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Editor: Greg Warner  
Associate Editor: Bob Allen  
Phone: (904) 262-6626  
Fax: (904) 262-7745

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## **Ministers will provide Clinton with 'accountability group,' counseling**

By Kenny Byrd

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Having publicly confessed to an inappropriate relationship with a former White House intern and facing possible impeachment, President Bill Clinton has turned to three ministers to counsel him weekly and provide him with an "accountability group" for his personal behavior.

Tony Campolo, professor of sociology at Eastern College in St. Davids, Pa., and Gordon MacDonald, senior pastor of Grace Chapel in Lexington, Mass., said that at least one of them will meet with Clinton weekly.

The Washington Post also reported that Philip Wogaman, pastor of Foundry United Methodist Church in Washington, D.C., will be a third spiritual adviser to the president.

Campolo said in a statement released Sept. 14 that Clinton called him Labor Day evening, Sept. 7, and asked Campolo to serve in a pastoral role to counsel him and hold him accountable for his behavior. "We will pray with him, study the Scripture together, and do our best to help him as he searches his heart and soul," Campolo said.

Pressure has mounted on Clinton since he admitted publicly Aug. 17 that he engaged in an "inappropriate relationship" with former White House intern Monica Lewinsky and then misled the public about the affair. There have been numerous calls for Clinton's resignation, and Congress is considering impeachment proceedings.

"We want him to understand what went wrong with him personally that led to the tragic sins that have so marred his life and the office of the presidency," Campolo said. "We want to provide all the help that we can to spiritually strengthen him against yielding to the temptations that have conquered him in the past," he said.

Campolo noted that he and MacDonald were with the president and First Lady Hillary Rodham Clinton prior to President Clinton's confession and plea for forgiveness at a Sept. 11 prayer breakfast. "Both Gordon and I are convinced that what Mr. Clinton said came from his heart and was absolutely sincere," Campolo said.

"There are those who will say that Gordon and I are being used and manipulated," Campolo said. "Should this be true, it would not be the first time that Christians have been taken in. But we would rather be men of faith who believe that God is working in the life of the president than to join the army of cynics, many of whom are religious leaders, who cannot accept a plea for forgiveness at face value."

"We welcome the opportunity to take the risks that love and reconciliation require," he added.

Years ago, MacDonald admitted to an extra-marital affair that led him to leave his job with a religious publishing group. He wrote a book discussing the issue titled *Rebuilding Your Broken World*.

In a sermon at Grace Chapel, Sept. 13, MacDonald told the congregation that Clinton had called him. According to a text of the sermon distributed by the church, MacDonald said: "He had read my book *Rebuilding Your Broken World* a second time and felt that there were things in the book that we needed to talk about. Having had some extensive experiences in the subject of what we biblical people call brokenness, I could sense his own brokenness after the first few minutes of the conversation."

"Like most others who have been publicly exposed in a terrible sin, the president had faced up to the reality of his deeds in a series of steps -- almost like descending a staircase," MacDonald said.

MacDonald spent the night preceding Clinton's comments to religious leaders at the White House. He said he joined Clinton and the first lady for several hours of discussion.

"The president and I sat alone late into the night talking about the future, not in political terms but spiritual. The content of that conversation will be for the most part, totally confidential. ... I went to bed that night awestruck at the providence of God which brought me to that position on that night," MacDonald said.

He said the three clergymen will be more concerned about "Bill the man, the husband, the father, the working man, than we are about President Clinton."

"I have been seriously troubled when I have listened to people talk about this president -- not in the civil course of acceptable political and philosophical adversity but rather in terms of hatred and vengeance," MacDonald told the crowd. "It has been easy for some to say that God's judgment will be upon this president. But will God's judgment not be upon a group of people who call themselves biblically-oriented but who permit such rancor in their hearts?"

