

Baptist and Reflector

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News journal of Tennessee Baptist Convention

Camp to draw pastors to retreat Aug. 17-21

Bible study, messages from Southern Baptist leaders, special music, and recreation will highlight the 31st annual Tennessee Baptist Pastors' Retreat Aug. 17-21 at Camp Carson in Newport.

Bible study sessions will be held by Jack Stanton, first vice-president of the Southern Baptist Convention and director of the Institute of Evangelism at Southwest Baptist College in Bolivar, Mo.

Robert Hamblin, Home Mission Board vice-president of evangelism based in Atlanta, Ga., also will present two messages. The camp pastor, Richard White, is pastor of First Baptist Church in Franklin and president of the Tennessee Baptist Pastors' Conference.

Recreation will be led by Archie Fendley, minister of activities, Central Baptist Church of Bearden in Knoxville; and the special music will be directed by

Walter E. "Bucky" Phillips, minister of music and youth administration, Trenton Street Baptist Church in Harriman.

Camp director, Jerry King, is program associate of the Tennessee Baptist Convention evangelism department, which sponsors the event.

Tennesseans speaking to the pastors include J. W. Bargiol, director of missions, Big Emory Baptist Association; Charles D. Page, pastor, First Baptist Church in Nashville; Phil Glisson, evangelist from Memphis; Tom Madden, TBC executive secretary-treasurer; and Montrose Street-er, associate campus pastor, Carson-Newman College in Jefferson City.

The pastors also will hear testimonies from fellow pastors and will spend time with prayer partners.

Baptist Book Store materials will be available and fellowship times will be



Stanton



White



Hamblin

sponsored by Carson-Newman College and Belmont College in Nashville.

Pastors interested in registering for the

retreat which costs \$50, should send \$1 to the TBC evangelism department, P.O. Box 728, Brentwood, TN 37027.

Historian claims SBC faces identity crisis

By Lonnie Wilkey

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)— Southern Baptists are in the midst of an identity crisis. Church History Professor Bill Leonard, told denominational educators.

Southern Baptists are living during a time when it is increasingly difficult to determine what it means to be both Southern and a Baptist, Leonard, professor at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., said during the Association of Southern Baptist Colleges and Schools annual meeting in Kansas City, Mo.

"While theological tensions have become the immediate issue in the Southern Baptist Convention, they must be viewed as symptoms of a wider and more complex identity crisis in both the denomination and the culture," Leonard noted.

Southern Baptists developed a close identification with Southern culture after the Civil War, he explained: "Southern Baptist identification with Southern society developed alongside the primary source of identity — the denomination."

"This denominational consciousness, which had to be protected at all costs as it evolved, provided an increasing sense of unity and uniqueness for churches affiliated with the SBC," he continued. "It served to distinguish Southern Baptists from their Northern counterparts and other more independent Baptists of the southland."

But the pluralism of American life tends to weaken denominational loyalties from without, Leonard warned.

"As the South loses its traditional identity, as it is invaded by outsiders and as Southern Baptists expand outside the South, pluralism of belief and experience is bound to occur," he said.

Diversity "has undermined denominational identity with the SBC," Leonard observed, noting the influx of people from the North and East has brought people into the SBC with no experience of the social and religious traditions of the convention.

This influx, combined with the efforts of Southern Baptists to take their faith to pioneer areas, meant people "became Southern Baptists who had never been south of the George Washington Bridge (in New York City) or eaten a bowl of grits."

"They did not, many denominationalists lamented, understand the need to do things the way we do it in our Southern Baptist Zion of the South," he noted.

As a result of the breakdown of cultural and denominational restraints, theological tensions, long present in Southern Baptist life, became increasingly pronounced, Leonard maintained.

He said many church leaders have urged the convention to unite around

historical Baptist doctrines as a response to denominational and cultural pluralism.

Yet this solution is not as simple as it seems, he noted: "Given the diversity of Baptist theological traditions, precise doctrinal definitions have been difficult if not impossible to construct. In many debates both sides in the convention can claim to represent historic Baptist positions with some validity."

Leonard called for Baptist colleges to play a role in aiding the convention in seeking "to remythologize its own traditions as a denomination of theological integrity but doctrinal diversity, responding to cultural transitions while retaining the best of its Southern heritage."

If that were to happen, he said, the convention could then re-evaluate its motives for evangelism and missions and its current captivity to aspects of American culture.

"If (the convention) would also pursue a new pluralism by which a people bound

by certain biblical imperatives might allow for diverse, practical, even theological, approaches to the evangelical and communal calling of the church of Jesus Christ," Leonard said.

Accident injures summer missionary

Regina Johnson, a student summer missionary from Hermitage, was injured in a car accident that also injured a child she was transporting from a day camp activity to Green River Baptist Church in Waynesboro. The accident occurred June 29.

Johnson's leg was broken in three places and the 10-year-old boy, Robert Mercier, broke a bone in his hand and required 15 stitches in both legs. He was not a member of the Waynesboro church but

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June CP gifts top \$1.9-million

After two-thirds of the convention's budget year, mission gifts to the Cooperative Program from Tennessee Baptist Convention churches are 8.71 percent ahead of last year, but still below the convention-approved goal, according to Tom Madden, executive secretary/treasurer of the Tennessee Baptist Convention.

When the books closed on June 30, \$14,478,618.49 had been received through the Cooperative Program during the first eight months of the November 1986 through October 1987 convention year, compared to \$13,319,061.56 during the same period last year. This represents a gain of \$1,159,556.93 over last year.

"It's a good report," Madden said. "In light of inflation,

it's marvelous."

June's gifts of \$1,948,387.42 represent the highest total ever received during the month of June and the 13th highest monthly total in TBC history. June's receipts were significantly higher (\$580,968.86 or 42.49 percent) than June 1986 receipts of \$1,367,418.56.

However, the goal for the eight months would be \$15-million. The \$14,478,618.49 received to date is \$521,381.51 or 3.48 percent below budget.

Madden expressed optimism that with strong giving during the last four months of the budget year, the \$22.5-million budget goal can be reached.

Lewis asks HMB staff to affirm BFM statement

By Sherri A. Brown

ATLANTA (BP) — Professional staffers of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board will be asked to reaffirm their commitment to the Baptist Faith and Message Statement as interpreted by the Southern Baptist Convention Peace Committee, HMB President Larry Lewis said June 26.

Lewis, who was elected president of the Home Mission Board in April and assumed the post June 1, also said future employment practices may be tightened and that there is a need to review the doctrinal stance of missionaries on the field.

"We must give careful attention to the doctrinal integrity of our agency," Lewis said. "Trustees and administrators who will not be responsive will be replaced."

Lewis made his remarks to about 150 employees who attended a recent Friday morning chapel service at the Atlanta offices of the HMB. Employees of the main offices of the HMB include 138 elected staff and 215 other employees. According to the annual report, the HMB has 3,637 appointed missionaries.

Lewis, who was president of the 800-student Hannibal-LaGrange Baptist College in Hannibal, Mo., before becoming HMB president, said his action is a result of the report of the SBC Peace Committee during the June 16-18 annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in St. Louis.

In its report, the Peace Committee recommended that "trustees determine the theological position of seminary administrators and faculty members," as well as to build their professional staffs and faculties "from those who clearly reflect" the dominant theological viewpoint of Southern Baptists.

The report also noted "most Southern Baptists" interpret the "historic Baptist position" that the Bible has "truth without any mixture of error for its matter" as meaning "for example" that Adam and Eve were real persons, the named authors did indeed write the books attributed to them in the Bible, the miracles did occur, and the historical narratives in the Scripture are "accurate and reliable."

"I see this (the Peace Committee report) as a mandate. I pledge, as president, I will do everything in my power to lead the board ... to be commensurate with guidelines of the Peace Committee," he said.

Lewis said he believes the "mandate" comes from the recommendation of the Peace Committee, which continues the 22-member group for up to three more years "for the purpose of observing the response of all agencies, officers and other participants to the recommendations of the Peace Committee."

Following the chapel address, Lewis told the Atlanta bureau of Baptist Press that although the recommendation of the Peace Committee was specifically directed to seminary administrators and faculty, "I believe the spirit is such for all agencies to comply."

"It behoves us as an agency to take the Peace Committee report and its overwhelming approval by the convention as a mandate. ... I do not see it will measurably affect hiring policies since we already ask professional employees to affirm the Baptist Faith and Message, in-

cluding Article I."

Article I deals with the Scripture and contains the phrase that the Bible "has truth without any mixture of error for its matter."

"Agencies exist to serve our people in reaching the world for Jesus Christ," Lewis said. "Our convention has the right and the responsibility to communicate directives. We are responsible for concurring. The grassroots (of Southern Baptists) are solid, Bible-believing, Bible-preaching folks. Southern Baptists refuse to accept muddled, watered-down, neo-orthodox theology."

Lewis said he will ask the staff to "indicate compliance with the Baptist Faith and Message, but not necessarily with a signature. I'll probably send a memo asking anyone who has a problem with it to come talk to me. If they don't come to me, I'll assume they affirm it (the statement). "I don't expect anybody at the Home Mission Board to be terminated. I don't

expect employees to be upset (by these actions)," Lewis said.

Future hiring practices will include a "more involved screening selection of future employees," Lewis said, indicating he will be more involved in interviewing upper-level management staff to determine they are, "doctrinally sound — ones who will without question embrace the Baptist Faith and Message, including Article I, as interpreted by the Peace Committee."

In reviewing hiring practices of both Atlanta staff and missionaries on the field, Lewis said the forms and practices "seem adequate to me. There might be some slight revisions. I like the idea of upper level staff meeting with the board of directors or at least meeting with the administrative committee of the board of directors."

In the only instance where Lewis has been involved in employing professional staff — the June trustee executive com-

mittee meeting — Lewis broke with hiring tradition to ask the prospective employee to affirm belief in the Baptist Faith and Message Statement.

In presenting Richard Reasoner of Kansas City, Mo., to trustees for election as director of counseling services, Lewis acknowledged he was breaking with regular hiring practices but asked Reasoner to affirm his belief in the BFM, specifically asking if he (Reasoner) agreed with Article I which defines the Bible as being "truth without any mixture of error."

Reasoner responded positively to the requests and answered additional questions, responding that he did not drink alcohol, use tobacco products, and would not engage in any behavior that would be an embarrassment to the board. He also answered a question in which he assured trustees he would join and be an active member of a Southern Baptist church after a move to Atlanta.

Lewis said the testimony and questioning of prospective employees will not necessarily become standard practice.

Currently, staff members and missionaries answer questions on their church involvement, their personal witnessing habits, and their moral behavior, as well as their doctrinal beliefs, in relation to the Baptist Faith and Message, said Gary Jones, director of the personnel division of the HMB.

The BFM was reaffirmed by the HMB trustees in March 1976 as "the theological basis and guideline for those employed as missionaries and staff of the HMB."

Lewis acknowledged that to review the doctrinal stance of more than 3,000 missionaries on the field would be a phenomenal task. "I'm not exactly sure what we'll do with that," he admitted, declining to comment further.

"I hope and pray that now the Peace Committee has brought a report that peace will be the result. This divisiveness has been a bad witness to the world and thwarted Bold Mission Thrust. I hope all agencies will ensure the recommendations of the Peace Committee," Lewis concluded.

