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Front-row seat to God's work

Don Blackmore, police chaplain, serves God, and his community, in uniform

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The end of an era

Photo by Caleb Yarbrough

LifeWay to close all 170 stores; includes five Arkansas locations

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – LifeWay Christian Resources, of the Southern Baptist Convention, is charting a new course in 2019, marking a strategic shift of resources to a digital strategy. As part of the transition, LifeWay will close all of its 170 brick-and-mortar stores in 2019.

LifeWay currently operates five stores in Arkansas, which are located in Little Rock, Fort Smith, Hot Springs, Jonesboro and Rogers. Carol Pipes, direc-

tor of corporate communications at LifeWay, confirmed with the *Arkansas Baptist News* (ABN) that the Little Rock, Hot Springs and Fort Smith stores are set to close in June. A timeline for the closing of the Rogers and Jonesboro stores was unavailable at press time.

LifeWay is considering implementing “distribution hubs” at some locations across the country following the store closings to expedite the deliv-

ery of timely materials such as those used for events like VBS (vacation Bible school), according to an unconfirmed report.

“LifeWay is fortunate to have a robust publishing, events and church services business. Our retail strategy for the future will be a greater focus on digital channels, which are experiencing strong growth,” said acting President and CEO Brad Waggoner. “LifeWay is moving into a new era with a strategic digital

focus that will prepare us for the future and allow us to better serve our customers.”

In January LifeWay announced it would reduce the number of its retail locations due to declining customer traffic and sales. “While we had hoped to keep some stores open, current market projections show this is no longer a viable option,” Waggoner said.

“The decision to close our local stores is a difficult one,”

Waggoner said. “LifeWay has developed close connections with the communities where our stores are located, and we have been honored to serve those communities. We will continue serving local congregations as they meet the spiritual needs of their neighbors.”

The timing of store closings will vary depending on local circumstances. LifeWay expects all brick-and-mortar

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ABN classifieds get results!

Read them on Page 10.

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Classifieds

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ABN Digest

Stories of interest
to Arkansas Baptists

Ark. House OKs bill requiring schools offer Bible course

LITTLE ROCK — If members of the Arkansas House of Representatives get their way, public school students requesting an elective course on the Bible will get an opportunity to take such a class.

The Arkansas House approved a bill March 19 by a vote of 64-7 requiring a public school to offer academic study of the Bible if at least 15 students at the school request it, according to published reports. The bill now must be approved by the Senate to go into effect. Under the proposal, the course would be taught in a “nondevotional manner with no attempt made to indoctrinate students.”

A 2013 law in Arkansas allows an elective course on the Bible in public schools, but it is voluntary and not required.

Gateway investigated as possible ‘hate group’

ONTARIO, Calif. — Gateway Seminary is cooperating with Facebook to show the school is not a “hate group” in efforts to boost a post describing the Bible as the ultimate authority.

Facebook refused to boost a post linking Gateway President Jeff Iorg’s March 5 blog entry titled “Logical Progression,” which mentioned abortion, gender issues and polygamy in asserting the domino effect of unbiblical decisions.

“Holding the line on positions based on timeless biblical standards as an ultimate authority has been and always will be important,” is the focus of the post Iorg sought to boost. Facebook refused.

“My understanding is Facebook has requested, and we have provided, additional information about me and the seminary,” Iorg said March 14. “They are seeking to establish we are a valid company, not a hate group or a foreign entity.”

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

Minister’s housing allowance constitutionality upheld

DALLAS — A housing allowance for ministers is constitutional under two landmark legal precedents, a three-judge panel of the 7th Circuit Court of Appeals in Chicago ruled March 15. The judgment reversed a lower court’s ruling in a lawsuit judgment that declared the minister’s cash housing allowance unconstitutional because it violated the establishment clause of the First Amendment.

The earlier ruling in *Gaylor v. Mnuchin and Peecher*, which was issued Dec. 31, 2017, was stayed until 180 days after all appeals were exhausted. The same lower court had made a similar ruling in 2013 that was overturned on appeal in 2014.

The lawsuit did not threaten the part of federal law that enables tax-free use of a par-

sonage or other home owned by a church or another religious body.

A 1954 federal law permits churches to designate part of eligible ministers’ income as a housing allowance, enabling “ministers of the Gospel” to exclude for federal income tax purposes a portion or all of their gross income. The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has interpreted “ministers of the Gospel” to include leaders of other religious faiths.

In oral arguments in October 2018 in Chicago, Justice Department attorney Jesse Panuccio defended the housing

allowance as constitutional, arguing that it satisfies the requirements of *Lemon v. Kurtzman*, a 1971 United States Supreme Court decision that articulated a three-prong test for determining whether a

legislative act violates the Establishment Clause. Panuccio argued that the provision is constitutional under *Town of Greece v. Galloway*, a

2013 Supreme Court decision regarding prayers before the opening of a legislative session that suggested that Establishment Clause challenges must be viewed by reference to historical practices and under-

standings. The appeals court panel agreed the housing allowance passes muster on both counts.

Harold R. Loftin Jr., GuideStone chief legal officer, who attended the oral arguments last October, said that history and precedent point to the housing allowance being constitutional.

“The 7th Circuit concurred that this is a reasonable benefit that does not violate the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment,” said Loftin. “We are thankful for the panel’s decision that puts this case to rest for now, though we expect litigation and other challenges will happen again in the future.”

That sentiment was echoed by GuideStone President

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CLOSING

continued from page one

stores to close by the end of the year.

In operation since 1891, LifeWay offers a comprehensive selection of Bibles, books, Scripture reference tools, Bible studies, children’s products, Christian music and movies, gifts and church supplies. Additional items, including church signs, furnishings and buses, as well as background checks, electronic giving and other services, are available through LifeWay’s OneSource program at LifeWay.com/OneSource. LifeWay also hosts a number of camps and events throughout the year for all age groups.

As part of the organization’s strategy, LifeWay has introduced a number of digital resources, including online Bible studies, worship planning, live streaming of events and online training opportunities.

“LifeWay has been serving the church for 128 years, and we will continue to grow our ministry to churches and individuals into the future,” Waggoner said. “As the market continues to change, primarily through shifts in brick-and-mortar retail, we are taking steps to meet customer demand for digital shopping experiences and to expand our reach globally.” LifeWay

distributes resources in 164 nations and licenses resources in more than 60 languages.

Like other retailers, over the last decade the organization has seen commerce increasingly move online, while experiencing overall growth in digital sales.

In one month, LifeWay interacts with five times as many people through its digital environments as it does through

LifeWay stores.

“Our world and our customers are increasingly online,” Waggoner said. “Investing in a dynamic digital strategy allows LifeWay to better serve the Church in its mission and only enhances our ability to provide biblical solutions for life.”

The organization will continue to offer a broad selection of resources through LifeWay.

com and the LifeWay Customer Service Center (800-458-2772). LifeWay Customer Service hours are Monday-Friday 7:30 a.m.-5 p.m. (Central). LifeWay will also continue to serve customers through its network of church partners who work directly with churches.

More information about store closings is available at LifeWay.com/StoreFAQs.

Reactions to LifeWay store closings

“Glad to see they are looking to the future in digital. It sure leaves out the little churches. I really love our LifeWay store in Jonesboro and their customer service is outstanding. Especially in a world where customer service has flown out the window. It’s a sad day.”
— Vaneissia Woods-Turner via arkansasbaptist.org

“I know the decision has been made. I buy a significant number of Bibles each month to distribute in a local ministry. We have been able to take advantage of specials and compare Bible options while shopping in your store here in Hot Springs. And I am very grateful for that. Shipping (and shopping) and convenience will be an adjustment. Also, seems like I often make an unplanned purchase when I am in your store! Thank you for the time we have had with your store here. My last concern is that so many people have Amazon Prime accounts with very favorable shipping — I really hope that many people will still choose LifeWay.”
— Michael Pounders via Facebook.com

“This saddens, but does not surprise me. The corporate mentality of decline in mission focus (Mission Board decisions and intentionally cutting back programming at Glorieta, selling the ground out from under missionaries and churches that purchased for their fellowships or built homes to retire there and then selling the property for \$1) is coming back to roost. Unfortunately, everyone that needed the Baptist Bookstore and Baptist Sunday School Board leadership and resources were denied to bring in more midline and secular retail items to produce more income for the stores. That is the way of the world and the church today.”
— Nancy’s Needle Niche via arkansasbaptist.org

“I am so disappointed, shipping is so expensive and I love to go in your stores for my Bible study books.” — Sharon McMahan via Facebook.com

“I’m very sorry to hear this. Not everyone is computer savvy!”
— Linda Chapman Wyatt via arkansasbaptist.org

Police chaplaincy:

A front-row seat to what God is doing

Margaret Colson
Arkansas Baptist News

JONESBORO – All in a day’s work of a Baptist chaplain ...

