



# Associated Baptist Press

Editor: Bob Allen  
Executive editor: Greg Warner

Phone: 800.340.6626  
Fax: 904.262.7745  
E-mail: bob@abpnews.com

July 3, 2001

SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL  
LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES  
Nashville, Tennessee

JUL 09 2001

(01-52)

## IN THIS ISSUE:

- Fellowship preacher calls crowd to spiritual 'point of no return'
- Vestal describes earmarks of 'Baptist witness'
- Fellowship launches rural-poverty initiative
- Historian reflects on 10 years of Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
- Civil-rights leader opposes Bush faith plan at meeting
- CBF history rooted in support of moderate schools, speaker says
- Ethnic minorities ponder their role in Fellowship
- Shared ministry can work, couple tells CBF crowd
- Publishing company presents Christian-education award
- Van crash injures Baptist students

## Fellowship preacher calls crowd to spiritual 'point of no return'

By Marv Knox

ATLANTA (ABP) -- Christ calls Christians to fly in faith past the "point of no return" in commitment to him, George Mason told participants at the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship General Assembly.

Mason, pastor of Wilshire Baptist Church in Dallas, delivered the opening sermon June 28 at the Fellowship's 10th anniversary gathering in Atlanta. Baptists disaffected by fundamentalist domination of the Southern Baptist Convention founded the missions/ministry organization in 1991.

Mason recounted a consistent theme of stories told by his father-in-law, a bomber pilot in World War II. The bombing crews had to watch their fuel carefully, for if they passed the point of no return, they could not return to base safely and would have to seek another place to land.

"There comes such a time in every life of discipleship -- the point of no return," Mason said. "So it is with CBF. Ten years: if we are to go with (Christ), we have to make a decision. He calls us on still."

Christian believers have struggled with the decision to cross the point of no return in commitment to Christ for 2,000 years, he said, pointing to the ninth chapter of the Gospel of Luke. Three believers considered the call to follow Christ, but at least two of them turned back, making excuses as to why the timing was wrong.

Christians must look ahead with their hearts -- discerning spiritually not rationally what the Lord would have them to do, Mason said.

Christ will speak through Christians' hearts "until we let go of our hold and go where he wants," he noted. "We like to say we're 'free and faithful' Baptists, but we're never one without the other. We're only free when we're faithful following Jesus."

That's easier to say than to do, Mason conceded, observing that the excuses cited by the would-be followers of Jesus in Luke 9 have echoed through the ages. And physical circumstances have reinforced those decisions, he added.

"If you knew following Jesus offered no creature comforts, no material blessings, only a life of danger and adventure, would you follow?" he asked.

Sadly, too few young people today are taking up the call, he said, citing "a paucity of young ministers." People under age 35 represent only 8 percent of Baptist clergy today, he reported.

"If the Baptist movement is to thrive, we're going to have to call out a lot more and a lot more will have to accept" vocational ministry, he said. While he affirmed the Baptist doctrine of the "priesthood of the believer," he underscored the necessity of calling out and equipping vocational ministers.

"And let me commend the ministry to you," he said. "It's a wonderful calling -- a lousy job sometimes, but a wonderful calling."

The challenge is complicated today for ministers who "realize following Christ among Cooperative Baptist Fellowship-types will shrink your options," Mason acknowledged.

Churches affiliated with the CBF represent a minority of Baptist churches, he explained, adding that some ministers fear affiliation with the Fellowship because they're afraid they might lose their churches, and others say they "don't see a future in it."

"So, we're supposed to know the future? It's all about secure careers? Is that it?" he asked.

Security wasn't the concern of Martin Luther, who launched the Protestant reformation, Mason stressed. Security wasn't the objective of John Smyth and Thomas Helwys, religious dissenters who began the Baptist movement in the 17th century; nor of Roger Williams, who founded the first Baptist church in America and fought for religious liberty; nor of William Carey, whose efforts began the Baptist missionary movement.

Christ still calls Christians to cross the point of no return, Mason insisted.

"Jesus calls us to a single-minded devotion to the kingdom of God," he stressed. "There's a time to look back, but only so long as it is not an excuse to hold back.

"Jesus calls us to plow forward . no turning back."

