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Agee withdraws from Southern Seminary  
presidential search, blasts ABP coverage

By Ken Camp

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (ABP) -- Claiming an Associated Baptist Press story compromised the process of selecting a new president for Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Oklahoma college president Bob Agee has withdrawn his name from consideration for the post.

And Wayne Allen, chairman of the Louisville, Ky., seminary's board of trustees, blasted the ABP report as "un-Christian, inappropriate, inconsiderate and unprofessional." Allen, a pastor in suburban Memphis, Tenn., labeled ABP a "rumor mill" that harmed the search process, Agee and OBU.

In response, ABP defended the story and the right of Baptists to know the facts about Southern's search for a president.

Mark Wingfield, author of the article, noted no one is disputing the facts of the story, which he said have become common knowledge in Louisville. The names of the four finalists could not have become known, he said, if members of the search committee and the candidates had not divulged the information themselves, said Wingfield, news director of the Western Recorder of Kentucky.

The Feb. 11 ABP article named Agee as one of four men on the "short list" to succeed retiring seminary president Roy Honeycutt. The four finalists were to be interviewed the week of Feb. 15, according to the news report.

The other three candidates named in the article were Richard Land, executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission; Timothy George, dean of Samford University's Beeson Divinity School; and Al Mohler, editor of the Christian Index newspaper of Georgia.

In his letter of withdrawal, faxed to trustee chairman Allen on Feb. 16, Agee, president of Oklahoma Baptist University, said, "Associated Baptist Press has compromised the interview process and created a very difficult atmosphere which can be potentially harmful to the current places of service of the candidates."

He further wrote "the decision of the Associated Baptist Press to run the story the week of the interviews and to report the story with the tone used, in my opinion, has compromised the process and has the potential to be harmful or hurtful to the OBU family as well as to the candidate chosen for the post."

Agee cited a number of "compelling reasons" -- including a strong desire to stay at OBU -- as the basis for his decision to withdraw.

"The opportunities and future prospects for our work are incredibly bright," the university president said. "For me to leave OBU now could disrupt the potential achievement of some very important things I am convinced God wants done."

Agee, 55, has served as president of the Shawnee, Okla., school since 1982. A graduate of Union University in Jackson, Tenn., he holds both master of divinity and doctor of ministry degrees from Southern, in addition to a doctorate in higher education from Vanderbilt University.

Neither Agee, Land, Mohler nor Allen were in their offices on Feb. 18, and attempts by ABP to reach them for comment were unsuccessful. Regarding the presidential search at Southern Seminary, George would say only, "That process is in the hands of God."

Allen told Baptist Press, news service of the Southern Baptist Convention, that he was "very, very angry at ABP."

"It is regrettable that the un-Christian, inappropriate, inconsiderate and unprofessional account of Mark Wingfield and ABP has caused harm to the presidential search process and has potentially harmed one of our finest university presidents -- Bob Agee -- and one of our great Baptist universities, OBU," Allen told BP.

"In my opinion, no responsible journalist nor ethical news media would publish unconfirmed rumors. ABP has proven itself to be nothing more than a rumor mill."

In response, Greg Warner, executive editor of ABP, said, "Mark Wingfield and ABP have not breached any confidences, compromised the search process or printed unconfirmed rumors, as alleged by Dr. Agee and chairman Allen."

"Despite the candidates' preference for confidentiality, the identity of the four finalists was well known within the seminary community," Warner said in a statement. "ABP could not have printed the list if it had not already been divulged by seminary trustees, staff, alumni and some of the candidates themselves."

Both Wingfield and Warner expressed sympathy to Agee for any discomfort caused to him or OBU as a result of his candidacy becoming public knowledge. Warner added that he hoped neither Agee nor the search committee would allow the disclosure to divert them from seeking and following God's will.

"Hopefully the committee members would not have included him on a list of finalists, and he would not have agreed to an interview, if he was not a serious candidate," Warner said.