He made the knock on the door that no one wants to make. He was called to “give the heart-breaking news” to a mother that her college-age daughter and her friend had been killed in a car accident. He followed up with the mother some time later to see how she was doing and invited her to a GriefShare ministry at Central Baptist Church, Jonesboro. Today, the mother, who still mourns the loss of her daughter, walks with others on their journeys of grief through the GriefShare ministry at the church.

He noticed her emotions seemed to be overwhelming her. The wife of a rookie law enforcement officer cried as her mind raced to all the dangers her husband might experience on the police force. To offer support and encouragement, he invited the husband and wife to attend a weekend marriage retreat free-of-charge. By the final day of the retreat, the wife admitted, “I have been resisting God my entire life, and I don’t want to do that anymore.” She then made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ and was soon baptized at Central Baptist.

He was called as a crisis negotiator for the Jonesboro Police Department SWAT team at a tense standoff where a mentally unstable woman allegedly had shot a worker at an apartment complex. He prayed with the SWAT team before they confronted the situation. During the standoff, a law enforcement K-9 was shot, and he rode with the K-9 and his handler to the veterinarian’s office for emergency surgery. The K-9 survived and is back on active duty.

The police officer asked him to ride along in the patrol car. Around 2 a.m. after much conversation, the young, single police officer, who is now married and serves with the Arkansas State Police, made a profession of faith “right there” in the patrol car. Now the law enforcement officer helps lead the safety team at Central Baptist Church,

Paragould, where he and his wife are actively involved.

“It’s great having a front-row seat to what God is doing in so many people’s lives. There’s nothing better,” said Don Blackmore, executive pastor of marriage and family ministries at Central Baptist Church, Jonesboro, and a chaplain for the Jonesboro Police Department.

Eleven years ago, the Jonesboro chief of police asked Blackmore if he would serve as a chaplain for the department, a ministry that had been launched in 1993 by Mike Martin, senior adult pastor, Central Baptist Church, Jonesboro. Blackmore quickly agreed and, just as quickly, “fell in love with the ministry.”

“It’s truly my ministry beyond the walls of the church,” he said.

Blackmore is one of six chaplains, including two women chaplains, who serve the Jonesboro Police Department.



As a chaplain, Blackmore said his ministry is three-dimensional. First, he ministers to law enforcement officers, who have stressful jobs with demanding hours and relatively low pay. “I feel a true sense of calling to minister to law enforcement officers. I love people, and I love ministering to police officers,” he said.

Second, he ministers to the community, as he assists in tasks such as death notifications. Third, he ministers to families of law enforcement officers, recently helping start a police officers’ wives support network.

He calls his chaplaincy ministry his “ministry with adven-



Don Blackmore, a chaplain with the Jonesboro Police Department, serves at a neighborhood Halloween event seeking to have a positive police presence in the community. Below, Blackmore (right) stands with a fellow officer and his K-9 partner. Blackmore is executive pastor at Central Baptist Church, Jonesboro.

ture,” he said, because “it can be adventuresome at times.”

Bob Fielding, consultant for chaplaincy and national/international missions at the Arkansas Baptist State Convention (ABSC), explained that chaplaincy “enables those who represent Christ to go into places where the Church can’t go or in ways the Church can’t go. It’s a kingdom ministry.”

Throughout the Natural State, Arkansas Baptists are involved in chaplaincy in a variety of settings, including hospitals, jails and prisons, nursing homes, and more.

Blackmore, he said, is a “natural” in his service as a law enforcement chaplain.

About three years ago, Blackmore went through 160 hours of training to become a reserve police officer himself. It’s his way of following in the Apostle Paul’s footsteps who said he “became all things to all people that I may win some to Christ” (1 Cor. 9:22), Blackmore explained.

“I became a reserve officer to give me greater credibility with the police officers in order that I can be more effective in ministering to them and with them,” he said.

As a reserve police officer, Blackmore has a uniform, duty belt and the same legal rights as other police officers. He typically rides two or three times a month with officers, sometimes specifically at an officer’s request.

“When I’m in their car, it gives me the opportunity to listen to them, to give guidance. I let them know I care about them, that I’m willing to walk in their shoes.

“They know they can trust me; they let me into their world,” he said.

Even as Blackmore is actively involved as a law enforcement chaplain, he calls on other Christians to minister to law enforcement as well. First, express gratitude to law enforcement officers, he said. Second, he encourages citizens to show “acts of kindness” to officers, such as buying their meals at restaurants. Third, he said, “Pray for the officers. It’s a very dangerous job, especially in the day in which we live.

“It would be awesome if every community in our state had a chaplain program,” he said.

The ABSC offers periodic training for chaplains. In between such training events, Fielding, also a law enforcement chaplain, is available to consult with individuals who are sensing a call to chaplaincy. If a person is interested in becoming involved in law enforcement chaplaincy, Blackmore said, “You have to do it for the right reasons. As a chaplain, you build a relationship and then you open the door on your side, but then they’ve got to open the door on their side whenever they’re ready to walk through it.”

Contact Margaret Colson at margaret@arkansasbaptist.org.

ABN Digest

Stories of interest
to Arkansas Baptists

Arkansas disaster relief responds to Midwest floods

OMAHA, Neb. (BP) – Several hundred Southern Baptist Disaster Relief (SBDR) volunteers – including teams from Arkansas – are preparing to “put themselves in the offering plate” by responding over the next two months to Midwest floods that have killed four people and displaced thousands from their homes, SBDR national director Sam Porter said.

Arkansas Baptist disaster relief has deployed in response to the flooding in Nebraska, Kansas, Iowa and Missouri. Currently, Arkansas is running a unified command over the response operation, according to the Arkansas Baptist State Convention. Arkansas DR anticipates deploying assessors and chaplains at some point next week, after which decisions will be made about additional teams and further deployment.

SBDR units from at least 10-15 Baptist state conventions will be involved in flood relief across Iowa, Nebraska, Michigan, Kansas and Missouri, Porter said. Disaster relief operations will focus on mud-out work for flooded houses but also include feeding, shower and laundry units.

SBDR leaders are attempting to establish five or six operation centers in Iowa and Nebraska, out of which relief work can be based.

In Michigan, DR workers with the Baptist State Convention of Michigan have begun responding to about 100 flooded homes with cleanup operations, the convention reported March 20 on a DR conference call.

Flooding may worsen in Kansas and Missouri as floodwaters in the Missouri River move south, according to media reports.

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

Editorial & Opinion

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

1 Peter 3:15 (NIV)

Brother. Soldier. Friend.

It's never easy to say goodbye, especially when it is so sudden and unexpected.

The passing of my older brother, Mike, blindsided me when I received a call from my sister-in-law in the wee hours of March 4. She was distraught. She said Mike had died during the night.

Mike and I last spoke the previous Thursday, and we were discussing plans and a future visit my wife and I were to make to his home in Tennessee. We had last seen each other about a month earlier.

The past couple of years had been tough for Mike. As a result of throat cancer and subsequent treatment – which had destroyed his esophagus – he had a feeding tube permanently implanted last fall.

He told me numerous times that having a feeding tube was tough. In addition to no longer being able to taste food, he said one of the things he missed most was drinking coffee.

In 2015 after Mike had completed treatments and was declared cancer-free, we did a multi-day motorcycle camping trip to Cotter, Ark., and the Ozark Mountains. Mike rode his Harley from Tennessee and brought his Razorback cap in honor of the occasion. What memories we made riding together and stopping along the way to take in the beauty of the Ozarks.

