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Rankin wins election  
as FMB President

By Robert O'Brien

Baptist Press  
6/15/93

HOUSTON (BP)--Jerry A. Rankin won election as president of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board by a 59-14 vote following a three-hour closed-door session in a special called meeting of the board trustees June 14 in Houston.

The vote, which exceeded the required 75 percent majority of trustees present and voting, was changed to a unanimous vote "in the spirit of harmony" on a motion by trustee Paul Pressler of Houston. Pressler had voted against Rankin in the preceding roll call vote.

Rankin's nomination by a 15-member trustee search committee had drawn considerable fire after reports began to circulate that Rankin was open to charismatic practices, such as glossolalia or speaking in tongues.

Speculation swirled that the more conservative trustees would muster enough votes either to deny Rankin's election or postpone a vote until the board's June 28-30 meeting in Richmond, Va. By that time seven trustees including two search committee members, would have completed terms of service.

Other reports indicated that Rankin's nomination would be withdrawn by either him or the search committee in the face of rising pressure. But the search committee, trustee chairman John Jackson of California and Rankin refused to back down on bringing the issue to a vote as planned.

Rankin, who said he does not speak in tongues or advocate it for others, faced stiff questioning on the subject in the three-hour portion of the meeting closed to all but trustees.

"He answered them directly and with integrity," trustee Terry Horton of Texas and a search committee member told Baptist Press.

Rankin has said that although he doesn't speak in tongues, he has had occasional experiences in "praying in the Spirit" in his private prayer life and had a one-time experience -- not an ongoing gift -- of interpreting when a man spoke in tongues in a public worship service in Singapore.

Search committee chairman Joel Gregory of Texas said the committee thoroughly investigated Rankin's background and is satisfied he is not a charismatic advocate and has "remained true to Baptist doctrine."

Jackson and search committee chairman Joel Gregory of Texas set the stage for the controversial vote with opening statements by all 15 members of the search committee and by Rankin himself.

Gregory told reporters before the called meeting that the committee, which spent 14 months searching for a successor to R. Keith Parks, would resign if the board failed to elect Rankin.

Rankin and several members of the search committee wiped away tears as the 15 men and women spoke of their conviction that God had led the diverse group to a "miraculous" and unanimous decision to nominate Rankin.

They related how they had sought to set aside personal opinions, political considerations and the expectations of others to seek God's leadership in finding the right person for the job.

Their choice was a 51-year-old area director for Southern Asia and the Pacific, with 23 years experience on the foreign mission field. Speaking with emotion about a spiritual investigation several said changed their own lives, search committee members said they found Rankin to be deeply spiritual, gifted in leadership, not too attached to the past way of doing things and innovative.

The nomination flew in the face of predictions that the committee would work from a narrow list of names of candidates whose agenda is the denomination's conservative resurgence, not missions.

Rankin's nomination, said trustee Ted Moody of Georgia, resulted from "400 hours of prayer (by search committee members) before the throne of God" as they pored over 80 candidates, 300 letters of recommendations and notes on numerous interviews.

Although reports persisted that some trustees opposed Rankin because he had not played an active role in the politics of the conservative resurgence, trustees interviewed after the vote insisted that opposition was based on theological concerns, not politics.

The question, said trustee Bill Blanchard of Tennessee, centered around the charismatic issue, which "has more to do more with biblical interpretation than presupposition about what the Bible is."

Blanchard, who voted for Rankin, said Rankin satisfied him that he holds to the inerrancy of the Bible and that he is not a charismatic.

One observer noted that opposition votes seemed to grow out fear that charges of charismatic tendencies by Rankin could be a divisive factor in the work of the Foreign Mission Board and Southern Baptists.

After his election, Rankin told trustees: "I am sincerely convinced that every vote cast" was cast with integrity and "out of conviction from the Lord."

He said as he assumed his role as 10th Foreign Mission Board president he is convinced "God has a plan and purpose (for Southern Baptists) far beyond what we can imagine."

In his statement before the election, Rankin chose not to open

with his position on gifts of the Holy Spirit to allow the trustees to deal with them in the executive session.

Making no direct reference to a history of tension between trustees and Foreign Mission Board staff over the past months, Rankin told trustees he would make every effort to work effectively with them.

He told them he would assume that if they had agreed to serve as trustees that their agenda is missions and winning the world to Christ. "I would have no problem working with you" to that end, he said, noting he would seek to avoid "a dichotomy" which separates staff, missionaries and trustees.

Rankin also declared he had the "best job in the world" as area director for Southern Asia and the Pacific and that he had not aspired to the FMB presidency.

"There was nothing to make me aspire to reach the presidency -- except for a lost world that needs Jesus Christ," he said.

Rankin said he succumbed to the search committee's process when he "recognized that tens of thousands of people were praying" for the committee.

He said that made him realize he "had to be submissive" to the assurance of the committee, which interviewed him four times, that it was serious about examining him as a potential president.

Rankin also retraced his call to missions from the time he accepted Jesus Christ as a 10-year-old boy in a Billy Graham crusade in Mississippi and outlined, in general terms, some things he would seek to implement if elected as Foreign Mission Board president.

"If we get in tune with what God wants us to do, we can have 5,000 missionaries and a \$100 million a year in Lottie Moon Christmas Offering receipts by the year 2000, Rankin said.

He said that although he will consult with FMB staff, missionaries and trustees to determine "precise and firm directions" for the future, he would:

-- multiply efforts to reach "World A" -- one fourth of the globe which has had little or no chance to hear the Christian gospel -- but would lead the board to focus on traditional mission fields "that God has ripened for the harvest."

"We will face the judgment and wrath of the Lord for failing to do so," he said.

-- support the board's historical stance of planting career missionaries to develop work indigenous to the countries in which they serve, but seek more ways to involve a wide range of Southern Baptists and develop "impact strategies" to win the world to Christ.

"I believe in the principle of developing indigenous churches" under national leadership, he said. "but indigeneity doesn't mean passivity" on the part of missionaries in seeking creative and innovative ministries.

-- advocate a "more diversified and more field-oriented strategy." That approach would seek to find "balance," he said, between the heavily field-oriented approach under the 25-year presidency of the late Baker James Cauthen and the more centralized strategy during the 13-year presidency of R. Keith Parks.

"The world is diverse," he said. "We can't have one" approach to strategy. "We need to give more flexibility to missionaries on the field."

-- enhance efforts to equip missionary candidates spiritually and practically.

-- set up a rapid deployment force of missionaries, staff members, emeritus missionaries, volunteers and others to enter areas of the world "when doors of opportunity open up."

-- challenge and equip families in Southern Baptist churches in the United States to nurture international students who will return home as leaders of their countries.

