



Conway BCM is currently fundraising for a 12,400-square-foot facility that will include a 300-seat auditorium, a coffee shop, meeting rooms and fellowship areas and three apartment units capable of housing 12 students. *Conway BCM image*

## Conway BCM looks to future as fundraising begins for new facility

Caleb Yarbrough  
*Arkansas Baptist News*

CONWAY – Conway Baptist Collegiate Ministry (BCM) has begun fundraising for a new facility that will better equip the ministry to reach and serve the more than 15,000 college students that call the “City of Colleges” home.

BCM ministry in Conway dates back to 1927, and while the original mission of reaching the city’s college students with the gospel has never changed, there are a whole lot more students to reach today than there were nearly a century ago, said Ryan Scantling, Conway BCM campus minister.

Unlike many BCM ministries across the country,

Conway BCM does not serve just one institution. Conway BCM serves students from four institutions, including the University of Central Arkansas (UCA), Hendrix College, Central Baptist College (CBC) and University of Arkansas Community College in Morrilton, which is located about 20 miles west of Conway.

While more than 15,000 college students live in and around Conway, according to an Arkansas Baptist State Convention study conducted five years ago, only about 1,500 students were involved in a local church or campus ministry, and of those 1,500, only about 250 were involved in a Southern Baptist church, said Scantling.

“That’s where our passion started growing and we said, ‘Hey, we’ve got to do a better

job at reaching our campus and connecting more students to more churches,” said Scantling.

Today, between 500-550 college students living in and around Conway are connected with a Southern Baptist church.

Each week, Conway BCM hosts a weekly service called BCM Collective, which brings together students from all four local campuses for worship and fellowship. For the past several years, the weekly event has been held downtown at OneChurch, Conway’s facility since Conway BCM’s own facility was not large enough to accommodate the 130-200 students that attend each week.

“Our building, that we occupied for over 60 years was

See **BCM** page 2



Scantling

## Church hosts historic Nativity after ACLU threatens litigation

Sarah Davis  
*Arkansas Baptist News*

WARREN – The Christmas decorations have been put up at the courthouse in Warren, but one thing is noticeably missing this year – a 50-year-old Nativity scene.

Unfortunately, it appears the culture wars have caught up with the good people of the southeast Arkansas town of about 6,000.

Beginning in 2017, Bradley County Judge Klay McKinney has received letters from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) threatening lawsuits regarding the Nativity scene.

“For the past few years, there have been written complaints from the ACLU requesting the nativity to be removed from state property and claiming that the complaint had been made from a citizen

of Bradley County,” said Matt Overall, senior pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church, Warren.

“He (McKinney) has ignored them until now,” said Russell Rhoden, pastor of First Baptist Church, Warren, adding, “He is worried, based on legal rulings, that if a lawsuit is filed, it will cost the county a lot of money in legal fees.”

Overall said a similar situation occurred in another Arkansas county regarding a Nativity scene displayed on public property and the ACLU won – with the county ending up having to pay nearly \$70,000 in legal fees.

“Our county judge was faced with the impossible decision,” said Overall. “One that he agonized over, prayed over and ultimately had to make for the best interest of our county,

See **NATIVITY** page 3



Bradley County Judge Klay McKinney begrudgingly barred the 50-year-old Nativity scene traditionally displayed at the county courthouse amid threats of litigation by the American Civil Liberties Union. *Submitted photo*

### ABN classifieds get results!

Read them on Page 9.

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## ABN Digest

Stories of interest  
to Arkansas Baptists

### U.S. Supreme Court upholds Kentucky abortion law

WASHINGTON - Pro-life supporters in Kentucky were pleased with a decision by the U.S. Supreme Court Dec. 9 that left in place a Kentucky law requiring doctors to perform ultrasounds and show fetal images to patients before abortions.

The justices did not comment in refusing to review an appeals court ruling that upheld the law.

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) had challenged the law on behalf of Kentucky's lone remaining abortion clinic in Louisville, Ky. The ACLU argued that "display and describe" ultrasound laws violate physicians' speech rights under the First Amendment.

The federal appeals court in Cincinnati upheld the Kentucky law, but its sister court in Richmond, Va., struck down a similar measure in North Carolina.

In Kentucky, doctors must describe the ultrasound in detail while the pregnant woman listens to the fetal heartbeat. Women can avert their eyes and cover their ears to avoid hearing the description or the fetal heartbeat. Doctors failing to comply face fines and can be referred to the state's medical licensing board.

The law was passed in 2017 and signed by outgoing Gov. Matt Bevin, a pro-life governor who said that the agenda was one of the hallmarks of his term.

"From the beginning, we have fought on the things that matter," Bevin said. "We have fought for the sanctity of human life, we have fought for the dignity of taxpayers, we have fought for the educational opportunity of kids in our inner cities who have been failed. We have fought at every turn to help people have a better life, a better opportunity."

For more ABN Digest, go to  
[arkansasbaptist.org/abn-digest](http://arkansasbaptist.org/abn-digest)

# CP looms large in FBC, Harrison's missions strategy

HARRISON (BP) - First Baptist Church, Harrison, believes its purpose is to be a bridge to Jesus.

The church, where about 350 people participate in Sunday morning worship, reaches out in Harrison and across Arkansas, north to Canada as well as other international locations, to tell people of God's love for them.

In addition to the way First Baptist members serve hands-on and financially in their community and state, they generously support missions and the cause of Christ through the Cooperative Program (CP) - the mechanism Southern Baptists employ to better work together in state conventions and throughout the world.

"For me and our church, it's important we're part of the bigger picture," said Rob Davis, pastor of First Baptist since April 1999. "The Southern Baptist Convention with the Cooperative Program has the best system for the financial support of global ministry."

"I think the Cooperative



First Baptist Church, Harrison, completed its sixth year of missions in Haiti this summer, including medical, dental, construction and VBS ministries. *Submitted photo*

Program is the design God has for us," Davis said. "It's for every person no matter what their social or financial status is, to become effective in God's work worldwide."

First Baptist's support of missions through CP equates to 11 percent of the church's annual budget, but is a line item rather than a percentage, and 25 percent of over-budget income also goes to missions through CP.

"Part of my responsibility is to teach the younger gen-

eration about the Cooperative Program and what they're part of by giving to the local church," Davis said. "If they're systematically giving, they're systematically giving to places they'll perhaps never go to."

"If pastors like me don't teach the effectiveness of the Cooperative Program model, people don't understand what they're a part of globally, and they'll stop seeing it as needed and stop participating," the pastor continued. "It's not a sacred cow. It's a vital ministry

opportunity we can't do without."