It was Mike that I had conversations with about things like family, trucks, motorcycles and politics. Our frequent talks took on added significance following the

passing of our father in 2008.

While I rest in the assurance that I will one day see my dear brother, Mike, once again in heaven, I will miss my discussions and his "older brother" wisdom on a variety of matters.

Mike was a retired Army veteran who served in Desert Storm. Our family celebrated

him in a wonderful service filled with music, prayer and laughter. A group of his veteran friends were

on hand to salute and honor Mike at the funeral. They led the procession on their motorcycles to Kentucky Veteran's Cemetery in Hopkinsville, Ky., where Mike was buried with military honors. As we passed through Clarksville, Tenn., people pulled their cars and trucks over to the shoulder out of respect; some even got out of their vehicles and saluted as the procession passed by.

Bill Graham of First Baptist Church, Clarksville, a retired Army chaplain, did a wonderful job with Mike's service. Bill is a dear friend from my days serving at the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission, during which time Bill was at the Home Mission Board (now the North American Mission Board).

The family asked me to write a letter of eulogy. My son, Caleb, read it at the funeral:

Son. Brother. Soldier. Husband. Father. Grandfather. Friend.

These are words we use to describe Michael Roy Yarbrough.



Pressing On

Tim Yarbrough

Phil. 3:14

the unknown – resulting in finding a bride and lifelong partner from halfway around the world.

As a father, Mike juggled the rigors of military service –

He was taken from us all too soon, but though his passing was sudden and unexpected, the life he lived will remain etched in our collective memory.

As a son, Mike came into the world on a hot and muggy July day in Southeast Missouri, at a time when air conditioning on the farm came in the form of a box fan and an open window.

As an older brother, Mike is recalled as one who didn't hesitate to get on the floor with his little brother – five years his junior – to play with Matchbox cars.

As a soldier, Mike traveled far away from the known to

including numerous moves – to proudly raise two wonderful and successful children.

As a friend, Mike always had time to listen, to smile and to weep – whether it was

his family, a friend from high school that he kept in touch with over the years, or military buddies, both past and present.

Mike was tough. In spite of battling cancer for nearly 10 years and suffering the debilitating consequences of a treatment that ultimately contributed to ending his life, Mike never complained, always smiled, and kept an optimistic attitude.

This past year he shared many conversations and texts with those he loved, but I want to read a few that he sent to his younger brother:

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The historical Jesus: Part 2

In my last column (Feb. 28) I began a discussion on the historical reliability of the life and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As the saying goes, if Christ be not raised, then Christianity is a farce. Gary Habermas writes, “[T]he resurrection was the center of the earliest Christian preaching. This is a fact admitted by essentially all scholars, based especially on Paul’s use of the ancient creed in 1 Cor. 15:3.”



Deep Waters

Chad Meeks

Thus, it is important that we are prepared to defend the historical veracity of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In this piece, I want to defend the historical account of Jesus’ crucifixion. Though some of the details may vary, most ancient Near Eastern historians concur that Jesus was indeed killed by the Roman authorities via crucifixion.

Crucifixion was a horrendous form of execution (human beings are creative at killing one another). The entire process started with a public beating and flogging with a flagrum (or cat-of-nine-tails). According to Jewish law, one could not receive more than 39 lashes; however, we have no record that the Romans had such a law. The beating and flogging were presumably pretty bad given that, following them, Jesus was unable to carry His cross to the execution site.

After the beating, Jesus was nailed to a cross. Generally, crucifixions killed by asphyxiation. In order to breathe, the individual would have to pull himself into the proper position – a painful and exhausting act. Some people lasted two or three days on the cross, but we know Jesus was dead within several hours.

Jesus’ crucifixion is likely one of the most recorded events in ancient history. The crucifixion is listed not only in the gospel narratives, but also in several extra-biblical accounts. These extra-biblical accounts include Josephus, Tacitus and Pliny the Younger. Josephus mentioned that Jesus lived, was sentenced by Pilate, was crucified, and resurrected. Granted, these extra-biblical accounts don’t make it certain that Jesus was crucified, but certainty is an impossible quality in historical investigations; we are simply looking for high probability. What we see in the historical evidence is a consistent notation by ancient authors – from the gospels to extra-biblical sources – that Jesus Christ lived and that He was indeed crucified.

William Lane Craig writes, “One of the most remarkable facts about the early Christian belief in Jesus’ resurrection was that it flourished in the very city where Jesus had been publicly crucified.” Now this is a telling claim. If Jesus’ resurrection had been a popular discussion in ancient Jerusalem, then the method of His death must also have been well known. If Jesus had been killed by any other means, it is likely that there would be counternarratives to the crucifixion, but that isn’t the case.

It seems reasonable by any standard measure of historical determination that Jesus Christ not only lived, but also was crucified in Jerusalem.

Chad Meeks is associate pastor of youth and discipleship at Cedar Heights Baptist Church in North Little Rock.

Letter to the Editor

Amazing people!

I just read the article about Earl and Joann Goatcher (ABN, 3-14-19). Joann delivered my son, Jackie Don, in Van Horn, Texas, in 1971. She also diagnosed my husband’s thyroid condition, sent him to El Paso just in time to save the loss of his eye and ultimately save his life. We will always be indebted to her for all she

did for us. What a blessing she was there at such a time! Earl Goatcher was the hospital administrator at that time. God has surely worked many miracles through both of them.

Quite an amazing thing that we now all live in Arkansas! God is so good! Thank you for the article, and thank you, Joann and Earl!

Susan Dees
Cove

Blocked paths

I enjoy solving spatial reasoning puzzles. Although these puzzles have many variations, most of them revolve around discovering where to put lines that ultimately connect to form one continuous loop around the entire puzzle – often with many strange and creative twists and turns. Interestingly, discovering where to put the lines often comes as much from eliminating the wrong paths as from seeing the right paths.

Recently, I had a particularly challenging day. Frustrations had arisen. Doors had closed. Nothing had seemed to go right. I needed to try to slow down my brain and unwind for the day, and a puzzle seemed to be a good way to accomplish that. I began to connect dots, drawing the lines that would eventually create a fun pattern across the entire page. When the first definite wrong path revealed itself, I placed an “X” on the path instead of drawing a line.



Uncovered Dish

Ann Hibbard

Then I drew a second “X” and a third. Soon, more “X’s” than lines filled my page.

As I worked, the thought occurred to me that the puzzle, filled with more obstacles than openings, resembled my day. Immediately following that thought was the realization that, like with the puzzle, all of the frustrations, closed doors, and redirections of my day were probably just as important to my learning and

growing as any successes would have been.

I can’t help but think of Joseph. His path

was rather violently redirected when his brothers sold him into slavery. Yet, at his reunion with those same brothers some 20 years later, he absolved them of their guilt as he pointed out God’s hand in the whole situation. The revelation of God’s plan didn’t change the pain of the slavery, imprisonment and separation from his family. But, as he looked back, Joseph gleaned comfort from the knowledge

that each obstacle did, in fact, set him on the path he needed to be on. And Joseph not only saw it, but also rejoiced in it!

Right now, that’s where I am convicted. Unlike Joseph, I often neglect to stop and consider how each “X” in my life has led to a place of God’s glory. Instead, I complain. I whine. I give into the frustration and wallow in the discouragement.

When we are truly surrendered to Christ as Lord, we know without a doubt that every step of our lives is directed by the One who knows what the final design looks like. He knows what paths we need to follow and which ones we must avoid. The attitude in which we follow that path is up to us. Will we whine and complain or observe and rejoice?

I’ve been a whiner for too long. I’m ready to rejoice. Who’s with me?

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

Effective mission trips: Selecting a partnership

Editor’s note: This is part of a series on effective mission trips.

Mission trips can be incredibly effective for both the mission field and the sending church – or they can be disastrous. I could personally tell you dozens of each. Often the difference simply comes down to choosing the right partnership.

Here are some basic tips for connecting your church with the right mission field partner.

