



Inside:

- IMB, Graham Center focuses on rural churches
- Horne named new Baptist Prep president
- Chesser elected Tennessee Baptist president
- Church loves neighbors with Thanksgiving meals
- 50% of pastors see opioid abuse in congregation

China recognizes Lottie Moon site

Lottie Moon church designated historic site

See page 6



Austin: 2019 Baptist Business Leader of the Year

Caleb Yarbrough
Arkansas Baptist News

CONWAY - Years ago, while working at a tire shop in Pine Bluff, Hugh Austin noticed a man wearing a lapel pin signifying that he was a Christian.

Austin was intrigued. He knew the man, and last time he spoke with him, the man was not a believer. Excited at the prospect that the man had been saved, he asked the man about the pin he was wearing.

In so many words, the man told Austin, "Oh, that? It just helps me sell more insurance."

The man's response couldn't have been more foreign to Austin and his philosophy of faith and business - which is one and the same: "Just do right" (gleaned from former Arkansas Razorback head football coach Ken Hatfield) and "prove it everyday."

Austin, a member of Woodland Heights Baptist Church, Conway, who for the past two and a half decades has owned and operated Austin Brothers Tire and Service in Little Rock, and later Conway, is the 2019 Arkansas Baptist News Baptist Business leader of the Year.

"To me Hugh Austin ... epitomizes the term 'Christian businessman,'" said Joe Howerton, a member of Woodland Heights Baptist Church, Conway, who



Hugh Austin (center), owner of Austin Brothers Tire and Service in Little Rock and Conway, checks an engine bay with one of his mechanics at the Conway location. Photo by Caleb Yarbrough

nominated Austin for the recognition.

"Any mechanically challenged individual, of which I am one, be they male, female, old, young ... can rest assured that they are dealing with a

tin. "It shouldn't be a surprise. "Every decision should be based off of Christian values. I don't know any other way of thinking," he said.

Austin's father was a Southern Baptist pastor and his mother a school-teacher. His family moved up and down Highway 67 throughout his childhood and adolescent years as his father served various churches across Arkansas.

After a handful of years in his late teens and early 20s when he fell away from God, Austin became serious about his walk with Christ again in his mid-20s.

About 25 years ago, Austin got involved with Bible Study Fellowship (BSF). He and his

wife, Wrenetta, felt God calling them to Conway, where both of them had grown up, so Wrenetta could be involved in a women's BSF group based there.

In order to allow the Austins to relocate, God led Austin to a new job in Conway. Eventually, God opened the door for Austin to open his own shops.

Automotive repair and tire shops don't always have the best reputation for honest business practices. Most people don't work on their own vehicles today, nor would many know how to if they had the time or desire to do so. This has led to poor experiences for many, including being taken advantage of by shops that know they are dealing with people who

See AUSTIN page 3

Thompson celebrated for 28 years of ministry

FORT SMITH - Dale Thompson, known throughout north-west Arkansas and the Arkansas River Valley as "Brother Dale," has retired from the full-time pastorate after nearly 28 years.

Thompson, 70, became the pastor of First Baptist Church, Fort Smith, in February of 1992, after serving as the pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church, Rogers.

"I can honestly say that my nearly 28 years here at First Baptist, Fort Smith, have all been really good years," said Thompson, adding, "Actually, all 47 of my years as a pastor have been wonderful."

J. Michael Carroll, accountant and member of First Baptist since 1977, said he recently was asked to complete a questionnaire for an organization, which included the question: "Who is the living Arkansan I admire the most?"

"My response was, 'My pastor of the past 28 years, Dale Thompson. He has celebrated with me in times of blessing and counseled me during times of challenge. His fingerprints are all over my life,'" wrote Carroll.

"God has blessed Bro. Dale with an unusual combination of talents. He is, without a



Thompson

See THOMPSON page 3



Austin stands in the lobby of Austin Brothers' Conway location. Photo by Caleb Yarbrough

man of integrity - a Christian man," said Howerton. "Through this man, people are blessed and God is honored."

"I don't want people to be shocked when they see me involved in ministry," said Aus-

ABN classifieds get results!

Read them on Page 10.

The ABN classifieds are a great way to advertise for your church, ministry or business. You can now submit a classified ad via the ABN website at arkansasbaptist.org/ads

Classifieds

WANTED
I am looking for a person to help with my business. Please contact me at [phone number].

FOR RENT
A beautiful home for rent in [location]. Call [phone number] for more information.

TECHNICAL POSITIONS
We are seeking experienced [job title] for our [company name].

CHURCH POSITIONS
We are looking for a [job title] for our church. Contact [name] at [phone number].

ADVERTISING
We offer advertising space in our classifieds section. Contact [name] at [phone number].

ABN Digest

Stories of interest
to Arkansas Baptists

IMB, Billy Graham Center focuses on rural churches

WHEATON, Ill. (BP) — The International Mission Board (IMB) and the Billy Graham Center at Wheaton College's Rural Matters Institute have launched a five-year research project that aims to arm the rural church with resources needed to advance the gospel within, and beyond, the United States.

"The idea is to provide information that will benefit rural practitioners in the United States and around the world," said Jeffrey Clark, director of rural missiology and research for the IMB. "This will involve research, writing, and training for rural practitioners. The goal is to provide information that will help rural practitioners be more effective in reaching their field for Christ."

John Brady, IMB's vice president of global engagement, signed the five-year memorandum of understanding with Ed Stetzer, executive director of the Billy Graham Center, and Josh Laxton, director of the Rural Matters Institute. RMI is an Institute of the Billy Graham Center that serves as a hub to bring together rural leaders, ministries, denominations, organizations and advocates to resource and inspire those serving or praying about serving in rural ministry.

"Rural peoples are vital to the 21st century," Brady said.

"They will continue to be producers of the food and other products that sustain life. Their spiritual health matters. We must seek effective avenues to reach rural peoples with the gospel and help them form healthy churches. This will change the spiritual health not only of our rural areas, but our cities as well."

Laxton said he couldn't be more excited about the partnership.

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

Horne named new Baptist Prep president

LITTLE ROCK — Rex M. Horne Jr. was named president of The Baptist Preparatory School in Little Rock Nov. 21 following a meeting of the school's board of trustees.

Horne, 66, former pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church, Little Rock, and president of Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia, replaces Laura Bednar, 53. He has served as the school's acting president since September.

"Dr. Horne is uniquely qualified as a former college president and pastor to advance our Christ-centered, college preparatory school. He is well-known for his vision and leadership, and we are so grateful he will guide Baptist Prep into the future as our presi-

dent," said Jonathan Curtis, Baptist Prep board chairman.

Horne served as pastor of Immanuel Baptist from 1990-2006, overseeing the relocation of the church from downtown Little Rock to west Little Rock.

At Ouachita, where he worked from 2006-2015, Horne oversaw major campus building projects and led his administrative team to increase enrollment. Since leaving OBU Horne worked from 2015-2019 as president of Arkansas' Independent Colleges and Universities, an organization of private colleges and universities in the state.

"In my previous roles as university president and pastor, I've seen the positive impact

Baptist Prep has made on generations of students academically and spiritually," Horne said. "Baptist Prep's opportunities are limitless, and I'm excited for us to carry out the plans God has for our school in the coming days," Horne said.

Notably, Horne was Bill Clinton's pastor at Immanuel Baptist Church during Clinton's first term as Arkansas governor and continuing after his election as U.S. president.

Horne is a graduate of Lyon College, Batesville, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. He also has served as president of the Arkansas Baptist State



Horne

Convention and as chairman of the Great American Conference Council of Presidents.

Chesser elected Tennessee Baptist president

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. — Former Arkansas Baptist pastor Bruce Chesser has been elected president of the Tennessee Baptist Convention (TBC).

A former pastor in Arkansas, Alabama and Texas, Chesser has served as pastor of First Baptist Church, Hendersonville, Tenn., for the past 10 years.

Chesser was elected without opposition Nov. 19 during the afternoon session of the 145th annual meeting of the TBC. He was nominated by Bruce Raley, executive pastor of First Baptist Church, Hendersonville.

Raley described Chesser as a pastor/shepherd and an "anointed preacher and

teacher of the gospel. He has a passion to see people come to Jesus and to grow in Christ."

