

May 28, 1997

(97-46)

In this issue:

- Dallas broadcaster hired to lead NAMB media arm
- Bible society drops plans for 'gender-accurate' NIV
- Midwestern Seminary closes day-care center to community
- Oklahoma editor to retire Sept. 30
- Schaller lists changing expectations of church
- 'Non-members' comprise largest of U.S. religious groupings
- Warning: Holding a grudge is hazardous to your health
- Forgiveness takes time, but here's a crash course
- Mom says God healed pain of daughter's kidnapping
- Baptist author debuts on Christian market

Dallas broadcaster hired to lead NAMB media arm

By Greg Warner

FORT WORTH, Texas (ABP) -- David Clark, a Christian broadcasting executive from Dallas, has been hired to head the media operation of the North American Mission Board.

Clark, 56, is president of KMC Media, a Dallas-based media company that produces and markets television programs for some of America's most prominent Christian ministries, such as Prison Fellowship, Concerned Women for America and World Vision. His company produces and/or markets the television ministries of Southern Baptist pastors Adrian Rogers of Bellevue Baptist Church in Cordova, Tenn.; Ed Young of Second Baptist Church in Houston; James Merritt of First Baptist Church in Snellville, Ga.; and Jack Graham of Prestonwood Baptist Church in Dallas, where Clark has been a member for six years.

He will be executive director of media technology for the North American Mission Board when the new Southern Baptist Convention agency is created June 19. However, he will begin serving June 1 as executive vice president of the Radio and Television Commission in Fort Worth, Texas, one of three Southern Baptist agencies being merged into the new NAMB.

Clark will direct the Fort Worth-based media operation of NAMB, which includes the FamilyNet cable TV network. He will report to the NAMB's as-yet-unnamed vice president for media and missions education.

Clark was introduced to RTVC trustees and employees at a May 23 banquet honoring the employees of the dissolved agency. He will be appointed to the NAMB position by Bob Reccord, who is scheduled to be elected

president of the Atlanta-based agency June 19. Reccord recruited Clark for the position, said Clark, adding his pastor, Jack Graham, also encouraged him to take the job.

Jack Johnson, current president of the RTVC, will become special assistant to Reccord in the new structure, RTVC trustees were told. Johnson was unavailable for comment May 28.

Clark is current chairman of the National Religious Broadcasters, a position he also held from 1991 to 1994 and will continue to fill while serving NAMB. He was instrumental in instituting ethical and financial standards for members of NRB in the wake of the high-profile Christian broadcasting scandals of the 1980s.

Before starting KMC Media in 1991, Clark was vice president of marketing for the Christian Broadcasting Network, where he was responsible for marketing Pat Robertson's "700 Club" television program. He previously was dean of the college of communications at Robertson's Regent University, then CBN University, and professor of broadcasting at Bowling Green (Ohio) University.

Clark also was appointed by a federal judge as bankruptcy trustee for Heritage USA, the failed theme park and development project of defrocked PTL founder Jim Bakker.

A Chicago native and son of Assembly of God missionaries, Clark holds a bachelor's degree from Evangel College, a master of divinity from Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, an American Baptist school, and a Ph.D. in communications research from the University of Iowa. He has served as pastor of two Baptist churches in the Midwest -- one independent and the other dually aligned with American and Southern Baptists.

Clark and his wife, Lois, have two sons and one daughter.

Clark said he intends to maintain the current ministries of the RTVC while expanding services to churches. FamilyNet has "tremendous potential" and will be able to grow as new technology allows cable TV systems to increase the number of channels they offer, he said. Meanwhile, the agency's stable of radio programs has earned valuable free airtime on secular stations, he said.

But, he added, "We'll change the priorities of the RTVC somewhat."

"There is a clear mandate to serve the churches," he said, echoing a theme voiced by Reccord. "We need to listen very carefully to the needs churches have, primarily focusing on evangelism."

Not only large churches but small and medium-sized congregations will benefit from the NAMB's media services, he said. The new agency will look for ways to equip local congregations to use NAMB media materials in their own outreach ministries, he said.

-30-

Bible society drops plans for 'gender-accurate' NIV

By Bob Allen

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. (ABP) -- Publishers of the New International Version have dropped plans to develop a "gender-accurate" Bible translation, which critics charged was motivated by a feminist agenda.

Citing "significant response" about potential updates to the NIV, International Bible Society officials announced May 27 they were abandoning plans for gender-related changes in future editions of the NIV.

"The NIV doesn't belong to IBS or our licensed publishers. It belongs to the people," said Victor Oliver, who chairs the Bible society board.

Controversy over proposed changes to the NIV convinced officials that many readers don't want their Bibles to change, Oliver said, even though many scholars believe updating gender-specific language would make the translation truer to the spirit of ancient texts.

The "patriarchal" culture in which the Bible was written affected the language the biblical authors used, John Stek, chairman of the IBS committee on Bible translation, said May 15 on a television talk show.