In the current SBC climate, "denominational search committees seldom enjoy the luxury of full confidentiality," Warner said. Noting the keen interest of Southern Baptists in who will lead their agencies and institutions, he said the pivotal question is, "Who has a right to that information?"

"Should it be controlled by a privileged inner circle, as Chairman Allen seems to suggest? Or do Baptists in general, who under Baptist polity ultimately govern denominational affairs, have a right to know the important business of their agencies before they become accomplished facts?"

Warner said the Feb. 11 story "must have been deemed legitimate by Baptist Press," the denomination's official news service, since BP chose to reprint it one day later.

"Since Dr. Agee's withdrawal," Wingfield added, "some trustees have assigned blame for the disclosure to seminary faculty and staff, interpreting my use of (the term) 'seminary sources' to mean only faculty and staff. That is not the case," Wingfield said.

"'Seminary sources,' as used in this story, encompasses a broad range of people both under the employment of the seminary and not employed by the seminary.

"Further, it is peculiar to blame these seminary sources for the disclosure of confidential information when, as far as I can tell, none of them ever were officially told the names on the list and asked to keep that information in confidence."

Wingfield, an OBU graduate, took exception to Allen's characterization of his article and his assertion that it was damaging to the Oklahoma school.

"The irony is that it was as a journalism student at OBU that I first learned the fundamentals of news reporting which ultimately led me to pursue the story in question. And that is a decision I believe any competent journalism professor would applaud as appropriate," he said.

Warner likewise defended the role of Baptist journalists as advocates of the people's right to know.

"It is not an unchristian role we serve," he said, "but a high calling which we accept without apology."

Hobbs urges leaders to share power,  
calls for summit of SBC factions

By Greg Warner

OKLAHOMA CITY (ABP) -- The lingering controversy in the Southern Baptist Convention would end if the SBC's conservative leaders would fulfill their constitutional obligation to share power with their moderate brethren, says Baptist elder statesman Herschel Hobbs.

Hobbs, a retired pastor and former SBC president, called for leaders of the SBC's two factions to come to the convention's annual June meeting in Houston with a plan to work together and end the bitter dispute that has dominated the 15 million-member denomination for 14 years.

However, leaders on both sides of the controversy said they are skeptical a summit of the factions will produce meaningful results.

"I do not agree that a summit of leaders is the answer for resolution of differences," said Morris Chapman, president and chief executive officer of the SBC Executive Committee.

"I would do it (but) I see no point in it," said Cecil Sherman, coordinator of the moderate Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

Hobbs made his remarks in an eight-page commentary titled "Food for Thought," which he released recently to Baptist news media.

Hobbs said the conservative leaders elected to SBC office since 1979 are bound to abide by the recommendations of the 1987 Peace Committee, which among other things "called for balanced committees and boards" to conduct convention business.

Critics say those leaders have used their authority to exclude from leadership all those not committed to the conservative movement, which has held sway in the SBC since 1979.

"We have the polity to end this controversy," Hobbs wrote. "But we must give it a chance to work!"

Hobbs served on the Peace Committee, which in 1987 concluded its two-year study of the SBC controversy by calling for inclusion of all factions in leadership positions, an end to denominational politicking, and the hiring of more conservatives at SBC agencies.

Hobbs noted the committee's report was approved by an estimated 97 percent of Southern Baptists voting at the SBC's annual meeting in 1987.

"The elected officers are to act in accord with convention action," Hobbs wrote. "They are not free to act contrary to it, no matter how worthy their motives. The convention has called for balanced committees and boards. In keeping with our polity, the elected officers should act accordingly."

"If that were done, the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship would have no valid reason to exist. Judging by their own statements, I believe that that organization would vanish like smoke in a strong wind."

