill Baptist Church, Pine Bluff, said the weekend particularly hit home with one of her girls.

"The girls and leaders from Shepherd Hill had a great time; but one of our young ladies, Amelia Stewart, seemed to be the most touched by the weekend. She came home talking about how she felt she would be a missionary one day," Lanthrip said.

Taylor also said a girl accepted Christ after the weekend.

While the girls were busy at their missions event, the boys were equally busy at theirs.

"Camp O Rama is a tent-camping, missions discipleship experience designed to aid boys and men in developing

the skills necessary to become effective on-mission Christians who carry out the Great Commission to make disciples 'as they are going,'" said Travis McCormick, ABSC missions team member.

"Camping and other outdoor activities provided opportunities for participants to interact with and learn from other Christian men and boys," McCormick explained. "Men from around the state spent the weekend sharing their passions, telling their stories and demonstrating how God uses the things men love to do to help them reach other men and boys who share their passions."

He said along with having a chance to interact with both "everyday missionaries" and vocational missionaries, Camp-O-Rama participants were able to take part in activities such as fishing, entomology, juggling, archery and much more.

Students from both camps heard from a missionary family who uses goat farming to reach people.

Both boys and girls were able to take part in missions themselves by bringing school supplies that Arkansas church planters will use to build relationships in their communities.

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Cedar Glade camp experience changes course of life

IMBODEN – Summer camp was just a few days out of 10-year-old Michael Freeman's summer, but it changed the course of his life – and the life of his family – forever.

It was the summer of 1997 – the first church camp he had ever attended and the first time he'd ever really heard the gospel clearly presented.

Freeman recalls a speaker giving an illustration about how Jesus is the only Way to heaven during a midweek worship session of Current-Gaines Baptist Association's week of camp held at Cedar Glade Baptist Encampment. Freeman remembers kneeling down in the dark near some pine trees to accept Christ as Savior as the music from the evening worship session played nearby. And he remembers hurrying back to his bunk and reading half of the Book of Matthew before falling asleep.

His decision opened the door for his uncle, who had invited him to camp, to encourage Freeman's parents to reconnect with church. Now, Freeman's sister is saved, his father is a deacon and his mother teaches and serves in the church. And Freeman? Well, now he is pastor of First Baptist Church, Imboden.

"And it really all started with God moving when I was 10 at Cedar Glade Baptist Encampment. ... It's just amazing what God can do with one night, one event," Freeman said.

Freeman also coordinated this year's children's camp for Black River Baptist Association, which took place at Cedar Glade.

Cedar Glade Baptist Encampment is owned by six associations: Black River Baptist Association, Trinity Baptist Association, Rocky Bayou Baptist Association, Current-Gaines Baptist Association, Greene County Baptist Association and Big Creek Baptist Association.

Frank Casillas, pastor of Ravenden Baptist Church, Ravenden, and camp administrator for Cedar Glade, said the camp is open year-round for weekend retreats. But for 10 weeks in the summer, it is set apart for summer camps.

The six associations bring campers for eight of those weeks, and outside groups bring campers the remaining two weeks.

This summer alone, 133 people made decisions for Christ, four were baptized in the camp pool, 34 rededicated their lives and 37 made other decisions, Casillas said.

And this is not out of the ordinary.

"There's never been less than a 100 decisions for Christ in any camp year," he said, noting the first camp was held in 1979.

Casillas also noted that among those who have been saved at the camp is Eric Fuller,

now an evangelist, who accepted Christ at Cedar Glade in the mid-1990s.

Prior to Casillas' 12 years as camp administrator, he served at the camp doing maintenance, running the kitchen and doing landscaping.

The Cedar Glade facilities include seven cabins, a lodge, a "motel lodge," nine RV pads, a cafeteria, a worship center, a snack shack, a game room, a swimming pool, volleyball and basketball courts, a baseball diamond and more. The camp

sleeps 274, and the worship center and cafeteria seat 340.

Cedar Glade provides the facilities and meals, and the individual groups bring their own programs.