1) Do not think in terms of a mission project; think in terms of a mission partnership. The Christian mission is about people, not about tasks. Seek to partner with boots-on-the-ground missionary personnel living on the field. Missionaries generally have a well-crafted plan to make disciples and plant churches in their region or among their people group.

2) Talk to several different missionaries about their strategy for evangelizing, discipling, developing leaders and

planting churches. Ask them about their needs. Ask them how they might envision utilizing mission teams. Ask them about opportunities for teams to share the gospel and meet practical and spiritual needs. Understand how your church would fit into the overall strategy.

3) Consider the gifts, skills and resources offered by your church. What is your church good at doing?

Answering the Call

Eric Ramsey

4) Consider the expense and the travel time necessary for each of

the potential mission partnerships. While we always trust the Lord to provide the resources to accomplish His mission, we must also be wise and consider the resources and time the Lord has currently given.

5) Plan on entering a partnership relationship for at least five years. It generally takes a couple of years to begin really understanding the mission field and connecting with the people.

6) Remember that the mis-

sionary is the field boss. The missionary controls the strategy and dictates the methods for evangelism, discipleship, leadership development and church planting. The job of your church should be to fall in behind the missionary, do what the missionary asks, and help the missionary in the manner requested.

7) Choose a field partner who will connect with and communicate with both your mission team and your church as a whole. The partnership relationship should be churchwide and not just limited to a small subgroup within your church.

Of course, the entire process of selecting a mission partnership should be deeply prayerful as well as strategically thoughtful. Through a mission partnership, your church can make an eternal impact while simultaneously helping your church members mature in their faith, leadership capacity and ability to personally share the gospel.

Eric W. Ramsey is associate pastor of First Baptist Church, Fort Smith.

Cabot hunting expo 'effective means' to reach lost

CABOT - More than 500 people gathered for the second annual Cabot Wild Game Expo at Cabot High School Saturday, March 2, and eight people made decisions for Christ.

"The expo shows the love of Jesus to hunters and those that like the outdoors," said Brett Tullos, men's ministry leader at Mount Carmel Baptist Church in Cabot. "What makes it different than some outdoor ministries that happen in neighboring communities is that it is open to the whole family, not just men. The family is the building block of the community, and we want to invest in that, too."

Hosted by First Baptist Church, Cabot, in Mount Carmel Baptist, Cabot, the expo is a one-day community outreach event featuring a vendor fair, door prizes, a silent auction, grand prize drawings and activities for children.

"What is God-honoring



More than 500 people gathered for the second annual Cabot Wild Game Expo at Cabot High School Saturday, March 2.

and unique is that we have two churches joining forces in this ministry," said Terry Bostick, senior pastor at First Baptist, Cabot. "This is about God's kingdom work opening the door for Jesus in the

hearts of hunters."

Scott Porter, founder of Trophies of Grace, spoke at the expo and gave an invitation. During the expo, members of Gideons International distributed New Testaments and Slip

Discs Flying Gospel Tracts featuring the plan of salvation.

"The event shows how a hunting expo could be an effective means of communication to share the gospel of our Lord Jesus," said Ken

Kincade, mayor of Cabot. "I know the expo addressed the needs of our community in a very positive manner, and my only wish for the expo is continued growth and success."

BROTHER

continued from page 4

Regarding his new RV (from 2015): "I checked the mileage on the RV. I was surprised that I averaged 13 mpg. That was hard driving most of the time. If I was more careful, it would be even better. It would do even better if I kept my foot out of it."

About Korea: "I meant to tell you that it looks like the balloon might go up in Korea anytime. We need to pray for peace over there. Bad situa-

tion everywhere."

About a Bible verse the Lord laid on his heart: "Here's a Bible passage I would like to share with you: 'For I, Jehovah thy God, will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee,' Isaiah 41:13 (ASV)."

On the Second Amendment: "I'm covered with my military training. I'm not going to get a concealed carry permit because I don't think it's something we should have to have - to carry weapons. It's a right by the Constitution. Alaska is a good example of our rights to bear arms;

you have a registered weapon and you can carry without a permit. Texas, the same way. If I want to carry, I'm going to carry."

Reflections of an aging soldier: "You know I'm an old soldier. I know that might not mean much to you and that's OK. I have a lot on my mind to be forgiven for. I know I'm forgiven for the things I've done. The memories are still there. I pray every day (for God) to help me. Pray for me. It's hard sometimes."

Memories of a younger brother and TV: "Do you re-

member when we played cars together? To me it was a lot of fun. Just thought of that. BTW, I'm watching Svengoolie on MeTV."

About our grandfather, Hauzie Wingfield, who served in World War II: "He was a great American. He fought in WWII. His feet were so bad that he couldn't walk to the hog house. He drove everywhere. He said he walked across Germany for the war and said he wasn't going to walk anywhere again unless he had to. He was in the 3rd Infantry Division. He never

talked much about it."

Lastly, the family would like to thank everyone for sharing your remembrances of Mike, for the love you have expressed, for the many flowers, and most importantly, for your heartfelt prayers. We will forever remember your kindness.

Today, we celebrate that Mike has been healed, is no longer in pain, and is safely in the arms of His Heavenly Father.

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

Letter to the Editor

Editor's Note: Jodie Wyatt was incorrectly listed as the author of the Letter to Editor in the March 14 edition of the Arkansas Baptist News. Nick Nixon is the correct author. The letter is being reprinted in its entirety below.

Is God a non-physical being?

In the January 31 issue of the *Arkansas Baptist News*, Chad Meeks said, "...God, a non-physical being..." Jesus did say God is Spirit, but when Adam was created, we

are told man became a living soul though he had a body. If God was air or a cloud, how could He eat with Father Abraham?

The same issue spoke of Easter, but not Good Friday. Does the crucifixion not matter? Members at business meetings ought to ask for a vote for Good Friday services. Most Baptists will vote for it.

Nick Nixon
Charleston

ALLOWANCE

continued from page 2

O.S. Hawkins.

"We expect challenges to the housing allowance will continue as groups like the Freedom From Religion Foundation seek to undermine churches and ministries in any way they can," Hawkins said.

"We are thankful that the 7th Circuit sided with a host of legal experts that the housing allowance allows churches of all types to best provide for their pastors' needs without favoring any one over the other. We will continue to monitor

future cases and stand ready to advocate alongside our Southern Baptist family and alongside a coalition of large and historic pension boards for the benefit of the pastors we are privileged to serve and, indeed, pastors throughout this country."

Russell Moore, president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC), described the ruling as "a victory for all Americans who care about the cause of religious liberty and desire to see communities flourish."

"That's because it's in no one's interest for the government to penalize clergy in

small congregations faithfully serving their communities," Moore said. "The court was right to say providing a tax exemption does not 'connote sponsorship.'"

The clergy allowance "has never been about an establishment of religion but instead applied indiscriminately across religions," he said. "I'm thankful to see sanity prevail in this ruling, as are millions of men and women around the country."

Roy Hayhurst, director of denominational and public relations at GuideStone Financial Resources, and Baptist Press contributed to this article.



Robert Ramsey (at piano), equipping pastor and worship leader at First Baptist Church, Russellville, and his wife, Brooke Ramsey (center), lead worship at Inspire women's event March 9.

Inspire conf. leaves women 'refreshed'

RUSSELLVILLE - "Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame" (Psa. 34:5, NIV).

This was the focal verse of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention's (ABSC) sixth annual Inspire women's event March 9 at First Baptist Church, Russellville.

The event, which encouraged women to live a radiant life for Jesus, brought 900 women from across Arkansas together for powerful worship, dynamic speakers and practical breakout sessions.

"Women come to Inspire running on empty," said Andrea Lennon, women's ministry specialist for the ABSC. "Their lives, roles and responsibilities leave them tired and overwhelmed.

"At Inspire, women are able to take a deep breath and hear

a fresh word of encouragement from the Bible, and the outcome is tangible.

"Women are refreshed and challenged to live for Jesus. Naturally, this impacts churches as women return to their homes and communities with a fresh focus and desire to radiate the joy of Jesus," Lennon said.

Marian Jordan Ellis, founder of Redeemed Girls Ministries and keynote speaker for Inspire, spoke on biblical radiance and how looking for Jesus leads to a legacy of faith.