-30-

## **Vestal describes earmarks of 'Baptist witness'**

By Marv Knox

ATLANTA (ABP) -- The "Baptist witness" is defined by evangelism, discipleship and prayer, Daniel Vestal stressed during his coordinator's report to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship June 29.

For many people, "Baptist" means being argumentative and quarrelsome, divisive or political, acknowledged Vestal, staff leader of the 10-year-old Fellowship.

"In contrast to these notions, I want to address being Baptist from the perspective of Christian discipleship and congregational formation," he said. "As long as being Baptist is a matter of preserving

institutions or protecting conventions, or even passing on the name 'Baptist,' it will become increasingly irrelevant in the 21st century.

"Present and future generations must discern that the Baptist witness is . a call to personal conversion to Jesus Christ and then personal growth in Christ."

Vestal quoted the late New York City Baptist minister Walter Rauschenbusch: "We summon all to conscious repentance from sin, to conscious prayer for forgiveness. We ask a person: 'Have you put your faith in Christ? Have you submitted your will to his will? Have you received the inward assurance that your sins are forgiven and that you are at peace with God? Have you made experience of God?' If anyone desires to enter our churches, we ask for evidence of such experience, and we ask for nothing else."

"Each individual is free and responsible before God," Vestal insisted. "No one can coerce or force another to faith. No authority, ecclesiastical or secular, can guarantee faith. It must be voluntary or it is not authentic."

But faith is not lived out in isolation, he added. "The personal experience of grace then leads to the congregational experience of grace. . Then growing out of this personal and community experience of grace, Baptists have been passionate about communicating that grace to the world in word and deed."

In order to evangelize people around the world and help them grow in faith, Baptists have cooperated voluntarily in this common endeavor, Vestal said.

"The purpose of this connectedness, when consistent with a Baptist vision, is not to mandate conformity among individuals or churches, but to foster cooperation for mission," he explained.

Those understandings of Baptist heritage have "everything to do" with the Fellowship, Vestal said, "because our identity and our mission are tied to being Baptist."

"And being Baptist is not just being a dissenter, a politician or a stubborn obstructionist. It is being passionate about the free experience of the grace of God revealed in Jesus Christ," he declared to applause. "It is being committed to the church as a body of baptized believers and then finding ways for believers and churches to connect and cooperate for the eternal kingdom of God."

That "Baptist vision of the gospel and the church" captivates many Fellowship Baptists, Vestal added. "We believe CBF is a movement of God to renew this vision into the 21st century."

He offered five suggestions for accomplishing such renewal:

-- "Look at the gospel more than to culture."

"Some doubt the relevancy of the church," he conceded. "Some even despair of its viability. But God's mission in Christ is not new, and it is not uncertain. God's concern for the poor is unchanging. God's kingdom is among us. God's call for us to live lives of holiness and compassion is constant. God's unconditional love and grace is still good news.

"So, we don't need to be afraid of the present. We don't need to look to a romanticized past or an idealized future. But we must, we must love the gospel. If there is no romance, no glory in our faith, no joy, no wonder in our community, there will be no renewal."

-- "Think congregationally more than denominationally."

"One reason I love CBF is because it represents a return to our roots as Baptists," he said. "The emphasis is on churches fulfilling their mission and then voluntarily coming together for fellowship and partnership."

While denominations and other church groups are important, "they are most effective when they serve churches, help churches, connect churches, resource churches," he added.

-- "Focus on function more than form."

"CBF is comprised of thousands of individuals ., more than 1,800 churches, a national organization ., 18 state and regional organizations. . Within this, there are scores of partnering organizations, institutions and ministries. And all of this has been born in the last 10 years," Vestal said.

"It is extremely important for all of us to nurture relationships, build trust, communicate openly and continuously seek structural forms that reflect that spirit. But if we will focus on our care for each other and our shared commitments, God will lead us in finding the structures that will help us fulfill our common mission."

-- "Seek unity more than unanimity."

"One mark of our maturity both as individuals and as a Fellowship is how enthusiastically we can work together across our differences," Vestal said. He cited such differences as social practices, worship, politics, public policy, ethical issues, gender, age, ethnicity, geography, passions, temperaments, tastes and personalities.