Parks challenges Baptists to 'run risks' in missions

By Karen Benson

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP) — The president of the largest missionary-sending agency in the world has challenged Southern Baptists to "run risks never before run" if they are to win the world for Christ.

R. Keith Parks, president of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, claims Bold Mission Thrust will never be successful until individual Christians make significant, sacrificial changes in their thinking and lifestyles.

Bold Mission Thrust is Southern Baptists' plan to do their part to reach the world for Christ by the year 2000.

Speaking through a recently released book, *World in View*, Parks claims that "if global evangelization is our consuming passion, we will budget differently, live differently, and give differently. We will sacrifice to be the people God is calling us to be."

There must be a "bottom line" if Christians are to be truly mission-minded, Parks says: "We cannot live in comfort, do everything we want to do for ourselves, and still reach the world for Jesus Christ. Leftovers will not do."

Global evangelization will not happen, Parks claims, until Christians free themselves from the "unimportant and the trivial."

"We need to grapple with the challenge of allowing ourselves to be freed from material-centered concerns in order to give ourselves to the spiritual concerns of reaching the world with God's good news in Jesus Christ."

Southern Baptists also need to be willing to change the way they think about missions, Parks says, urging all to redraw their "mission maps" and seek to view the world "as God sees it."

Traditional methods of doing missions must be coupled with non-traditional ways of reaching others for Christ, Parks says. But this openness to change will not come without fervent prayer, he says.

"We must pray for openness to this new day and the new opportunities before us," he says. "We must pray because many of our maps are out of date, and we lack wisdom. We must pray as we give ourselves to learning more about this world and how to reach it with the good news of the gospel. We must pray as we discipline ourselves to identify priorities." Further, Parks says, "We need to iden-

tify sharp priorities with the full awareness that to accept them means we will stop doing some of the things we are now doing in order to get on with more important things."

All of this means "we must run risks that we have never run before," Parks says. "The course is uncharted. We have no maps complete in every detail. We have not been there before. We have not talked enough about kingdom matters beyond our own perspective before." But what hangs in the balance, he says, "is the salvation of multitudes of people."

Parks' book, *World in View*, is the second release in the A.D. 2000 Series, a joint publishing venture of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board in Richmond, Va., and New Hope publishers in Birmingham, Ala. New Hope is a publishing arm of the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union.

Preachers' school explores 'life, work' of ministers

JEFFERSON CITY — "What are we as ministers?" Wayne Oates asked his audience of pastors attending the East Tennessee Baptist Preachers' School.

"We are harbingers and bearers of hope — that is what a bleeding, broken-hearted, despairing world needs," Oates declared.

Oates was among the featured teachers and speakers for the 1987 meeting of the annual Preachers' School, which was held June 29 through July 3 at Carson-Newman College. This year's school attracted 260 persons, including pastors, their wives, and children.

The "Life and Work of the Minister" was a topic of lectures by both Oates and C-N Professor William Blevins.

Quoting from Acts 14:15, Oates emphasized that ministers are "men of like nature" with those to whom they minister. "We comfort, care for, fortify, and heal other people out of our own wounds," he said. "We act on behalf of men in relation to God, not on behalf of God in relation to men."

"Christianity is not man reaching up to God, it's God reaching down to man," H. Franklin Paschall, retired pastor of First Baptist Church, Nashville, told the au-

dience at his Baptist heritage lecture on the doctrine of salvation. "We're saved not by working a plan, but by receiving a gift from God," said Paschall, who also delivered several lectures on the Book of Malachi.

Dorothy Sample, past president of Woman's Missionary Union, delivered three lectures to the more than 60 pastors' wives who attended the school. Sample spoke on personal development and on mentoring the growth of others.

James McCluskey, pastor of Wallace Memorial Baptist Church in Knoxville, spoke on the ministry of evangelism. Ralph Langley, pastor of First Baptist Church, Huntsville, Ala., led worship services as preacher of the week, and Claude Irons, pastor of Rogers Creek Baptist Church in Niota, served as president of the Preachers' School.

This year's session was the 58th annual meeting of the school. Among those pastors present was Paul Culpepper of Blue Ridge, Ga., who attended the first Preachers' School when it was held at Carson-Newman in 1929. Since that time, all but two meetings of the school have been held on the Carson-Newman campus.

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News analysis

High court preserves 'wall' of separation

By Stan Haste

WASHINGTON (BP)— Separation of church and state was a big winner at the U.S. Supreme Court during the just-completed 1986-87 term.

Significant victories included rulings that:

- Unanimously upheld a federal law allowing churches and other religious organizations to discriminate in favor of their own members when filling "secular" as well as religious jobs.

- Struck down, on a 7-2 vote, a law requiring the teaching of creation science in public schools whenever evolution is taught as a theory of origins.

- Ruled 8-1 that states may not deny unemployment benefits to employees fired from their jobs for refusing to work

on their Sabbath.

- Unanimously invalidated an airport commission's ban on the distribution of religious literature inside an airport terminal.

- Held unanimously that Jews qualify as a racial minority under a 19th century federal law banning race discrimination.

In the lone setback for free exercise of religion in a major case, the court split 5-4 in holding that prison officials have no Constitutional obligation to allow prisoners to attend worship services if the denial is "reasonable."

By deciding those half-dozen cases, the high court continued the trend in recent terms of accepting for review a large number of disputes involving religious issues. Indications are the trend will continue.

In other important actions taken — but without benefit of full argument and decision — the court:

- Refused to review the Constitutionality of formal diplomatic ties between the United States and the Roman Catholic papacy.

- Declined to consider a challenge to an Oregon law that prohibits public schoolteachers from wearing religious dress in the classroom.

- Let stand a lower ruling that Michigan may require teachers in sectarian as well as religious schools to obtain teaching certificates.

- Twice rejected appeals by ministers — one Presbyterian, the other Methodist — to review the legality of their respective ousters because of conflict with their congregations.

- Refused to review the claim of the historic Church of St. Paul and St. Andrew in New York City that a municipal commission violated the Constitution by designating the church an official landmark subject to city jurisdiction.

- In a second dispute between a religious group and an airport authority, declined to review lower court decisions that San Francisco officials violated free exercise of religion by refusing to rent space for a Christian Science reading room.

Far and away the most important rulings came, however, in the lopsided decisions during the final week of the term on job discrimination by churches and creationism.

In its unanimous decision in the job discrimination case, the court ruled Congress did not unconstitutionally favor churches and other religious organizations 15 years ago when it exempted them from complying with the Civil Rights Act's ban on religious bias in hiring prac-

tices. The exemption, the court held, actually strengthened separation of church and state. Church-state experts agreed.

One of these, Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs General Counsel Oliver S. Thomas, hailed the ruling as "a strong endorsement" of church-state separation and added: "We sometimes forget that without separation the state is free not only to advance religion but to interfere with it as well. The court wisely has recognized that it is perfectly proper for Congress to pass laws that protect religious institutions from governmental interference with or entanglement in their internal affairs."

The BJCPA was one of numerous religious bodies that filed friend-of-the-court briefs in the case, a dispute between the Mormon Church and a former building engineer fired because he did not meet certain religious standards mandated for continued employment.

In the surprisingly one-sided decision on creation science, seven justices joined in striking down a 1981 Louisiana law that sought to force public school science teachers to give equal time to creationism and evolution. In an opinion written by Justice William J. Brennan Jr., the court rejected the state's claim that the law had the secular purpose of fostering academic freedom; such a claim, Brennan wrote, was a "sham."

The law's real purpose, Brennan held, was "to change the science curriculum of public schools in order to provide pervasive advantage to a particular religious doctrine that rejects the factual basis of evolution in its entirety." Accordingly, the court's senior justice concluded, "The Act violates the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment because it seeks to employ the symbolic and financial support of government to achieve a religious purpose."

In another church-state test, the court ruled in February that Paula Hobbie, a Seventh-day Adventist fired by a Florida jewelry chain after she refused to work Friday evenings and Saturdays, was entitled to state unemployment compensation benefits. Florida violated Hobbie's free exercise religion, Brennan wrote for the 8-1 majority, because it failed to demonstrate a compelling state interest in refusing the benefits.

The court ruled unanimously June 15 that the Board of Airport Commissioners of Los Angeles had no Constitutional authority to issue a blanket ban on First Amendment activities inside the terminal of Los Angeles International Airport. Three years ago, airport police arrested a representative of the messianic group

Jews for Jesus for handing out literature in defiance of the ban.

In yet another unanimous decision, the court held in May that Jews constitute a racial as well as religious minority and are therefore entitled to protection under an 1870 anti-discrimination law. The same holds for Arabs, the court ruled separately. In the case testing whether Jews qualified under the terms of the law, a Silver Spring, Md., synagogue had used the law to file a civil suit against several young vandals convicted in a separate criminal trial of defacing the synagogue with swastikas and other anti-Semitic graffiti.

And in the lone decision that split the court down the middle, a 5-4 majority ruled June 9 that officials at Leesburg State Prison in New Jersey did not violate the free exercise rights of two Black Muslim inmates by denying them permission to attend a weekly service on Friday afternoons as required by the Islamic faith. The two had asked to be allowed to come inside the main prison building from duty outside prison walls for the service. Prison officials argued they should be permitted to curtail religious freedom on a limited basis in the larger interest of maintaining security. Justice Lewis F. Powell Jr., writing for the slim majority, agreed.

Lawrence County elects Bob Polk

Bob Polk was elected as director of missions of Lawrence County Association of Baptists at the May 8 executive board meeting held at Gum Springs Baptist Church in Lawrenceburg.

The vote was unanimous after discussion that included questions about Polk's belief in the inerrancy of the Scripture and his stance on the ordination of women and divorced men.

Polk, who will begin serving during the first week in August, is a native of Johnson City. He was ordained at Pine Crest Baptist Church in Johnson City and is a graduate of East Tennessee State University in Johnson City and Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C.

Polk is pastor of Oak Street Baptist Church in Elizabethton. He and his wife, Ruth Adams Polk, served as missionaries in Colombia from 1980-85.

He also has served as pastor of First Baptist Church in Jellico, Oak Street Baptist Church in Elizabethton, Shallow Ford Baptist Church in Erwin, and churches in North Carolina.

He has served as a moderator, clerk, and on various committees in associations.



Polk

Elizabeth Stiles dies in Nashville

Elizabeth Stiles, who served in the Tennessee Baptist Convention's missions department as office secretary for 16 years until her retirement in 1975, died June 29 in a Nashville hospital. She was 77 years old.

She was a member of Belmont Heights Baptist Church in Nashville and Professional Secretaries International.

The funeral was July 1 at Woodlawn Funeral Home in Nashville and was led by Perry Michel, pastor of her church, and Phil Padgett, retired executive director of United Tennessee League in Nashville. She was buried in Oak Grove Cemetery in Greeneville.

Stiles is survived by nieces, Martha Compton, Greeneville; Betty Montgomery, Church Hill; five great-nieces and nephews; and one great-niece.

Memorials in her honor may be made at Belmont Heights Baptist Church, P.O. Box 121053, Nashville, TN 37212.

Accident...

was attending the day camp activities of the church.

Johnson was transferred that day from Wayne County General Hospital in Waynesboro to Baptist Hospital in Nashville. She was released July 2. Her leg will remain in a cast for three months and she may face future surgery.

