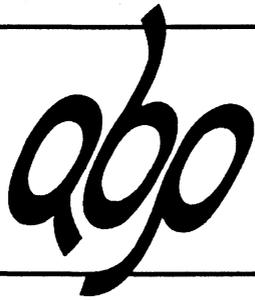


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### **Fellowship focuses on community, future in 1999 General Assembly**

By Bob Allen

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (ABP) -- In 1990, unsuccessful Southern Baptist Convention presidential candidate Daniel Vestal called for a consultation of concerned Baptists to discuss options in light of moderates' increasing disenfranchisement in the SBC. The meeting, held in Atlanta, drew 3,000 people and was the first step in formation of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

Nine years later, Vestal, now coordinator of the Atlanta-based Fellowship, addressed a similar-sized crowd in Birmingham, Ala. The mood, however, has changed.

Vestal called on participants in the Fellowship's June 24-26 General Assembly to "nurture community" in the coming year, following a focus on spirituality that guided Fellowship planning the past year.

"I don't know the shape or form the church in the 21st century will take, but I believe with all my heart that the only effective churches will be the ones that understand, practice, celebrate and nurture Christian community," Vestal said in his annual address to the group. "I don't know all that CBF will become, but I believe with all my heart that we will not become what God intends unless we nurture, celebrate and practice Christian community."

Moderator John Tyler echoed Vestal's call for community and lauded the Fellowship's forward-looking stance. "We are a people living in the present with eyes fixed firmly on the future," Tyler said. "Brothers and sisters, this is your home. These people are your extended community."

Meeting participants were invited to "shape the future" of the Fellowship by gathering in small groups to assess strengths, challenges and priorities for the CBF. Their responses will be used in a strategic ministry plan due to be developed during the next 12 months and presented to the General Assembly next year, said John Brantley, an Athens, Ga., consultant hired to guide the process.

Registration totaled 2,452 as of Friday night. Final registration had not been tallied when the meeting closed at noon Saturday, but a registration worker said some people had registered as late as that morning. Tyler said an estimated 3,600 attended the opening general session Thursday night.

Tyler, a retired communications executive from St. Louis, completed his one-year term as moderator by presiding over the General Assembly. Sarah Frances Anders, an emeritus professor at Louisiana College, who was elected last year as moderator-elect, will succeed him. This year's General Assembly chose Donna Forrester as new moderator-elect, to preside in the year 2001. Forrester, minister of pastoral care and counseling at First Baptist Church in Greenville, S.C., will become the fifth woman to serve as the Fellowship's presiding officer in 10 years.

In a light business session, participants approved a \$15.5 million budget for 1999-2000. It anticipates \$8.7 million in undesignated gifts and \$5.1 through the Fellowship's annual Global Missions Offering. The budget is 5 percent higher than this year's spending plan, said David Currie, chairman of the finance task group of the Fellowship's Coordinating Council.

Currie said finances this year are 8 percent above budget, but most of that is due to a 12 percent increase in the Global Missions Offering and a special appeal for Kosovo relief that pushed designated gifts up 39 percent. Funds for general operation are only 1 percent ahead of budget, he said.

Currie said the main reason the national budget hasn't grown in recent years is expansion of state and regional networks, several of which now have full-time staff. He said that is good for the long-range health of the organization but has placed limits on missions work. "We are not doing many things I believe God wants us to do," Currie said.

Currie said he believes, however, there is a potential for the Fellowship to reach many new churches. "If there are 37,000 churches that relate to the name Southern Baptist -- as we still do -- the vast, vast majority of the people in those churches would be more comfortable here than they would be in Atlanta (site of this year's Southern Baptist Convention, which met the week before)," Currie said.

"We are the real Baptists," he added.

In other business, the Fellowship appointed eight career and eight short-term missionaries, bringing the total CBF missionary force to 125. In his last report as global missions coordinator, Keith Parks called the Fellowship's use of both career and volunteer missionaries "the best opportunity I know of in Christendom today" for the local church to be free in "shaping its own mission and yet not being isolated and taking on the world by itself."

Parks, who took early retirement as president of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board to become the Fellowship's first global missions coordinator in 1993, planned to retire earlier this year but stayed on until the General Assembly. A search committee had hoped to announce his successor in Birmingham but was unable to meet that goal, said Sanford Smith, the committee's chairman.