"To seek unity, let's be honest about our differences, refuse to judge one another and then celebrate ties that bind us more than walls that separate us," he urged.

"We have a common humanity. Every person is created in the image of God, loved and treasured and cherished by divine love. We have a common fallenness and brokenness. We are all sinners in need of a Savior, and in this Fellowship we have a common experience of that Savior. We believe in Jesus the Christ, God incarnate, the Savior of the world. We have a common commitment to Scripture, divinely inspired and authoritative for faith and practice.

"We have a common love of freedom, for the individual, for the church, indeed for all people. We have a common passion for the kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven. As we celebrate these common ties, we will discover far more unity than we ever thought possible."

-- "Pray more than we do anything else."

"Prayer is more than for emergencies," Vestal observed. "It is a way of life. Prayer is realizing our finitude and recognizing our dependence.

"Prayer is believing in divine love and providence and then being attentive to it. Prayer is listening to God and talking with God.

"So, my brothers and sisters, let us pray more than anything else."

-30-

## **Fellowship launches rural-poverty initiative**

By Jim Newton

ATLANTA (ABP) -- Quietly and without fanfare, the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship launched a 20-year commitment called "Partners in Hope: CBF's Rural Poverty Initiative" to work in partnership with others to bring about transformation in 20 of the poorest counties of the United States.

The initiative will focus on counties located in four regions: Appalachia, the (Mississippi River) Delta/Cotton Belt, the Rio Grande River area of Texas, and American Indian reservations in South Dakota.

CBF leaders said they didn't give high-profile attention to the initiative at this year's annual gathering because it is in such a formative stage.

During the final general session of the 2001 General Assembly in Atlanta, however, CBF Global Missions Co-Coordinator Gary Baldrige challenged Baptists to join with others in an effort to erase these 20 counties from the list of the poorest counties in America.

Earlier during a workshop on a CBF strategic plan for global missions, Baldrige said that CBF is making a 20-year commitment to work in partnership with others to address human needs through holistic

ministry in rural counties that are often overlooked by government and other humanitarian or Christian agencies.

The missions leader said CBF would use the same catalytic and networking skills used to address the least-evangelized and marginalized people around the world.

CBF will avoid paternalism, but will listen to local leaders and others who already are working among the poor in these rural counties to learn from them the needs and the methods that are culturally appropriate to meet those needs, Baldrige said.

During another workshop on "Discovering Your Place in CBF's Rural Poverty Initiative," CBF Global Missions Associate Coordinator Tom Ogburn of Dallas described "Partners in Hope" as a new approach to Baptist missions and ministry that is grass-roots driven and aimed at long-term transformational development.

"This is not patronage, this is partnership," insisted Ogburn. "This is not about short-term mission projects, this is about building relationships of trust and partnership and about conversations out of which the hopes and dreams of the people emerge."

Ogburn said the Rural Poverty Initiative "will call us to a new kind of ministry and missions" and force Baptists to think outside the traditional ways of doing missions.

For example, CBF does not plan to appoint missionaries to work in these 20 poorest counties, or to recruit large numbers of volunteers for short-term missions projects unless there is a specific request from local leaders for small teams with specific skills.

The first step is listening, learning, and building relationships, Ogburn said. "We are learning there are some racial myths related to poverty in America, and that the face of poverty reflects the diversity of America. Poverty is not based on the color of your skin, but on the place where you live and the opportunities that exist there."

Ogburn praised the Alabama Cooperative Baptist Fellowship for developing a model for others to follow that is "years ahead" of what CBF is doing in the other counties where it hopes to work.

Ogburn moderated a panel discussion involving leaders of "Sowing Seeds of Hope," a partnership between the people of Perry County, Ala., and the Alabama Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. Co-chairs of the organization are Mayor Edward Daniel of Marion, Ala., and Mart Gray, coordinator of Alabama CBF.

Mayor Daniel commended Gray for the attitude and spirit he demonstrated when he came to Marion, located about 30 miles northwest of Selma, Ala. "He didn't come to us with a personal agenda. I can't think of anyone who has been accepted in Perry County the way he has."