-- streamline administrative procedures at the Foreign Mission Board and on the foreign mission field.

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Rankin outlines vision for FMB  
'to focus on what God is doing'

Baptist Press  
6/15/93

By Tammi Ledbetter & Scott Collins

HOUSTON (BP)--The decision of the full body of trustees to affirm his nomination "bears testimony to God's providence and their commitment to the missions task of the Southern Baptist Convention," Jerry Rankin said in a news conference less than two hours after his election as president of the Foreign Mission Board.

The 23-year veteran missionary said his election was not due to qualification or experience but rather "the hand of God acting consistently" and the result of a spiritual pilgrimage of the 15 search committee members.

Rankin was joined by FMB trustee chairman John Jackson and presidential search chairman Joel Gregory who sought to downplay the attention given to the nominee's views regarding spiritual gifts. Noting that trustees "totally support the election of Jerry Rankin as president," Jackson said he was hopeful the news media would not "make a big deal out of our being able to have our family discussion then come out of it with a decision."

Jackson said the closed-door session to discuss Rankin's election had been extended to more than three hours to allow for a full discussion of perceptions regarding the nominee's views relating to spiritual gifts.

Rankin said he had never found, in his studies, a definite position among Southern Baptists regarding exercise of spiritual gifts such as tongues. "My beliefs certainly are consistent with the Baptist Faith and Message and I believe with all my heart the teachings of Scripture."

While he told the media all the gifts of the Holy Spirit could be operative on the mission field -- particularly evangelism, prophecy, service and helps -- he said the greatest sign and wonder he had ever witnessed was the conversion of an individual to belief in Jesus Christ.

Rankin expressed "tremendous affirmation of my pilgrimage and walk with the Lord" throughout the questioning by trustees. He characterized their concern as relating to a "perception of what people feel I've experienced might be disruptive because it's not common to most Southern Baptists."

Jackson insisted that the discussion Southern Baptists were having could not be described as a debate of Pentecostal theology. "Jerry has denied that vehemently. He does not believe in a baptism of the Holy Spirit as evidenced by speaking in tongues as a second act of grace."

Gregory countered allegations that the committee had not directly

asked Rankin if he spoke in tongues or would describe himself as a charismatic. "That charge is erroneous," Gregory said, referring to four occasions on which the committee interviewed Rankin regarding his view of spiritual gifts.

"We fully accept his explanation that the prayer experiences that he has do not by his definition or by our committee's understanding fit into the category of unknown ecstatic utterance usually identified as speaking in tongues."

Gregory said the 14-month process involved consideration of 80 candidates during 20 meetings and 10 teleconference sessions. "When we came to a decision about Jerry Rankin it was with a unanimity and solidarity that stunned this committee" because of the members' diversity.

When asked about his agency's relationship with the moderate-led Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, Rankin said he "would not see a possibility of working in any kind of union with that kind of independent effort among Southern Baptists." Instead, he urged support of his own proposal to broaden the work of the FMB to be "a network coordinator to mobilize the resources and interests of churches, state conventions and other agencies to contribute to our task of reaching a lost world."

"We're not in competition in reaching the lost world," Rankin additionally said of CBF, adding that "Satan is our only adversary." He also noted the FMB will continue in cooperation with other like-minded evangelical groups.

But when it came to his assessment of the CBF's impact on funding, Rankin said the CBF "is deliberately competing and drawing away that kind of support Southern Baptists ought to be giving to the Foreign Mission Board."

Still, he expects Southern Baptists to be unified in reaching the world for Christ, expressing confidence the 15-million member denomination "will financially undergird the FMB."

"Once we focus on what God is doing, the resources are there and God will bless us," Rankin said. "We will be unified and on track with what God has for us to do."

He said he expects the election of a career missionary to encourage the nearly 4,000 missionaries serving in 129 countries around the world as he identifies with their "needs, struggles and victories."

Rankin said the theme of his administration will be "that all the world might know Him." Efforts to reach the unevangelized World A, reaching from the Middle East through China, will intensify under Rankin's administration, with a refocus in those areas where God is "ripening the harvest on traditional, established mission fields."

His plan calls for moving from "a common global agenda, to restore mission-generated strategies that will give those on the field more ownership of mission methods in fulfilling our purpose of evangelism that results in churches."

Through streamlined decision-making, the FMB will respond more quickly to opportunities "amidst the accelerating changes taking place in the world," Rankin said.

"God has raised up Southern Baptists and blessed them with tremendous potential, not to bring glory to a great denomination, but to lift up and glorify our Lord Jesus Christ. We have turned back to the biblical foundations and faith essential to effective evangelism," Rankin said.

"We have a strategic place in God's eternal plan to bring people from every tribe and tongue and nation to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. With single-mindedness we will be devoted to leading Southern Baptists to fulfill that task."

Rankin challenged "distorted information" being circulated about the FMB, praising the record number of baptisms, entry into new countries, development of new strategies, as well as an increase in foreign missionary applications as evidence that "God is faithful in fulfilling the task before us."

Predicting a \$100 million Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions and 5,000 missionaries overseas by the year 2000, Rankin said he expects "restored hope and confidence in the trustees and the board."

Rankin's wife, Bobbye, expressed gratitude for the prayers of others throughout the election process, adding, "We have felt so very lifted up."

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EDITORS'S NOTE: Baptist Press asked Russell Rankin, son of new Foreign Mission Board President Jerry Rankin, to pen some reflections about his father. Russell Rankin is a newswriter at in the office of communications and marketing at Baylor University in Waco, Texas.

My father is a hero  
with a servant's heart

By Russell Rankin

Baptist Press  
6/15/93

How many children in this day and age can honestly say that their father is their hero? Role models seem to be a dime a dozen, and family values seem to originate in the political office instead of the home.

My father is my hero not because he is a great man, although I know he is. He is not my hero because of anything he has or hasn't done or accomplished. My father is my hero because he is a man of God.

Growing up overseas in a missionary family can be difficult; however, I wouldn't trade the 17 years in Indonesia and Thailand for any other experience in the world. With an absence of all the comforts and luxuries we could have had in Suburbia, America, my parents brought up my sister, Lori, and I to want nothing, for all that our hearts needed was provided.

The most vivid memories I have of my father during those early years overseas all revolve around his work, which was to see God's purpose accomplished in the world. He had all the potential to be a booming force from the pulpit, but that was overshadowed because my father's job was to be a servant; he did his work on his knees.

Early in the morning, my father would get up and spend time before the Lord. Seeking direction from the Lord has been a habit for my family far as long as I can remember; every decision and possibility was prayed over and talked about before an action was taken.