MacDonald said he believes Clinton was sincere in the contrition he expressed in the speech to religious leaders at the recent breakfast. "I have seen his private tears, heard his personal words of remorse. And I have chosen to embrace this man, as a sinner in need of mercy. I have received him as I would try to receive any of you should you find yourself in a similar circumstance."

MacDonald said he is not endorsing the president but is charged to carry the "gospel of the second chance."

"Am I endorsing this president? No. That is not my intention in this statement. I have tried to keep this pulpit, which I love, free of political endorsements of any kind -- much to the consternation of some and the suspicion of others," he said.

Campolo said he and MacDonald would not offer "cheap grace" in their counseling with the president.

"Cheap grace takes sin lightly and does not call for repentance and change," Campolo said. "But neither do we come in a spirit of loveless condemnation, which would deny the president the costly grace which we ourselves have received from God. ... The president is a Baptist, and it is only fitting that he should call upon brothers in his own religious tradition to help him on his journey of faith in the days that lie ahead."

Wogaman told Associated Baptist Press that he would not confirm nor deny the Post story, citing confidentiality. "In all cases of pastoral counseling and relationships, confidentiality is important," he said. "If anything is said, it must be said by the person with whom the pastor is working and not by the pastor."

"We understand the reality and tragedy of sin; we understand all the more, the wonder of grace, forgiveness and redemption," Wogaman said. "This is a time when the whole country needs renewal because the

sin in question -- the separation between love and commitment and sex -- is very widespread. It permeates in our culture. We will not be able to heal simply by condemning the president."

While critics denounced the release of information about the president seeking counseling as an attempt to manipulate public opinion, a group of religious leaders at a Sept. 16 symposium disagreed with that suggestion.

Joan Brown Campbell, general secretary of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., said it would be "almost impossible for [Clinton], even if he wanted, to keep it private, to choose three clergy people, at least one of whom is fairly well known, and have that be a private matter."

James Dunn, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee, said, "If there is a tough character who's not going to be snookered or snowed, it's Tony Campolo."

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## **Starr outlines impeachable conduct; Clinton disagrees**

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Graphic descriptions of sexual acts that allegedly occurred between President Bill Clinton and former White House intern Monica Lewinsky highlight a 445-page report submitted to Congress by Whitewater independent counsel Kenneth Starr.

The U.S. House of Representatives voted Sept. 11 to make the report available to the public over the Internet. The House vote empowers the 37-member Judiciary Committee to review 17 boxes of transcripts, testimony, audio tapes and other information gathered by Starr in an investigation which has lasted more than four years and cost more than \$40 million.

Starr claims that there are 11 acts outlined in the report that may "constitute grounds for impeachment."

Under the House resolution allowing review of the report, the Judiciary Committee has until Sept. 28 to review the extra boxes of information and decide what to make public.

During House debate, lawmakers noted that the proceedings could lead to the first impeachment hearings of a president since President Richard Nixon.

"We are here because circumstances and our Constitution have thrust upon us an onerous duty -- one that requires us to summon the courage and the means to defend the rule of law," said Rep. Henry Hyde, R-Ill., head of the Judiciary Committee.

Starr's 11 allegations of impeachable acts include perjury, obstruction of justice and official misconduct.

Starr charges that Clinton lied under oath:

-- at numerous times in his deposition in the Paula Jones civil case when he discussed being alone with Lewinsky, gifts he gave to her and their relationship.

-- in the civil deposition about his discussions with Washington lawyer Vernon Jordan concerning Lewinsky's involvement in the Jones case; and

-- to the grand jury about his relationship with Lewinsky;

The Starr report also details charges of obstruction of justice and witness tampering, alleging that Clinton:

-- had an understanding with Lewinsky to jointly conceal the truth about their relationship by concealing gifts subpoenaed by Jones' lawyers;

-- had an understanding with Lewinsky to jointly conceal the truth of their relationship from the judicial process by lying under oath and by Clinton suggesting that Lewinsky prepare a false affidavit;

-- helped Lewinsky obtain a job in New York at a time when she would have been a witness harmful to him;

-- attempted to influence the testimony of his personal secretary Betty Currie; and  
-- endeavored to obstruct justice during the grand jury investigation by refusing to testify for seven months and by lying to senior White House aides.