Gray said that following the example of Jesus is the heart of what CBF is trying to do. "CBF doesn't have a lot of money to offer, but what we do have to offer is building relationships based on our relationship with Jesus Christ."

Ogburn said that he is also working with organizations in Texas, Arkansas, Mississippi, Louisiana, Kentucky and with American Baptists in South Dakota on the initial stages of establishing relationships as part of the Rural Poverty Initiative, but it is too early to report what is going to happen in other parts of the country.

"We're in this for the long haul," Ogburn said. "It is very exciting to dream together on what we might do in partnership with others to bring about change."

## Historian reflects on 10 years of Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

By Marv Knox

ATLANTA (ABP) -- Six words characterize the first 10 years of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, church historian Walter Shurden noted during the William H. Whitsitt Baptist Heritage Society's annual meeting June 28. They are beginnings, diversity, Bible, ecumenical, leadership and identity.

"A Decade of Destiny: 10 Years of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship" was the theme for the Whitsitt Society meeting, which convened just hours before the start of the CBF's 10th anniversary General Assembly in Atlanta.

Shurden, the Callaway professor of Christianity at Mercer University in Macon, Ga., spoke at the 1990 "Consultation of Concerned Southern Baptists," which led to the formation of the CBF.

He reflected on the past 11 years in the Whitsitt Society's keynote address, offering six words as points to ponder:

-- Beginnings. "Let me begin by tweaking our 10-year celebration. CBF began in 1990, not 1991," he said, referencing the first gathering, which also happened in Atlanta.

"I am aware, of course, that moderates did not organize CBF until 1991," he said. "But the specific CBF strand of history is a clear continuation from what began in 1990, not simply what happened in 1991. Historically, in terms of continuous history, we are 11 years old, not 10."

The 1990 gathering "may have been the most exhilarating Baptist meeting I've ever attended," Shurden recalled.

Reflecting on moderate Baptists' sense of disaffection with the Southern Baptist Convention and hope for the future, he quoted sociologist Nancy Ammerman from 1991: "This is one free Baptist who had rather be in the desert with you than be back in Egypt making bricks."

"Her allusion to the (ancient Israelites in the) desert indicated that we all knew we were going somewhere, but we did not yet know where or how," he said. "Some did not want to go. Leaving the SBC was too much for them. Some of us had already left."

-- Diversity. "If we thought we had escaped controversy by leaving the SBC, we were wrong," he noted. "Moderate Baptists have always had a left and a right and a middle, or to say it another way, a high church, a low church and a broad church. .

"What we had in common when we came together in 1990 was a bruising defeat (in the SBC). We also had a common concern to be free from fundamentalist domination. But from the very beginning, we brought different agendas into the tent we call CBF."

Those agendas variously placed emphasis on missions; theological education; "Baptist convictions" such as the priesthood of all believers, separation of church and state, and soul liberty; and "justice issues" such as gender equality, racial equality, peacemaking, alleviation of hunger and religious liberty.

"There is little reason to think this contention for priorities will cease," Shurden predicted. "I doubt you can talk so freely about freedom the way we have in CBF and not have remarkable diversity.

"Thus far, we have been able to move on together even after the debates produced winners and losers. One hopes we can move together into the future without too much uniformity."

-- Bible. The CBF's first statement on the Bible was produced by its interim steering committee in 1991, he said.

"Many of our differences come from a different understanding and interpretation of holy Scripture," that statement noted, and he quoted it. "But the difference is not at the point of the inspiration or authority of the Bible.

"We interpret the Bible differently, as will be seen . in our treatment of the biblical understanding of women and pastors.

"We also, however, have a different understanding of the nature of the Bible. We want to be biblical -- especially in our view of the Bible. That means that we dare not claim less for the Bible than the Bible claims for itself. The Bible neither claims nor reveals inerrancy as a Christian teaching.

"Bible claims must be based on the Bible, not on human interpretation of the Bible."

He called for "a far more serious investigation of biblical issues" and predicted Baptist people will respond enthusiastically.

-- Ecumenical. The CBF has affirmed that "great ideas of theology are the common property of all the church" and advocated for stronger relationships with other Christians, he noted.

"I wish we had been much more deliberate over the last 10 years in our ecumenical commitments," he said, citing some relationships with American Baptists and European Baptists.

