
A S S O C I A T E D B A P T I S T P R E S S

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Southern discontinues exhibits,
alumni meetings at Fellowship

SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL
LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES
Historical Commission, SBC
Nashville, Tennessee

By Marv Knox

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (ABP) -- Southern Baptist Theological Seminary no longer will set up exhibits or sponsor alumni gatherings at meetings of groups it believes compete with the Southern Baptist Convention.

The new policy will terminate the school's presence at state and national meetings of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, seminary administrators confirmed. The policy was approved by the seminary's trustee executive committee Feb. 1 in Louisville.

The decision follows a motion to that effect presented at the 1993 SBC annual meeting.

Jerry Brown, a layman from Edmond, Okla., proposed "that the alumni associations of our seminaries which have exhibited at Cooperative Baptist Fellowship gatherings be discouraged from doing so, and that if they continue to exhibit, the Cooperative Program (SBC budget) allocations for those seminaries be withheld and divided among our other seminaries."

The motion was referred to the six SBC seminaries' trustee boards for action. The seminaries' total 1993-94 Cooperative Program allocation is slightly more than \$28 million. Southern is to receive \$5,990,158.

The new policy -- approved by the trustee executive committee in time to be presented in the SBC's 1994 Book of Reports -- will prevent future exhibits and alumni dinners, reported Tom Mabe, vice president for institutional advancement and supervisor of alumni relations.

The new policy states: "The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary takes seriously its responsibility to maintain trust and allegiance with the Southern Baptist Convention and to reach out to the diverse constituency of the Southern Baptist Convention.

"As a statement of affirmation and trust with the Southern Baptist Convention, Southern Seminary will not exhibit nor hold meetings in connection with the assembly of any group in competition with the Southern Baptist Convention or the Cooperative Program."

Mabe pointed out the new policy does not specifically cite any organization.

"Some thought went into that," he said. "There are other groups (besides the Fellowship) that are not part of the SBC whose relationships probably would continue."

For example, the seminary regularly sponsors state and national meetings of alumni affiliated with the American Baptist Churches, he said. Those gatherings will continue, he said. "There is not the feeling that there is the competition element there."

The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship was established in 1990 by Southern Baptist moderates displeased with the current conservative leadership of the SBC and its agencies. Because the Fellowship attracts support from about 1,200 Southern Baptist churches to fund its own missionaries and other programs, the SBC's controlling conservatives consider the organization to be in competition with the larger SBC.

Despite dropping the seminary's presence at the Fellowship meetings, the school plans to seek a relationship with alumni who affiliate with the Fellowship, Mabe reported.

"We have very aggressive plans to have regional roundtables to reach out to all our alumni and ask them to talk about what's going on at the seminary and express their opinions," he said.

"We've got plans for several cities. These meetings will not be official organizations or chapters of the seminary alumni association, but groups where we invite all alumni to come together and discuss the seminary."

The concept is to be presented to the school's alumni advisory council the second week of February, he said.

Seminary President Albert Mohler "will meet with any group as long as it's not part of the overall Fellowship meeting or the Kentucky Baptist Fellowship meeting or whatever," Mabe noted. "He has no hesitancy to meet with the people, but out of respect for the request of the SBC," he won't come to meetings affiliated with anti-SBC groups.

Howard Cobble, president of the national alumni association, said he hopes the seminary will maintain its ties with all alumni.

"I think we must be careful not to lose contact with the alumni of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary," said Cobble, pastor of Severns Valley Baptist Church in Elizabethtown, Ky.

"All of them, whether in the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship or not, have attended the school. Many of them have sacrificed for her (Southern's) well-being and have supported the school.

"There must be found some way to continue a loving relationship with all alumni."

The decision to close off one avenue of relating to alumni will hurt the seminary, predicted David Wilkinson, the Fellowship's communications coordinator and former vice president for public relations at the seminary.

"The purpose of the resource fair at our general assembly is to offer a service to Baptist churches and individuals," he said. "The invitation to participate was extended to the seminary's alumni association in good faith and in the Fellowship's spirit of openness and inclusiveness.

"It's an opportunity for Southern Seminary and other Baptist organizations to relate to the thousands of Baptists from all across the country who will be there for that meeting. So I think it's the seminary's

loss."

Wilkinson also questioned the trustees' involvement in the process.

"I was a little surprised that the trustees felt compelled to respond when the invitation was extended to the seminary's alumni association, not to the board of trustees" he explained. "Their attitude may be disappointing to those Southern Baptists who chose to contribute more than \$125,000 to the seminary through the Fellowship last year.

"That attitude is certainly not inconsistent with the paranoia of those who now control the boards of the SBC's agencies and institutions."

Some schools' alumni associations -- such as those for Baylor University and Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary -- are independently incorporated. But Southern's is directly connected to the seminary, said Mabe.

"The alumni association exists to serve the seminary and its outreach to the alumni community," he noted.

In the past, Southern Seminary booths and alumni dinners at the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship have been set up by the seminary administration, not the alumni association, he said.

The seminary's response to the SBC motion was developed by the administration before being approved by the trustees, he said.

In other business, the trustee executive committee:

-- Voted to move forward with architectural work on the north wing -- the third and final phase -- of the school's campus center.

Allocation of \$1 million of a gift from Walter and Georgia Chiles of Eustis, Fla., "puts the seminary at 50 percent of funding for the new wing," said Mohler. The wing is to feature a cafeteria and conference/continuing education space, he added.