"A radiant woman leaves a legacy when she lives intentionally," said Ellis. "A radiant woman leaves a legacy when she lives for eternity, and a radiant woman leaves a legacy when she lives to lead others to Jesus."



Marian Jordan Ellis talks to women about living a more radiant life for Jesus at the 2019 Inspire conference held at First Baptist Church in Russellville.

Dean to speak at women's retreat April 12-13

EL DORADO - Jennifer Kennedy Dean, author and executive director of The Praying Life Foundation, will be the keynote speaker at a women's retreat at First Baptist Church, El Dorado, Friday and Saturday, April 12-13.

The retreat, open to all women across the state, is fo-

cused on living connected to the heart of Jesus. Women will have time to fellowship with one another, worship and learn more about living a life "synced" with God, said Camille Daniels, women's ministry coordinator at First Baptist.

"Our goal for the retreat is

that women would learn more about prayer and its role in keeping us in line with God's will," said Daniels. "I am personally excited about getting to know other women from around the state who are intent on having their best walks with God so that we can go home and affect others."

Dean is the Kentucky state director for United States National Prayer Council and a member of America's National Prayer Committee. Dean is the host of The Praying Life Minute podcast. Her book, "Heart's Cry," is the National Day of Prayer's recommended resource for 2019.

For more information, visit fbceldorado.org/womensretreat.

Master'Singers scholarship applications due June 11

LITTLE ROCK - The Arkansas Master'Singers Memorial Scholarship, established in memory of deceased members, is accepting applications for the upcoming school year. The scholarship is awarded annually and designed to support a college or seminary student who is preparing for some type

of vocational ministry through music.

Online scholarship application guidelines and forms are available at absc.org/music-scholarship.

All scholarship applications and required supporting documents must be received by June 11.

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Tax code updates positive and negative, says Davis

LITTLE ROCK – The federal tax act passed in November 2017, the largest overhaul of the code since 1986, and the recent government shutdown have both contributed to an extra level of complexity for this year's tax season.

The 2017 changes take effect with the 2018 tax year, and there are multiple changes that pastors and ministers need to consider before filing, said Eric Davis, treasurer and chief operating officer of the Arkansas Baptist Foundation.

Davis discussed the tax code changes in the Arkansas Baptist News Podcast 95.

"Tax brackets were widened, which means they last longer and the rates have dropped," said Davis.

While state returns remain unchanged, federal standard deductions basically double, according to Davis. That means that most people will opt for the standard deduction instead of itemizing deductions, he said.

The personal exemption

concept, which allowed taxpayers to receive an exemption for the people in their household, has been done away with, said Davis.

"One thing that I think could impact a lot of pastors is unreimbursed expenses that pastors had for serving their church. You don't get to deduct that on your federal return anymore – or your state return. That has gone away," said Davis. "You need to really be sure ... to have your church reimburse you through what is called an 'accountable plan.'"

"If a church doesn't reimburse a pastor for mileage, the way they used to get that deduction on their tax return just does not exist now," said Davis.

While it often applies to pastors, church staff and other ministers, Davis said that the change affects anyone who has unreimbursed expenses from an employer. These expenses are no longer deductible on a person's tax return.

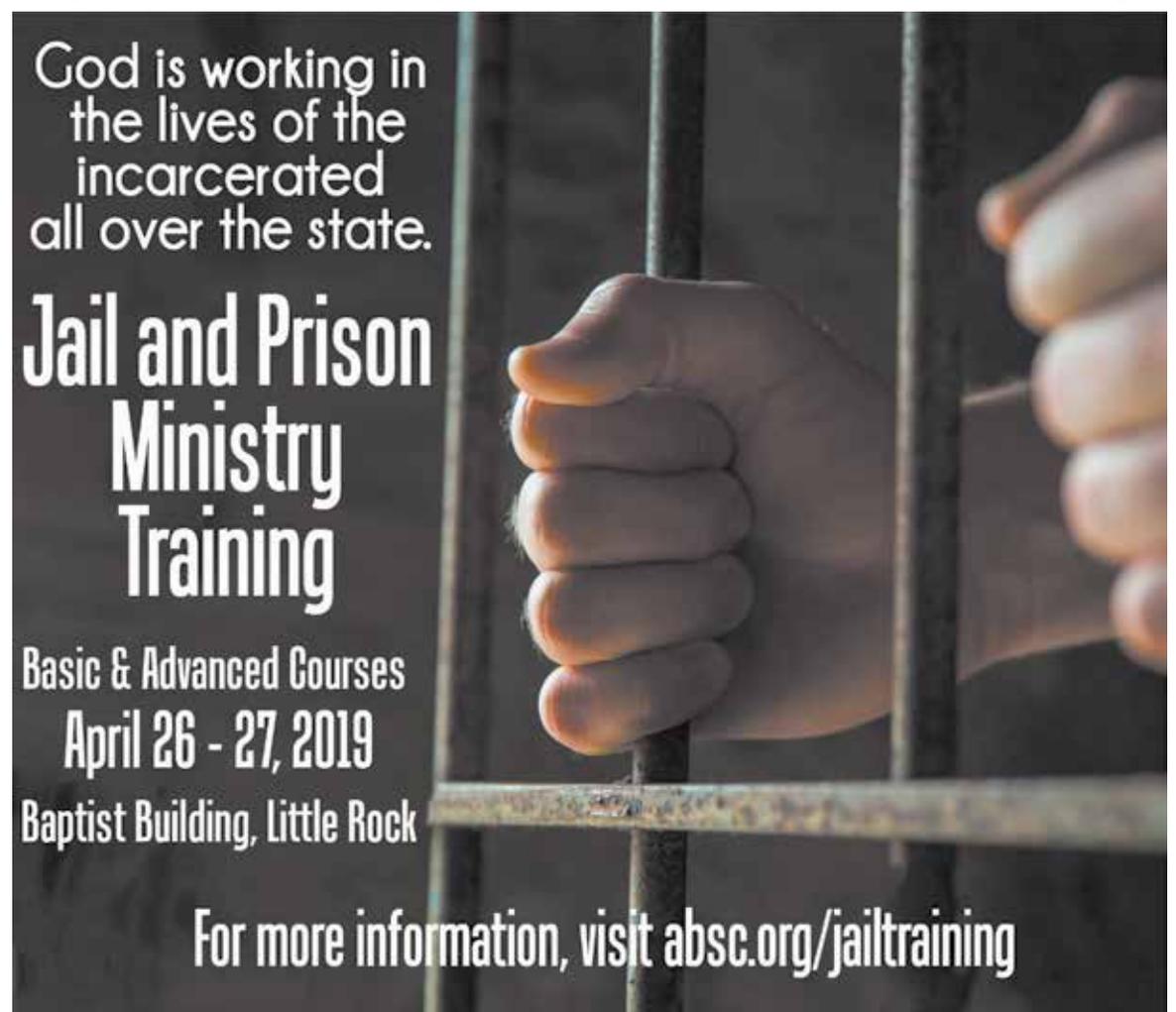
However, mileage and other unreimbursed expenses are still deductible for persons filing as self-employed. The change only affects those who

are employees of a church or other organization, said Davis.

Another positive change to the federal tax code, according to Davis, is that the child

tax credit, for children under the age of 17, has gone from \$1,000 to \$2,000 per child.

