

Merry Christmas

Arkansas Baptist News

Volume 110, Number 25

For Christ, the Churches, and Co-operation.

December 15, 2011

Swaim to retire after 48 years at Williams

WALNUT RIDGE - After 48 years at Williams Baptist College, including 17 years as president, Jerol Swaim plans to retire at the conclusion of the school year, which ends June 30.

"It has been a difficult decision in a lot of ways, simply because I love this college and the people I work with, but after much thought and prayer, Virginia and I are confident the time is right. We are ready to enjoy a lot of the things we haven't had time to do before," Swaim said.



Swaim in 1968

The president told the Williams Board of Trustees of his decision at their regular meeting Dec. 2 and then announced it to the full faculty and staff in the afternoon.

"The board and our entire campus community have been incredibly supportive, and I can't thank them enough. I felt absolutely no pressure in this decision. Quite the contrary, I knew I had their complete support whatever I decided to do, which was very comforting," he said.

Swaim, 73, came to Williams in 1964, when it was known as Southern Baptist College. He taught history, government, economics and other subjects, and he then took on the role of academic dean and registrar in 1973. He also served as vice president for academic affairs and executive vice president before assuming the presidency in 1995. He is the fifth president of the college.

"I've never worked with anybody that I respect more and appreciate more for his work ethic and integrity than Jerol Swaim. I can't say enough about him. I've known him since 1965, and I've never seen anything that he has done that would take away from my respect and esteem," said Frank Shell, board chairman.

"He has been just what Williams needs, and it is with great reluctance that we accepted his retirement. But we understand, and he deserves

See Swaim page 3

Blessed, Wonderful Savior

A poem by Linda Tracy Miller

Born with no place to lay your head
Placed within a manger bed
Destined to punishment in my stead
Blessed, wonderful Savior

Years you spent on earth were few
You were back in heaven before we knew
Yet all was changed because of you
Blessed, wonderful Savior

Not one truly understood God's Plan
Formed in Heaven before time began
Sin was too much for mortal man
We needed a wonderful Savior

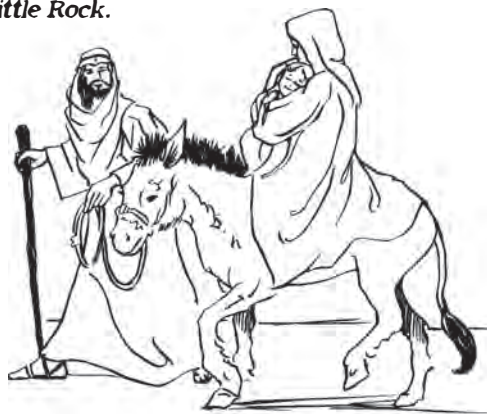
We celebrate your birth today
Fully knowing, all the way
That you, alone, for us did pay
Oh blessed, wonderful Savior

Thank you for giving us a New Birth Day
Our Blessed Wonderful Savior!

Christmas Blessings 2011!

From the staff of the Arkansas Baptist News

Miller is a member of the business affairs team at the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, Little Rock.



Angels adorn the front of Second Baptist Church, Monticello.

Baptist dental team ministers in Haiti

By Jessica Vanderpool

HARRISON - Eight days. Five hundred extracted teeth. Sixty-three professions of faith.

That's a quick summary of the results from the Arkansas Baptist State Convention's (ABSC) first dental mission team to visit Haiti since the country's 2010 earthquake.

Seven members of First Baptist Church, Har-

See Haiti page 10

England church jumpstarts Lottie giving

ENGLAND - A little creativity, along with a silent and live auction, resulted in big giving to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for one Arkansas church.

Robby Sherman, pastor of First Baptist Church, England, since Oct. 16, said the event created a lot of excitement for international missions Sunday night, Dec. 4, resulting in the church surpassing its giving goal during the first week of its annual promotion. Sherman previously pastored First Baptist Church, Clinton, for two and a half years.

"I thought, 'Let's just see what we can do,'" remarked Sherman. "It was really a fun night. It's the buzz around town today."

During the event, Tim Wicker, a member of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention missions ministries team, shared his experiences serving as an International Mission Board missionary and the importance of the support received from Lottie Moon.

Sherman said the formula for the auction was really quite simple. He and church members asked

businesses and people in the community to donate items to be included in the auction.

Items donated included meal vouchers from local restaurants, a subscription to the local newspaper, several bags of soybeans, pies, handmade afghans and even an acre of a stocked fish pond.

Additionally, church members have been encouraged to purchase Lottie Moon ornaments for a Christmas tree at \$20 apiece, with all ornaments already being sold out.

Sherman said excitement continues to build for the offering, which is already at \$6,661 as of Dec. 7. That is \$1,600 above the church's goal.

"Smaller churches understand Lottie Moon is going to missions," he said. "We just came up with some creative ways of raising money for Lottie Moon, and it didn't cost us anything."

He added, "We're not anywhere close to stopping. ... We are just getting started."

Sherman said worship attendance at First Baptist averages from 125 to 150 and that three adults have made professions of faith since October.



Moon

Note to our readers

To mark the 110th anniversary of the founding of the Arkansas Baptist News, we are publishing a "retro" front page that combines various aspects of the look of the newspaper over these many years. We hope you enjoy it! Be sure to read a brief history of our newspaper on pages 7-9.

Tim Yarbrough
Editor

Church sports ministries reach families

Lisa Watson
Arkansas Baptist News

LITTLE ROCK – The Geyer Springs First Baptist Church, Little Rock, soccer league provides more than just an opportunity to play sports. It's also a way to share Christ with children and adults.

Though the church doesn't have a gym facility, that hasn't stopped them from offering Upward Soccer, Upward Basketball and Upward Cheerleading at a local school.

Upward Sports is one of the largest Christian sports leagues designed especially for children, according to its website.

About 300 children play Upward Soccer in the Geyer Springs First Baptist league, while another 225 children participate in Upward Football and Upward Cheerleading.

The goal, according to Patrick Henry, who serves on the staff of Geyer Springs First Baptist as recreation minister, is to create sports opportunities for children so they might develop a personal relationship with Christ.

"Our culture loves sports so why wouldn't the church take advantage of that passion by using it for eternal purposes," said Jeff Williams, pastor of Geyer Springs First Baptist. "Upward Sports has been our answer to that question."

"It has been a great outreach min-

istry to our community and a great serving opportunity for our people. Every week I meet someone who was introduced to Geyer Springs and to Christ through Upward."

The church also works to create a positive experience for families and children who participate in Upward Sports activities. To accomplish this, Henry tries to keep the teams as equal as possible in terms of athletic ability.

"My goal as a minister is to create a positive impact for the families that are participating," said Henry.

In all, it takes more than 200 volunteers to pull off Upward at Geyer Springs First Baptist. And volunteers don't need special skills to be involved.

"Anybody can work in a concession stand. Anyone can help coach a team," Henry said.

Henry said Upward provides an opportunity for families who might not be involved anywhere else to get "plugged in" to the church. And that involvement often leads to members making professions of faith in Christ.

But that's not all. Henry said it's not uncommon for familial relationships to improve.

"We have seen relationships between fathers and sons grow as (fathers) get to know their kids better," he said.



Noah Berry (foreground) and Tyler McCormick play Upward Football.



Chris Vincent (center) coaches the Owls, an Upward Football team.

Henry said he hopes other churches will consider hosting Upward Sports leagues.

"We don't feel like we need to corner the market in Arkansas," he continued.

Churches that might have concerns about the logistics of starting a program shouldn't be afraid to give the sports ministry a try, according to Henry.

"Upward makes it so easy," he said.

Though Henry admits hosting Upward does require work and energy, it's also a fruitful outreach for his church.

"Every season we see families come to our church as a direct result of Upward Sports," he said.

And more importantly, between 15 and 30 children and adults make professions of faith in Christ at the church's annual Upward Awards Night.

"It's a soul-winning ministry," he said.

Upward Soccer registration begins Jan. 1 at the church, and evaluations are held the week before spring break. Teams play in April and May. For more information about Upward at Geyer Springs, contact Henry at 501-455-3474.

Ellison to direct Ouachita Baptist camp

MENA – Steve Ellison of Hot Springs has been named camp administrator at the Ouachita Baptist Assembly in Mena.

Ellison, who previously served as pastor of Harvey's Chapel Baptist Church, Hot Springs, begins his new duties Jan. 1.

Marvin Peters, interim associational missionary at Ouachita Baptist Association, said the hiring of Ellison is "part of our developing vision plan for the camp."

"We're excited. We think Steve is the right man to do something with the place," said Peters. "The vision is to make it more than a camp – rather a retreat center."

Peters added, "You've got to start somewhere. ... We've started some things already, and Steve will continue that strategy."

In addition to taking care of the grounds and facilities, Ellison will be responsible for promoting the

camp and its programs.

"He's a visionary," said Peters of Ellison. "(He) was around the camp growing up and has a real heart for it."

Peters said association leadership was particularly impressed with Ellison's background with the Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA). Ellison said his FCA ministry grew

out of his work as a public school teacher and coach.

In addition to Arkansas, Ellison has pastored churches in Texas and Oklahoma.

Ellison has a bachelor's degree in education from the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, and is currently working on a master's degree from Midwestern Baptist Theologi-

cal Seminary in Kansas City, Mo.