First Baptist, Hendersonville, is a strong supporter of convention causes. In 2018, the church ranked fifth among Tennessee Baptist churches in total gifts through the Cooperative Program with \$369,603 (approximately 3.4 percent of undesignated gifts). First Baptist also ranked eighth in the TBC in the number of baptisms with 178 in 2018.

Chesser earned a bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of Mobile, Ala., and a master's and doctorate in ministry from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

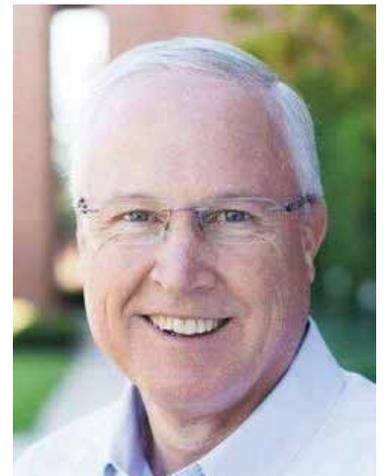
According to the First Bap-

tist Church, Hendersonville's website, he met his wife Joy in college and the pair married in 1978. They have two sons, Justin and Travis.

The Chessers have served the following churches: First Baptist, Spearman, Texas; First Baptist, Opp, Ala.; Fayette First Baptist, Fayette, Ala.; Calvary Baptist, Tuscaloosa, Ala.; Geyer Springs First Baptist, Little Rock; and First Baptist Church, Hendersonville, since August 2009.

Bruce enjoys all sports, especially involving the University of Alabama. He is also a fan of the Tennessee Titans and the Nashville Predators.

This article was compiled from reports by the Baptist & Reflec-



Chesser

tor, the official news journal of the Tennessee Baptist Convention, and the Andalusia (Ala.) Star-News.

Ritchie returns to Arkansas, joins ABSC staff

LITTLE ROCK — Clint Ritchie, former pastor of First Baptist Church, Hampton, and Swifton Baptist Church, Swifton, who has served as pastor of First Baptist Church, Yazoo City, Miss., since 2014, is returning to Arkansas.

Ritchie, 40, has joined the Arkansas Baptist State Convention (ABSC) missions team as community missions mobilization specialist.

"Ritchie (will be) serving in the area of community missions in promoting, imple-

menting and evaluating the overall strategy of community missions among ABSC churches and associations," said Bob Harper, ABSC missions team leader.

"Clint will help our churches to be more mission-minded no matter what size congregation they might be. He has demonstrated that he is a leader in reaching out to the community with the gospel of Christ with various mission projects and ministries in the local churches he has served in. We are grateful for his

heart for missions and his love of Arkansas Baptists."

Ritchie said he welcomes the opportunity to return the investment the ABSC has played in his ministry and personal development and is excited to serve the churches of the convention.

"God is doing great things through Arkansas Baptists, and it is my privilege to be part of it," said Ritchie.

Ritchie and his wife, Jennifer, have two children, Addison Elizabeth, 13, and Whitley Gracy, 9.



Ritchie

AUSTIN

continued from page one

often don't know any better.

These stereotypes and expectations are part of why Austin Brothers Tire and Service has developed an avid customer base over the years.

Informed by a Christian worldview and deep faith, Austin made the decision a long time ago that he, and his business, would treat people right and that would be all the advertising they would need.

Unlike the Pine Bluff man who wore the Christian lapel pin to "sell more insurance," Austin aims each day to walk with Christ and let his actions speak to his convictions. It's likely no coincidence that, multiple mechanics who work in Austin Brothers' Conway shop made professions of faith in Christ in the past year.

"My wife and I pray before we leave the house every morning, 'God place our steps today. Protect our family. Draw my children and their children, and us, to a closer walk with you today. Help us not to be impacted by the world today. Let us see Satan's attacks and deal with them - You help us do that (and) heal those that are ill. ... Protect our men (shop mechanics), keep us from making mistakes,'" said Austin.

"This is our mission field," said Austin. "Everybody who comes in that door, they don't come in here because their life is going well, they come in because they have a

problem," he said.

Austin said that many of the people that he and Wrenetta pray for are customers, many of whom who have become like family to them over the years.

A few years ago, Austin became involved with a local non-profit ministry called Project 3:27. Named for Proverbs 3:27 (CSB), "When it is in your power, don't withhold good from the one to whom it belongs," the ministry's main focus is finding vehicles that can be repaired and made road worthy in order to donate them to those in need across central Arkansas.

Since its inception, Project 3:27 has donated nearly 50 vehicles. Austin's role includes accessing incoming vehicles that have been donated and either repairing them or, for larger jobs including transmission and/or engine rebuilds, sending them on to other ministries that can repair them, including Renewal Ranch in Houston.



One of Austin's "greatest joys," is BSF, where he currently serves as a third and fourth-grade children's leader.

"That hour-and-a-half with those children on Monday night ... is a big deal for me,"



Austin works the service counter at Austin Brothers Tire and Service in Conway. Photos by Caleb Yarbrough

said Austin. "It's a ministry totally outside of the church. Many families have been changed because of that ministry."

Austin is also involved with a men's BSF group.

"Men that might not go to church on Sunday morning, might come with their buddy over to that. You know, if you start studying God's Word, and you start doing it seriously, its going to change your life," said Austin. "Some of the most amazing friendships that I have developed over the past 25 years have been in men's Bible Study Fellowship."

"Hugh is a great man. He is a discipler of young men," said Larry White, senior pastor of Woodland Heights Baptist Church, Conway. "His

business is kind of like a little coffee shop (or) town square. People go in there just to hang out, just to be around him.

"He is kind and gracious and everything he does he does with excellence," said White. "He is an advocate for the church there and for the kingdom. ... In fact, a family in our church is here because Hugh loved them and shared the gospel with them.

"I can't say enough about Hugh Austin," said White.

While some businesses advertise their Christian values, Hugh Austin's goal is for himself and his business to walk the talk.

"Keep doing the right thing over and over and over again and don't count the cost," said Austin.

Contact Caleb Yarbrough at caleb@arkansasbaptist.org.

THOMPSON

continued from page one

doubt, one of the most gifted communicators of God's Word in the Southern Baptist Convention and an extremely gifted administrator. That is a rare combination! He is an incredible example of a servant leader."

In a story that aired on 5 News, the Fort Smith/Fayetteville TV station, Jacob Ray, the worship pastor at First Baptist, said he has grown up with "Brother Dale" as his pastor and says he's the same person at the pulpit that he is behind closed doors.

"It's been wonderful. I've loved it, I've loved being

with him. I've loved serving with him. I would do anything for him. He has just greatly impacted my life and my wife's life and we are very grateful for him," Ray told 5 News.

On Sunday, Nov. 24, First Baptist hosted a special service honoring Thompson and his wife, Toni. The church auditorium was filled to capacity with church members, community leaders, former church staff and long-time friends.

Sen. John Boozman, who has been a friend of Thompson for more than 40 years, was in attendance. Gov. Asa Hutchinson, a long-time friend of Thompson, sent a pre-recorded video mes-

sage thanking Thompson and Toni for their friendship and his great impact on his life and the lives of countless others.

Speakers during the celebration service were Eric Ramsey, associate pastor of First Baptist; Thompson's sons: Tad Thompson, pastor of Covenant Church, Siloam Springs, and Tyler Thompson, pastor of Westwood Baptist Church, Greenwood; Bill Hulse, pastor of Putnam City Baptist Church, Putnam City, Okla.; Kendall Lucas, worship pastor of Denton Bible Church, Denton, Texas, and Mike Carroll, a deacon and church leader at First Baptist.

In addition to serving as pastor of the church, Thomp-

son has been the host of Hope from Above, a weekly broadcast of First Baptist. The live TV broadcast of the church began in 1953, making it one of the longest-running live weekly TV broadcasts in the world. It also has one of the largest viewing audiences among local live programming in its market.

"There's really not much about me worth celebrating," said Thompson, "We celebrate our Savior, Jesus Christ. Let's make much of Him."

In January 2020, Blake Boylston, who currently serves as assistant pastor at Capitol Hill Baptist Church, Washington, D.C., will assume the pastorate of First Baptist.

ABN Digest

Stories of interest
to Arkansas Baptists

Tenn. church loves neighbors with Thanksgiving meals

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) - "If the Lord brings a need to our attention that can glorify Him, we might as well jump on it," said Alba Rice, member of Immanuel Nashville, Tenn., when explaining the attitude behind the church's Thanksgiving ministry.

