

Baptist and Reflector

VOL. 157/NO. 2/JANUARY 9, 1991

STATEWIDE EDITION

NEWSJOURNAL OF THE TENNESSEE BAPTIST CONVENTION

Dismissals, CP giving, prayer top SBC news stories in 1990

By Wm. Fletcher Allen

Closing out a year and beginning another gives opportunity to review Baptist work. The year 1990 was impacted for Southern Baptists by events at home and abroad.

There were the usual political agenda meetings. "Conservative" and "moderate" leadership made plans and announced candidates.

Seminary trustees meetings were held and then discussed in length.

But 1990 certainly was, most observers say, a pivotal year for the Southern Baptist Convention. It was a year marked by the solidifying of "conservative" leadership in almost every position available, and "conservatives" gained control of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville.

It was a year when the SBC presidency was contested hotly, beginning a year in advance. And — the 1990 presidency was won by Morris Chapman, "conservative" candidate with the largest plurality in several years. He defeated Dan Vestal with 57 percent of the vote.

The top news event of the SBC year was the firing of Al Shackleford and Dan Martin by the Executive Committee on July 17. Official charges were not filed against the two, but differences between their reporting style and what the Executive Committee wanted was the probable cause. Some committee members said they were dismissed because of "a perceived lack of balanced reporting." The firings evoked one of the loudest outcries

in Executive Committee history.

Runnerup to the Shackleford-Martin story is SBC giving. Southern Baptists contributed a record \$140.7 million through Cooperative Program gifts. This was a 2.46 percent increase, but a decrease in spending power since the cost of living rose 5.6 percent.

Number three on the news list is prayer and solemn assemblies. Not an ordinary news item, the year saw more calls by leadership for planned prayer and assemblies. Many were held — and the movement should grow.

There was (and is) much attention focused on the Persian Gulf area, the Middle East. When Iraq invaded Kuwait early in August, two Southern Baptist missionaries (workers) were trapped. The Maurice Graham family found refuge in the U.S. Embassy along with several other Americans.

Maurice Graham, a native of Shelbyville, was in the last group of hostages released, Dec. 9, and made it to Nashville in time for his wife Laurie's birthday Dec. 10. Laurie Graham and sons Peter and Aaron were released in September. The family had served only two months in Kuwait, having been transferred when Liberia was enveloped in civil war. Conflict involved in the lives of many Baptists and millions of others puts this story at least fourth on the list.

Trustees of the Sunday School Board seemed to be giving more support to President Lloyd Elder during the year, but their refusal to publish Leon McBeth's commissioned centennial



NEW TRUSTEES — Nine new trustees met with Belmont College's 39-member board in December. Serving a three-year term, all are eligible for reappointment. From left, seated, Donald K. Dixon, Highland Church, Tullahoma; Helen Jarrett Kennedy, Judson Church, Nashville; B. Otto Wheeley, First Church, Concord, Knoxville; standing, T. J. McDaniel Jr., Harpeth Heights Church, Nashville; Thomas R. Boyd, First Church, Lebanon; Clinton H. Swafford, First Church, Winchester; Kenneth L. Castleberry, Dalewood Church, Nashville; and Horace H. Hooper Jr., Inglewood Church, Nashville. F. Murray Mathis, Third Church, Murfreesboro, also is a new trustee at Belmont.

history of the Sunday School Board ranks number five. Lack of balance was the purported reason.

These are the top five news items in the Southern Baptist Convention.

Other noteworthy happenings are listed, not necessarily in order of importance:

- Consultation of Concerned Baptists met in Atlanta Aug. 23-25 with 3000 attending. The group organized a new fellowship and developed an alternate method of gifting to SBC programs and entities.

- The Sunday School Board, because of lack of subscribing churches, eliminated the BTN Satellite teaching and training network. Twenty-five fulltime positions at the board were deleted.