Ellison and his wife, Malea, have two sons, Caleb, a senior at Mountain Pine High School, and Levi, a sophomore at Southern Arkansas University, Magnolia.

More information about Ouachita Baptist Assembly is available at www.ouachitabaptistassociation.com.



Ellison

Burgos dies following extended illness

WHITE HALL – Mark Burgos, 53, of White Hall, died Nov. 26 following an extended illness.

Burgos, a native of Mississippi, was featured in the Sept. 22, 2011, edition of the *Arkansas Baptist News*.

In the article, Burgos and his wife, Amanda, recounted his health struggle and his perspective on suffering.

"Because of the suffering that's happened to me, God is using it for His purpose and His glory,"

said Burgos in the article. "What we don't understand when we suffer is ... that God knows these things," he continued. "It's not about me. It's about the people around me – that God was trying to increase their faith."

"If I have to die because of it, that's okay," he said. "I can't lose because I'm going to heaven."

Burgos and his wife served as North American Mission Board Mission Service Corps missionaries in Arkansas and

New York. He was a member of First Baptist Church, White Hall.

He is survived by his wife, three stepchildren, six grandchildren, two nieces and two nephews.

Funeral services were held Nov. 30 at First Baptist Church, White Hall.

In lieu of flowers, memorial donations may be made to First Baptist Church Building Fund, P.O. Box 20703, White Hall, AR 71612; Metropolitan New York Baptist Association, 236 W. 72nd Street, New York, NY 10023; or Granny Davis Mission House, 7210 Dollarway Road, White Hall, AR 71602.



Burgos

Ark. FAITH Riders reach bikers

SPRINGDALE - A new ministry, formed with the goal of reaching out to motorcycle enthusiasts, has already done just that during several recent festivals - resulting in dozens of professions of faith.

FAITH Riders was commissioned in May 2010 as a ministry of Cross Church of Springdale and Rogers, said Jeff Hairston, co-director of the Northwest Arkansas (NWA) chapter. He said FAITH Riders started as a ministry of First Baptist Church at the Mall in Lakeland, Fla., and now has about 170 member churches. "While this ministry is primarily focused on reaching out and ministering to the motorcycle community," said Hairston, "(the) group also is involved in outreach opportunities such as disaster relief, children's events, bike nights, toy runs and Christmas outreach."

One of the largest events in which FAITH Riders was involved in 2011 was the Bikes, Blues & BBQ festival in Fayetteville. Hairston said the festival is the largest charitable motorcycle rally in the United States, donating more than \$500,000 to charities. An estimated 425,000 motorcycle enthusiasts participated.

During the festival, FAITH Riders members shared "3-minute testimonies" with participants and offered opportunities to register to win various prizes, including Kindles, iPads and a TV.

The strategy is similar to what is used by Dakota Baptists at the Sturgis motorcycle event, as reported



FAITH Riders at the Bikes, Blues & BBQ festival in Fayetteville.

by the Baptist Press in August. Festival attendees are asked to listen to a 3-minute testimony in order to register for the drawings. Arkansas FAITH Riders were assisted in testimony training by members from Oklahoma, including Jimmy May, associate pastor of Trinity Baptist Church in Ardmore, Okla.

Additionally, First Baptist Church, Greenland, donated the use of its gymnasium to house some of the Oklahoma FAITH Riders, said Hairston.

"The group was able to share testimonies with 493 people, and 94 of those individuals accepted Christ as their Lord and Savior," said Hair-

ston. "In addition to sharing their testimonies with so many fellow motorcycle enthusiasts, they were also able to minister to riders who simply came in asking for someone to pray with them about specific issues."

NWA FAITH Riders co-director Don Vlastuin said he was amazed at not only the number of testimonies that the group was able to share, but also the affect that this had on their local FAITH Riders members who participated.

Both Vlastuin and his wife, Paulita, experienced apprehension about sharing their faith with total strangers - but rejoiced in seeing some of those same people become brothers and sisters and enter the family of God.

"For me, it was great to see these people who have a passion for the Great Commission go into an environment where most people would not expect to see a

lot of evidence of Christ and boldly share their faith," said Richard Cox, minister of community missions at Cross Church, Springdale.

"Then, we got to see how God had prepared the way and prepared people to hear from God," said Cox. "It was an awesome experience to see how open many of the motorcyclists were to listening to our group of FAITH Riders sharing their faith."

Hairston said the group already is making plans to participate in the 2012 Bikes, Blues & BBQ event.

Churches interested in starting a FAITH Riders motorcycle ministry may contact Hairston at jeffh@nwa-faithriders.com.

"Dr. Swaim has kept Williams in the black every year and built a very healthy budget balance. He leaves Williams in great financial shape, even on the heels of such a severe recession. That is a resounding tribute to Dr. Swaim's management," said Brett Cooper, Williams' vice president for college relations.

Enrollment, resident student population and endowment have all grown appreciably in Swaim's tenure. The college has grown to 600 students enrolled, including 550 on the main campus at Walnut Ridge. Some 400 students now live on campus, which is nearly double the number when Swaim took office. And the college's endowment has climbed from \$2 million to nearly \$10 million.

Cooper added that Swaim's legacy extends beyond his successes in buildings and budgets.

"Dr. Swaim became president believing passionately in Williams Baptist College, and those of us who work for him have found that

contagious," Cooper said. "He has never desired for us to become like any other school, but rather to move forward with our own personality as an institution. In doing so, he has established an institutional confidence and a very healthy identity for WBC (Williams)."

Shell, the board chairman, also noted the impact Swaim's wife, Virginia, has had on the college.

"Virginia has been a wonderful president's wife," Shell said. "She has been a really devoted employee of the college and has filled the role of president's wife in a most commendable manner."

Shell appointed a search committee Dec. 2 to look for the next president. The committee is composed of trustees Carol Belford-Lewallen of Pocahontas, Ken Brunt of Bryant, Joann Goatcher of Clinton and Dana Kelley of Jonesboro, as well as Angela Flippo, Williams' vice president for enrollment management, and Bob Magee, chairman of the college's music department.

ABN Digest

Stories of interest to Arkansas Baptists

Baptist identity mixed, says new LifeWay study

NASHVILLE, Tenn. - The majority of Americans have a favorable impression of Southern Baptists, according to a recent LifeWay Research study. However, 40 percent of respondents have an unfavorable view of the denomination, and the negativity is higher among the unchurched.

CP more than 11% below 2011 pace

NASHVILLE, Tenn. - Year-to-date contributions to Southern Baptist national and international missions and ministries received by the SBC Executive Committee are 11.14 percent below the same time frame last year.

SBC 'Call to Prayer' set for January launch

ALPHARETTA, Ga. - In January, Southern Baptists are again being called to a time of prayer and spiritual awakening. For more, visit www.namb.net/sbccalltoprayer.

Tenn. Baptists oppose SBC name change

HENDERSONVILLE, Tenn. - Messengers to the Tennessee Baptist Convention - by a show of hands - adopted a resolution opposing a name change for the Southern Baptist Convention. An SBC task force is currently studying the possibility.

Megachurches: Young, white, still growing

If megachurches were a denomination, they'd be the second largest Protestant group in the country, according to researchers. Megachurches today (2,000 or more attendants) are said to draw 6 million worshippers every weekend, the *Christian Post* reports.

Church of the Nativity to get overdue repairs

BETHLEHEM - The ancient Church of the Nativity, built over the cave that is traditionally seen as the birthplace of Jesus, in the West Bank town of Bethlehem, will get the long overdue repairs that have been hindered by a longtime denominational rivalry over the structure's ownership.

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

SWAIM

continued from page one

a great retirement. I believe in that college as a Christian institution, and Jerol has truly been a godsend to it," Shell added.

Swaim steps down after presiding over a transformation of the Williams campus. Since the late 1990s, nearly every building on the campus has either been newly constructed or extensively renovated. The college has spent over \$18 million in improvements in those years.

Williams has also expanded its academic offerings, as well as its academic reputation. The four-year liberal arts college now has 25 baccalaureate majors. It broke into the top tier of the *U.S. News & World Report* college rankings in 2010, and it climbed in the rankings again this year.

The president has also been known for fiscal discipline during his presidency.

After 110 years, what have we learned?

As I'm sure you have noticed, the *Arkansas Baptist News* (ABN) is celebrating its 110th anniversary of continuous publication.

As the new editor, I have enjoyed reading through the history of the ABN this past year and have included tidbits in presentations when I have spoken at churches and associational gatherings.

The history of Arkansas Baptists included numerous state newspapers prior to the establishment of *The Baptist Advance* – the forerunner of the *Arkansas Baptist* (“Newsmagazine” was added to the name in 1960) – but they all disappeared with the passing of time (see related story, pages 7-9).

There have been times of trouble – including when convention leadership got sideways with the editor of a publication that also was called the *Arkansas Baptist*. The controversy resulted in action being taken by messengers to start the *Advance*.

Ironically, one of the biggest barriers to the success of the newspaper early in its history was a low literacy rate in Arkansas.

Other challenges over the years included the Great Depression, inflation, dramatic increases in newsprint prices and ever-increasing postage rates.

Today, the ABN faces an equally formidable challenge of being a relevant news service in the Internet age as it seeks to tell the story of God's activity among His people known as Arkansas Baptists – at home, across our nation and

around the world.

At its founding, the motto of the *Advance* was “For Christ, the Churches, and Cooperation” – which is still the charge of the newspaper these many years later.