The Fellowship, a two-year-old organization of moderate Southern Baptists opposed to the tactics of conservative leaders, has drawn criticism for allowing churches to direct their contributions away from conservative-controlled SBC agencies or toward the Fellowship's own programs.

Chapman recently called on the Fellowship to leave the convention rather than to continue claiming to be Southern Baptists. In response to Hobbs' latest proposal, Chapman told Associated Baptist Press that Southern Baptists can solve their differences when they "catch a fresh vision of the Great Commission. When we do that, no uncooperative individuals will be able to hold us back."

Concerning Hobbs' suggestion that the SBC officers may have violated the SBC constitution in their leadership appointments, Chapman, a former SBC president himself, said, "I have every confidence that the presidents of the Southern Baptist Convention have approached this responsibility with a strong sense of what is best for the SBC and its witness for Christ to the world."

The Fellowship's Sherman, who also served on the Peace Committee, said Hobbs' acknowledgement that recent SBC presidents abused their power "is a little late coming." Sherman said the venerable pastor, while on the committee, didn't complain when conservatives used both the presidential appointments and the Peace Committee process for their own political ends.

"What makes him think they are going to act different now than they acted then?" Sherman asked. "I think he is asking them to give something away that they won in political combat, and they are not going to give it away."

When Chapman first suggested the Fellowship leave the SBC, Hobbs was quoted as saying his suggestion had some merit. However, Hobbs told ABP Feb. 11 he has not given up on reconciliation. But, he added, recent events -- like the controversy over the SBC's Woman's Missionary Union -- have dimmed that hope somewhat. "I've been saying all along we're going to end up back together, but I'm beginning to wonder."

Hobbs, legendary pastor of First Baptist Church of Oklahoma City, is a theological conservative and one of Southern Baptists' most prolific theological writers. Heretofore, he has not been critical of the SBC's new leaders, and he told ABP his commentary was not directed at any individuals.

"I am just one Southern Baptist who has (prayed) and does pray for a return of our historic Baptist position -- unity in diversity," he wrote.

Hobbs asked leaders of the two factions to meet and bring a plan for reconciliation to the SBC annual meeting in Houston, the city where their controversy first erupted in 1979. "The controversy began in Houston. Let it end there!" he declared.

The leaders should "come to the convention with a recommendation that we lock hearts and hands as, through unity in diversity, we do together the work God has for us to do," he wrote.

Hobbs said the fateful 1979 meeting in Houston was significant not only because it marked the onset of the controversy but because it launched Bold Mission Thrust, Southern Baptists' ambitious program to preach the gospel to everyone in the world by the year 2000.

Southern Baptists missed "their finest hour" by becoming distracted by the controversy and not fulfilling Bold Mission Thrust, Hobbs said.

Hobbs recited the history of the ancient Hebrews, who after fleeing Egypt stopped short of taking possession of the Promised Land when they rebelled at Kadesh-barnea. "In Houston we came to our Kadesh-barnea," he wrote. "We looked over into our Canaan but rebelled. We refused to enter it. Consequently we have wandered in the wilderness of controversy for 14 years."

When Southern Baptists return to Houston this June, Hobbs said, they should devote an entire session of their convention -- usually three to four hours -- to confession, prayer for forgiveness, and rededication to Bold Mission Thrust.

But Chapman said the SBC previously devoted an entire session of its annual meeting to prayer for spiritual awakening in 1991.

Chapman, noting that his own 1992 presidential address was based on the same account of Hebrew history cited by Hobbs, said, "As you can see, I agree with much of what Dr. Hobbs has written."

Chapman said he has "great respect" for Hobbs, adding, "When he speaks, he always says something which gives food for thought."

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Patterson says he holds no ill will toward church that rejected him

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (ABP) -- Paige Patterson, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, says he has no hard feelings over the decision of Wake Forest Baptist Church to deny him and his wife membership.

"I affirm the autonomy of their church. We love them and pray for them," said Patterson, who was on a trip to Russia when the controversy erupted in early February and unavailable for comment. "I'm interested in people knowing I'm not vituperative."