"But we could have done so much more," he said, calling for strengthened relationships with American Baptists, the African-American Baptist conventions and Canadian Baptists, as well as Christians outside the Baptist tradition.

"It is not too late for this," he said. "It could be a point of spiritual renewal for us to link arms with other Christians."

-- Leadership. Shurden praised the selection of CBF's first two key leaders, Cecil Sherman as overall coordinator and Keith Parks as missions leader, as well as Sherman's replacement, current Coordinator Daniel Vestal.

"Eventually, other capable ministers were added to the Atlanta staff," he observed. He also praised the CBF moderators and "hundreds of talented people" who have volunteered to serve on the organization's Coordinating Council.

-- Identity. "As much as some have resisted it, CBF surely has been identified by its relationship to the SBC," Shurden said, noting the first identification was that CBF sent some of its money to the SBC until Southern Baptist leaders refused to accept it in 1994.

"The SBC did us a favor," he claimed. "They sharpened our identity by doing for us what some were reluctant to do -- delineate SBC from CBF." The SBC further delineated that relationship in 2000 by revising the "Baptist Faith and Message" statement, he said.

CBF has "self-identified" as a missions-delivery system and a religious-endorsing body, he said. It is not a full-fledged convention, but it is not simply a missions society, he added.

Throughout its history, the CBF's adversaries, particularly in the SBC, have sought to define the organization, he noted.

"It is a necessity that CBF not let their adversaries fully define them," he urged. "If CBF does not speak up, its adversaries will have a field day with negative definition. That is why it remains crucial for CBFers to articulate how they differ from SBCers. We are still too close to the turbulence of birth to let distorted descriptions of CBF go unchallenged."

As a description, he harked back to a refrain, "We are Baptists." The CBF no longer is Southern Baptist, but it is comprised of Baptists who have a "vigorous missionary program," who partner in theological education, who partner with a variety of specially focused ministries, who encourage shared leadership among men and women and clergy and laity, who have resisted "a tightly drawn doctrinal or ethical statement," who honor self-government of congregations.

The Whitsitt Society presented two courage awards this year. Recipients were former President Jimmy Carter and Glenn Hinson, retired professor at Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond, Va., and former longtime professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky. The award recognizes Baptists who have championed Baptist history and heritage.

Officers for the society are Shurden, president; Rob Nash, dean of the School of Religion and International Studies at Shorter College in Rome, Ga., president-elect; and Doug Weaver, chair of the division of religion and philosophy at Brewton-Parker College in Mount Vernon, Ga., secretary-treasurer.

-30-

## **Civil-rights leader opposes Bush faith plan at meeting**

By Kenny Byrd

ATLANTA (ABP) -- "In our nation, church and state do not mix," civil-rights leader and House of Representatives member John Lewis, D-Ga., told participants of the annual luncheon meeting of the Religious Liberty Council.

The RLC is the individual-membership arm of the 64-year-old Baptist Joint Committee, a church-state separation organization in Washington. The group held its meeting June 29 in Atlanta in conjunction with the 10th annual meeting of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

The RLC presented Lewis with its second-ever Barbara Jordan-Mark Hatfield Courage Award, presented to members of Congress who demonstrate courage in the advancement of religious liberty. The previous recipient was Rep. Chet Edwards, D-Texas, who was awarded for opposing a failed constitutional amendment to allow school-sponsored prayer.

Lewis came out strongly against President George W. Bush's faith-based initiative, in particular the "charitable choice" plan to fund religious social service ministries with tax dollars.

"I am strongly opposed to this effort for many reasons," said Lewis. "In our nation, church and state do not mix. They cannot, they must not and they should not. This principle is so important, it is in the First Amendment of the Bill of Rights."

He said the Bush plan "may be a well-intended way to solve our problems, but it is a proposal we cannot embrace." He called it "an assault on our Constitution and our Bill of Rights."

Lewis, an ordained Baptist minister, said church-state separation has "guided us for more than 220 years."

"Organized religion can and should involve itself in important social issues," he said. "I am a firm believer in the Social Gospel."

Lewis pointed to churches active in the civil-rights movement, who were not given "a dime for their efforts."