Johnson was working through the Tennessee Baptist Convention Sunday School department's summer missionary program in Indian Creek Baptist Association. She is a student at Union University.

She may be contacted at her home: 4235 Sweden Drive, Hermitage, TN 37076.

Neely's brother-in-law dies in Louisiana

J. C. Smyth, the brother-in-law of Wilma Neely, who works in the Tennessee Baptist Convention executive secretary/treasurer's office, died June 29 of cancer in Baton Rouge, La.

The funeral and burial was July 1 in Baton Rouge.

He is survived by his wife, Pauline; two children; and two grandchildren.

Court faces new religious disputes

By Stan Haste

WASHINGTON (BP)— Besides deciding and otherwise disposing of dozens of church-state cases during its recently concluded term, the Supreme Court already has announced it will review three such cases, plus a dispute between Jerry Falwell and Hustler magazine publisher Larry Flynt in the term that begins next October.

In what may turn out to be its most important ruling on religious exercises in public school classrooms in 25 years, the high court will decide whether state laws mandating observance of a moment of silence at the outset of the school day violate the First Amendment.

Two years ago, the court struck down an Alabama law that required a one-minute period of silence specifically designated for purposes of prayer and meditation. At stake

in the case next term are laws with more neutral language in New Jersey and two dozen other states.

In addition, the court will hear arguments in a pair of cases involving the religious rights of Native Americans.

In one, the justices will decide if the free exercise clause of the First Amendment protects Indians who use the drug peyote in religious ceremonies. The other case has to do with a dispute between Native Americans and the federal government over a tract of land in California some Indian tribes believe to be sacred.

The court also has agreed to decide if a lower court was right in awarding Falwell \$200,000 in damages for "emotional distress" after an advertisement in Hustler magazine parodied the well-known preacher and founder of the Moral Majority (now Liberty Federation).

Tennesseans analyze convention

Pastors' columns reveal opinions on SBC '87

By Charlie Warren

In the June 24 issue of the Baptist and Reflector, we expressed our own views concerning the recent annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention held this year in St. Louis, June 16-18. In last week's issue, we carried the editorial comments of other state Baptist paper editors.

This week we include the comments of some of Tennessee's pastors who attended the annual meeting. Following are excerpts from the pastors' columns from church newsletters which have been received in the Baptist and Reflector office.

"I want to thank the Lord for the great convention we had in St. Louis. It was the best Southern Baptist Convention that I have ever attended. There was some super preaching and singing, a more peaceful atmosphere than was anticipated, and a strong stand on biblical faith.

"As the convention continues to move toward a deeper commitment to our God and His Word, we are going to see days of great growth, both spiritually and numerically.

"I am proud to have Adrian Rogers as our president for another year. His patient and fair leadership during the convention did much to set the tone of the sessions."

Ray Gilder
Speedway Terrace Baptist Church
Memphis

"The convention was much more peaceful than in the past two years, but of course, not everyone was pleased in all the decisions that were made. However, that is the way our democratic process works. Let each issue be fairly presented and the messengers vote according to their convictions and the majority rules.

"We must live with and cooperate together as Christians even though we may differ on some issues. The main objective of our convention is to work together in support of missions and in that area, Southern Baptists are accomplishing their task second to none."

Ray Kitts
Island Home Baptist Church
Knoxville

"The 1987 annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in St. Louis is now history.

"The Peace Committee reported after two years of work. Time will only tell if true peace and reconciliation can be achieved in our convention. I pray that it will.

"All in all, it was a good convention. There seemingly was a more peaceful atmosphere and very little verbal fighting. The conservatives again won all the major votes in elections and other actions and so we'll continue down the path on which we've been for the last eight years.

"My hope is that we will not only talk about the Bible but that we will live it and practice it as we Southern Baptists seek to do our part in winning the world to Christ."

Ken Castleberry
Dalewood Baptist Church
Nashville

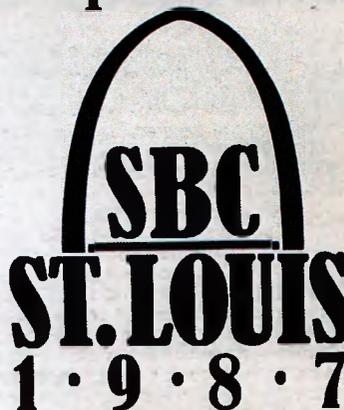
"Once again we have gathered as a convention and conducted the necessary business to hopefully insure another year of successful operation as we strive to carry out the Great Commission.

"As always the Home and Foreign Mission boards presented outstanding programs and reports. We were challenged to work together and accept our differences. Hopefully, the Peace Committee's report and its adoption will serve as a catalyst to restore our harmony. Reconciliation always begins in the heart of a person."

Ray Cleek
First Baptist Church
Lebanon

"Basically, the convention meeting is a grand experiment in democratic Baptist fellowship and decision making. Important issues were at stake and disagreements did occur. On some issues, Baptists are still divided. However, there is much that we should celebrate together and much common ground that we should claim for the glory of God."

Ronald Murray
First Baptist Church
Kingston



"For the ninth consecutive year, Southern Baptists who believe in the inerrancy of Scripture have controlled the leadership of our denomination. It speaks of the fact that grassroots Southern Baptists still believe in the historicity of Genesis 1-12, in the miracles of the Old Testament, in the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, the Books of Daniel and Isaiah as real prophecies, and in the validity of what the New Testament teaches about spiritual leadership in the home and in the church.

"The Peace Committee, which has been studying for the past two years the division within our denomination, brought its report. The report was a victory for the conservatives. It indicated what we have been saying all along, that the main problem in our convention is theological in nature and not political.

"The report challenged our seminary professors to begin reflecting in their teaching what mainline Southern Baptists have believed all along.

"What is taking place in our convention is of historic importance. It is one of the few times in church history that a major denomination has ever turned the tide on theological liberalism.

"Let us pray for Southern Baptists as they face what can be some of the greatest years that they have ever had and let us commit ourselves more fully to be a part of the work of our denomination."

Bob Mowrey
Park Avenue Baptist Church
Nashville

"All in all, I believe this was one of the most harmonious conventions we have had in several years. The convention was definitely conservative in its makeup. The election of Adrian Rogers by a majority of almost 5,000 votes indicates the stance of the convention."

Charles Sullivan
First Baptist Church
Lenoir City

"The controversy in our convention has begun to diminish to the point where Baptists are once again ready to cooperate with one another in world missions and in evangelism.

"Adrian Rogers was elected for his second term as the president of all Southern Baptists. We can all be thankful for the influence and power of this man of God. He is a friend, a leader, and a powerful influence among Baptists. Only eternity will be able to measure his impact on the lives of Southern Baptists."

O. E. Mims
First Baptist Church
Cleveland

"This year's convention in St. Louis was one of the best in recent years. There was a warm spirit of worship and an exciting atmosphere of praise.

"One of the highlights was acceptance of the Southern Baptist Convention Peace Committee report. Thank God! Perhaps most of our controversy is behind us and we can get on with fulfilling the Great Commission.

"We also re-elected our president, Adrian Rogers of Bellevue Baptist Church, Memphis. He has served us well already. This coming year should be even greater."

Joe Jernigan
First Baptist Church
Adamsville

"Clearly, this convention demonstrated that the majority of Southern Baptists are conservative theologically and are ready to go forward in missions and evangelism.

"Attending the convention has always been a boost for me. I found myself evaluating what I'm doing personally and what we're doing collectively in reaching people. My assessment is that we're barely making a dent in the secular society in which we live. The lost population continues to grow and become harder to reach as we find ourselves 'at ease in Zion.'

"What can we do about this awesome need confronting us? We can begin by trying to reach our lost friends and relatives with the good news of Jesus."

Phil Newton
Kirby Woods Baptist Church
at Winchester
Memphis

"Praise the Lord for our convention! It is definitely making a swing!

"By the adopting of the peace committee report, it is now official that the reasons for division in our convention are theological and doctrinal. We re-affirmed that Scripture is truth without any mixture of error and is both historically and scientifically true.

"Now leverage is given for trustee boards to approach professors who teach otherwise and to do something about the cancer of liberalism that has gotten into our schools!

"Continue to pray for our convention."

Wayne Barber
Woodland Park Baptist Church
Chattanooga

"There was a sweet and precious spirit felt at the convention. Pastors that have been going to conventions many more years than I have shared that it was the best convention they have been to in this respect. Someone said, 'It was good to see people smiling again.'

"I believe that the conservative direction of our beloved convention has been set. The past eight years have been filled with turmoil, but it may become clear very soon that these years were necessary so that the future of Southern Baptists' worldwide mission effort might remain strong.

"The Peace Committee report was adopted decisively without any changes. This document gives a clear mandate to our agencies that the beliefs of those who are employed by Southern Baptists should reflect what the majority of Southern Baptists believe."

Sam Simmons
Trinity Baptist Church
Memphis

CIRCULATION THIS ISSUE — 70,351

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Tom Madden, Executive Secretary-Treasurer

BOARD OF DIRECTORS: Fred Isaacs, chairman; Paul Bryant, vice-chairman; Paul Barkley, David Drumel, Ray Fowler, Marshall Gupion, Calvin Harvell, Mrs. Richard Hawkins, James Hutson, Murray Mathis, Calvin Metcalf, Perry Michel, Jerry Oakley, Jere Plunk, Dennis Pulley, James Robertson, Lon Shoopman Jr., and Fred Steelman.

Letters to the editor

Letters on any religion-related subject are welcomed. Letters of over 300 words will not be used. Other letters may be shortened at the discretion of the editor. No unsigned letters will be printed, but writer's name will be withheld for sufficient reason. Letters must contain complete address and telephone number. Letters must not make personal attacks on the character or integrity of individuals.

Minority report

Dear editor:

We would like to share what we feel is an important observation of our recent convention in St. Louis.

We would like to commend the trustees who were in the minority in the recent election of Larry Lewis as head of the Home Mission Board for not bringing a minority report. We would like to commend the minority Peace Committee members for not bringing a minority report to the convention. Both minority groups surely could have brought such reports, but it seems that in the interest of genuine peace within our fellowship, they refrained from doing so.

It is sad to us, on the other hand, that the minority trustees on the Christian Life Commission felt they had to bring to the convention a minority report which reflected their dissatisfaction with the election of Larry Baker. Such action did not reflect the honest attempts by many to find reconciliation and prayerful support of our leaders.

It remains our hope and prayer that all of our agency trustees will work together in support of our leaders and ministry programs as we continue to find creative ways to reconcile our differences and live in peace and common ministry for the sake of the coming kingdom of God.

Mark Hopper, pastor
Linda Barnes, minister of music and youth
Fern Creek Baptist Church
P.O. Box 91146
Louisville, KY 40291

Alliance convocation

Dear editor:

In regard to your recent article concerning the resignation of Lee Roberts from the Southern Baptist Alliance, it is my opinion that his negative reaction to the Alliance convocation was the only negative view shared by the more than 400 present.

I found it to be one of the most positive and refreshing experiences in my life. The sharing in the memorial supper during

Munford Baptist calls Thomas to ministry

Joe Thomason has accepted the call to the pastorate of Munford Baptist Church, Munford.