The projected cost is \$4,135,000, and the seminary has \$2.2 million.

"We won't bring a recommendation for construction until resources (to complete the building) are in hand," Mohler told the trustees. "But this step with the architects is prudent. This building is vital for the future purposes of the seminary."

-- Responded to another SBC motion, declining to change the way it allocates severance benefits for departing employees.

The motion to limit severance benefits was presented at the 1993 SBC annual meeting for the second consecutive year and subsequently referred to the six seminaries. Southern's trustees approved essentially the same response as last year, Mohler noted.

The statement says: "Southern Seminary trustees have exercised appropriate and responsible stewardship of all institutional funds, including Cooperative Program monies, seminary endowment income and all related funds. Through the trustee system, the board of trustees accounts for these monies on behalf of the Southern Baptist Convention, for whom it guards the institution in trust.

"The seminary provides severance compensation on the basis of established contractual policies."

-- Heard a report that final fall enrollment was 2,300.

That number marks a 2 percent increase over fall 1992, said Mohler. He noted a previous report, which listed the fall enrollments of the six SBC seminaries, was developed too early to include reports from all Southern's extension centers. Consequently, the early report showed a 4 percent enrollment decrease, which was reversed when the extension center enrollments were tabulated.

-- Learned that enrollment for new students this spring is up. New students total 145 this spring, a gain of five over the 140 new students in

the spring of 1992.

-- Received a report that the seminary has nine-and-a-half vacancies on its faculty, in fields of theology, preaching, missions, church administration, church social work and church music.

-- Elected Thom Rainer, senior pastor at Green Valley Baptist Church in Birmingham, Ala., to be associate professor of evangelism and church growth.

Earlier in the day, Mohler announced he was naming Rainer as dean of the seminary's new Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Church Growth. He also named Lloyd Mims, associate professor of church music, to be dean of the School of Church Music.

A search for a dean of the School of Christian Education is continuing, Dockery reported.

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Senator calls off fight
against TV violence

By Bob Allen

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- An initiative by network executives eliminates the need for legislation to reduce violence on television, the U.S. Senate's most outspoken critic of TV violence said Feb. 1.

Sen. Paul Simon (D-Ill.) announced an agreement by cable and broadcast network executives to obtain independent monitoring of TV violence.

Six months ago, Simon urged independent monitoring as a less-intrusive option than the federal legislation he was drafting that would have assigned the monitoring of TV violence to the National Institute of Mental Health.

Satisfied with the networks' commitment to independent monitoring, Simon said he will not introduce his bill and that he will "resist" any legislation on the issue in the current session of Congress.

"We've turned a corner in our culture," said Simon. "We've begun to recognize the harmful effects of excessive, glamorized violence."

He noted that three decades ago, television glamorized smoking. When the health concerns associated with smoking became known, that began to change. Similarly, he said, "this breakthrough has the potential to lead to more progress on the problem of violence."

Some Capitol Hill observers said the compromise would probably kill the nine measures introduced so far to regulate or monitor TV violence. Sponsors of the separate bills, however, said they remain unconvinced that voluntary controls go far enough.

Rep. Ed Markey (D-Mass.), who has sponsored the so-called V-chip legislation that would require television set manufacturers to provide the technology to block violent programming, said he disagreed with Simon on the need for legislation.

"Unless the broadcasting industry accepts some rating system along with some sort of violence-chip block voluntarily, I don't believe legislation is avoidable," he said.

Simon began his effort to make TV less violent nine years ago. In the last year, he said, he has detected progress, specifically: the first joint standards on violence by broadcast networks, industrywide use of advance parental advisories, and the "least violent broadcast network schedule in many years."

Since August, he added, his concern has been to assure continued improvement. "Independent monitoring will do that," he said.

"This makes it less likely that a year or two years from now the lure of profits alone will be able to entice the industry to abandon these gains and to return to old patterns."

One evangelical observer downplayed the legislative struggle. "This is a recurring theme that comes up about every 20 years," said Quentin Schultze, professor of communication at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Mich. "Nothing ever happens that makes a long-term difference," he said.

"This is a symbolic political conflict and is not a real battle about the content of television," Schultze told Associated Baptist Press.

Schultze said it will be difficult to ever legislate violent programming "except for very obvious things like profanity or particular violent acts."

Schultze, who has written several books on the effects of television viewing, said a better long-term strategy is to "bring change in the hearts of people in the entertainment industry."

The basic problem, he contended, is not that shows must contain graphic violence to be successful, but "there are not enough gifted storytellers in that industry." Lacking creativity, too many writers and producers resort to "cheap shots," he said.

Schultze believes there is a role for creative Christian storytellers in the entertainment industry. He said he is "very hopeful" about the success of programs like ABC's "Home Improvement," which features a stable, loving family and steers clear of the offensive brand of humor often associated with situation comedies.

Schultze said there is some indication that broadcast networks are convinced that they cannot compete with graphic sex and violence on cable and may see family programming as a niche they can fill.

He said he has previewed a two-hour pilot for a CBS series based on Catherine Marshall's book, "Christy." Scheduled to air in late March, the program "is absolutely tremendous," Schultze said.

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Baptist World Alliance
urges focus on 'World A'

By Wendy Ryan

LARNACA, Cyprus (ABP) -- Baptists of the world endorsed a "blueprint for action" aimed at reaching the 1.3 billion people who have never heard the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Participants in the Baptist International Conference on Unevangelized People Jan. 20-24 in Larnaca, Cyprus, pledged support to the plan making reaching unevangelized people a priority.