"The churches in the civil-rights movement came out OK," he said. "It worked out all right."

The Spirit led churches involved in the struggle for civil rights, Lewis said, "And the Spirit should be our guide today, not the government." He added, "We should care for our nation -- our brothers and sisters -- because it is the right thing to do, the moral thing to do, not because the government has paid us to do it."

Speaking out against government-funded proselytization. Lewis said, "In the United States of America, people should never have to get saved to be saved."

And he criticized provisions in charitable choice that would allow churches to take federal funds while discriminating in their hiring practices. He said employment offers could say: "Catholics, Jews, Protestants or Muslims need not apply for this federally subsidized job. I cannot and will not support any bill that allows the government to promote discrimination or return us to the days of religious intolerance and bigotry."

Lewis wrote a check and joined the Religious Liberty Council of the BJC during the luncheon.

Earlier, Melissa Rogers, executive director of the PEW Forum on Religion and Public Life, described the BJC as having "perfect pitch" on religious liberty advocacy. The former BJC general counsel said at the same time

the BJC has been raising questions about the Bush faith initiative, it has also worked to clarify ways in which the church and state can cooperate in a constitutional way.

Members of the RLC also voted on new officers and representatives to the BJC board at the meeting. Suzii Paynter of the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission and Bill Wilson, pastor of First Baptist Church in Waynesboro, Va., were re-elected co-chairs of the RLC. Bryan Brock of First Baptist Church in Gaithersburg, Md., was re-elected to be RLC secretary. Hal Bass of Arkansas and Jack Glasgow of North Carolina were re-elected to serve a three-year term on the BJC.

Elected to represent the RLC on the BJC board for three-year terms were Pat Anderson, head of the Florida CBF; Cynthia Holmes, an attorney in St. Louis; and David Massengill, a lawyer from New York and member Metro Baptist Church in New York. Also, Barbara Baugh, travel agent and member of Trinity Baptist Church in San Antonio, was elected to serve out the last year of an unexpired term.

The RLC gave several standing ovations to honor Lewis, who was cited for his efforts in the historic March on Washington, the Freedom Riders and the march across the Edmond Pettus Bridge in Selma, Ala.

Lewis spoke of his childhood and life, which is detailed in his award-winning book, "Walking With the Wind." He signed books after the luncheon.

He said: "I saw those signs that said, 'White Men,' 'Colored Men.' I tasted the bitter fruits of racism and segregation."

Meeting Martin Luther King Jr. changed his life, said Lewis, who went on to become a believer in nonviolent civil disobedience. When waiting to be served at segregated lunch counters, people would put out cigarettes in his hair, beat him or pull him out of his chair. Often he went to jail.

"As a student, as a Christian, I got in trouble," he said. "As Baptists, as people of faith, from time to time, we have to get in trouble. We have to get in the way. Sometimes you have to just get in the way and go with the Spirit."

"If someone had told me ... that one day I would be standing here as a member of the House of Representative speaking to the Baptist Joint Committee, I would have said you are crazy."

After the lunch, Lewis sat down with a reporter from Associated Baptist Press in the CBF exhibit hall for a 30-minute interview and took questions from onlookers.

He reiterated his opposition to the Bush faith initiative and told onlookers that the House will debate the initiative in the days following Congress' July 4th recess. "I do not want us to move to that point where we have the government encouraging and financing faith," he said.

He also pointed to providing health care for all citizens and protecting the environment as issues that people of faith should support.

"When we pray, in a sense, we must move our feet," Lewis said. "We must be prepared to act. And I think sometimes as religious individuals . we become too quiet." He added, "The church should get out in front and be . a headlight instead of a taillight on some of the big issues of our time."

-30-

## **CBF history rooted in support of moderate schools, speaker says**

By John Pierce

ATLANTA (ABP) -- "The history of the (Cooperative Baptist Fellowship) is rooted in the support of moderate Baptist theological education," said Tom Graves, president of Baptist Theological Seminary in

Richmond, speaking to a theological-education luncheon held June 28 in conjunction with the CBF General Assembly in Atlanta.