Even before coming to Arkansas, I spent time reflecting on the role of a state Baptist newspaper.

Below are observations about some things we have learned after 110 years of continuous publication.

To be trusted, a state Baptist newspaper must represent the interests of its people. A review of history reveals

PRESSING ON

Tim Yarbrough



that Arkansas Baptists read and support a newspaper that lifts up things they are interested in and concerned about – particularly related to missions and the missionary cause of Christ.

To be relevant, a state Baptist newspaper should first and foremost publish news and information about its people. The ABN is the *ARKANSAS Baptist News*,

which means it's our newspaper and should publish news and information about and for Arkansas Baptists. When the ABN publishes news from outside the state, it should be about things that impact Arkansas Baptists, their ministries and their churches – and not just to fill space.

To continue its ministry, a state Baptist newspaper must embrace changing technologies and new methods of distribution. Everyone knows that printed publications – and newspapers in particular – are experiencing shrinking circulation.



Does that mean people don't read or want news? No. What it does mean is that our culture is changing, and Baptists, particularly younger generations of Baptists, are accessing news and information in new ways. Consider this: Personal computers only made their way into homes about 25 years ago, and the Internet has only been widely used by people since the 1990s; smartphones with Internet capabilities have only existed since the mid- to late-2000s. Yes, times, they are a changin', and the use of technology is exploding in every facet of our lives.

As editor now for nearly a year,

I say without hesitation I am proud to be associated with a publication that strives with every edition to lift up the cause of Jesus Christ.

The ministry of the ABN wouldn't be possible today without generations of Arkansas Baptists who have faithfully supported and advocated for its publication all these many years.

Without them – and you – the ABN would not exist!

Happy 110th birthday to the ABN, and thanks to all Arkansas Baptists – past, present and future – for your support!

Tim Yarbrough is editor of the *Arkansas Baptist News*.

Name change conspiracy

I'm absolutely against changing the name of the Southern Baptist Convention, but I must be missing something here.

What's that got to do with the name of your local church? Are they going to dictate to your autonomous church that you've got to change your name as well?

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

I don't think they can.

Someone took Baptist off of our bookstore and repackaged it with a generic name. They took Southern Baptist off of our Annuity Board and repackaged it with a generic name. They took Southern Baptist off our Sunday school literature, and no one even noticed it. Now there is a proposal that they change the name of our

convention. I will prophesy that they will try to take Southern off the name and even Baptist if they can.

Don't argue geography. According to www.adherents.com/largecom/com_sbc.html, 99 percent of all Southern Baptist are in the South. I pastored seven years in Homer, Alaska, and putting SBC on our sign was an asset, not a liability.

Greg Pierce
Crossett

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Send letters to the editor to tim@arkansasbaptist.org or the mailing address below. We prefer letters typed doublespaced, and they must be 300 words or less. Letters must be signed and marked “for publication.”

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Baptists Ask

How can I overcome the pressures of Christmas and truly focus on Christ?

It's difficult to "depressurize" Christmas since so many holiday activities compete for our attention. No other holiday offers more family traditions; no other holiday is more commercial. Our economy bases its success or failure upon the Christmas season – small wonder Christmas "arrives" earlier each year in the stores.



Gore

Here are some ways you can focus upon the glory of Christ's birth. First, read the Christmas story (Matt. 1-2, Luke 1-2).

Because the media often centers upon the secular aspects of the holiday, we must bring Christ's birth to the forefront of our family's thoughts. Read it aloud, meditate upon it and celebrate it.

Second, re-evaluate your Christmas traditions. Every card sent, every gift given and every carol sung should be because of the Person we celebrate. If it is not, reconsider why you're doing it.

Third, be thankful. If you celebrate Christmas with loved ones, remember that not everyone can. Pause and give thanks to God. Doing so will help you think of those in need.

Fourth, don't overspend. Realize that your "presence" is much more valuable than your "presents."

Fifth, simplify your life. Ron Sider's "Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger" will help you focus upon what is most important in life.

When I served in Scotland, I awoke Christmas Day in my quiet, small apartment – all alone. I preserved these words in my journal: "I now realize that Christmas is truly Christ and nothing more – all else are fringe benefits."

More than 25 years later, I've not forgotten the simplicity of that wonderful Christmas.

The first Christmas was a moment of peace, joy and simplicity in the midst of a chaotic census.

May you find moments of peace, joy and simplicity in the midst of a chaotic holiday season.

Ken Gore is chair of the Williams Baptist College department of Christian ministries. Send your questions for Baptists Ask to tim@arkansasbaptist.org.

'March to the Manger'

It is always a journey of discovery when you join a new church family. When I became a part of the family at First Baptist Church in Cabot, I discovered a wonderful tradition – March to the Manger. On the first Sunday of December each year, we place a series of mangers at the front of the worship center. Our congregation then comes forward during the worship part of the service to place a missions offering into the manger. It might seem familiar to you if your church has ever used a "chest of Joash" type of offering experience.

The March to the Manger has become one of my favorite events each year. As a part of the congregation, it is a beautiful worship experience. Who doesn't love Christmas worship music? The March to the Manger experience is also good because it gives a real sense of participation. Everyone is involved. We are all active in walking to the front and placing our offering physically into the manger. It is beautiful to watch the entire congregation, in unity, come to the manger and bring our gifts to the Savior.

The thing that is most beautiful to me, however, is the clarity of presenting a missions offering to the manger. What better way can you imagine to teach the true meaning of the birth of Jesus? What

better way could you create to begin the season of Christmas than to acknowledge in such a significant way the reason why Jesus was born to a young virgin and placed in a manger? It is a perfect way to set the tone and theme for Christmas.

People far more eloquent than I have spent years railing against the commercialization of Christmas. It is a tragedy and one that I abhor as well. Despite their best efforts, the trend has continued, and it affects everyone, including Christians. What can we do about it as Christians? You may not be able to stem the tide, but you can focus yourself and others on Jesus. The most important thing you can do is focus on the reason for Jesus' birth – the gospel.

Your church may not begin the season with March to the Manger, but your church has its own tradition of Christmas that points everyone to the gospel. You can start a new tradition in your family that begins the season by specifically focusing your children on the real meaning of Jesus' birth. You can prepare to invite friends and neighbors to an event at your church to hear the gospel. Everyone can find a special way to March to the Manger.

Greg Addison is president of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention and pastor at First Baptist Church, Cabot.



PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

Greg Addison



Jacob T. Marley: The Story of the Ghost who visited Scrooge

By R. William Bennett, Deseret Book Company, 2011

During this time of year, you might see the movie "A Christmas Carol" on TV. Most of us are familiar with Ebenezer Scrooge, the grumpy old man who only cares about money and himself, depicted in Charles Dickens' classic book "A Christmas Carol." The journey Scrooge takes into Christmases past, present and future, can make us consider what we would have done differently and has no doubt made many consider their present and future priorities. The story is a classic, and many times classics have further tales to tell.

In a new book, "Jacob T. Marley: The Story of the Ghost who visited Scrooge," William Bennett brings readers deeper into the story, perhaps more than ever before. Bennett is a former president of the corporate division of Franklin Covey, a management, consulting and training company. He is also the author of "The Christmas Gift," published in 2010.

In "Jacob T. Marley," Bennett takes the reader on a journey that goes beyond the classic story and shows the relationship between the former business partners Scrooge and Marley. Those familiar with the story will know that after Marley died, he came back to visit Scrooge and warn him of his fate. Scrooge's life would never be the same.

"I believe everyone gets a shot at redemption," says Bennett. "Dickens gave us a peek into that process for Jacob Marley. I wanted to explore the rest of his story."

Bennett tells the story of Marley, who was sick – on

his deathbed. All he had was a nurse, who was paid to take care of him. His doctor advised Scrooge that the nurse was a waste of Marley's money so she was sent home. Here Scrooge took the opportunity to gain Marley's estate. Marley lay there unable to voice opposition. The gentlemen conversing with Scrooge felt uncomfortable, but Scrooge continued, and as Marley finally grew able to mutter a sound, Scrooge dismissed his words as gibberish.

Marley passed on to meet Spirit and learned that humans who were unable to forgive and love were forced to wander the earth visiting those they had wronged but they had no ability to correct the past acts. Marley, though, forgave Scrooge as he was on his deathbed and was able to experience love for the first time. Even though others had tried to warn Scrooge, Spirit granted Marley the ability to visit Scrooge and attempt to show him his fate if he did not change. Spirit also explains the significance of the "T" in Jacob T. Marley's name.

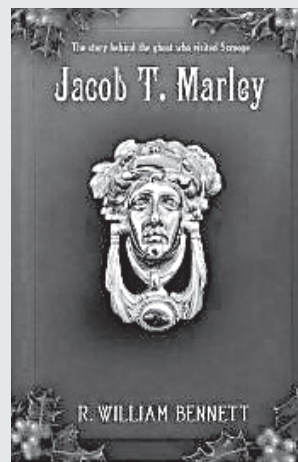
Bennett examines, in Dickensian detail, the prideful and ruthless taskmaster who taught Scrooge how to be Scrooge. Similar to "Wicked," the story that gave further insight into Wicked Witch in "The Wizard of Oz," Bennett's new novel

illuminates how the two men became who they were, what went on behind the scenes on Scrooge's fateful night and what happened to both men after the encounter.