The General Assembly acted on one motion made from the floor. Lynn Wardell, one of four persons to resign last year from the Friends of New Churches board of directors after failing in an effort to fire the executive director, sought to restrict the organization to using the \$152,000 it will receive next year from the CBF only for grants to churches. A breakout session for business discussed the motion for an hour before voting against it, 27-21.

## **Vestal urges CBF to forgive conservative 'takeover' of SBC**

By Jimmy Allen

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (ABP) -- The coordinator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship urged members June 24 to forgive the people responsible for the "takeover" of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Daniel Vestal, who heads CBF as its paid director, made his remarks about forgiveness during his address to about 3,400 people at the opening session of the CBF General Assembly in Birmingham, Ala.

"Let me say that by God's grace we as a fellowship must have a forgiving spirit to those who planned and performed the takeover of the SBC," Vestal said. "Those who fired professors and presidents, changed the character of institutions and to this day falsely accuse us of all kinds of practices -- we must offer forgiveness."

CBF was formed in 1991, largely as a result of the conservative rise in the SBC.

"This does not mean that we forget what they did or pretend that it did not happen," Vestal said. "This does not mean that we give up our conscience or convictions and keep silent in the face of injustice. But it does mean that in the words of Roberta Bondi we do not seek revenge and that we genuinely seek the welfare of those who harm us. We incarnate the mind and heart of Christ, who prayed for those who were crucifying him, 'Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.'"

The topic of Vestal's address was nurturing community, the theme of this year's assembly. Forgiveness is one of the three ingredients needed for nurturing Christian community, he said.

A former pastor, Vestal used an illustration about the time his family's home was broken into while the family was at church. One of the items stolen was one of their two boys' piggy bank. A few days later while tucking the boys into bed and beginning the ritual of nightly prayer, Vestal suggested the boys pray for those who broke into the house. "Do you mean you want me to pray for the men who stole my piggy bank?" asked his son, Philip, then 7. After Vestal replied, "yes," Philip noted the perpetrators were going to hell for their deed, and the 5-year-old, Joel, asked if hell has real fire.

"I'm afraid that our inclination is to do what my sons did -- either harbor resentment and revenge in our hearts or want to get into a theological discussion that avoids responsibility. In either case, community is lost."

Forgiveness is needed within families and within the body of Christ, he said. Moderate Baptists "tend toward being critical and caustic of each other," he said. "Some of us are grouchy. Others of us are compulsive and competitive. Still others of us are tentative and timid. And none of us is perfect. ... We are at different places on the journey, so let us do toward each other what St. Paul admonishes, 'Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you.'" Vestal then led the crowd in reciting, "Be ye kind one to another."

The other ingredients for nurturing Christian community are conversation, and music and ritual, he said. People need to talk with one another in a spirit of respect, honesty and trust, he said. The goal of conversation should be authentic relationship, he said.

Music and ritual are found wherever authentic community occurs, he said.

CBF first held a General Assembly in 1991 in Atlanta. The group is beginning to seek input on how to better organize itself, said Terry Hamrick, the coordinator of church resources. The only non-negotiable in the reorganization process is the mission statement: "We are a fellowship of Baptist Christians and churches who share a passion for the Great Commission of Jesus Christ and a commitment to Baptist principles of faith and practice. Our mission is to network, empower, and mobilize Baptist Christians and churches for effective missions and ministry in the name of Christ."

During a banquet prior to the first session of the General Assembly, Vestal described the old SBC organizational model as a triangle with local churches at the bottom with associations, state conventions and the SBC on top, in that order. He said CBF's model is a circle with the local church in the middle. The church can partner with whatever group it chooses

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-- Jimmy Allen is assistant editor of the Biblical Recorder in Raleigh, N.C.

## **Fellowship denies motion to restrict funding for 'partner'**

By Bob Allen

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (ABP) -- The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship declined to intervene in a dispute over leadership of Friends of New Churches, denying a motion to restrict use of the \$152,000 in CBF funding due the Knoxville, Tenn., -based "partner" organization this year.