Thomason's previous pastorates include Hornsby Baptist Church, Hornsby; Delaplaine Baptist Church, Delaplaine, Ark.; and Robbs Chapel Baptist Church, Paragould, Ark.

He is a graduate of Southern Baptist College, Walnut Ridge, Ark., and Union University, Jackson. He has served as associational moderator for the Hardeeman Baptist Association, and has been elected vice-president of the 1987 West Tennessee Summer Preachers' School.

Thomason began his ministry May 3.

the final session was truly a wonderful spiritual experience. If Mr. Roberts had such negative feelings about the convocation, why did he participate in the observance of the memorial supper? The Scripture seems very clear at this point (1 Corinthians 11:27-28).

Nothing at the Alliance convocation was political, which is most unusual for any kind of Baptist meeting today. I am grateful that I had the opportunity to be there to share, celebrate, and worship with a wonderful group of fellow believers.

Dillard A. Mynatt
1101 Oak Ridge Turnpike
Oak Ridge, TN 37830

Wall of separation

Dear editor:

I would like to respond to the issue of church verses state raised by Brother Duggins' letter in the June 24 issue.

He questions the church's "supposed right to use its broad powers, influence, and resources in attempts to dictate government policy." Also, "Is the constitutional mandate of separation of church and state a unilateral provision to protect the church, is it reciprocal. . . ."

It would do him (and us all) good to read the first article of the Constitution: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

In short, Congress can't establish a state approved church, nor prevent the free exercise of one's religion; can't prevent speech or writing to redress (correct) wrongs. When the wrongs are being caused by Congress or the president, the only way to correct them is get a new Congress.

If one would look back in the 1700s, 1800s, you would find that our churches have always spoken up on political issues. It's only now that we conservatives are speaking up, that the liberals and humanists in power are dragging out the "wall of separation" which never existed in the first place.

Joel Johnson
Rt. 3
Jonesborough, TN 37659

Restudy Baptist history. Baptists have always fought, even given their lives, to preserve the "wall" of separation between church and state. (editor)

Peace report

Dear editor:

The messengers to the 1987 convention have reaffirmed the conservative position and direction.

The essential question is: Will the report of the Peace Committee bring reconciliation, promote continued cooperation, and prevent a split? Yes, but only if individual Baptists are permitted to express not only functional diversity but also some doctrinal diversity.

According to the 1963 Baptist Faith and Message statement, the Peace Committee is an advisory body, and so their recommendations are not binding on any Baptist or local church. Any attempt to impose these recommendations is a violation of the spirit and the letter of the BFM statement. "The sole authority for faith and practice is the Scriptures."

I wholeheartedly agree with the recom-

mendation that we refrain from using intemperate and inflammatory language and from labeling and characterizing fellow Baptists. Amen.

There is diversity among Baptists. The report did not define diversity nor answer the question: "How broad can that diversity be while still continuing to cooperate?"

While I agree with the report's interpretation of the Bible, I would have left the interpretation open for each Baptist to decide. I will not withdraw association and fellowship from someone who professes Jesus as Savior and Lord and who believes the other interpretation.

The committee's stand on interpretation will alienate many Baptists. How many? Anywhere from 3- to 5-million as a guess.

Finally, personal and academic freedom will suffer if Baptist institutions and agencies employ only those who clearly reflect dominant convictions and beliefs held by Baptists at large. "Confessions of faith constitute a consensus of opinion, not to be used to hamper freedom of thought. Statements are not complete, infallible statements of faith nor official creeds carrying mandatory authority." Amen.

The report is commendable. Let us pray the denomination can survive intact.

Jim Pennington
Rt. 2, Box 107J
Johnson City, TN 37601

The way to God

Dear editor:

In the beginning, all of the earth was Eden, for there was no sin or rebellion against God. There was perfect peace and harmony among God's creation. Then God planted a garden eastward in Eden, a special place for man to grow and develop his God-given talents and abilities.

I believe Adam and Eve could have later eaten of the tree of life and walked and talked with God. They could have learned from God all the secrets and mysteries of life if they had not disobeyed and lost their place.

When God drove them out of the garden, He placed Cherubim at the east of the garden and a flaming sword which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life. That flaming sword which turns every way is the Word of God.

Man can read the Word of God and study it consistently, but he will not find his way back to the tree of life inside the paradise of God unless he comes through Jesus Christ, Who is the door.

God's Word is so written that it turns

Royer, former pastor in Tennessee, retires

Alfred T. Royer, a former Tennessee pastor, retired May 31 from Palm Springs Baptist Church in West Palm Beach, Fla.

A native of Middletown, Ky., Royer attended Union University in Jackson, and has done graduate work at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. He is a graduate of Wayland Baptist College in Plainview, Texas, and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.

Former pastorates include First Baptist Church, Shelbyville, and Grace and Glenwood Baptist churches in Knoxville. He also served as pastor of churches in Phoenix, Ariz.; Abernathy, Texas; and Elizabethtown, Ky.

every way and cuts us off as long as there is any sin, root of bitterness, pride, envy, jealousy, or any such thing in our hearts. The same Word that reveals the way to God also shields and protects the way from those who are insincere.

You cannot go over, around, or under the Word of God, you must come through it and by it. "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 14:12).

The way is made plain in the Word of God to those who come sincerely, humbly, and repenting.

Robert Mid Gordon
520 South First St.
Pulaski, TN 38478

On abortion

Dear editor:

In the June 24 issue of the Baptist and Reflector, there was a letter to the editor on abortion by a Mr. Concon, agreeing with a Mr. Simmons, a professor of ethic at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky.

Mr. Concon used Genesis 2:7 as his proof of abortion. Any Bible student knows that a woman does not bring a baby of dirt into this world, and then breathe the breath of life into its nostrils, and it becomes a living soul.

Luke 1:31 says "And, behold, thou shalt conceive in they womb, and bring forth a Son, and shalt call His name Jesus. If my interpretation of this is correct, life begins at conception.

If my mother had believed in abortion, I would not have been here today to write this letter. May God have mercy on Mr. Simmons and Mr. Concon is my prayer.

F. B. Scates Sr.
R.R. 4, Box 72
McKenzie, TN 38201

BMH, Memphis plans renovation

MEMPHIS — Baptist Memorial Hospital plans to seek state approval for a major renovation and bed replacement project for Baptist Memorial Hospital Medical Center and Baptist Memorial Hospital East, BMH President Joseph H. Powell has announced.

The plan, approved recently by the hospital's board of directors, calls for the transfer of beds from the Medical Center to East and a reduction in the licensed bed capacity of Baptist Memorial Hospital, which includes Baptist Memorial Hospital Medical Center, Baptist Memorial Hospital East, and the Regional Rehabilitation Center.

Under the proposal, 270 beds in the Medical Center would be closed and 187 beds would be added at BMH East. Baptist Memorial Hospital's total licensed bed capacity would be reduced by 83 beds, from 2,053 to 1,970.

The bed transfer will serve a twofold purpose, according to Powell. First, it will allow BMH to upgrade patient services at the Medical Center by moving some ancillary patient services out of the oldest building of the hospital — Madison West, which was built in 1912 — and open needed space for education and research activities. Secondly, it will meet increased demand for beds at BMH East.

Baptist Memorial Hospital plans to submit its certificate of need to the Tennessee Health Facilities Commission in early July. The commission hearing will be in October 1987. If approved, work at BMH East and BMH Medical Center would begin in February 1988. The new facilities at BMH East would open in January 1990, with Medical Center renovation expected to be completed later in 1990.

Family, RAs, Radnor welcome Hawkinses

The Charles Hawkins, returning to the states from the Philippines on missionary furlough, were met at the Nashville airport by friends, family, and church members from First Baptist Church in Dickson and Radnor Baptist Church in Nashville.

Hawkins will begin serving as missionary-in-residence for the Tennessee Baptist Convention's Cooperative Program and stewardship department on Aug. 1.

The Charles and Bette Hawkins chapter of RAs from the Dickson church greeted them with signs of welcome. Her parents, Graydon and Leta White, are members of the church. Robin and Christy Hawkins exited the plane to find their grandfather waiting with open arms.

Radnor Baptist Church in Nashville is helping to provide housing for the missionary family. Members of the church displayed a banner welcoming the Hawkinses on behalf of the church and Tennessee Baptists.

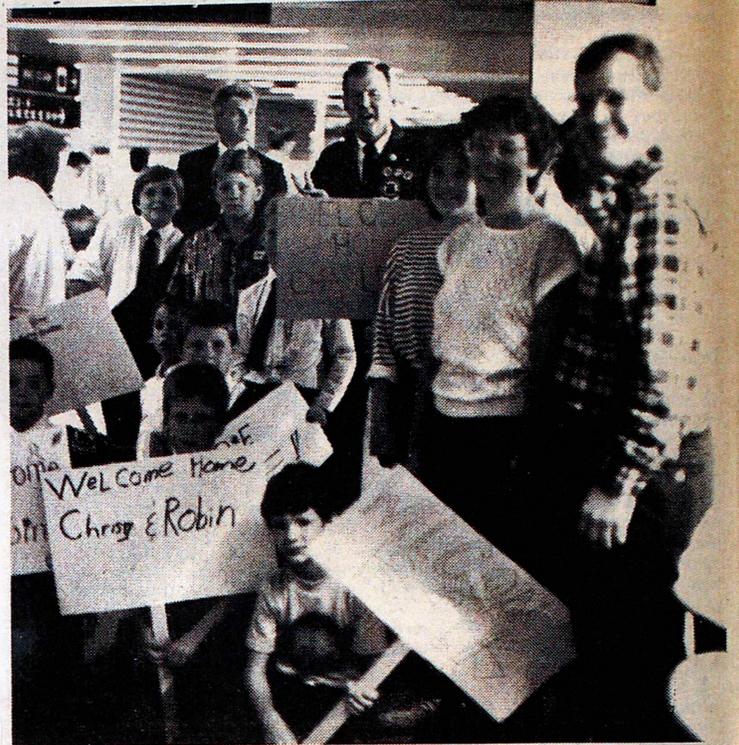
A native of Covington, Ga., Hawkins was graduated from the University of Tennessee in Knoxville and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky. He also served in the U. S. Army.

A native of Elmhurst, Ill., Mrs. Hawkins was also graduated from UT and Southern seminary. Before their appointment to the Philippines in 1975, she worked as a microbiologist in Nashville.



WARM WELCOME — Graydon White embraces his daughter and granddaughter.

Since 1985, the Hawkins family has been living on the island of Mindanao where Hawkins serves as director of health care ministries. Mrs. Hawkins serves as middle school science teacher for missionary kids in Davao. Robin is 15 and a sophomore at Faith Academy in Manila, a high school for missionary kids. Christy is 12 and one of two students in her seventh grade class.



PICKETING A WORTHY CAUSE — RAs from the Dickson church greet the couple, pictured on the right, for whom the chapter is named. Larry Lucas, back center, organized the demonstration.