Translating the Bible into English poses special problems, said Steve Johnson, the Bible society's communications director, because the language lacks words which describe both men and women. As a result, English translations sometimes use "man" or "him" for terms that in biblical languages are gender-neutral.

In Gen. 1:26-27, for example, the Bible describes "man" as being created in God's image. In the past, most readers would have understood "man" in that usage to mean both males and females. Nowadays, that might not be true, prompting translators to translate the Hebrew word as "human beings" in an NIV edition aimed at children or readers for whom English is a second language.

Such talk raised eyebrows among conservative critics, who accused the NIV -- a conservative translation that is the Bible of choice among U.S. evangelicals -- of putting political correctness ahead of doctrinal fidelity.

Paige Patterson, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, wrote in Jerry Falwell's National Liberty Journal he wouldn't be as concerned if it were a matter of "liberalism or neo-orthodoxy and if the translation were the New Revised Standard Version."

"Unfortunately, the translators want the NIV to be the translation for evangelical Christianity but, of course, with a sufficient tip of the hat to the feminists' agenda to guarantee escalating sales among those disposed toward such an agenda," Patterson wrote.

Other Southern Baptist leaders joined Patterson in criticizing proposed revisions. Two other seminary presidents -- Albert Mohler of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and Mark Coppenger of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary -- spoke out against the proposal.

An official at the Baptist Sunday School Board, which uses the current NIV text in many of its products, expressed "concern" about the proposed gender-neutral version.

That concern prompted a May 17 meeting of Sunday School Board officials with representatives of the Bible society, which owns the copyright to the NIV, and Zondervan Publishing House, the translation's North American publisher. Mohler also attended the closed-door meeting, according to a news story in Baptist Press.

Speculation grew that a resolution against the NIV might be forthcoming at the June 17-19 Southern Baptist Convention in Dallas.

According to a statement, the Bible society's board decided in 1992 that the New International Readers Version, intended for young readers and for those with limited English skills, would be translated "gender-accurate" from the start.

Officials became aware of resistance to that decision in 1993, causing Zondervan to express doubts about a gender-accurate edition, while Hodder & Stoughton, the NIV's British publisher, insisted on moving ahead. Hodder and Stoughton gained permission to publish a gender-accurate edition in Britain. About 5,000 copies are currently in print.

Recently, however, criticism of the 1992 decision gained new hearing after an expose in a conservative magazine.

On March 29, World magazine published a story claiming the Committee on Bible Translation had voted to produce a "unisex" version of the NIV, which eventually would become the only version available in the U.S.

Bible society officials decried the article as "filled with innuendo and sensationalism [and] containing unconscionable slander." After it appeared, the Bible society was swamped with phone calls, forcing the agency into "damage control," said an official.

Falwell's National Liberty Journal picked up on criticisms leveled in World. Patterson wrote front-page commentaries blasting the NIV in consecutive issues. Soon, other Southern Baptist leaders joined in.

Some Southern Baptist leaders, however, defended the new translation. Western Recorder Editor Mark Wingfield editorialized that criticism by Southern Baptist leaders represented a departure from mainstream evangelicalism into fundamentalism, which is characterized by "a negative gospel that condemns all who don't toe their theological line or share their social agenda."

"Let's boycott chauvinism, not the Bible," Wingfield wrote.

At first, the NIV attempted to weather the storm. In a May 14 announcement, the IBS and Zondervan issued a statement saying they would continue to publish the current NIV text without revision while moving forward with plans for a possible updated edition of the translation.

In a May 27 news release, however, IBS officials said the flap had prompted them to "forego all plans to develop a revised edition of the NIV."

In addition to dropping all plans for gender-related changes in future editions of the NIV, officials said they will stick with the present NIV text, last revised in 1984. They will "begin immediately" to undo gender-neutral references in its current New International Readers Version and will approach the NIV's British publisher about ceasing publication of an "inclusive language" edition available in the United Kingdom.

"We deeply care about the concerns of church leaders, scholars and Christian readers who favor gender-related language changes," said IBS president Lars Dunberg. "However, this decision comes from our internal conviction that to move ahead would cause division within the body of Christ and therefore compromise our mission to serve the church in the U.S. and abroad."

-30-

Midwestern Seminary closes day-care center to community

By Tim Palmer

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (ABP) -- Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo., recently announced it will limit services of its Child Development Center -- which has been providing day care to approximately 90 youngsters -- to children of students, faculty and staff.

The decision was not popular among non-seminary parents, whose children made up two-thirds of the CDC's enrollment and who were forced to find other options for child care by the end of May.

One such parent, Mary Canham, said she was told by Midwestern president Mark Coppenger, "If I really wanted Christian child care I should stay home."

Coppenger said he mentioned staying home as an option. "The context was, she was saying that we were showing insensitivity to the needs of the kids, and I was suggesting that perhaps kids needed a stay-at-home parent in some cases."