Lynn Walters Wardell of Smithville, Tenn., was a founding board member of Friends of New Churches, a network of about 100 new, CBF-friendly congregations founded in 1995. She resigned from the board in 1997 over differences with the agency's executive director, Will Carter, and last year signed a letter with current and former board members calling for him to be fired. At a called meeting Dec. 3, the Friends of New Churches board voted 6-5 against a motion by the executive committee to fire Carter, prompting four board members and one staff member to resign.

In light of that controversy, Wardell brought a motion to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship General Assembly, held June 24-26 in Birmingham, Ala., asking that all CBF money and gifts given to Friends of New Churches "be designated specifically for grants to new churches."

In accordance with rules governing the General Assembly, Wardell's motion was discussed in a business breakout session. After debating the matter about an hour, the breakout group voted against the motion 27-21.

During discussion, Wardell, a former pastor who also has experience in setting up and running non-profit organizations, said CBF partners should be held accountable for funding they receive from the Fellowship. "I am concerned that there has never been any real accountability," she said, for funds disbursed by the Fellowship's global missions ministry group to the Friends of New Churches.

Since Carter went full time as executive director in 1997, Friends of New Churches spends too much on administration and too little on grants to new churches, she charged. Carter recently wrote a letter advising that in light of an anticipated cut in funding, the organization might have trouble in fulfilling grants it has already committed.

Friends of New Churches has budgeted \$26,500 in grants and aid to new churches in 1999-2000, out of a total budget of \$232,760. Staff salaries and benefits total \$106,075. Carter, who is 63 and has been in ministry 41 years, will earn \$48,000 in salary and housing.

"The most important thing Friends of New Churches can do is give grants for new churches," said one small-church pastor during discussion. "Unless you're in one of these churches, you don't understand how important that \$200 or \$400 a month is," said another.

But Carter said grants, while important, have never been the main focus of Friends of New Churches, which exists mainly to network, encourage and support new churches.

The Fellowship's global missions ministry group appointed a subcommittee to study the group's relationship to Friends of New Churches in light of the leadership dispute. The subcommittee's chairman, Kyle Henderson, said Friends of New Churches has kept terms of a covenant it signed with the Fellowship four years ago.

Henderson said the Fellowship should honor its five-year funding commitment to Friends of New Churches, which expires this year. Current plans call for the Fellowship to phase out funding for the organization, in part to free up money for a new church-starting emphasis within the Fellowship's own global-missions program.

The CBF Coordinating Council received a report June 24 from a church-starting task force. The report calls for the Fellowship, through partnerships with other organizations, to "take initiative in strategically planting new CBF churches nationwide." The initiative will require multiple funding sources and the hiring of additional CBF staff, said Jimmy Lewis, chairman of the task force.

Henderson, pastor of First Baptist Church in Athens, Texas, said an extension to the partnership covenant with Friends of New Churches is being developed.

Also opposing Wardell's motion in the breakout session was Ed Vick, a businessman in Raleigh, N.C., who was just elected to the Friends of New Churches board. He called the motion "punitive," noting it was directed at only one Fellowship partner.

Ray Graves, chairman of the Friends of New Churches board, said the motion was merely an effort to resurface issues that had already been dealt with by the organization's board. "It is much of a poor-loser's syndrome," he said.

Another board member, Charles Chandler, protested "innuendo coming out of a prejudiced mindset" behind the motion.

In its written report to the Coordinating Council, the global-missions subcommittee said the minority members of Friends of New Churches' board "did not work to establish agreement with other board members, thus short-circuiting the process by which FNC might have been redirected without disruption." The subcommittee also found that an internal staff dispute "polarized the board and resulted in a fracturing of the board in December of 1998" and caused the executive director to be "viewed from an adversarial point of view and cast in the worst possible light."

After the breakout session, Wardell said she was disappointed that Henderson both chaired the discussion and spoke against her motion. She said she offered to discuss her concerns with the subcommittee, but the group limited its inquiry to current members of the Friends of New Churches board.

Wardell sent an unsolicited four-page memo to subcommittee members in March outlining charges including questionable travel expenses, the purchase of a computer and other equipment and a blurring between Friends of New Churches and First Fellowship Church, where FNC rents office space. Carter has retired as pastor of the church but remains as part-time co-pastor without pay. Wardell said it was her frustration with the Friends of New Churches' board's unwillingness to confront those and other issues that prompted her to resign.