Rice, along with other church members and leaders, organized an outreach in connection with Park Avenue Elementary school in west Nashville, Tenn., to provide a Thanksgiving meal for families in need.

Immanuel's partnership with the nearby school is three years old. In that time, the church has helped provide lunches for staff work days or treats on birthdays, but Rice said the approach this Thanksgiving was intended to create face-to-face relationships with the school's families.

"This is not a once-a-year thing for us," Rice said. "This is a continuing presence of our church."

Rice said previous ministry efforts with Park Avenue Elementary have included local restaurants that have donated food for events hosted by the church. The hope with these ministries, she said, is to get the entire community involved in spreading the gospel.

"We're always looking for projects to do at the school and hopefully the Lord will enlarge our territory," Rice said, adding that providing the meals in person was meant to do more than just finance a meal.

Rice already has plans for similar outreach events during the Christmas season and is looking ahead for ways to partner with Park Avenue Elementary next spring and summer.

"The Lord's in charge of time, so while we're here, we make the best of it."

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)

Is Chick-fil-A 'chickening out?'

Just when many Christians felt it was honorable (and tasty to boot) to promote fast-food chain Chick-fil-A, which has always espoused Judeo-Christian values, comes revelations the company's foundation is in the process of reassessing its philanthropic partnerships – including faith-based ministries.



Pressing On

Tim Yarbrough

Phil. 3:14

What is alarming is what drove the Atlanta-based fast-food chain to make the decision.

Included in the organizations the company will cease to support are The Salvation Army and Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA), which just happen to be ministries LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer) activists have expressed concerns about, fearing they are "anti-LGBTQ."

David Almasi of the National Center for Public Policy Research, spoke for many believers when he stated:

"That was a gut punch when Chick-fil-A decided to compromise on its values. It's something that's going to hurt the chain more than it's going to help it, despite what they say."

I have to admit that I have been concerned when reading the news over the past few years citing Chick-Fil-A being kicked out of malls and banned from college campuses.

Innocently, I chalked it up to the cost of doing business for a company driven by Christian values in the 21st century.

And honestly, actions taken by activists didn't seem to

harm the company's bottom line, which fast-food industry analysts announced in April of this year is set to become the third-largest restaurant in the U.S. trailing behind only McDonald's and Starbucks.

As recently as 2017, Chick-fil-A was ranked seventh behind McDonald's, Starbucks, Subway, Wendy's, Burger King, Taco Bell and Dunkin' Donuts.

So to say the growth of the company has been explosive is an understatement.

That's why Chick-fil-A's decision to cave on its values – values that have played no small part in attracting customers to their restaurants – is so disconcerting.

Evangelist Franklin Graham, who personally frequents the restaurant, said in a Facebook post that he spoke to Chick-fil-A CEO Dan Cathy, son of founder Truett Cathy, who assured him the company is not caving on its values.

Franklin said Cathy told him, "They will continue to support whoever they want to support. They haven't changed who they are or what they believe. Chick-fil-A remains committed to Christian values."

But Chick-fil-A President and Chief Operating Officer Tim Tassopoulos seems to be sending a different message.

In announcing the company will now focus on three initiatives with one accompanying charity each: education, homelessness and hunger, Tassopoulos told bisnow.com, "There's no question we

know that, as we go into new markets, we need to be clear about who we are," he said. "There are lots of articles and newscasts about Chick-fil-A, and we thought we needed to be clear about our message."

It is interesting that the move in allocation of their support of charities comes at a time when Chick-fil-A is making a more aggressive push to expand globally and into more liberal U.S. markets that have publicly rejected them based on their biblically-based values in the past.

It is, indeed, a complicated issue.

In response to Chick-fil-A's announcement, The Salvation Army said in a statement to bisnow.com, "We're saddened to learn that a corporate partner has felt it

necessary to divert funding to other hunger, education and homelessness organizations. We serve more than 23 million individuals a year, including those in the LGBTQ+ community."

Chick-fil-A has intentionally built its brand around a foundation of traditional values – more specifically Judeo-Christian values. From their emphasis on service (treating their customers how they would like to be treated) to being closed on Sundays, the company's identity has long been faith-based one.

Often referred to – albeit tongue-in-cheek – as "Christian chicken," Chick-fil-A is known by many Christians, especially evangelicals, as a company that shares their basic worldview – to the

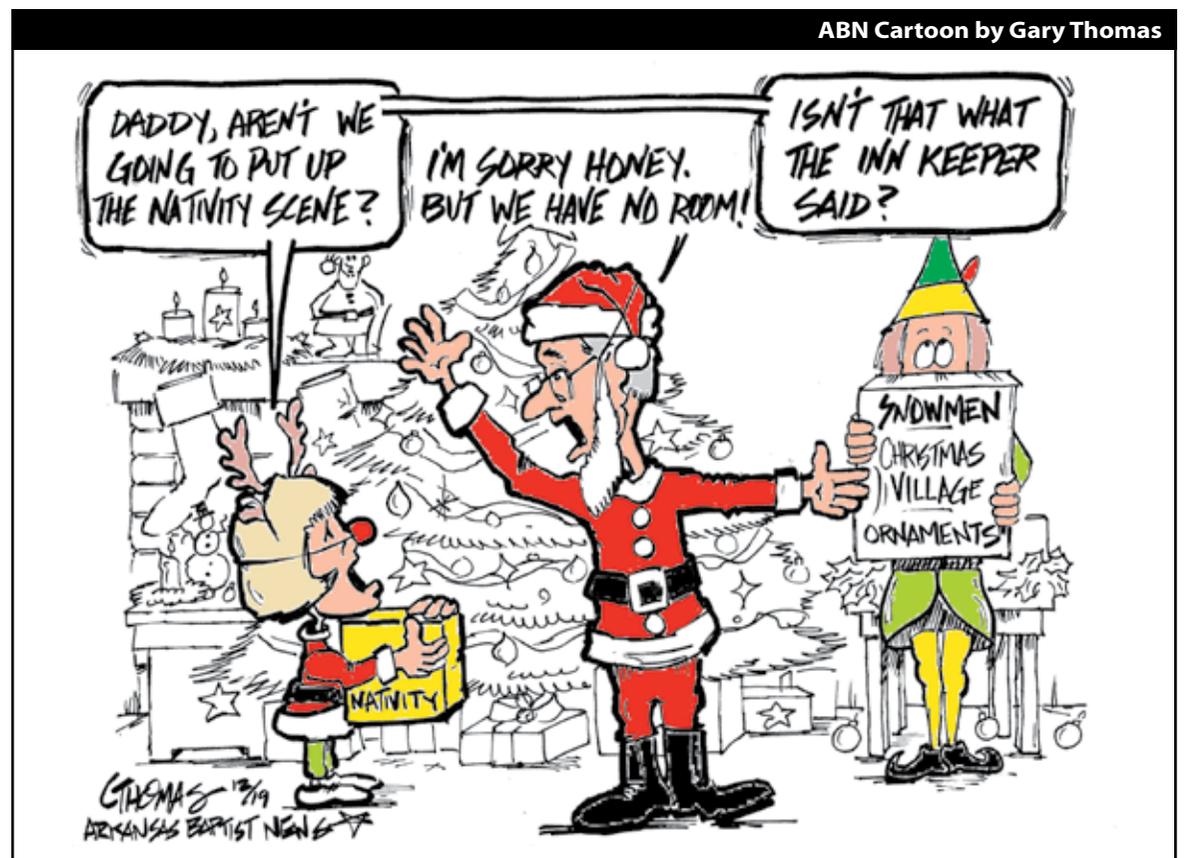
extent that their support of the restaurant is not simply based on the quality of its chicken sandwiches but on its publicly-espoused values and commitments.

One of Merriam-Webster's definitions of apostasy is, "abandonment of a previous loyalty." This perfectly defines Chick-fil-A's recent capitulation to the culture war taking place in America – and the West in general.

British theologian John Stott once said, "The essence of apostasy is changing sides from that of the crucified to that of the crucifier." American singer-songwriter Bob Dylan, said it more plainly in his 1979 song, "Gotta Serve

See **CHICKEN** page 6

ABN Cartoon by Gary Thomas



Volume 118, Number 24
USPS08021

Member of the Association
of State Baptist Publications
Arkansas Press Association
Baptist Communicators Association

Inform. Inspire. Involve.