The main reason for the change, Coppenger said, is that offering the service does not fall under the seminary's mission. "I have no doubt that we did some good work with this, but we are asking in every case, what did this have to do with our founding purpose?"

Parents learned of the new policy in an April 29 letter from Gary Ledbetter, the seminary's vice president for student development. Citing financial needs, the condition of the building and safety problems that needed immediate correction, Ledbetter concluded, "The only way we can see to continue involves some drastic redesign of our programs."

The letter followed an April 17 memo from Ledbetter to the parents which announced the resignation of CDC director Larry Smith and the appointment of Suzy Armstrong as his replacement. That memo stated, "Our current schedule, staffing and procedures continue as before ... for now, our services will be unchanged." The seminary declined to give a reason for Smith's resignation, citing personnel policy.

Ledbetter concluded the April 17 memo by inviting parents to join him in welcoming Armstrong and thanking them for their support of the seminary's day-care center.

Janet Braud of Pleasant Valley, whose 4-year-old son and 8-month-old daughter were in the CDC, said she and other parents were unhappy with the seminary's handling of the matter.

"Midwestern's administration has put parents of many, many children in a tailspin to locate quality child care," she said. "We feel this situation has been handled less than professionally with the parents, as well as the teachers, and are shocked about the lack of compassion and empathy toward parents, children and teachers."

Ledbetter said the primary reason for the change was to allow a broader range of services to the seminary community. If the seminary wanted to offer an early childhood education program or a "mothers' day out" service, he said, it could not do so without reducing the number of children in day care.

The CDC must meet state fire safety and health requirements, Ledbetter noted. He said he was told by a state inspector that expanding the capacity beyond 99 children would put the center under more stringent requirements.

Ledbetter predicted that usage of the CDC by seminary families will increase from the current 30 children "when we offer ministries that they need." A survey has been distributed to seminary families to determine their child-care needs.

Some non-seminary parents think the change reflects a belief that mothers should be staying home with their young children rather than holding down jobs.

"I've not said anything resembling that to any parents," Ledbetter responded. "We'd get out of the day-care business altogether if we held those convictions."

One couple -- Canham and her husband, Marc -- took the step of sending letters to all Midwestern trustees and encouraging other affected parents to do the same.

Mary Canham, who works in the accounting department of Trans World Airlines, wrote, "Being a stay-home-mom is not always an option. However, that is what Mr. Mark Coppenger recommended to me if I wanted to have quality Christian child care, on a full-time basis.

"Why then will the CDC reopen June 30? According to his philosophy women should stay home and care for their own children. Wouldn't that include wives of seminary students as well as community mothers, or is there a different standard for seminary students?"

Coppenger pointed to the financial bind many seminary students find themselves in. "We're trying to bend over backwards to relieve those pressures -- pressures not shared by all those who are using our day care now."

He noted that two national news magazines [Newsweek and U.S. News & World Report] recently published cover stories that raised questions about placing children in day care. "Our chief rationale was not to repudiate day care, but the concerns in those magazine-cover stories should give us pause."

Canham's 7-year-old son and 3-year-old daughter both started in the CDC at 6 weeks of age. She said it has been "a wonderful experience" for her family. Her children developed close friendships and learned about the Bible and prayer.

Canham said her daughter came home from the new day care center she attends and asked, "Why don't they say a prayer before meals?"

Marc Canham, an engineer for Sprint, estimated he had provided names and addresses of trustees to 15-18 other interested parents. In his letter to trustees, he questioned Ledbetter's citing of financial reasons for the closing, noting that the family's fees recently had been lowered by \$20 a week.

As of May 19, the Canhams had not heard back from any trustees.

Recently, a Baptist church in Arkansas drew nationwide media attention over a similar dispute. First Baptist Church in Berryville, Ark., closed its day-care center in March to discourage mothers from working outside the home.

The story was reported by Associated Press, "Good Morning America," Religion News Service and numerous other media outlets across the country.

Oklahoma editor to retire Sept. 30

OKLAHOMA CITY (ABP) -- Oklahoma Baptist Messenger Editor Glenn Brown has announced he will retire Sept. 30.

Brown, who turns 65 on Sept. 6, has led the 100,000-circulation Baptist paper since 1987.

Brown has worked for the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma since 1971, including 15 years as associate director of planning and promotion.

Brown cited declining health of his wife, Jean, as a factor in his decision to step down. She suffers from chronic fatigue syndrome.

-30-

-- By ABP staff

Schaller lists changing expectations of church

By Joyce Sweeney Martin

BOSTON (ABP) -- Church members today expect their involvement in a local congregation to transform their lives, not just enrich them, according to a widely-known church consultant.

Lyle Schaller shared this and other changes he's seen in church life during a metropolitan ministry conference in Boston, sponsored by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

Forty years ago, Schaller said, church membership was a destination that entitled a person to vote and tithe, but rarely included expectations that a person's life would show evidence of the transforming power of the gospel. For many church members, membership was basically a "life-enriching" experience, he said.

