

in Oklahoma City. "There is even pain about what all this has done to missions. But it's not all bad. Pain serves as a warning of danger and has caused us to change for the better."

Mainstream participants gave a standing ovation to Loper, who left the North American Mission Board rather than consent to the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message, the more conservative faith statement now used for doctrinal accountability within the Southern Baptist Convention. Loper received financial assistance from a Texas Baptist transition fund for missionaries who refuse to sign the statement, which some say is being applied as a creed.

Clay and Debbie Porter, who resigned from the SBC International Mission Board for the same reason after 12 years of service in Macao and Hong Kong, also were welcomed with a standing ovation. The Porters are now missionaries in residence at Samford University in Birmingham.

"We realized that we can't fear God and man at the same time," Clay Porter told Associated Baptist Press in an interview. "The IMB didn't fire us. We fired them."

The executives of two Baptist state conventions -- Charles Wade of Texas and John Upton of Virginia -- outlined approaches to missions in their two states. Both conventions will seek to include any Baptists who want to network in the cause of missions around the world.

Wade, executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, announced that a 32-person board of directors, chaired by retired seminary missions professor Justice Anderson, has been formed to administrate the work of a newly developing World Missions Network. Wade said that up to eight board members could come from outside Texas in the future as members rotate on and off.

"Our missions network is not just for Texas Baptists," Wade said. "We will network with Virginia Baptists, [Cooperative Baptist Fellowship] global missions, or any others [including the SBC] who want to help people come to Jesus. This is a world missions network that won't tell people what they can't do, but we will try to help people work together to do what God has called and gifted them to do."

"It's easy to camp out where we've been and nurse our hurts," Wade added. "The future is where God is calling us, and we can't allow our critics to define our future."

Upton, addressing the convocation via video because of his wife's recent surgery for breast cancer, echoed Wade's words of inclusiveness and networking as he outlined the new Kingdom Advance approach to missions by the Baptist General Association of Virginia.

Kingdom Advance, like the new Texas Baptist approach, grew out of the BGAV's founding document, Upton said, and focuses on the New Testament word "together" as used in Acts 1-4.

"Together is the key word, the pivot word," declared Upton, a former missionary to Taiwan. "It's one of collaboration and partnership ... that honors differences ... and shares resources."

Upton said 70 percent of the world's churches will be outside the United States and Europe by 2025, compared to 13 percent in 1900. "The two-thirds world and the Western world must collaborate," he said.

Upton said Kingdom Advance will seek to "plug the right people into the right places" in an inclusive manner. One priority of Kingdom Advance, he said, is to scout out and train emerging leaders, noting that "for every three retiring from [Christian] ministry, one is now entering it." Other priorities are to start and develop "courageous" churches "willing to risk again," empower leaders around the world, and emphasize 'glocal'

missions and evangelism that includes both global to local aspects.

Suzanah Raffield of Birmingham spoke of gender inclusion and the needs of women around the world. "The call to minister with women around the world is louder and more powerful than any denominational crisis," said Raffield, coordinator of Global Women, an independent missions organization. "The callings of the women on whose shoulders I stand are more powerful and louder than a reaction to a convention," she said.

Two missions veterans, Keith Parks of Richardson, Texas, and Bill O'Brien of Birmingham, opened and closed the convocation respectively with addresses on the priority of missions and a vision for future missions.

"The Bible is not a book that just includes missions -- it is missions," said Parks, former president of the SBC Foreign (now International) Mission Board and former global missions coordinator for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

"Our spiritual ancestors [in the SBC] declared in 1845 that missions was the priority around which they joined," Parks said. "The current SBC leadership insists that doctrine, not missions, is the controlling force... The fulfillment of this God-given missions priority for those of our persuasion is not possible within that system."

The "antidote" to such a system, he said, is not bitterness or recrimination, but a renewed focus on the heritage and priority of missions -- "Christian-by-Christian, church-by-church and state-by-state in cooperation with all who share this biblical priority and celebrate the God-given variety of convictions, gifts and methods."

Patrick Anderson of Lakeland, Fla., the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship's missions advocate, paralleled the biblical story of the Good Samaritan with the need for Baptists to collaborate and minister to neglected people afflicted around the world by AIDS, hunger, war and ethnic cleansing.

"We can identify with the guy in the ditch," who was beaten and left behind by thieves and aided by the Samaritan, Anderson said. He described "people stripped of reputation and careers" during the SBC controversy, and said "the Baptist landscape is littered" with people like that.

Anderson said Baptists seeking new horizons in missions have "no need to re-create missions from scratch" but can develop partnerships to "network with neglected people groups" and collaborate with each other in missions.

Parks, Upton and O'Brien outlined how the power center of Christianity is gravitating away from Western world to the Southern Hemisphere.

"The era of us-to-them is over," said O'Brien, former Foreign Mission Board executive vice president and former director of the Global Center at Samford University. "Unilateral missions is part and parcel of the past. Any sending body that holds to a strategy that sets its work and its missionaries separate and apart from any existing [national] church is both poor ecclesiology and sheer folly.

"A vision of missions in the future must include 'netweaving' webs of inclusiveness," he declared. "There will be many webs -- research webs, health-care webs, educational webs, environmental webs -- all fed by the discipling webs of churches committed to the whole gospel for whole persons and whole societies."