Lodging information

1987 Tennessee Baptist Convention
Nov. 10-12, Radnor Baptist Church, Nashville

Hotel/Motel	Single	Double
Ramada Inn 709 Spence Lane (615) 361-0102	\$38.00	\$46.00
Drury Airport Inn 837 Briley Parkway (615) 361-6999	40.00	40.00
Drury Inn, South 343 Harding Place (615) 834-7170	35.00	35.00
Airport Hilton Inn International Plaza (615) 371-7666	41.00	49.00
Park Suite Hotel 10 Century Blvd. (615) 871-0033	63.00 (includes full breakfast)	63.00
LaQuinta Motel Sidco Drive (615) 834-6900	34.00	36.00
Traveler's Rest Franklin Road Brentwood (615) 373-3033	28.00/30.00	40.00
Hampton Inn Brentwood (615) 373-2212	36.00 (includes continental breakfast)	40.00

- ▶ In making your reservations, please state that you will be attending the Tennessee Baptist Convention. The reservations are blocked in that name.
- ▶ Please make reservations directly with the hotel/motel.
- ▶ Pastors' Conference will meet Monday, Nov. 9, at First Baptist Church, 828 Murfreesboro Rd., Franklin.
- ▶ Woman's Missionary Union will meet Monday, Nov. 9, at Brentwood Baptist Church, 409 Franklin Rd., Brentwood.

Dial-a-porn convictions aid war on pornography

By Tim Fields

WASHINGTON (BP) — The first convictions under a federal statute enacted in 1983 have put two national "dial-a-porn" distributors in Los Angeles out of business and stepped up the Justice Department's war on obscenity.

The two distributors, Adult Entertainment Network Inc. I and II, were fined \$50,000 each after pleading guilty to the charges and permanently were enjoined from engaging in other such practices by the federal district court in Salt Lake City.

Rob Showers, executive director of the Justice Department's National Obscenity Enforcement Unit, said records of the two companies show they used 38 different telephone lines in 12 cities and received up to 2.8-million calls per month.

Showers said an FBI investigation revealed that a significant number of these callers were children between the ages of 10 and 16.

The lines were located in Los Angeles; San Francisco; San Diego; Sacramento, Calif.; Washington; Baltimore; Pittsburgh; Philadelphia; Seattle; Portland, Ore.; New Orleans; and New York City.

Showers, a Southern Baptist attorney from North Carolina who was named in March by Attorney General Edwin Meese to head the new National Obscenity Enforcement Unit, said, "The purveyors of telephone sex are making money on kids at a cost which goes far beyond the mere expense of the calls. These pre-recorded telephone messages contained explicit dramatizations of sex acts whose effect on young people who might tend to model their behavior on them is a serious national concern."

Establishment of the National Obscenity

Enforcement Unit came after Meese made a public commitment last fall to make child pornography and obscenity prosecutions high priorities during the rest of the Reagan administration.

Meese cited the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography which in its 1986 report identified federal "dial-a-porn" legislation as an important step in curtailing the spread of obscenity in America.

According to Larry Braidfoot, general counsel for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, the successful prosecution of the Los Angeles companies comes at a time when federal legislation is pending that even more effectively would prohibit the use of telephones for commercial distribution of sexually explicit conversation.

"Congressional aides have indicated a strong possibility that this 'dial-a-porn' legislation will be added to the appropriations bill for the Federal Communications Commission later this year," he explained.

"Too many persons have not recognized seriously the destructive nature of 'dial-a-porn' as a means of disseminating obscene communication," Braidfoot warned.

"With the first conviction of 'dial-a-porn' distributors and pending federal legislation on pornography, it is a good time to do something significant about pornography."

"A very specific way Baptists and other concerned citizens can do something about pornography is to communicate with members of Congress, asking for the passage of legislation prohibiting such commercial distribution of obscene material," Braidfoot suggested.

Fountain City members sponsor refugees

Editor's note: The Tennessee Baptist Convention missions department reported that our convention ranked fifth in the number of refugees sponsored in 1986. But the 41 persons helped by Baptists in our state pales in comparison to the 11-million persons who have escaped wars, starvation, and lack of freedom in their countries and are in refugee camps waiting for a new home. Persons may contact the TBC missions department for information on sponsoring refugees.

By Susanne Burnette

The small band of Central Baptist Church, Fountain City, members who met at the Knoxville airport to greet a Cambodian family probably will not soon forget that cold January evening in 1986.

The Poeung family came off the plane — Poeung Seang, 56; Sary, 46; Ra, 18; Rath, 16; Roek, 13; Te, 10; Navy, 5; and Borin, 1. All eight family members were dressed in similar brown overcoats given to them in San Francisco. Most of the coats still had tags attached to the zippers which read "Made in the USA."

The Poeungs had been on airplanes and in airports for over 48 hours since they left the Philippines. They had eaten very little on the flight and most of them had been airsick, yet they were smiling broadly and greeted their new sponsors with shy warmth.

Since then, all eight members of the family have become closely united in many ways with the congregation of Central Baptist Church. And the people in the church have found new and creative ways to love this refugee family.

How it began

The story of the church's sponsorship began a few months earlier as Bridge Refugee Services, in cooperation with the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, began searching for a church sponsor in the Fountain City area. After the pastor of Central Baptist Church, Calvin Metcalf, was contacted about the need, he called the chairperson of the missions committee.

Though the church had a short time to prepare, most of the committee members had favorable responses, some even saying that they had been praying for such an opportunity.

In a very short time, approval of the project was given by the deacons and the church body, and a task force committee began functioning. Church members contributed furniture, linens, clothing, food staples, money, and major appliances.

Two weeks before the arrival of the Poeungs, everything was ready — except housing for such a large family! The task force committee had stipulated that the house be near the church, near schools, near the shopping areas, and be within a specific rental price range. It seemed an impossible task until the church began praying about housing.

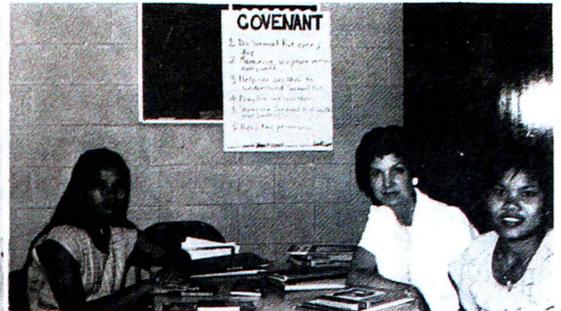
One week before the Poeungs' arrival in Knoxville, a suitable house was found. Quickly, church members began working to get the house ready.

Volunteers cleaned the house and moved the furniture that had been stored at the church to the house. Pictures were hung on the walls, curtains were pressed and hung up, the pantry was stocked, and new linoleum was installed in the kitchen. Young people raked leaves in the yard.

Many commented that they never knew cleaning a house could be so much fun! There was even time for an "Open House" for interested church members to see what had resulted from love and prayer.



U. S. FRIENDS — Rath (center) with Royal Ambassadors Marc Bush (left) and Mark Burnette (right), two of the friends he made through the church organization for boys.



STUDYING FOR HER NEW LIFE — Ra (left) studies with Dung Le (right) a refugee from Vietnam who is seeking a sponsor for her and her Amer-Asian child, in a class which is a part of Cumberland Baptist Church's English as a Second Language program. Their teacher, Betty Bowling, is a member of the Knoxville church.



SPECIAL FAMILY — The Poeung family members (from left, back row), Roek, Rath, Ra, Sary, Poeung Seang, (front row) Te, Borin, and Navy, gather in front of Central Baptist Church, Fountain City, in Knoxville.

After they arrived

But the work was just beginning when the refugees arrived. Physical examinations were required at the government health center. The Social Security office required the completion of forms. The children had to be enrolled in school.

Various church members were trying to teach Sary, the mother, and Ra, the eldest daughter, how to use the appliances and how to shop for groceries. Ra told one sponsor later that she was never told about taxes, and because she could never get the same figure as the sales clerk, she thought for a few weeks that she was being cheated at every store.

The children's adjustment to school and to new surroundings seemed to go smoothly. They learned to understand and to speak English quickly, and have each in his or her own way gained more confidence.

Navy invited her entire kindergarten class to her house for her birthday party, but neglected to tell her mother about it!

No church-budgeted funds have been used for the sponsorship. Poeung Seang has had two jobs, both secured for him by church members. He is now working at a metal fabricators shop. Medical and dental care has been donated by members of the church.

The Royal Ambassadors planted and cultivated a garden for them on land owned by a church member. Some singles are tutoring Roek each week. A retired

church member teaches Poeung Seang English and in turn, Poeung teaches his friend Cambodian.

Other church friends include the family in outings and entertain the Poeungs in their homes. Thanks to the special love of one couple, Ra and Rath have been to a Cambodian friend's wedding in North Carolina and have visited friends in Nashville.

Effects on church

Many organizations within the church have been enriched by the participation of the Cambodian family. The children are involved in almost every aspect of church life, from Mission Friends to choirs. Te is even in the children's handbell choir, although she had never been taught to read music. Now she says, "I can play two bells!"

Rath's closest friends have been made within the older RA group. He traveled with them to Memphis last spring for the RA Congress and has participated in other RA activities. Rath has even shared with the boys some of his experiences in the work camps in Cambodia, though he had previously refused to discuss them.

The three older children attended the Youth Evangelism Conference in Nashville in March and had several questions about the unique experience when they returned home.

Central Baptist members have learned a lot about the world beyond Fountain City through the family. They have enjoyed Sary's eggrolls at church picnics. They have also noticed the faithfulness of the Poeungs as they take their place in the fourth pew Sunday after Sunday, even though they still understand little of the worship service.

Sary summed up the experience when she said, "Every day I thank God for my sponsors" — and she punctuated her statement with a hug!

—Burnette is chairperson of the committee at Central Baptist Church of Fountain City, Knoxville, that coordinated this mission effort.

TBC plans financial meetings

The final Responsible Financial Planning Conferences will be held in July and September across the state. The conferences which began in March, are for church staff members, deacon chairmen, finance/budget/stewardship chairmen, personnel chairmen, and church council members.

The conferences are sponsored by the Tennessee Baptist Convention's Cooperative Program/stewardship department, protection plans department, and the Tennessee Baptist Foundation.

Topics covered in the evening meetings include planning for compensation and benefits of church staff members, design and promotion of church budgets, the support of missions and evangelism, and planning for financial giving after death.

The schedule follows: July 9 for Sevier County and Chilhowee Baptist associations. First Baptist Church in Pigeon

Forge; July 10 for Cumberland Gap Baptist Association and Mulberry Gap Association of Missionary Baptists, Combo Restaurant in Tazewell; and July 16 for Hamilton County Baptist Association, Brainerd Baptist Church in Chattanooga. Other meetings will be on July 23 for Sullivan Baptist and Holston Valley Missionary Baptist associations, Calvary Baptist Church in Kingsport; July 27 for Grainger County Association of Baptists and Jefferson County Baptist Association, Rutledge High School in Rutledge; July 28 for Midland and Northern Baptist associations, First Baptist Church in Maynardville; and Sept. 8 for Nashville Baptist Association, Tennessee Baptist Convention Executive Board building in Brentwood.

Reservations must be made for the dinner through the associational office and spouses are welcome.

Baker calls for support of Danforth amendment

By Tim Fields

NASHVILLE (BP) — N. Larry Baker, executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, has written a letter to U.S. senators urging them to support the Danforth Abortion-Neutral Amendment or a similar amendment to the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987, which is waiting to be introduced on the floor of the Senate.