Carter's supporters on the board, however, said they suspect Wardell's main agenda in seeing Carter fired was so Susan Parrish, who quit her job as resource coordinator Dec. 10, could have his job. Wardell denies the charge, and Parrish says she wasn't interested in becoming executive director.

In reporting the breakout session's vote against Wardell's motion, her involvement on the Friends of New Churches board was described as "micromanagement."

Friends of New Churches did not address the dispute at its annual meeting June 26. The board chairman had written members saying the matter had been adequately covered in the press and inviting concerned individuals to contact him personally. Instead, the group kicked off its "One Vision, Purpose,

Mission" fund-raising campaign. Carter said the effort would enable the organization to raise more of its own funding, while allowing the Fellowship to take the lead in funding new-church starts.

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## **1,300 gather to bid farewell to retiring CBF leader Keith Parks**

By Robert O'Brien

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (ABP) -- Keith and Helen Jean Parks found "treasure" at the end of their "second rainbow" in an evening of laughter, tears, celebration and somber reflection with 1,300 friends at a June 21 banquet in Birmingham, Ala.

One "treasure" -- unearthed as Keith Parks retires at age 71 from the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship -- was a profuse expression of love, respect and admiration from Baptists around the world.

They delivered those emotions via letters, songs, personal testimony, a humorous "roast," and video clips -- including a video tribute from former U.S. President Jimmy Carter.

Another "treasure" was a CBF announcement of an "R. Keith Parks Global Scholarship Fund," now totaling \$70,000 in contributions. It will expand over the years to fund training for leaders in neglected and unreached parts of the globe that Parks has championed over the years.

The Parks family's "first rainbow," Helen Jean Parks said, spanned their 38 years with the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, where her husband took early retirement in 1992 after 12 years as president.

The second "six-year rainbow," she said, spanned the period, 1993-99, which her husband spent as CBF's first global-missions coordinator, laying the groundwork for a missions program focusing on neglected people in a world without borders.

Keith Parks, who has seen many breakthroughs in missions, said his CBF tenure has shown him "a discernible moving of God's spirit in a more powerful way than in any other six-year period" in his ministry.

"But I didn't join CBF because of missions," he told the crowd filling the huge Birmingham Ballroom at the Sheraton Hotel. "I came because of a conviction that it's the way Baptist Christians have always worked and should work."

Fellowship Coordinator Daniel Vestal said CBF's missions program has impact far beyond its age and size because of the influence of Keith Parks and his priority to reach a lost world."

Vestal said Parks, who retires June 30, will now assist the CBF Foundation "to identify and develop financial resources for the future" as the Parkses begin "a third rainbow" of service based in their native Texas.

"Contrary to popular opinion, you're not here to view the body," quipped Parks, who will move from Atlanta, to Richardson, Texas, and focus on writing, speaking and traveling. "We're still going to be kicking."

Bryan Tours of Jackson, Miss., announced establishment of a travel fund, now totaling \$10,000, for the Parkses. "We don't know how many countries we've sent you to over the years," said Josephine Bryan, "but we want you to travel wherever you wish for the rest of your life."

Personal testimonies throughout the evening used words like "wisdom," "openness," "love," "passion for the lost," "innovation," "role model," "mentor," "vision," "truthfulness," "personal humility," "warmth," "energy," "dynamic biblical preaching," and "integrity" to describe Parks' 45 years of service.

"Keith Parks has made a tremendous impact," declared former President Carter, who said he called Parks in 1992 to urge him to join CBF as global-missions coordinator.

"He has a passion for the lost and integrity under pressure," Carter said. "Keith's mission is missions. He has championed the cause of thousands. I want to thank him for what he's done to keep us in touch with the heart of Jesus Christ."

Baptist leaders also praised Parks for his commitment to integrity and truth in the midst of Southern Baptist denominational strife that led to his decision to leave the Foreign Mission Board (now International Mission Board).

Personal tributes from missionaries and the Parks' four children were the most emotional parts of the evening.

"You encouraged me as a woman [in ministry] to do what God led me to do, not respond to what people said," said daughter Eloise Parks, a chaplain at Parklands Hospital in Dallas who was recently endorsed by CBF's council on endorsement for chaplains and pastoral counselors. "I've never heard you say anything from the pulpit that you haven't lived in your life."