The BWA will encourage Baptist mission societies to redeploy missionary personnel and recruit new people to reach unevangelized regions.

Worldwide, 91 percent of Christian missionaries and 94 percent of missionary budgets are directed to the 33 percent of the world that is the most evangelized, researchers say.

The Larnaca conference brought together Baptists and other mission leaders from Africa, Europe, North America and the Middle East to focus on why large portions of the globe remain untouched by the gospel.

Language, poverty, illiteracy, non-Christian religions, undemocratic governments, lack of human rights and religious freedom, lack of understanding, and stereotypes have put up almost impenetrable walls to the gospel in these resistant areas, speakers said.

"If they are poor and illiterate, they have the least chance of hearing the gospel," said Jim Slack of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

Christians also struggle with how to deal with the influence of Islam, particularly in the Middle East, other speakers said.

"The fear of Islamic fundamentalism is crippling Christian outreach," said one Christian worker in the Middle East.

"There is a great gulf of misunderstanding of people, areas and religions of the Middle East," said Bill O'Brien, director of the Global Mission Resource Center of Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham, Ala.

"Many Westerners think all Arabs and Muslims are terrorists, and there is a woeful ignorance in the Christian community about the complexities of the Middle East," he said.

Baptist disunity also hampers outreach, according to Denton Lotz, BWA general secretary. "Our fighting gives us little time for the rest of the world," he said.

Reaching the vast geographic belt of unreached peoples sometimes known as "World A" presents a challenge, said Tony Cupit, BWA director for evangelism. "But if we neglect those areas that are difficult, and work only among potentially productive areas, we must ask ourselves, 'Is this the way of the cross?'"

While the Foreign Mission Board recently strengthened its emphasis on reaching World A, Christians in general have disobeyed Jesus' command to make disciples in those nations, said Jimmy Maroney of the FMB.

Still, Maroney said, in many of those countries there exists "a small Christian body, capable of explosive, spontaneous, activity without outside interference."

"We as Christians must be wise and use creative means of getting the gospel to people when political and religious barriers are created," Maroney said. "God has not released us from our responsibility."

BWA president Knud Wumplemann challenged Baptists to avoid the tendency "to find good excuses for not doing what God wants us to do and go where God wants us to go."

"God calls us to go to the poorest and most difficult places at once," he said.

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Despite lack of missionaries,
unreached world hears gospel

By Wendy Ryan

LARNACA, Cyprus (ABP) -- While much remains to be done if the world's 1.3 billion unevangelized people are to hear the Christian gospel, prayer, media ministries, social ministries and "signs and wonders" are already having an impact on the least evangelized parts of the world.

"Christ is not without a presence in the Middle East," said one speaker during the Baptist International Conference on Unevangelized People, sponsored by the Baptist World Alliance and held in Larnaca, Cyprus, Jan. 20-25.

"There are many believers," said another leader, "but many stay underground, within their own communities and do not attend a Baptist church. Many prefer to stay in their Jewishness and be called Jewish believers."

"Numbers do not tell the whole story," he said. "There are many more believers than you think."

Another Christian from Israel said the influx of immigrants from Eastern Europe has given more visibility to the Christian church. "The hearts of the immigrants are open to God's Word," he said.

The gospel is also being preached in the unevangelized world through radio, Bible distribution, newspaper advertisements and personal contact, other speakers said.

Baptists in the Cameroon, in West Africa, have targeted more than 250 people or language groups to hear the gospel.

But the personal cost of converting to the Christian faith is high for many, especially in areas of militant Islamic fundamentalism.

"Many in these groups are Muslim," said Emmanuel Cheng of the Cameroon, "and they face pressure, intimidation and death threats if they are converted."

"I struggled for eight years with my parents before I was baptized," said one Middle Eastern believer.

Reaching "ethno-linguistic" or "people" groups is another strategy change in world evangelism. As well as going to nations, mission groups are now focusing on people who speak the same language and share the same culture, wherever they might be.

Keith Parks, former president of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board and now missions coordinator for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, explained the shift in focus.

"People groups" are people with the same ethnic-racial background who speak a common language," Parks said. "And it is estimated there are more than 5,000 such groups unreached by the gospel."

For example, the Romani gypsy people live all across Europe, not just in one country. Cooperative Baptist Fellowship missionary T. Thomas ministers to them.

People groups in Africa, such as the Fulani in Nigeria, are also being reached by African Baptists and others. Baptists in Nigeria are reaching out to the "Jula" speaking people. Other speakers described "great enthusiasm" for an outreach to more than one million Gypsies in Egypt, and to the Bedouins.

Satellite broadcasting and media ministries are also proving there is no place truly outside the reach of the gospel, speakers said.

"The rapid nature of change, the rapid growth and distribution of information and globalization versus ethnic identity are all affecting mission strategy," said Parks. "We must adapt our approaches to changing trends in society."

"The arbitrary and unnatural definition of nations has broken down with the fall of communism," Parks said. "Now everybody is involved in every nation, and the use of electronic mail joins people groups wherever they are."

Because information is key to the sharing of the gospel, Parks is concerned about those who are illiterate or have no access to information.

"The division of the 'haves' and 'have nots' may be the difference between those with and those without access to information," Parks said. "How do we reach the illiterate who are cut off from information?"