Tim Yarbrough, editor/exec. director
Caleb Yarbrough, associate editor
Sarah Davis, staff writer

Barbara Vick, circulation coordinator
G. Gee, advertising sales rep

Advertising: ads@arkansasbaptist.org
Phone 501-376-4791, ext. 5161
Toll-free 800-838-2272, ext. 5161

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

SUBSCRIPTION rates are \$9.75 per year (Every Resident Family Plan or Group), \$17 per year (Individual). Arkansas Baptist News, 10 Remington Drive, Little Rock, AR 72204; phone 501-376-4791; toll-free 800-838-2272; email: abn@arkansasbaptist.org. Periodical

Postage paid at Little Rock, AR.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR: Send letters to the Editor to tim@arkansasbaptist.org or to our mailing address. Letters must be typed, doublespaced and 300 words or less (fewer words the better). Letters must be signed and marked "for publication" and may be edited to fit space requirements.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Arkansas Baptist News, 10 Remington Drive, Little Rock, AR 72204.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS: Doug Hibbard, East End, president; Danny Allen, Rison, vice president; Glenda Riddle, Ashdown, secretary; Bob Beach, Little Rock; Steve Ellison, Mena; Rex Griffin, Elkins; Jennifer Booth, Little Rock; Carey Trickey, Judsonia; Mike McCoy, Hoxie; Mike Sheets, Texarkana; Mike Vinson, Corning; Lyndon Finney, Little Rock; Tommy Jacobs, Lexa; Larry Killian, Hampton.

Is the Bible reliable? – Part 4

Over the last several columns, I have discussed the reliability of Scripture. I have argued that the Bible is authoritative and inspired. That is to say, the Bible is the inspired Word of God and it has the authority of God in its declaration. In this piece, I want to discuss another important attribute of Scripture: infallibility.



Deep Waters

Chad Meeks

Infallibility generally means that the Bible doesn't err in things on faith and morals. Thus, whatever theological or ethical claims the Bible makes is without error.

For example, if the Bible claims that Jesus was born of a virgin – even though that might seem scientifically impossible – it is true. Or another example, if Scripture claims that sexual immorality is morally impermissible – despite what personal or cultural sensibilities may be – it is so. Given that the Bible doesn't err in things on faith and morals, it cannot mislead someone who places his or her reliability in its claims. In summary, infallibility claims: if Scripture makes a claim, that claim is true.

This is a bold claim. So why believe it? For one, there are several places where Scripture implies infallibility. In 2 Peter 3:15-17, Peter writes, "... our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their destruction, as they do the other Scriptures. You ...

take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people." Peter's meaning here is two-fold: 1) he is claiming that Paul's writings are Scripture by equating Paul's writings with the writings of other Scripture, and 2) Peter notes that the church should not be "carried away with ... error"; implying that Paul's writings contain no such errors.

If the Bible is true (without error), then it cannot contain any contradictions. Though there are certainly difficult passages within the Scriptures (both difficult to translate or understand and difficult to accept), if someone wants to claim that there is a contradiction within Scripture, he or she must produce the evidence. To my mind, though many have tried, none have produced such evidence.

Two of the most popular examples of "questionable" biblical claims are the historical evidence of the city of Jericho and the historical claim that the Hebrews had a great number that escaped from Egypt. Some, perhaps many, modern archeologists claim that the currently available data doesn't seem to support the claim that Jericho was a great walled city – or a walled city at all. Some also claim that it was simply a small band of Hebrew slaves that escaped Egypt, not a vast congregation.

Without getting into a historical or archeological debate, if we are to take the critics concerns as reliable, there is a vast difference between, "current evidence doesn't support the biblical narrative" (which is what the critics claim) and "current evidence outright contradicts the biblical narrative" (which isn't the claim of most critics). In other words, there is a major distinction between, "we don't have evidence to support such a claim" and "the evidence outright contradicts said claim." Those who question the reliability of Scripture will generally claim the former; which doesn't disprove Scripture, it merely shows more data is needed.

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



Celebrating an 'incredible' annual meeting

Arkansas Baptists, thank you for making the 2019 Arkansas Baptist State Convention (ABSC) Annual Meeting an incredible meeting! The ABSC Pastors' Conference and Annual Meeting is one of our most important events of the year,

celebrating the victories of the past year and challenging us to focus on our mission and ministry for the upcoming year.

There was strong participation from Arkansas Baptists across the state in this year's annual meeting. Our records indicate 1,318 individuals from 366 churches participated in the many events that make up the ABSC Pastors' Conference and Annual Meeting. Our staff has heard from countless people that the meeting proper, networks

and fellowship meetings across the three days were incredible. There was laughter, tears, times of intense prayer, celebration, handshakes, hugs and heartwarming fellowship.

As expected, when so many high impact leaders are gathered in one place, the

spiritually charged energy and excitement is something that is detectable and humbling to experience.

I want to express personal thanks to Dave Hughey, Jarvis Smith and Scott Miller for their leadership as officers with the Pastors' Conference. I also express deep appreciation to Greg Sykes, Jeff Paxton and Stacy Reed for their leadership as officers of the annual meeting.

I was honored to welcome back long-time Arkansas Baptist and dear friend, Ronnie

Floyd, on Tuesday to bring an inspiring word and connect with Arkansas Baptists. We were inspired and moved at the many ministry reports, testimonies, worship, sermons and updates from the agencies and institutions.

We anticipate a great Pastors' Conference next year from newly elected officers Nick Floyd, David R. Mitchell and Chester Witherspoon; as well as another incredible annual meeting led by elected officers Manley Beasley, Ken Shaddox and Jamar Andrews.

Arkansas Baptists, thank you again for coming in great numbers and connecting at this meeting. Because of your great heart and participation, we left feeling unified, recharged and excited at what God will do in this coming year!

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



Executive Directions

Sonny Tucker

'I'll just try to stay in my lane'

I'm sure no one is keeping track except me, but this will be my last column for the *Arkansas Baptist News*. It has been a privilege to serve Arkansas Baptists as president over the past two years, but I'm somewhat thankful and excited to hand that role over to the capable hands of Manley Beasley.

This role, of course, was humbling, but also an educational opportunity.

Most importantly, I had the chance to encounter so many of the state's greatest kingdom servants and to have a front-row seat to witness their leadership, hear their hearts and count the results of their ministries.

God is at work in Arkansas, and He's doing it through some amazing people.

Forget my role over the past two years for a moment – just as a pastor and a Baptist, I'll be focusing on my real job

with a great dose of encouragement.

My faith in the Cooperative Program has only deepened. My excitement about ministry partnerships, church planting, missions and the role of the local church has only intensified. My belief in the leadership of the Arkansas Baptist

State Convention (ABSC) – from Executive Director J.D. "Sonny" Tucker and his entire team

down through each agency head and institution – has blossomed with each event, each meeting and each opportunity for exposure.

Again, there are some amazing people in Arkansas, and they are doing great things for our great God.

As for me, to be completely honest, I'm relieved to return full-time to Russellville, and to pastor the wonderful people of First Baptist with a bit more singular focus. If

I've learned anything over the past two years, it's that I do not desire a platform or an expanded ministry. No one needs to read my tweets. No one needs to listen to my podcast. I won't be writing a pastoring book anytime soon.

I just want to shepherd our flock to the best of my ability, to preach the Word, to equip the saints for the work of the ministry, to captain our ministry team to the best of my ability and to have faith, endure and work hard.

The ABSC is in great hands and the future is bright. Don't let all the angry, national SBC "tweeters" convince you otherwise. And I'll trust that and just try to stay in my lane in little, old Russellville. If you see me at next year's annual meeting, seated with our staff team, don't hesitate to say "hello." But if you have any questions, I'll gladly point you to "President Beasley."

Greg Sykes is pastor of First Baptist Church, Russellville, and president of the ABSC.



President's Perspective

Greg Sykes

Letters to the Editor welcomed

The *Arkansas Baptist News* (ABN) welcomes Letters to the Editor regarding issues of concern to Southern Baptists in Arkansas. Send Letters to the Editor to tim@arkansasbaptist.org or to our mailing address. Letters must be typed, double-spaced and 300 words or less (fewer words, the better). Letters must be signed and marked "for publication" and may be edited to fit space requirements.



China designates Lottie Moon's church a historical site

Catherine Finch
International Mission Board

PENGLAI, China - The name, "Lottie Moon," is known by many in the Southern Baptist world. From the Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, to movies, books and documentaries detailing her life of service, Lottie Moon is often hailed as a "missionary hero."