Patterson is considered the architect of the movement that since 1979 has turned the Southern Baptist Convention into a conservative bastion and given biblical inerrantists like himself control of Southeastern and other SBC seminaries.

But the church's members, keenly aware of Patterson's role in that movement, said his presence in the 500-member church adjacent the seminary campus would be disruptive.

"This church has been wounded in the Southern Baptist war more than any other church in the Southern Baptist Convention," Pastor Tom Jackson said at the time. "Out of 15 million members claimed by Southern Baptists, he is the one person identified most of all as the source of all that pain."

The church, located prominently within the seminary's quadrangle, has been closely linked to the seminary's moderate theological tradition. But that is a tradition Patterson has committed to change since becoming president in 1992.

Acknowledging there have been "a lot of ill feelings" between the seminary and the church in recent years, Patterson said he and his wife, Dorothy, saw membership in the Wake Forest church as "the best way to bridge the gap."

Patterson noted all of Southeastern's previous presidents were members of the Wake Forest congregation and, given the church's proximity, "it's pretty hard for them to ignore us or us to ignore them."

He said he had received more letters from Wake Forest members inviting them to attend than from any other church, and he added: "Dorothy preferred to go there. We have made friends out of a lot of the townspeople."

"When I realized they were concerned about us joining," he said, "we decided we would just go with watch care," a temporary form of membership that he said would require "no obligation" from the church.

But Jan. 24 the church's deacons voted 16-1 to ask the Pattersons to withdraw their request for watch care, which they did.

Patterson said he shared news of the church's vote with other members of the Interagency Council -- the organization of Southern Baptist institutional heads -- to demonstrate "that inclusivity is a two-way street."

"I was tiring of the talk of how exclusive conservatives are, when in my view moderates are even more so."

He said he regrets that members of the council released the letter to the Baptist Press, the denomination's news service.

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-- By Greg Warner

Clinton urges Congress,  
country to set new course

By Pam Parry

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Americans must seize the moment and steer a course toward progress and prosperity, President Bill Clinton said Feb. 17 in a nationally televised State of the Union address.

Speaking to a joint session of Congress, Clinton focused on the economy and called on lawmakers to deliver the change demanded by Americans.

"It has been too long -- at least three decades -- since a president has come and challenged Americans to join him on our great national journey, not merely to consume the bounty of today but to invest for a much greater one tomorrow," Clinton said.

"I believe we will find our new direction in the basic, old values that brought us here over the last two centuries: a commitment to opportunity, to individual responsibility, to community, to work, to family and to faith," said Clinton, the second Southern Baptist president in two decades.

"If we have the vision, the will and the heart to make the changes we must, we can still enter the 21st century with possibilities our parents could not even have imagined and enter it having secured the American dream for ourselves and future generations."

Clinton appeared to want to lay aside partisanship when he said the country's economic woes could be blamed on both branches of government and both parties.

"The time has come for blame to end," he said to a standing ovation -- one of 75 times his address was interrupted by applause of varying length.

Clinton said his economic stimulus package would create new jobs, cut \$140 billion from the deficit by 1997, and make more than 150 federal spending cuts totaling \$246 billion.

His plan would shift the federal budget from consumption to investment, he said, particularly investing in children and families. He proposed tax increases for the wealthiest Americans who earn more than \$180,000 annually, as well as a broad-based energy tax.

Clinton urged Congress to help him "reinvent" government to make it work again.

"Tonight, the American people know we have to change. But they are also likely to ask me tomorrow, and all of you for the weeks and months ahead, whether we have the fortitude to make those changes happen. ... We must scale the walls of the people's skepticism, not with our words, but with our deeds.

"After so many years of gridlock and indecision, after so many hopeful beginnings and so few promising results, the American people are going to be harsh in their judgments of all of us if we fail to seize this moment.