- The SBC Executive Committee in September changed its bylaws so that its officers could fill staff vacancies on an interim basis. In early December, the officers announced interim appointments of Mark Coppenger as vice president in public relations and Richard Rosenbaum Jr. as vice presi-

SBC president asks for day of prayer

WICHITA FALLS, Texas (BP) — Southern Baptist Convention President Morris Chapman sent a telegram to President George Bush Jan. 4 asking the president to proclaim Sunday, Jan. 13, as a National Day of Prayer.

Chapman told the president that Southern Baptists are "praying for world peace and for God's supernatural intervention in the Persian Gulf crisis."

"I believe the people of our country would welcome and readily respond to a presidential proclamation drawing us together in prayer on a day prior to January 15," (the date the United Nations has designated as the deadline date for Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait) Chapman said in his message.

dent for business and finance.

- Here's Hope simultaneous revivals resulted in at least 100,000 commitments to Christ.

- State paper editors met with President George Bush and later visited the Soviet Embassy while attending a Baptist Joint Committee briefing in Washington.

- In February, the Executive Committee voted to recommend to the SBC messengers that the BJCPA allocation (See Dismissals, page 5)

Cooperative Program gifts second highest for SBC in month of December

NASHVILLE (BP) — Southern Baptist Convention Cooperative Program unified budget receipts in December 1990 totaled \$11,192,207, an increase of 6.73 percent over December of 1989.

The December 1990 total was the second highest December Cooperative Program giving amount on record. Receipts for the same month in 1988 totaled a record \$12,151,002.

Receipts for the first three months of the 1990-91 budget year were 3.54 percent above the same period for 1989-90.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the rate of inflation, or annualized Consumer Price Index, for the period was 6.3 percent.

"I am gratified by the continued increase in Cooperative Program giving," said Harold C. Bennett,

president and treasurer of the SBC Executive Committee. "Thank God for faithful Southern Baptist churches," he continued.

"All Cooperative Program receipts are distributed in keeping with the SBC Cooperative Program Allocation Budget as adopted by the convention in June 1990," Bennett stated. "The division of CP funds between states and the SBC is approximately 61-39 percent."

Designated gifts received by the Executive Committee for the three-month period, primarily for the Annie Armstrong Offering for Home Missions and the Lottie Moon Offering for Foreign Missions, experienced growth comparable to the Cooperative Program, a 3.61 percent increase over the same three months of 1989.

December giving shows slight gain

Tennessee Baptist Convention's Cooperative Program giving for December failed to overcome a "slow" November, according to the monthly report from D. L. Lowrie, TBC executive director/treasurer.

CP receipts for December amounted to \$1,668,723.55, showing a slight gain of \$6,660.50 over December 1989. The report shows that after two months into the budget year, TBC churches have given \$499,911.89 less than they gave last year at this time.

Overall, CP budget receipts are \$3,434,082.89, or \$1,032,227.11 below budget requirements. That means the first two months missed the budget by 23.1 percent.

Receipts for November and December are 12.7 percent below last year's total for the same period.

Lowrie noted the \$6600 increase in budget receipts for December with appreciation to the churches and expressed optimism for a "healthy" January.

The CP budget approved for TBC needs is \$26,797,860.

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Editorials

Baptist Hospital, Nashville, and its new relationship with TBC

On December 19, trustees of Baptist Health Care System Inc., commonly known as Middle Tennessee's Baptist Hospital, voted to amend its charter so that the hospital can elect its own trustees. Board leaders said the action allows the body "to prepare the hospital for the challenges of the 1990s."

The action in effect removes the Nashville entity from its close ties with the Tennessee Baptist Convention, ties which began in April 1948.

Trustees of Protestant Hospital in downtown Nashville voted on April 21, 1948, to give the facilities to the Executive Board, Tennessee Baptist Convention. The board accepted, and at that December state convention messengers validated the board vote.

Since then Baptist Hospital and its subsidiaries have been a part of the TBC, with trustees nominated and approved each year as are trustees for all TBC entities.

The convention approved the board's recommendation in 1948 that the hospital "be subject to the same regulations, restraints, and privileges as obtains in the relation of other Tennessee Baptist institutions to the Tennessee Baptist Convention."