Sons Randall Parks, a former missionary, and Kent Parks and Stan Parks, both assigned as CBF international coordinators in Southeast Asia, also paid tribute to their father.

They echoed what others said about his major contributions to developing missions in unreached parts of the globe but took it a step further.

"You taught me what it means to forgive others, even when slandered," Kent said. "You taught me that anything is possible with God."

"As good as you were in missions," said Stan, "you did a better job as a father. You're not just my father but my friend."

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## **8 career, 8 short-term missionaries appointed**

By Robert O'Brien

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (ABP) -- Eight career and eight short-term missionaries were appointed for a variety of roles, bringing the total Cooperative Baptist Fellowship mission force to 125 as of June 25.

Career missionaries and international coordinators will serve unreached people groups in Southeast Asia, Middle East, North Africa and China. Short-term Global Service Corps personnel, who serve up to three years and raise their own support, will take assignments in Miami; Kostroma, Russia; Brussels, Belgium; New York City; the Middle East and unreached peoples who are immigrants in Europe.

Named as career missionaries were:

-- Three couples. Scott and Shari Yapple Hunter and Scott and Teresa Maurer Uzzle will serve unreached people groups in Southeast Asia. Don and Janet Rumpf Pittman were assigned to another unreached people in the Middle East.

-- Brenda Lisenby will work in China, and another single missionary, who can't be identified for security issues related to work among Muslims, will serve in North Africa.

The Hunters, who completed two years in the Global Service Corps in Southeast Asia, will now work as career missionaries with an unreached people in the region. He is a native of Salt Lake City, Utah, and graduate of Wayland Baptist University in Anchorage, Alaska, and Midwestern Baptist Seminary in Kansas City, Mo. She is a native of Anchorage and a graduate of Park College, Anchorage.

The Uzzles live in Richmond, Va., where she has taught geometry at Trinity Episcopal School and tutored at Church Hill Baptist Center. He was minister of outreach at Pine Street Baptist Church and earned a master of divinity degree at Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond. Both are graduates of Western Kentucky University. She was born in Kalamazoo, Mich., and he in Madison, Ky.

The Pittmans will do agricultural and rural development in the Middle East. They live in Wilson, N.C., where he is district conservationist for the U.S. Department of Agriculture and she is a medical technologist. He was born in Wilson, and she in Conestee, S.C. Both are graduates of North Carolina State University.

Lisenby, part of CBF's envoy (tentmaker) program since 1998, has five years experience teaching English as a second language at universities in China. A native of Beaumont, Texas, she previously taught public school in Texas and New Mexico. She earned B.A. and M.A. degrees from Austin College in Sherman, Texas, and has done ESL doctoral study at the University of New Mexico.

Named as Global Service Corps personnel were:

-- Lee and Hilary Leathers Canipe. They will work for a year in human needs and community outreach ministries in Kostroma, Russia.

A native of Augusta, Ga., she is completing a medical residency at Memorial Medical Center in Savannah, Ga., and earned a B.A. degree from Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, N.C., and an M.D. degree from Wake Forest's Bowman Gray School of Medicine.

He is a native of Winston-Salem and has served as a pastoral assistant and minister to youth at churches in North Carolina and Georgia. He earned a B.A. degree from Davidson College, M.A. from Wake Forest University and a master of divinity in the Baptist studies program at Duke Divinity School of Duke University in Durham, N.C.

-- Tony Morgan, a native of Jefferson City, Tenn., will work in New York City for one year in an urban/AIDS ministry. He is a graduate of Carson-Newman College and the Baptist studies program at Brite Divinity School of Texas Christian University in Fort Worth.

-- Carol Byerly and Tara Johns will take one-year and two-year assignments, respectively, teaching English as a second language among unreached peoples in the Middle East.

Byerly spent 33 years in Texas public schools as a teacher, consultant and educational diagnostician before retiring in 1997 in Bryan, Texas. Since then, she has taught English in Pakistan, 1997-98, and Thailand, 1998-99. A native of Corpus Christi, Texas, she holds B.S. and M.A. degrees from Lamar University in Beaumont, Texas, earned additional certifications at the University of Texas at El Paso, and attended Southwestern Baptist Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

Johns, a graduate of Georgia College and State University, has been a school teacher in Milledgeville, Ga., since 1997. She was born in Waycross, Ga., but moved to Milledgeville as a small child.