Lottie Moon's legacy will now be preserved beyond the Southern Baptist realm. Wulin Shenghui Church of Penglai in Shandong province, where

Lottie Moon was a member during her time in Dengzhou, China, has been designated as a nationally protected historical and cultural site by The State Council of the People's Republic of China, chinachristiandaily.com reported Nov. 14.

WMU Executive Director and Treasurer Sandy Wisdom-Martin is thankful for the continuing impact of Lottie Moon's legacy.

"We celebrate the decision to protect this location of historical significance. More than a century later, we still feel the impact of Lottie's legacy that

helped shape our global missionary enterprise. Her sacrifice for the sake of the gospel continues to inspire new generations to fulfill His Commission," she said.

Built in 1872 by Southern Baptist missionaries Tarleton and Martha Crawford, the church at Penglai is still in use to this day with a current church membership of about 4,000. The church was closed to foreigners in the 1900s but reopened in 1988. WMU leaders from the United States were some of the first foreigners to visit Lottie Moon's church once it reopened. Within the walls of the European-styled church, WMU leaders discovered a monument dedicated to Lottie Moon by Chinese Christians in 1915.

International Mission Board (IMB) President Paul Chitwood reflected on the vital role Lottie Moon has played in Southern Baptist missions throughout the years.

"Lottie Moon's love for the

Chinese people meant that she gave her best to them - and her best was the good news that she shared by her life and witness as a Southern Baptist missionary," said Chitwood.

"The Wulin Shenghui Church of Penglai Shandong province was 'home base' for Lottie and we are thrilled to see this site preserved, not as a monument to a missionary, but as a spiritual marker to remind the world that the gospel is worthy of your life. God used Lottie Moon to change China,

and also to change Southern Baptists, forever," Chitwood said.

"We're incredibly grateful for the legacy of her work in partnership with this local church, and the more than 4.5 billion dollars given in her honor by Southern Baptists in the past 120 years to advance the gospel toward the vision of people from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, worshipping our Lord," he said.

Catherine Finch is an International Mission Board writer based in Richmond, Va.



A Chinese woman stands beside a monument dedicated to Lottie Moon at Wulin Shenghui Church of Penglai in Shandong province. Chinese Christians built the monument and dedicated it to Moon in 1915. *IMB photo*

CHICKEN

continued from page 4

Somebody," "You're gonna have to serve somebody. Well, it may be the devil or it may be the Lord. But you're gonna have to serve somebody."

While Chick-fil-A's leadership claim that nothing has changed and that their commitment to Christian values remains as strong as ever - actions speak louder than words.

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

I SAW

A GREAT MULTITUDE

FROM EVERY NATION AND ALL TRIBES **REV 7:9**

imb | LOTTIE MOON CHRISTMAS OFFERING®

imb.org/lmco

The Lottie Moon Christmas Offering® is a registered trademark of WMU®.

50 percent of pastors see opioid abuse in congregation

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – Like most U.S. pastors, Robby Gallaty knows someone who has been affected by opioid abuse. But unlike most pastors, Gallaty has personally suffered through addiction.

Twenty years ago this month, Gallaty endured a near-fatal car accident. When he left the hospital, the club-bouncer-turned-church-leader took with him several prescriptions for painkillers.

“My descent into full-scale drug abuse was amazingly rapid,” he writes in his new book, “Recovered: How an Accident, Alcohol, and Addiction Led Me to God.”

“In November of 1999, be-

fore the accident, I was selling cars, training for the Ultimate Fighting Championship, and thinking about business opportunities. By early the next year, I was looking for faster and better drug connections,” said Gallaty.

After stealing \$15,000 from his parents to feed his addiction, Gallaty found himself at his lowest point – kicked out of his parents’ home and told not to come back.

“It was the hardest three months of their lives, and they’ll tell you that,” he said. “But it was the best thing for me. I knew that I couldn’t fix myself.”

This led Gallaty, now pas-

tor of Long Hollow Baptist Church in Hendersonville, Tenn., to what he calls a “radical, Paul-like conversion” on Nov. 12, 2002.

Most pastors don’t have the intimate knowledge of addiction Gallaty has, but most say they’ve seen it through people connected to their church and even among members of their congregation.

Nashville-based LifeWay Research asked 1,000 Protestant pastors about their connections to the opioid epidemic and how their churches are looking to address the issue.

Two-thirds of pastors (66 percent) say a family member of someone in their congrega-

tion has been personally affected by opioid abuse.

More than half (55 percent) say they or someone in their congregation knows a local neighbor suffering through opioid abuse.

For half of pastors (52 percent), someone directly in their church is dealing with an opioid addiction.

Fewer than a quarter (23 percent) of pastors say they don’t know anyone personally affected by it.

“The drug epidemic has infiltrated our churches and neighborhoods. It is not localized to a particular region or socio-economic class,” said Gallaty. “Addiction is no re-

specter of persons.”

Pastors of the smallest churches (fewer than 50 in attendance) are most likely to say they don’t know anyone connected to their congregation or community affected by opioid abuse (31 percent).

Pastors in the Northeast (11 percent) are least likely to say they don’t have any such personal connections.

“More than two-thirds of even the smallest churches have connections to people affected by opioid abuse,” said Scott McConnell, executive director of LifeWay Research. “Opioid addiction can impact people who aren’t a significant risk for other types of drugs.”

AFB approves budget, distributes funds

LITTLE ROCK – The Arkansas Baptist Foundation (ABF) Board of Directors approved the organization’s 2020 budget and officers, as well as distributions for mission work in

Israel, among other business during its quarterly board meeting Nov. 14 in Little Rock.

ABF’s 2020 officers are John McMorran, chairman;

Jay Shell, vice chairman; Tommy Vaughan, secretary; Bobby Thomas, president; Dillon McClain, vice president, and Eric Davis, treasurer.

Mark Conine, the current chairman of the ABF’s board, was recognized for his service during the meeting. Wendell Stratton was recognized for completing a six-year term of service on the board.

The board approved the ABF’s 2020 operating budget, in addition to Amos distributions for mission work in Israel and among the Israelite people.

In other action, the board:

– Heard a report from Thomas, who reviewed the report given at this year’s Arkansas Baptist State Convention Annual Meeting, highlighting five young professionals on ABF staff who are professionally trained and using their talents to fulfill a call to ministry.

Thomas noted a variety of resources available by the ABF such as the continuation of scholarship opportunities provided to Arkansas Baptist students and an online form for creating a legacy giving plan available to Arkansas Baptists in denominational service or those wishing to make a legacy gift to kingdom causes.

Thomas told the board that approximately \$100 million in estate plans have been prepared this year by ABF attorney Dillon McClain.

– Heard a report from Jason Wilkie, executive director of Camp Siloam.

“It was the perfect location for my annual staff planning retreat and the most productive retreat ever!”
Pastor Mark Eason, Church at Rock Creek

“We truly met God face-to-face at CrossHeirs”
Karnan Egby, RAP Minister

CROSS HEIRS

Retreat CENTER

Teaching, Training, Recreation ... Rest

Sitting on a secluded 280-acre farm in Arkansas County the CrossHeirs Retreat Center is the ideal location for your next church, ministry, corporate or family retreat. Big Jim’s Lodge is the centerpiece of CrossHeirs. The three-story, 16 bedroom log cabin provides the perfect location for teaching, training or just getting away from it all to focus on what’s really important.

For more information contact Matt Mosler
matt@crossheirs.org · (501) 352-3465

CHURCH SERVICES DIRECTORY

Baptistries/Steeple

Construction Sales Co., Inc.
P.O. Box 1049
Magnolia, AR 71753-1049
800-526-9663 FAX: 870-234-6475
Also laminated wood arches, beams and decking

Church Facility Planner

Sowell Architects
1315 North Street, Suite 100
Conway, AR 72034
501-450-9633 FAX: 501-450-7228
Email: rik@sowellarchitects.com
www.sowellarchitects.com
Master planning, site analysis
and all architectural services

Church Insurance

Michael B. Russell, MA, MBA
Member, Cross Church, Springdale
Mike Russell & Associates
P.O. Box 709, Bentonville, AR 72712
877-715-5336, 479-657-6369 fax
www.protectmychurch.org
AR Ins. Lic. #185726
Non-profit - Church - Commercial -
Employee Benefits

James Greene & Associates

800-422-3384
www.jamesgreeneins.com
James Greene & Associates represents
Brotherhood Mutual Insurance, a national leader
insuring churches in alliance with GuideStone.
Call today or go online for property, liability,
auto and worker’s comp quotes!