Finally, Starr charges that the president abused his constitutional authority by lying to the public and Congress in January about the affair; promising to cooperate fully with the grand jury and later refusing six invitations to testify voluntarily; invoking executive privilege; lying to the grand jury; and lying to the public in his televised confession Aug. 17.

In his Aug. 17 speech, Clinton said his answers in the civil deposition were "legally accurate," but that he did not volunteer information.

Clinton's personal lawyers released a preliminary rebuttal to Starr's charges about an hour before Starr's report was made public. They released a more in-depth response Sept. 12.

They called the Starr report a "hit-and-run smear campaign" intended to damage the president.

"After impaneling grand juries and leasing office space in three jurisdictions, and investigating virtually every aspect of the president's business, financial, political, official and ultimately, personal life, the Office of Independent Counsel has presented to the House a referral that no prosecutor would present to any grand jury," Clinton's response stated.

It said: "In 445 pages, the referral mentions Whitewater, the failed land deal which originated its investigation, twice. It never once mentions other issues it has been investigating for years -- matters concerning the firing of employees of the White House travel office and the controversy surrounding the FBI files. By contrast, the issue of sex is mentioned more than 500 times, in the most graphic, salacious and gratuitous manner."

The White House response said the president "has admitted -- an improper -- illicit relationship outside of his marriage. Having such a relationship is wrong. Trying to keep such a relationship private, while understandable, is wrong. But such acts do not even approach the constitutional test of impeachment -- 'treason, bribery, or other high crimes and misdemeanors.'"

With other possible punishments available to punish Clinton such as a congressional censure, the decision will ultimately rest in the hand of the Judiciary Committee.

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-- By Kenny Byrd

## **Congress passes resolution seeking release of 3 missionary hostages**

By Stacey Hamby

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- The United States House of Representatives has passed a resolution aimed at speeding up the release of three New Tribes Mission missionaries who are believed being held hostage by rebel forces in Colombia. Mark David Mankins, Rick Tenenoff and Mark Rich were kidnapped from their homes in a Kuna village in southern Panama in January 1993. The three men are believed to be the longest-held American hostages in Colombia.

"I feel like the U.S. government is more behind us now," said Patti Tenenoff, wife of Rick Tenenoff. "I feel like they are now seeing my husband's case as a legitimate situation to get involved in."

The resolution calls for President Clinton and other U.S. officials to raise the issue of the kidnapping to foreign governments at every opportunity.

Scott Ross, New Tribes Mission attorney and crisis-team member, commented: "When New Tribes Mission representatives go to different countries and can show we have the U.S. Congress behind us, it gives more legitimacy to foreign ministers and leaders. Any time U.S. ambassadors have important meetings with foreign officials, they are now instructed to bring up our case."

Ross said the next step is to try to arrange a meeting between New Tribes Mission representatives and Colombian President Pastrana while he is in Washington next month visiting President Clinton.

"That would elevate the issue in the media, and any media attention is felt by FARC, who is very sensitive to media," Ross said. FARC, a Spanish acronym for Revolutionary Forces of Colombia, is the group believed to be holding the men. "That would pressure the guerrillas to sit down and talk with us."

Ross noted that a meeting with President Pastrana could also encourage Pastrana in his peace initiatives with guerilla organizations in Colombia.

New Tribes Mission, based in Sanford, Fla., has not had any contact with the guerilla group since the early months after the kidnapping. "We are working very hard to renew our dialogue with the guerrillas, and that will happen with the help of some of these high-level officials," Ross said.

Although the mission and the wives remain optimistic based on some reports that the men are alive, there is no proof of their actual condition or whereabouts.

U.S. Rep. Roy Blunt (R-Mo.) introduced the resolution as a member of the House International Relations Committee.