For many believers today, however, church membership is a means to an end, bringing higher expectations from both church leaders and participants, who believe a "life-transforming" experience will result from involvement in a congregation, he said.

Schaller, a Methodist, has worked with more than 60 religious traditions during the past 37 years. He said American churches have changed more in the last 15 years than in the previous 60 years.

For example, many churches today expect people to be well along in their faith journey before they become a member of the church. In the past, joining the church was easy, he said. A person only had to profess faith in Jesus as savior in order to join. Now, in order to join, a person also must commit to being a lifelong disciple.

Converting non-believers is no longer the end-focus, Schaller said. Instead, conversion is the doorway to a journey of "transforming believers into saints."

Other changes Schaller said he has observed:

-- Marks of a true Christian. Today, discipleship and ministry, not baptism or active church membership, are the marks of a true Christian. A lot of people today are not interested in being "admirers of Jesus," Schaller said. Instead, they want to be "followers of Christ."

-- Worship. Today, worship is an "experience" not a "service," Schaller said. Instead of the "preaching sermon" model of the past, congregants want a teaching sermon or a teaching/counseling sermon. They expect to hear something about the faith that will change their lives or hear what the gospel has to say to their hurts, he said.

Teaching sermons run 35 to 75 minutes while preaching sermons run 12 to 22 minutes, he said.

-- Laity/church staff roles. Increasingly, lay people are more intentional about the work they do in the church.

Churches used to hire staff to do ministry and asked volunteers to do administrative tasks. Today, staff focus on administration and train volunteers to do ministry.

"Where do you find unhappy volunteers today? Doing administrative work. Where do you find happy volunteers? Doing ministry," Schaller said.

-- Church staff qualifications. Today, churches list Christian character as the highest priority they want in staff members. A distant second is competence, followed by Christian commitment and skill in interpersonal relationships. "Way down the list at about number 18 is 'credentials,'" Schaller said.

-- Choosing a church. Fewer people choose a church based on geographical proximity or denominational label. "About the only place left where a denominational label matters is the Yellow Pages listing," Schaller said.

Today, people choose a church based on its teachings and how much help it provides for their particular stage on their spiritual journey.

When their journey takes them beyond what one church is providing, they move to another church.

It's much like a person who completes elementary school then high school then college then graduate school -- each time recognizing "they taught me all they had to offer," Schaller said.

-- Essential teachings. Today, church shoppers are defining essential Christian teachings. In times past, professional religionists performed that function.

The historicity of the biblical accounts concerning Jesus, Scripture as the sole source of authority and Christianity as revealed religion "once and for all time" are the teachings Schaller said he most often hears stated as essential.

"People are looking for certainty," Schaller said. "They want to know what you believe for sure. They don't want ambiguity."

Two issues Schaller says he hears professional religionists discuss frequently but never hears church shoppers talk about are the virgin birth and biblical inerrancy.

-- Women in the church. Today, the issue for most evangelicals is not gender, but spiritual gifts, Schaller said. "For every bundle of words I hear about what women can and can't do, I hear 50 bundles of words about gifts," Schaller said.

Even in theologically conservative churches, 50 to 60 percent of the program staff is female, he said. While men still decide ministry content, "women staff it" based on their spiritual gifts, he said. The fastest growing ministry role in the church today is the minister of prayer, most of whom are women volunteers.

Meanwhile, a significant number of "liberated" professional women 25 to 30 years old still say the senior pastor has to be male, he said.

-30-

'Non-members' comprise largest of U.S. religious groupings

By Marv Knox

OXNARD, Calif. (ABP) -- Nearly half of Americans are "non-members" who "rarely engage in religious endeavor," according to new groupings that gauge the religious involvement of U.S. adults.

A study by The Angus Reid Group, a Canadian research firm, was profiled in the latest issue of The Barna Report, a product of the Barna Research Group, a surveyor of religious trends and issues. The study described six categories describing the religious involvement of U.S. adults.

Nearly half -- 47 percent -- were described as "non-members," those who rarely engage in religious activities or contribute to charitable causes. They tend to have limited education and do not keep up with current events, the study showed.

Other groupings identified by Reid researchers are:

-- Religion First, about 17 percent of the population.

These people are church members, and they also participate in several "religious-oriented efforts," such as Sunday school, small groups and community service teams. They are the most involved in church.

"These people are older than average, possess moderate levels of education and are the most likely to regularly engage in personal spiritual activities," the Barna newsletter reports.

-- Community and Church, 10 percent of American adults.

Members of this group generously volunteer their time and services and "exhibit a balance between faith and community work," Barna notes.

On average, they participate in the largest number of groups, the study showed. It also discovered they "are the youngest adults, tend to be highly educated and are most likely to donate to charitable organizations."

-- Limited Involvement, 9 percent.

They volunteer sparingly and do not get involved "in any church-related efforts," the survey discovered. They restrict their affiliations and efforts to recreational, community or educational/cultural causes.

"They tend to have limited education and a limited likelihood of charitable donations," Barna says.