-- Stan and Kirsten Granberry will do church planting for three years among Muslim immigrants in a major city in Europe. He was born in Dallas and earned a B.A. degree from Baylor University in Waco, Texas, and a master of divinity degree from Truett Seminary at Baylor. A native of Ottawa, Canada, she is a graduate of the University of Vermont.

-- Cherie Hornback, who has taught in schools in Texas and Japan, will serve for two years as an English teacher in Brussels, Belgium. She is a graduate of Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge and a native of Houston.

## **CBF, North Carolina youth group reach out to Sayre residents**

By Jeff Huett

SAYRE, Ala. (ABP) -- From her vantage-point behind the counter at the post office in Sayre, Ala., acting postmaster Joyce Suggs sees and hears daily the hopes and dreams of the residents of the small rural community.

At 8 every morning she gets out of her compact car and unlocks the door of the small post office, popping out just minutes later to raise the American flag up the pole. The flag's reaching its destination acts like a "ready" signal to those watching and waiting to see what the U.S. Postal Service has for them that day.

By 8:45 a.m., six people have paid Suggs a visit, some with a story, others with a problem -- all with something to say about the building those "young folks" are doing.

During the 1999 Cooperative Baptist Fellowship's meeting in Birmingham, Ala., 22 youth from First Baptist Church in Wilmington, N.C., spent the week of June 21-25 building a pavilion with four picnic tables and leading a Bible school for the children in the small town just west of Alabama's largest city.

Before 1973, Sayre was a thriving mining town. But everything changed the year the mine shut down. For Suggs, who was born and raised in the town and whose father was a coal miner, life hasn't been the same.

"When the mine was here, everybody took care of their houses. They painted them, kept them up and they looked terrific," Suggs said. "It was great growing up here.

"Now that the mine has closed, the houses have just gone down. You can tell just by looking."

Seeing the needs in this community, CBF mission-project organizers decided to use their scheduled workday to help construct a place for the people of Sayre to gather for meetings and barbecues.

"When we first started talking with the people out here, we envisioned CBF doing work to repair some of the homes, but we were only going to be here one day, and we wanted to have a sense of completion," said project coordinator Deborah Schoenfeld. "One of the things that has been a struggle is when groups come out here to help and they start a project, but never finish. So the community has been skeptical of the help that's being offered."

Schoenfeld said the point of the project was not simply to do something for the community, but instead, to partner with them and help them get accomplished what they would like to do.

"I started off with too narrow a vision of what we could do, because I thought everything would have to happen in one day," Schoenfeld said. "But FBC Wilmington called and said they would like to bring a group of youth and adults out and do Bible school and construction all week."

What began as a single workday for volunteers from the CBF turned into a weeklong event involving several Birmingham-area churches that included a community-wide picnic lunch, discussion groups on parenting and health-care issues and vacation Bible school.

Schoenfeld hoped the discussion groups would allow adults to dialogue with each other and build a friendship connection and support network in the community.

And to give everyone attending the General Assembly the chance to participate, a display was set up near the resource fair area of the convention center requesting non-perishable food donations for the families in Sayre. Children participating in the CBF day camp then sorted the food into 60 baskets that were delivered to residents on the final day of the Fellowship meeting.

For the youth workers from Wilmington, the week was a chance to put into practice knowledge gained from a continuing study of both Southern Baptist Convention missionaries and CBF missionaries.

Each year, youth in the church alternate between a home and foreign mission project. Last year the youth went to Antigua.

"We want people here to know that beyond economics and beyond social standing, there is a hopeful and joyous life just by a personal relationship with God," said Don Vigus, the youth minister at the church.

The youth's efforts did not go unnoticed by community leader Johnny Rainey, who grabbed a hammer and helped where he could. Rainey, who has lived in Sayre since 1991, could not do much lifting, but was happy driving in nails from atop the forming structure.

"The pavilion and the community center, once we get it, will give the adults a place to watch their kids play and have a good time without having to worry about people bothering them. Right now, the kids just run around aggravating the grown-ups," Rainey said with a grin.

It was Rainey who donated the land for the tent-church where the vacation Bible school was held. The Middle Oak Church now owns the land and the tent and holds services on Wednesday night and twice on Sunday.

"The Lord wanted us to get it started," Rainey said.