This philosophy is the greatest thing my parents could have instilled in my life and it is reinforced and strengthened as I see that belief played out in my parents' life.

The 14 months of interviews, deliberation and discussion my mom and dad went through before his election as president of the Foreign Mission Board seemed to be the hardest months my parents had ever been through. In spite of the concerns, they affirmed that they felt no

anxiety about the situation. They reminded me that once again, as always, they had given the situation to the Lord in prayer, and they had no reason to worry for it was no longer in their hands; the Lord was always faithful to accomplish his purpose.

As I watched tears run down the faces of members of the presidential search committee as they gave testimony to the way the Lord had worked to bring them to a unanimous recommendation of my father, I was moved to see my father weeping. How many sons see their fathers cry? It is an incredible, yet scary experience. In spite of it all, there was a peace, because I knew the tears were because the Lord had, once again, been faithful.

My father is not my hero because he is a great man. My father is my hero because he is a servant.

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Historical Commission pamphlet  
raises Executive Committee concerns

Baptist Press  
6/15/93

By Brenda J. Sanders

HOUSTON (BP)--Members of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee adopted a recommendation asking the SBC Historical Commission to "cease to distribute" a pamphlet which makes reference to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, "until such a time it deletes any reference" to the CBF in the pamphlet.

The action came during a meeting of the Executive Committee prior to the annual meeting of the SBC in Houston, June 15-17.

The pamphlet in question -- "Who Are Southern Baptists?" -- is part of a series designed to help Southern Baptists understand their history, according to Lynn E. May Jr., executive director-treasurer of the Historical Commission. Executive Committee president Morris Chapman invited May to address committee members before voting on the recommendation.

May said one characteristic of Southern Baptists is that "we are a cooperative people" who work together to reach the world for Christ. "We do that through the Cooperative Program," he said, "but there are also some churches that choose other means to support missions and evangelism." It is in this context that the pamphlet mentions the CBF as "one of the many ways Southern Baptists fund the Lord's work," he said.

The pamphlet acknowledges this fact, May said, but "by no means do we intend to promote the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship or damage the Cooperative Program."

Committee member Guy S. Sanders III of Lake Wales, Fla., said he had received "numerous calls" from Southern Baptists who had seen the pamphlet and raised concerns about its reference to the CBF.

"A dangerous misconception could come of this," Sanders warned. "If a pastor uses a piece like this to tell new church members who Southern Baptists are, the lines could become very blurred."

Committee members voted unanimously to approve the recommendation, which will be referred to the board of the Historical Commission for consideration at their next meeting.

In other action, the Executive Committee voted to allocate \$300,000 of capital needs funds to the Christian Life Commission for use in purchasing housing for an office in the Washington, D.C., area. The funds were entrusted to the Executive Committee by SBC messengers

at the denomination's 1992 annual meeting.

During the past year, the \$300,000 corpus was the focus of a dispute between the SBC and the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, a Washington-based religious liberty organization that claimed ownership of the money and threatened to sue the convention over the dispute. In February, the Executive Committee approved a settlement of \$100,000 to the BJC, leaving the \$300,000 fund the sole property of the SBC.

Committee members also approved a recommendation that instructs SBC entities to request advance approval of the convention or the Executive Committee before conducting any type of fund-raising activities. The recommendation excludes the annual Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for home missions.

Also at the pre-convention meeting, John R. "Jack" Wilkerson was elected as Executive Committee vice president for business and finance, effective July 12. Employed by E.I. DuPont de Nemours & Company the past 28 years, Wilkerson, 50, said he recently took early retirement to devote "full time and energies to Christian ministry."

Wilkerson's responsibilities will include managing the Executive Committee's business and finance office, serving as financial planner for the SBC operating budget and directing convention operations for the SBC annual meetings.

The Executive Committee also adopted resolutions of appreciation for Roy L. Honeycutt and Arthur L. Walker Jr. Honeycutt retires July 31 after 11 years as president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky. Walker retires September 1 after 15 years as executive director-treasurer of the SBC Education Commission and secretary-treasurer of the Southern Baptist Commission on the American Baptist Theological Seminary.

Committee members also received a report that second quarter Cooperative Program receipts of \$69.9 million represent a .42 percent decrease compared to the same period a year ago.

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Elder report sparks creation  
of ad hoc 'coalition of hope' By Ken Camp

Baptist Press  
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HOUSTON (BP)--Looking toward forging a "coalition of hope," an ad hoc group of about three dozen Baptist state convention presidents and executive directors named a six-member work group to act on former Sunday School Board President Lloyd Elder's suggestions for "calling the Southern Baptist family together."

Several dozen state convention presidents, executive directors, executive board chairpersons, representatives from the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and other "concerned Baptists" attended a meeting convened by Elder at 8 p.m. June 14 at the Four Seasons Hotel in Houston, prior to the annual session of the Southern Baptist Convention.

The general session included a statistical report on "critical trends" in Southern Baptist life presented by Elder, a call to action by former SBC President Herschel Hobbs and an open discussion involving the state convention leaders.

At least 30 responded to an invitation by Elder to stay after

the larger group adjourned at 10 p.m., and about a dozen actively participated in deliberations for another hour calling for a "convocation of hope" to broaden the base of involvement in Southern Baptist governance.

Rodney C. Osborn, an anesthesiologist from Peoria, Ill., who was immediate past president of the State Convention Presidents Fellowship and of the Illinois Baptist State Association, was elected to serve as convener of the small work group.

Other work group members selected were Dick Maples, president of the Baptist General Convention of Texas and pastor of First Baptist Church, Bryan, Texas; Joe Baker, president of the State Convention of Baptists in Ohio and a director of missions; Rodney Travis, president of the Missouri Baptist Convention and pastor of First Baptist Church, Jackson, Mo.; R. Quinn Pugh, executive director of the Baptist Convention of New York; and Cecil Sims, executive director of the Northwest Baptist Convention.

Elder, professor of biblical studies and preaching at Belmont University in Nashville, and president of the Baptist Sunday School Board from 1983-91, will work with the small group as a facilitator.

The work group agreed to meet for a breakfast meeting at Houston's downtown Hyatt Regency Hotel June 15.

Topics of discussion were to include:

-- a resolution of support for Elder's research report, "Calling the Family Back Together," that could be introduced for adoption by the State Convention Presidents Fellowship the morning of June 16.

-- similar resolutions of support at state conventions this fall.

-- a nationwide "convocation of hope," possibly involving the five immediate past presidents of all 35 state conventions, as well as some means of involving more laity and women in proposals for fashioning new methods of Southern Baptist Convention governance.