Graves pointed to the Fellowship's action, soon after its formation in 1991, in rallying churches to provide more than \$250,000 to the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland. The need arose after the Southern Baptist Convention's Foreign Mission Board (now International Mission Board) stopped funding the school. The European Baptist Federation seminary has since relocated to Prague in the Czech Republic.

Both CBF and BTSR, the first of several alternative theology schools to spring up following the rightward swing of the six SBC-owned seminaries, are celebrating 10th anniversaries this year.

"One cannot tell the story of one (CBF or the new seminaries that receive some CBF funding) without telling the story of the other," said Graves.

Graves said he has learned valuable lessons in leading the Virginia seminary that has grown from a small gathering of students in borrowed classrooms to 250 alumni and expanding facilities.

He warned those who lead new theological institutions to forget "personal hurts and disappointments" over feeling ostracized from once-familiar institutions.

Graves also cautioned leaders to be more accepting of those who previously did not see the need for new institutions but now consider them as important. Being willing to work only with "purists," who have supported the schools since their beginning, is unwise, he said.

Another important lesson Graves said he has learned is to not make decisions out of fear. "Fear is the chief obstacle as we look to future," he said.

Later that afternoon, four university-based programs for Baptist studies held a retirement reception for William Hendricks of Brite Divinity School at Texas Christian University and Furman Hewitt of Duke Divinity School. The other programs are at Wake Forest and Emory universities.

-30-

## **Ethnic minorities ponder their role in Fellowship**

By Christopher Hedglin

ATLANTA (ABP) -- Minorities affiliated with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship say they would like to see the moderate organization plant ethnic churches and become more aware of cultural differences within the CBF.

Hispanic and Asian Network groups met on June 29 during the 2001 CBF General Assembly in Atlanta.

The Hispanic Network breakfast brought approximately 15 delegates of various ethnic backgrounds together to discuss the role that they hoped the CBF would play in Hispanic church life. Among the topics discussed were the need for CBF involvement in church planting and the hopes for continued sensitivity toward Hispanic members.

When asked what the most important agenda for his group was, volunteer Hispanic Network Coordinator Bernie Moraga from Albuquerque, N.M., said: "Sensitivity from the CBF contingency. Not just from two or three (people), but everybody."

The breakfast also served as a time to honor the Aldalpes, a Hispanic family who was commissioned during the conference to be missionaries in India. In addition to his joy about doing God's work, Eddie Aldalpe said he was pleased with the interest that their work was generating in the Hispanic community.

"I am really excited, because the Hispanic churches that know us are asking about the CBF," said Aldalpe.

Bill Bruster, the networking coordinator for the Atlanta-based CBF, attended the meeting and gave his vision for next year's General Assembly, which will be held in Texas.

"I hope the General Assembly in Fort Worth will reflect the true multicultural make-up of the population in Texas," Bruster said.

Phil Hester, associate coordinator for church starts for the CBF, gave the keynote address at the Asian Network luncheon. His speech, which gave the attendees information on starting new mission projects and churches, made reference to Revelation 7:9. The passage, which discusses God's church of the future with people from "every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues," was illustrated at the luncheon which included CBF members from Korean, Chinese and Vietnamese backgrounds.

The luncheon attracted more than 50 people who were interested in learning about the Asian Network's goals for the coming year.

-30-

## **Shared ministry can work, couple tells CBF crowd**

By John Hall

ATLANTA (ABP) -- Russ and Amy Jacks Dean decided almost 15 years ago to share the rest of their lives with each other. About eight months ago the Deans decided to take their partnership to another level.

Co-pastors at Park Road Baptist Church in Charlotte, N.C., the Deans are part of a growing number of couples that are sharing their ministries in churches around the nation.

Russ Dean told an auxiliary meeting audience at the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship meeting that a shared pastoral ministry, while only recently emerging in contemporary society, is a biblical model, citing numerous examples including Priscilla and Aquilla.

"The lone-ranger minister that is common in Baptist life today really is the exception biblically," he said.

He said the nature of the couple's ministry allows each of them to focus on their individual strengths. He said he tends to focus on thoughts while his wife tends to focus more on emotions, helping different types of people to connect to their ministry.

"I don't care how good your minister is, he will have a style and connect better with some people," Russ Dean said.