Rainey now hopes that the church, the pavilion and an eventual community center will be a springboard for a better Sayre -- a hope that lifetime resident Suggs shares.

"It used to be that if you didn't know where you were going you would get lost here," Suggs said.

Ironically, she now hopes for folks to become lost again by finding a sense of community in an otherwise scattered neighborhood.

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## **Collection continues for family of 6-year-old accident victim**

By Jeff Huett

SAYRE, Ala. (ABP) -- The tragic death of 6-year-old Jessica Boston June 23 in a two-vehicle accident near Dora, Ala., gave members of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship a new appreciation for missions.

As CBF members were assembling in Birmingham for a meeting titled "Nurturing Community," Fellowship volunteers and members of the youth group at First Baptist Church in Wilmington, N.C., were leading a vacation Bible school and building a picnic pavilion for residents of the Sayre community.

Jessica was a resident of the community with her parents, Kenny and Renay Boston and her sisters, Marie, 3, and Rachel, 2.

She was traveling in a car with her aunt and uncle, Larry and Libby Moncrief, and her sisters when the accident occurred. Larry was treated and released from Carroway Medical Center in Birmingham and Libby suffered various injuries and was released on Saturday. Marie and Rachel suffered minor injuries but were not hospitalized.

The conditions of the occupants of the other car, Joyce and Alison Trustee, were unavailable.

A collection was taken for the Boston and Moncrief families at the CBF meeting and continues at the New Temple Baptist Church in Dora, Ala. or the Alabama CBF office.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Donations for the Boston and Moncrief families may be sent to New Temple Baptist Church at 4501 Greathouse Road, Dora, Ala., 35062

## **CBF children, youth learn lessons about nurturing their communities**

By Jeff Huett

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (ABP) -- Following the theme their parents were addressing in sessions at the annual Cooperative Baptist Fellowship meeting, the children and youth attending the General Assembly learned lessons in "nurturing community," too.

From bed babies to 12th graders, organizers at the CBF planned activities to show the children and youth that nurturing community was not just for the grown-ups.

Youth from seventh to 12th grades participated in a Passport camp, which emphasized "doing justice, loving kindness and walking humbly." In addition to games and other usual camp activities, the camp also incorporated the youth into worship by having them read Scripture and lead the group prayer.

Before retreating to their rooms of the Birmingham-Jefferson Convention Center for a dance, the youth took the offering in a session of the General Assembly.

The highlight of the camp for Craig Naylor, camp director and youth-and-college minister at First Baptist Church in Alachua, Fla., was the trip to Kelly Ingram Park. The park is a monument to the civil-rights movement.

"We did a silent prayer walk around the park for the youth to pray to themselves," Naylor said. "To me, looking at the injustice of the 1960s drove home the theme of the week."

Various mission projects also helped teach the campers about community. The youth took part in four projects in the Sayre community, Fresh Start, the Salvation Army and a clothes closet.

"Taking the offering, seeing the missionaries in the General Assembly session and taking part in the projects gives the kids a chance to see the people and know they themselves can be used," Naylor said. "You can tell the youth have a passion for caring and doing missions."

The theme for the kindergarten-through-fifth-grade day camp was building community through diversity, and based on the cultural makeup of the group, one could not have chosen a better theme. With at least four countries represented -- the United States, France, Germany and Belgium -- the Bible stories and games focused on what it means to be a family of faith.

With 50 kids divided by grade level, the children visited the McWane Center, a hands-on children museum with an I-Max theater. The children also sorted food donated by those attending the General Assembly for the Sayre community of west Jefferson County, Ala.

The theme for the children's camp, for ages 1 to 5, was 'I can help'. Through Bible stories and stations that promoted creativity, children were able to do things for themselves. From blocks, to a coloring station and parachute games outside, children were doing constructive activities while their parents were in the General Assembly sessions.

"These are conference rooms that we've made child friendly," said Brooke Howard, the pre-school day camp organizer. "This isn't an ideal nursery, but the kids and the parents seemed to be pleased with it."

## **CBF leader describes cultural forces leading to the Fellowship's beginning**

By Jeff Huett

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (ABP) -- Citing the old adage that "those who forget the past are condemned to repeat it," Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Baptist Principles Coordinator Gary Parker offered a ministry workshop on the history and the differences between the Southern Baptist Convention and the CBF.