Elder said he was "encouraged" by the "thoughtful responses" of the Baptist leaders who attended the larger meeting to discuss his research report and by the smaller group who stayed to hammer out some plan for implementing Elder's vision of "including the whole Southern Baptist family in governance and giving."

In the larger group, Elder discussed in detail the findings of his research report, "Calling the Family Back Together," and of its 20 action plans designed to broaden participation in SBC annual meetings and reduce the appointment power of the convention president.

In mid-May, Elder mailed 6,300 copies of the report to state and local church and missions leaders. He later had 10,000 reprinted and sent an additional mailing to a "broadened circle" of leaders.

The Southern Baptist Convention is "at risk" and "moving toward crisis by 2000 A.D." unless changes are made to involve in decision-making the 6.8 million Southern Baptists represented by the 45 percent voting minority at national conventions since 1979, according to Elder.

"We've got to get giving and governance back together if we're going to move forward in Southern Baptist life," Elder said.

Critics such as Morris Chapman, president of the SBC Executive Committee, had charged Elder's proposals -- particularly the six action plans centered around a "vision of governance partnership" authorizing

state conventions to nominate persons for the SBC Executive Committee, Committee on Committees, Committee on Nominations and agency governing boards -- violated Baptist polity by creating a connectionalism.

Elder dismissed the charge, saying connectionalism was the norm during the first 86 years of Southern Baptist history and exists today in terms of finances through the Cooperative Program.

"We have connectionalism. My great fear is not involving the qualified elected leaders of our state conventions. My fear is excluding 6.8 million Southern Baptists from governance," he said.

Elder said he had received many encouraging responses from "grassroots" Southern Baptists; was appreciative of a "cordial call" from Cecil Sherman, coordinator of the moderate Cooperative Baptist Fellowship; and was heartened by the endorsement of Hobbs, a retired Oklahoma pastor and former SBC president. However, more recent elected leaders of the convention had offered no encouragement, he said.

Hobbs, who at 85 is considered by many as an "elder statesman" of the Southern Baptist Convention, said he had proposed to the Southern Baptist Peace Committee three times recommendations for reducing the convention president's appointive powers. He suggested that the "coalition of hope" pick up where the Peace Committee left off.

Initially, Elder stressed the urgency of acting on the report at the SBC meeting in Houston this week.

"Hope is running out," he said. "We're running out of people to blame. We're running out of people who care. We need to act now."

Maples of Texas suggested in the large group discussion that a motion be presented to the SBC in Houston endorsing the Elder report and its action plan.

However, in the smaller ad hoc group, both Maples and Elder acknowledged that if a motion were presented to the convention without first communicating its importance to "grassroots Southern Baptists," its likely defeat could "crush all hope."

Before the meeting, Maples told Baptist Press that he "liked the spirit" of Elder's action plans.

"It is past time for Southern Baptists to find a positive way to work together in healthy cooperation," he said. "Lloyd has provided a viable program by which we can put an end to 13 or 14 years of controversy and get on with the Lord's work."

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WMU wrap-up

WMU annual meeting focuses  
on future of global missions

Baptist Press  
6/15/93

By Linda Lawson & Philip Poole

HOUSTON (BP)--Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union is moving beyond controversy to focus on the future, according to speakers' comments and the spirit evidenced during the group's 105th annual meeting June 13-14 in Houston.

In his first public appearance, less than one hour after his election as Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board president, Jerry Rankin asked WMU to join him in "reaching the world for Jesus Christ."

Greeted by a sustained standing ovation, Rankin thanked WMU for their missions support.

"You have upheld us and supported us," he said. "Apart from the very missionaries themselves, WMU is most responsible for the success of the largest missionary force around the world."

National WMU President Carolyn Miller of Huntsville, Ala., set the tone for the two-day meeting with her opening remarks June 13 to the 1,800-plus registered participants and guests.

After a brief reference to problems encountered by the national organization in recent months, Miller encouraged participants to look to the future.

"Although we have experienced a difficult year, we have real peace about our decisions and about what the future holds for WMU," she said. "That leaves us nothing but excited about our future."

The WMU executive board voted in January 1993 to enlarge their focus to include other, non-traditional missions opportunities and to produce missions materials on request for other evangelical groups.

The action produced resolutions from the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee and several state Baptist conventions expressing concern that WMU would no longer maintain exclusive relationships with the Home and Foreign Mission boards. FMB and HMB trustees subsequently affirmed the Executive Committee resolution. Other groups and individuals have expressed support for WMU.

During the June 14 morning session, Daniel Vestal, pastor of Tallwood Baptist Church in Houston, brought in 15 boxes containing more than 50,000 tributes to WMU. Vestal and four others held an April 8 telephone news conference to express support for WMU and urge Southern Baptists to write or call an 800 number to voice their tributes.

"Please continue, for the sake of the gospel and the cause of Jesus Christ," Vestal said, "to lead Southern Baptists -- all Southern Baptists -- in the cause of missions involvement and missions support into the next century and the next millennium."

In response, Executive Director Dellanna O'Brien said: "WMU in its 105 years has never sought glory for itself. We have always said, 'If the hungry are fed, the wounded bound up and people are brought to Christ, to God be the glory.'"

In its executive board meeting June 12 prior to the annual meeting O'Brien said the controversy was discussed but board members determined no response was needed.

Miller echoed that decision in her remarks to the general session.

"We are here today because of our tomorrows, not because of what happened in our yesterdays," Miller said. "If you feel like I do, you are ready to move on -- to greater service, to deeper levels of ministry, to a higher calling of missions."

Missionaries and other speakers called on Southern Baptists to support missions with their prayers, their money and a willingness to become personally involved.

Beverly Dunston Scott, retired professor of urban planning at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, N.J., noted: "We are inundated with human misery and need. We have been fed so much gloom and doom we are becoming compassion fatigued."

She called on Christian women to "see themselves as God sees them -- intellectually and spiritually capable, compassionate, caring. Christian service is not and should not be defined by man, denominations or society. It is defined by our Lord and Savior Jesus

Christ."

Mike Chute, missionary in Hong Kong, said the three objectives of Bold Mission Thrust (Southern Baptists' goal to share the gospel with every person in the world by the year 2000) are still valid. "We still need people who will go. We need people who will give. We need people who will pray."

Home missionary David Fuller of Cleveland, Ohio, said that Scripture is clear on serving "the least of these."

He said fear and pride are two barriers Christians face in ministering to others. "If we feel like we're better than the least of these, then we can't serve them. And if we can't serve them, then we can't serve Christ."

Houston pastor William A. Lawson Jr. echoed Fuller's comments in a later session.

"Jesus set an example of service so that the church he left behind would not have the notion that it is a country club, but rather a community of service.