Though they said their ministry is working well, they had problems finding a church that was open to having a shared pastorate. Amy Jacks Dean said her husband had several offers from churches, but they were unwilling to split the pastoral responsibilities between him and her.

She said search committees had two main concerns when faced with the possibility of a shared ministry: how would the two be paid and the responsibilities split. She said pay varies from church to church, with some allotting a salary for one pastor for the duo while others double the salary to compensate for two pastors.

The Deans said they split the work equally as he focuses on worship planning, administration and outreach while she concentrates on discipleship, pastoral care and missions. They share preaching responsibilities. Amy Jacks Dean said they discuss all decisions before taking action.

"The buck doesn't have to stop at one place," Amy Jacks Dean said. "It can stop with two. We can make the decision together."

-30-

## **Publishing company presents Christian-education award**

By ABP staff

ATLANTA (ABP) -- Virginian Leon Castle received the Smyth & Helwys Excellence in Christian Education Award during a banquet June 28 in Atlanta. He is the sixth recipient of the award, which is presented annually to a Christian educator.

Castle has worked in Christian education for more than 30 years, including several years as editor and supervisor of children's Sunday school materials at the former Baptist Sunday School Board. He also served on staff with churches in Virginia, Kentucky, Georgia and Tennessee. He has authored six books and written numerous articles and curriculum units.

In 1992 the Virginia Baptist Religious Education Association honored him with the "Distinguished Christian Educator Award." Castle retired in 2000 from his position as minister of education at the First Baptist Church of Memphis, Tenn. He continues to serve churches and educational organizations as a consultant and writer from his home in Charlottesville, Va.

The award was presented as part of an annual dinner hosted by Smyth & Helwys Publishing. A capacity crowd attended the sixth annual dinner, where Brett Younger, pastor of Broadway Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas, was the keynote speaker.

Each year, the editors of Smyth & Helwys choose a recipient for the award for excellence in Christian education. The candidates must be directly involved in the practice of Christian education at the local church level.

"This award is one more way we honor the significant work of Christian education in the life of the local church," explained David Cassidy, executive vice president for Smyth & Helwys. "Our core mission is to support churches as they minister, and this award highlights a few of the people who superbly model that work through teaching ministries."

Smyth & Helwys Publishing, located in Macon, Ga., is an independent Christian publisher of educational resources and books.

-30-

## **Van crash injures Baptist students**

By Christopher Hedglin

GREENSBORO, N.C. (ABP) -- A van carrying 14 members of Virginia Heights Baptist Church in Roanoke, Va., flipped over on U.S. 220 near Level Cross, N.C., on July 1.

First Sgt. R.A. Graves of the North Carolina Highway patrol told the Roanoke Times the crash occurred due to a blowout of the left rear tire. The youth group was coming home from a church trip to Myrtle Beach, S.C. when the accident occurred.

After the blowout, Graves said the van veered off the side of the road but driver Jonathan Newcomb was able to bring the vehicle back onto the road. At that point the van overturned and ejected four of the riders through the window. Newcomb and his wife, Jonni, were the only two people wearing seat belts. Both were treated and released from the hospital.

One of the passengers, Ben Wheeler, 15, of Roanoke, was airlifted to the University of North Carolina Hospital in Chapel Hill, N.C. As of July 3 he was in serious condition.

In addition to Wheeler, other seriously injured passengers include Marella Dizdarevic, 19, of Roanoke. She underwent back surgery on Monday at Moses Cone Hospital in Greensboro, N.C., and was listed in fair condition.

Two other students, Jessica Lewis, 13, and Helen Vandegrift, 14, were in critical condition at the hospital as of July 3.

Five other passengers were treated and released after the accident.

On Monday, a psychologist met with the passengers and their families to discuss the event.

"Obviously, they've had a very traumatic experience," the church's pastor, Nelson Harris, told the Roanoke newspaper. "We want to provide as much support to the youth as we can."

Members of the church have held prayer meetings for the injured teens. In addition, Harris said a fund has been created to assist the families with medical bills and counseling.

-30-

EDITOR'S NOTE: Donations for the families of accident victims can be made to the Ministry Fund, c/o Virginia Heights Baptist Church, 2014 Memorial Avenue, Roanoke, Va., 24015.

**END**

---