Convention messengers approved Executive Board recommendations that trustees for the hospital be elected by the TBC, and that the hospital be given an allocation of three percent of Cooperative Program funds.

Through the years Baptist Hospital has grown in every way — as has the city of Nashville. Once

located in the "suburbs," it is now near the heart of the state's capital. It has a reputation second to none — and has become, along with the Baptist hospital systems in Memphis and East Tennessee, a gem in the crown of healing for the Southeast.

Under the leadership of David Stringfield and those who preceded him, Baptist Hospital has flourished. It is not now receiving any Cooperative Program funds — and has not for some time. For several years, hospital administrators have not been entirely satisfied with TBC trustee selections.

As partners in Christian service, the Tennessee Baptist Convention and Baptist Hospital have established a spotless reputation for excellence. Both have prospered by use of the name "Baptist."

It is probably true that Baptist Hospital does not need the Tennessee Baptist Convention. And since the convention does not give the hospital a slice of the CP pie, some may say that the TBC does not need the hospital.

But in the December action, Baptist's trustees and administrators broke new ground in Baptist relationships. How do we now relate to Baptist Hospital? It is much like the young person who is out of school, earning money, and no longer eligible to be considered a dependent on father's income tax form. They still need the relationship, though they are more like equal partners.

However, they are not equal partners in this case. When the books closed in 1989, Baptist Hospital had assets of more than \$204,000,000. A not-for-profit entity, Baptist also reported liabilities of

the same amount.

Tennessee Baptists should realize that Baptist Hospital owes something to the convention. The relationship need not become strained. Baptist will probably want to continue using that "Baptist" name and identity. That should not be contested. What Baptist owes, if anything, should be left for the two parties to decide in friendly negotiations.

The second point has to do with the relationship of other institutions with the TBC. At the November TBC meeting in Nashville, the three colleges (Belmont, Carson-Newman, Union) were asked to take no action on relationships and a study committee was set to work.

At the December meeting of the Tennessee Baptist Children's Homes trustees, that body changed its charter to require a one year's notice on any change (such as relationship).

Since two of the staunchest Baptist universities, Furman in South Carolina and Baylor in Texas, have recently taken action to elect their own trustees, Baptists are becoming skittish about convention-institution ties.

As representatives of the Tennessee Baptist Convention and the Baptist Health Care System Inc. (Nashville) meet this week in dialogue — sound minds and generous Christian attitudes must prevail.

Whatever we have gotten ourselves into, there is a best way out. That is the road we must travel together. It must be determined whether we need each other, and if so, how and why. — WFA

Where is Baptist Press — and are there vital signs?

We are frequently asked about the status of Baptist Press.

Once the primary purveyor of Baptist news, Baptist Press has not operated for several months with the alacrity for which it has been known.

Many journalists were alarmed last summer when Baptist Press underwent some drastic changes. When the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee fired Al Shackleford and Dan Martin July 17, Baptist Press was left without journalistic leadership at the Nashville home office.

Shackleford, vice president for public relations, and Martin, veteran news editor, were dismissed for differences with the Executive Committee on their perception of news. BP feature editor Marv Knox had resigned a month earlier to become editor of the Western Recorder, Kentucky state paper.

The dismissals had a telling effect on the reliability of Baptist Press. The lives of the two men were dramatically affected. Not only has the BP role been subject to criticism, those chosen to replace them will be unduly scrutinized. The Executive Committee has named a new vice president for public relations, but his duties do not include BP management.

Shackleford and Martin are highly esteemed by Baptist journalists and by their secular counterparts. That the Executive Committee has not yet been able to replace the two is troubling — and taints BP's reputation to some extent each day that passes.

The current BP office staff in Nashville has done good work in handling news as it continues to come from BP bureaus and individual contributors.

But the newsgathering process has broken down.

Baptist state papers face a crisis decision. Associated Baptist Press, birthed by interested Baptists because of the demise of BP, offers to step in to supply qualified news reporting and processing.