Bennett says, "I count myself as one of Dickens' biggest fans. ... I've always been intrigued by Marley's character in 'A Christmas Carol.'"

BOOK REVIEW

Adam Brown
Leonard Street Baptist
Hot Springs



Ark. churches reflect on year's ministry

Lisa Watson
Arkansas Baptist News

IT'S BEGINNING TO look a lot like Christmas in Arkansas. Homes and businesses are aglow with lights, and Christmas shopping is in full swing. The weather has turned cooler, and in some parts of the state, snow has already fallen. And every night, Little Rock weather forecaster Ned Perme serenades viewers following the evening news.

As preparations for the season shift into high gear, the *Arkansas Baptist News* staff asked church staff members to reflect on the previous year, highlighting ways their churches have been involved in ministry and missions and relating stories of hope and redemption.

'Plywood Christmas'

New staff member, Lyle Hern, who began serving in September as pastor of **South Main Baptist Church, Crossett**, said his congregation's focus is Christ and loving people. The church's involvement in ministry includes reaching out to the community with "prospect packets" that include a New Testament.

The church cooperates with other churches in the community to provide lunches for needy people. Church members participated in the Across Arkansas evangelistic emphasis while children's missions organizations put together 54 boxes for Operation Christmas Child and collected food for the area food pantry.

The church's Women on Mission ministered at the Arkansas Baptist Home for Children in Monticello. Hern said South Main Baptist Church is "linking up with other churches" to participate in "Plywood Christmas," helping to purchase Christmas gifts for local families of recently laid-off plywood mill employees.

And the church is beginning a FAITH Riders motorcycle ministry, which will include mission trips and evangelism ministry (see related story, page 3).

"These are just some of the regular and seasonal emphases that go on in our church," Hern said. "I've personally witnessed lives being trans-



Decorations at First Baptist Church, Monette, include a nativity and a singing Christmas tree.

formed and changed in the short time I've been here. There's nothing better than serving right where God places you."

Missions in Mena

When Ron Reimar began serving in October on the staff of **Dallas Avenue Baptist Church, Mena**, he was impressed by the church's missions involvement. Reimar said more than 50 people participated in the Acts 1:8 One Day Mission Trip held this year in the Mena/De Queen area.

Additionally, small groups in the church have been involved in supporting widows and orphans and planting churches in Malawi and Haiti.

The church is involved in hospice ministry.

"Our hospice ministry received a letter from a family that told how much our church had made a difference in their mother's life before she passed," he related.

Dallas Avenue members collected more than 500 pairs of shoes to be given away at the church's annual Community Meal and Christmas Shoe Giveaway. The church's food bank distributes more than 125 boxes of food a month.

"We also have people involved in prison ministry, nursing home ministry, cowboy church ministry - and

this is not an exhaustive list of what God is doing through our people," Reimar said. "It is so exciting to be a part of a church that has such a heart for ministering to the world in Jesus' name."

Delta church reaches out

Arkansas City Baptist Church, Arkansas City, members haven't let the church's small size keep them from being involved in ministry. Though they average only 10-13 people in Sunday school, church members provided money and supplies for 44 shoeboxes for Operation Christmas Child, said Shirley Watson, church treasurer.

The church hosted a citywide thanksgiving service in the spring after the Mississippi River flood waters receded.

"Five of our city's churches met together to give praises and thanks that the river did not overflow the levee and flood our city," said Watson. The church also hosted a citywide Thanksgiving service Nov. 16.

Arkansas City Baptist held a Christmas Open House Dec. 7 prior to the citywide Christmas program led by Gene Gregory, pastor of Halley Baptist Church, Halley.

"It was a great time with Pastor Gregory performing his annual dramatic presentation about the birth of Christ through the eyes of an eyewitness," said Watson.

Church meets at old zoo

The **New Tabernacle Church (TNT), Dennard**, which began meeting in October 2010, has much to be thankful for, according to Rick Montgomery, TNT pastor. The church recently moved to its new location, an old zoo. Set on 25 acres, the grounds and five buildings were in disrepair when the church first began meeting there in June.

With a grant from the Arkansas

Baptist State Convention, Montgomery said members were able to begin repairs on the property.

"Our mother congregation, First Baptist Church, Western Grove, and their pastor, Jack Searcy, have been a great encouragement as we stepped out in faith to do God's will here," said Montgomery.

Other churches provided chairs, worship music and labor.

"God provided a couple of teams to come help at the church on cleaning and repairs, and then He provided over \$25,000-worth of pews, a pulpit and a Lord's Supper table."

Montgomery said 10 people have made professions of faith in Christ, and 11 are scheduled for baptism in the near future. In addition, the church has started a food ministry for people in the area, helping more than 80 people in November.

"We serve a hot meal on Wednesday evenings and breakfast on Sunday mornings for anyone in the community, with no requirement of staying for service," he said. "We like to say our ministry is 'to the least, the last and the lost.'"

TNT has a "God-sized vision for ministry," said Montgomery.

"This is only the tip of our vision, but we are all so excited about it," he said.

Church gives to others

Members of **Dixsonville Baptist Church, Benton**, lent a helping hand to needy children by donating shoeboxes filled with necessities and toys to Operation Christmas Child. The church, which averages around 25 in attendance, had a goal of 50 boxes, but because of the members' enthusiasm, they ended up packing 204 boxes. Over a two-month period, church members "shopped diligently for great deals" on personal care items, clothing and toys, said Brent Thompson, Dixsonville Baptist's interim pastor.

Before sending the boxes to a collection center, church members "prayed over their shoeboxes and the children who would receive them, as well as all the staff and volunteers who would be part of helping the boxes reach their ultimate destination," continued Thompson, adding the church already has plans to send "even more" shoeboxes in 2012.

The reason for the season

Ed Simpson, pastor of **Calvary Baptist Church, Little Rock**, summed up what he believes is most important during the Christmas season. "We are reminded every year, during the Advent season, of Christ's coming to earth," he said. "It's the second coming of Christ that needs to be remembered. He's coming again!"

Contact Lisa Watson at lisa@arkansasbaptist.org.



Some of the many Christmas decorations at First Baptist Church, Jasper.



ABN online
For more
church Christmas
photos, go to
www.arkansasbaptist.org



ABN photo illustration by Jessica Vanderpool

Started in 1901 as *The Baptist Advance*

ABN celebrates 110th birthday

LITTLE ROCK – The *Arkansas Baptist News* (ABN) reaches a very special birthday as 2011 comes to an end – that of being the state newspaper for Arkansas Baptists for 110 years.

There were newspapers published for Arkansas Baptists prior to the ABN – which was established as *The Baptist Advance* by messengers to the Arkansas Baptist State Convention (ABSC) meeting at First Baptist Church, Paragould, Nov. 15-19, 1901 – but none stood the test of time.

Lacking a statewide publication, Arkansas Baptists in the early 1800s depended on the periodical of a neighboring state, Tennessee, for news about Baptist life. *The Baptist* (first called the *Tennessee Baptist*) provided an Arkansas page or de-

partment in their publication as late as 1890.

Over the years, numerous state publications came and went throughout Arkansas Baptist convention life.

In 1859, there was the *Arkansas Baptist*, edited by P.S.G. Watson, which ceased publication during the Civil War. Other short-lived publications included another *Arkansas Baptist* founded in Little Rock by N.P. Moore, which lasted 10 weeks; *Western Baptist*, started in 1873 in Searcy, a two-year venture by T.B. Espy and T.P. Boone; *Baptist Index*, started in Texarkana in 1880; and *Arkansas Baptist Banner* (originally *Arkansas Baptist*) started in 1879 in Beebe and later moved to Judsonia.

It was in 1880 that Arkansas Bap-

tists concluded they could not manage without a publication of their own. J.B. Searcy, convention executive secretary, commented on a report to the convention, noting, “We feel the necessity of a state paper to foster our educational, missionary and other vital interests of the state. We can never agree among ourselves what paper published beyond the state we shall adopt as a medium of communication. Yet, we must have such a medium.”

Searcy resigned as Arkansas department editor of the Tennessee Baptist newspaper to become co-editor of a new publication, the *Baptist Evangel*. The newspaper became the *Arkansas Baptist* in 1887 and was supported by the churches until 1900, when the convention, meeting at Hope, reprimanded its

editor at the time, W. A. Clark, for not supporting the convention program. Following a year of increasing acrimony, messengers at the 1901 convention renounced the newspaper and started the *Advance*.

The action taken by messengers in 1901 read in part, “We believe that the State Mission Board should arrange to publish a Missionary bulletin to give information and quicken interest in the work.”

The messengers’ action set in motion the founding of the *Advance*, describing the mission for the publication and the motivation behind its establishment in its motto, “For Christ, the Churches, and Cooperation.” Selling stock subscriptions in the Advance Publishing Company

Front pages through the years ...



1904



1934



1960



1985



1994



2009



Today

BIRTHDAY

continued from page seven

supported the *Advance*. W.L. Comper, editor of the *Advance* from 1919 to 1929, rejoiced at the fact that Arkansas Baptists again had a newspaper which would let "all the facts, principles and issues involved in our convention work be clearly set before our readers."

In 1902, every issue of the *Advance* carried ads for Kimball pianos and organs, with advertising copy stating they were "the most renowned instruments in the world."

When the church family plan was adopted in 1904, the price of an annual subscription was about \$2. Today, the cost of the ABN's comparable plan, the Every Resident Family Plan, is \$7.75 per year for the print edition or \$4 for the digital edition.