"If the focus of Jesus was on the underclasses, then where should our focus be?" asked Lawson, pastor of Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church.

Echoing the annual meeting theme, "Summoned to Serve," Lawson encouraged the audience to "return to your community to find a way to serve Jesus Christ because one day he is coming back for all of us. Will you be ready?"

Participants re-elected by acclamation their two national officers, Carolyn Miller of Huntsville, Ala., president, and Martha L. Wennerberg of Defuniak Springs, Fla., recording secretary.

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WMU officials reiterate  
support for SBC missions

By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press  
6/15/93

HOUSTON (BP)--Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union will continue its historic stance of promoting only traditional denominational missions offerings while affirming the right of other groups to choose funding options, approximately 300 people attending a session on "WMU in the news" were told June 14 during the organization's annual meeting at First Baptist Church of Houston.

WMU has always affirmed that right to choose, Karen Benson, manager of the WMU communications group, said. She noted that WMU helped in 1925 give birth to the Cooperative Program, the SBC plan for funding missions and other causes, while supporting the rights of those who opposed it.

"WMU is committed to continuing its hand-in-glove relationship with the SBC. Our intent is to continue to support Southern Baptist missions.-- the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions, Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for home missions and the Cooperative Program," Benson said.

January 1993 action by the WMU executive board to consider requests to produce missions materials for other evangelical groups has generated controversy and a resolution of concern by the SBC Executive Committee that WMU would no longer have an exclusive relationship with the Home and Foreign Mission boards. That resolution was affirmed by trustees of the two boards. Other groups and individuals have

expressed support for WMU, including a June 8 resolution by the executive board of the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Several questions during the one-hour conference centered around the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, an organization of moderate Southern Baptists that has its own missions agency and has begun collecting an offering to support its efforts.

Benson reiterated that WMU will not promote offerings of any other group, including CBF. Also, she said, "CBF has not asked WMU to publish any materials."

In response to a request to define "Southern Baptist," Benson responded, "If you identify yourself as a Southern Baptist and you are involved in, care about or support missions, WMU wants to be there to help you."

She noted the Southern Baptist Convention now includes some 20 language and ethnic fellowships involved in missions, vocational fellowships such as the Baptist Nursing Fellowship and student groups and fellowships as well as CBF.

"Do you consider CBF churches Southern Baptist churches?" one questioner asked.

"Yes," Benson responded.

Another participant asked whether the Executive Committee resolution changes its relationship with WMU.

"We will continue to relate to the SBC Executive Committee just like we always have," Benson said, adding she is aware of no attempt to alter the auxiliary relationship of WMU with the SBC.

As an auxiliary, WMU board members are not subject to election by the SBC Committee on Nominations.

Any action regarding its status would have to come from the WMU executive board, Benson said. However, she emphasized: "I really do believe it would be arrogant of us to equate auxiliary with independent. The reason we exist is to support missions. Southern Baptist missions."

She added that materials produced in the future for any groups will "be based on the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message statement. It has been and will continue to be our doctrinal guideline. We will not produce materials counter to the Baptist Faith and Message for anyone."

Benson and WMU associate executive directors Bobbie Patterson and Joyce Mitchell outlined developments that led in January 1993 to executive board action adopting a vision statement, eight core values and six recommendations proposed by a study committee named in early 1992 by WMU Executive Director Dellanna O'Brien.

The six recommendations, viewed as WMU corporate priorities for the remainder of the decade, are:

-- "recommit ourselves to missions, the reason we exist, and relate to others who share our commitment."

-- "provide prayer support and produce resources for Southern Baptist groups involved in missions at their request."

-- "produce and market generic missions education resources for other evangelical groups."

-- "promote and facilitate effective volunteerism in response to missions needs."

-- "identify one social issue each year for specific intervention through national projects."

-- "accept contributions to be used for WMU and related missions needs."

Pastors' Conference Wrap-up  
Brokenness required for healing,  
speakers tell pastors' conference

Baptist Press  
6/15/93

By Tom Strode

HOUSTON (BP)--Pastors need to experience brokenness and humility to bring healing to their lives, churches and country, speakers frequently told participants in the two-day 1993 Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference June 13-14 in Houston.

"Heal Our Land," taken from 2 Chronicles 7:14, was the theme of the conference, which traditionally attracts by far the largest crowds among preliminary SBC meetings.

In the closing message June 14, Charles Stanley admonished pastors to proclaim the grace of God, rather than judgment and repentance, as the only "message that's going to heal our land."

To effectively proclaim grace to hurting people, the pastor must do so "out of a broken life," said Stanley, pastor of First Baptist Church of Atlanta.

Brokenness, he said, is a process in which God targets anything a Christian depends on rather than God, arranges the circumstances to break a person, chooses the tools to do the breaking and controls the pressure on the person.

If you are "going to be a blessing, you're going to have to bleed," Stanley said.

At the close, Stanley asked those willing to be broken, no matter the cost, to bow their heads and stand. It appeared about 90 percent of the crowd stood, Stanley told those in attendance.

Harold O'Chester, pastor of Great Hills Baptist Church in Austin, Tex., said. "Brokenness is that condition ... where our will is brought into absolute and total submission to God's will. ... you've got to understand, whatever it takes (to break a person), God's up to it."

Failure, bad health and persecution are circumstances which can bring brokenness, he said. Such events can toughen and teach pastors, as well as make them tender, he said.

O'Chester shared about his life, including the deaths of his first wife, their two children and an unborn child in an auto accident.

Seven things prevent leaders from being broken by God, said John Maxwell, senior pastor of Skyline Wesleyan Church in San Diego and a popular speaker on pastoral leadership and lay ministry.

They are, Maxwell said, 1) the fast pace of life; 2) an unwillingness to be vulnerable; 3) immaturity; 4) isolation from the world; 5) misplaced priorities; 6) contentment with status quo; and 7) a human perspective rather than faith perspective.

"We lack brokenness because we don't see people like God sees people," Maxwell said. "If the pastor can be changed, the church can be changed, and if the church can be changed, the community can be changed."

Ego is "on parade in too many pulpits," said Adrian Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in suburban Memphis, Tenn. The problem, he said, in the SBC is the same as in America and in the country's homes: pride.

"I'm sick and tired of people standing up and talking about our

great Southern Baptist Convention, our great churches. There's one who's great. His name is Jesus," Rogers said.

Columnist Cal Thomas blamed "a compromising, undisciplined, disobedient church of Jesus Christ" for much of the moral and spiritual decline in America during the last 25 years.

"If the church and its leaders cannot be transformed by the renewing of their minds and marriages, how can we ever hope to transform culture?" Thomas asked. "Why should culture even bother to listen?"