First Baptist maintains a cross-generational ministry with a next-generation focus. Midweek activities reach about 80 children, plus youth, and there are Bible study and missions opportunities for all adults Wednesday nights and throughout the week.

"God created us to be a bridge to Jesus. Jesus came to be the bridge to God," declares the church's website, [fbcharri-son.org](http://fbcharri-son.org).

## BCM

*continued from page one*

pretty outdated and just didn't really accommodate needs, so we recently had the opportunity to sell that facility to UCA," said Scantling.

Conway BCM's previous facility was about 3,000 square feet, and while it was a blessing and conducive facility for countless Bible studies and student activities over the years, it was not large enough, or well-equipped, to meet the ministry's current, and constantly-evolving, needs, said Scantling.

Conway BCM used the money from selling its previous facility to purchase land in a growing part of town, where they plan to build a new 12,400 square foot facility, which will include a 300-seat worship auditorium, a coffee shop and areas for students to hang out. The facility will include three apartment units capable of housing 12 students who are called to ministry. Students living in said apartments will be able to gain practical ministerial training and expe-

rience while attending a local college or university.

"One of the things about a new building is that there are 10,000 students that set foot at UCA every day ... and then another 600 at CBC. And this facility is within walking distance to both of those," said Scantling. "This building enables us to have instant access to 10,600 students who step foot there each day. ... Where else can I identify that God has brought so many 18-22-year-olds together so that they can hear the gospel? I really think that God established university campuses so that we can get the gospel to them right there all at once. They are like fish in a barrel and we have the opportunity to proclaim the gospel right in the middle of that."

"There is ministry happening without a facility, but this facility will just lay a foundation for future ministry that we are so excited about," said Scantling.

Conway BCM's future facility has been designed, the property has been rezoned and the ministry is currently seeking prayer and financial support for the project.

"Now we're launching full

force into a funding phase. We are looking for partners to come alongside and pray with us and even be financial contributors to this cause," said Scantling. "We are committed to not going into debt for a building project. ... So we are waiting on 100 percent of the funding before we break ground or lay a brick."

While they are committed to good financial stewardship, Conway BCM's leadership has set a goal of raising the necessary funding for the new facility within two years, "so that not a generation of students goes by without having a physical expression of the gospel on campus," said Scantling.

Once funding is secure, the building will take about six months from start to finish. The total estimated cost of the project is \$3.5 million.

"We think that God can do something as significant as using a building to bring people closer to him. It's not about a building, but its about the students that are going to occupy it, the students that are on campus right now that so desperately need a relationship with Jesus," said Scantling.

For more information on Conway BCM's building project and fundraising campaign, visit [buildthebcm.com](http://buildthebcm.com).

Contact Caleb Yarbrough at [caleb@arkansasbaptist.org](mailto:caleb@arkansasbaptist.org).

## ABN to resume publication Jan. 16

THIS IS THE LAST print edition of the *Arkansas Baptist News* (ABN) for 2019.

The ABN will resume publication on Jan. 16.

For news and information over the Christmas and New Year's holidays, visit [arkansasbaptist.org](http://arkansasbaptist.org) or our Facebook or Twitter pages at [ArkBaptNews](https://www.facebook.com/ArkBaptNews).

For breaking news and other updates throughout the year, visit [arkansasbaptist.org](http://arkansasbaptist.org) to sign up for alerts.

The ABN is planning some exciting editions for 2020. For a preview of special editions and information about advertising opportunities, visit [arkansasbaptist.org/advertise](http://arkansasbaptist.org/advertise).

# ABCHomes dedicates LR Family Counseling Center, rebrands to Living Well Counseling

LITTLE ROCK – More than 75 supporters and friends of Arkansas Baptist Children's Homes and Family Ministries (ABCHomes) gathered Dec. 10 to dedicate the recently completed Little Rock Family Counseling Center.

The 3,500-square-foot facility houses marriage and family counseling rooms, a state-of-the-art play therapy room with observation options to train parents to respond to their child's needs, and a conference room with interconnected capabilities. The facility also includes a training room for equipping counselors to provide hope to hurting individuals and families.

The facility will provide a place for ABCHomes' professionally trained and licensed counselors to provide services for individuals, couples and entire families, with a goal of fostering hope and healing through planned and struc-



Arkansas Baptist Children's Homes and Family Ministries (ABCHomes) dedicated the newly completed Little Rock Family Counseling Center Dec. 10 in honor of David Perry (right), former executive director of ABCHomes. ABCHomes also announced the rebranding of its counseling ministry to, "Living Well Counseling." Photos by Caleb Yarbrough

tured therapeutic relationships.

The center was built in honor of David Perry, long-time executive director of ABCHomes who retired Dec. 1, 2018. Perry cut the ribbon during the dedication ceremony.

"This is an honor and a blessing," said Perry at the dedication ceremony. "I'm humbled by this kind gesture."

Multiple generous donors contributed financially towards the construction and equipping of the center. Geyer Springs First Baptist Church, Little Rock, donated the land for the counseling center, which is located within walking distance of Geyer Springs FBC's campus.

Earlier in the day, ABCHomes' board of trustees voted to rename and rebrand the agency's counseling ministry to, "Living Well Counsel-

ing," in order to better align with the unique services provided.

"When we break down what is truly unique about Christian counseling, we find authority and perspective at the core," said Derek Brown, executive director of ABCHomes. "The Living Well brand offers a reminder of our source or authority of hope and healing as well as a biblical perspective on right living."

ABCHomes counseling services are provided in seven locations across Arkansas, with new locations in Conway and Hot Springs.



## NATIVITY

*continued from page one*

which was, unfortunately, to not allow the display this year.

"Klay (McKinney) is a great man who loves Jesus and is highly involved in our church," said Overall. "His job as county judge was to make the best decision for Bradley County – a county who could not afford to suffer that kind of lawsuit."

For the 2019 Christmas season, the Nativity scene has found a new home on the lawn of First Baptist, which is two blocks away from the courthouse.

According to Rhoden, most people support McKinney's decision but some people see this act as McKinney giving in to outside pressure.

"Judge McKinney is simply making the best decision based upon legal advice for the financial impact for the county," said Rhoden.

"The county, by moving the Nativity scene, has not been defeated on this issue," Rhoden wrote on his Facebook page Dec. 3. "On the contrary, Christ is being glorified even more by the simple fact that more people are now displaying the Nativity scene than ever before in Bradley County, and ultimately this issue has people talking about the Nativity."

Additionally, many residents of Bradley County have purchased or created a Nativity scene to place in their yards. Even businesses are proudly displaying the scene.

"That is exactly what the ACLU did not want to hap-

pen," said Overall. "Bradley County is full of wonderful people who do have a heart for the gospel and a love for others. This controversy has brought more attention to what the Nativity actually represents than placing it on the courthouse lawn ever would have."