The 10 inductees into the Mainstream Baptist Hall of Fame were cited for standing up for Baptist principles, heritage and freedom. They are Sarah Frances Anders, retired professor at Louisiana Baptist College,

Pineville, La.; Patrick and Carolyn Anderson of Lakeland, Fla., who were instrumental in development of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship; James Slatton, retired pastor of River Road Church, Baptist, in Richmond, Va.; R. G. Puckett of Raleigh, N.C., retired editor of the Biblical Recorder, North Carolina's state Baptist newsjournal; Wilmer C. Fields, retired vice president for public relations and director of Baptist Press for the SBC Executive Committee, Nashville, Tenn.; Phil Strickland, executive director of the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission, Dallas; Bruce Prescott, executive director of the Mainstream Oklahoma Baptists, Norman, Okla.; Wade; and Wilson.

The next Mainstream Baptist Network convocation is set for Feb. 6-7, 2004, in Nashville.

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Joel Gregory challenges preachers
to speak into the 'battles' of life

By Marv Knox

WACO, Texas (ABP) -- Preaching is sounding God's trumpet in the midst of battle, Joel Gregory told participants in the inaugural pastors conference at Baylor University's Truett Theological Seminary.

Gregory, one of 10 keynote speakers at the Feb. 3-5 event, cited the Apostle Paul's analogy: "If the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle?"

He addressed the conference theme, "The Urgency of the Hour" which was related to the phrase "Night Cometh" inscribed on Truett Sminary's clock tower.

Gregory, for more than two decades known as one of Baptists' premier pulpiteers, walked away from the prestigious pastorate of First Baptist Church of Dallas in 1992. For awhile, he sold burial plots, unable to find another preaching opportunity. Now he is a magazine publisher in Fort Worth and preaches with some frequency.

At various times in the past, he said he saw preaching as the interpretation of Scripture, as an oratorical performance, and even as an "aesthetic art form to carve out a niche in history."

"But when you have put the trumpet down for a while, you better understand what it's about when you pick it up," he said. "We are preaching to people who are battling for their very existence."

"You preach into people's battles," he advised. "Most of the people you preach to are barely making it." He lamented that he cannot go back to apologize to former parishioners who reached out to him through their need, but he did not realize what was happening.

Recalling how he rapidly moved "from a mansion to a one-bedroom apartment, from national TV to obscurity," he reported, "God taught me people are living in a battle."

Pastors also preach to churches engaged in battle, Gregory noted. "Since the Reformation, never has there been a greater battle for the soul of the church," he said. Some church leaders want to reflect culture in order to build huge churches, while others want to return to an "old-time religion" that never really existed.

The battle of the church is not about worship or marketing strategies or growth programs, he said, "but about the soul of who we are."

Preaching additionally goes out to a national battle, he said, admitting his thinking has changed in this regard. Before 9-11, he believed

America primarily was a secular society. "Now, I see a thin veneer of secularism overlaying a deep desire for faith."

In the midst of cataclysm, Americans won't turn to sociology, psychology or TV, he said. "They're going to want to know if there's a word from God. You are going to face a church house full of people wanting to know if you've got a trumpet to blow."

And pastors preach from their own battles, he said, pointing to pastors whose preaching matured after they faced crises.

"You find your voice in the middle of your battles," he observed. "Authentic preaching has always had as its center the canonical gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ ... and don't ever try to change it. Don't trade authentic preaching for the kazoo of being contemporary, for the tin whistle of entertainment, for the turkey call of trying to get as many people as you can under one roof."

Wherever they are called to blow the preaching trumpet, pastors should remain faithful, Gregory urged.

"Most of you are preachers because you are very good Christians and preached out of your commitment," he said. "God called some of us to preach because he knew that's how we would stay Christians. ... Because I knew I'd have to pick up the trumpet, I went back to the Savior."
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Texas church receives
\$800,000 Lilly grant

By Mark Wingfield

DALLAS (ABP) -- A Texas Baptist congregation is among 15 nationwide to receive grants from the Lilly Endowment for pastoral residency programs.

Wilshire Baptist Church of Dallas received \$800,000 from Lilly's Transition-into-Ministry Grants Program. The church's pastoral residency program is one of only two funded in a Baptist church and the only one of any denomination in the southwestern United States. The other Baptist church funded is Concord Baptist Church of Christ in Brooklyn, N.Y.

Wilshire's grant will fund seven recent seminary graduates who will work in two-year cycles as ministry residents at the church.

The first of those residents, Jay Hogewood, already is in place. Hogewood was in the first graduating class of Truett Seminary at Baylor University, then served on staff at First Baptist Church of Richardson. He currently is writing his doctoral dissertation at Texas Christian University's Brite Divinity School.

Two more residents will come on board in August, then two more the next August and two more the following August, according to Pastor George Mason, who directs the program named for the church's longtime former pastor, Bruce McIver.

The Lilly Endowment has been a major funder of religious research and ministry training through the years but most often through institutions rather than local churches. The Transition-into-Ministry Grants Program, however, has directed funds into churches as well as institutions.

Nationally, the program has funded 15 congregation-based efforts and seven institution-based residencies.

The purpose of the grants, according to Lilly literature, is to "nurture a new generation of talented pastors and give them an opportunity to develop their leadership capacities and skills within the setting of

healthy and dynamic congregations."

Such a program is needed, Lilly says, because the first years of pastoral ministry are both critical and difficult.

"Many new pastors comment that they were frustrated by a sense of isolation and lack of professional support or guidance," the Lilly guidelines explain. "As a result, the retention rate for talented younger pastors is discouragingly low."

Pastoral residency programs, according to Lilly officials, provide a "new way for training and developing talented pastors" through mentoring that results in healthy habits.

The Wilshire residency, like all the others funded by Lilly, will emphasize pastoral, congregational and academic components.

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