See **TAX CHANGES** page 9



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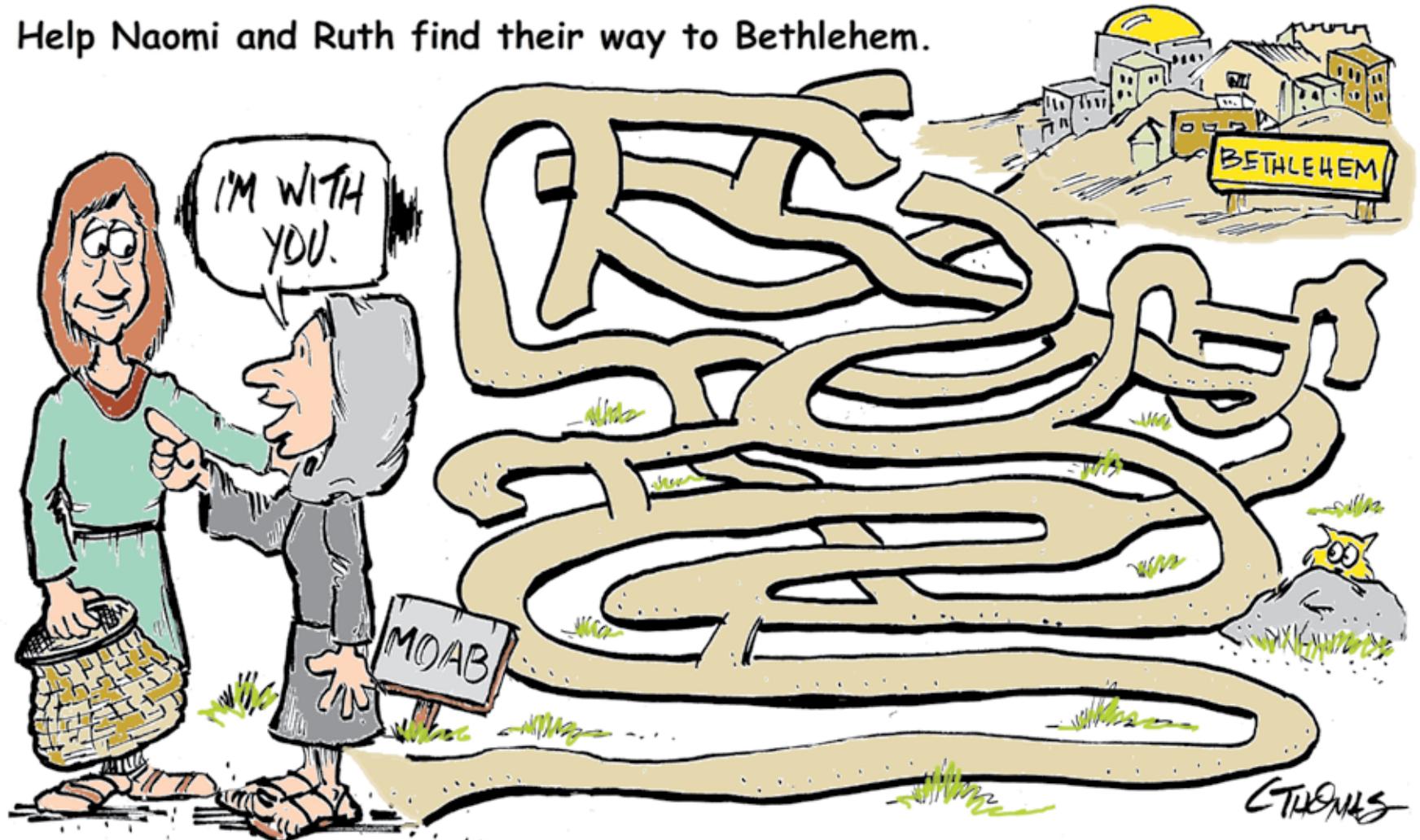
To advertise in the Church Services Directory, contact the *ABN* at 501-376-4791, ext. 5161, or email ads@arkansasbaptist.org

Gospel Games

"An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules."

2 Timothy 2:5 (CSB)

Help Naomi and Ruth find their way to Bethlehem.



Across

- 1. Butter unit
- 4. "with lies ye made the heart of the righteous ____" (Ezekiel 13:22)
- 7. "Doth he think that servant...? I ____ not" (Luke 17:9)
- 11. Naboth couldn't stand in his way
- 13. Mary Todd's fiance, to friends
- 14. Luzon native
- 15. Worry
- 16. O.T. bk.
- 17. ____ Hill, "pulpit" of Paul
- 18. A wife of Esau (Genesis 36)
- 21. Fabled bear
- 23. "offer the tenth of a bath out of the ____" (Ezekiel 45:14)
- 24. "he overturneth the mountains by the ____" (Job 28:9)
- 25. Actor Ayres
- 26. FDR program
- 29. Part of cosmetics brand name
- 30. Two (Sp.)
- 31. "Jesus went not with his disciples into the ____" (John 6:22)

- 32. "Arise, take up thy ____" (Matthew 9:6)
- 33. Period
- 34. "____ would see Jesus" (John 12:21)
- 35. Feel poorly
- 36. "I have graven thee upon the ____ of my hands" (Isaiah 49:16)
- 37. He intercedes with King Zedekiah for Jeremiah (Jeremiah 38, 39)
- 41. Where coed "crashes"
- 42. ____ de siècle
- 43. One of Lamech's wives (Genesis 4)
- 47. Operatic solo
- 48. Footed vase
- 49. An unclean "beast" (Leviticus 11)
- 50. Hebrew letter
- 51. "The Son of man hath not where to ____ his head" (Luke 9:58)
- 52. Hoover ____

Down

- 1. Type of moccasin

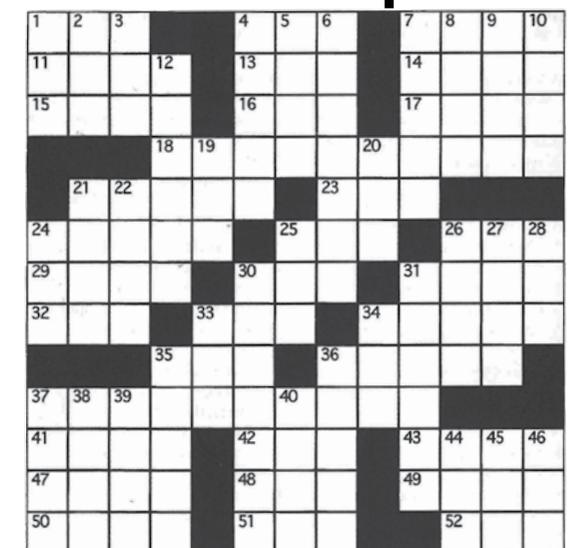
- 2. Exclamation
- 3. ____adiddle (Brit., a fib)
- 4. Reception hall
- 5. By his action, "he being dead yet speaketh" (Hebrews 11:4)
- 6. "He disappointeth the ____ of the crafty" (Job 5:12)
- 7. Absalom's sister (2 Samuel 13)
- 8. 500 sheets of paper
- 9. Other (Sp.)
- 10. "____ me thoroughly from mine iniquity" (Psalm 51:2)
- 12. "array thyself with glory and ____" (Job 40:10)
- 19. Pronoun
- 20. Early movie star
- 21. Tree trunk
- 22. "Ehither have ye made a ____ today?" (1 Samuel 27:10)
- 24. "____ not the poor" (Proverbs 22:22)
- 25. Abraham's nephew
- 26. "Neither was there any ____ there-in" (Exodus 16:24)
- 27. Handles clumsily

- 28. Chewed
- 30. "lament with a ____ lamentation" (Micah 2:4)
- 31. Handmaid of Rachel (Genesis 30)
- 33. Poorly lit
- 34. Pouch
- 35. One of the fenced cities of Naphtali (Joshua 19)
- 36. Woman's nickname
- 37. "Israel...spread his tent beyond the town of ____" (Genesis 35:21)
- 38. "His master shall ____ his ear through" (Exodus 21:6)
- 39. Belonging to the head of the Erites
- 40. What to fork over in Firenze
- 44. Father
- 45. A son of Jether (1 Chronicles 7)
- 46. Search for right word

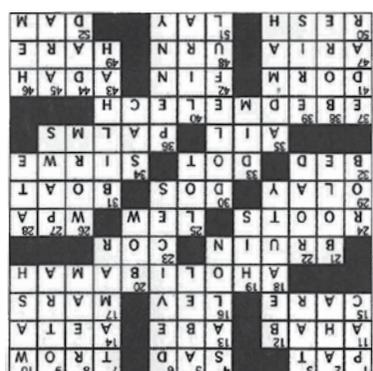
Crossword by Barbour Publishing, Inc.

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ABN Crossword puzzle



Crossword answer below



TAX CHANGES

continued from page 8

"That credit is truly what it sounds like. It is dollar for dollar coming back to you," said Davis.