"If we act boldly and honestly, as leaders should, our legacy will be one of prosperity and progress. This must be America's new direction. Let us summon the courage to seize it."

Following the address, Rep. Robert Michael, R-Ill., criticized Clinton for failing to communicate his long-range economic strategy and said Clinton has given the American people "a new political vocabulary" that describes taxes as "contributions."

"The American people would do well to remember: When you hear a Democrat call for taxes, do not ask for whom the tax rises -- it will rise for you," the House minority leader said. "The president's answer is: more taxes on everyone."

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EDITOR'S NOTE: The following stories about family values can be run as a series. ABP will release a wrap-up from the Baptist Center for Ethics' family conference Friday, Feb. 19.

Son's letter prompts pastor  
to give boy his dad back

By Mark Wingfield

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP) -- A letter from the fifth-grade son of a Baptist minister to the school guidance counselor:

"Dear Counselor: I have a problem. My dad is an important man. He makes me very proud. But he has to go on lots of trips and business meetings and I don't get to see him very much. He does not have lots of time to play with me. I just wish I could play with him more. Could you use this as a topic sometime?"

The letter was written last fall by the son of John Hewett, pastor of First Baptist Church in Asheville, N.C.

Hewett, speaking at a Baptist Center for Ethics conference on the family in Nashville, Tenn., Feb. 16, used it as an illustration of his own confrontation with urgent family needs.

Family members must hold each other accountable, Hewett said.

"Have you ever noticed that when someone says, 'It's not the money, it's the principle of the thing,' it's nearly always the money," Hewett explained. "And when I hear some busy father defend his lousy schedule by telling me about the 'quality time' he's spent with his children, I always bet that distinction is lost on his kids.

"It sure was lost on mine," he confessed.

Hewett explained he found his son's letter to the counselor in a stack of returned homework one night.

"That child needed help," he said. "He didn't need a holistic view of the role of the pastor, or a clearer understanding of what it means to balance the demands of a thriving congregation with the needs of the ministerial home, or a preliminary sketch of a new spirituality of the family.

"What that boy needed was his daddy, plain and simple. And, by the grace of God, that father and son are being restored."

Even concerned parents can spend so much time doing good things -- attending parenting seminars, reading appropriate books, screening family videos -- that they fail to do the most important thing, Hewett said.

Too much analysis and too little practice is a deadly tradeoff for a parent, he explained. "If I'm not careful I can substitute a long list of how-tos for the simple decision to want to."

And churches unwittingly compound this problem by becoming the prime competitor for a family's time together, Hewett added.

"Many of our families stay home from church on Sunday nights for good reasons," he suggested. "They love each other, and they live out that love in a world which, in the name of God, school, country, sports, academics and community service, threatens to tear them apart."

Churches concerned about family ministry should structure their activities with priority given to family time at home, Hewett continued.

"Can't the church honor what God's people do at home?" he asked.

"Sometimes we at church talk as though people ought to sell their houses and move to church. ...

"If churches really want to help families, they'll give them time, prime family time, and turn them loose to celebrate that time without guilt and with glad and generous hearts."

Meanwhile, churches and Christians must be faithful in presenting Jesus to the world, Hewett concluded.

"This is the truth above and beyond, beneath and within all our seminars, conferences and commissions. If we want to help families, and do it as Christians, we must give them Jesus."

Return of family values to America  
is no rerun of '50s, researcher says

By Mark Wingfield

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP) -- America is returning to a stronger emphasis on family, but it is not a return the 1950s and '60s, according to an American family policy expert.

This shift is occurring largely as baby boomers become parents, said Barbara Dafoe Whitehead, research associate with the Institute for American Values in New York City.

Whitehead spoke during a conference on family issues sponsored by the Baptist Center for Ethics Feb. 15-16 in Nashville, Tenn.