"The message of Christmas – and of the Nativity – has been shared more in the wake of this controversy that it ever had been in the years before," said Overall.

Jeff Hessinger, director of missions at Bartholomew Baptist Association, said the Nativity scene controversy is a "visible representation of the shift (of) our community."

"Though we have many who love the Lord and are very upset, their values are only a part of who we are as a com-

munity," he said. "Like the rest of North America, our community is leaning further away from God and the church more than it has in the past."

According to Hessinger, the removal of the Nativity has challenged the biblical values and the churches in Bradley County.

"We here in Warren need Christians to take the gospel to the streets," said Hessinger. "The values found in scripture and the life-changing power of the gospel must be talked about, shared and lived out in the streets, schools and community."

"When we only express our Christian faith in the church house, then we lose the Nativity at the courthouse," added Hessinger.

Contact Sarah Davis at [sarah@arkansasbaptist.org](mailto:sarah@arkansasbaptist.org).

## ABN Digest

Stories of interest  
to Arkansas Baptists

### Tenn. church gets creative with 'Lattes for Lottie'

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. (BP) – If you're heading to Mount Harmony Baptist Church in Knoxville, Tenn., you don't need to stop at a fancy coffee shop on your way to church. Multi-flavored coffees and lattes will be ready for you when you arrive, served by smiling baristas. Donations at the coffee counter raise money for the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering (LMCO), but also raise awareness about the offering's namesake.

"I didn't just want it to be a table with people coming up to give money and get a latte," says Emily Sheddan, who started "Lattes for Lottie" at the church in 2017. "It was on my heart to get them involved and really know who Lottie was."

Sheddan, the daughter of International Mission Board missionaries, grew up in Southeast Asia and remembers learning about Lottie Moon. As an adult, she noticed that many people in local churches didn't know about the feisty missionary. Those who did not participate in missions education programs, like Girls in Action and Royal Ambassadors, may never have learned about Lottie.

"It wasn't just a name of an offering, but was indeed a sweet soul who went forth," Sheddan says. "I feel like it has to be pushed out there that she's an actual person in history that we speak of, not just the name of the Christmas mission offering."

This year Sheddan hopes that latte donations will raise \$800 toward the church's LMCO goal. With her own missions experience and with her parents still serving on the field, she has personal connections and the knowledge of how those contributions make a difference in the lives of missionaries.

For more ABN Digest, go to [arkansasbaptist.org/abn-digest](http://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)

## Hallmark joins Chick-fil-A; caves to culture wars

I don't know about your household, but Hallmark has quickly become the go-to for our family in recent years because of its family-friendly and values-based content. In fact, during the Christmas season, my wife, daughter and daughter-in-law carve out significant portions of time to watch the new Christmas movies the Hallmark Channel offers.



### Pressing On

Tim Yarbrough

Phil. 3:14

Contrary to what some think, Southern Baptists have been on the forefront of technology advancement at times during the storied history of the denomination. In fact, the Hallmark Channel has a connection to the old Southern Baptist Radio-Television Commission.

What is now Hallmark Channel has roots in the religious cable channel American Christian Television System - know by its acronym ACTS.

ACTS was one of the initiatives that came out of the Southern Baptist Convention's Radio-Television Commission, which was merged with the Brotherhood Commission into the North American Mission Board (NAMB) in 1997.

ACTS started operations in 1984, and was owned by the SBC. Programming included evangelical and conservative non-charismatic Christian groups, including evangelists such as Jerry Falwell, Charles Stanley and James Kennedy. ACTS aired several hours a week of religious children's

programming, including Sunshine Factory, Joy Junction, Davey and Goliath and my personal favorite, Jot.

In 1993 ACTS was renamed the Faith and Values Channel and began airing a few secular programs such as fitness shows, health and cooking shows and family-oriented drama series and films.

In 1995, cable conglomerate

Tele-Communications Inc.'s Liberty Media acquired a 49 percent ownership stake in the Faith and Values Channel and took over operational control of the network. It added more secular programming to the network and reduced religious programming to about 10 hours per day. In 1996, the network was rebranded as the Odyssey Network.

Hallmark Entertainment and The Jim Henson Company bought significant stakes, paid in part through programming commitments, in Odyssey in late 1998. On August 5, 2001, the channel underwent yet another rebranding as the Hallmark Channel and began quickly adding original programming.

As you can see, today's popular Hallmark Channel - which reaches nearly 75 percent of paying TV households (85.4 million) in the United States - can trace a portion of its roots to the original Southern Baptist ACTS channel.

According to my own informal straw polling of friends

and family, the popularity of the Hallmark Channel among evangelicals Christians is huge.

However, that might soon change.

In case you missed it, executives at Hallmark Channel's parent company, Crown Media Family Networks, has announced that the network is seeking to produce and air more holiday movies focused on LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer) characters, according to media reports.

"We are continuing to expand our diversity," Michelle Vicary, Crown Media's executive vice president of programming, told thewrap.com, a website covering the business of entertainment and media. "We are looking at pitches

for LGBTQ movies ... and we are looking to expand and represent the United States as a whole."

Stephen Kokx, writing in an opinion piece for western-journal.com, seemed puzzled by the move, stating, "The channel's reputation for airing wholesome, feel-good stories is widely known and greatly appreciated by millions of Americans who detest the radical nature of the LGBT movement's demands."

If what is happening at

Hallmark sounds familiar, it should. In my last column, I wrote about Chick-fil-A's apparent capitulation to LGBTQ lobbyists to quit supporting Christian charities with

perceived anti-LGBTQ biases.

Kokx wrote that lifesitenews.com, a pro-life, pro-family Christian website, has started an online petition of the Hallmark Channel, warning the

network could risk losing a big part of their market if it gives in to the LGBT agenda.

"Hallmark should also know that if they give-in to

See **HALLMARK** page 6



Read more ABN perspectives at [arkansasbaptist.org](http://arkansasbaptist.org)



Volume 118, Number 25  
USPS08021

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

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Toll-free 800-838-2272, ext. 5161

Arkansas Baptist News (ISSN 1040-6056) is published bi-weekly except the last issue of the year (25 issues) by the Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine, Inc.,

10 Remington Drive,  
Little Rock, AR 72204.

SUBSCRIPTION rates are \$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](mailto:abn@arkansasbaptist.org). Periodical Postage paid at Little Rock, AR.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR: Send Letters to the Editor to [tim@arkansasbaptist.org](mailto: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.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Arkansas Baptist News, 10 Remington Drive,

Little Rock, AR 72204.

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# Introducing Williams Works

Academically excellent. Unwaveringly Christian. Imminently affordable.