Freeman was in charge of making all arrangements and plans for Black River Baptist Association's children's camp this year. He said this is the first year the association has paired up with Trinity Baptist Association for camp – holding both a children's camp, which Black River coordinated, and a youth camp, which Trinity coordinated.

Freeman said the children's camp theme – Unashamed – came from Romans 1:16.

Out of the 149 children who attended the two associations' children's camp, 29 made professions of faith. But Freeman said he thinks the camp's effect went even further than those who officially made decisions.

He said he spoke to some of the children at camp and there were more than those 29 who "really had some questions."

"They never committed or did anything about it, but they were really intrigued," Freeman said. "They were really wanting to know more about what it means to be saved,

what it means to follow Christ (and) be unashamed."

He said their youth camp also had a good turnout, with several decisions of some type being made.

Casillas said Cedar Glade has changed a lot over the years, with much growth and expansion.

One particularly notable event that stands out from his 12 years as camp administrator took place in 2005 following Hurricane Katrina. For seven weeks, the camp housed 297 refugees.

"We really grew from that and learned a lot," Casillas said. "We weren't really prepared for it, but the Lord guided us through it, and I

think we were a great blessing to them, and we learned a lot from it also."

Through the years, he has seen countless lives changed, and he has seen many people return to the camp to reminisce on their life-changing moments. He said many people have met their future spouses on the campgrounds or even gotten engaged on the grounds.

And many, like Freeman, have found new life and purpose in Christ.

Reflecting on Cedar Glade, Freeman said, "It's a big deal to me. I got saved there; I know a lot of people got saved there. And I know God works through Cedar Glade camp."



Freeman

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Obituaries

John Finn, 87, formerly of Melbourne, died Oct. 7. Finn served in the U.S. Navy from 1945 through 1954. He was a Baptist minister and served as pastor of numerous churches in Arkansas, including First Baptist Church, Parkin, and First Baptist Church, Evening Shade. He was a former president of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, a former executive director of the Christian Civic Foundation (now the Arkansas Faith and Ethics Council) and also served many years as director of missions for North Arkansas Baptist Association in Harrison. Finn was preceded in death by his wife, Elizabeth Louise "Bette" Crawford Finn; seven brothers, and three sisters. He is survived by a son, a sister, two grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. Funeral services were held Oct. 10 at First Baptist Church, Parkin. Interment followed in Parkin Cemetery.



Mary K. Sisson Turner, 85, mother of former Arkansas Baptist State Convention Executive Director Emil Turner, died Oct. 10. She was a member of First Baptist Church, Bastrop, La. She was preceded in death by a sister. She is survived by her husband of 66 years, Bernie; three sons; a sister; a brother; six grandchildren, and 11 great-grandchildren. Funeral services were held Oct. 13 at Golden Funeral



Home in Bastrop. Emil Turner officiated. Interment followed in Bartholomew Methodist Church Cemetery in Bastrop.

Milestones

Ted Darling is retiring Oct. 31 after 26 years as pastor of First Baptist Church, Ozark. During his 47 years in the ministry, he served churches in Arkansas, Texas, Missouri and Oklahoma.

William A. "Skip" Wofford is retiring Oct. 31 after 60 years in the music ministry, during which he served churches in Arkansas, Georgia, California and Hawaii. For

the past 13 years, he has served as minister of worship at First Baptist Church, Ozark.

On the move

Michael McDaniel is serving on the staff of First Baptist Church, Cullendale, as minister to students.



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jeanie@arkansasbaptist.org

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Cherry Street Baptist Church of Clarksville is seeking a **full-time pastor**. Please send resumes to P.O. Box 378, Clarksville, AR 72830, Attn: Sylvia Ritchie. 479-705-2707.

Bethel Baptist Church, Norman, Okla., is seeking a **full-time senior pastor**. Located approximately 1 mile from the University of Oklahoma, we are a conservative Southern Baptist church that supports the Cooperative Program. Please email resumes to bbcnormanpsc@gmail.com or send to Pastor Search Committee, Bethel Baptist Church, 1717 W. Lindsey St., Norman, OK 73069.

