

2021 BMA of the Central Arkansas *Trumpet* Report

God Is Faithful

Let me start by acknowledging that God has been faithful to the ministry of the *Baptist Trumpet* — all the way back to the beginning in 1939 as the *Temple Trumpet* and through today. And we are doing our best to continue to carry out our mission to inform and inspire our readers with every issue that is produced.

One thing I have learned in over 25 years of ministry is that He is always faithful, and He asks us to faithfully carry out what He calls us to do. I shared last November when I was elected as executive editor that it was not a position I was seeking, but I firmly believe that God clearly led me to the *Trumpet* and it is where He has asked me to serve. My commitment to Him and you, the people of the BMA of Arkansas, is to do my best to faithfully serve in the ministry of the *Baptist Trumpet*.

Some New Things

You may have noticed in our July 28 issue that we had a four-page insert from BMA Global Ministries featuring content from BMA Missions and Lifeword. The next insert will be in our Sept. 29 issue. I am excited about this new opportunity to bring news and information from our national work. This is just another reason that if you are not already a subscriber, you should become one today!

We have also added a new column, “In My Own Words,” by Lifeword Executive Director Donny Parrish. I believe his involvement in the BMA on so many levels for so many years gives him a unique ability to speak to BMA Baptists in a special way. He will share things that are meant to challenge us to be our best as we seek to carry out God’s mission.

Customer Portal Now Available

Over the past year, we have been working with our new circulation management system. One of the features of this new system is the customer portal that is available to every subscriber and church plan manager. As an individual subscriber, you can manage your subscription, update your mailing address, make payment arrangements and see payments that have posted to your account. Church plan managers can also update mailing addresses, add or remove church plan members, check to see if a payment has posted to your account and even make payments via credit card or ACH (electronic check).

If you haven’t checked it out, visit baptisttrumpet.com/portal today.

Special Emphasis

One of the major ways God has proven Himself to be faithful this past year is in our Special Emphasis offerings. I am excited to share that God has allowed us to meet the goal that was set at the beginning of the year. I know this would not have been possible without the faithful giving of God’s people and the churches of the BMA of Arkansas. We received Special Emphasis donations from 82 churches and individuals. Thank you for supporting this ministry! It is not an understatement to say that we would not be able to keep the *Trumpet* going out each week without your faithful support!

Budget Planning

One of the first things Allan and I began to do in November of 2020 was to evaluate and implement a working budget for the year, as well as analyze how to ensure long-term stability for the ministry of the *Baptist Trumpet*. As part of this process, we calculated costs in multiple areas, which can ultimately be divided into two major categories — production and post-production costs. Production costs include everything that allows us to produce the paper and send it out each week — salaries, computer equipment, software, building costs and more. Post-production costs are what it takes to get the paper out to our subscribers each week — printing, sorting/labeling and postage.

Post-production costs are about 43¢ per issue, per subscriber, and production costs are about 46¢ per issue, per subscriber, a total of 89¢. Our current subscription rate is 52¢ per issue, per subscriber for our regular rate and 45¢ per issue, per subscriber for church plans. I don't want to bore you with lots of numbers, but I simply want you to understand that there is no way we can operate "in the black" when each paper that goes out to an individual subscriber is costing us 89¢, but we are only bringing in an average of 46¢ per issue per subscriber. That leaves a deficit of approximately 43¢ per issue.

This deficit translates to over \$3,200 per issue that we must make up for with offerings from our supporters. We currently average around \$1,600 per week in regular donations. This leaves a weekly deficit of \$1,600 that we currently must make up for by using any "cushion" in our accounts or our yearly Special Emphasis donations. This weekly amount adds up to over \$6,000 each month. That is the reason the major portion of our Special Emphasis this year was needed for our General Fund. We simply had to have operating funds in order to keep moving forward.

There are many reasons for this deficit. Our subscriber base trends down on a regular basis due to death of subscribers, churches updating lists, etc., and as the subscribers go down, there are fewer to divide the load of the production costs, so the production costs per subscriber go up. There have also been increases in the cost of printing and postage since our last rate increase that we have just absorbed the best we could. Just in the last few months, our printing costs went up by 6% and our postage went up by 10%.

Church Plans

The majority (around 87%) of our subscribers are part of a church plan. Of the approximately 320 churches in the BMA of Arkansas, only 239 have active church plans. Some are very active and always add new members as they join, and some have just a few and don't actively add new members to their list.

The BMA of Central Arkansas has 24 out of 33 churches with an active church plan. If your church is one of those that is not currently a church plan subscriber and you want to sign up for a free two-month trial today, please let me know. We have a tumbler for those willing to give it a try!

I talked about where we are financially, and I'll come back to that in a moment, but the other side of the coin is the number of subscribers. If we increase the number of subscribers, then our production cost is spread out over more subscribers and therefore our price per issue per subscriber goes down. If we increase our subscriber base by 1,000, our production cost would go down 5¢ per issue.

I know what you are thinking, it sounds impossible to add 1,000 subscribers. But if you think about it, that is an average of adding 4 additional subscribers to each of our current church plans.

I am sure that if each church would look and see who is not getting the *Trumpet* and make a diligent effort to keep everyone in their church informed and inspired by including them, then we could easily add 1,000 subscribers very quickly, not to mention the possibility of adding new church plans or restarting a canceled church plan.

The bottom line is this — the more subscribers we have, the more we can spread out the costs on the production side of things at the *Trumpet*.

What All This Means

My goal for the future of the *Baptist Trumpet* is that it will continue to be the go-to source for information and inspiration for years to come. In order to do that, I believe we must do our best to be in a better place financially. In the coming years, I would love to be able to cover production and post-production costs with our subscription fees and regular church offerings. This would give us long-term financial stability and allow us to use our Special Emphasis offerings for special projects and improvements that would help us do things more efficiently and ensure that the ministry of the *Baptist Trumpet* will continue.

Please pray with me about the following points of action for the coming year:

- For every BMA of Arkansas church to be on the church plan where all church members are included and the church **actively** adds new members to their plan. This means I need you to be ambassadors for the *Trumpet* and let other pastors know how keeping their people informed about our associational work is worth the investment.

- We are considering a rate increase. There is no way we can implement the rate increase that would erase our monthly deficit at one time — that would be an increase of almost \$12 annually for each of our subscribers (+26¢ per issue). Instead, we are looking at an annual increase of \$6.75 for church plan subscribers (+15¢ per issue = 60¢ per issue/\$27 per year) and an annual increase of \$6.50 for individual subscribers (+15¢ per issue = 67¢ per issue/\$30 per year). Even with this rate increase, the *Trumpet* would still be cheaper per issue than most other BMA papers, and we are still the only BMA paper that brings you current news, information and inspiration every week (45 issues per year).

The hope for the next year would be that with this rate increase and a big push for new subscribers, we could lessen the deficit. We would then look at how things shape up next year to determine if we would need another rate increase and how much that would be.

If you believe the ministry of the *Baptist Trumpet* is worth having and is a benefit to the work of the BMA of Arkansas and beyond, then we ask for your help so that we can continue far into the future. As an individual, subscribe today! As a church, sign your church up for the church plan and actively add your new members to the list so that everyone can be informed and inspired!

We know God is still faithful, and He is able to supply our needs. We will continue to do our best to inform and inspire our readers with each issue we produce. Thank you for your prayers as we come together to build for the future ministry of the *Trumpet*.