-- Jobs and Culture, also 9 percent.

These people are active in at least one professional or career-related organization, and they also tend to participate in educational or cultural non-profit organizations, the research revealed. However, their religious involvement is "limited, if at all existent."

As a group, they are the most highly educated Americans, and they stay abreast of current events, Barna says.

-- Service and Seniors, about 8 percent.

"One of the most widely involved groups are the elder citizens," Barna reports. "Religious activity is one of their top priorities, but it competes for their attention along with social service, senior citizen programs and support groups."

About 40 percent of the people represented by this group are retired, and many are college graduates, the study found. They are described as well-informed and generous contributors to non-profit causes.

In addition to describing the nation's religious makeup, researchers polled Americans on possible priorities for the government to address.

"Promoting family" was the No. 1 cause, cited by 31 percent of the U.S. adults interviewed. Second was "raising moral standards," favored by 18 percent.

The others are "maintaining law and order," 14 percent; "building up the economy," 13 percent; "giving people more say," 10 percent; and "protecting the environment," 9 percent.

The survey also "shows some interesting conditions related to current American religiosity," Barna notes. "The most committed self-described evangelicals are at odds with the prevailing American views related to gay rights and abortion."

For example, 64 percent of Americans -- including majorities from all religious groups except those who call themselves committed evangelicals -- "favor the provision of the same rights for gays as afforded to all other segments of society."

In addition, 62 percent of Americans at large claim "abortion laws infringe on individual rights," while only 24 percent of self-described committed evangelicals make that claim.

Compared to Canadians, the Reid survey found that Americans are twice as likely to attend church weekly, pray weekly, read the Bible weekly, interpret the Bible literally, claim their religious views shape their political positions and identify with the "Religious Right."

Warning: Holding a grudge is hazardous to your health

By David Winfrey

MADISON, Wis. (ABP) -- To forgive is not only divine. It's also healthy, according to a professor who's spent 12 years studying the subject.

From survivors of incest to family members of murder victims, an ability to forgive radically improved subjects' emotional and psychological health, said Bob Enright, director of the International Forgiveness Institute.

"I was very surprised actually," said Enright. "I'm a Christian believer, and I was still surprised by the depth of emotional healing I saw through our educational programs."

During studies at the institute, patients completed a lengthy process during which they examined their own feelings and eventually forgave someone who had hurt them, Enright said.

As a result, he said, they experienced decreased anxiety and depression and increased self-esteem and hopefulness toward the future. "All of this happened upon forgiving someone who had hurt them very deeply."

The findings give credence to the lessons of both Sunday school teachers and psychologists: Hate or bitterness may never affect the person it's directed toward, but it can destroy the person who feels it and fails to let go.

Enright said his study of forgiveness has affected him both professionally and spiritually.

More than a dozen years ago, as a social scientist studying moral development, Enright became disenchanted with the direction of his research, he said.

"The scholarship was isolated for the most part," he said. "I was much more interested in having an impact on everyday people."

Enright abandoned his line of study at the University of Wisconsin and took an interest in the idea of forgiveness. To his astonishment, however, he found absolutely no scholarly books on the subject.

The most helpful writing, he said, was a book by Christian professor Lewis Smeeds: "Forgive and Forget."

As a scientific researcher, Enright said, he had become distant from his Christian background.

But his growing interest in forgiveness paralleled a strengthening of his faith, he said. "It's interesting that my personal life has been radically transformed as I've studied forgiveness."

In 1994, Enright established the International Forgiveness Institute to promote his findings. He chuckled when he said the 3-year-old institute is the world's oldest, but added that more have developed in the wake of awareness about the topic.

Enright said the center uses scientific tools to define forgiveness and help people understand it. "All I can say as a scientist is it has shocked me about how important and valuable forgiveness is to hurting people," he said.

Today, the institute seeks to be a clearinghouse of information.

"What's interesting about forgiveness [is] regardless of your belief system you can understand this word. There's something rather uniting about this word. It also is a word that can repel. Some people hate the word and hate that I study it, but they're in the vast minority."

Enright defends his research by noting that forgiveness does not mean approval for the actions a person has committed.

"Forgiveness, ultimately, is a loving transformation within the human heart toward the one who hurt you," he said.

Neither is forgiveness necessarily reconciliation, he said, offering a Christian comparison.

God accomplished forgiveness for sinners through Christ, Enright said. "But we were not reconciled to him at the point he was giving us unconditional love." Reconciliation requires acceptance of the forgiveness God offers, he said.

Enright hopes the institute promotes a consciousness about forgiveness that's similar to that of physical fitness or sound personal finance. Even if everyone doesn't exercise three times a week or save for a rainy day, most people know it's good for them.

"My impression is most people have heard about forgiveness, of course, and most of them would think it's a pretty good idea, but they don't necessarily consciously incorporate it into their lives," Enright said.

That assessment extends to Christians, he added. "We looked at religion a lot actually."