First Baptist Church of Lockesburg is seeking a **full-time pastor**. Please send resumes to Pastor Selection Committee, FBC, P.O. Box 53, Lockesburg, AR 71846 or fbsecretary@outlook.com.

First Baptist Church, Gillett, is seeking a **bi-vocational or retired pastor**. Send resumes to First Baptist Church, Attn: Pastor Search Committee, P.O. Box 117, Gillett, AR 72055. For more information, phone Tricia Hayes: 870-548-2547.

Leonard Street Baptist Church is seeking a **part-time bi-vocational pastor**. Please mail resumes to Search Committee,

Leonard Street Baptist Church, 625 Leonard St., Hot Springs, AR 71913. (No phone calls please.)

Trinity Baptist Church, Fort Smith, is seeking a **bi-vocational pastor**. Please send resume to Trinity Baptist Pastor Search Committee, 3619 N. 6th, Fort Smith, AR 72904 or email mackjoretta@gmail.com.

Cedar Glades Baptist Church in Mountain Pine is seeking a conservative **full-time pastor**. Please send resume to Cedar Glades Baptist Church, Pastor Search Committee, 303 Gum Springs Road, Mountain Pine, AR 71956.

Armored Baptist Church is renewing search for **full-time pastor**. Please submit resumes, CDs or websites for review. Pastor Search Committee, linda@armoredbc.com.

First Baptist Church, El Dorado, is prayerfully seeking to fill the position of **senior pastor**. Email resumes to fbcel-dorado201@gmail.com or mail to Pastor Search Committee, 100 E. Peach St., Suite 350, El Dorado, AR 71730.

Reynolds Memorial Baptist Church, Little Rock, is a small church in search of a **bi-vocational pastor**. Mail inquiries

to Reynolds Baptist Church, 7111 Fourche Dam Pike, Little Rock, AR 72206, Attn: Pastor Search Committee.

OTHER STAFF POSITIONS

Danville FBC is seeking a full-time passionate **worship leader**. Send resume to P.O. Box 877, Danville, AR 72833 or fbc-dan@arkwest.com.

First Baptist, Sherwood, is accepting resumes for a **part-time preschool ministry director** (26 hours per week). The director will coordinate programming for birth — kindergarten. Submit resumes to response@fbcsherwood.org.

Trinity Baptist Church, Searcy, is prayerfully seeking a **full-time associate pastor of students and discipleship**. Email resumes to donnajohnson127@yahoo.com or mail to Trinity Baptist Church, Pastor Search Committee, 1601 E. Moore, Searcy, AR 72143.

Send resumes for **full-time music pastor** to EHBC, 703 E. Walters, Harrison, AR 72601 or email to ehbcadmin@eagle-heightsharrison.org.

First Baptist Church of Newport is looking for a **full-time youth**

pastor. Please send resume to Pastor Greg Dills at the following email: pray4raingwd@gmail.com.

Monte Ne Baptist Church, Rogers, seeking **bi-vocational minister of music** to lead blended worship service. Email resume to mnbrogers@att.net.

Southern Heights Baptist Church is currently seeking a **full-time worship leader**. Resumes may be sent to shbc.arcoxmail.com or to 279 Highway 221 S., Berryville, AR 72616.

Union Valley Baptist Church of Beebe is seeking a **full-time minister of music** to lead our blended worship services. Located in central Arkansas, Union Valley has an average worship attendance of 500. This individual will be responsible for directing adult and youth choirs, as well as the praise band. Send resume to timsparks@centurytel.net.

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■ **Relief housemother:** Paragould Emergency Home. This part-time position includes salary, medical and life insurance and paid leave. Contact: James Barham at (870) 935-5134 or jbarham@abchomes.org.

■ **Recreation Director** Baptist Home for Children, Monticello. Horse/farm management experience and a bachelor's degree are required. This full-time position includes salary, medical and life insurance and paid leave. Contact Randy Luper at (870) 367-5358 or rluper@abchomes.org.

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Fort Smith residents enjoy bike stunts, hear gospel

FORT SMITH - Grand Avenue Baptist Church, Fort Smith, and the Arkansas Baptist State Convention (ABSC) partnered in an evangelistic outreach for students Sept. 29-30.