An independent agency, ABP has supplied news coverage since July — and now offers a full range of news service. Baptist state papers, including this one, have a choice. Some will not be able to afford the independent service. Some say they cannot afford to go without news.

Most state papers can develop news stories, report them, and complete the process. But all of us need spot news coverage and distribution that BP has supplied. It is said that necessity is the mother of invention. Decisions will be made soon. Where is Baptist Press when we need it? — WFA

Federal judge restricts investigation of churches

WASHINGTON (BP) — A federal district judge has ruled that government investigators do not have "unfettered discretion" to infiltrate church services.

The ruling by U.S. District Judge Roger Strand in a lawsuit filed by four Lutheran and Presbyterian congregations and their parent denominations imposed new restrictions on the government's ability to infiltrate religious services.

The churches filed suit in 1986 challenging the covert investigation of churches suspected of involvement in the sanctuary movement by undercover informants hired by the federal Immigration and Naturalization Service. Court records show that undercover informants attended church services and on at least one occasion, secretly tape-recorded a worship service.

The undercover investigation was made public during the trial of several sanctuary movement members who had been charged with conspiracy and smuggling Central Americans into the United States.

While Judge Strand's ruling did not

prohibit investigation of church activities, it held that the government's investigation must be conducted in good faith.

"The government is constitutionally precluded from unbridled and inappropriate covert activity which has as its propose or objective the abridgment of the First Amendment freedoms of those involved," the ruling stated.

Additionally, the ruling said investigators "must adhere scrupulously to the scope and extent of the invitation to participate that may have been extended or offered to them."

Peter Baird, an attorney representing the plaintiffs, said the ruling means that when the invitation extended is for worship, anything outside that invitation, such as tape-recording the service, is not permissible.

A broad coalition of religious groups, including the Baptist Joint Committee, joined the case in support of the churches out of concern for First Amendment and other rights.

"This case is of critical importance to all churches regardless of their views on the sanctuary movement, said Oliver Thomas, general counsel of

the Baptist Joint Committee, a Washington-based religious liberty agency representing ten national Baptist groups.

"Churches have First Amendment rights that must be taken into account — even by the Justice Department," Thomas said.

The Baptist Joint Committee, in a statement approved in 1986, condemned "the use of paid informants,

undercover agents, and surreptitious tactics by any government agency investigating religious organizations as improper and illegal when less intrusive means of investigation or fact gathering are available.

"We lament the chilling effect upon worship, prayer, faith, and fellowship freely exercised when worship services are invaded through the use of electronic eavesdropping equipment."

Baptist and Reflector

Newsjournal of Tennessee Baptist Convention
Established in 1835

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Lonnie Wilkey, Associate Editor
Connie Davis, Assistant Editor
Connie Umstead, News Assistant/Church Pages Coordinator

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Baptist and Reflector is published weekly except Christmas week by the Executive Board, Tennessee Baptist Convention, 5001 Maryland Way, Brentwood, Tenn. 37027. Subscription prices: \$6.55 individual; clubs of ten or more, \$6.25; church budget plan, \$5.56 when sent to 50 percent or more of church homes. Second class postage paid at Brentwood and at additional mailing office. (USPS 041-780).

Space forbids printing of resolutions, obituaries, and poetry. Advertising rates on request.

Baptist and Reflector holds membership with Baptist Press (BP) news service of the Southern Baptist Convention. Telephone: (615) 371-2003.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Baptist and Reflector, P. O. Box 728, Brentwood, Tenn. 37024.

CLC asks for dismissal of NEA Chairman Frohnmayer

WASHINGTON (BP)— The Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission has reiterated its call for the dismissal of National Endowment for the Arts Chairman John Frohnmayer after he said that he would not refuse grants based on their failure to meet a standard of decency.

"There will not be a case where I will impose my own judgment (on a grant based on decency concerns)," Frohnmayer said Dec. 14. "I am not going to be the decency czar here."