Research doesn't link regular church attendance with a higher initial willingness to consider forgiveness, he said. "In the short run, we can be as wounded as a non-believer."

Although Enright professes to be a Christian, he purposely has separated his faith from his studies. Those involved in his think tanks have ranged from evangelicals to atheists, Muslims and Jews.

"As a scholar I try to think about forgiveness from a wide variety of perspectives," he said. "If I approach this from faith alone, we certainly wouldn't be able to make the statements we make."

Those interested in the institute's findings are growing. "We've been overwhelmed with calls and letters," he said. Some are from counselors and clergy, but most are "from people who are deeply hurting who are looking for resources ... and want to reflect on this idea of forgiveness."

That's helping Enright achieve his goal of making an impact on people's everyday lives. He also is working to apply his findings to strengthen families in inner-city Madison.

As Enright's studies have developed, he said he's been more ambitious in the areas he has researched. Studies have included a multitude of pains that were forgiven, from children of emotionally distant parents to men who felt betrayed by the unilateral decision of a partner to have an abortion.

"There's no harm in the world that I've ever seen that at least one person hasn't forgiven," he said.

-30-

EDITOR'S NOTE -- More information about the institute is available by calling (608) 262-0241 or by writing the institute at P.O. Box 6153, Madison, Wis. 53716.

Forgiveness takes time, but here's a crash course

By David Winfrey

MADISON, Wis. (ABP) -- Forgiveness is a process, not an overnight feeling, according to Bob Enright. Having studied the topic of forgiveness for 12 years, Enright said he's learned forgiveness requires time and work.

"You have to be willing to wait for it," said Enright, director of the International Forgiveness Institute.

Through research, he has developed a checklist of activities used to work with people who are exploring forgiving someone.

The process, which can take more than a year, has up to 20 steps, but Enright has outlined it by five key events:

-- Examination. Victims should examine the extent of their pain and anger and realize how that pain and anger affects them, Enright said.

"That's a very courageous step because you have to admit someone has hurt you," he said. "That can be hard for many people, most of us really."

While some may consider anger a bad emotion or a sin, Enright said the Bible teaches anger can be a proper emotion if it is handled correctly.

"The Bible doesn't tell us not to be angry at all. Paul realized people can exasperate us," he said. "He said, 'Be angry but sin not. Don't let the sun go down on your anger.'

"I think you need a period of anger so that you don't let it just stifle you and overwhelm you."

Enright said he encourages subjects to focus on one person and one event at a time. "If one person might have hurt you 30 times, just think about one time when the other person was unfair."

-- Commitment. After examining the impact of pain and anger, someone seeking to forgive should make a commitment to work at forgiving.

"The decision doesn't mean it's accomplished," he said, comparing this step to a marriage ceremony -- the vows are spoken, but the long-term marriage is by no means accomplished.

"You can go through this ritual of saying, 'Yes, I will work on this and forgive this person.' But then you have to enter into a process."

-- Thinking work. Forgiveness requires consciously trying to think about the other person in new ways, Enright said. He offered a series of questions to consider about the other person: What was it like for the person who hurt you at the time of the incident? What was it like for that person while growing up? Can you see the hurtful person as a member of the human community?

"A question that I think is important for Christians to ask is, 'Can you see that person at the foot of the cross with you, as needy of Christ's grace as you are?'" Enright said, "The Christian would say that you're trying to see the person as a sinner. 'Welcome to the club.'"

These questions shouldn't be seen as an attempt to excuse the action, Enright added. "That doesn't mean we condone the sin, but we see them as vulnerable at this point."

-- Feelings change. "As we begin seeing a person in a new way, new feelings, if we're open to them, begin to emerge," Enright said. "I still don't understand it. It's a mystery what happens here in transition."

Such feelings include compassion, empathy and, eventually, love, he said.

"That's the ultimate challenge as a Christian, to love those who you don't particularly see as lovable -- and those who hurt us deeply tend to fall into that category," Enright said

Because forgiveness is a process, such feelings usually won't come automatically, Enright noted. "There's something rather developmental about these feelings," he said. "These feelings have to be nurtured. ... You have to be willing to wait."

-- Absorbing the pain. In this step, the victim decides to take responsibility for his or her pain rather than seeking to return it in vengeance or deflecting the pain to someone else. "Those who were less forgiving to their ex-husband tended to have harsher parenting to their children," Enright noted.

"In essence, when we forgive we are carrying a cross that should not be ours," he said. "Usually, people ... want the person who hurt them to carry the cross."

"If a Christian understands the cross, they're more willing to take up that cross on behalf of the one who hurt them."

-30-

Mom says God healed pain of daughter's kidnapping

By David Winfrey

DETROIT (ABP) -- No one has to tell Marietta Jaeger about the power of forgiveness. She credits it with helping her survive 15 months of uncertainty and dread after the abduction of her youngest daughter.