Utilizing Real Encounter Outreach Ministries, eight assemblies were held in five schools, with more than 4,000 students attending over the

course of two days. Then, a rally was held at Grand Avenue Baptist, where 800-plus people heard the gospel and dozens accepted Christ.

According to its website, Real Encounter Outreach Ministries connects with people through action sports and extreme sports - such as motorcycle and bike stunting - in order to share the gospel.

"We were looking to see the gospel go out in a unique way in 'the Fort,'" said Josh Hargett, student pastor at Grand Avenue Baptist. "In many ways, our city is untapped for student ministry. This was simply a great way to draw students and families to a great gospel presentation. As far as I know, the event went really well."

Warren Gasaway, member of the ABSC church health team, said 80 students and adults were saved, 33 of whom chose a date for baptism. Another 40-plus made significant faith decisions.

Gasaway said that the following morning, a group of senior adults gathered at Grand Avenue to begin the follow-up process of making sure all who made decisions were contacted within the next 72 hours.

"Our senior adults were amazing with the follow-up," said Hargett. "They

worked super hard, as did our whole church."

He said Grand Avenue members are "serious about reaching people with the gospel, and they don't hold anything back."

"Grand Avenue made every effort to get the gospel in front of

students," said Gasaway. "And then they were strategic in their preparation for the event and in their follow-up to a large outreach."

Gasaway offered training and support for the event.

"(It is) super fun knowing our convention is behind our local churches," said Hargett.



Real Encounter Outreach Ministries performs in Fort Smith Sept. 29-30.

Team of four serves two weeks in Ecuador

EL TAMBO, Ecuador - A team of four left the U.S. Sept. 4 on a two-week mission trip to El Tambo, Ecuador. The team worked with seven students who came from all across Ecuador to attend a six-week training institute.

Tommy and Phyllis Vaughn, members of Tumbling Shoals Baptist Church, Tumbling Shoals, served as hosts for the students and kept the training center running. This was the couple's 20th trip to Ecuador.

Bruce Short, pastor of Maranatha Baptist Church in Nashville, and Ali Velasquez, pastor of both Iglesia Bautista Betel, North Little Rock, and Iglesia Bautista El Shaddai, Cabot, taught the students



A team of Arkansans spent two weeks helping with a training institute in Ecuador.

spiritual leadership and spiritual disciplines.

Their in-country contact, coordinator and translator was Dr. Manuel Avilla, a medical doctor from Cuenca, Ecuador. He has been the in-country

coordinator for International Church Planters for more than 10 years.

The group made the trip in conjunction with International Church Planters, Tumbling Shoals.

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Romans 12:2 (ESV)

Lecrae named Dove Artist of Year

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) – Lecrae, called "one of the leading lights in the gospel-rap movement" by Billboard, was named Artist of the Year at the 46th annual Dove Awards, Oct. 12 in Nashville.

It marks the first time the top award has gone to "a rapper," according to *The Tennessean*, though the newspaper added a qualification: "rap-pop artist" TobyMac was named Artist of the Year in 2008.

Lecrae also won Dove Awards for Rap/Hip Hop Album of the Year for his 2014 release "Anomaly" and song of the year, "All I Need is You," in the same genre among 40-plus categories.

Other winners included:

– For King & Country,

Contemporary Christian Artist of the Year.

– Michael W. Smith, Christmas Album of the Year for last year's "The Spirit of Christmas."

– Gaither Vocal Band, Southern Gospel Artist of the Year.

– Oak Ridge Boys, Country Song of the Year, "Sweet Jesus" with Merle Haggard.

Lauren Daigle, from Lafayette, La., was named New Artist of the Year while her song "How Can It Be" was named Pop/Contemporary Song of the Year.

A list of this year's Dove winners can be accessed at doveawards.com/awards/2015-winners.

