

# Central Baptist College

By Terry Kimbrow, President



The Central Baptist College Mission Statement: “Central Baptist College is committed to transforming lives through education that integrates Christian faith and academic excellence in a Christ-centered environment.”



## Stepping out in Faith

In the Dec. 5, 1951 issue of the *Temple Trumpet* (now *Baptist Trumpet*), Dr. D.N. Jackson, Promotional Secretary of the Christian Education Committee, gave this charge: “We all know that we need this college. This writer feels like that we, as an association have come to the kingdom for just such a time as this. We must provide an institution of higher learning for our young men and women. After all, it is upon their shoulders that the responsibility of proclaiming the gospel will fall. This project is going to demand the assistance of every Missionary Baptist in Arkansas. Who will be the first to send a liberal offering to fill this great need?”

The next year, on Aug. 18, 1952, Dr. Jackson was elected the first president of the college. Ironically, our chapel theme this year is “*For such a time as this.*” Just uttering those words alone invokes courage and hope among believers. These six simple words inspire us to take action, to strike out on a mission to make a difference and to live wisely, “... *redeeming the time, for the days are evil*” (Eph. 5:16).

## Now Is the Time

I’m not one to sound the alarm, but I can tell you without reservation that Central Baptist College is at a pivotal time in our history. I am finding increasing pressure to conform to issues that would potentially compromise our mission. You have my word — we will protect our mission. But we need your help! There are some things that must occur for us to not just survive, but to thrive. To continue in our mission of transforming lives by integrating Christian faith and academic excellence, here are a few things that need to happen:

- **The Support of our Churches.** It is imperative that we have the financial support of BMAA churches. Many of our efforts in the past few years have been centered on getting churches to promote the college through hosting a “CBC Day” in their church. A few years ago, based on input from pastors, we decided that rather than asking churches to give a special offering to the college during the three months designated by the BMA of

Arkansas as our time of “Special Emphasis,” we would ask churches to host a “CBC Day” on a day we designate or another day that works best for them. I appreciate those who have followed through and planned something special to promote CBC. However, at the same time, we have lost significant financial support from churches that were once our largest givers.

I assumed the office of president on Dec. 26, 2004. Our church giving for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2005 was \$593,885 (15.3% of our total budget expenditures). As of June 30, 2020, church giving for the fiscal year was \$567,067 (6.8% of our total budget expenditures). During that same time period, our student enrollment has more than doubled, we have expanded the campus footprint significantly, acquired 30+ houses/lots adjacent to the campus for future expansion, invested \$22 million in new construction and renovations, increased our athletic team offerings four-fold and added over 30 bachelor level degree programs.

In our most recent accreditation visit, the site visit team leader told me that at least 25% of our budget should come from churches that own the college. We are doing our best to make up the difference with special offerings from churches and by going to individuals for financial support. Yet our church giving, as a percentage of our budget, continues to fall. A recent review of church giving revealed that 14 churches discontinued their giving to CBC sometime during the last fiscal year. Of greater concern are those churches that have, over the past 32 years (we began keeping electronic records of giving in 1988), either given a special offering or had CBC in their budget but no longer give. That report lists 199 churches that have, at some time, contributed to CBC (with a cumulative contribution total of \$2.7 million), but they have discontinued their giving.

- **The Support of our Alumni & Friends.** Everyone who has been touched in a positive way can and should be giving to CBC. I really believe that, but I don’t think we have done the best job of challenging our alumni and friends to give. I’m asking you to do just that! Recurring giving, monthly giving sustained giving, it doesn’t matter what you call it. We need men and women to commit to a monthly donation and know that every single contribution helps us continue our mission of “transforming lives.”

Giving online is easy! Go to [cbc.edu/give](http://cbc.edu/give). You have 12 different giving opportunities from which to choose. You can make a single gift or recurring gift — be sure to check the “make this a monthly gift” box. You may want to make a pledge to give a certain amount and spread your donation over a period of months or years. If your employer has a gift matching program, we will work with you/them to complete that transaction. If you are not sure, go to the menu item, “Does Your Employer Match Gifts,” and type in the name of the company to search the database of the over 1,000 companies that will match your donation to CBC. All this is available in one location, making it possible for anyone and everyone to give.