"I have met with the families of these men, and their pain will continue until some real answers about the fate of their loved ones are provided," Blunt said.

"This resolution is the least that Congress and the President should do to find those answers."

Blunt introduced the measure after a March 31 hearing where Dan Germann of New Tribes Mission and Tania Rich, wife of Mark Rich, testified about the kidnapping.

Former British envoy Terry Waite and American journalist Terry Anderson, who were held hostage in Lebanon for years, also have lent their support to the families and efforts to free the missionaries.

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## **Rural churches rally around ill pastor**

By Stacey Hamby

LEBANON, Mo. (ABP) -- A little help goes a long way. That's what Larry Burke has learned this summer.

Burke, bivocational pastor of Pleasant Grove Baptist Church near Lebanon, Mo., was in the process of building a house in his spare time when he learned the news: a cancerous tumor was taking the sight in his left eye.

"I didn't want to leave [working on the house] because it couldn't go through a winter without a roof on it," said Burke, who had to leave his job at the Lee jeans factory in Lebanon so he could travel to Columbia for radiation treatments.

He was considering getting a loan to have someone finish the roof on his house when Laclede Baptist Association director of missions Perry Wolfe told him to wait. Wolfe helped organize about 60 volunteers to spend a day working on Burke's roof. "His house is under a roof now and his investment is protected, and we're planning to have another workday or two to help him enclose it," Wolfe said.

Wolfe said churches in the association have contributed money to Burke to help with medical-related and house-related expenses. Pleasant Grove Church hosted a hymn sing and raised several thousand dollars, Wolfe said. Churches also have taken special offerings.

"We are an association of small churches, and I think the people identified with Pastor Burke," he said. "He's stayed with them through thick and thin, and of course, we're always touched by tragedy, and our church people were very sympathetic and responded in that way."

The trials aren't over for Burke, though. He said his eye is recovering fine, but now doctors have found a tumor on his back and possibly his neck. He will be undergoing tests to determine if those also are cancerous.

"I've told all the people who've helped me out that they've gone way beyond the call of duty," Burke said. "You never think something like this is going to happen to you, and I appreciate the Christian response."

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## **Preaching chair to honor Chafin at Richmond seminary**

By Michael Clingenpeel

RICHMOND, Va. (ABP) -- Kenneth Chafin, who spent his entire professional life working for Southern Baptists, has had an endowed chair in preaching named in his honor at a Virginia seminary that is supported by the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

At its opening convocation Sept. 15, Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond President Thomas Graves announced gifts of more than \$250,000 had been given by Chafin's friends in Louisville, Ky., and Houston to establish the Kenneth L. Chafin Chair of Preaching at the 8-year-old school on Richmond's north side.

During a long career of denominational service, Chafin taught preaching and evangelism at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, served as Billy Graham Professor of Evangelism and later professor of preaching at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, directed the evangelism department at the former Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention and was pastor at two prominent Southern Baptist churches, South Main in Houston and Walnut Street in Louisville, Ky.

But in his introduction of Chafin during the convocation, Graves noted that the native Oklahoman was "one of the first to see the demise of Southern Baptist life." Through most of the two-decade SBC controversy Chafin was an outspoken critic of the convention's conservative shift, and early this decade made the motion to place BTSR in CBF's budget, according to Graves.

"This comes at a time when I am totally out of the loop with my roots," said Chafin. "Southern Baptists don't publish me any more, they don't let me speak at conferences and assemblies. Then this comes."

"But I am glad it is in this place. It is strange that someone born in Oklahoma and schooled in New Mexico and Texas should feel more at home in Virginia. This seminary, its students and faculty represent Baptists in a wonderful way. This seminary believes in a free pulpit. The preachers they produce will not be clones; they will be real Baptists."

Graves said the announcement of the endowed chair indicates the importance of preaching at BTSR. "Preaching is at the center of what a Baptist seminary does because it is at the center of what a church does. Ken Chafin is as good a model of preaching and teaching as we have in Baptist life."