Co-hosts for the awards cer-

emony were Sadie Robertson of the "Duck Dynasty" TV series and author of "Live Original: How the Duck Commander Teen Keeps It Real and Stays True to Her Values," and Erica Campbell, five-time Grammy winner and WETV star of "Mary Mary." Campbell garnered a Dove Award for Contemporary/Gospel/Urban Song of the Year for "I Luh God."

The Dove Awards telecast aired on the Trinity Broadcasting Network (TBN) on Oct. 18. The ceremony was held in Nashville at Lipscomb University's Allen Arena.

Daniel Woodman, a journalism student at the University of Missouri who served as Baptist Press' 2015 summer intern, noted to Baptist Press, "Lecrae is important as an artist because he is the bridge between Christianity and the culture of our youth."

"Through his music he addresses issues that are hard to talk about, from racism to sexual abuse, in a relevant manner that relates to us, the youth in America especially," Woodman said in written comments. "Lecrae's Artist of the Year award not only signifies his musical talent, but his ability to bring Christ to our culture in a way that touches believers and non-believers alike. He is the transcendent artist of our generation."

Lecrae, who had a tour date in California, accepted the Artist of the Year honor by video.

The 36-year-old's music has garnered multiple awards, including a GRAMMY award for Best Contemporary Christian Music Performance/Song in February and earlier Dove Awards for rap/hip hop album and song of the year. "Anomaly," his seventh album, premiered last year atop the Billboard 200 Album Chart and Gospel Album Chart – the first-ever to do so in both genres, in addition to topping



Lecrae is the first rapper to win the Dove Artist of the Year award.

several other Billboard categories.

A book by Lecrae, titled "Unashamed," is slated for a May 2016 release by the B&H Publishing Group of LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention. According to a LifeWay news report, Lecrae will write of how his Christian faith lifted him from a difficult past that included childhood abuse and struggles with drugs and alcoholism.

"As an artist, my ambition is to make honest music, and I feel the same way about writing this book," Lecrae said. "I want to be honest about where I've come from and what I've learned along the way. I want to influence culture, to help catalyze and inspire, and help other people find understanding. If they find some inspiration and some clarity for their own lives, as they follow my journey, then I will have succeeded."

He was a May 2013 guest on "The Exchange" (vimeo.com/67132216), interviewed by guest host Eric Geiger, Resource Division vice president of LifeWay Christian Resources. "The Exchange" is a weekly program hosted by Ed Stetzer, executive director of LifeWay Research, now aired on the NRB channel on Direct TV.

Lecrae's testimony at the I am Second website can be viewed at iamsecond.com/seconds/lecrea. A video in his own words and nine music videos can be viewed at lecrea.com.

The Watercooler

"Justice is not amnesty. Justice secures the border and stops illegal immigration but also builds a bridge where the undocumented can qualify through a strict regimen of metrics, can pay fines and can begin a process of fully embracing the American dream."

– Samuel Rodriguez, *Relevant*

WRITING FOR *relevant-magazine.com* Samuel Rodriguez, president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, argues that, for Christians, immigration reform should be seen through the example of the cross of Christ. "It is the cross that should prompt us to lift our hands toward heaven and stretch our hands toward our fellow man," said Rodriguez. "This commitment is consistent with the image of the cross and the agenda of the Lamb."

"The headlines announcing *Playboy* would no longer feature nude photographs of women looked like good news ... but the underlying story is horrifying in moral terms. *Playboy* did open the floodgates and pornography now pervades the entire culture."

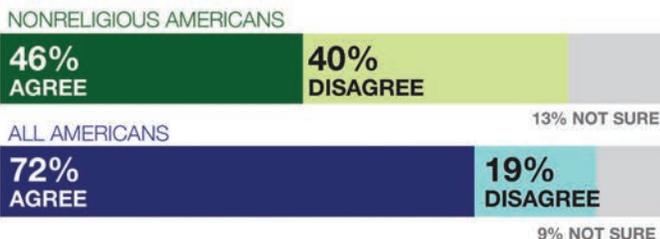
– R. Albert Mohler Jr., BP

Playboy, the 62-year-old magazine famous for publishing pornographic images of women, recently announced that it will stop publishing nude photographs by March 2016. Baptist leaders were quick to comment on the announcement, including R. Albert Mohler Jr., president of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Russell Moore, president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission. "It shouldn't surprise us that a culture awash in graphic porn would find *Playboy* dull," said Moore.