Frohnmayer's remarks were made at a special meeting of the National Council on the Arts, which is the advisory council of the NEA. Prior to his statement, the council voted unanimously not to include a decency requirement in its written grant guidelines for 1991. An NEA spokesman said Frohnmayer and the council agreed that grant-review panels should be the ones to consider decency standards.

HMB suggests response of churches

Congress included a decency provision in its October legislation reauthorizing NEA funding through 1993. It directed the chairman to make certain that grants are determined "taking into consideration general standards of decency and respect for the diverse beliefs and values of the American public."

"It is clear that Mr. Frohnmayer and the NEA's hostility toward evangelical Christians' concerns have not diminished. He believes even the minimalist 'decency' approach of Congress in dealing with the abuses of the NEA is unreasonable. Therefore, he has no intention of upholding the law," said Richard D. Land, CLC executive director.

"The National Endowment for the Arts is out of control," he said.

Land was a member of a group of 18 evangelical leaders who met with President George Bush Oct. 30 and

asked for the replacement of Frohnmayer.

Evangelicals have expressed concern for more than a year about NEA and such taxpayer-funded grants as a crucifix submerged in urine; homoerotic, sadomasochistic photographs and sexually explicit stage shows. The NEA operated under a requirement forbidding obscenity during the 1990 grant year. The CLC and other evangelicals groups called for strict guidelines in this fall's reauthorization bill, but the resultant legislation included only the general provision, which critics said was too vague.

The endowment has \$155 million for grants and fellowships in 1991, an NEA spokesman said.

Recent actions of the NEA's general counsel were "deplorable" and "outrageous," Land said. Julianne Davis said in a speech on Oct. 24 at the

University of Pennsylvania Law School that Pat Robertson, head of the Christian Broadcasting Network, and the American Family Association, directed by Don Wildmon, were both "enemies" of the NEA. She said the AFA "advocates that astrologers, adulterers, blasphemers, homosexuals, and incorrigible children be executed, preferably by stoning."

The AFA filed a lawsuit for slander against Davis in U.S. District Court in Philadelphia, where her speech was made.

Davis also said she assisted lawyers in defending Cincinnati's Contemporary Arts Center against obscenity charges brought by the state of Ohio. The museum director was charged over a presentation of homoerotic photographs by the late Robert Mapplethorpe. The director was acquitted. The NEA granted \$30,000 for the traveling Mapplethorpe exhibit.

Military service pulls ministers from congregations

ATLANTA (BP)— The call to military duty has left dozens of Southern Baptist churches without the ministers they called to their staffs.

Church staff members who serve in the National Guard or military reserves are among the 400,000 U.S. troops assigned to the Persian Gulf.

"We sent a missionary out involuntarily," said David Sapp, pastor of First Church, Chamblee, Ga. The church's minister of education, Larry Jones, is in California being trained in desert warfare for possible deployment to Saudi Arabia.

Jones came home for a few days at Christmas, and church members learned that he is "doing an incredible amount of counseling. We feel like we've extended our church's ministry to a lot of scared kids in the military," Sapp said.

Jones was called to active duty as a chaplain in November, and the church agreed to continue his salary in full through December. Beginning in January, the church will supplement his income to make up the difference between what his church salary would be and what the military pays.

At First Church in Plantersville, Miss., Gene Williams, personnel committee member, said the church "made sure our pastor didn't lose anything financially" while he serves as a military chaplain.

Jimmy Smith, Plantersville pastor, was called to active duty in December and is already in Saudi Arabia. His wife and two children continue to live in the parsonage, and the church pays the utility bills at the house.

"It's a difficult time for his family and the church," Williams said. "We're in the process of hiring an interim pastor, but in the meantime everybody's pitching in and doing their part."

Everyone doing their part is also the operating principle at First Church. Dawson, Ga. Pastor James Mallard is a chaplain with the National Guard, and he, like Jones, is in California training for desert warfare.

"The last two or three years the pastor has led the deacons in a shared ministry concept," said Ted Stephens, minister of music. "Upon receiving the news (that the pastor was being called to military duty,) one of the deacons

said, 'The Lord has been preparing us for this time.'"