Charles Bugg, who directs BTSR's preaching center, will occupy the newly-named chair. Bugg was Chafin's successor as preaching professor at Southern Seminary. He called his mentor a "person of courage" who possesses the "strength to preach to difficult issues" yet has "remarkable compassion."

Chafin, 71, directed the Billy Graham Association's schools of evangelism for more than a decade and convened the first Congress on World Evangelization at Lausanne, Switzerland, in 1974.

He also chaired the board of trustees at Southwestern Seminary. He and his wife, Barbara, are the parents of three children and live in Louisville.

The endowed professorship is the third at BTSR. The others are in pastoral care and church history. Seminary officials said they hoped to name more in the near future as part of a \$10 million endowment and capital funds campaign.

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## **'Let go the past, embrace your calling,' Ken Chafin challenges BTSR students**

RICHMOND, Va. (ABP) -- Reflecting on his roots in a broken home, poor early education and crippling arthritis, Ken Chafin urged seminary students at Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond (Va.) not to be held captive to their past, but to find themselves in their relationship with Christ and their calling as ministers.

On the day when Chafin was honored by BTSR by having an endowed chair in preaching named in his honor, the educator and pastor reflected on his struggle to let loose of the past. Using Philippians 3:13-14 as his text and the apostle Paul as his model, Chafin described the difficulty of giving up old ideas, emotions, failures and conflicts in order to embrace the new.

"Each of us is trapped, whether we know it or not, in where we are from," said Chafin. "Turning loose of what you have held onto is not easy. I have turned loose of more in the past decade than I have in the previous four decades of my life."

Releasing the past to embrace the new is difficult because it leaves people without a familiar source of stability, said Chafin. Ministers have a right to be concerned about this, because they fear losing their "authority for ministry."

This authority, said Chafin, comes from one's personal relationship with Jesus Christ, not from old ideas about religion. "It is in this relationship that calling comes. Calling tells you why you are here. It guides you, sustains you in the difficult years of ministry."

He also told students that in addition to their calling, they would find "the possibility of compassion" in this relationship with Jesus. Compassion, not holiness, is the "controlling characteristic of God," Chafin cautioned the gathering of students, faculty and Baptists from the community.

Forty-five new students are enrolled at BTSR this semester, bringing the total enrollment to almost 250, many of whom were present for the Sept. 15 convocation at Ginter Park Baptist Church near the BTSR campus.

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-- By Michael Clingenpeel

## **Lonnie Wilkey elected editor of Tennessee Baptist news journal**

By Connie Davis

BRENTWOOD, Tenn. (ABP) -- Lonnie Wilkey, associate editor of the Baptist and Reflector since 1988, was elected the news journal's editor by the Tennessee Baptist Convention executive board Sept. 15.

Wilkey was appointed interim editor April 1 following the March 31 retirement of Fletcher Allen.

"As interim, Lonnie Wilkey demonstrated his ability to be the editor of the Baptist and Reflector and in that capacity he did an outstanding job," said Herbert Higdon, chairman of the search committee for the editor.

Higdon, of Jackson, who is a retired director of missions and past president of the Tennessee Baptist Convention, said the committee "looked at a number of resumes and unanimously agreed on Lonnie Wilkey as the new editor.

"Lonnie Wilkey's dedication is to Tennessee Baptists and his concern is to convey the news that is important to our constituency across the state," Higdon said.

Prior to his work at the Tennessee Baptist state paper, Wilkey was director of communications of the former Southern Baptist Education Commission, based in Nashville, for about six years. In that role he was editor of The Southern Baptist Educator and other publications of the commission, which was later disbanded as part of SBC restructuring.

Wilkey has been on the staff of two Baptist schools. He was assistant director of public relations for Baptist College at Charleston in South Carolina (now Charleston Southern University) and was director of public information at North Greenville College, Tigerville, S.C.

He also was news editor of the Northwest Sentinel, a weekly community newspaper published in Travelers Rest, S.C.