Though endorsed by convention leaders, the *Advance* struggled financially for many years. E. Glenn Hinson's 1979 history of Arkansas Baptists attributes the difficulty to the fact that Arkansas had too few literate people to assure a large circulation.

ABN editors over the years represented the convention during times of legislative activism. For example, in 1911, the convention formed a state-wide organization of Baptist temper-

ance forces to advocate statewide prohibition of alcohol. The next year they voted to send E.J.A. McKinney, editor of the *Advance*, to lobby in Washington "in interest of the Sheppard-Kenyon Bill, which proposes to prohibit the shipment of liquor into dry territory." Cash and pledges of \$74.80 were collected for McKinney's trip. Arkansas became a dry state in 1913.

By 1912, the *Advance* Publishing Company was \$6,000 in debt, and the directors were willing to transfer their stock to the state convention and help get other stockholders to do the same. The convention agreed to assume the debt and placed the newspaper's future in the hands of the newly-formed Arkansas Baptist State Convention (ABSC) Executive Board.

The inauguration of the Southern Baptist 75-Million Campaign in 1919 helped the financial situation of both the convention and the newspaper - for a time.

Financial hardships continued as Arkansas Baptists dealt with the effects of the Great Depression. By 1932, the financial situation was grim. At a meeting of the Executive Board late that year, the board considered closing all departments with the exception of the executive secretary's office. At this time, the *Advance* was without an editor, and at the meeting, J.I. Cossey, pastor of First Baptist Church, Searcy,



was nominated. Cossey had pleaded for a chance to keep the newspaper going. During Cossey's tenure as editor, he accepted chickens and produce in exchange for subscriptions.

In 1933, the *Advance* was once again renamed the *Arkansas Baptist*, which historian J.S. Rogers said "appealed to our people."

Circulation of the newspaper increased dramatically in the 1940s and stood at nearly 60,000 in 1971 when Erwin L. McDonald retired as editor. McDonald was beginning his tenure at

the *Arkansas Baptist* during the Little Rock desegregation crisis in 1957. At the time, McDonald took unpopular positions on the editorial page several times. For example, prior to the integration of Little Rock schools, McDonald argued that a simultaneous revival crusade jointly planned and promoted by white and blacks in the Pulaski County Baptist Association "points in the right direction."

Under the leadership of J. Everett Sneed in the 1980s, the ABN became an agency of the state convention and

"We must maintain a responsible, free channel of communication with grassroots Baptists."

John Stubblefield, first president of the ABN board

begin operating under its own board of directors elected by messengers to the annual meeting.

With technology changing rapidly, the ABN purchased its own typesetting equipment in 1983, which allowed the staff to do its own in-house production, offset camera and press work.

Sneed, who holds the longest tenure of any ABN editor at 20 years, found himself in the crossfire of opposing movements of the Southern Baptist Conservative Resurgence of the late 1970s and early 1980s.

It was during the inflationary times of the 1980s the decision was made to change the ABN mail rate from second to third class and reduce the number of issues published annually from 48 to 26.

Following Sneed's death in office at the age of 61, editor emeritus Erwin L. McDonald wrote, "Everett and I saw the *Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine* as having a strategic and unique place, a constant and continuing ministry of service to local churches and to the convention. The state Baptist paper is to help all of us to be the best possible stewards in carrying out the Great Commission, winning people to Christ, and teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you ..." The editor and paper can be successful in achieving this great purpose only to the extent that they have the support of the convention, the churches, and individual Baptists."

Trennis Henderson, who was serving as associate editor of Missouri's *Word&Way*, succeeded Sneed as editor and held the position from 1992 to 1999.

Charlie Warren, then director of public relations at Oklahoma Baptist University, was elected editor in September 1999, following Henderson's resignation to become editor of the *Kentucky Western Recorder*.

Warren said upon being named edi-

tor, "With God's help, the assistance of a great staff, and the support of Arkansas Baptists, we will attempt to produce the best Baptist news publication to be found anywhere."

Warren continued the ABN's march into the future in September 2010 with the establishment of a digital edition named the *ABN Now*.

Following Warren's retirement in December 2010, the ABN undertook a number of initiatives in 2011 under the leadership of its new editor, Tim Yarbrough, who had previously served as director of church relations at the North American Mission Board.

Changes included a revision of the newspaper's design; the redesign of the ABN logo; adoption of a new slogan, "Telling the story of Arkansas Baptists since 1901"; new special pages and sections; increased Arkansas Baptist-centric news; more color; and shorter and more concise stories.

A brochure, "Communication: A Family Tradition," published in 1984 by the ABN staff, aptly summed up the journey the newspaper has traveled during the years of its existence. It said, "Communication through the state paper in the present was made possible by the struggles and day-to-day labor of some far-sighted Baptists in Arkansas. The past was not always easy and the future is not guaranteed. Challenges lie ahead and economic

ones are among them. Yet, Arkansas Baptists have shown they can meet such challenges."

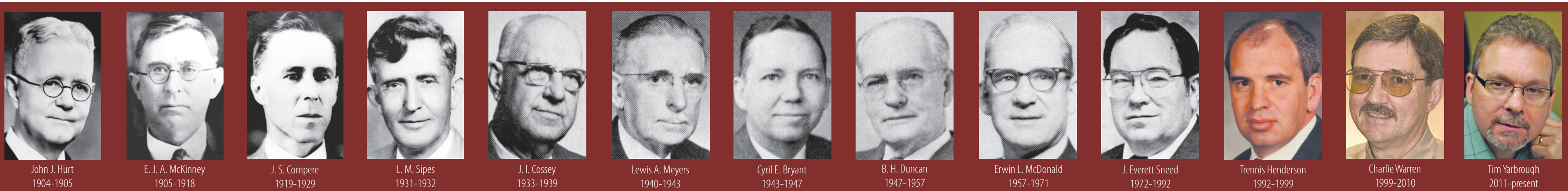
Jon Stubblefield, the first president of the ABN board, acknowledged the challenge of continuing the medium of communication for Arkansas Baptists but came to this conclusion: "We must maintain a responsible, free channel of communication with grassroots Baptists."

The ABN exists today due to the faithful support of Arkansas Baptists throughout the generations. While not all churches or members subscribe to the newspaper, all ABSC-member churches support the ABN with gifts given through the Cooperative Program, which makes up 47 percent of the ABN's operating budget.

In 2012 and for many years to come, the ABN and staff look forward to telling the story of God among His people known as Arkansas Baptists.

Sources for this article included various ABSC annuals; "A History of Baptists in Arkansas 1818-1978" by E. Glenn Hinson; "Across the Editor's Desk: The Story of State Baptist Papers" by Erwin L. McDonald; "A System & Plan: Arkansas Baptist State Convention 1848-1998" by C. Fred Williams, S. Ray Granade and Kenneth M. Startup; and the "Communication: A Family Tradition" brochure, published in 1984 by the *Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine*.

Arkansas Baptist Editors 1904-present



John J. Hurt 1904-1905 | E. J. A. McKinney 1905-1918 | J. S. Comper 1919-1929 | L. M. Sipes 1931-1932 | J. I. Cossey 1933-1939 | Lewis A. Meyers 1940-1943 | Cyril E. Bryant 1943-1947 | B. H. Duncan 1947-1957 | Erwin L. McDonald 1957-1971 | J. Everett Sneed 1972-1992 | Trennis Henderson 1992-1999 | Charlie Warren 1999-2010 | Tim Yarbrough 2011-present

Wash. Madison team witnesses decisions

FAYETTEVILLE - A mission team composed of members of churches from the Washington Madison Baptist Association, Fayetteville, shared the gospel with an estimated 1,200 people during a visit to earthquake-ravaged Haiti Nov. 25-Dec. 2.

Serving in Leogane, Haiti, the team "witnessed over 225 decisions; some were salvations, and others wanted to know more about Jesus," said Mitchell Tanksley, team leader for Calvary Baptist Church, Huntsville.

"The team went into six schools with three to six classes in each and gave out school supplies, toothpaste and toothbrushes and shared the gospel with each class," said Tanksley.

More than 250 kids participated in kids clubs,

where volunteers shared Bible stories and crafts with children.

"We built a roof and porch on a small block home. We passed out over 500 personal testimonies with the gospel on each and gave out 30 full Bibles," said Tanksley.

Joe Jones, pastor of Shiloh Community Church, Fayetteville, preached at the local Haiti Baptist church and after each showing of the "JESUS" film, said Tanksley. The group also did door-to-door evangelism, with 160 names being given to local pastors for follow up.

"We had electricity a little over half the time and working toilets half the time. ... It was a great trip," laughed Tanksley.



Haitian children welcome volunteers.

Current-Gaines sends mission team to Haiti



Richard Raspberry (left) and Mike Vinson work on a 12-by-12 house, which is now the home of six people.

CORNING - A Current-Gaines Baptist Association mission team put roofs on block house shelters, ministered at Bible clubs and orphanages and handed out hundreds of tracts to Haitians on a recent mission trip.

Don Settles, associational missionary for Current-Gaines Baptist Association, led the team during its work in Haiti.

Bob Fielding, a member of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention (ABSC) missions ministries team and Haiti project coordinator, said one of the houses the team worked on was for an elderly woman who broke her leg in the 2010 earthquake and then "lost a part of the leg due to infection."