Transforming the culture will require greater emphasis on prayer, more ministry by the laity and withdrawal from the public schools, he said.

Thomas exhorted pastors to "remove ourselves from American public schools and establish a superior school system. What's wrong with us being the standard and drawing them to our schools?"

Christians should bear the cost of such schools organized on a regional basis, Thomas said. Being missionaries to public schools is important, he said, but "not if it means the loss of our children."

Others also called the church to repentance.

The only thing keeping God from healing America is the sin "of the people of God," said Dallas evangelist Jay Strack. "We can either be humbled because of our sin or be humbled by our sin."

Arkansas pastor Ronnie Floyd said, "America is not in need of healing because of abortion or pornography or liberalism or humanism or even homosexuality. America is in need of healing because the church of America is sick. When the church of America is sick, the nation is doomed."

New Mexico pastor Charles Lowery and popular author and conference speaker Gary Smalley encouraged pastors to deal with relationships, especially in their families.

"If we're going to heal our land, we've got to heal our relationships," Lowery said. "Some men are trying to be Superman, super pastor. What your family needs is for you to be a husband and a dad."

Christians and their families need to "own up" to and resolve their anger, Smalley said. Men should "put on the nature of Christ" and be gentle and tender with their wives, he said.

Other speakers exhorted pastors to focus on evangelism without accepting the teachings of the power evangelism movement. "Many of you come from churches that reflect keepers of the aquarium rather than fishers of men," said E.V. Hill, pastor of Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church in Los Angeles. They are "safe-haven places tucked away on comfortable avenues far away from the distant battlefields."

Evangelical churches in America have written off the 31 million people on the poverty rolls, Hill said.

Jerry Vines, co-pastor of First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Fla., and Rogers both warned pastors about the power evangelism movement, which teaches miraculous signs in worship will produce dramatic evangelistic results, and about an overemphasis on meeting "felt needs."

Pastors need to make sure their churches don't become "Satan-friendly" in an attempt to become "seeker-friendly," Vines said. A "Satan-friendly" church is a material, liberal or sensational church.

While the SBC "has fought and won the battle about the inspiration of Scripture," he said, a pastor can be conservative theologically

"but, lest he offend a contemporary congregation," not say anything about the blood of Christ and living a holy life.

"The result, brethren, is the same," Vines said.

Frequently, speakers deplored such sins in America as abortion and homosexuality but there were few references to President Bill Clinton, a Southern Baptist who has lifted restrictions on abortion and has promised to lift the ban on homosexuals in the military.

Ike Reighard, pastor of New Hope Baptist Church in Fayetteville, Ga., was elected president of next year's Pastors' Conference. Curt Dodd, pastor of Metropolitan Baptist Church in Houston, was elected vice president, and Danny Gray, pastor of Brushy Creek Baptist Church in Easley, S.C., secretary.

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Hollinger demonstrates  
SBC computer system

Baptist Press  
6/15/93

HOUSTON (BP)--Southern Baptists can retrieve Baptist Press daily with only a "computer, a telephone and somebody who likes to do this kind of thing," Herb Hollinger, vice president for convention news, told messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting.

Hollinger demonstrated SBCNet, the computer forum available to Southern Baptists, during his report to the SBC meeting in Houston. Currently, SBCNet has 825 users.

In a matter of minutes, users of SBCNet can retrieve Baptist Press as well as Sunday School Board teaching helps, clip art and missions prayer requests.

Using SBCNet requires a computer, a modem and a membership kit available from the Sunday School Board, which coordinates the computer forum. Membership kits can be ordered by calling Sunday School Board customer services at 1-800-458-2772.

Membership kits cost \$20, and they include a \$15 credit toward usage. Members pay for actual time on the system plus a \$2.50 monthly account fee.

SBCNet works through CompuServe, but CompuServe users must have the SBCNet membership kit to log on to the SBCNet system. Membership in SBCNet provides automatic membership in CompuServe, which gives users access to some other special interest forums, such as newspaper and magazine articles, stock market quotes and current travel information.

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Freemasonry study rejuvenated  
members, Masonic editor says

Baptist Press  
6/15/93

By David Winfrey

HOUSTON (BP)--Charges against Freemasonry as anti-Christian have helped rejuvenate Masons' devotion to their lodge, the editor of The Scottish Rite Journal told Southern Baptist newspaper editors.

"This has really been a tonic," said Boettjer, editor of the monthly publication of the Scottish Rite's southern jurisdiction. Boettjer addressed a meeting of the Southern Baptist Press Association just before the start of the Southern Baptist Convention annual

meeting, June 15-17 in Houston.

Masons are more excited about their lodge membership now and are better prepared to answer critics of their teachings, he said.

"I want to thank Dr. Holly, wherever he is, for having helped us in this endeavor," Boettjer said, referring to James "Larry" Holly, a Beaumont, Texas, physician. Last year Holly requested a Southern Baptist Convention study of Freemasonry, charging the lodge was involved in a luciferian conspiracy to prohibit spiritual revival.

After a study by the Home Mission Board, the agency's directors issued a report, to be presented at this convention meeting, that states some Masonic teachings are compatible with Christianity but others are incompatible. The study concludes that lodge membership should be left a matter of personal conscience.

The increased interest in Freemasonry by its members is significant, given the average age for members of the Scottish Rite's southern jurisdiction is about 63 years, and the organization membership decreases about 2-3 percent annually, Boettjer said. "We are an easy whipping boy because we don't usually respond."

Boettjer re-emphasized that the lodge is not a religion. "We are a church-supporting fraternity."

He also disputed criticism that such charitable endeavors as alzheimer clinics and cripple children hospitals are attempts by Masons to work their way into heaven.

"We don't have a theology in Freemasonry. We simply understand the Bible when it says, 'Good faith brings good works. Faith without works is dead,'" he said. "We urge our members to participate in their churches, whatever church that may be. And, indeed, when you become a Mason almost inevitably you become a better church member."

Answering questions from editors, Boettjer said he's heard some Masons want to amend the report when it reaches the floor, but he personally wants to see it pass as is.

"We have been advocating that the resolution be accepted as it is because we think if the floor is open to debate to further resolutions, it might turn out worse."

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Deal with anger in self.  
at home, pastors warned

By Elizabeth Young

Baptist Press  
6/15/93

HOUSTON (BP)--If we are going to heal our homes, our churches or our country, we are going to have to address the issue of anger, said Gary Smalley at the Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference.

"I believe that anger does more damage in our homes and in our lives than any other single thing I see," said Smalley, president of Today's Family. "It's very normal to get angry but it's very damaging to allow the anger to stay."