The social researcher described a "resurgence of more family-centered values and orientation." This is a shift away from careerism and individualism to family ties and commitment, a shift from self-fulfillment to personal responsibility and family obligation, Whitehead said.

It also is a shift from "an adult-centered culture, where anything goes, toward a greater concern about what messages this culture is sending to children," she added.

The major differences between the new family emphasis and that of the 1950s and '60s is greater stress on shared work both inside and outside the home and on more equal relationships in family life, Whitehead explained.

The baby boom generation -- the 78 million Americans born between 1946 and 1964 -- affects American demographics like a "pig in a python," she said. This vast bulge in the population changes the shape of society as it moves through each generational cycle.

In the 1970s and '80s, many baby boomers were not forming families, Whitehead noted. "They were busy inventing singlehood as a lifestyle, a separate stage of adult life. Both men and women were focused on getting ahead in the workplace and expressing themselves in the marketplace."

But in the 1990s, baby boomers are settling into family life, she said, explaining a majority of boomers now are married and are parents.

Parenthood is changing the attitudes and actions of many baby boomers in at least five ways, Whitehead suggested:

- More involvement in the larger society and community activities.
- A return to church to teach their children moral values.
- Changing relationships to the workplace.
- A more socially conservative outlook on culture.
- Redefinition of what makes for a fulfilling life.

While this trend is hopeful, it is not guaranteed to continue, Whitehead said. "If a more family-oriented tendency is to take root and grow, then it must be tended and nurtured and looked after as carefully as a small seedling."

Churches, she declared, are the most potent social force to foster the renewed emphasis on family.

Whitehead suggested three areas on which churches should focus their ministry to families:

-- Marriage preparation. "Churches must do more than provide the church and the wedding service," she said, calling for premarital counseling and marriage-enrichment programs.

-- Intergenerational activities and opportunities for service. "Many children simply have little to do except turn on the TV, hang out at the mall or play Nintendo," Whitehead said.

-- "Churches can provide alternatives to the mall, both in supporting youth activities and creating occasions when children and grown-ups other than their parents can get to know each other. ... Equally important, churches can provide occasions where children learn to serve others."

-- Alternatives to the media culture. Instead of letting children learn most of their stories from television, churches can help by reinforcing morals through the telling of Bible stories, she said.

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Amount of TV viewing, not content,  
poses threat to family, prof says

By Mark Wingfield

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP) --The biggest threat families face from television is not the worldly perspective of Hollywood but a lack of discipline in limiting television viewing, a professor said.

Quentin Schultze, professor at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Mich., specializes in the relation of television to families and recently wrote a book on the subject. He spoke about his findings and observations at the Baptist Center for Ethics conference in Nashville, Tenn., Feb. 15-16.

"In all the hullabaloo about television and its influence on the family, I think we're missing the major point," Schultze said. "Relatively speaking, the flap over Murphy Brown doesn't matter that much.

"The biggest influence of television is its shifting of our time usage from interpersonal relations to watching more television."

He cited these statistics to support his point:

-- Last year, the average American adult watched four hours and 40 minutes of television per day.

-- Last year, the average American child watched three and one-half hours of television per day.

-- Last year, the average American family had a television set on in the home seven hours per day.

"If we have the television on that much, what are we not doing?" Schultze asked.

Research has shown Americans now spend more time on average watching television than working, he said.

Adults need to set limits on television viewing both for themselves and for their children, Schultze suggested.

And rather than asking how they ever will give up their favorite television shows, Americans should consider what they could gain in better relationships as a result, he said.

Ultimately, the influence television has on American families will be determined by the self-control families exercise, Schultze said.

"The Christian community loves to blast all the secular humanists in Hollywood," he said. "But I think a lot of that anger is there because we don't have our houses in order. We want to blame other people for raising our children wrongly."

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Church fills sex-ed vacuum  
by creating its own program

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP) -- When Lakeside Baptist Church in Lakeland, Fla., looked for a model of a church teaching Christian sex education, they found none.