"At the recent annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention, a resolution was adopted endorsing the Danforth amendment," Baker wrote. "As the Southern Baptist Convention agency representing more than 37,000 cooperating churches and more than 23,000 messengers from those churches attending the convention, the Christian Life Commission urges you to . . . support the Danforth amendment or some such effort to achieve its purpose of rendering the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987 neutral in effect and intent on the abortion issue."

According to Baker and other anti-abortion proponents, the legislation now before the Senate could be used to force Southern Baptist and other educational institutions and hospitals that accept any federal funds to include abortion in health benefit plans for students and employees.

"If institutions did not comply, they might be threatened by lawsuits for sex discrimination," Baker said. "The CRRA S.557 legislation would reverse the 1984 Supreme Court *Grove vs. Bell* decision that narrowed application of the federal civil rights laws," he said. "The high court held that Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 applied only to a specific 'program or activity' receiving federal grants, not the entire institution."

"Passage of the CRRA without the amendment would mean that civil rights laws would cover the entire institution,

opening the possibility that abortion coverage would be a requirement of religiously affiliated institutions, including those morally opposed to abortion."

Baker also told senators in the letter: "It is our opinion that S.557, whether intentionally or unintentionally, might in effect codify current problematic regulations in a way that would further extend legalized abortion rights.

"This result seems incompatible with current restrictions on the use of federal funds for abortion services. It also raises serious questions about the legitimate self-determination of healthcare institutions."

In addition to the letter, Baker said he is calling on all Southern Baptists who are concerned about abortion to write their senators immediately, urging support of the Danforth or similar amendment.

H. E. Nicholson dies

H. E. Nicholson, pastor of Dowelltown Baptist Church in Dowelltown, died on June 16.

The funeral was officiated by Thurman Seber, director of missions, Salem Baptist Association, and Joe Elledge, a member of the Dowelltown Baptist Church and former pastor of Sycamore Baptist Church in Woodbury. It was held June 17 at the Dowelltown church.

Nicholson, who had served as a pastor in Georgia churches, held several leadership positions in the Salem association.

He is survived by his wife, Duene, and two children.

Seminary grad makes waves

SOUTH PADRE ISLAND, Texas (BP) — Charlie Arnold's most effective pastoral tools are sunscreen and gospel tracts.

Most of Arnold's peers from the 1986 graduating class of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, are busy tending more traditional flocks. But Arnold's pastoral role includes meeting summer vacationers and "winter Texans" on beaches of South Padre Island, a skinny five-mile resort island just off the southern Texas coast.

As pastor of the island's only church, Arnold works with South Padre's 1,066 permanent residents, most of whom are retirees. Arnold practices what he calls "lifestyle" ministry when he's not prepar-

ing sermons for the 79-member Island Baptist Church or his weekly columns for the island newspaper.

"As I go about my daily routine, I try to be everyone's friend in the name of Jesus," he said.

Arnold packs tracts in his racquetball cans and distributes them to people he meets at the health club. Recently he led the club manager to become a Christian.

On Sundays Arnold dons a tie for his pulpit role. But his congregation's apparel ranges from cut-offs and Hawaiian shirts to three-piece suits.

"We almost always have more visitors than members," he said.

Arnold wants to establish a permanent "mission outreach post" on the island. "More than 5-million people visit South Padre Island each year," he said. "We need a facility that will serve as a bunkhouse for mission workers and Sunday school space."

Red Bank sends 33 to Venezuela

As a part of the Tennessee/Venezuela partnership, a team of 33 high school students and adults from Red Bank Baptist Church in Chattanooga will be serving in Los Teques, Venezuela, from July 9-20.

The volunteers bring the total to 362 Tennesseans who have participated in the partnership since it began in November 1985. It is coordinated by the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

The team from Chattanooga will be doing maintenance work at the seminary in Los Teques and presenting music programs in both English and Spanish in local churches.

The team includes Minister of Music Billy Appling, Randy Walker, Al Plummer, Steve Mabry, Tom Collins, Louis Bell, Marcel Bull, Pe Than Tin, Bill Burley, Spencer Collins, Chris Mathews, Andy Templeton, Gwen McGhee, Joan Marler, Susan Jackson, Steve Appling, Philip Luckey, Chrissy Bell, Jennifer Blaylock, Amy Hamill, Leesa Jenkins, Tammi Plummer, Terri Plummer, Paul and Tommie Palmer, David and Patricia Baker, Lina Young, Karmon Reed, Stefanie Swingle, MiMi Tin, Ann Underwood, and Kim Young.

Gary Arnett accepts Forty-Five pastorate

Gary Lee Arnett began his ministry at Forty-Five Baptist Church, Moscow, May 31.

He comes to Moscow from Missouri where he served as pastor of Crooked Creek Baptist Church, Shelbina. He also served as pastor of Ten Mile Baptist Church, Anabel, Mo.

The native of Union City graduated from Hannibal-LaGrange College, Hannibal, Mo., with a bachelor of theology degree.

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VBS can provide force for summer evangelism

NASHVILLE (BP) — While some 30,000 churches in the Southern Baptist Convention are conducting Vacation Bible School this summer, Lakeview Baptist Church in Tallahassee, Fla., is preparing for a VBS Explosion.

VBS Explosion, a program under development by the Southern Baptist Sun-

day School Board, is a summer-long involvement in Vacation Bible School and relies on the strengths of the program to increase evangelism and enrollment at the church, explained Sharon Smith, minister of education.

The church is participating in a pilot project for VBS Explosion. Materials for the program will be available from the board in October 1988, said Art Burcham, supervisor of small Sunday School administration and project promotion in the board's Sunday School department.

With VBS Explosion, Lakeview Baptist Church will conduct a two-week VBS at the church, multiple Backyard Bible Clubs, and a Mission Vacation Bible School which will be the impetus for a new Sunday School.

"The idea is to maximize the potential for evangelism and enrollment. The three types of VBS can be used by churches as their summer program for evangelism,"

Burcham said. "We believe every church can have Vacation Bible School. We want to see many churches go beyond a single VBS for a summer emphasis on evangelism."

Lakeview Baptist recorded 27 professions of faith in Vacation Bible School last year and has a goal of 50 professions of faith this summer, Smith explained. The two-week VBS is helpful in developing professions of faith, in Christ, he added, noting, "We get more professions of faith with a two-week school than a one-week school."

Despite the apparent evangelistic advantages of a two-week Vacation Bible School, the trend is toward one-week schools, Burcham said.

"Our statistics show that more children make professions of faith in a longer school. The trend creates a challenge for commitment and good training for workers in a one-week school," Burcham said.

Throughout the convention, there were 34,970 Vacation Bible Schools, Mission Vacation Bible Schools, and Backyard Bible Clubs held in 1986. That is a decrease from the 35,185 schools conducted the previous summer. Enrollment for 1986 was 3,278,296 — a decrease from 3,304,463 in 1985.

Despite the decreases in number of schools and enrollment, professions of faith in Christ increased. There were 57,455 professions of faith reported by churches from Vacation Bible Schools in 1986, compared with 51,420 recorded in 1985.

Burcham believes those figures represent the most important aspect of VBS. "Vacation Bible School is a great tool for evangelism. It's a good way to find prospects for the Sunday School, too," he said.

Many of the prospective church members found in VBS will make professions of faith after they are enrolled in Sunday School, Burcham explained.

In 1986, churches reported 578,593 prospects discovered — a decrease from the 609,533 reported in 1985. Of the prospects reported in 1986, churches reported 274,004 actually added to the Sunday School rolls. That statistic is new on the VBS report, Burcham said.

Personal Perspective

By Tom Madden
TBC Executive
Secretary-Treasurer



I will not offer ... to the Lord my God that which costs me nothing" (2 Samuel 24:24).

David wanted to purchase a piece of land from Araunah on which to erect an altar to God. Araunah begged his king to accept it as a gift. David, in refusing to accept the land as a gift, said, "I will not offer ... to the Lord my God that which costs me nothing."

I don't know whether my dear mother ever read about David and Araunah, but she taught us that genuine worship costs something. Her way of teaching this was to make sure our bodies were clean, that the clothes we wore to God's house were the best we had, and we were to take an offering. That teaching has stayed with me across the years. I have felt that Saturday evening was a part of the Lord's day. God does not want us to rush exhausted and preoccupied into His presence.

I have always felt that God desires our offerings to Him to involve sacrifice. Christ emptied Himself for us. When the widow cast in her two mites, Jesus was pleased by the sacrifice involved and gave her a strong commendation. I like the expression, "not equal gifts, but equal sacrifice."

I believe you would agree that our service to our Lord should include sacrifice. He does not want our leftover time. There is a joy that comes from serving, but also there are burdens, disappointments, and heartbreak.

I recall reading an account of a skilled surgeon spending several hours performing a surgical procedure on a patient that had no financial resources. A colleague asked him, "How much will you receive for this?" He answered, "Well sir, for this I will get nothing but my patient's gratitude ... and my Master's smile, but that, sir, is worth more than all the money the world can give."

Education Commission adopts record budget, elects officers

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP) — The Southern Baptist Education Commission adopted a record \$548,300 budget during its annual meeting June 28-29 in Kansas City, Mo.

The budget, which increased about \$10,000 over the previous year, reflects a 2.4 percent increase in receipts from the Southern Baptist Cooperative Program unified budget.

About 90 percent of the Nashville-based agency's budget comes through the Cooperative Program. The remainder of

the commission's budget is raised through the sale of publications, dues from the Association of Southern Baptist Colleges and Schools, interest, and other sources.

Bob R. Agee, president of Oklahoma Baptist University in Shawnee, was elected chairman of the commission for 1987-88. Other officers include D. Jack Nicholas, president of Southern Baptist College in Walnut Ridge, Ark., vice-chairman, and William R. Cotton, a layman from Hastings, Fla., secretary.

The commission also named James M. Boswell, president emeritus of Cumberland College in Williamsburg, Ky., as recipient of the 1987 Charles D. Johnson Outstanding Educator Award.

Boswell was president of Cumberland College, a Kentucky Baptist school, from 1947 to 1980.

The award, given annually to an individual who has made significant contributions to Southern Baptist higher education, honors Charles D. Johnson, who wrote "Higher Education of Southern Baptists" and was chairman of the Education Commission from 1932 to 1953.

Corrections

In a story in the June 10 issue of the Baptist and Reflector on the Brotherhood members who constructed playground equipment at Camp Linden and Camp Carson, Chris and Vernon McCord were incorrectly identified as from a Michigan church. They are from Highland Heights Baptist Church in Memphis.

In the July 1 issue two officers of the Tennessee Baptist Convention Secretaries' Association were incorrectly identified in the photo on page 7. Helen Butler of West Jackson Baptist Church in Jackson, secretary-treasurer, is in the center, and Beth Prowse of First Baptist Church in Cookeville, president, is on the right.

The Baptist and Reflector staff regrets these errors.



Tennessee/Venezuela prayer net partnership

Answered Prayer:

—Jeremy McDonald, 4-year-old son of Jim and Jani, missionaries in Puerto Ordaz, has been seizure free for more than two months and has had no side effects from medication. This is the first time in two and a half years Jeremy has been seizure free.

Pray for:

—The maintenance/music team from Red Bank Baptist Church, Chattanooga, leaves July 9 to go to Los Teques.

—A team of Venezuela Baptist leaders will be traveling to Cali, Colombia, to observe the Baptist Convention's media ministry and consider a similar ministry in Venezuela.