A negative change is that moving expenses are no longer deductible, and employers are no longer able to reimburse

moving expenses tax-free.

Another possible negative implication of the 2017 tax changes include a tax for nonprofits, churches included, on the cost of providing parking spaces for employees. While there are active efforts to repeal this tax, Davis said that if churches remove all signs and emblems denoting reserved parking spots for em-

ployees, including pastors, by March 31, 2019, they would not be required to fill out a 990 form and pay the associated tax.

The Arkansas Baptist Foundation has developed a relationship with the Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA), which lobbies on behalf of evangelicals regarding tax and financial

issues.

The ECFA has a free resource called Church Excel, which includes a minister tax guide and church reporting guide that are good reference tools for churches, said Davis.

"Most pastors will probably be better off tax-wise, given the changes in the law that have occurred," he said.

Editor's Note: The Arkansas Baptist News would love to share your church news with the state. Send your information to sarah@arkansasbaptist.org or call 1-800-838-2272, ext. 5153. Please submit information three weeks prior to the event.

Obituaries

Amy Sue Grant Brown, 90, of North Little Rock, died March 3.



Brown worked as a church secretary and served at numerous churches, including Park Hill Baptist Church in North Little Rock and First Baptist Church in Russellville. She was preceded in death by her parents, husband, two daughters and eight siblings.

Brown is survived by a son, a daughter, nine grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren.

A funeral service was held March 6 at North Little Rock Funeral Home's chapel followed by burial at Rest Haven Memorial Park in Russellville.

Minnie Lea Moore Caldwell, 87, of Houston, died March 16.

Caldwell's husband, Refus T. Caldwell, was a former

associational missionary for Conway-Perry Baptist Association. Her daughter and son-in-law, Lynette and Max Rose, are on staff at Williams Baptist University in Walnut Ridge.

She was preceded in death by her husband, a daughter, a brother and four sisters.

Caldwell is survived by four children, eight grandchildren, 11 great-grandchildren, two brothers and two sisters.

Funeral services were held March 19 at Harris Chapel in Morrilton followed by burial at McGhee Cemetery in Adona.

Church life

Mount Olive Baptist Church, Crossett, will host Gospel Fest at 6 p.m., Friday,

March 29. The event is a fundraiser for Hope at Home, an organization that supports cancer patients in Ashley County, and will feature Scott Sasser and The Stone Quartet.

West Side Baptist Church, Greers Ferry, will have a dedication service for its new sanctuary at 10:45 a.m., Sunday, March 31.

First Baptist Church, El Dorado, will host a Spring Fling at 4 p.m., Sunday, March 31 at its Oak Street property.

First Baptist Church, Gillham, will host a revival Sunday-Wednesday, March 31-April 3.

Yocana Baptist Church, Mena, will host a revival Sunday-Wednesday, April 7-10.

First Baptist Church, Shannon Hills, will host a special service to honor Jesus and how He sustains pastors, at 3 p.m., April 7, at the church's facility.

Geyer Springs First Baptist Church, Little Rock, will present "The Kingdom," a dramatic presentation of the life, death and resurrection of Christ. The performances will be Friday, April 12 at 7 p.m.; Saturday, April 13 at 3 p.m. and 7 p.m.; and Sunday, April 14 at 7 p.m.

On the move

Randy Lee is serving as pastor at First Baptist Church, Aberdeen.

Justin Curtis has resigned as pastor of First Baptist Church, Marvell. He and his wife, Bethany, will begin church planting in Maine.

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Bethany Baptist Church in Manila, AR, looking for **bi-vocational pastor**. Send resume to Bethany Baptist, P.O. BOX 748, Manila, AR 72442 or email Rhonda Marr: rmarr51@centurylink.net.

FBC in Senath, MO (www.senathfirstbaptist.org), is seeking a **full-time pastor**. Please send resumes to Box 177, Senath, MO, 63876 or by email to fbcSenath@gmail.com.

Witt's Chapel Baptist Church in Maynard, AR, is seeking a **pastor**. Send resumes and references to: David Byers, 1340 Legate Road, Maynard, AR 72444.

Bigelow Baptist Church, Bigelow, AR, is seeking a **bi-vocational pastor**. Please send resumes to brandonrakridge@gmail.com.

First Baptist Church, Hector, is seeking a **bi-vocational pastor**. Send resume to 801 East 16th Street, Russellville, AR 72801, or email: arvba@suddenlink.net.

East Side Baptist Church, Paragould, AR, is seeking a **full-time senior pastor**. Please mail resumes to: Pastor Search Committee, East Side Baptist Church, 529 E. Court Street, Paragould, AR 72450, or email resumes to: brichey@connect2eastside.com. You may also include a sermon DVD or a link to a sermon video/audio.

Victory Baptist Church, Back Gate, AR, is seeking a **full-time pastor**. Please send resumes to: pastorsearch@vbcbackgate.com.

Mountain Top Cowboy Church, Heber Springs, is searching for a **full-time senior pastor**. Mail resume to the Pastor Search Committee, 45 Heber Springs Rd., Heber Springs, AR 72543, or go online to www.mountaintopcowboychurch.com and click on "Pastor Search" for more information.

OTHER STAFF POSITIONS

We are seeking a **bi-vocational youth and family ministries pastor**. Send resume to Open Door Baptist Church, 2400 W. Oak St., Rogers, AR 72758 or email opendoor-rogers@gmail.com.

Central Baptist Church, Bald Knob, AR seeking **bi-vocational music director**. Send

resume to P.O. Box 226, Bald Knob, AR 72010 or email Bro. Paul Barker: pbarker0512@gmail.com.

Mt. Gilead Baptist Church in Bethel Springs, TN, is seeking a **full-time student & music pastor**. We are a growing church with a heart for people all over the world. Please email your resume and/or DVD's to mlarue2020@gmail.com or mail to Mt. Gilead Baptist Church, 6185 Rowsey School Road, Bethel Springs, TN 38315, ATTN: Search Committee. For questions call 731-607-1000.

Cullendale First Baptist Church, 1850 Cash Rd, Camden AR 71701 is seeking a **full-time student minister**. Send resumes to wadetotty@cullendalefbc.org or mail to the church address.

North Central Baptist Association is seeking a **full-time associational missionary**. Send resumes to ncbaclinton@gmail.com or mail to: NCBA, 268 Main St., Clinton, AR 72031.

Balboa Baptist Church, Hot Springs Village, is seeking a **part-time worship leader** of a casual celebration service reaching retiring & still-working adults. Send resume to debbiebalboabaptist@gmail.com.

The First Baptist Church Paris, AR, is look-

ing for a **part-time music director**. For more information, contact Harlin Brewton at hbrewton@hotmail.com.

South Side Baptist Church, Damascus, AR, is seeking a **full-time student minister**. Send resume to sbsc0809@gmail.com or 153 Sulphur Road, Damascus, AR 72039.

Otter Creek Community Church, Little Rock, seeking **part-time minister of music**. Send resume to info@theocchurch.com.

West Baptist, Batesville is searching for a **full-time pastor to students**. Mail resumes to 1100 N. Central Ave., Batesville, AR 72501 or send to pastordmaj.west@gmail.com.

Cedar Heights Baptist Church in North Little Rock, AR, is seeking a **part-time children's minister**. Please send resumes to jobs@chbcnlr.com or visit chbcnlr.com.

Ebenezer Baptist Church, El Dorado, AR, is receiving resumes for a **part-time minister of youth** with more responsibilities during the summer. Please send resume to: Youth Minister Search Committee, Ebenezer Baptist Church, 1942 North Wyatt Dr., El Dorado, AR 71730.

Glendale Baptist Church, Booneville, is seeking a **full-time minister to students**. For more information visit our website

at www.glendalebc.org.

Maple Avenue Baptist Church of Smackover, AR, is seeking a **P/T student minister**. If interested, please call 870-310-5508 or email benmc@mapleavenuebc.com.

Woodland Heights, Conway is seeking a **full-time student pastor for 7th-12th grades**. Looking for a strong leader to reach students and equip them for ministry. Experience and a theology degree preferred. Send resume to resumes@whbconway.org.

