

BAPTIST TRUMPET

2020 Annual Report

By Diane Spriggs, Editor/Business Manager

I graduated from high school back in the dark ages — our North Little Rock Wildcats class yell that year was “We’re the Wildest Cats Alive, We’re the Class of ‘65!” You do the math, like I said, the dark ages!

Seriously, though, one thing I loved about those times was that our graduation theme was based on Scripture — “A Time for Every Purpose” from Eccl. 3:1-8



Well, friends, I’ve always heard it said that “what goes around comes around,” and the time has come for my purpose at the *Baptist Trumpet* to come to an end. I have “*finished my course,*” and I’ll leave it up to God (and you) to determine whether I have “*fought the good fight and kept the faith.*” All I can honestly say is that I have tried.

One thing about it, you will never forget my last year at the *Trumpet*! You may not think of me when you think of 2020, but this year will undoubtedly be forever etched in your mind!

And all of you, my dear friends, will be forever etched in my mind and my heart.

In just a moment, Assistant Editor/Editor Elect Jeff Herring will give the rest of the *Baptist Trumpet* report. My catchphrase around the office, especially the last few weeks, has been that “he must increase, and I must decrease.” So he will give you the majority of our report so he can share his heart with all of you.

I’ve often said that Jeff and I have this Timothy and Paulette thing down to an art. He has been great to work with, and I know he and Associate Editor

Allan Eakin will do a great job of taking the *Baptist Trumpet* into the future. Paulette is proud of you, Son, and I wholeheartedly recommend you to serve in this position.

I love you all, and, for the last time, thank you, my wonderful BMA family, for allowing me to have “the best job a girl can have in the BMA!”

2020 Annual *Baptist Trumpet* Report

By Jeff Herring, Executive Editor



If the Lord Wills

Following the state meeting last year, Diane and I began the associational year with an idea of how we expected the next 12 months before her retirement to play out, including the usual time of Special Emphasis in the early spring, covering the BMAA national meeting, a summer full of activities and speaking appointments. Then we planned to close out the year by visiting as many local association meetings as we could so she could say goodbye and I could introduce myself and make connections for the future ministry of the *Trumpet*. We were both looking forward to attending the state meeting in November with family and friends present as she retires and I begin a new role in this ministry according to the Lord’s will.

As we progressed into the early Spring, right in the middle of our time of Special Emphasis, everything changed with the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic. As always, we prayed and began to adjust as the Lord gave us direction. This meant that much of what we had “planned” for the year was not going to be possible, at least not in the way we expected. There has been plenty to learn along the way, and this unexpected twist has been a great reminder of the truth found in James 4:15: “*For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.*”

Special Emphasis a Success

After approval from Paul White, Director of Missions, we borrowed a month from those allotted to State Missions and extended our time of Special Emphasis through May. Even though there were times that we wondered how God would work things out, we were amazed and awed as He used His people and His churches to bless the *Trumpet* by allowing us to not only meet our goal but to exceed it!

The primary focus of our Special Emphasis this year was to raise the funds to pay for the new *Trumpet* SUV after we retired Gracie last year. We were able to completely pay for the SUV, as well as have the funds necessary to continue the ministry without a rate increase or other measures. Our subscription price covers about 50% of the cost of producing the *Baptist Trumpet*. Without the funds received during our time of Special Emphasis we simply would not be able to keep the *Trumpet* going out every week.

Thank you for your faithfulness to give and support the *Baptist Trumpet*. In our times of Special Emphasis, we prayerfully set a goal that is designed to meet the expected needs and expenses, and this will continue to be the case going forward. We will only ask for what we need and continue to trust that God will provide through your continued faithfulness.

Staff Changes

As we began preparing for Diane's retirement and trying to plan for a smooth transition, we knew we would need to find someone to fill the assistant editor role when I became editor. As we talked and discussed what that might look like, we created a job description that seemed to be pretty daunting since we would be combining many assistant editor duties along with the bookkeeper duties. Diane and I discussed that it would have to be the "right" person to fill this role, but we knew that if God led us to this point, He surely had someone in mind!

After sending out notices to area pastors asking if they knew anyone that might be interested, we received three different leads. We interviewed two candidates and, through that process, we offered the new associate editor position to Allan Eakin. He serves as the bi-vocational lead pastor of Celebration Baptist Church in Haskell and will continue in that role. Allan began working with us on Oct. 5 and is already fitting in very well and learning about the many parts of the ministry of the *Baptist Trumpet*.

Our Administrative Assistant/Bookkeeper Jen Marvel finished her time at the *Trumpet* at the end of October after being with us for just over a year. We knew when she was hired that it would most likely be temporary since her husband (who works for FamilyLife) was being moved to Florida because of his job. She has been a great blessing this past year and has spent time training Allan as he prepares to take over the bookkeeping duties.

Updates in Progress

One of the things I began working on soon after I came on staff at the *Trumpet* was a way to update the way we manage our subscribers. Our current system is a custom-built Access database that has been causing us problems for a while now. It is creating more work instead of being a help because of all the time that must be spent correcting the mistakes in the program.

As I began searching for a solution, I quickly realized that we are pretty unique in the way we bill for our Church Plans. We bill our churches weekly and statements are mailed out monthly. We want to make sure we are fair to our Church Plan subscribers so we allow churches to add/remove subscribers as often as they would like so that we are not billing them for subscribers they have removed. When I tried to explain this to the vendors, most replied with, "We don't have a way to do that."

We did finally find a solution that allows us to fully customize the way we bill and offers us many other options as part of the process. We have been working for the past three months to transition to the new system and make sure that everything is working as it should be. That means we have been

running both systems side-by-side for the past two months. We are making progress and we hope to have things working well before the end of the year.

Our goal with the new system is to not only make the process more efficient but that it will also allow us to take advantage of future ministry opportunities by giving us a way to connect our subscribers to our website. This will allow us to expand our digital presence via our website, provide ways for individuals and churches to see and update their profile information online and allow things that are just not possible with our current system. Please pray with us that we can get all of the changes finalized and get the system up and operating soon.

Looking Ahead

As we look ahead to the upcoming year, we will continue to look for ways to expand the ministry of the *Baptist Trumpet*. Our mission is to get the news of our association, from the local church to the foreign mission field, to the most important person in our churches, the person in the pew. We plan to do our best to produce a quality paper every week (45 issues per year), and we need you to be a part of this ministry.

Here are a few ways you can do that:

- Pray for God's clear direction in all things related to the ministry of the *Baptist Trumpet*.
- If your church is already on the Church Plan, please make sure to add all of your members so that they are well-informed about their association and its ministries.
- If your church is not on the Church Plan, please let us set you up and start getting the paper to your members. We will offer a three-month free trial for any churches willing to sign-up.
- Please prayerfully consider adding us to your church budget for regular offerings. Your offerings help us keep the paper affordable for our churches and individuals.

“But God”

As we have so often heard over the years, this phrase is a favorite of Diane’s. It carries so much meaning as we seek to serve Him every step of the way. It is a comfort when we don’t understand, **but God** does. It is a help when we don’t see how it could be possible, **but God** makes it possible. It is a strength when we don’t think we can go on, **but God** is able.

But God — this phrase recognizes that we have come to the end of ourselves and our abilities and have moved to a place where we fully rely on God. We recognize that He is more than capable no matter what we are facing. Our goal with every issue of the *Baptist Trumpet* that is produced is to fully rely on God as we seek to accomplish our mission by being a blessing to our churches and every person in the pew. Thank you for your prayers and support as we continue the ministry of the *Baptist Trumpet*, not in our strength, but God’s.