Many groups at the conference reported great success using the "Jesus" film, which has been shown around the world as an introduction to the gospel. Produced by Campus Crusade for Christ, the film symbolizes the kind of collaboration needed if "World A" is to be reached, participants said.

"The great historic churches as well as para-church organizations will have to participate to reach the unevangelized," said Tony Cupit, Baptist World Alliance evangelism director.

"The last frontier in mission is the frontier of collaboration," said Bill O'Brien, director of the Global Mission Resource Center of Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham, Ala.

A common thread in many of the stories about ministry in "World A" is the role of "signs and wonders," miraculous events that inspire faith in Jesus.

Many of these stories come from Africa. "God will do the miraculous when he needs to work," said Samuel Fadeji, general secretary of the Nigerian Baptist Convention, who spoke at the conference.

"Ninety percent of people who come to Christ in my area come because of miracles," said one speaker. "One man asked for a sign from God, to send rain in the driest season. God did and that man followed Jesus."

Five general strategies were identified for evangelizing the unevangelized: prayer, more effective partnerships, Western mission agencies working more closely with local churches, important new media opportunities, and a focus on children and young people.

While mission groups are encouraged to send personnel, reports indicate that in many places, "indigenous missionaries" -- those who work with their own people -- are most cost effective and have greater impact.

BWA general secretary Denton Lotz said Baptists need to develop a new ecclesiology to effectively evangelize "World A." "Our doctrine of local autonomy is too much at times," he said.

Lotz also appealed for unity. "How can we evangelize the world when we don't even talk to one another," Lotz said.

"We lack power because of a lack of unity, prayer and the movement of the Spirit among us," he said.

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Senate approves Helms school-prayer amendment

WASHINGTON (ABP) -- School districts that prevent constitutionally protected prayer in public schools could lose federal aid under an education bill amendment approved Feb. 3 by the U.S. Senate.

The Senate voted 75-22 to approve the amendment offered by Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N.C., after Helms agreed to add the words "constitutionally protected."

The Helms rider was attached to the Goals 2000: Educate America Act (S. 1150) -- the Clinton administration's proposal that would provide more than \$420 million in education funds and establish education goals to be met by the year 2000.

The legal impact of Helms' amendment, if it becomes law, is uncertain, since it would not expand opportunities for school prayer beyond what is already permitted by federal court interpretations of the Constitution.

But opposing senators and representatives of religious liberty agencies expressed concern about the amendment's practical impact. School officials fearful of losing federal dollars could be pressured into sanctioning more than "constitutionally protected" prayer, they said.

Helms' amendment would deny federal funds to state or local education agencies that prevent participation in "constitutionally protected prayer in schools by individuals on a voluntary basis." It also would bar states or local school districts from requiring participation in prayer and from influencing "the form or content of any constitutionally protected prayer in

such public schools."

Since the early 1960s, the U.S. Supreme Court has consistently barred school-sponsored religious exercises in public schools. A long-time proponent of restoring state-sponsored prayer in public schools, Helms said the country has been in moral decline since the Supreme Court's landmark school prayer decisions.

"Since that time, America has been on a slippery slope," he said. "Morality has been all but forgotten."

Helms insisted that his proposal does not require a school district "to do anything in favor of voluntary prayer. It merely must refrain from instituting policies prohibiting voluntary student prayer."

Senate opponents, led by Sen. John Danforth, R-Mo., an Episcopal minister, said the amendment was unnecessary and amounted to a federal mandate to local school districts.

Danforth offered an alternative, approved 78-8 by the Senate the next day, that simply expressed the Senate's view that local school districts should encourage a brief period of silence for students.

Two Baptist church-state specialists criticized the Helms' amendment.

"Some senators who know better dived under their desks yesterday in their zeal to escape the heat on the issue of school prayer," said James Dunn, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee.

Dunn called the Helms amendment unwise and unnecessary.

"It simply would compound the chaos that already exists in the public schools," he said. "Alas, poor superintendents, principals and teachers would have their already challenging jobs made more difficult trying to sort out what is 'constitutionally protected' and what is not."

Dunn expressed hope that the House of Representatives "will be more sensitive to the implications of this unfortunate amendment."

The Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission declined immediate comment on the Helms amendment.

Brent Walker, BJC general counsel, agreed that the amendment was unnecessary.

"Students already have the right to pray -- privately, even corporately sometimes," he said. "We rarely find schools preventing this kind of prayer."

More often, Walker said, schools "try to exceed the limits of constitutionally protected prayer."

Walker expressed concern that "with the sword of a fund cutoff over their heads, school administrators will bend over backward to appease those who want state-sponsored prayer. The Helms amendment simply adds to the already confused situation on the school prayer front and ups the ante on an already struggling public school system."

Barry Lynn, executive director of American United for Separation of Church and State, predicted that increased litigation could result if the Helms amendment becomes law.

"Pat Robertson's American Center for Law and Justice and other Religious Right legal-aid groups are likely to try to use this law as a means of harassing public schools," Lynn said. "That's the last thing our already overburdened public school officials need."

EDITOR'S NOTE: Following is a series of articles on educational options -- public, private and home schools.

Christians called positive influence on public schools

By Marv Knox and Greg Warner

(ABP) -- Christians shouldn't abandon the public schools, a cross-section of educators claim.

On the contrary, Christian involvement in public schools enriches both the schools and the Christian children who study there, they insist.