—Missionary Patsy Davis' father had a heart attack and is hospitalized in North Carolina. She is home on furlough.

HOMECOMING 1987

First Baptist Church, Dover
Sunday, July 26

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Covered dish meal Noon

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BIBLE BOOK SERIES
Lesson for July 12

Letters to the seven churches

By Marvin P. Nail, pastor
Whitsitt Chapel Baptist Church, Nashville

Basic Passages: Revelation 2:1 to 3:22
Focal Passages: Revelation 2:1-7; 3:14-16, 19-22

The second and third chapters of the Revelation have had some interesting interpretations over the years. It will not be my purpose here or in any future lessons to debate these options. I merely state the fact at this point so that you are not puzzled if the one presented in these columns is unknown to you.

Throughout, it is hoped that you will keep in mind that this writer sees the Revelation primarily as a word of hope and encouragement to the people of God. We must remember that the purpose of prophecy was not primarily the prediction of the future, but the description of what God is doing in the present.

The letters from the risen Christ to the seven churches of Asia are unique. They are at the same time letters to seven particular churches and also letters to churches like them throughout history. For the purposes of this study, I have grouped them somewhat out of sequence.

Churches which lost their distinctives

The church at Ephesus was in many ways an exemplary body of believers. In the midst of much evil and false doctrine, they had stood strongly against those who would pervert the faith. Christ commends their zeal and efforts.

However, He deals them a devastating condemnation and warning. In their efforts to keep the faith pure, they have lost sight of the hallmark of their faith. Somewhere along the way they have begun not only to hate the sin, they have also begun to hate the sinners. Jesus says they have lost their witness.

The church at Pergamum also receives words of praise from the lips of the risen Christ. But they have also lost sight of something important. To sum up the condemnation, they have sold out to the ways of the world. They have adopted pagan methods in an effort to better do the work of Christ.

Balaam had long ago persuaded God's people to turn aside to the ways of the world. One of the ways they had apparently done this was in setting up those leaders in the church who ruled over the people instead of letting Christ rule their hearts.

The church at Thyatira had even grown in their service of the Lord and received His approval for that growth. However, they had been failing at one dangerous point. In their efforts to love the sinners that they might win them to Christ, they have tolerated their behavior and compromised the teachings of Christ.

Churches which kept the faith

Out of the seven churches to which our Lord sends messages, only two are praised without an accompanying warning. They do not appear to be churches which are successful in human terms. In fact, both of them seem to be on the verge of being overwhelmed by outside forces.

The church at Smyrna was struggling for its very life. They were apparently suffering physical persecution. Notice that they are not "raptured" out of such persecution. Instead they are told it will probably get worse. They are not to be afraid, however, because the Christ who suffered death Himself is alive and will be with them even through death.

The church at Philadelphia was a small church with an almost impossible task. They have been faithful to the teachings of Christ, but they were not making much progress in their mission. They were not successful. Because of that, there were some who thought they were doomed to failure. But Christ was keeping their doors open and He would keep open their opportunities for reaching out with the gospel.

Churches about to lose it all

Two churches are singled out by Christ for special condemnation. They have stopped being a witness for Christ and have, instead, become witnesses against Christ. They are not declining churches. On the contrary, they appear to be successful in many ways. But there is in them a sickness unto death.

The church at Sardis was dead and didn't even know it. To the human eye it didn't appear to be so. To the human eye they were the picture of success. In today's terms they might even be one of our super churches with big buildings, big budgets, and many baptisms.

Though all of these sound good on a human level they are still human measurements of the activity of God. In spite of their seeming success there is only a remnant of faith. The only hope for the church is for that remnant to get on with the business of being the people of God.

Finally we come to the famous, or infamous, church at Laodicea. This was a "warm" church. They probably had excellent fellowship. It was very likely a popular church among the people. It may have been, like so many churches in the Bible belt, the "in" place to be.

They were carrying on quite well, but something important was missing. They had left Christ out of it all. Notice the shocking picture of Jesus standing at the door of the church trying to get into it. What a shocking commentary on a church!

It will be good if each of us can see in our churches something of all of these churches. We often have our good points, but we need to constantly place ourselves under the correcting gaze of God's Holy Spirit that we may be fitting witnesses of Jesus Christ.



Nail



Palmer

UNIFORM LESSON SERIES
Lesson for July 12

A new way of living

By William L. Palmer, president
Harrison Chilhowee Baptist Academy, Seymour

Basic Passage: Romans 5:12 to 6:23
Focal Passage: Romans 6:1-14

Coming to the conclusion of chapter 5, we hear the Apostle Paul say, "But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (v. 20b). Sin is a fact. We know that we have sinned.

The Old Testament gives us the law of God. God makes clear that which is pleasing to Him and that which is displeasing to Him. The Word of God also makes clear to us the grace, the unmerited favor, of God. "That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord" (v. 21).

Being condemned as sinners, we need the grace of God. Experiencing the grace of God does not give us the excuse to sin more in order that we might experience more of the grace of God! This is the problem which the apostle hits head on in the first two verses of chapter 6: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid."

Up to this point in his letter to the Romans, the Apostle Paul has been dealing with justification through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now he is dealing with sanctification by faith in the risen Savior. We have seen the contrast between wrath and justification. Now the emphasis is between sin and holiness.

Holiness is a good word. We as Baptists ought not to shy away from a good biblical doctrine just because some folks have misused the truth. In Hebrews 12:14 are the words, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." As God is holy, He expects us to be holy.

Justification is the foundation upon which holiness is built. Holiness is more than a doctrine to be believed. Holiness is a quality of living to be achieved. Justification ought to produce victory over sin, and justification ought to produce a likeness to Jesus Christ. The truth of God in Jesus Christ leads to holiness of life.

A man's mind must surely be perverted if he believes that his continuing in sin gives God greater opportunity to prove the greatness of His grace and mercy. William Barclay was right when he wrote, "It is a terrible thing to make the mercy of God an excuse for sinning."

Such a thought was abhorrent to the apostle. He wrote, "How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (v. 2b). The manner of life for one who is a Christian is not to live any longer in sin. A man in Christ is a new creation. When Christ died, we died. Because Christ lives, we live.

Baptism (immersion) is the perfect picture of death, burial, and resurrection. Baptism enables a believer to bear witness to his being united with Jesus Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. Baptism is a public confession of faith.

Barclay, the British scholar, described the experience: "Commonly, baptism was by total immersion, and that practice lent itself to a symbolism which sprinkling does not so readily lend itself to. When a man descended into the water, the water closed over his head, it was like being buried in a grave. Baptism was symbolically like dying and rising again.

"The man died to one kind of life and rose to another kind of life. He died to the old life of sin and rose to the new life of grace. He went down into the water a man of the world and rose a man in Christ." Baptism symbolizes death to the old man and life in the new man.

The apostle described the new life in the words: "That like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (v. 4b). In verses 5 and 6 he describes the consequences. Acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior of life makes all the difference in this world and the world to come. Our "old man" (v. 6) has been dealt with by the crucifixion with Christ. That is an accomplished fact. Our responsibility is to believe, to receive, and to live in the light of this glorious truth. "For he that is dead is freed from sin" (v. 7).

In union with Christ we as believers need to realize that we have been released from both the penalty of sin and from the power of sin. "Death hath no more dominion over" Christ (v. 9). "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (v. 11). Sin is a fact. Sin is real. Sin is to be dealt with, but we must keep on reckoning ourselves "to be dead indeed unto sin." Christianity is not a one-time experience "in an August revival." Christianity is a continuing way of life.

Do not let sin have control. Do not obey the lusts (v. 12). Do not "yield your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin" (v. 13a). God is looking for clean hands and clean voices that He can use. You must let God take all of you and use all of you in the fight against sin.

We must recognize our own responsibility. We must practice control of self in the power of the Holy Spirit. We must dedicate all our energies to the will of God. "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace" (v. 14).

Glenn Weekley accepts Hendersonville call

Steven Glenn Weekley will begin his pastorate at First Baptist Church, Hendersonville, July 12.

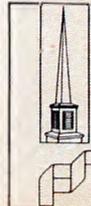
He is a graduate of the University of North Alabama, Florence, Ala. He also holds a master of divinity degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Ft. Worth, Texas, and a doctor of ministry degree from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, New Orleans, La.

Weekley has served as pastor for 21 years at various churches in Alabama. He has also served Alabama as a member of the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions and the Alabama Baptist Executive Committee. He has been president of the Alabama Baptist Pastors' Conference and in 1986 gave the convocation sermon at the Alabama State Convention.

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LIFE AND WORK LESSON SERIES

Lesson for July 12

Training others

By Johnny M. Johnson, pastor
First Baptist Church, McEwen

Basic Passage: Acts 18:18 to 21:14
Focal Passage: Acts 20:18-21, 27-32

Our Lord has given His people a great commission that involves us in His bold mission. He says, "Go . . . and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20). Our challenge is not to make converts, but to make disciples.



Johnson

Newly born into God's family, converts must be nurtured, fed, and instructed, so that they may grow toward maturity in Christ Jesus. Teaching and training others is a glorious ministry for our Lord's kingdom. Jesus' instruction of the twelve is a model for our discipleship efforts today. The Apostle Paul followed a similar method as he disciplined converts and leaders.

Teaching elders (20:18-21, 27)

Paul and his missionary entourage were hastening toward Jerusalem to participate in the celebration of Pentecost. Paul wished to meet with the leaders of the church at Ephesus, but was unwilling to hazard the delay of a long stop-over in the area of Asia. His ship came to port at the ancient harbor city of Miletus. Miletus was about 30 miles south of Ephesus, but was separated from that city by both a stretch of land and a tiny gulf. Paul made use of the time the ship was in port to speak with the Ephesian leaders.

Paul "called to him the elders of the church" (v. 17) and proceeded to address them. Paul's touching speech is the third discourse reported so far by Luke. The first address was to Jews at Antioch (13:16f), the next to Gentiles in Athens (17:22f), and now he speaks to the church.

The "elders" of the church were its leaders. While Paul surely taught many Christians, he focused his attention on the leaders. Timothy was encouraged to "entrust" the Christian teachings "to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2). Training leaders yields a multiplied harvest for the kingdom.

Paul reminded the leaders that he had taught them by the way he lived among them. He was not content to be merely a lifestyle evangelist nor a lifestyle teacher. He taught publicly and privately, declaring the positive, profitable word of God. To all who would listen, Paul testified of "repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 21). Paul was careful to teach the Christian way by both his life and his lips.

Paul taught large groups and "from house to house" (v. 20), one-on-one and small group instruction were a real part of his ministry. Let us remember that each pupil is precious, for our Lord shared some of His greatest words with one person, Nicodemus (see John 3).

Just as Paul "did not shrink from declaring . . . the whole counsel of God" (v. 27), neither did he hesitate to repeat himself. Someone has said that the pastor's job is to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable. Our Lord often had to say difficult things. Likewise, Paul spoke the truth in love. Let us not be guilty of holding back God's truth from those who need it. God's word is not all pleasant, yet it is all profitable. We must be very careful to remember that there is a difference between speaking the truth in love, and just telling bare truth. Are we "brutally honest" or just plain brutal? Our teaching must be salted with love.