Those are all phrases that describe the outstanding, Christ-centered education provided by Williams Baptist University (WBU). And that last phrase, “imminently affordable,” becomes especially true with a new initiative called Williams Works.



**Williams Baptist University**

Brett Cooper

To say the least, WBU is excited about the advent of Williams Works. It is a truly innovative new program that will add a lot to the educational process in its own right. But make no mistake about it, the goal of Williams Works is to give more students access to a transformative educational experience at WBU.

Williams Works is our response to the rising cost of higher education that is impacting so many families. Since WBU President Stan Norman announced this exciting initiative in September

the response has been tremendous from both prospective students and the general public.

Here is how it works: Students agree to work 16 hours a week, every week, through the fall and spring semesters. These are real jobs with real responsibilities. Without

question, the students in Williams Works will need a great work ethic

and time management skills.

But for those who are willing to invest the time and work, the payoff is huge. The cost of education, which is their tuition and fees, is fully covered. On top of that, those who work through the summer months will have their room and board paid. That means it is now possible to complete an outstanding university education debt-free.

Students will work in a variety of jobs. WBU is launching an agricultural endeavor called Eagle Farms, which

utilizes undeveloped acres on the west end of the Williams campus. Student-workers will raise, harvest and market the farm products.

Community partners – local industries and businesses – will also put WBU students to work. On-campus jobs will also be filled by students.

Williams Works officially begins next fall, when we welcome 40 incoming freshmen into the initiative. The number grows to 80 students by the following year and 120 the year after that, with more rapid expansion expected in the years beyond.

Williams Works is a bold initiative, unlike anything else in Arkansas or the Southern Baptist Convention. It provides students the kind of work experience future employers will savor.

But above all, Williams Works makes an academically excellent, unwaveringly Christian education attain-

See **WORKS** page 8

## I am having a tough time getting into the ‘Christmas Spirit.’ How do I get out of the ‘holiday blues?’

The “holiday blues” are very real for many this time of year. Not only are the nights longer and colder, but the Christmas season also brings a flood of memories of past holidays. Some of these memories, while wonderful, are often filled with loved ones who have died. Other memories are of longstanding arguments (family feuds) that resurrect every Christmas.

At Christmas, some pressure themselves to get into a certain feeling, often by buying lots of gifts. As the author and businessman Dave Ramsey says, “We try to impress others we don’t like by buying things they don’t need with money we don’t have!” These purchases add up during December, which creates credit card woes in January.

Were this not enough, the general hype of the season itself can cause maudlin emotions. Whether it’s the music,



**Baptists Ask**

Ken Gore

the decorations, or even the outrageous advertisements, a little of the festive spirit can go a long way.

While it may seem difficult – even impossible – to fight all the blues during this time of year, here are a few things I suggest.

**First, do not get pressured into having a certain feeling.** God is not impressed with our “masks,” but he does delight in our transparency. It might be helpful to write down your feelings and reflect on why they occur. If possible, share them with a good friend. Above all, share them with God.

**Second, place the biblical account of Christmas first and foremost in your mind.** The Advent season helps by reading a daily portion of Scripture during the month of December. This helps us keep Christmas in a proper perspective.

**Third, shed yourself of the rampant commercialism of the season.** The prophet Amos spoke of merchants who couldn’t wait for the festivals to be over, so they could get back to their nefarious business practices (Amos 8:5-6). It’s possible that some modern merchants use Christmas in the same manner. Avoid as much of this as possible, and focus celebrating what life means with Jesus in it.

**Fourth, give to others in appropriate ways.** It is often said that we gain many benefits by helping others, and the Christmas season is a good catalyst for the year ahead. Find opportunities for service throughout your church and community.

In 1985, I served as a missionary in Scotland. While Christmas that year was lovely with my church, it meant I was away from my family at Christmas for the first time. In my journal, I wrote the following: “Christmas is Christ – nothing more. Everything else is a fringe benefit.”

By paring down the Christmas season to that one Person, it will help you recalibrate all that is around you. May Jesus shine down on you this Christmas.

Ken Gore is professor of biblical studies at Dallas Baptist University. Email your questions to [tim@arkansasbaptist.org](mailto:tim@arkansasbaptist.org).

## How do you celebrate Christmas?

The Son of Man could have made a triumphant entry into the world, but instead, he came as a vulnerable baby with no place to lay his head. Jesus gave up His place in Heaven to see the world through the eyes of a child in need. As we celebrate Christmas

this year, I hope you will reflect on the scene of Jesus laying in a manger and consider the way the God of the universe has chosen to relate to us. Before the baby Jesus uttered a word, He revealed the unfathomable love of the Father – love that is personal, intimate and sacrificial.

What better way to celebrate Christmas this year than to show the love of Jesus to the children in need around us? God’s heart overflows for these little ones who have come from hard places. In Matthew 25:40 (CSB), Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters

of mine, you did for me.” Join me in celebrating the birth of Jesus by showing His love to the children without families this Christmas. Dedicate yourself to prayer for the caregivers who demonstrate this love on a regular basis. Make the commitment to volunteer



**ABCHomes**

Derek A. Brown

in one of our ministries near you. Schedule a tour of one of our campuses and find out

how you can get involved. Invite one of our staff members to share about how you can offer your home to a child in need. Make a donation to share the resources God has blessed you with. However you do it, join with us in caring for God’s children this Christmas and into the New Year.

Perhaps you are one who knows that all of the hope in the world is found in the good news of Jesus, but you are not feeling very hopeful this year. Let us help you through our Christian counseling ministries. This service

is provided in many places around the state to offer healing and restoration from a biblical perspective. Call (501) 455-8554 to schedule an appointment with one of our professional counselors.

As we wrap up our 125th year of ministry to God’s children and families, I have to say thank you to our Arkansas Baptist family for your great commitment to Arkansas Baptist Children’s Homes and Family Ministries! Because of you, many children will experience this Christmas in their forever homes, some for the very first time! Many more have defeated the cycle of brokenness that disrupted their childhoods. The children of Arkansas can find hope, because the Son of Man entered the world as a child that first Christmas morning, and you have helped to spread the good news! On behalf of our children, thank you and Merry Christmas!

Derek A. Brown is executive director of the Arkansas Baptist Children’s Homes and Family Ministries.

## 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](mailto: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.

# Williams Baptist University releases 'swoosh' athletics logo

WALNUT RIDGE – A new version of its athletic logo featuring a “swoosh” joins sideways and forward-facing

branded logos already in use at Williams Baptist University (WBU), the university announced Dec. 2.

“We believe the addition of this logo will complement our existing logos while giving us the flexibility to further our

reach on multiple platforms,” said Shane Stolz, sports information director.