Flooring

Floors & More, Inc.
21286 Interstate 30
Benton, AR 72019
501-316-0267 FAX: 501-316-2533
Email: sales@floorsandmorear.com
www.floorsandmorear.com
Consultation/Statewide Services/Commercial
Flooring/Carpet Squares/Gym Floors

Kitchen Equipment & Supplies

Aimco Equipment Co.
10001 Colonel Glenn Rd.
Little Rock, AR 72204
501-228-0808

Lighting & Sound

American AVL
800-352-7222
Little Rock/Jackson/Ruston/
New Orleans
Audio, Video, & Lighting Systems &
Equipment - Ask about our free site needs
AVL review

Stained Glass

Jonathan Soos
Soos Stained Glass Inc.
jon@soosstainedglass.com
http://www.soosstainedglass.com
30 Maumelle Curve Ct.
Maumelle AR 72113
501-758-8641 Maumelle studio
501-758-8655 fax

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

New ABN website enhances digital engagement

LITTLE ROCK – To address the growing needs of digital readers, the *Arkansas Baptist News (ABN)* has launched an all-new online presence.

“It amazes me how much the delivery of digital content has grown in the nine years I have served as editor,” said Tim Yarbrough, ABN editor/

executive director.

“We have gone from very little regular traffic to tens of thousands of people visiting our site every month,” Yarbrough said.

“Our new website is designed to meet the needs of readers who access the ABN news service via the Web. It has been greatly simplified and is now more mobile-friendly than ever. It looks great on a desktop or mobile platform.”

Yarbrough said visitors to arkansasbaptist.org may read

the latest news, access archives of past editions, place a classified ad, subscribe to ABN’s print or digital edition and listen to the ABN Podcast in addition to many other activities.

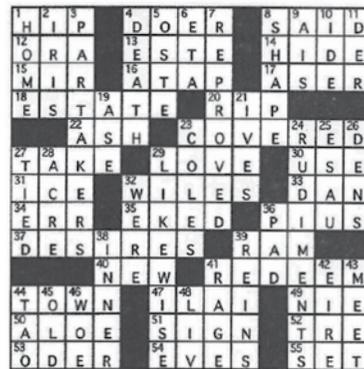
“It’s also easier than ever to sign up for free website updates via a strip located at the bottom of the home page. By signing up, readers will get breaking news alerts and receive ABN Link, our free newsletter,” he said.

“One of the things I like most about the new website is the ease of use in accessing past editions of the ABN – whether historic archives or editions as recent as what has been published this year,” he said.

Yarbrough encouraged website readers to send ABN staff members story ideas and information about happenings around the state by visiting arkansasbaptist.org/submit-story-idea.



See the ABN crossword, page 9



Need help with your Medicare options?

Call Rev. Randy Bond
Licensed Sales Agent
479-459-3988



BOND INSURANCE SOLUTIONS

Medicare Advantage | Medicare Supplement | Prescription Drug Plans

Choose from five Arkansas State Park lodges that offer first-class accommodations in the most scenic settings in the state. Whether it's a private getaway or corporate retreat, we can help personalize your experience.





MEETING SPACES

vacation views

PETIT JEAN STATE PARK



Discover the possibilities at LodgesofArkansas.com

#ARStateParks

Gospel Games

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

2 Timothy 2:5 (CSB)

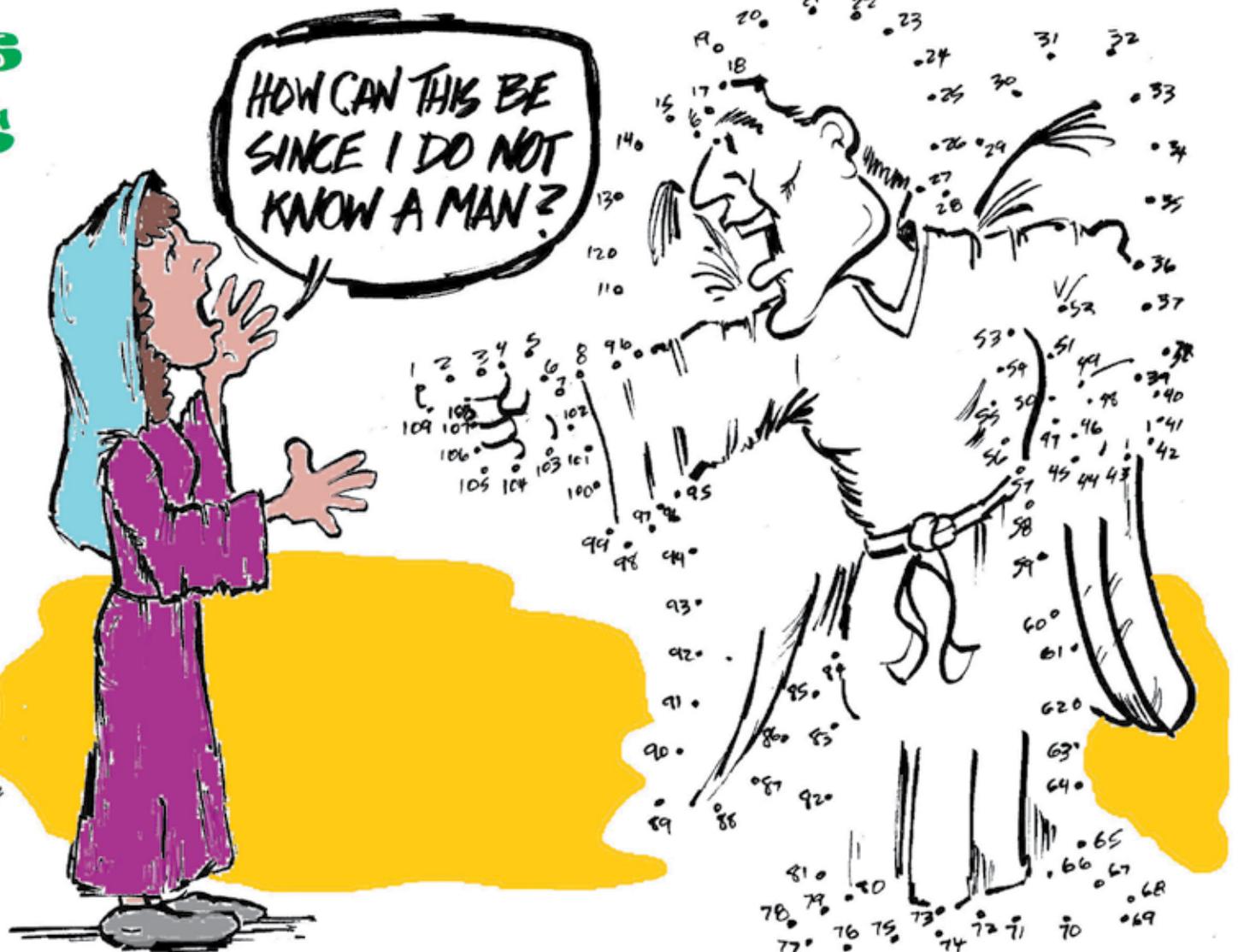
Christmas Dot to Dot

Connect the dots to discover who told Mary that she would give birth to Jesus, God's Son.

"And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."