"Her two children and two grandchildren are

very appreciative of their new home," said Fielding.

"By the end of the week, 28 people had roofs over their heads as we finished five houses," said trip team member Jennifer Raspberry, a youth leader at First Baptist Church, Piggott, who also serves on the association's children's committee.

She went on to say, "After our week in Haiti, we left ... with mixed emotions. We were all exhausted and ready to see our families back home but hated to leave our new friends - our Haitian brothers and sisters."

Churches participating in the trip were First Baptist Church, Corning; Calvary Baptist Church, Corning; First Baptist Church, Success; and First Baptist Church, Piggott.

HAITI

continued from page one

risson, journeyed to Haiti Oct. 28-Nov. 4 for the dental and evangelism mission trip.

"Like any Third World country, the masses have no access to dentistry," explained Bob Fielding, a member of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention (ABSC) missions ministries team and Haiti project coordinator. "In mission trip situations, the vast majority of dental work is pulling teeth that have no hope of being restored. The compassion and care involved opens doors to share Jesus."

Fielding has seen firsthand how dentistry can be used to minister.

"I had been on a dental trip years ago, and it opened many doors for the gospel," he said.

Larry Brandt, team member and missions coordinator at First Baptist, said before treatment, patients went to an area where First Baptist team members shared the gospel with unbelievers and prayed for believers.

Dr. Robert Hubbard, a general dentist and First Baptist member who went on the trip, said extractions, exams and explanations of oral hygiene were the focus of the team's dental work. They gave toothbrushes to patients, and patients sat in "folding chairs and plastic lawn chairs" for the operations, he said.

Hubbard estimated that 500-600 teeth were extracted while they were



Dental assistant Christie Merkling demonstrates the correct method of brushing teeth to Haitian children at an orphanage

there. He explained that Haitians eat sugarcane, which contributes to tooth decay.

"Many of the teeth extracted were decayed down to root tips," Hubbard explained.

He added, "I think dentistry works hand in hand with evangelism. Pastor Rob and Larry would always say, 'We're here to help your physical needs, but we also want to help your spiritual needs.' Dentistry provided our way to tell the Haitians, 'We're here to serve you and to tell you about Jesus.'"

The trip also affected Hubbard personally. He said dentists are "very performance-oriented people," having the desire for their patients' smiles to be beautiful and healthy.

"The trip to Haiti helps me re-

member the people aspect of dentistry rather than the performance aspect," he said. "Furthermore, it took dentistry outside of a business setting and placed it in the mission field. This was my favorite part - enjoying dentistry while serving those in need and sharing the love of Christ."

Brandt noted, "Treating the Haitians physically with dental treatments was great, but it was truly awesome treating them spiritually by leading 63 to Christ. ... Like all Arkansas Baptist teams that have gone to Haiti, it was hot and humid with long hours, but the rewards were tremendous in the lives we touched while we were there."

Rob Davis, pastor of First Baptist and team member, said the church's

involvement in Haiti was an answer to prayer.

"I have asked God for a 'target' so our people can share similar experiences. Haiti is it. Our younger men and women have a struggle taking 10-14 days for mission trips. Haiti missions will offer more of our people an opportunity," said Davis.

He said the church is already planning to return.

Davis, Brandt and Hubbard all spoke highly of Roody Joseph and his work as the ABSC's partner in Haiti.

"The comfort and care given by Roody Joseph and his Arkansas Baptist compound staff made our team able to do more than we imagined we could," Davis said.

The blessing was mutual.

"The FBC, Harrison, dental team was a blessing to the work that the Lord is doing in Haiti through Arkansas Baptists," Fielding said.

"Caring for people's physical needs is a natural and godly way to touch a person's body and heart. Our partner, Roody Joseph, is blessed by every ABSC team that comes down and was blessed by the love and compassion and desire for souls exhibited by the FBC, Harrison, team."

Fielding added there are still open weeks in 2012 for churches considering ministry in Haiti. For more information, call 800-838-2272, ext. 5249.

Contact Jessica Vanderpool at jessica@arkansasbaptist.org.



ABSC calendar

- **Jan. 5:** Compensation Planning Workshop – ABSC Building, Little Rock
- **Jan. 5:** Compensation Planning Workshop – First Baptist Church, Dover
- **Jan. 6:** Compensation Planning Workshop – First Baptist Church, Stuttgart
- **Jan. 9:** Williams Baptist College spring registration – Walnut Ridge
- **Jan. 10:** Williams Baptist College classes begin – Walnut Ridge
- **Jan. 12:** Compensation Planning Workshop – First Baptist Church, McGehee
- **Jan. 12:** Compensation Planning Workshop – Cullendale Baptist Church, Camden
- **Jan. 15:** Sanctity of Human Life Sunday – Nationwide
- **Jan. 17:** Ouachita Baptist University spring registration – Arkadelphia
- **Jan. 17:** Compensation Planning Workshop – First Baptist Church, Flippin
- **Jan. 17:** Compensation Planning Workshop – First Baptist Church, Desha
- **Jan. 17:** New Trustee Orientation – ABSC Building, Little Rock
- **Jan. 19:** Arkansas Baptist Foundation Development Officers' Open Forum – ABF Offices, Little Rock
- **Jan. 19:** Compensation Planning Workshop – Williams Baptist College, Walnut Ridge
- **Jan. 19:** Compensation Planning Workshop – Wynne Baptist Church, Wynne

For more information on events, go to www.absc.org, or call 800-838-2272.

Mark your calendar

PraizFest Feb. 24-25

Geyer Springs First Baptist Church, Little Rock

YEC

Youth Evangelism
Conference

March 30-31

Statehouse Convention
Center, Little Rock

JoyWorks June 26-29

Hispanic Focus:

Bible institutes celebrate milestones

THIS YEAR HAS been an interesting year for the Centro de Capacitación Bíblica (CECABI) and the Instituto Teológico Bautista de Arkansas (ITBA), according to the directors of the Hispanic Bible institutes that serve Hispanic Baptists in Arkansas.

CECABI was established by the Northwest Baptist Association in partnership with the Arkansas Baptist State Convention (ABSC). Daniel Cerda is the CECABI director.

Francisco Gómez, who serves on the ABSC missions ministries team, also directs ITBA.

These biblical training centers are designed to provide Christian lead-

ership training. Their objective is to effectively prepare students with the knowledge and the practical skills for the work of the ministry in the local church.

The centers focus on training leaders to be Christ-like. They educate, enable, motivate, disciple and exhort the Christians with the goal to reproduce a permanent leadership to minister in the church of Jesus Christ.

Three students who graduated from ITBA in Little Rock May 14 are now serving in pastoral roles.

The first CECABI graduation was held at the Primera Iglesia Bautista in Fort Smith Sept. 25. Seven stu-

dents – representing seven churches – obtained their certificate in biblical studies.

Robby Tingle, ABSC missions ministries leader, preached the graduation sermon for the occasion and challenged and encouraged students to be servant leaders based on the example of Jesus when He washed the disciples' feet.

CECABI and ITBA are sponsored with gifts given through the Dixie Jackson Arkansas Missions Offering.

More information about these ministries is available at www.absc.org/ministries/hispanic-ministry.html and www.nwbaptist.net.

Evangelism conference set for Jan. 23-24

SHERWOOD – Speakers for the 2012 State Conference on Evangelism and Church Growth plan to “stir up a passion for evangelism,” according to the conference theme.

The two-day event, which will be held at First Baptist Church, Sherwood, Jan. 23-24, will feature speakers from Arkansas and across the country.

Keynote speakers include Roy Fish, retired distinguished professor of evangelism, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas; Robert Smith, professor of Christian preaching, Beeson Divinity School, Birmingham, Ala.; Michael Catt, pastor

of Sherwood Baptist Church, Albany, Ga.; John Meador, pastor of First Baptist Church, Euless, Texas; Chuck Kelley, president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, New Orleans, La.; and Archie Mason, senior pastor of Central Baptist Church, Jonesboro.

An old-time camp meeting will be a highlight of the meeting. Camp meeting speakers include Don Chandler, pastor of Central Baptist Church, Conway; Doug Compton, an evangelist from Paragould; Tommy Miller, pastor of Union Valley Baptist Church, Beebe; and John Sammons, pastor of Marshall Road Baptist Church, Jacksonville.

Worship will be lead by Charles

Billingsley, worship leader at Thomas Road Baptist Church, Lynchburg, Va. The Skit Guys, Christian comedian sketch artists, will also perform.

A prayer conference will be held prior to the conference Jan. 23.

Evangelism section

The *Arkansas Baptist News* is planning to publish a special evangelism section during the State Conference on Evangelism and Church Growth in January. If you would like to submit the name of an evangelist you would like to see featured in the section, email abn@arkansasbaptist.org.

Mission Connection set for 2012

LOOKING FOR A WAY to be a part of mission opportunities in Arkansas, across the nation and internationally?

Mission Connection may be for you.

Mission Connection, which participants may attend on either Feb. 9 or Feb. 11 at Second Baptist

Church, Jacksonville, is a one-day event for anyone interested in connecting with state, national and international mission partners.

Connect with international mission partners from Belgium, Chile, Japan and Russia, along with North American mission partners from Alaska, Chicago, Kansas, Nebraska,

Philadelphia and South Dakota.

Mission representatives from Arkansas will be available, as well.