The logo features an Eagle flying in a downward motion. It maintains a similar color scheme as the other two Eagles logos, with a yellow beak and white head, surrounded by fields of black and blue. It also



utilizes the color gray, which is a new addition for Eagle logos. The gray outlines the WBU Eagle.

## HALLMARK

*continued from page 4*

the LGBT agenda, the LGBT activists will never be satisfied,” wrote Kokx.

The petition had garnered more than 47,000 signatures as of press time. An online poll at westernjournal.com that asked readers, “Will you continue to watch the Hallmark Channel?” resulted in 97 percent responding “No.”

In spite of mainstream media’s liberal narrative, much of the United States is made up of God-fearing folks who are deeply conservative in their thinking. They love those who hold different views, but look to God as their compass when it comes to issues involving homosexuality and same-sex marriage.

Unfortunately, as we have seen with actions taken by Chick-Fil-A and now the Hallmark Channel, it is the al-

mighty dollar – not Almighty God – that influences many companies’ actions.

May God give Southern Baptists, and the broader evangelical community, wisdom in these days as we continue to be a witness in a culture which is becoming more and more caustic to the things of God and the truth of Scripture.

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

## Letters to the Editor

### Learning from missionaries

As the Week of Prayer for International Missions begins, I can’t help but think back to my youth when my mother and the Woman’s Missionary Union (WMU) ladies at our church would promote the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. Usually a real live foreign missionary would speak at our church during this time.

Many may not know that the International Mission Board (IMB) has fully financed requests for missionaries going unfilled. Volunteers may believe financial support is not available since the IMB recently asked more than 1,000 active missionaries to retire early. Another reason might be

because our young people are not hearing the personal testimonies of missionaries who can share their stories and the need for others to be open to God’s call.

I believe it is possible today for a young person to grow up in a Southern Baptist church without ever hearing a missionary give their testimony. As a young person, missionaries often visited my church. I attended RA camp each summer where missionaries would tell of their work. Later I attended Siloam Springs each summer where a missionary would speak in the morning sessions. Names such as Truman Moore, Glendon Grober and Josephine Scaggs come to mind. These missionaries were instrumental in my call to mis-

sions. Later, as an IMB missionary, I had the opportunity to speak to hundreds of young people at Siloam. Thirty years ago, if I was in the states, there was seldom a week in the fall that I was not asked to speak at a church, WMU group or associational meeting. That may not be true today.

We must do a better job of mission’s education and promotion. In addition to utilizing the missionaries and resources at the IMB and WMU, the *Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine* provides regular testimonies and reports from the IMB. Every Arkansas Baptist should be taking advantage of this resource.

**Ron West**  
Little Rock

### Family and holidays

Many songs have been written about being home for the holidays.

For our international missionary families, home is a relative term. Families are often separated by thousands of miles. They may be in the tropics, in the stress of learn-

ing complicated languages or serving in areas hostile to the gospel.

Parents of missionaries are often deeply concerned about their loved ones serving far away. College-age MK’s (missionary kids) could celebrate the holidays with extended family and only have video chats with immediate fam-

ily. Younger missionary kids might come home from boarding school for the holidays.

Praying regularly for missionary families is an incredible gift; a form of partnership in their work and a great encouragement.

**Kay Hicks**  
Little Rock

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

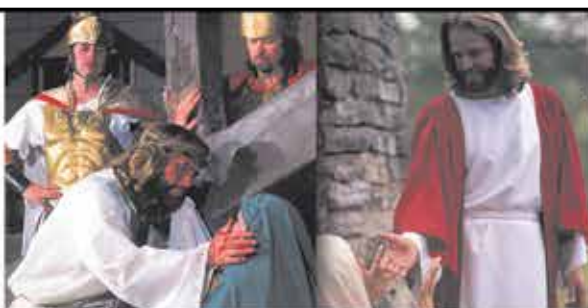
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*Karina Egley, RAP Ministries*

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# Central Baptist, North Little Rock, updates facilities

NORTH LITTLE ROCK – Central Baptist Church, North Little Rock, has recently completed two phases of a four-phase church renovation project to make its facilities more secure and functional.

“The first two phases were the largest phases and constitute around 70 percent of the overall work we plan to do,” said Wyman Richardson, pastor of Central Baptist.

The first phase of the church’s renovations was the construction of a multi-purpose center called “The Rec.”

“The multi-purpose area was needed because – outside of the fellowship hall – we did not have any large activity

area,” said Richardson. “Our primary goal in this area is to provide space for children’s activities, ministry activities and host missions teams.”

With the new facility that includes a men’s and women’s shower areas, they were able to host more than 200 children for the Connect weekend held in October.

“We will be hosting our first mission team from outside of Arkansas next spring break,” said Richardson. “Additionally, we would like to encourage any churches reading this to feel free to contact us if you would like to bring a team to North Little Rock to do missions work!”

The second phase of Central Baptist’s renovations focused on the classrooms. The preschool area was moved from the front of the building into an “extensively renovated and more secure” part of the building in the back where adults used to meet, said Richardson.

“The new preschool area was needed primarily in order to provide a more secure, functional and updated area for us to minister to kids,” he said. “Our senior adults are also pleased to have been moved much closer to our sanctuary.”

Richardson said the new preschool area has generated a “great deal of excitement.”



“It is a joy to welcome the children of both members and visitors into this area,” said Richardson.

Central Baptist’s renovations are to expand the welcome center and restrooms and enlarge the student ministry area.

The other two phases of

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# ECON 2020 and Prayer Workshop set for Jan. 27-28

LITTLE ROCK – The Arkansas Baptist State Convention's (ABSC) Conference on Evangelism and Church Health (ECON) and Prayer Leaders Workshop will be held Jan. 27-28 at Geyer Springs First Baptist Church, Little Rock.

The Prayer Leaders Workshop will take place from 9-11:30 a.m., Monday, Jan. 27, prior to the start of ECON. The workshop, which will be led by Kie Bowman, senior pastor of Hyde Park

Baptist Church and The Quarries Church in Austin, Texas, is for individuals who are prayer leaders in their families, churches and communities.

Following the prayer workshop ECON will kick off at 1 p.m. and continue through Monday evening. ECON continues Tuesday beginning at 8:45 a.m., concluding with lunch and workshops at 1:30 p.m.



ECON speakers will include Adam Greenway, president of The Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas; J. Warner Wallace, speaker and author; Robert Smith, Charles T. Carter Baptist Chair of Divinity at Beeson Divinity School, Birmingham, Ala.; Tom Richter, pastor of

First Baptist Church, Cullman, Ala.; Evangelist Ronnie Hill, and Bowman.