Luke 1:31-33

THOMAS



Across

1. With it
4. "I suffer trouble, even as an evil ____" (2 Timothy 2:9)
8. Mentioned
12. Mouths
13. This (Sp.)
14. "the people did ____ themselves in caves" (1 Samuel 13:6)
15. Russian space station
16. Thatch for Malayan huts
17. Tribe of Anna (Luke 2)
18. "For he hath regarded the low ____ of his hand- maiden" (Luke 1:48)
20. Tear
22. "he planteth an ____ and the rain doth nourish it" (Isaiah 44:14)
23. "As the word went out... they ____ Haman's face" (Esther 7:8)
27. "he was manifested to ____ away our sins" (1 John 4:7)
29. "let us ____ one another" (1 John 4:7)
30. Employ
31. "He casteth forth his ____

- like morsels" (Psalm 147:17)
32. "able to stand against the ____ of the devil" (Ephesians 6:11)
33. Son of Bilhah and Jacob
34. Botch
35. Just made it, with "out"
36. Several Popes
37. "he shall give thee the ____ of thine heart" (Psalm 95:10)
39. "behind him a ____ caught in a thicket" (Genesis 22:13)
40. "the mountains shall drop down ____ wine" (Joel 3:18)
41. "like Israel, when God went to ____ for a people to himself" (2 Samuel 7:23)
44. Municipality
47. ____ the Ahohite (1 Chronicles 11:29)
49. Never (Ger.)
50. Soothing plant
51. "what shall be the ____ of thy coming?" (Matthew 24:3)
52. Three (comb. form)
53. European river
54. Belonging to Seth's

- mother
55. Gel

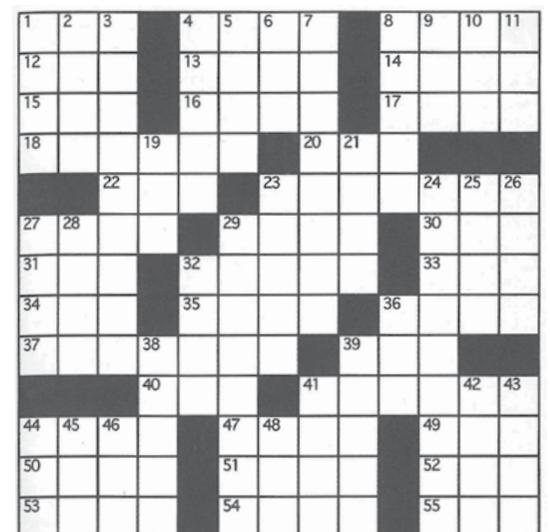
Down

1. "we are at ____ in the body" (2 Corinthians 5:6)
2. Perennial flower
3. "for we are all ____ of that one bread" (1 Corinthians 10:17)
4. "neither ____ shall be able to separate us from the love of God" (Romans 8:38-39)
5. Bone (Ger.)
6. Greek letter
7. "He, that being often ____ hardeneth his neck" (Proverbs 29:1)
8. "And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily ____" (Luke 3:22)
9. Of the town beside Bethaven (Joshua 7)
10. Chemical (suffix)
11. German article
19. Of an enzyme (suffix)
21. American composer
23. Belonging to Mr. Porter
24. "after the ____ of the

- world, and not after Christ" (Colossians 2:8)
25. He was not his mother's favorite
26. Retreats
27. "ye shall find a colt ____" (Mark 11:2)
28. Land measure
29. "Go, and do thou ____" (Luke 10:37)
32. Used to be
36. Walk softly
38. "go into an ____ chamber to hide thyself" (1 Kings 22:35)
39. "the righteous God trieth the hearts and ____" (Psalm 7:9)
41. Storm
42. Ireland
43. Encounter
44. Philippine peasant
45. "We have a father, an ____ man" (Genesis 44:20)
46. "____ unto them that call evil good" (Isaiah 5:20)
48. Actress Ullman

Crossword by Barbour Publishing, Inc.

AB Crossword puzzle



Crossword answer, page 8



CHURCH CELEBRATES 125 YEARS OF MINISTRY – Mount Zion Baptist Church, Arkadelphia, celebrated its 125th anniversary Sunday, Oct. 6. Bob Harper (left), missions team leader for the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, presented a plaque to Ray Franklin (right), pastor of Mount Zion, and Randall Quilin, a deacon at Mount Zion.

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

Marsha Wiggins Griffin, 82, of Crossett, died Nov. 10.



Wiggins served as the church pianist for 40 years at First Baptist Church, Crossett.

She is preceded in death by her husband and a sister.

Griffin is survived by three daughters, nine grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

Greene is survived by her husband, four children, 11 grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.

Carl Garrett Willis, 86, of Conway, died Nov. 15.



Willis served as a pastor for 57 years at churches in Arkansas, Louisiana and Texas.

He was preceded in death by his parents and a sister.

Willis is survived his wife, a son, a daughter, five grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

Annielee "Fay" Daughety Johnston, 95, of McCrory, died Nov. 23.



Johnston was a member of Elaine Baptist Church, Elaine, and held the record for longest membership in the church.

She was preceded in death by her parents, siblings, husband and a son. Johnston is survived by four sons, eight grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren.

Shelba Jean Greene, 81, of Jacksonville, died Nov. 17.

A member of First Baptist Church, Sherwood, Greene served as the chaplain and president of the Auxiliary of the Gideons International.

She was preceded in death by her parents.

Milestones

Rick Hyde was named pastor emeritus of First Baptist Church, Curtis, Sunday, Nov. 17. Hyde served as pastor at First Baptist, Curtis, for six years before retiring.

Robert Greene, pastor of First Baptist Church, Yorktown, will retire in January 2020. Greene has served as pastor at the church for 25 years.

Church life

Hot Springs Baptist Church, Hot Springs, will host Night in Bethlehem starting at 6 p.m., Friday-Saturday, Dec. 6-7 and Friday-Saturday, Dec. 13-14. The event features a free 30-minute walk through a live depiction of Bethlehem's sights, sounds and smells.

Central Baptist Church, Pine Bluff and White Hall will host its annual Christmas Village starting at 6 p.m., Saturday, Dec. 7. There will be games, door prizes, cookie decorating and ornament making.

First Baptist Church, Con-

way, will host Conway Down Home Christmas Festival starting at 5 p.m., Sunday, Dec. 8. There will be horse drawn carriage rides, live music, free food, carnival games, snow machines, crafts, family photos, fire pits and Christmas carols.

First Baptist Church, Sherwood, will host a Winter Wonderland celebration starting at 5 p.m., Sunday, Dec. 15. There will be a live nativity, a pony carousel, train rides, bounce houses, hot chocolate and food.

You may be the One!

■ **Case Manager:**
Baptist Home for Children, Monticello

A bachelor's degree in a human services field or two years human services experience and a non-related bachelor's degree is required. This full-time, position includes salary, medical insurance, life insurance, paid leave, annuity after one year and training.

Contact: Kelly Jones, 870.367.5358 or kjones@arkansasfamilies.org.

arkansasfamilies.org

ARKANSAS BAPTIST CHILDREN'S HOMES & FAMILY MINISTRIES

RADIANT 2020 an all-girls retreat
7th - 12th grade
February 14-16

to register or for more details, visit our website: www.campsiloam.com

Classifieds

PASTOR

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

First Baptist Church, Concord, AR, is in search of a **pastor**. Mail resumes to 718 West Main St., Heber Springs, AR 72543 or email to tdollar1956@gmail.com, or call 501-206-7505, 870-668-0328 or 870-307-4710.

FBC, Bismarck, AR, is seeking a **full-time pastor**. Please send resumes to FBC Bismarck, PO Box 147, Bismarck, AR 71929 or email to ricnorris145@gmail.com.

Pangburn First Baptist Church is seek-

ing a **pastor**. Please send resumes to PO Box 250, Pangburn, AR 72121, or email: pangburnfbcpastorsearch@gmail.com.

Saltillo Heights Baptist Church, Conway, AR, seeking **full-time or bi-vocational pastor**. Please send resumes to westk28@gmail.com.

Life Fellowship in Jacksonville, Arkansas, seeks **bi-vocational pastor**. Please send resume to 5baldwins@comcast.net.

First Baptist Church, Clarendon, AR, is seeking a **full-time pastor**. Send resumes to FBC Search Committee, PO Box 324, Clarendon, AR 72029 or email to: info@fbcclarendon.com.

OTHER STAFF POSITIONS

Trinity Baptist Church, Benton, is looking for God's man to help **lead our worship & choir ministries** on Sundays beginning in January 2020. It is a part-time staff position with generous benefits. If interested email trinitybenton@gmail.com.

FBC, Pencil Bluff, seeks **part-time youth pastor** with some children's ministry involved. Primarily Wed. evening and weekends. Contact desertmjo@gmail.com or FBC, PO Box 70, Pencil Bluff, AR 71965.

First Baptist Church is seeking a **full-time music minister**. Please submit resumes to

FBC, 507 N Rosser St, Forrest City, AR 72335, Attention: Music Search Committee or by e-mail to dianne@fbcfc.org.

FBC, Trumann, is seeking to hire a **full-time next generation pastor**, overseeing the ministry areas of children, teenagers, and college. For job description, visit www.fbctrumann.org. Interested applicants should send resume to john.maley@fbctrumann.org.