Beyond that, Christians have a mandate to participate in important aspects of society such as public schools, several add.

"It's our mission as Christians to go into the whole world," noted Wayne Young, a Baptist layman who serves as executive director of the Kentucky Association of School Administrators.

"We can't say, 'There's a big piece of the world that doesn't suit us, so let's ignore it,'" said Young, a member of Durbin Memorial Baptist Church in Lexington, Ky. "We must carry our witness everywhere."

"If everybody deserts the public schools, when we need the public schools they won't be there," said Arnie Fege of the National Parents-Teachers Association in Washington, D.C.

Fege, director of governmental relations for the national PTA, argues that Christians have an obligation to support and strengthen public schools for the good of society.

Carolyn Crawford, a Baptist laywoman and public school official in Texas, agrees. "Public education has been a great strength of our country. It has provided a cohesion that has held us together. One of the dangers I see is we are splintering more and more. We have a common heritage, and it is carried through our schools. ... That is how we learn what holds us together."

Crawford is chairwoman of the Board of Education for the State of Texas, as well as director of counseling services for the Beaumont (Texas) Independent School District.

She says parents have an obligation to seek quality education for all children, not just their own. "There are other children whose parents are absent or uninvolved or unconcerned. As a citizen I have a responsibility for the education of all children. ... If you neglect the education of any children, you neglect the future of your country."

Ethicist Weston Ware sounded a similar note. "We stand to survive as a nation not as individual enclaves -- not as Baptists or Catholics -- but as Americans," said Ware, citizenship associate for the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission. "And if we reject the opportunity of participating in the public square, we will not be part of the America of the future."

While some Christians complain public schools are a negative influence on their children, other Christians who work in those schools say Christians can and should be an influence for good.

"You should light a candle wherever you are and have an influence there," said Crawford, a former English teacher and member of Calvary Baptist Church in Beaumont. "We need to make things better where we are rather than wishing it were an ideal world, which it's not."

"I have a humongous opportunity to minister," insisted Nell Earwood, a middle school and high school choir teacher in Calloway County, Ky.

Children "ought to get most of their influence at home, from Christian

parents," said Earwood, a member of First Baptist Church of Murray, Ky. "But if they don't get that influence from Christian parents, Christian teachers can influence them."

Many children aren't raised by parents of faith, and many enter public schools with little or no moral training, educators say.

"We're dealing with kids who come from such poor environments, spiritually and economically, that they have no idea how to respond to situations from a moral basis," said Stephen Swan, a teacher at Goldsmith Elementary and a member of Highland Baptist Church, both in Louisville, Ky.

"That's not just inner-city kids, it's not based upon race, and it's not completely economical," he continued. "Teachers are forced to teach values to kids, but they have to be extremely careful they don't label it as such."

"If you believe that values are more caught than taught," Crawford said, "if you believe that an example is what people are looking for, then you know that a Christian can have an impact in a classroom, on a local school board or as a parent involved in a local school."

"My hat is off to Christian teachers who are in the classroom."

All agreed public schools should and do impart values. Much of the debate about public schools centers around what values should be taught, however.

Teachers "can't come in with an agenda that has a Christian label attached to it," said Swan. "Society is just too diverse for that."

Still, "we as Christians need to sit down and realize there is a level at which we need to start addressing the needs of kids who come to school with nothing," he said.

While public schools can't teach a specific religion, said David Keller, executive director of the Kentucky School Boards Association, they do "have an obligation to promote values which transcend 97 percent of all faith communities -- honesty, responsibility, tolerance, courage, self-reliance."

"But you must strike a balance. When the family of a child objects to the value position of a school, the school has to bend way over to honor that."

Still, the blend of perspectives in public education provides valuable exposure for Christian children in those schools, public-school advocates said.

"It is my view," said Ware of the Texas CLC, "that children need to grow up in the real world, and the public school represents the real world in a way that private schools generally do not."

"Our children need to learn they live in a world where there are a whole lot of people who don't share their beliefs," said Young of the Kentucky Association of School Administrators. "They have to learn how to deal with that personally -- how to hold those beliefs -- and prepare for the challenge."

The challenges students encounter provide parents with "opportunities to teach our children about their faith," stressed Young, whose three children attend public schools.

"It's almost like turning a negative into a positive. I tell my kids: 'You have to remember you're a Christian. Some people aren't going to accept that and challenge you, and you have to make right choices. ...'

"The place to teach our children faith is at home and at church. If we're doing a good job, we have to believe their faith will sustain them at school. You have to believe what we've instilled in our children is going to hold."

Young can tick off a list of public school advantages for children: "Curriculum, activities and participation in things that expand a child's

world. Cost and convenience. Opportunities for children with special needs, handicapped or gifted."

In that context, Christians can be more successful in influencing public schools if they will learn how to address the issue, claimed Louisville teacher Swan. "Part of the problem we have is that some Christians take on an adversarial mode (with the schools). How do we get over the political hump that attaches a stigma to us?"

"We have politicized the process so that we cannot come together to work things out. ... We've got to get over this rhetoric, sit down at a table and find common ground about what we can teach our children in the schools."

Meanwhile, public schools aren't as dreadful as critics charge, the educators insisted.

"Many people say the quality of education is questionable," Texas official Crawford said. "But in our own state, since the education reform movement has begun, the SAT scores have steadily gone upward." That's despite the fact the public school population has become poorer on the average, she said.

"I think it is very discouraging to educators who are giving a service by teaching to have (the system) constantly disparaged," she added.