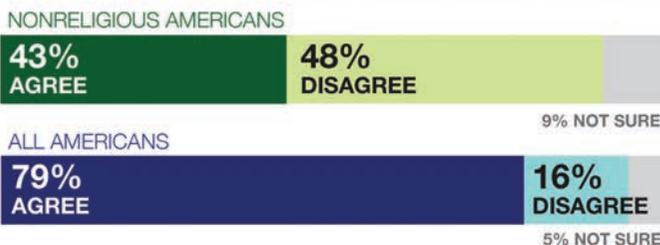
Is there a Creator?

COMPARING VIEWS OF NONRELIGIOUS & ALL AMERICANS

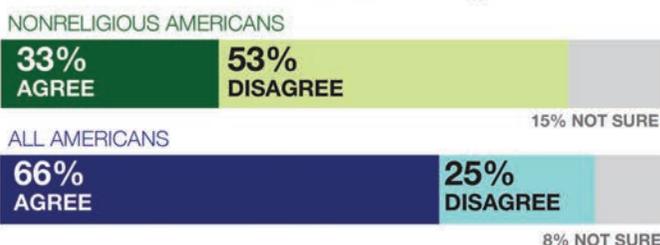
Since the universe has organization, I think there is a creator who designed it.



The fact we exist means someone created us.



Since people have morality, I think there is a creator who defines morality.



Note: Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.

NOVEMBER 1, 2015

I preached a revival on a Cherokee reservation years ago. At the end of our week, the chief had a ceremony in which he gave me an Indian name. The congregation was very quiet as the chief placed a headdress on my head. I was excited to get my Indian name. Since I had done such a great job preaching, I imagined it would be something like "Wise Owl," "Strong Spirited One" or "The Word Proclaimer." The chief raised his hand and spoke a name I could not pronounce or spell. The congregation erupted into a roar. The name translated was "Big Wind, No Rain."

The changing of a name has great importance in the Bible. It meant that a crucial turning point had occurred in a person's life. Simon became "Peter," or "Rock," because of his confession of faith in Christ. The Church would be built upon the rock foundation of faith (Matt. 16:18). Jacob received the name "Israel," which means "God strives." He struggled with God and prevailed (Gen. 32:28; 35:10). Chris-

tians are to victoriously strive with God.

Abram's name meant "exalted father." God changed his name to "Abraham" to express his new calling to be "the father of many nations" (Gen. 17:5). Abraham's wife Sarai also receives a new name - "Sarah" (Gen. 17:15). She would no longer be known as a barren old woman.

She would be known as a "noble lady" who would birth many nations and kings (Gen. 17:16). As God renews His Covenant with Abraham, He gives them new names to fit new realities. It is important to note that God appears to Abraham with a new name, "El Shaddai," which means "God Almighty" (Gen. 17:1).

It was through God's Covenant with Abraham that the Savior came. His name is also important. God gave Jesus a "name which is above every name" (Phil. 2:9). And there is "no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

A new name

GENESIS 17:1-8, 15-22

Gerald Nash
ConwayBIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE
Stand courageously

DANIEL 3:13-18, 26-28

Kathryn Reams
Bald Knob

Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego had been taken into the Babylonian captivity and learned from Daniel how to follow God. In Daniel 3, it was time to learn to stand.

Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold and ordered that all officials of his kingdom bow down to worship it. Anyone who chose not to worship the image would be thrown into the "burning fiery furnace" (Dan. 3:6). Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were brought before the king because they refused to worship the golden image. Nebuchadnezzar gave them one more chance to bow down and worship the golden image or be thrown into the fiery furnace (Dan. 3:13-15).

How many times have we been in the position to compromise our beliefs or values just to make life easier or to gain a monetary advantage? All we have to do is bow down and worship the "golden image." Like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, we have a choice. They told the king that even if God chose not to spare their lives, they would not serve

the king's gods (Dan. 3:16-18).

