

# **Baptist Briefs: Arkansas Baptists focus on children & youth**

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**Arkansas Baptists focus on children & youth.** Messengers to the 2008 annual meeting of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention launched a three-year emphasis on reaching children and youth. Without discussion, they also passed resolutions opposing the lottery and supporting the Arkansas Adoption and Foster Care Act, which would prohibit cohabitating adults—heterosexual or homosexual—from serving as foster or adoptive parents. Messengers to the annual meeting at First Baptist Church in Bentonville, Ark., elected officers without opposition—Wes George, pastor of First Baptist Church of Rogers, president; Clay Hallmark, pastor of First Baptist Church of Marion, first vice president; and Stephen Bailey, pastor of Earle Baptist Church of Earle, second vice president.

**Mississippi Baptists pass record budget.** Messengers at the Mississippi Baptist Convention's 173rd annual meeting approved a record Cooperative Program budget for 2009. The budget of \$34,940,629, ratified without opposition, represents an increase of just under 2 percent, or \$676,866, over the 2008 budget. Mickey Dalrymple, longtime pastor of Fairview Baptist Church in Columbus, was reelected by acclamation to his second one-year term as president. David Hamilton, pastor of West Heights Baptist Church in Pontotoc, also was re-elected by acclamation to a second one-year term as first vice president. Rickey Blythe, pastor of First Baptist Church in New Albany, was elected as second vice president.

**Missouri Baptists elect reform candidates.** Messengers to the Missouri Baptist Convention annual meeting heard a report about the difficult work

of an ad hoc “peace committee” formed to broker a truce between warring conservative factions. The committee’s official report to the convention suggested progress, but it acknowledged that the committee had reached an impasse. Committee members said they would invite a Christian arbitration group to mediate their discussions—even though the committee, when beginning its work, had initially decided against such mediation. In other business, messengers rejected a bid to end a 6-year-old lawsuit against five breakaway Missouri Baptist agencies—the Baptist Home retirement-home system, Missouri Baptist Foundation, Missouri Baptist University, Windermere Baptist Conference Center and *Word & Way* newspaper.

**New Mexico Baptists have quiet convention.** Messengers to the 97th annual meeting of the Baptist Convention of New Mexico zipped through each of the convention’s business sessions, passing every recommendation without questions, discussion or opposition. Officers elected by acclamation were Bruce Kirby, pastor of First Baptist Church in Raton, president; Garland Moore, pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church in Milan, first vice president; and Gavin Vaughan of Hermosa Drive Baptist Church in Artesia, second vice president. Messengers also approved the largest budget in the convention’s history, which will require \$4.47 million in Cooperative Program receipts from the churches, an increase of \$81,632, or 1.86 percent, over the current budget.

**GuideStone adds property and casualty insurance.** This fall, many Southern Baptist churches and ministries will have access to property and casualty insurance and risk management services from GuideStone Agency Services. The GuideStone Property & Casualty Program will gradually roll out regionally over the next year. The program offers churches property, general liability, workers’ compensation and auto insurance. Specialty liability coverages such as abuse and molestation, directors’ and officers’ and pastoral counseling also are available. Insured churches have access to

risk management services, which include educational seminars and programs on risk evaluation, tools to help reduce risk and preferred pricing from a vendor that provides volunteer background checks.

**BWA seeks aid for Congo.** The head of an international Baptist relief agency has sent out an urgent fund-raising appeal to ease the suffering of victims of civil war in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Just back from a conference in Uganda in which Baptist leaders discussed the crisis, Paul Montacute, director of Baptist World Aid, appealed for gifts to assist people in the eastern part of the country. The area has been affected by intensified fighting between rebel troops and government forces in recent weeks. Montacute said funds sent to BWAid would be used to help Baptists in Congo and neighboring countries to help struggling people. Gifts for the appeal should be designated "Goma Congo Appeal." Information on how to give is available on the BWAid website, [www.bwanet.org](http://www.bwanet.org).

**Kidnapped pastor released.** Southern Baptist pastor Manuel Jesus Tec was freed after 11 days in the hands of unknown kidnappers who abducted him in Tijuana, Mexico. Tec is recuperating at an undisclosed San Diego hospital and is expected to make a full recovery. Tec, 59, was released around 6 a.m., Oct. 31, following extensive negotiations, according to Johnny Tec, the pastor's 30-year-old son. He added that his father endured significant physical and psychological trauma during the ordeal, being whipped with barbed wire whenever he started praying or talking to his captors about God. Motive for the kidnapping has not been determined.