So, Pastor Craig Sherouse said, the church decided to create a model. Sherouse presented that blueprint in a workshop held during the Baptist Center for Ethics conference in Nashville, Tenn., Feb. 15-16.

"It's humorous that I'm up here doing this," Sherouse said, adding that having to turn to him to lead such a seminar shows how few Baptist churches are willing to address sex education.

Yet churches must address the topic with their children and teenagers, he said. "We're not winning the battle because we're not fighting it. ... We have surrendered the transmission of Christian sexual values to other sources."

Few people would argue about the need for teaching sex education, Sherouse suggested, although there is disagreement about how to teach it.

Lakeside Baptist Church has decided it will focus on an abstinence-based program and will not become involved in promoting or distributing contraceptives, Sherouse said.

The church's program, which is beginning in February, includes:

- A seminar for parents on how to talk with their children about sex.
- Using the Sunday school hour once each year to show children and youth age-appropriate videos on sex education. Parents will be invited to preview the material the week before and have the option to request that their children not see it the next week.
- Encouraging parents to talk with their children after the videos are shown.
- Instituting a "key talk" program whereby a major presentation is made to seventh graders every spring.

Parents of seventh graders will be asked (and trained) to have a serious talk with their children as part of a celebrative special event. The seventh graders will be asked by their parents to sign a covenant commitment to chastity until marriage.

Special rings will be available which parents may give their teens as a symbol of this covenant, Sherouse said. The teen can give the ring to his or her spouse on the wedding night as a symbol of purity.

Sherouse said his church hopes to expand this new program in the future to include emphases such as units for college students and units on sexual abuse.

Author offers help  
for 'wounded parents'

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP) -- Communities are full of "wounded parents" who need the redemptive ministry of Christians, according to an ethicist and author who himself has been hurt as a parent.

"There are lots of wounded parents. You can find them everywhere," said Guy Greenfield, pastor of Eastern Hills Baptist Church in Albuquerque, N.M., and author of the book, "The Wounded Parent."

Greenfield presented help for wounded parents during the second annual conference of the Baptist Center for Ethics Feb. 15-16 in Nashville, Tenn.

Wounded parents, he explained, are Christians who have tried to raise their children in Christian homes but whose children have seriously rebelled or become self-destructive anyway.

"These parents are very, very discouraged and heartbroken," Greenfield said, and may even lose confidence in God as a result of their experiences.

The former seminary ethics professor said he estimates up to 20 percent of Baptist church members who once were active in church no longer are active because of some problem with a son or daughter.

Based on his counseling experiences and personal experience, Greenfield offered 12 suggestions for wounded parents:

-- Realize you aren't alone. "This is a common problem in Christian homes," he explained. "It does little good to try to figure out what went wrong. Only God knows. Reach out to help one another."

-- Release the rebellious child into God's hands. Be willing to trust God's ability to work, he said, even though it may not happen overnight.

-- Learn to control your emotions. People choose whether to be angry or not, or whether to be hurt or not, Greenfield said.

-- Stop playing the "blame game" because it goes nowhere.

-- Don't play the "what if" game, which likewise goes nowhere.

-- Avoid comparing your children with other children.

-- Seek individual or family counseling from a competent and trained counselor.

-- Work at maintaining a healthy marriage. "One of the greatest strains can be on your marriage," he advised, "especially when you start blaming each other."

-- Organize a support group of wounded parents. "Share the pain and learn from one another," he suggested.

-- Seek to build a new relationship with the child, moving from control to communication, from judgment to respect, from talking to listening.

-- Become a "wounded healer," helping others while tending your own needs.

Although no action can guarantee a child won't disappoint a parent, some things can be done to lessen the chances of becoming a wounded parent, according to Greenfield:

-- Make friends with your children, and learn the art of having fun with them.