Repetition and review is an effective teaching/learning method. Jesus repeated His teachings and Paul reviewed his hearers. We all need to be reminded of certain truths from time to time. Here, Paul reminds these leaders of much that he had taught them.

Taking heed (20:28-31)

Paul warns the leaders about "fierce wolves" from without and false brothers from within who would entice the church

with "perverse" teachings. The leadership must "take heed" (v. 28), both to themselves and to all of the church. The church is pictured as a flock and the leaders as undershepherds providing for and protecting them. Leaders must be knowledgeable and well-prepared to oversee God's church.

Interestingly, three New Testament terms for pastor are used interchangeably here. Paul addresses the "elders" and calls them "overseers" (v. 28). This is the same word often translated "bishop." The function of the overseeing elders is "to care for the church" (v. 28). "To care for" could be

translated, "to shepherd," and this is often rendered "pastor." This free interchange of terminology indicates that the three terms, elder, bishop, and pastor, denote the pastoral minister. Pastors must take heed to watch over God's church.

Turning over (20:32)

Ultimately, a pastor must turn his flock over to the watchcare of the Great Shepherd. As Paul said farewell, he commended the leaders and the church to "God and to the word of His grace" (v. 32). Jesus Christ must be Lord over all - His church, His leaders, His people.

Hymnal editor solicits input

ST. LOUIS - The process to solicit "unprecedented input" for the new Southern Baptist hymnal to be released in 1991 began prior to the annual Southern Baptist Convention meeting in St. Louis.

Wesley L. Forbis, director of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's church music department and editor-in-chief of the hymnal, told state church music leaders during their midyear meeting June 11-13 that about 25,000 general questionnaires were distributed to 10 organizations prior to the annual meeting.

Groups that agreed to distribute questionnaires were the Pastors' Conference, Woman's Missionary Union, the SBC Forum, Church Music Conference, Directors of Missions Conference, Religious Educators Association, Women in Ministry, the Evangelists Conference, Brotherhood, and the Association of Campus Ministers.

The form solicits preferences in musical selections among hymns, songs, choruses, and spirituals; additions or deletions compared to the 1975 Baptist Hymnal; special musical features, such as medleys, descants, or free accompaniments; indexes; non-musical worship aids; and Scripture versions for responsive readings.

The general questionnaire also will be distributed during all conferences at Ridgecrest (N.C.) and Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist conference centers throughout the summer.

Subsequently, a scientific, representative sampling questionnaire will be mailed to churches by the Sunday School Board's research services department this fall.

Forbis said individuals have responded positively to an earlier invitation through state Baptist newspapers and Facts and Trends, the board's publication for full-time church staff persons, to submit original hymns and to comment on preferences in hymnal content. He said "scores of letters" had been received as of June 1.

Official unveiling of the hymnal is planned for March 11-14, 1991, during PraiSing II, a four-day celebration during the church music department's 50th anniversary and the Sunday School Board's 100th anniversary.

Correspondence should be addressed to Hymnal, MSN 170, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, TN 37234.

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1997 overshadows Hong Kong Christians

By Erich Bridges

HONG KONG (BP) — For just \$26, you can sponsor a Rice Paddy Baby.

That's the "emigration fee" for Hong Kong's tongue-in-cheek clone of the Cabbage Patch Kids. The cute Oriental dolls come complete with individual names and personalized Hong Kong-British "pass-ports."

Hong Kong shopkeepers sell everything imaginable, so their sardonic attempt to merchandize the continuing exodus of the colony's well-to-do citizens is hardly surprising. Emigration is rising again after a two-year lull, and recent polls show waning public confidence in Hong Kong's future.

Hong Kong reverts from British to Chinese rule on July 1, 1997. A significant number of educated, affluent professionals are marking the beginning of the decade-long countdown by departing for the United States, Canada, Australia, and other points abroad.

Observers say the emigration upturn reflects worries about the political shakeup in China earlier this year and the current debate over post-1997 social freedoms in Hong Kong. But the fact remains that the bulk of Hong Kong's 5.6-million people have no realistic prospect of leaving the tiny colony, even if they want to. And many, including numerous Hong Kong Christians, don't want to.

"We're tired of hearing about 1997," sighs Jachin Chan, president of the Baptist Convention of Hong Kong. "Whatever will come will come. We have faith in God."

Chan will stay in Hong Kong "until they chase me out," he jokes. "There will be changes. We don't know what kind, but we feel whoever is in power will probably honor the basic agreement."

Chan's comments reflect Hong Kong's growing acceptance, if not wholehearted embrace, of its inevitable future. The society and all-important economy are considerably more stable now than they were during the tense months of negotiations before China and Great Britain signed a joint declaration in 1984, announcing the return of Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty in 1997.

One observer summarizes the public mood: "Those who can leave will leave, and those who can't will make the best of it."

The details of post-1997 Hong Kong remain a mystery, but the rough outlines are beginning to emerge. A joint Chinese-Hong Kong committee is drafting the Basic Law, a "mini-constitution" that will govern Hong Kong.

The Chinese government promises "one country, two systems" — allowing Hong Kong to keep its social system, capitalist economy and a high degree of local autonomy for at least 50 years after becoming a special administrative region of China.

The Sino-British agreement guarantees freedom of religion and the right of religious groups to operate churches and other institutions, maintain ties with foreign religious groups, and invite missionaries to Hong Kong. It pledges no interference in Hong Kong church affairs by Chinese government or religious organizations, with the understanding that Hong Kong churches in turn will not seek to influence religious affairs in China.

A survey of about 250 Hong Kong Christian pastors last year showed a high approval rating for the religion guarantees. But a majority of the pastors who responded admitted they are wary or anxious about whether the guarantees will ac-

tually be carried out. Many remain suspicious of China churches and religious organizations.

In China, national Christian leader Ding Guangxun (K. H. Ting) has echoed the statements on Hong Kong religious freedom in the Sino-British agreement. Ding, head of both the China Christian

social and political stands could result in "unpleasant consequences" after 1997. San's article drew a flurry of responses charging him with intimidation.

Hong Kong's Baptists, traditionally cautious about politics, have kept a low profile, avoiding united statements about 1997. But single voices such as Carver Yu,



TEN-YEAR COUNTDOWN — Hong Kong reverts from British to Chinese rule on July 1, 1997. The Chinese government promises to preserve Hong Kong's social system, including religious freedom and an open door for missionaries. But some Christians in the colony remain anxious about the future.

Council and Chinese Protestants' Three Self Patriotic Movement, said neither organization will attempt to influence or interfere with Hong Kong churches.

Hong Kong religious groups should adopt the same attitude toward China churches, he added, as the two sides "adhere to the principles of non-subordination, non-interference, and mutual respect." That doesn't mean contact and fellowship will be barred, Ding stressed. "I hope there will be a lot of mutual respect, mutual prayer, mutual learning, and mutual exchange," he said.

Ding met recently with Sam James, East Asia director for the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board. He urged Southern Baptists not to let the approach of 1997 determine whether their 67 missionaries will remain in Hong Kong.

The future of missionaries there, the Chinese leader said, should be determined by Hong Kong Christians and the value of missionary work and relationships. Missionaries in Hong Kong leading up to 1997 could be a very positive influence on the church by providing an air of stability during an "anxious time," he said.

Another 20 Southern Baptist missionaries work in nearby Macao, which reverts from Portuguese to Chinese control in 1999. The social and legal system worked out for Macao is expected to resemble the Hong Kong model.

Meanwhile, a debate has been raging in Hong Kong's Chinese-language press over the definition of religious freedom and the separation of church and state after 1997. San Weisze (an apparent pseudonym for a writer widely assumed to be representing the Chinese government's perspective) wrote an article for the newspaper Ming Pao, advocating strict separation of the church both from government and sociopolitical affairs.

San took a dim view of the church's major political impact in recent years in the Philippines, Poland, and other countries. And he issued a not-so-subtle warning that Hong Kong churches' increasingly vocal

head of the religion and philosophy department at Hong Kong Baptist College, have spoken out. Yu believes Christians must take a much more active role in the political arena — both as individuals and as a group — to guard their future religious freedom.

Individual citizenship is fine, replies Baptist College President Daniel Tse, who is himself an influential member of the Hong Kong government's Legislative Council. But he believes group action poses significant hazards to the church's spiritual health.

"I personally am very heavily involved in Hong Kong local politics but I don't get my church involved in it," says Tse. "I can only represent myself."

Tse thinks Hong Kong Christians have more than enough to do in renewing

themselves and evangelizing the 90 percent of the population that is not Christian. "Many church leaders have left Hong Kong and that is a very sad thing," he observes. "If our churches are not strong spiritually, no matter how good the future is we will not exert our influence as the light and salt of the world. I think we are very weak at the moment."

Baptist convention leader Chan is more upbeat about church strength. He believes the 30,000 Baptists in Hong Kong can reach their ambitious goal of starting 100 churches within 10 years (which would be more than double the current total) by focusing on the legion of huge, self-contained housing estates and residential high-rises mushrooming all over Hong Kong. He also says missionaries can have a "great role" in the future through consulting, teaching, and helping Hong Kong Baptists start churches.

Southern Baptist missionaries hope and plan to have a future in Hong Kong. According to East Asia director James and Hong Kong mission administrator Gerald Hale, the best way to build the future is to build strong relationships now — through effective service to Hong Kong and its Christians.

And missionaries, both men believe, must spend more and more time with the grassroots believers who are sure to stay in Hong Kong for the long haul.

Says Hale: "Wouldn't it be a shame to work here 10 years and realize all the people you worked with are in Australia, Canada, and the United States?"

Gifts to Samford top \$16-million in year

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (BP) — Private contributions to Samford University exceeded \$16.2-million in 1986-87, eclipsing the previous record of \$10.1-million set in 1985-86. The school's fiscal year ended May 31.

The surge in gifts was sparked by early receipts from Samford Commitment, a fund-raising campaign which passed its \$28-million goal this spring after only eight months of its planned three-year solicitation schedule.

Gifts and pledges to the campaign are expected to exceed \$31-million by the end of the current fiscal year.

Interpretations

The admonishing Christ

By Herschel H. Hobbs

"Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven" (Matthew 18:22).

The apostles asked Jesus, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" (Matthew 18:1). Using a little child as an example, He taught about kingdom greatness (Matthew 18:2-4).

Eventually Peter asked how many times he should forgive his brother — "Until seven times?"

The rabbi taught to forgive three times. The Babylonian Talmud reads, "When a man sins against another, they forgive him once, they forgive him a second time, they forgive him a third time, but the fourth time they do not forgive him."

So Peter thought he was going well beyond the limit. He was being unusually generous. But he was in for a surprise.

Jesus said, "Until seventy times seven." Some want to read this "seventy-seven" times. But generally it is taken as 490 times! It is difficult to see such a number being necessary.

However, Jesus' point was unlimited forgiveness. Peter thought in terms of mathematics. Jesus taught in terms of the spirit. We are not to count the wrongs.

In 1 Corinthians 13:5 Paul said that "love (agape, Christian love) thinketh no evil." "Thinketh" translates into a book-keeping term. Love does not keep books on the evil done to it. The idea being that one must do enough good things to balance the books. Christian love does not act that way. This is a commentary on Jesus' words.

In light of God's infinite forgiveness of our sins, we should not limit the forgiveness we give to others (Matthew 18:23-35).