A graduate of North Greenville College and the University of South Carolina, Columbia, Wilkey also has done graduate study at Tennessee State University, Nashville.

He is a member of the Association of State Baptist Papers and was treasurer for Baptist Communication Association.

He is married to the former Joyce Day of Greenville and they have two children, Joanna, 12, and Daniel, 9.

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## **Wayne Oates Institute plans on-line 'conference'**

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (ABP) -- It's a conference you can attend in your pajamas.

In a new twist made possible by the growth of the Internet, the Wayne Oates Institute is preparing to host its first-ever "on-line" conference Nov. 9-15.

The Oates Institute, based in Louisville, Ky., has offered several traditional conferences in the past, where participants have come together in person to hear presentations and ask questions.

The same type of presentations will be a part of the on-line conference, and participants also will be able to ask questions, according to information in the center's newsletter. The difference will be that participants can attend the conference on their own timetable and without leaving their homes or offices.

Participants will pay a conference registration fee of \$50 to gain access to the proceedings via the Internet. Then, over a one-week period they will be able to download and read comments by 20 keynote presenters.

The topic of the conference is "Hope as a Dynamic for Healing," with content aimed at helping health care providers, counselors, pastors and others involved in the connection of health care and faith.

In addition to the 20 formal presentations, the keynote figures also will be scheduled for periods of live conversation via the Internet. In these "real-time" conversations, participants from all over the world will be able to ask presenters questions and get immediate answers.

The conference also will have its own form of hallway conversation, with discussion forums in which participants may post questions and comments for other participants to see and respond to.

Even the exhibit hall, a staple of traditional conferences, will translate to the Internet, with a group of exhibitors offering information about their products and services on-line.

Keynote presenters for the conference include Jann Aldredge-Clanton of Baylor University Medical Center in Dallas; Bill Amos, director of pastoral counseling at North Carolina Baptist Hospital in Winston-Salem, N.C.; Dan Bagby, professor of pastoral care at Baptist Theological Seminary of Richmond, Va.; Hardy Clemons, pastor of First Baptist Church of Greenville, S.C.; James Hyde, associate professor of psychiatry at the University of Louisville's Medical School; Andy Lester, professor of pastoral theology at Brite Divinity School in Fort Worth, Texas; Kay Shurden, associate professor of psychiatry at Mercer University Medical School in Macon, Ga.; and Myron Madden, retired professor of psychiatry at Louisiana State University Medical Center in New Orleans.

Information about the conference is available on the Internet at [www.oates.org](http://www.oates.org) or by telephone at (502) 459-2370.

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-- Western Recorder

## **Westmoreland inaugurated as 14th president of Ouachita**

By Trennis Henderson

ARKADELPHIA, Ark. (ABP) -- Andy Westmoreland, who has served since Jan. 1 as president of Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia, Ark., was formally inaugurated Sept. 10 as the school's 14th president.

Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee, an alumnus and former trustee of Ouachita, presented the inaugural charge to Westmoreland. Citing OBU's tradition of "Christian and academic excellence," he emphasized that "the peer pressure at Ouachita is to excel."

Urging Westmoreland to maintain "the most important legacy of all," Huckabee said, "That's the truth of God's word upon which this campus was founded."

"Convictions and core values have never been so vitally needed as they are today," he pointed out. "We need leadership in our world that has moral authority."

Insisting that "one person, one light, one life does make a difference," Huckabee challenged Westmoreland to lead Ouachita to "have true clarity about the Christian worldview" and to "send forth leaders who are as bright in their morals as they are in their minds."

Westmoreland, a 1979 graduate of OBU, has served on the Ouachita staff for the past 20 years, most recently as executive vice president. Voicing appreciation for his two immediate predecessors, Daniel Grant and Ben Elrod, he described them as "two dear friends who have served Ouachita with distinction."