Speaking June 25 in a breakout meeting at the CBF General Assembly, Parker gave about 40 listeners a historical overview of the religious, political and cultural forces that led to the creation of the CBF in 1991.

"You can't understand the existence of the CBF without understanding that it came into being because a large number of Baptists came to some unflattering conclusions about the leadership of the SBC, post 1979," Parker said. "Christian people decided they could no longer, in good conscience, support things taking place in the SBC."

Parker began with the history of the SBC that led to the creation of the CBF. He said the Southern Baptist Convention was founded in 1845 not out of doctrine, but out of function, while initially avoiding any statement of its beliefs.

He said between 1865 and 1925, the SBC "struggled to recover from the war, struggled to deal with the ignorance of its society and struggled to deal with the challenges of a world in transition."

Two significant events occurred in the SBC in 1925, Parker said. The convention adopted the Cooperative Program to support its ministry, and for the first time in its 80-year history, the SBC adopted the "Baptist Faith and Message" as its generalized statement of beliefs.

"Over the next 50 years, the convention gradually took on a more and more centralized structure and was wildly successful in its system of raising money," Parker said. "It also continued to develop its statement of what its people confessed as their beliefs."

He said the SBC continued to grow in power and influence over the years and through the Cooperative Program, the state conventions became "the middle person for the receiving and dispensing" of offering money to the national convention.

He said the six Southern Baptist seminaries trained one of every five seminarians in America.

"Everything seemed well. The sky was clear," Parker said, "but storm clouds were gathering."

American culture then took a turn toward uneasiness. The sexual revolution, the 1960s, rising divorce rates, the civil-rights movement, the breakdown of the family and the rebellious attitudes of students on college campuses all attributed to the tumultuous culture, Parker said.

"But some Baptists in that era began to believe that they knew the cause of all of America's problems," Parker said. "In the opinion of some in the Southern Baptist Convention, the seminaries had become roosting places for a whole nest of theological liberals, and they planned to do something about it."

Paige Patterson and Paul Pressler took leadership in a plan to take over the convention and change it, he said.

"By studying the SBC bylaws, (Pressler) identified the Achilles heel of the Baptist institutional system, that the power of appointments all flow through the presidency of the SBC," Parker said. "So, Pressler understands that if he can take over that office and maintain control of the office for a certain number of years, he can take over the Southern Baptist Convention."

Parker said the plan bubbled to the surface at the 1979 SBC meeting in Houston where Adrian Rogers, "a man committed to the takeover," was elected president of the SBC.

Moderates were then unable to beat fundamentalists "at the ballot box" to regain control of the convention, Parker said.

"The fundamentalists began to purge the agencies and institutions of the SBC of good and godly leadership and people," Parker said. In addition to numerous firings, the fundamentalists began to impose creedal tests and used the "Chicago Statement of Inerrancy" as its litmus test for the hiring of professors at the seminaries and administrators at denominational agencies

"The fundamentalists completely remade the SBC, and they excluded anyone who disagreed with them," Parker said. "

By 1990, the takeover was complete, but not everyone agreed with the direction the convention was going. In fact, Parker said, a group led by those who had attempted to stand up to the takeover "decided that they could no longer live in such a repressive, creedalistic, authoritarian structure."

Under the leadership of Daniel Vestal, 3,000 concerned Baptist met in 1990 in Atlanta to find ways to support missions and education but without supporting the Southern Baptist Executive Committee.

Formed out of the meeting was the Baptist Cooperative Missions Program, which allowed people in churches to fund agencies and institutions they trusted, but it also allowed them to discontinue funding for things they no longer supported, Parker said.

By 1991, people wanted to turn the mechanism formed at the Atlanta meeting into something more. "The time had come to make this funding mechanism a forerunner of a new missions and ministry body," Parker said.

In May 1991, the group met again in Atlanta and adopted its current name, the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

Now, Parker said, two conflicting views have emerged about the meaning of being Baptist. In his opinion, the two groups differ in their views of pastoral leadership, with the CBF calling for pastors to be servant leaders, thus conflicting with the SBC's vision of a pastor as the ruler of the church.

Other differences include views of the theological-education process, diversity, local-church autonomy, biblical views and views on the separation of church and state, Parker said.

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