The conference will be held from 9:45 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. and includes lunch.

To register, go to www.absc.org/uttermost, or call Jill Modlin at 800-838-2272, ext. 5149.

Classifieds

PASTOR

Star City First Baptist Church is seeking a **full-time pastor**. Prayerfully send resume: FBC, P.O. Box 368, Star City, AR 71667 or email to detrimghe@yahoo.com. Fax 870-628-4184.

Clarendon FBC seeking **full-time pastor**. Please send resumes to First Baptist Church, P.O. Box 324, Clarendon, AR 72029, or email melindap@fbc-clarendon.com.

Mt. Zion Baptist Church, Arkadelphia, Ark., is seeking a **full-time pastor** to fulfill that office in a godly manner, upholding God's Word, as it is written, and can minister to the needs of the church. Contact Fred Goshen at frednbea@suddenlink.net.

First Baptist Church, Unionville, Missouri, a dispensational, fundamentally conservative church, KJV, is prayerfully seeking an experienced **full-time senior pastor**. Send resume and detailed doctrinal statement to 104 N. 15th, Unionville, MO

63565, or email kristycullum@yahoo.com. Website: fbcunionville.org.

OTHER STAFF POSITIONS

Preschool and children's ministry associate at First Baptist Church, Benton. Details available at www.fbc Benton.org.

First Baptist Trumann, Ark., is seeking a **part-time youth minister**. Send resume to First Baptist Church, P.O. Box 575, Trumann, AR 72472.

Bi-vocational youth director needed. Contact River Road Baptist, P.O. Box 161, Redfield, AR 72132, 501-397-2576 or 870-536-4109.

Sugarloaf Baptist Church of Heber Springs, Ark., is currently accepting resumes for a **full-time minister of youth**. Please mail resumes and photo to 699 Wilburn Road, Heber Springs, AR 72543, or email to sugarloafbaptistchurch@gmail.com.

First Baptist Church in Carlisle is seeking a **part-**

time or full-time music minister. Send resume to First Baptist Church, P.O. Box 25, Carlisle, AR 72024.

First Baptist Church, Forrest City, is seeking a **full-time minister of music**. If interested, send resume to 507 N. Rosser St., Forrest City, AR 72335.

MISCELLANEOUS

College students – Do you have summer plans? Consider spending **eight weeks on mission in the Philippines**, working with the student ministries of the University Baptist Church of Manila. This exciting opportunity will be a life-changing event for you and for the Filipino students that you will work with. For more information, contact Ralph Baker, Atkins FBC music minister, at 501-757-0978 or rmbaker58@yahoo.com.

To place a classified ad, email nelle@arkansasbaptist.org.



'Flashy Fashion for Permanency'

Geyer Springs First Baptist Church, Little Rock, hosted the Department of Child and Family Service's "Flashy Fashion for Permanency" Dec. 3. Youth from the church purchased clothing for children and teenagers to model at the event, which was set up like a fashion show. The purpose of the afternoon was to pair children who are available for adoption with families. Volunteers also helped children prepare their hair, nails and makeup before the show.



County Line Baptist assists World Hunger

Kaitlin Humphrey, a member of County Line Baptist Church, Compton, donates money for hunger relief. County Line Baptist recently adopted the idea of having a box where people can donate small amounts toward hunger relief each week, rather than donate a large amount all at once. Patricia Zimmerman, a Sunday school teacher at the church, suggested the idea, and Kenneth Davis, carpenter and church deacon, made the box. Zimmerman explained if a member donates \$1 each week, that member will have donated \$52 by the end of the year. Similarly, donating 50 cents each week will total \$26 at the end of the year, and donating 25 cents each week will total \$13 at the end of the year.

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Obituaries

Patricia Diane Balducci, 57, of McGehee, died Dec. 5, in Little Rock, following a battle with cancer. A native of Jacksonville, Fla., she was a graduate of the University of North Florida. Her husband, Ed, serves as pastor of First Baptist Church, McGehee. She was actively involved in children's ministry and women's ministry. Survivors include her husband, Ed Balducci; one son; one daughter; and two grandchildren. Funeral services were held at First Baptist Church, McGehee, Dec 8. Another service will be held at Jones-Gallagher Funeral Home in Keystone Heights, Fla. In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to the children's ministry at First Baptist Church, McGehee, or to caringbridge.org.



Milestones

Caledonia Baptist Church, El Dorado, honored Pastor Hugh Nelson, 78, with a surprise birthday meal Nov. 16. The church also gave Nelson a monetary gift. Nelson served as pastor from 1965-1984 and returned as pastor in 1989.

Write for the ABN

The *Arkansas Baptist News* is seeking part-time region correspondents who live in the Northwest and Northeast regions of Arkansas. Duties include writing news articles and soliciting advertising for quarterly pages. Please send a resume, along with a cover letter of qualifications, to tim@arkansasbaptist.org.

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WBC opens new dorm

WALNUT RIDGE – Multiple scissors sliced through a long blue ribbon as Nicholas Hall was dedicated at Williams Baptist College Dec. 2. The ribbon cutting represented the formal opening of the women's residence hall, which was completed this fall.

Nicholas Hall, a 9,000-square-foot facility, is home to 43 female students and features a large lobby, an exercise room, a study room and even a covered back patio.

The facility is named for Jack and Martha Nicholas of Little Rock. Jack Nicholas was president of Williams Baptist College from 1973 to 1991, and he also served as a psychology professor. Martha Nicholas was director of the Williams library for 30 years, and she is also the daughter of H.E. Wil-

liams, who founded the college.

"Dr. and Mrs. Nicholas are pivotal figures in the history of this college. During Dr. Nicholas' time as president, WBC (Williams) made critical transitions that helped make the college what it is today, the most important being the move to four-year status. We also added facilities in those years that are still central to the operation of the college today. It is quite fitting that this beautiful new building is named in their honor," said Williams President Jerol Swaim.

Jack Nicholas commented, "Martha and I are profoundly honored to have this new women's residence hall named after us."

Nicholas Hall was completed at a cost of approximately \$1.75 million.

Happy Birthday!

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

- ◆ Jan. 7: Coleson Lechner, OBU Box 4304, Arkadelphia, AR 71998-0001; Mozambique.
- ◆ Jan. 20: Megan Hart, OBU Box 3599, Arkadelphia, AR 71998-0001; Russia.
- ◆ Jan. 25: Jacob Stewart, OBU Box 4580, Arkadelphia, AR 71998-0001; United Arab Emirates.
- ◆ Jan. 26: Steven Harvell, OBU Box 4271, Arkadelphia, AR 71998-0001.

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The Messiah has come!

The birth of a child is exciting, especially if there has been a delay with the family getting pregnant. Imagine, then, the excitement when the birth is delayed by hundreds of years.

In Numbers 24, Balaam, who was hired by Balak, the king of Moab, to curse the Israelites, predicted the coming of a Star from Jacob and a Scepter from Israel. For generations, God's people waited for this King to come to them. Amazingly, when He did arrive, most of His people missed His arrival.

Bethlehem was not only the place where King David was born, it was

the place where the flocks destined to be the sacrificial lambs offered for the sins of God's people were pastured. Not surprisingly, we find the parents of the long-awaited Messiah drawn to Bethlehem just as the birth of Jesus draws near. God is all about the details.

Mary and Joseph were two ordinary people who loved God. Like you and me, they had no idea of the place God had for them in history. A trip because Caesar wanted to enrich himself was a very inconvenient political requirement. The young couple could not know how important that trip would be – bringing

God's own Lamb to the fields of sacrifice, foreshadowing the ultimate sacrifice breaking sin's power over mankind.

God is still about the details. He rejoices in the opportunity to remind us that Jesus, God's own Lamb, has arrived to free us from our burdens. When Jesus was born, God was so excited that He sent an army of angels to proclaim Jesus' birth.

Shepherds and kings were invited to welcome the new King; the lowly and the great were received.

Today it is the same; no matter who you are or what your station is in life, God has a detailed plan inviting you into a relationship with Him.

Angels are waiting to rejoice when you come to the manger and then lift your eyes to the cross.

One of the most beloved songs of Christmas is "Joy to the World." Because Christ has come, we have reason to rejoice.

In this passage (Luke 2:8-20), there are at least five ways we can rejoice in the Gift of Jesus.

First, we can be in awe of God's glory. The presence of the Lord brought awe and holy fear into the hearts of the shepherds (Luke 2:8-9). This fear of Him implies submission to Him and a sense

of unworthiness of Him.

Rejoicing in Jesus also reveals our need to share Him with others. The

angel came for the purpose of proclaiming the message that the Savior, the promised Messiah, had come as a source of joy for all people (Luke 2:10-11). Good news is meant to be shared with

others (Luke 2:17-18).

Immediately following the proclamation, a multitude of angels rejoiced through corporate praise

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE DECEMBER 25, 2011

David Bond
team member
Arkansas Baptist State Convention

Scripture passage:
Luke 2:8-20

Stay grateful for God's care

I think we will one day be totally amazed to see all the ways God has taken care of us in our journey through life. There are amazing accounts in Scripture of how God watched over and protected His children.

In this week's lesson, we read in Numbers 22:31, "Then the Lord opened Balaam's eyes."

God was at work, but Balaam didn't realize it. We often don't realize until later that God's hand was protecting and covering us in the midst of a crisis.