Prior to Westmoreland's remarks, Elrod welcomed the crowd gathered for the inauguration. "We at Ouachita have eagerly anticipated this good day," he affirmed. "It is a singular pleasure for me to share in the installation of this wise and bright young man."

During comments following the inauguration service, Elrod added, "It's been a great day for Andy and for Ouachita. I've known the tremendous qualities of Andy and his work. It was good to see that unfold before a larger audience ... I'm very comfortable knowing Ouachita is under his leadership."

Grant, who spoke on behalf of Baptist institutions of higher education, told Westmoreland he was thankful for God's leadership in the process "because bringing you and Ouachita together is a match made in heaven."

Sharing his goals for the future, Westmoreland responded: "My vision for Ouachita is that it will be a university built upon the example and buried beneath the love of Jesus Christ. In Christ and in our Christian faith, we find the highest standards for scholarship, personal conduct and service."

"Our Christianity is no excuse for a lack of scholarship," he insisted. "Instead, it provides the highest standards for excellence ... We do not fear the discovery of any truth because all truth is the perfect creation of Almighty God."

Westmoreland said his vision for Ouachita also includes being "a community of love and encouragement." He emphasized the need to oppose "those who would promote a culture of prejudice" while allowing God's love "to envelope this campus so that the world is drawn to a better way of life."

He also called for Ouachita to be "a community committed to responsible behavior and service," adding that "our actions are indeed a reflection of the values most important to us."

"When we shift the blame, when we lie, when we treat others with disrespect, we open a window on our heart," he warned. "If we are an authentic Christian community, that window on our heart will show us to be responsible and truthful."

Addressing Arkansas Baptist pastors and laypeople, Westmoreland said, "I extend the hand of friendship and a deepening commitment to sharing the gospel of Christ with the people of the world." Citing his "uncompromised belief that Christ is the foundation for this institution," he added, "Now I ask for your support."

Alluding to controversy during the past two years concerning Ouachita's relationship to the state convention, he emphasized: "If any divisions remain in the Baptist house, I ask today that we put them aside and that we move forward together ... We will hold fast to our Baptist moorings, we will cherish our spiritual heritage and we will embrace our fellow Christians as we spread the message of redemption and hope."

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## **Former drug addict walks across America to share message of hope**

By Colleen Backus

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (ABP) -- By his own admission, Ted Stone does everything nearly to the point of obsession. But his obsession to help free America from drugs is no light matter. At 64 years of age, he is walking across America for a second time to draw attention to the nation's drug problem. His own plunge into a drug-addicted spiral once landed Stone -- a former pastor -- in prison.

Moving beyond that tragic period of his life, Stone now declares, "We make a mistake when we use the term 'recovering alcoholic' or 'recovering drug addict.' I am recovered forever by the grace of God."

Carrying the American flag and battling temperatures in the 100s, Stone walked into Arkansas in late August. The summer-long grueling heat has thrown his walking tour and speaking engagements slightly out of sync. So he sometimes rides to speaking engagements and then backtracks to continue his walk.

When his escort car took him to speak at First Baptist Church in Fort Smith, he challenged members, especially youth, to meet him when he officially walked into the state. Eight days later, Stone was met by more than 20 young people and a few adults from the church. They walked with him over Garrison Bridge, which crosses the Arkansas River at the city limits of Fort Smith.

"We walked the mile with him and had an attitude of prayer the whole way," said youth minister Russ Tyler. "It really was a prayerwalk. We wanted to get behind him and support him through prayer."

"The reason we took the kids out is that there is a drug problem in our nation," Tyler explained. "Ted has such a passion for God in this area -- he has a neat heart."

"When he walked across the bridge, his legs were cramping and he was becoming dehydrated," he noted.

Stone knelt by the side of the road and prayed with the group, but couldn't get up after walking 32 miles in the blazing heat. "Russ brought me a big keg of sweet tea," Stone said. Tea is a staple on his journey -- he eats very little until evening and doesn't drink much water. "Being from the South, I like that sweet tea!" he noted.