- Give children quality time rather than leftovers of a busy life.
- Begin early to control the family television.
- Teach children how to select friends carefully.
- Spend time learning helpful child-rearing techniques.
- As children grow and mature, release control from them and trust them to be responsible.
- Set firm yet loving parameters.
- Model the kind of life expected of children. "If you want them to be honest, you better be honest."
- Engage in family worship as a regular habit that is enjoyable rather than burdensome.
- Give children the stability of a good marriage.
- Grow spiritually.
- Discover and relate to family members on the deeper levels of relating.

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-- By Mark Wingfield

Families turned inward can self-destruct, pastor warns

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (ABP) -- God puts people in families not only for their sake only but also for the sake of the world, according to Paul Duke. Duke, pastor of Kirkwood Baptist Church in St. Louis, Mo., preached about "The Family Calling" during a conference on families sponsored by the Baptist Center for Ethics Feb. 15-16 in Nashville, Tenn.

Healthy families must focus outward as well as inward, he said. "If the family is only an in-facing circle, we always do damage to each other."

Jesus spoke harsh words about the love of family, Duke noted, describing Jesus' words on families as "not the kind of stuff you cross-stitch and hang on a kitchen wall."

Jesus "knew the family is the most dangerous institution on earth," Duke explained. "He knew families are prone to idolatry."

The inevitable tendency for families to turn inward can result in selfishness expressed in "happy, feel-good ways" or in "hateful ways," he added.

The family should not be seen as a fortress but as a people on mission, Duke suggested. "In Christ, I cannot attend to my biological family without asking about ways to help other families.

"We do not focus on the family. We turn and find the focus of our family in the larger world."

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Baptists make up large portion  
of Americans eligible for benefit

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- Baptists make up a large portion of Americans likely to qualify for a tax credit for low-income working families, according to a study commissioned by the Internal Revenue Service.

The Earned Income Credit is a tax benefit for working families with at least one child living at home and an income of less than \$22,370 in 1992. Even families that earn too little to owe federal taxes may be eligible for EIC, an anti-poverty program created by Congress in 1975.

In 1991 the IRS commissioned a demographic study of families likely to be EIC-eligible. Baptists represented about one-third of those most likely to be eligible, according to an IRS spokeswoman.

The IRS official cautioned that Baptist ministers must include their housing allowance in determining their earned income eligibility. While ministers are not required to pay federal income tax on their housing allowance, those benefits are considered earned income in determining EIC eligibility.

The basic EIC for families with one child is worth up to \$1,324. Families with more children could qualify for additional credit.

Two other EIC benefits also are available for some families. Families with a child born in 1992 could receive up to \$376, and families that pay at least part of their child's health insurance premiums could receive \$451.

The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, a Washington-based organization that is spearheading a national educational campaign on EIC, said there are millions of eligible families that do not receive the benefit because they fail to file.

Eligible families must do two things to receive their refundable credit. First, they must file a federal return (Form 1040A or 1040). Second, they must file a "Schedule EIC" tax form with the return.

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-- By Pam Parry

Bread for the World launches  
'Offering of Letters' campaign

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- One out of seven people across the globe are hungry, with 40,000 people dying daily from malnutrition and related diseases, according to Bread for the World.

The Christian hunger-policy organization, with 44,000 members, has launched its 1993 "Offering of Letters" campaign to make poverty reduction and environmental protection the leading purpose of U.S. foreign aid.

The campaign, sporting the theme "Many Neighbors, One Earth: Transforming Foreign Aid," is an annual Bread for the World emphasis that

involves churches and individuals mailing letters to members of Congress concerning hunger issues.

Last year, churches sent more than 140,000 letters in support of the Every Fifth Child Act, the group reported.

The new legislation would call for no new foreign aid money but rather a re-prioritizing of current funds now that the Cold War is over. It would target programs that help hungry people become self-reliant and that protect the environment, according to Bread for the World materials.

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-- By Pam Parry

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