"I get tired of people blaming the schools for every problem in society," said June Rice, a retired public school librarian, member of Liberty Baptist Church in Denver, Ky., and mother of public school teachers. "The whole of society isn't doing what it should to raise these children."

"The schools aren't as pagan as everybody seems to let on. I don't think we're teaching godlessness. ... Schools are pretty much representative of society."

"Public schools do an excellent job," Young added. "If parents stay on top of it, their children will get a good education. That's the key."

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What rights do Christians have in public schools?

(ABP) -- Although the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that public schools cannot teach religion, proselytize or lead in devotional exercises, the court did not throw religion completely out of public schools.

"There are several things that our public schools can do -- indeed, in some cases must do -- with regard to religion," said Brent Walker, general counsel for the Baptist Joint Committee. Among them:

-- Teaching. Schools can teach about religion from an academic/awareness standpoint, Walker said. But schools cannot sponsor devotional programs, press for student acceptance of a religion, impose a religious view or denigrate any religion.

-- Holidays. "Several holidays which have a religious and secular basis may be observed." Holidays may be explained and interpreted with music, art, drama and symbols, but holidays should not be used to indoctrinate students.

-- Free exercise. "Public schools are required to accommodate the religious exercise of students under the (U.S. Constitution's) free-exercise clause when that can be done without disrupting the learning process or interfering with the rights of others."

-- Release time. Through "release time" programs, schools may allow students to attend classes in religious instruction in an off-campus facility.

-- Equal Access. The 1984 Equal Access Act provides that "if a public secondary school permits non-curriculum-related groups to meet on campus before and after school, it has to allow religious groups to meet there too."

For more information, contact the Baptist Joint Committee, 200 Maryland Ave., NE, Washington, D.C. 20002.

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Interest in Baptist schools
booming, educators say

By Dawn Richerson

(ABP) -- In a society many perceive as increasingly hostile to Christian young people, more and more Baptist churches are deciding to extend their own influence beyond one day a week -- by starting schools.

About 450 Southern Baptist churches around the country operate Christian schools, and an increasing number of churches report they are considering opening schools, according to John Chandler, executive director of the Nashville-based Southern Baptist Association of Christian Schools.

Nationwide 11.2 percent of America's 49 million school-age children are educated outside the public schools -- most in private schools -- according to the U.S. Department of Education.

That percentage has held steady for several decades, government officials said, despite the reported growth in Baptist schools. A drop in Catholic school enrollment may account for the government's no-growth statistics.

Chandler said the increased interest in Baptist schools is a direct result of more parents searching for a quality educational experience for their children. Several factors figure into that search. Among them:

-- Concerns for safety and values.

"Safety has become a primary concern," Chandler said. The issue of violence in schools recently prompted one Virginia church to open a school after a young boy was being pressured to join a drug-related gang.

Parents also say they are concerned about the values their children are being taught. "In many places parents feel that the values system being held up is contrary to biblical teaching," Chandler reported.

"I think the big advantage of a church school is that God's word is present along with the rest of the curriculum," said Bill Maggard, principal of Highview Baptist School in Louisville, Ky. "Discipline is stronger, and parents, as paying participants, are more involved. The more people who are involved," he said, "the more success we have in education."

"If you're going to raise Christian children, you must educate them as Christian people," said Ed Gamble, headmaster at The First Academy, sponsored by First Baptist Church of Orlando, Fla.

"The value system in our society has changed dramatically," Gamble said. Earlier in this century, he said, public school students were encouraged to emulate teachers who "by and large were moral and godly people."

Today, he said, children in public schools might be taught by people involved in homosexual or out-of-wedlock live-in relationships. "If I am a parent," Gamble said, "I look for a school where I won't be at war over my school's values."

-- Community outreach.

While many Christian schools require one or both parents to be

Christians, this is not true of most Southern Baptist schools, Chandler said. "In many situations, the school becomes an outreach to the community." Other parents see the value of what's being taught and enroll their children or visit the church as a result. Chandler said most churches which operate schools have seen families associated with the school join their church.

-- Bible and missions education.

The task of Christian education and teaching the Bible is not taken lightly by most Southern Baptist schools.

Students at Rose Hill Christian School in Ashland, Ky., receive an hour of Bible instruction each day and attend chapel weekly. "If they start in the 7th grade," said Charles Stewart, Rose Hill's pastor, "they survey the entire Bible by the time they graduate."

In most cases, the Bible teaching is geared to a general audience, and not just to Southern Baptists. "We teach the truths of God's word," he said. "We don't elaborate on or argue about controversial subjects."

The school requires teachers who attended secular schools to complete six hours of Bible taught by a Bible college nearby.

One interesting aspect of most Southern Baptist schools is the strong emphasis on mission education, Chandler said. For example, one Tennessee school has adopted a Christian school in France. Students in the two schools correspond regularly and learn about each other's culture.

-- Links with home-schooling.

A number of Christian schools now serve as "umbrella schools" for home schoolers, allowing these students to participate in band and other activities and receive the testing required by most states. Some churches view this as an important ministry to parents who have opted for home-schooling.

-- Improved quality.

The image of church schools has improved with increased emphasis on accreditation and academic excellence.

"Christian schools have received a black eye," said Gamble of Orlando. Many started in the 1970s as "a knee-jerk reaction to busing and integration." That, he added, is "the wrong reason."