First Baptist Church, Paris, is seeking a **part-time music director**. The services are a blend of relevant hymns and newer worship-style music. For more information email hbrewton2678@gmail.com.

First Baptist Church, Harrison, AR (30 miles

south of Branson) is seeking a **F/T worship pastor**. Send inquiries and/or resumes to robd@fbcharrison.org.

East Baptist Church, Wynne, AR, seeks **bi-vocational music minister** to lead and direct overall church music ministry and lead blended style of music in worship. Must adhere to Southern Baptist doctrine. Some technical skills required. Housing and utilities included, salary is negotiable. Resumes to jfryer444@yahoo.com, or PO Box 538, Wynne, AR 72396.

Submit a classified ad at arkansasbaptist.org/ads

DECEMBER 8, 2019

The Christian life is a life in constant motion. When we step out in faith, we are trusting God for the results. When we don't step out in faith, we are taking a step backwards in fear. God often takes us to the very threshold of a great moment in our life but fear keeps us from taking that necessary step of faith. The results can be tragic and life defining.

This lesson contains one of the saddest and most tragic experiences of Israel's long history. This tragic experience resulted in devastating consequences. The people were about to enter the land flowing with milk and honey. Moses sent a spy from each of the ancestral tribes, which included Joshua and Caleb. This 40-day spy mission was to assess the quality of the land, the types of cities, the number of inhabitants and whether or not these inhabitants were weak or strong.

The men came back with some fruit and said the land was indeed flowing with milk and honey. However, the people were strong and some were giants.

The cities were large and fortified. This caused a stir in the camp. Caleb quieted the people and made a call-to-arms to take the land. All of Israel wept and complained to Moses and Aaron and planned to appoint their own leader and return to Egypt. They even threatened to stone Moses and Aaron.

As this was going on, the Lord appears to all of Israel at the tent of meeting. The

EXPLORE THE BIBLE**God judges**

NUMBERS 14:5-19 (HCSB)

Lord wanted to destroy the people but Moses interceded for them. He didn't destroy them, but they would experience God's judgment for their lack of faith and subsequent disobedience. God struck the 10 spies with a plague. The nation would wander in the wilderness for 40 years and die there. Only their children, Caleb and Joshua would enter the land.

Warren Wiersbe said, "Unbelief is serious because it challenges the character of God and rebels against the will of God." Remember Caleb's words and move forward in faith, "The Lord is with us" (Num. 14:9).

My wife and I vacationed in Sedona. The crystal clear, dark Arizona sky was a perfect place for stargazing. As the sun rose over red rocks, it eclipsed all other celestial bodies. The sunrise between the red peaks flooded the desert landscape with beautiful reds, oranges and purples. It was an awesome sight.

David was in a similar setting when he was moved to praise, "The heavens declare the glory of God" (Psa. 19:1). Creation gives a visual argument for the existence of God as it speaks of a conscious, intelligent and sustaining Creator. David says that creation is constantly speaking revealing knowledge (Psa. 19:1-2). This knowledge is general revelation of God's character, power, goodness and faithfulness. This message goes out to the entire world because the whole world is covered with God's handiwork (Psa. 19:4).

In Psalm 111:7-10, we are told that all of God's works are faithful and just. His commands are trustworthy and eternal. God's greatest work was the redemption of His people. This leads the Psalmist to

praise but praise has a condition, "the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom" (Psa. 111:10). The word "beginning" means "the starting point" or it is often translated as "first principle." It is the primary element or fruit of wisdom. Fearing God leads to wisdom about Him and then leads to praise of Him.

Not every person who looks at creation or reads the Bible believes in the existence of God. Carl Sagan, in his book "Cosmos," said, "The Cosmos is all that is or ever was or ever will be." This is a statement of atheistic materialism.

Sagan believed man created God and religion to help make sense of the cosmos. He believed science would eventually replace God.

Creation points to God's existence but Scripture, special revelation, points to a God who can be known personally. When we acknowledge the existence of God, we are on the path to wisdom and spiritual insight, but that is not enough. We need to know God fully through His Son Jesus Christ, our Redeemer.

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE**Is there a God?**

PSALM 19:1-6; 111:7-10 (HCSB)

DECEMBER 15, 2019

We have many angry idioms in the English language: "short fuse," "fly off the handle," "foam at the mouth," "fit to be tied," "bent out of shape," "hit the roof," "off the wall," "off the deep end," "blow one's top," "blood is boiling," and "blow a gasket," among others. Do any of these describe you?

Moses let his anger get the best of him. I can sympathize with Moses. The Israelites had done nothing but complain the whole journey from Egypt. Moses had their back. Every time God wanted to destroy them, Moses interceded for them and God relented.

Moses was a phenomenal leader but, as with all leaders, sometimes he faltered. This lesson teaches us that God works through leaders who humbly and obediently follow Him.

Israel had no water for the community or for the livestock. The people did what they did best - complained. "Why have you led us up from Egypt to bring us to this evil place?" (Num. 20:5). Don't miss the irony of what they said next, "It's not a place of grain, figs, vines, and pome-

granates, and there is no water to drink!" (Num. 20:5). This was exactly what was available in the promised land Israel had refused to enter.

Moses and Aaron fell before God. God told Moses to take his staff, assemble the people and speak to the rock. Moses struck the rock twice and it brought forth water, problem solved. Moses' disobedience revealed he was letting his anger to get the best of him.

Moses harshly rebuked the people (Num. 20:10). He took credit for what God had done, "Must we bring water out of this rock for you?" (Num. 20:10). He resented the Israelites and lost his temper (Num. 20:11). He and Aaron failed to glorify God (Num. 20:12). God judged all of this as rebellion (Num. 20:24). Neither Moses or Aaron would be allowed to enter the promised land.

No matter how great a leader is, anything less than full obedience is unacceptable. God requires total obedience despite what we have accomplished in the past.

The hatred and hostility of the Jewish aristocracy for Jesus had reached its intended climax. Jesus stood before Pilate, accused of being a king. Pilate's questioning of Jesus was not to ascertain the truth but to do a threat assessment. If Jesus thought he was a king, He could be a threat to Pilate's authority and lead an uprising. Jesus' reply made no such claim in the political sense, but only in a spiritual sense. Jesus explains that He came into the world to testify to the truth (John 18:37). In a cynical and dismissive manner, Pilate asks, "What is truth?" (John 18:38). It was a rhetorical question, Pilate was not interested in the truth. Ironically, the answer to his question was standing right in front of him. Jesus is literally truth incarnate and the King of Truth (John 14:6; 18:37).

Pilate's question reflected the cynicism of his culture. Skeptics taught that truth was unknowable and that absolute truth did not exist. This is what we describe today as "relativism." In relativism, there is no absolute standard of

truth, there is no right or wrong and there is only what is consider relative to that situation.

The Bible doesn't specifically speak of absolute truth, but does connect truth with God. John MacArthur makes this connection in his definition, "Truth is that which is consistent with the mind, will, character, glory, and being of God." Contrary to skepticism, truth can be known. Jesus said in His prayer to the Father, "Your word is truth" (John 17:17).

The Bible is the Word of God. John MacArthur also said, "The Bible is the touchstone to which all truth claims should be brought and by which all other truth must finally be measured." Absolute truth is recorded in the pages of the Bible. Jesus connects truth with discipleship, "If you continue in My word, you really are My disciples" (John 8:31).

Jesus Christ is the ultimate expression of truth (John 1:14; 14:6). When we trust and follow Christ, we discover truth and experience freedom in life (John 8:32).

BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE**Does absolute truth exist?**

JOHN 1:14-18; 8:30-32; 18:36-38 (HCSB)

Featured commentary writer



Gerald Nash

Gerald Nash is a registered respiratory therapist and EEG technician at Saint Mary's Regional Medical Center in Russellville. Nash is involved in medical research and is a preaching pastor at Soul Food Cafe Mission. He is involved in missions and also leads a small group and the decision room ministry at Second Baptist Church, Conway. Nash has attended several universities and seminaries, including Williams Baptist University and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He holds multiple educational degrees, including a bachelor of arts in Christian ministries, a master of arts and doctor of ministry in pastoral studies and a master of arts in theological studies. Nash volunteers on the Cairo Geniza Project deciphering and transcribing ancient Greek and Arabic documents. He loves to read, bass fish, and spend time with his family. He and his wife, Mary Ann, love to travel, explore ancient ruins and go on wild animal safaris.