Jaeger, her husband and five children were asleep on a Montana camping trip in 1973 when a man cut a hole through the tent, reached in and choked 7-year-old Susie Jaeger to the point of unconsciousness.

"She never made a sound," her mother said.

While everyone else slept, the man pulled Susie through the tent and left with her. No one knew she was missing until morning.

A week after the disappearance, the abductor called with ransom demands. The family and authorities prepared for another contact, but he didn't call.

"About a week later, I had a major wrestling match with God," Jaeger said.

Montana law allows for the death penalty in kidnapping cases.

"I certainly wanted him to get it," she said. "I would have been happy to have killed the guy with my bare hands at that point."

At the same time, however, she couldn't reconcile her feelings of rage with God's call for forgiveness, she said. "Unable to do that on my own, I gave God permission to change my heart."

A month after the abduction, Jaeger and the rest of her family returned home to Michigan without Susie.

Three months after the abduction, the kidnapper called Jaeger's home. The man told her oldest son, Dan, that he still wanted to exchange Susie for ransom but hadn't thought of how to do it yet.

During this time, Jaeger had committed herself to three actions and ideas she believed God wanted her to have toward the kidnapper.

First, "I had to remind myself that however I felt about this man, in God's eyes he was just as precious as Susie," Jaeger said. "That's the kind of God I believe in. ... I had to put my money where my mouth was."

Second, Jaeger tried to think of the kidnapper as someone with dignity, and she spoke of him always in respectful terms.

Third, she prayed for the kidnapper. "I discovered that when you start praying for someone, it's your own heart that's changed," she said.

Jaeger said she realized it was important that the kidnapper discover in his heart the love of God. "If he had Susie, I wanted him to be good to her, and if he didn't have Susie, I wanted him to have the courage that it would take to come forward and say what had happened."

It wasn't easy, she added.

"A lot of people say that forgiveness is for wimps, but I say, 'Then you've never tried it' because forgiveness is hard work," she said. "Forgiveness takes daily, diligent discipline."

Almost a year after the abduction, Jaeger returned to Montana for a newspaper interview. In the article, one of her quotes intrigued the kidnapper: "I would give anything for the chance to talk to the kidnapper himself."

At almost 4 a.m. on the anniversary of Susie's abduction, at the very moment one year earlier that the kidnapping occurred, Jaeger got her wish. The abductor called.

"You wanted to talk to me? Well here I am," the man told Jaeger. "Now what good's it going to do you?"

"It became very clear he was just calling to taunt me," she said. However, "I was aware of the fact that something very marvelous was happening to me."

Regardless of the man's taunts, Jaeger found she could treat the man with respect. That caught him off guard, and the two talked for more than an hour. "When I asked him, 'What can I do for you,' he began to weep."

Jaeger taped the call, and the man's answers to her questions helped the FBI focus its investigation on an earlier suspect named David. The local 26-year-old also had been a suspect in an earlier crime: the murder of an 18-year-old girl found at a deserted ranch.

But David passed both lie-detector and truth-serum tests, Jaeger said. After his release from custody, another child nearly was abducted, she said.

Jaeger was flown to Montana where authorities set up three conversations between her and David, hoping he would break and confess. He didn't.

A week later, Jaeger got a call from the kidnapper, which was traced to Salt Lake City. Authorities later determined David had escaped surveillance and drove there, trying to convince Jaeger and the authorities that the real kidnapper was someone else.

Jaeger, however, called David by his name. Confused and scared, David referred to information from their conversation in Montana. Aware he had incriminated himself, he told Jaeger, "You'll never see your little girl alive again."

The next day authorities prepared a warrant for David's arrest, and 15 months of wondering came to an end.

Because the 18-year-old's body had been discovered at the ranch, other items found there regularly went to a lab. On this day, anthropologists and biologists reported that a recent discovery was the backbone of 7-year-old Susie.

"In all this time I had been searching for her, she was already safely in the arms of God," Jaeger said.

Police arrested David immediately after he returned home. A subsequent search of his house uncovered conclusive evidence that he was Susie's killer.

Because of her assistance in the case, prosecutors in that county agreed to Jaeger's request not to pursue the death penalty, but instead to seek life imprisonment without parole.

"I had finally come to understand that God's idea of judgment is not punishment, but restoration," she said. "That was the kind of justice I knew I wanted for this man."

With the death penalty no longer a possibility in the case, David admitted to killing Susie, the 18-year-old girl and two boys.

Authorities suspected him of killing several children in other counties, but he wouldn't confess in counties where prosecutors would seek the death penalty, Jaeger said.

Four hours after his confession, David committed suicide in his jail cell.

While others might have been bitter, Jaeger credits God with allowing her to have a forgiving spirit.

That spirit extended to the kidnapper's mother. Together, they have visited the grave sites of both David and Susie.

"People who retain a vindictive mindset give the offender another victim," Jaeger said.

As evidence she cited her husband, a heart attack victim 10 years ago. Jaeger attributes his death to his strong feelings against Susie's killer.