David McKinney, worship pastor at Cross Church in northwest Arkansas, will lead worship during the conference.

Marcus Brown, team leader of the ABSC evangelism and church health team, said ECON 2020 is a significant time of worship and fellowship in Arkansas Baptist life.

"As one of the largest annual gatherings of ABSC pastors, staff, and lay leaders, ECON

## WORKS

*continued from page 5*

able for more students. And that transformative education will send WBU graduates out as light into a dark world that desperately needs them.

*Brett Cooper is vice president for creative services and technology at Williams Baptist College.*

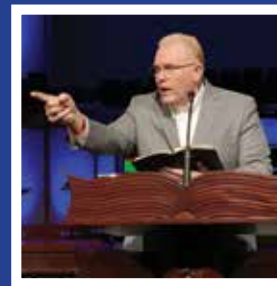
provides a great opportunity for Arkansas Baptists to come together for encouraging worship, powerful preaching, and uplifting fellowship. God continually uses ECON to encourage us and focus us on Him and on His call to reach the unreached," said Brown.

"If you have never attended ECON or if you are new to the Arkansas Baptist family, I would like to encourage you to consider joining us this year. The event is free because

of ABSC churches' generous gifts to missions through the Cooperative Program, and we will be meeting in Little Rock at Geyer Springs First Baptist Church. They are great hosts, and you will be blessed by their gracious hospitality."

Registration is not required to attend ECON, but it is required to attend Tuesday's workshops. To register for a workshop or for lodging information, visit [absc.org/econ](http://absc.org/econ).

## Sam Moore Evangelistic Ministries



479-381-1170,  
[evangelistsammoore@gmail.com](mailto:evangelistsammoore@gmail.com)

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## FBC, Nashville, dedicates 11,250 shoeboxes

NASHVILLE - First Baptist Church, Nashville, dedicated 11,250 Operation Christmas Child (OCC) shoeboxes Sunday, Dec. 17. In the past 16 years, the church has packed almost 87,000 shoeboxes for OCC.

"Our Operation Christmas Child ministry has been a great 'whole-church' ministry for us at First Baptist Church," said Kevin Sartin, pastor of FBC Nashville. "Purchasing supplies, preparing items for packing and packing the Operation Christmas Child shoeboxes is a year-round endeavor that everyone from our children to our senior adults can participate in."

FBC is a central drop-off site for OCC in Southwest

Arkansas. During OCC's National Collection Week, 22,656 shoeboxes were collected from surrounding communities, bring the 16 year total to more than 167,000 shoeboxes.

"Packing shoeboxes for Operation Christmas Child is a year-round missions ministry for First Baptist Church in Nashville," said Beverly Starr, central drop-off team leader for FBC. "It is a wonderful and meaningful way to involve your family in sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ with children and adults around the world."

The shoeboxes collected will be distributed to children in more than 100 countries by missionaries who will pres-

ent the gospel and follow up with a discipleship program called The Greatest Journey. In the last 10 years, 18.9 million children who received a shoebox participated in The Greatest Journey, where they learn what it means to follow Jesus and share their faith with friends and family.

"Our prayer continues to be that God will use the materials contained in the shoeboxes that we pack to share His love and to communicate the message of His gospel to children all around the world," said Sartin.



**SECRETARY RETIRES AFTER 36 YEARS** — Ann Gunn Clark celebrated her retirement as church secretary of First Baptist Church, Sheridan, Dec. 8. Clark has served on the church's staff since 1983.

*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

**William "Bill" Andrew Menard**, 79, of Sherwood, died Dec. 2.

Menard served as a pastor at Rehobeth Baptist Church, Moorefield, and youth pastor at First Baptist Church, Batesville.

He was preceded in death by his parents and sister.

He is survived by his wife, two daughters, seven grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

**Orby Gene Gregory**, 77, of Monticello, died Dec. 7.

Gregory was an ordained minister and served as pastor of Halley Baptist Church, Dermott, for 36 years. He also worked in the public school system as a coach, principal and su-

perintendent.

He was preceded in death by his parents.

Gregory is survived by his wife, three daughters, nine grandchildren and two sisters.

**Norman Lamar Roberts**, 89, of Little Rock, died Dec. 7.

Roberts served as administrator of Memorial Hospital in North Little Rock until 1993. After he retired, Roberts and his wife participated in several short-term assignments with the International

Mission Board in India, Indonesia, Germany and Kazakhstan.

He was preceded in death by his parents.

Roberts is survived by his wife, four children, five grandchildren and one great-grandson.

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## Classifieds

### PASTOR

First Baptist Church, Danville, AR is seeking a **full-time pastor**. Please send resumes to: [fbcdan@arkwest.com](mailto:fbcdan@arkwest.com).

Shepherd Hill SBC located south of Pine Bluff on Hwy 63 is seeking a **full or part-time pastor**. Please send all resumes and inquiries to [cbrown@next-wire.com](mailto:cbrown@next-wire.com).

Ebenezer Baptist Church, El Dorado, AR, in search of a **full-time pastor**. Send resumes to

Pastor Search Committee, 1942 N. Wyatt Dr, El Dorado, AR 71730 or e-mail to [myebcchurch@yahoo.com](mailto:myebcchurch@yahoo.com). Resumes will be accepted until Feb. 29, 2020.

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

Pangburn First Baptist Church is seeking a **pastor**. Please send resumes to PO Box 250, Pangburn, AR 72121, or email: [pangburnfbcpastorsearch@gmail.com](mailto:pangburnfbcpastorsearch@gmail.com).

Life Fellowship in Jacksonville, Arkansas, seeks **bi-vocational pastor**. Please send resume to [5baldwins@comcast.net](mailto:5baldwins@comcast.net).

### OTHER STAFF POSITIONS

Mansfield FBC is searching for a **part-time student minister**. Job description at [mansfieldfbc.com/student-minister-job](http://mansfieldfbc.com/student-minister-job).

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](mailto:trinitybenton@gmail.com).

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](mailto:dianne@fbcfc.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](mailto: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@fbc Harrison.org](mailto:robd@fbc Harrison.org).

Submit a classified ad at  
[arkansasbaptist.org/ads](http://arkansasbaptist.org/ads)

## DECEMBER 22, 2019

I was rather confused when one of my co-workers told me she was taking her children to see a live nativity. They were not Christians and celebrated Christmas only as a secular holiday. My co-worker thought the nativity was a sweet scene from the life of the historical Jesus. However, she rejected the real reason for the season.

The birth of Jesus was more than historical. Author and theologian, J.I. Packer said, "It is here, in the thing that happened at the first Christmas, that the profoundest and most unfathomable depths of the Christian revelation lie." This baby is God's salvation.