"The right reason to start a school is to seek something and not to flee something," he said.

Gamble said his school's mission statement focuses on building character, but "we want children to be academically challenged." He said he would want graduates of his school not only to be able to compete in any college, but after the education will "not sit on the bench" in society.

Much of society's slide away from traditional values, he said, was facilitated by Christians who preferred not to rock the boat.

Stewart said Rose Hill has seen a dramatic rise in the number of people interested in church schools. Enrollment is up 20 from 1992, he said, and "our phone is ringing off the wall for next year. People are just very disgruntled with the public schools.

"One of the greatest things I see is that ... Baptists are now recognizing the need for an alternative. I believe there will be more and more schools open. I don't think there's any question."

Maggard of Highview agreed that Southern Baptists are beginning to recognize the value of non-public schools and, in particular, church schools. While he typically receives only a handful of calls each year from people seeking information on starting a church-related school, he had more than 25 inquiries in 1993.

"I hope that we would come to a point one day when people realize that there are some of us out here doing a quality job," Maggard said. "Just

because we're a private school doesn't mean we're below standard. We're doing some things here, and we're doing them right."

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-- Richerson is a state correspondent for the Western Recorder. Bob Allen contributed to this story.

Reasons for home schooling
as varied as the families

By Marv Knox

(ABP) -- While bitter cold and snow have kept some American children at home and out of school at times this winter, others have gotten no reprieve from the weather. That's because their home is their school.

Perhaps a million American children are educated at home. The reasons parents make the home the school of choice for their children are as varied as the families themselves.

"Beyond abiding faith in God and a good, stable family, the best gift we can give our children is a quality education. That's what prepares them for what life deals out," explained Laura Reynolds, who has home schooled all three children she and her husband, Steve, are raising.

"I'm not sure public schools do that at all," the Ludlow, Ky., mother added. "And I have some problems with Christian education, particularly at the high school level. They teach too much religion in history and science and too little factual material."

The Reynoldses, members of Erlanger Baptist Church in Erlanger, Ky., have had children in all three categories of education -- public schools, Christian schools and home school. Their oldest daughter attends public high school, but the girls primarily have attended Christian academies when not home schooling.

For Bill and Holly Elliff of Arkansas, the decision to home school involved the commitment to maintain a vibrant family life in a busy pastor's home.

"The primary motive for us was that we just didn't see our children," reported Elliff, pastor of First Baptist Church of Little Rock, Ark. "We'd pack them off at 7:30 in the morning, and they'd get home at 4:30 in the afternoon with two hours' homework. We just didn't have the time with the kids to be the parents we felt we should be."

That's important, particularly because the additional time with parents allows them to influence their children positively, Elliff stressed.

"One of the prime benefits, at least initially, was removing them from the encroachment of peer pressure," he explained. "That has been a real valuable asset. Our kids are 'younger' in approaching some issues, but we hope wiser. We -- their parents -- have been able to introduce them to those things."

An important side benefit is the ability to take advantage of the "teachable moments" in the children's lives, added Holly Elliff, who is expecting the couple's seventh child this year.

"The whole house is a learning environment," she explained. "If a child has a question at 8 in the morning or 8 at night, you're the teacher."

Home schooling also affords the parents/teachers the flexibility to meet the learning needs of each child, said Gwen Hodges, who with her husband,

David, is raising four children in Memphis, Tenn. They are members of Bellevue Baptist Church.

They're in their seventh year of home schooling, but when they decided to start teaching at home, their two school-age children attended a private Christian school.

"The price of (private) schooling was getting overwhelming," she said. "The Lord began to deal with my husband, and he began to feel we should look at other options. ... One of our children needed one-on-one education. God began to show me that for that particular time home schooling was what he was telling us."

The Hodgeses study their situation regularly to determine what's best for the children.

"We test each child every year," she said. "We look at the needs of each child to determine how to go on. Through the years we've learned about the learning styles of each of our children."

This year, their oldest attends a Christian school on a scholarship, the middle two are home schooled and the youngest is a preschooler.

Like the other families, home schooling has brought them unexpected blessings, Gwen Hodges said.

"In the first few years, it drew our family back together. We're so pulled anyway," she said, noting her husband sells pharmaceuticals and is "gone some" from home because of his job.

"A side benefit," she added, "is the respect you gain from your children when you're their teacher."

While some parents might be frightened by the specter of teaching their children a wide range of subjects, the home-school concept and curriculum simplifies the process, the parents said.

"If you're an average, intelligent adult who can read and write and think a little bit, you can teach an elementary child," insisted Laura Reynolds.

"You learn to understand how your child learns, and you can gear your teaching directly to what works," added Holly Elliff. "Some children are visual. Some are hands-on learners. You can gear your presentation appropriately. Once they've got it, you can move ahead."

Some home-school families work together in the teaching process, with parents who have skills in certain areas teaching those subjects.

"I'm part of a group of five mothers" who teach various subjects one time per week, Hodges said. For example, she teams up with another mother to teach history and science "on a multi-level range" for children from several families.

In some cities, older students take individual courses at Christian schools. In addition, some home-school groups pool resources to offer "satellite" centers. Students, all home schooled for the most part, gather to take courses -- such as band, science, foreign languages and physical education -- not easily offered at home.

Home schoolers also can choose from a broad array of curriculum lines and teaching materials, the parents noted.

"There are plenty of things out there," Hodges said. Home-school products typically come equipped with teaching plans and procedures, as well as student textbooks.