"I think his death was early and, unfortunately, in a large part, because he could not withstand the stress of being angry."

Today Jaeger shares her story with anyone who will listen, pointing a way to help people struggling to forgive.

"I always say God's the best psychologist going. God knows the only way we're going to be whole and healthy and happy is when we learn how to forgive."

-30-

Baptist author debuts on Christian market

By Stacey Hamby

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (ABP) -- Catherine Palmer's "Cinderella" career as a romance novelist might never have begun had not a persistent mother-in-law persuaded her to attend the ball.

Palmer, the daughter of Baptist missionaries who was making up stories even before she could write, had written a "huge, medieval novel" in her spare time after earning a master's degree in English from Baylor University in Waco, Texas. After publishers rejected it twice, she put it away until she received a call from her mother-in-law, Helene Palmer, three years later.

"She told me about a writing contest and said, 'Why don't you submit your novel?'" Palmer recalled. "She said it was a romance novel contest, but mine was not a romance. I never had even read a romance novel. She said, 'Just change your book.'"

After revising one chapter and adding a hero, Palmer submitted her novel to the contest. The book won "Best Historical Romance Novel" and "Best of Show."

"It was a shock, to say the least," she said. "Agents and editors came up to me and asked what other novels I had written, but that was the only one."

Palmer, a born-again Christian, immediately began praying about this opportunity. "I asked, 'What did the Lord want from me? Why were doors opening to me in romance in a very secular publishing field?'"

Psalm 19:14 came to mind. "It says, 'Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight,'" she said. "So, I started writing and reading romance novels. I found a wide range of quality. But basically, I wanted to tell stories using moral standards."

Sixteen published novels later, she still is finding stories to tell. Several of her books have appeared on Waldenbooks' and B. Dalton's romance national bestseller lists, including one novel that stayed in the No. 1 and 2 spots for three weeks.

A Christian writing in a secular industry posed some challenges, though. Sexual content is a characteristic of most secular romance novels. "I had my characters married before any of that happened," she said.

While working in secular settings has opened the door for her to talk about her faith, it also had limits, leading Palmer to move into a new genre of explicitly Christian tales.

The Treasure of Timbuktu and the Treasure of Zanzibar are her first novels released by Christian publishing company Tyndale House of Carol Stream, Ill. She also is a consulting editor for Tyndale and is helping the publisher set up a romance line.

Palmer said she made the switch from the secular market to the Christian market so she could express her faith message more completely.

"I wanted to show the vital importance of faith in Jesus Christ as the foundation of a successful marriage," Palmer said. "In secular books, I couldn't do that."

"Romance novels show the building of marriage," she said. "They show man and woman overcoming obstacles to the final building of a stable lifetime marriage -- happily ever after. To portray that and leave the faith out is to leave out the main element."

Palmer will celebrate 20 years of marriage this year. Her husband, Tim, is managing editor of the Missouri Baptist paper Word & Way.

The Christian fiction market is much smaller than the worldwide readership of secular romance novels. Palmer's books have been published in six languages and have sold more than 1 million copies worldwide. Her final secular novel has been nominated for a RITA Award from the Romance Writers of America.

"I struggled in moving over to the Christian market," she said. "I have a faith message that's very small in my secular books but an audience that is large. In the Christian market, I have a faith message that is very large but an audience that is smaller. Leaving my non-Christian audience (for the Christian market) would be like preaching to the choir."

Then Francine Rivers, also a former secular novelist who now writes for Tyndale, gave Palmer some advice. "She told me, 'Your books will strengthen the faith of believers and be used as a witnessing tool to nonbelievers.' That's what made the difference for me."

Her readers also will notice some differences in her books. "As I have explored romance novels, I have determined that in a secular novel, there is a double-plot thread -- an action plot, which moves the story along, and an emotion plot, which focuses on a relationship.

"In a Christian novel, there is a third plot -- the faith plot. In a good Christian novel, those three elements braid back and forth, and the third one makes it more interesting because there is yet another level from the secular novels."

Palmer's latest books launch the HeartQuest series, Tyndale's first romance line. "We see the need for good Christian romances," said Rebekah Nesbitt, acquisitions editor at Tyndale. "Cathy is a well-read author; she has a great style and is very entertaining; and her message is challenging to Christians and non-Christians alike because it inspires them in their relationship or toward a relationship with the Lord."

"At Tyndale, her books have been very well received," Nesbitt added. "Everyone has enthusiasm for her work, and if that's any indicator of the market, then we expect she will do very well."

Palmer said she views her books as a ministry. "It's a blessing from God to be able to express what's on my heart through fiction," she said. "I pray God will use what I've written to touch hearts for him."

The daughter of Southern Baptist missionaries, Palmer grew up in Kenya, East Africa. Her parents, Harold and Betty Cummins, are retired and live in Missouri. But Palmer's experiences in Kenya influence her writing to this day.

"A lot of the experiences I had on the mission field have been translated into my books and fictionalized," she said. "You write what you know and care about."

END