On Aug. 24, Stone met in the state capitol with Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee, who encouraged him in his effort and signed the pledge card, "Commitment to a Lifestyle Free from Drug Abuse." The cards, which Stone hands out everywhere he goes, offer a pledge "to abstain from any substance that will have a negative impact on my behavior" and "to offer assistance to those around me who are suffering from drug-related problems."

Stone's personal odyssey has already taken him walking across the United States once, logging 3,600 miles. His current pilgrimage started April 20 in San Francisco and will end in mid-October in Virginia Beach. He walked to Utah during the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting, where his motion to create an SBC drug task force was approved.

The motion calls for the task force, headed by Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, to formulate a plan of action for the denomination's more direct involvement in the solution of serious drug problems. The task force is scheduled to present a plan of action to the messengers attending next year's SBC annual meeting.

During his trek through the state, Stone shared his anti-drug message in several other Arkansas churches, including First Baptist churches in Russellville, Little Rock and Benton.

Stone warned churchgoers in Benton that his was an ugly story. "I grew up with a dream -- of being somebody special," he explained. "I didn't understand what success was about. I became a Christian when I was 10, but didn't know much about Jesus except that He loved me.

"When I was a teenager, I searched and felt God's call," Stone shared. "Now we have a wider view of God's call -- that he calls every Christian in the pew to do something special, but then I thought he called me to be a pastor.

"I went to college at Wake Forest and attended Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary," he continued. "I was a pastor for about seven years -- but I wanted that flashy red sports car and the house with the white columns.

"I tried every kind of business you could imagine -- real estate, shopping centers, even putt-putt golf," Stone noted. "I made up my mind to be a rebel -- I decided to get drunk. I remember my wife finding out that I was sneaking out of state to drink. ... You don't have to be an alcoholic to have an alcohol problem. Alcohol is America's number one drug problem."

"Then a friend brought some amphetamines to my office to help my energy level," he said. "I went from two capsules a day to 15 a day in 14 months. I might have noticed the warning signals -- talking a mile a minute and grinding my teeth."

"I started seeking things that weren't there, I wrecked the car and started fantasizing about being a master criminal," Stone recalled. "I got violent. Finally, I shot a man in Raleigh, N.C. -- I will always hear the sound of the bullet hitting his stomach. He lived and I stayed out on bond for one and a half years. I was psychotic because of my dependency -- when I couldn't find speed, I would take barbiturates, marijuana, LSD.

"I thought the judge couldn't touch me -- and then he gave me seven 15-25 year sentences to run concurrently. You know, I always thought God lived up in the skies -- I found out he is down in the bottom."

Quitting his drug habit cold turkey landed Stone in the prison infirmary with double pneumonia. "It was a long, hard road back," he acknowledged. Afterwards, he was transferred to the prison farm. Although "drugs were smuggled in," Stone added, "With God's help, I made the correct choices."

The prison chaplain urged him to reach out to the inmates, telling Stone that he owed it to God. "So I preached and an inmate came forward." The inmate wanted to be baptized by Stone, so they got permission to fill a wooden coffin with water for the baptism. "We witnessed amazing grace," he reflected.

Since his release from prison in 1976, Stone has worked in a specialized ministry to help those whose lives have been wrecked by substance abuse. Working out of his home base in Durham, N.C., he promotes faith-based halfway houses. "A person is not doomed to drug addiction, but you have to substitute something stronger -- the grace of God," he explained.

"Jesus is who set me free and it's forever," Stone emphasized. "If he accepts a monster like I used to be, I couldn't live without telling about the Jesus I know."

He has written two books, *Somebody Special*, an autobiography, and *The Drug Tragedy: Cost, Cause and Cure*. Next year, he plans to write a book about his walks across America.

"The walk is to call attention to the problem and to carry a word of hope," Stone explained. "There is hope to win the war."

"Our young people need a new set of heroes in America," he said. "What greater hero than a family member who is sober and has self-control? That's the key."

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