A National Home Education Research Institute survey found the average cost to home school a child in 1990 was \$488.53.

Although home schooling is a family affair, most of the teaching becomes the mother's lot, parents agreed.

Elliff, who was interviewed during her children's lunch break, teaches

their four school-age children. But even though their father isn't home in the middle of the day, their flexibility allows them to take advantage of a mid-week day off he might have or a revival trip with dad, Elliff said.

Last year, when Steve Reynolds had foot surgery and recuperated at home, he started out teaching math to their youngest child and "ended up doing most of the teaching at the end of the year," Laura Reynolds said.

The most common criticism of home schooling is that the children suffer from lack of social contact. How do kids learn to relate to other people when they're home all day?

"The main drawback I see to home schooling is that the children get lonely," Reynolds admitted. "They miss the contact with each other."

But parents work to ensure broader contacts for their children, the parents said. They cited children's and youth groups at church, outings and activities with other home-school families and community groups such as Little League as avenues for social adjustment.

"Socialization has not been a problem," said Gwen Hodges. "The question in Memphis is: 'What do I have to eliminate?' Our children never have lacked socially, with friends from church, regular school and private school."

Besides, the personal development that grows within a vibrant family is paramount, Elliff stressed. "Is not the socialization that comes through your parents and family more important than through school? We have a great time. Our kids seem to be well-adjusted and courteous. ...

"They don't seem to be experiencing what a lot of kids face. They hear it through kids at church, but we're able to give them biblical guidance -- as parents -- at home."

Home-school parents stressed they don't try to force their educational choices on others.

"I have friends God has called to each area -- public school, Christian school, home school," said Hodges. "God just led us into this."

"We don't believe home schooling is for everybody," added Elliff, whose church operates an academy. "We're entering our eighth year of home schooling. We've seen the value of it. We just wouldn't do things differently."

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Home schooling trend said
to be sweeping the nation

By Marv Knox

(ABP) -- Home schooling is an educational trend supporters claim is sweeping the nation.

Yet nobody really knows how many children are being taught by their parents at home, reported Inge Cannon, associate director of the National Center for Home Education.

Most estimates range from 300,000 to 1.2 million. "If anybody tells you they know, they don't know," Cannon said. "The number probably is in the neighborhood of a million, but that's just an estimate."

A million students would account for about 2 percent of all school-age children in the United States. And home-schooling leaders say their movement is growing at about 15-20 percent per year.

That report is based on attendance at home-schooling conferences, where parents share information and curriculum publishers peddle their wares, Cannon added.

A clearer picture of the size and growth of home schooling is difficult to determine, she said, ticking off three primary reasons: "Home schooling is regulated at the state level, and states are very different in their (reporting) requirements. There is no national organization with affiliates in all 50 states. And many people who home school their children aren't the type to comply with requests for reports."

The reasons parents decide to home school their children are numerous, Cannon stressed.

"One of the most common mistakes made in approaching the home-schooling community is to treat it as a monolithic structure," she said, citing several reasons for home schooling:

-- The opinion that "school wastes too much time."

-- A feeling school education is too restrictive and "doesn't allow students to explore their own interests."

-- A philosophy that the traditional school format damages children's creativity.

-- Fear of violence in public schools.

-- Inability to afford private and parochial schools.

-- A flexible curriculum and structure. This particularly is appealing to parents of gifted children who devote significant amounts of time to their specialties, such as music, sports, acting or academic/intellectual fields.

-- Religious beliefs or the conviction parents should be the ones to teach values to their children.

This last reason alone accounts for about 80 percent of the home-schooling community nationwide, Cannon said.

Nationwide, Baptists provide the second-largest group of home schoolers.

A 1990 study conducted by the National Home Education Research Institute revealed that, of the parents of home-schooled children in America, 18.4 percent of fathers and 17.6 percent of mothers are Baptist. The largest group was independent fundamentalists/evangelicals, represented by 25.9 percent of fathers and 26.5 percent of mothers. The third-highest representation was from independent charismatics, who comprised 13.6 percent of fathers and 14.7 percent of mothers.

The study also showed the "average" home-schooled child was 8 years old, in the third grade and had been taught at home for three years since age 5.

About one-quarter of the home-schooled students (25.6 percent) had attended public school prior to home school, and an equivalent number (24.4 percent) had attended private school.

About half (50.3 percent) of fathers and one-third (35.2 percent) of mothers of home-schooled children had received a college degree. But the mothers (88.3 percent) do more teaching than the fathers (9.9 percent).

Whatever their background and reason for home schooling, the parents' focus is on the well-being of their children, stressed Debbie Woolett of Christian Home Educators of Kentucky.

"We've found that when a family home educates, they're doing it out of a deep concern for their child's education and morality," Woolett noted.

The home-school study indicates that emphasis produces benefits. In a comparison of standardized achievement test results, home schoolers' average rank was at the 82nd percentile -- 32 points above the national average.

Despite those results, the legal standing of home schooling varies across the country.

Some states' procedures are simple, while other states enforce complex testing and accreditation standards, according to Sue Welch and Cindy Short, editors of The Teaching Home magazine.

"Constitutional rights to liberty and privacy under the 14th Amendment

and the free exercise of religion under the First Amendment guarantee your rights in educating your children according to your convictions," they wrote in a pamphlet, "Questions & Answers," published by their magazine.

"However, lower courts have ruled inconsistently in applying these rights to home schooling."

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