South Main Baptist Church, Crossett, is seeking a **bi-vocational youth pastor**. Send resume to: smbcsecretary@windstream.net or PO Box 430, Crossett, AR 71635.

Perryville FBC is seeking a **bi-vocational music director**. Send resumes to pvfb.church@gmail.com.

MISCELLANEOUS

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MARCH 31, 2019

Jesus went home and taught in the synagogue. The people were astonished and asked all the right questions: “Who is this man?” “Where did He get His wisdom?” “Where does He get this power?” The people had the right questions but the wrong attitude. Their prejudice blinded them to the evidence of Who He was. This was a turning point. It was time for Jesus to send out His disciples. They must preach, teach, heal and cast out demons just like He did. He would send them down the path of service while He followed the path of suffering.

With only walking sticks, the clothes on their backs, and the sandals on their feet, Jesus’ disciples went out in pairs (Mark 6:7-9). Jesus empowered them by giving them authority over unclean spirits, power to heal the sick, and power to preach repentance and the good news (6:7, 12-13; Luke 9:6). They would have to rely on a Levitical law of hospitality for room and board (6:10-11; Lev. 19:33-34).

The disciples went out and completed

their mission. They brought back a report to Jesus about what they had done and the teaching they had proclaimed (6:30). They must have been excited. People were coming and going, and there was little time to even eat (6:31). Jesus instructed them to go to a remote place to rest, but the crowds followed them (6:32-33).

The constant demands of ministry require periods of rest, but we will never escape the pressing demands of needy people. Jeri Phillips, who wrote the lessons for the *Explore the Bible* commentary on Mark, said, “Being with Jesus in the middle of a hectic schedule is more restful than sitting in a rocking chair on the back porch without Him.”

Our church’s Easter theme is “The Second Biggest Easter.” All of our offering collected during our three services will go to support ministries and missions with the goal of proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ. We do this because Jesus stills sends out disciples.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE**Sends**

MARK 6:7-13, 30-32 (HCSB)

Daniel Akin, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, said Jesus Christ was the greatest missionary because “He came the greatest distance, from heaven to earth, to bring the good news of salvation. He also made the greatest sacrifice, giving His life in place of sinners that we might be reconciled to God.”

Jesus is a missionary not bound by economic, ethnic, racial, national or gender barriers. His kingdom includes all peoples. After having engaged the Pharisees over tradition versus the gospel, Jesus needed some time away from His enemies and the crowds.

In the region of Tyre and Sidon, He was not alone long before a Greek woman found Him and pleaded with Him to heal her demon-possessed daughter. His response to her was rather shocking, “It isn’t right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs” (Mark 7:27). Jews referred to Gentiles as dogs unworthy of salvation. This is not what Jesus meant.

He was testing her faith. He was saying He must minister to Israel first. The woman was not offended but pressed Jesus, “Lord, even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs” (7:28). She was right; Jesus cares for Gentiles as well. Jesus commended her for her great faith and healed her daughter (7:29-30).

In the region of the Decapolis, a deaf man was brought to Jesus who also had a speech impediment. They begged Jesus to heal him (7:32). Jesus took him away from the crowd and healed him. Immediately he could hear and speak clearly (7:35). Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone, but they told it even more (7:36). The people were astonished, saying, “He has done everything well!” (7:37).

We should be astonished at what God is doing in our lives. We should naturally tell others about what He is doing in our lives and what He can do in theirs. Jesus died and rose again so all peoples could be saved.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE**Includes**

MARK 7:25-37 (HCSB)

The late W. A. Criswell, pastor of First Baptist Church, Dallas, for more than 50 years, said, “I do not know of a more pervasive delusion in America than this: ‘If I were rich, I’d be happy. For me to be happy would be to be rich.’” Most studies show that wealth doesn’t necessarily make one happy. In recent times, several multi-millionaires and billionaires have found happiness in giving the majority of their wealth to philanthropic causes.

Solomon, the richest man in the known world in his day, said that wealth doesn’t bring happiness. There’s nothing wrong with having possessions or wealth. Our misconceptions about wealth are the problem.

The love of money and wealth creates a drive to always want more (Eccl. 5:10). Solomon used the Hebrew word *ahab* to describe the love of money. *Ahab* literally means to “breathe after.” The one who loves money seeks after it as if life depended on it, and this person is

never satisfied (5:10). Once this person gets money, it is spent (5:11). The vicious drive for wealth causes insomnia (5:12). The one who loves money is worried about losing it (5:13-14).

Solomon was not against having wealth. He wanted us to understand that the more we have demands more dependency and responsibility. In the end, it will all be left behind (5:14-17).

We need to have the right perspective about wealth. Having the ability to work to purchase what we need to live is a gift from God

(5:18). Even our ability to enjoy our work and our possessions is a gift from God (5:19-20).

It is a pervasive delusion to think that happiness can be found in possessions. Jesus said, “One’s life is not in the abundance of his possessions” (Luke 12:15). True abundance is found in Jesus Christ (John 10:10). God provides all that we need, and we should trust in Him and not in our possessions.

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE**The problem with wealth**

ECCLESIASTES 5:10-20 (HCSB)

Are you thankful for each and every day? Robert Louis Stevenson said, “The person who has stopped being thankful has fallen asleep in life.” We should be thankful for each new day because it is a gift from God. Solomon told us that the days of our lives should be lived to the fullest.

Solomon told us several ways we can enjoy life. We should appreciate every day we are alive (Eccl. 11:7). He connected light with life. We prepare for death by remembering our days (11:8). Another way of saying this is to count our blessings because the “days of darkness ... will be many” (11:8). Solomon was saying that we should live life to the fullest before we can’t any longer. He also told us that we should pursue our dreams (11:9).

While telling us that we should live life to the fullest, Solomon gave us a warning: “God will bring you to judgment” (11:9). He was saying there will be a day of reckoning. God is going to hold us accountable for how we live our lives.

Solomon also told us to enjoy life

through contentment (11:10). The word “sorrow” comes from a Hebrew word that is a combination of two ideas: anger and resentment, often described as “vexation.” When you place anger and resentment together, you get rebellion – the total opposite of contentment.

Solomon said we should “put away pain from your flesh” (11:10). He said we should stop doing things that harm our bodies. We should also be careful about our minds (12:12). Solomon said there is no end to books and “study wears the body” (12:12). This is the one that

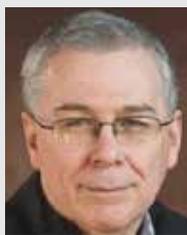
really made me think, since I own tens of thousands of books. Solomon was not anti-educational, but we should not let these books rob us of God’s wisdom.

After all Solomon had experienced and considered, he concluded, “Fear God and keep His commands” (12:13). Solomon chased after things of the world, and it was like chasing the wind. We should not chase after the things of the world, but rather seek God and His kingdom, and all the things we need will be given to us (Matt. 6:33).

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE**Full contentment**

ECCLESIASTES 11:7-10; 12:12-14 (HCSB)

Featured commentary writer



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Gerald Nash is a registered respiratory therapist and EEG technician at St. Mary’s Regional Health System in Russellville. He is involved in medical research, determining antibiotic resistance in tuberculosis. Nash leads a small group and is involved in many ministries at Second Baptist Church, Conway. He has attended several universities and seminaries, including Williams Baptist University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. His degrees include a bachelor of arts in Christian ministries, master of arts and doctor of ministry in pastoral studies, and master of arts in theological studies. He is currently studying archaeology and paleography and volunteers on the Cairo Geniza Project, deciphering and analyzing ancient Greek and Arabic documents. Nash enjoys reading, bass fishing and spending time with his family. He and his wife, Mary Ann, love to travel, explore ancient ruins and go on wild animal safaris.

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Volume 118, Number 5

Leadership and apologetics

Students and leaders make Lead/Defend annual priority

Lisa Falknor
Special to the ABN

LITTLE ROCK

"Lead/Defend is a priority for me," she said, adding, "It's an opportunity to reach out to students - not just college stu-

Sarah Davis
Arkansas Baptist News

Sharing Christ among 'untouchables' in South