The Apostle Matthew says, "The birth of Jesus Christ came about this way..." (Matt. 1:18). Matthew explains that what had been conceived in Mary was by the Holy Spirit. This is why Joseph is to accept this miracle and not divorce his betrothed. The angel told Joseph to name the child "Jesus" because "He will save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21). This is Jesus' legal name. The word "Christ" is significant. It is not Jesus' last

name. The word "Christ" means "Messiah" or "Anointed One." Matthew explains that Jesus' birth is the fulfillment of prophecy (Isa. 7:14). There are approximately 332 distinct Old Testament prophecies that are fulfilled in Christ. This is not just another baby; He came to be the Savior of the world.

Numbers 21:6-9 provides an illustration of how God saves. The Israelites complained about having no bread or

water and they didn't like the food. God sent poisonous snakes as judgment. People were bitten and died. When the people asked

Moses to intercede for them, he did. God instructed Moses to make a bronze snake and mount it on a pole. Whenever someone in the camp was bitten by a snake, they were to look at the bronze snake on the pole and they would be healed.

Jesus would apply this story to His own life as His being lifted up on the cross to provide eternal life (John 3:14-16). The Bethlehem babe was and is the salvation of the world.

## EXPLORE THE BIBLE

## God saves

MATTHEW 1:18-25; NUMBERS 21:6-9

The lyrics in Mark Lowry's song, "Mary Did You Know," pose some interesting questions. Mary couldn't have known the answers to most of them. The rhetorical questions in the song are for our contemplation. A couple of questions in the lyrics are intriguing and Mary probably knew the answers to them. When Mary kissed the face of Jesus, did she know she was kissing the face of God? Also, when Mary held Jesus in her arms, did she know she was holding the great "I Am?" In other words, did she know that baby Jesus was God?

The angel Gabriel appears to Mary and announces she has found favor with God but she is troubled by this greeting and encounter (Luke 1:28-29). Gabriel tells her not to fear and announces, "You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will call His name Jesus" (Luke 1:31). Gabriel expounds about this child, quoting messianic prophecies. Mary's mind was still back where he said she would conceive and give birth. She asks, "How can this be, since I have not been intimate with a

man?" (Luke 1:34).

The birth of Jesus was natural like any other birth. However, the conception of our Lord was like no other, it was supernatural, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you" (Luke 1:35). This was a divine miracle.

Luke gives further evidence for Jesus' divinity. Jesus' name means, "the Lord is salvation." Jesus would be both fully human and fully God. As Mary's son, He is fully human. As the Son of the Most High, He is

the Son of God. He will also be a king by inheriting the throne and reigning over the house of Jacob. He will return one day and establish His kingdom and it will have no end. Jesus is God. Her response to all this was simple and humble surrender (Luke 1:38).

God brought humanity and divinity together in Mary's womb. Mary delivered God's Christmas gift to the world. This Christmas, include Jesus in your gift giving.

## BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

## Is Jesus God?

LUKE 1:26-35

## DECEMBER 29, 2019

The story of Balaam and his donkey is an incredible story. Bible commentator and expositor, Ronald B. Allen wrote, "The pagan mantic, the donkey, and the angel of the Lord are brought together in this truly tragicomic scene."

Balak, the King of Moab, feared Israel because God had given Israel tremendous victories. Balak knew there was no military option in defeating the Israelites. He sought a diviner of renown, Balaam, to place a curse on Israel.

God came to Balaam in a dream and told him he couldn't go with Balak's delegation

and curse Israel. Balak didn't accept this and he sent another delegation. God allowed Balaam to go but he was to follow His instructions. Somewhere along the way Balaam must have violated God's instruction because the angel of the Lord blocked his path.

Balaam's donkey could see what he couldn't see. The angel of the Lord is holding a sword and blocking the way. She turned away, saving her master's life. Three times the donkey changed the

route and three times her master beat her. Balaam was filled with anger; if he had been armed he would have killed the donkey.

God spoke through the donkey, "Am I not the donkey you've ridden all your life until today? Have I ever treated you this way before?" Balaam replies to his donkey, "No." At that point God opened Balaam's eyes and he saw the angel of the Lord and knelt before Him. The Lord then asked Balaam why he beat his donkey - since it was the donkey that saw the Lord and saved his life.

Balaam's words of repentance makes us think that Balaam had truly repented. The outcome of the full story shows this to be false (Num. 25; 31). Balaam was not able to curse Israel as he intended. Balaam pronounced a series of oracles that the Lord transformed as blessing for the Israelites.

This is the point of the lesson: "God calls His followers to represent Him and His purposes to the world." We need to speak God's message and be an instrument of blessing.

I taught a class on world religions and cults. I was asked, "Aren't all religions essentially the same?" I answered this question with a question, "In what ways are all religions the same?" They usually can't answer this question because they haven't actually studied any of them. I explained that most religions have superficial similarities but all have fundamental differences.

The Hindu religion worships more than 330 million gods. Buddhists worship an extensive system of gods and demigods and believe in 27 heavens. Mormons teach a plurality of gods and that men can become gods. The Bible paints a totally different picture.

God claims to be the God of His people but He also claims to be the God of history (Isa. 44:6-8). Only the God of the Bible can explain the past and predict the future. He challenges any so-called gods to come and make their case (Isa. 44:7). He invites them to predict the future (Isa. 44:7). He asks a rhetorical question, "Is there any God besides Me?" (Isa. 44:8).

God answers His own question, "There is no other Rock; I do not know any" (Isa. 44:8).

Isaiah 44:9-20 depicts an imaginative scene of an idol-makers' workshop. God says idols are nothing and they have no profit (Isa. 44:9). They can't see anything and don't know anything (Isa. 44:9). They will be put to shame (Isa. 44:9). Idol-makers and those who worship idols have shut their eyes and they cannot see (Isa. 44:18). They have closed their minds and cannot understand (Isa. 44:18).

The way to God is not through idols, it is through His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." (John 14:6). This is a foundation that other religions do not have. Jesus is the only means of reaching God. Merrill C. Tenny, in the *Expositors Bible Commentary*, said, "Jesus is the only authorized revelation of God in human form, and He is the only authorized representative of humanity to God."

## EXPLORE THE BIBLE

## God calls

NUMBERS 22:22-35

## BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

## Aren't all religions the same?

ISA. 44:6-11; JOHN 14:5-7

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JANUARY 5, 2020

Provisions are made for the exceptions and the irregularities of the inheritance laws but no such provisions are made for Moses. Moses and Aaron had not honored God at Kadesh and would not be allowed to enter the promised land with the new generation (Num. 20:1-13; 27:13-14). Aaron had already died and Moses would soon die. Before Moses' death, God allowed him a glimpse of the land from the top of a mountain (Num. 27:12). Moses would return with Elijah centuries later to talk with Jesus on the mount of transfiguration (Matt. 17:1-8). In that sense, Moses would finally make it to the promised land.