The key is not staying angry, said the counselor and author who recently moved from Phoenix, Ariz., to Branson, Mo. The healthy way to use anger, he said, is to allow the emotion to grip us and motivate us to action in love.

Smalley said he has found more than 20 negative consequences of keeping anger in the heart. Anger weakens the immune system, instantly creates distance between people and "darkens our heart so we cannot know or walk in the light of God," he said.

If you're praying for revival in your church, he told the pastors, and not encouraging your members to resolve their anger, starting in their homes, you will not have revival.

"When you stay angry, you can't move into intimacy with another person," Smalley said. In addition, he said, "people who are angry sabotage good relationships."

Smalley explored the question of why there is so much anger between men and women, noting there are many differences between the sexes.

Men should remember the admonition of 1 Peter 3:7 and treat their wives with respect as the "weaker vessel," he said.

Women experience things far more often on an emotional basis than men do, he said. Women tend to be a little more sensitive, to be able to access their feelings more easily, Smalley noted.

For 70-80 percent of the population, he said, it is true that men express facts while women express feelings; men offer solutions and women give sympathy.

Smalley pointed to Ephesians 4:32-33 and Proverbs 15:1,4 to tell how to overcome anger. We should put on the nature of Christ, be kind and tenderhearted and remember that a soft answer turns away wrath, he said.

While it may not seem natural to behave that way as a man, he said, men can ask God to give them the power to do it until it becomes a part of them.

Smalley told of a time when his wife hit their house with a recreational vehicle. His natural response was to lecture, he said. Instead, he wrapped his arms around his crying wife and offered comfort.

Hugging a bed pillow to his chest, Smalley demonstrated his response. He asked the audience to touch their cushioned seat cushions.

"As often as you sit on a cushioned seat," he said, "remember to be tender."

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Christians must anticipate change  
to make impact, futurist says By Chip Alford

Baptist Press  
6/15/93

HOUSTON (BP)--If Christians are going to make an impact in the 21st century, they must begin taking the future seriously, Tom Sine told religious educators gathered for the 38th annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Religious Education Association June 13-14 in Houston.

"Rarely do I find a denomination, seminary, agency or institution that is making an effort to anticipate how things will change in the future . . . . We are preparing people to live in the world that is, instead of how to live in the world that is going to be," Sine, a Seattle-based Christian researcher and futurist, said. He is author of the book, "Wild Hope," which has been described as "a rallying call to take charge and live creatively in a changing world."

Too often, Sine said, Christians get caught in a reactive rather than proactive mode.

"We are living in a world that changes at a blinding speed. We've got to do more than long-range planning. We've got to forecast. If we don't, we're being irresponsible," he said.

In a speech titled "Anticipating Tomorrow's Challenges," Sine

outlined several global and national challenges that will impact Christian education in the next 10-15 years.

First, he mentioned a continued focus on ecology and environmentalism. Claiming the 1990s will be remembered as "the earth decade," he said Christian educators must teach people how to be responsible stewards of creation without turning their concern for the environment into earth worship.

Changes in the global political stage will present another challenge for religious educators, Sine said.

"By the year 2000, there will probably be four or five super powers, including Japan, China, the European Community and the United States," he said. The break-up of the Soviet Union likely will eliminate Russia from superpower status, if it hasn't already, he said.

Sine also predicted a related "three-way race" for economic supremacy between USA/Canada/Mexico; Asian countries such as Japan, China and Taiwan; and the European Community.

"We (the United States) could finish in last place," he said, adding the resulting economic problems in the country would result in less giving to churches and, as a result, less money for ministry.

"The party is over," he said, referring to the middle-class lifestyle enjoyed by a majority of Americans. "We are going to have to be calling people to 'whole-life stewardship.' The earth is the Lord's. So, the question is not how much of mine do I have to give up, but how much of God's do I get to keep?"

Educators also need to prepare for the continued "blending" of America, he said, referring to the country's shift to a more multi-cultural society.

"I believe the culturally disadvantaged people in the new few years are not going to be those living in the inner cities, but middle-class white young people that have never been exposed to people of other cultures, races, or languages . . . . They're not going to be ready to live in the 21st century," he said.

The "graying" of America also will impact Christian education, Sine said, citing statistics which show the nation's 65 and over population is likely to grow from 342 million in 1992 to 2.5 billion by 2050.

Increasing tension and debate between older and younger generations over where and how the country's money should be spent will create the need for educators to encourage understanding and provide ministries that meet the needs of both groups, Sine said.

Understanding or even keeping up with rapidly advancing technology will pose yet another serious challenge to educators, Sine predicted. The eventual emergence of "high-definition" television, interactive video and "virtual reality" technology -- all of which will more fully absorb viewers in artificial worlds -- are but a few of the high-tech advances likely to hit the marketplace in the next couple of decades, he said.

To help Christians cope in an increasingly complex society, Sine said educators must take the lead in helping them discover the true biblical vision for the "good life."

"We need to search the Scriptures to find the fundamental aspirations that will define our lives," he said. "We've been letting the American dream do that, and I think that's idolatry. Our faith needs to have more of the aroma of the kingdom of God than the aroma of materialism and greed."

Women can change America,  
anti-pornography leader says      By Norman Miller

Baptist Press  
6/15/93

HOUSTON (BP)--"America's women can determine the nature of this nation's culture, if we will decide to do it," said Dee Jepsen.

Jepsen, national campaign director for the anti-pornography campaign "Enough is Enough," spoke in a workshop sponsored by the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union June 14 at First Baptist Church in Houston.

"If American women want to turn this country around we can do it! We have more influence than we realize," Jepsen said. Pornographers are "counting on the fact that women are not willing to get our hands dirty, discount our many religious and political differences or pay the financial price to wage a war against them."

Jepsen noted her organization garners bipartisan support from 19 states' governors and the support of Barbara Bush and Hillary Clinton. A letter to Jepsen from America's First Lady says, "I applaud your group's efforts to eliminate child pornography and illegal pornography and appreciate your willingness to take a stand for the children of our nation."

Stating pornography is an \$8-\$10 billion a year industry in America, Jepsen said. "Something is seriously wrong in this country when the right of so-called free speech protects the financial interests of a few men who make billions of dollars at the expense of men, women and children."

Jepsen said there is too much subjectivism involved when allowing a community to decide what is and is not pornographic. "We want Congress to pass per se legislation. This would specify what constitutes pornographic content by definition, content and particular activities."

Citing the success of residents living on the south side of Oklahoma City, Jepsen said citizens can "take back their communities. In Oklahoma City, residents managed to close over 160 business which dealt in pornography." Jepsen also said that during the five-year struggle Oklahoma City's reported rape cases decreased 25 percent while the rate of rape increased by 20 percent statewide. "This means that in Oklahoma City, more than 1,000 women avoided attack."