• **Increased Student Enrollment.** Fall 2020 enrollment of traditional-age students was basically flat (1.3% increase). Praise the Lord! I never thought I would be so thankful for maintaining the status quo. Yet, in the midst of what many consider a “global pandemic,” I was overjoyed to see our student numbers hold up. Additionally, the college reported a 3.6% increase in first-time entering students (includes first time entering freshmen, transfer students, re-admitted students and transient students) and an increase of 17% in the incoming freshmen class. However, the Professional Adult College Education (PACE) program did not fare as well. Despite the strong enrollment for the traditional program, overall enrollment for the institution decreased by 9.9%. Total enrollment on the tenth day of classes was reported as 607 students, compared to 685 in the fall of 2019. The enrollment decrease was due to a decrease in both PACE and high school concurrent students. Thankfully, we planned for and budgeted for a decrease in total enrollment due to the uncertainty surrounding the start of the fall semester, and actual numbers came in very close to projections.

Because of COVID-19, our recruiters will not be allowed into many high schools for the traditional college fairs. SOAR, the BMAA’s largest gathering of young people (or any people for that matter), did not meet in person. Those two things alone will make it very challenging to build our “admissions funnel” of prospective students. If you know of a junior or senior in high school who is a good fit for CBC, please let us know. Go to [cbc.edu/referral](http://cbc.edu/referral) or e-mail [admissions@cbc.edu](mailto:admissions@cbc.edu). We have resumed campus tours, taking all the necessary precautions, and we love to host students, parents and coaches on our campus.

I just read in a national Christian publication that over the past six to eight years, “prospective students and their parents seemed to increasingly prioritize an education that would lead to a good job over one that would integrate faith and learning.” That disturbs me! I’ve noticed a waning of loyalty among those who once had strong ties to the college. It’s difficult to say anything without sounding negative. It troubles me deeply, and I do try to not take it personally, when I see parents and students, but mostly parents, choosing a college or university based on how little they have to pay while disregarding the fact that their student’s faith will certainly be challenged. Some survive; others may not.

Much of the blame falls on us, actually on me. Sometimes we are prone to say, “We are doing the best we can with what we have.” That’s seldom true in any situation. We must reach more students, do a better job of telling our story and stop apologizing for being who we are — which is what God called us to be. We are a Christian college with high standards for academics, morals and spiritual growth. We are CBC!

I’m pleased to tell you that students at Central Baptist College are still required to complete three courses (nine credit hours) of Bible. No matter what program of study or

course delivery system they are enrolled in, they will take Survey of the Old Testament, Survey of the New Testament and then a third Bible course of their choice. For example, they could take Life of Christ as their third course option.

In addition to the Bible coursework, they will participate in a weekly chapel service, facilitated by our Director of Spiritual Life Programs (delivered virtually for now). They will have other opportunities to participate in a student-led discipleship program, student-led worship services or other Bible study programs on campus. But in addition to all of this, as I mentioned above, all coursework will be presented from a biblical worldview. That will never change, and it shouldn't!

Pray that all our students will increase in their knowledge of God and lead others to trust Jesus for their salvation. God continues His work in the lives of students. Decisions have already been made this academic year to trust Jesus for salvation! That truly is the mission of Central Baptist College!

### **The Future of CBC**

Our challenges are huge, but they are not bigger than our God. I remind myself often of the words of Christ in Luke 18:27: *"What is impossible with men is possible with God."* As the calendar year draws to a close, we are transitioning out of "Vision 2020: A Miracle in the Making," the campaign that has guided the institution for nearly a decade. We didn't accomplish all 10 of the planned projects, and we did not meet our enrollment goals. But, as I typed the previous paragraphs, I rejoiced in all God has allowed us to enjoy and I am looking forward to His continued blessings on CBC.

We are in the early stages of developing a new campus strategic plan which will then guide our next steps as an institution. I hope to be sharing more with you soon!

### **Thank you!**

When you support CBC, either through prayer or financial support, you are making a difference in lives of our students — you are contributing to the "transformation of lives."