I was driving a friend's car home from the hospital in the wee hours of the night a few months ago. I was

on the interstate when out of the corner of my eye I saw a deer jump the median, having already crossed the three lanes of traffic on the opposite side of the interstate. Seeing that I was probably going to hit the deer and unable to slow down because of a transport truck behind me and one coming up beside me, I tightened my grip on the steering wheel and leaned forward in hopes of holding the steering wheel straight as I saw the deer coming. The deer hit the front passenger side, and as I hung on to the steering wheel, I heard parts of the vehicle breaking and hitting the road. I expected the tire to blow even as I

saw the exit and knew I needed to get off the road.

I was overwhelmed when I finally got out of the car and saw the damage. I made it home, and as we surveyed the car, my husband kept saying to me over and over, "Do you realize how much worse this could have been?" At that point all I could focus on was that I had just wrecked my friend's car! Over the next few days, the enormity of what happened sunk

in. God truly had protected me from what could have been potential disaster. It left me with a grateful heart and a desire to be careful to acknowledge His care for me to Him and to others.

As Psalm 121:7-8 (NIV) reminds us, "The Lord will keep you from all harm – he will watch over your life; the Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore."

God truly cares for His children!

The fast-food culture of our day is a world of impulsive thinking and instant gratification. We live in our cars and speed from one activity to another. We only slow down it seems when we are forced to by long lines at our favorite drive-thru.

Thriving in this kind of culture requires a sharp mind and keen senses.

Romans 13:12-13 (NKJV) says, "The night is far spent, the day is at

hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy."

Proverbs 23:20-21 (NKJV) also addresses how to live. It says, "Do not mix with winebibbers, or with gluttonous eaters of meat; for the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, and drowsiness

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE JANUARY 1, 2012

Joy Ross
member
First Baptist, Van Buren

Scripture passage:
Proverbs 23:20-21; Daniel 1:8, 11-16;
Romans 13:12-13

EXPLORE THE BIBLE JANUARY 1, 2012

Frances Raley
minister of adult education
First Baptist, Benton

Scripture passages:
Numbers 22:4b-6, 31-35; 23:19-23

Scripture passages:
Numbers 22:4b-6, 31-35; 23:19-23

Thriving in a fast-food culture

will clothe a man with rags."

Gluttony is not only excessive eating, but also excessive behavior of satisfying other lusts of the flesh. To be in the best physical shape to work, one must eat right.

A diet of only fast food is not healthy, satisfying or productive.

Daniel understood what it meant to choose God and His plan for healthy eating rather than the rich, fatty foods of the world.

Making up his mind to follow God's guidelines, Daniel revealed the glory and power of his God to the king.

Daniel knew that "less is more." It is not what you eat, but how much!

His discipline was one step in his prosperity of greater riches.

Obedying God in the flesh is not only a matter of choosing healthy food but also of trusting on God to guide our decisions every day.

Living one day at a time, spending time with God, prioritizing our activities and planning healthy meals, we can thrive in this fast-food culture.

The words of Jesus in Matthew 4:4 are a good reminder. "But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God'" (Matt. 4:4, NKJV).

Stay focused on the goal

Do you ever feel like you're hanging on to the tiger's tail, being swung back and forth, totally out of control? Ministry sometimes feels that way, as does life in general. So many things pull at us and scream for our attention. Years ago, I read Charles Hummel's essay "Tyranny of the Urgent." In studying this week's lesson on staying focused, I pulled out this small booklet and reread it. Although it was written in 1967 and times have certainly changed, the challenge is still the same - not allowing the urgent demands that bombard us through our cell phones, emails and texts keep us from doing the important

things. Ouch! I don't know about you, but that steps on my toes.

How do we know what is important and what we should focus on? Jesus showed us the way. In the midst of people pulling at Him, Jesus knew why He was here and what He was to be about.

He was able to stay focused amidst overwhelming needs because His life was guided day-by-day through time spent in prayer. He and the Father were in daily communion. At the end of three short years, He was able to say He had completed the work the Father had given Him to do (John 17:4).

Our lesson this week challenges

us to balance the call to serve God through serving others while caring for our families and ourselves. Numbers 32:21 shows that God instructed His people to stay together as they entered the Promised Land and to work together until the enemies had been driven out of His presence. Cooperatively they could accomplish what individually they would have been unable to do.

We must do our part if the church body is going to function as it is supposed to and reach people for Christ. Each day is full of possibilities. Don't miss what God has for you to do. You are in a local body of believers for a purpose.

Striving to spend time in prayer early in our day will keep us focused and enable us to be a part of making a difference in God's kingdom.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE JANUARY 8, 2012

Frances Raley
minister of adult education
First Baptist, Benton

Scripture passages:
Numbers 32:1, 5-8, 16-18, 20-24;
33:51-53

Our granddaughter received a silver purity ring for her 16th birthday inscribed with "I will wait for my beloved."

She has a constant reminder of the commitment she made to her parents and to God on the day she received the ring.

Each of us has a seal that states we belong to God. He is our Beloved, and we are His. He has a banner over our lives to insure that we remain free of sexual immorality,

impure thoughts, silly and corrupt talk, coarse jesting and things that are not befitting to His children.

The Holy Spirit prompts us to remember the seal and to be committed to it.

Ephesians 1:13-14 (NKJV) tells us, "In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation;

in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE JANUARY 8, 2012

Joy Ross
member
First Baptist, Van Buren

Scripture passages:
Ephesians 5:1-5, 8-12, 15-16

Be resolute about life's value

Life lessons come to us in many ways. Years ago, while in seminary, I was sitting among a group of people when the topic turned to homosexuality. A joke was told in regard to this, and then a few harsh comments were made. I sat there and listened, and it was a knife in my heart. That alternate lifestyle had come to light within my extended family, and I was well-acquainted with the heartache and tragedy it brought. I have never forgotten the life lesson I learned in that moment. You never know who your words are hurting as a result of them hearing your conversation.

This week's lesson is the Sanctity of Human Life lesson. There are

several ways to approach this lesson, but here is my challenge: Be careful in your approach. Whereas most people will readily agree that murder is wrong and deserves to be punished, you will have some sitting in your class who are suffering with long-standing guilt and remorse over actions taken years ago, possibly in haste and without guidance and support.

Statistics show that 40 percent of women have had abortions. Many who hear this lesson have lived their entire lives with "what ifs" and the desire to have a do-over.

We live in a self-centered culture where life has become more and more disposable. Anger and violence

abound. If something or someone inconveniences us, then just get rid of it or them. Abortion is a result of this attitude, as is euthanasia and really even the way we treat our aging adults.

In the midst of teaching the sinfulness of murder (Deut. 5:17) this week, strive to create an environment where people who wish

they had not made the choices they did can be honest and share their heartaches. May they find a place of

refuge when they hear the truth, but may they also find mercy and grace.

We have all lived in darkness because of our sin, but praise God we don't have to stay in darkness. Through the forgiveness found in Christ, we can live in the light of His love.

Churches are to be hospitals for sinners. So, we need to provide opportunities and programs to help people heal emotionally and spiritually.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE JANUARY 15, 2012

Frances Raley
minister of adult education
First Baptist, Benton

Scripture passages:
Deuteronomy 5:17; 19:1-13; 24:6-22;
Matthew 5:17-26

Unable to resist a story about his grandchildren, an acquaintance relayed the following story.

His grandchildren were viewing the ultrasound of their new baby sister. Both girls exclaimed at the same time, "Oh, but we wanted a boy for Daddy!"

The concept of trading in the baby for what they wanted is a humorous comment made by 2- and 3-year-olds. It is a sad commentary on the culture of

our day that human life is made expendable if it does not fit into what we have planned for our lives.

Psalms 139 reminds us of God's ability to see inside us. He is never surprised about what life brings us. He sees and knows the secrets of our hearts and the worthlessness of our thoughts.

If life overwhelms us, God encourages us to sit down and rest in Him.

He has charted all our paths. The

Caring in an expendable culture

tragedy of abortion is not a surprise to Him, for He knows our very natures are wicked. We can never escape His presence. "You shall not murder" (Ex. 20:13) is a commandment of God; we obey this commandment when we value human life and show His love to others in the midst of difficulties.

We think we make our plans, but God commands our ways; we are out of our league emotionally, mentally and spiritually if we believe we can override His perfect plan. Human life is precious to God. He created it for His glory. Everything that happens to us is for that purpose.

He values our very beings to the

extent that He never leaves us nor forsakes us; the waters roar, and He is there; the darkness comes, and He is there! The question for us to answer is, "Where will we be?" Will we be trying to hide from Him? Will we be resting in His love or fighting with everything in us against it?

Swimming upstream is painful and goes against all nature. When we try to fight what God has brought into our lives, we have conflict, confusion and corruption. Often we blame Him and say He has forsaken us, but that is not the truth. We have forsaken His Word and His promise that He is with us always.

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE JANUARY 15, 2012

Joy Ross
member
First Baptist, Van Buren

Scripture passages:
Psalm 139:1-6, 13-18



110 years
The Arkansas Baptist News celebrates 110th anniversary.

PAGES 7-9

Swaim to retire
Jerol Swaim to retire as president of Williams Baptist College.

PAGE 1

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ABN Digest, stories of interest to Arkansas Baptists, has moved to page 3.

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Churches
celebrate
Christmas and
reflect on
year's ministry

PAGE 6

Pictured: Second Baptist Church, Monticello



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