One of the most fascinating aspects of Moses' leadership is how he always interceded for the Israelites. On the eve of his death, his concern was for someone to lead the people. Moses asked God to appoint a leader who would be like a shepherd to the people (Num. 27:15-17).

God answers favorably for Moses and the people. God commanded Moses to commission Joshua for the task (Num.

27:18-21). Joshua was one of two heroes that emerged during Israel's dark days of apostasy (Num. 13-14). The commissioning service was done in the presence of Eleazar the priest and the whole congregation so that there would be no objections to Joshua's leadership. The service included the laying on of hands, which was a visible representation of Moses transferring some of his authority to

Joshua. This was done so that the people would start obeying Joshua immediately. Joshua would seek guidance of the Urim, which was a process of discerning

the will of God.

We need to commission and invest in spiritual leaders who will shepherd the church and lead the church to carry out its stewardship of the gospel. As Paul approached the end of his life, he was concerned about church leadership and the furtherance of the gospel, "And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2).

### EXPLORE THE BIBLE

## God commissions

NUM. 27:12-23

Our church had a men's group called "Men of Faith." The point of our Bible study and fellowship was to encourage each other to keep our commitments. Their wives would stop me in the hallway and inform me that their husbands were better at keeping their promises. In this lesson, we should learn that God expects us to keep our promises and commitments to each other and to Him.

The Reubenites and the Gadites owned a significant amount of livestock and found the land on the east side of the Jordan River well suited for raising

livestock. They asked Moses if they could settle on the east side of the river. Moses did not want a repeat episode of the rebellion at Kadesh-barnea. He demanded the Reubenites and the Gadites make a specific commitment.

The commitment required these tribes, if they settled on the east side, to cross the Jordan and fight with Israel until the land was secured. If they didn't keep their commitment "you will certainly sin against the Lord; be sure your

sin will catch up to you" (Num. 32:23). If they broke their promise, they should expect God's judgment.

Moses established a sort of system of accountability for the Reubenites and Gadites because he would not be alive when these events would happen. He called together Eleazar the priest, Joshua, and the heads of the tribes. He informed them that if Reubenites and Gadites crossed the Jordan and fought with the rest of the Israelites, they were to be given the land they requested. If not, they must cross the Jordan

and settle in Canaan. These two tribes understood that what Moses was saying was just as if God was saying it, "What the Lord has spoken to your servants is what we will do" (32:31).

Believers honor God when we keep the commitments in our daily routines, in our families, and in our jobs. If we are living godly lives of discipleship, we should equate the commitments we make in our lives with commitments made to God Himself.

### EXPLORE THE BIBLE

## God expects

NUM. 32:20-32

She rejected repeated attempts of her family and friends to lead her to Christ. She couldn't see any difference that Christ made in their lives. Their talk did not agree with their walk.

Her husband was an abusive and hard man. He came home one day a totally different man. He had received Christ and was so transformed she hardly knew him. She wanted what he had. It is difficult to ignore a transformed life.

Paul's defense before King Agrippa is a powerful defense of the gospel, which gives several important insights into our testimony to Jesus Christ. First, speak to unbelievers with respect. Paul told Agrippa that he considered himself an expert in Jewish affairs and he was fortunate to be able to make a defense before him (Acts 26:1-3).

Second, Paul spoke about his life before his conversion (Acts 26:4-11). He explained he was a member of the sect of the Pharisees. Paul arrested Christians and voted to put them to death.

Third, Paul gave an account of his conversion and commission. Paul explained

that he had literally seen the Light on the road to Damascus (Acts 26:12-18). The resurrected Jesus had revealed Himself known to Paul. Immediately the Lord commissioned him to be a missionary to the Gentiles (Acts 26:16-18).

Fourth, Paul stuck to the message of the gospel and the call to repentance (Acts 26:19-23). This led the fifth insight, be prepared for rejection and ridicule (Acts 26:24-25). Festus told Paul

he was out of his mind. Paul said he was speaking bold words of truth and good judgment.

Lastly, Paul respectfully and straight up asks

Agrippa, "King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you believe." Agrippa was not so easily persuaded but did come to the conclusion Paul had done nothing worthy of death or chains.

Darrell Bock, Director of Cultural Engagement at Dallas Theological Seminary, said that Paul was "the exemplary witness who calls for a response." We need to be exemplary witnesses who call for a response. A transformed life gives credibility to our testimony.

### BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

## What proof is my testimony?

ACTS 26:2-5, 12-18, 24-26

JANUARY 12, 2020

I work in an acute and a short-term rehabilitation healthcare facility. Whether a person is experiencing an acute illness or battling a chronic disease, the question arises, "Why does God allow suffering?" We must have a proper understanding of the origin and nature of suffering if we ever hope to make sense of it.

There are those who believe that suffering is a by-product of the evolutionary process. They see the randomness in evolution to be why sickness and disaster occur without discrimination. It is simply the natural order of things. One might attempt to justify natural disasters this way but it could never explain suffering imposed by others.

The first book of the Bible makes it perfectly clear that suffering is the result of the fall of man in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve succumbed to temptation and forfeited their assigned role as rulers over creation and were cursed with hardship and pain (Gen. 3:16-19).

This wasn't a situation where evil could be isolated and then destroyed. The Russian historian and novelist,

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, explained why removing evil from the world isn't that simple, "The line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being." Adam and Eve's sin against God radically altered the human condition. All mankind and all of creation suffered because of man's fallen state (Rom. 8:18-22).

Paul explains that our "present sufferings are not worth comparing to our future glory" (Rom. 8:18). In Christ, we will experience the fullness of our adoption and the redemption of our bodies

from a life of suffering (Rom. 8:23). We need to practice "patient hope" in our present sufferings (Rom. 8:24-25). We have a precious promise that the curse of suffering will be eliminated when we get to heaven because God is making everything new (Rev. 21:4-5).

We live in a fallen world. Suffering, disease, and crime are always present. We must not lose sight of the future glory God has promised us. Keep this view in sight and you will be able to endure suffering with hope.

### BIBLE STUDIES FOR LIFE

## Why does suffering exist?

GEN. 3:16-19; ROM. 8:18-25

## 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.



## Church hosts historic Nativity after ACLU threatens litigation

Sarah Davis  
Arkansas Baptist News

of Bradley County," said Matt Overall, senior pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church, Warren

WARREN - The Christmas decorations have been on at the courthouse but

ney) has ignored now," said pastor of First

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