We know the story's end. They were bound and thrown into the furnace, and when the king looked into the furnace, he saw not three men burning, but three men loose and a fourth whose form was like the Son of God (Dan. 3:25). Nebuchadnezzar ran to the furnace and asked them to come out (Dan. 3:26). Not a piece of their clothing was burned, nor did they even smell like smoke (Dan. 3:27)!

The king then spoke: "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants, who trusted in him" (Dan. 3:28).

"Courage" can be defined as "facing difficulty without fear." It can better be defined as "facing

difficulty in spite of fear." These men chose to stand courageously in the face of adversity. We, too, can stand courageously when the golden images of life seem to be crashing in upon us. Adversity helps us to grow in our faith; as our faith grows, we learn that following God helps us to stand courageously.

NOVEMBER 8, 2015

I grew up in a small town in rural Missouri. There were nearby towns with bad reputations. After I got my driver's license, my parents told me never to go to these places. They feared I would get in trouble or at the least be guilty by association. These places were notorious for drinking, gambling and all sorts of crimes. We all could identify places like these. If you were to ask someone what places mentioned in the Bible were notorious or had a bad reputation, Sodom and Gomorrah would be at the top of the list.

Sodom and Gomorrah serve as symbols in the Bible of divine judgment for man's collective wickedness.

Peter tells us they had a bad reputation: "And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly" (2 Pet. 2:6).

Peter also described the citizens of Sodom as having "filthy conduct" (2 Pet. 2:7), which included homosexuality (Gen. 19:1-11). However, God

judged Sodom and Gomorrah for a variety of sins: pride, gluttony, idleness and not helping the poor and needy (Ezek. 16:49). These cities were places of unrestrained degeneracy.

God's judgment on these cities was total destruction.

Genesis 19:24-25 says, "Then the LORD rained brimstone and fire on Sodom and Gomorrah, from the LORD out of the heavens. So He overthrew those cities, all the plain, all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground."

This judgment destroyed all life, except three people, and totally changed the geography of the land.

Abraham wanted God to demonstrate His justice by delivering Lot and sparing the city. But God

chose to demonstrate justice by delivering Lot and then destroying Sodom.

We need to know that God always judges sin - "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23a).

The good news is "the gift of God is eternal life in Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23b).

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Where wickedness rules

GENESIS 18:20-25; 19:12-16

Gerald Nash
Conway

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

Live humbly

DANIEL 4:28-35

Kathryn Reams
Bald Knob

The Babylonian Empire was vast and powerful. No one could match its power and wealth. In Daniel 4, Daniel was troubled by the king's dream. God revealed what lay ahead for Nebuchadnezzar because of his pride and arrogance. He dreamed of a beautiful tree, abundant in fruit and as tall as the heavens. He then saw the tree chopped down to its stump, stripped of leaves with all of its fruit scattered.

Daniel confronted the king with his sin and pleaded with him to repent. Nebuchadnezzar was full of pride in what he had accomplished. We know that God alone is sovereign, and He will not let any earthy king bask in His glory. Whether pride or selfishness, God gives us an opportunity to repent and turn from our sin because of His love for us (Dan. 4:27).

Nebuchadnezzar chose not to repent. He continued to speak of the greatness of Babylon and of the palace that he built. While these words were in his mouth, the Lord spoke and stripped

the king of his throne and drove him away to dwell with the beasts of the field (Dan. 4:31-33).

How many times do we take God's forbearance for granted? God is patient with sinners, not wanting anyone to perish, but when it comes to judgement, there is no delay.

The king remained in exile until he lifted his "eyes to heaven" and his "under-

standing returned" to him (Dan. 4:34). Restoration only began when Nebuchadnezzar showed submission to God by lifting his "eyes to heaven." Oh, how gracious God is to restore us when we lift our eyes in surrender.

To live humbly can be said another way: to practice no sign of pride. What accomplishments

and achievements are we putting between us and the Lord? God will not permit us to take credit for what He alone can do.

"Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted" (Matt. 23:12).

The Lord always has the last word.

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