Jepsen claims no denominational affiliation but rather said she is a "non-denominationalist" by choice. She said this makes it easier to reach more women, even those in the National Organization of Women.

She did say, however, the real battle is "spiritual," and the "spiritual battle must be won before natural battle can be won."

Jepsen is the wife of former United States Senator Roger Jepsen from Iowa. She also served on President Reagan's Task Force on the Private Sector.

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Seek help in crises,  
Ron Dunn urges pastors

By Kay Moore

Baptist Press  
6/15/93

HOUSTON (BP)--A longtime minister whose teen-age son committed suicide urged Southern Baptist pastors and denominational leaders to

seek professional help during life's crises and believe that God can use their brokenness for his glory.

At a luncheon sponsored by Rapha Treatment Centers before the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention, minister and Bible teacher Ron Dunn of Irving, Texas, told the audience of about 1,500 that the death of his son 18 years ago and Dunn's subsequent bouts of depression caused him to lose his "zip-a-dee-do-dah" kind of faith. The experience taught him how the Lord can use "less than a whole person" to help others.

Instead of asking, "Why, Lord?" when crisis hits, Dunn said he now asks God what he will do with the experience. Dealing with crisis in this manner "saves us from self-pity, gives us a future to look forward to and makes me a part of God's work," said Dunn, president of Lifestyle Ministries, which produces Christian tapes.

Dunn said he today is under the care of a Christian psychiatrist and takes medication to control his depression. Although some people tend to believe that a person's suffering stems from some sin, Dunn said he feels no less spiritual and no less victorious because of his experiences. He said the experience has been "a dose of reality" that has caused him to see his ministry as "an opportunity for service to others, not as the arena of my success."

As Dunn finished his remarks, Freddie Gage, director of communications for Rapha, told the audience. "Thousands of people that hide behind stained-glass windows today live the way that Ron Dunn and Freddie Gage do." Gage told the audience that he, too, experiences extreme mood swings and is under the care of a psychiatrist.

Linda Masteller, wife of Oklahoma pastor Rod Masteller, told the audience that learning the concepts of "Search for Significance" by Rapha's founder and president, Robert S. McGee, helped save her marriage and family in a crisis which caused her to consider ending her life several years ago.

Although she described her upbringing as a pastor's daughter and her life as a mother and pastor's wife as a "storybook existence," Masteller said Satan had taught her she would be accepted and loved "if I performed well and that I needed the approval of certain others to feel worthy." She said she learned to replace Satan's lies with the truths of God's Word that she was unconditionally loved and accepted by God.

Masteller said she and her husband, pastor of Putnam City (Okla.) Baptist Church, underwent several months of counseling at Rapha as they struggled to repair their marriage and home life.

"Now I've traded my storybook life for the Good Book life," she said. She said she believes the couple's four children are much more compassionate than are other children their age because of the family's experience.

Avery Willis, director of the adult discipleship and family development department at the Baptist Sunday School Board, introduced the new LIFE Support book "Untangling Relationships" and the upcoming youth version of Search for Significance. Willis said such products will keep hurting individuals from "fading back into the world" when they find no help from churches for their critical needs. Untangling Relationships is designed to help individuals learn about codependency -- the compulsion to control and rescue others.

Rapha last year donated Untangling Relationships, Search for Significance and six other Rapha books for the board to adapt for its

new LIFE Support ministries. The resources are assigned to help churches start support groups for issues such as codependency, chemical abuse, sexual abuse and eating disorders recovery.

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Volunteer office director  
to leave FMB for pastorate By Marty Croll

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RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--The architect and veteran apologist for Southern Baptists' overseas volunteer program will leave the Foreign Mission Board to become pastor of Grove Avenue Baptist Church in Richmond, a leading conservative congregation.

Ron Boswell, 58, was appointed as a missionary to Brazil in 1964 and joined the board staff in 1980. As director of the volunteers in missions department, he is credited with helping carve out a niche during the last 13 years for some 100,000 Southern Baptists who wanted to make a difference overseas.

Boswell's early retirement from the Foreign Mission Board takes effect June 30. He will start working the next day at Grove Avenue church, where he has been interim pastor since Jan. 17. He succeeds long-time pastor Vander Warner, who left to develop a ministry to pastors, lay leaders and others.

He is the second key leader in the volunteer office in recent weeks to announce early retirement. The first was James Cecil, also a veteran figure in the use of lay people in foreign missions and a former missionary to Hong Kong. Cecil, 62, cited health reasons for retiring. He will work part time in retirement as associate professor at Mid-Continent Baptist Bible College in Mayfield, Ky.

FMB staff member Bill Peacock will become interim director of the volunteer department. Boyd O'Neal will become interim associate director for the department's Spanish South America, Middle America and Canada section -- Cecil's post.

In Grove Avenue's June 6 morning service -- before he was overwhelmingly elected pastor that evening -- Boswell told the congregation of about 1,000 people that he comes with an agenda: "Jesus is our North Star, the Bible is our guide, and missions is our main business," he said.

He plans for the church to raise its offering to Southern Baptists' unified giving plan, the Cooperative Program, by about 2 percent immediately and 2 percent a year until it reaches a "worthy" figure of 10 to 20 percent, he said. The church now gives about 4 percent of its yearly budget to the Cooperative Program. The fund helps support Southern Baptist mission causes.

For the past two years overall Cooperative Program gifts to the Southern Baptist Convention from local churches have dropped. Since 1987 the inflation rate has exceeded any increase in Cooperative Program receipts, resulting in a net decrease of spending power. Many Southern Baptists blame fragmentation of the denomination for the steady decline and look to leading conservative churches to pick up the slack.

Boswell leaves the volunteer effort at a time when it enjoys greater acceptance than ever before. Last fall mission board trustees appointed a task group to find ways to use volunteers more effectively in missionaries' strategies overseas. They also pushed for -- and got -- a program to draw large numbers of volunteers into service in

Eastern Europe and Central Asia, filling the vacuum from the fall of communism.

"We're trying to keep up with the demand," said Boswell. "When we first started working with volunteers here, we were selling volunteerism."

Boswell expects volunteers to play "an expanding role" in the future of world evangelism. They will be used in new countries and employ new methods, and foreign mission planners will see them as a main tool in getting the job done, he predicted, "not just an afterthought."

But he doesn't feel he'll miss out on any personal fulfillment. After 13 interim pastorates in 13 years, Boswell said Grove Avenue captured his heart. "I just want to pastor that church," he said.