When Mallard was activated in the military, the church continued his salary for two weeks, and his family continues to live in the parsonage.

"We're in the process of selecting an interim now, but we're holding a place for our pastor," Stephens said.

The Home Mission Board's chaplaincy division offers the following sugges-

tions to churches whose pastor or church staff member is called to active military duty:

- Provide a six-month leave of absence. Without a declaration of war, people serving in the National Guard or military reserves can only be given up to two six-month assignments.

- Continue paying health care, life insurance, and retirement benefits for six months.

Cambron honored as bivocational pastor

MEMPHIS (BP)— Pastors from Texas, Louisiana, Tennessee, and Kentucky were recognized as "Exemplary Bivocational Pastors of the Year" during the annual meeting of the National Council on Bivocational Ministries.

Honorees included: Domingo Ozuna, an oil company employee and pastor of Primera Iglesia Bautista in Grand Prairie, Texas; James Greer, owner of a tire company and pastor of Donahue Church in Pineville, La.; James Cambron, manager of an insurance agency and pastor of Mountain View Chapel near Johnson City, and Charles E. Stewart, retired gas company employee and pastor since 1964 of Rose Hill Church in Ashland, Ky.

Criteria for selecting those recognized included tenure at present church, development of the church under his leadership, unique features of his ministry, and his image within his community.

The national council consists of local,

Jim G. Butler leads Trinity Church, Memphis

Jim G. Butler is serving Trinity Church, Memphis, as pastor, following service in the same role at Calvary Church, McAllen, Texas.

Butler, who also has been a pastor of churches in Washington, Oklahoma, and Texas, is an Oklahoma native. He was ordained in 1975 at First Church, Moore, Okla.

He is a graduate of Oklahoma Baptist University, Shawnee, Okla.; Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas; and Luther Rice Seminary, Jacksonville, Fla.

He and his wife, Lawanda, have three children.

state and national leaders committed to strengthening bivocational ministries. Next year's meeting is planned for Raleigh, N.C.

David Bunch, the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's vice president for new church extension, told the council that national mission strategy must include a plan for using lay leaders, volunteers, and bivocational ministers. "The Home Mission Board will recruit, train, and deploy volunteers and bivocational ministers," he said. "Winning the nation to Christ cannot be done without them."

Bunch pointed out that Baptist colleges and seminaries are holding up models of intentional bivocational service. At the same time, he added the agencies and Seminary Extension are responding with training at times and places where bivocational ministers can receive it.

Ernest E. Mosley, executive vice president of the SBC Executive Committee, recalled his own experience of growing up under the ministry of a pastor who was also the local grocer. Mosley drew a strong distinction between the bivocational ministers and "moonlighting preachers." Bivocational ministers are there with the churches and the membership in good times and bad, he contended, while "moonlighting preachers" show up to deliver a sermon but never seem to be around when the going gets rough.

Mosley pointed to the SBC Annual for evidence that "today's strategy is not adequate." Noting the thousands of names listed this year as "other ordained," Mosley suggested that many of these persons could be put to work in bivocational ministries.

Re-elected council president was Glenn Ailshie of Mullins, S.C. Other of-



CAMBRON CITED — James Cambron, right, pastor of Mountain View Church, Johnson City, recently was one of four pastors nationwide honored as "Exemplary Bivocational Pastors of the Year." Cambron received his award from Dale Holloway, bivocational program consultant for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

ficers are Claud Slate, Fort Worth, Texas, first vice president; Frank Phillips, Gainesville, Fla., second vice president; and Lee Holloway, Nashville, recording secretary. Elected to one-year terms as directors of the council were Paul Stevens, Fort Worth; Don Beall, Wichita, Kan.; Larry Kirk, Nashville; Larry Orange, Louisville, Ky.; and Corbin Cooper, Cary, N.C.

Evangelism Conference

To reach those attending the 1991 State Evangelism Conference Jan. 21-23 at Belmont Heights Church, Nashville, people may call (615) 385-3872 or 385-3873.

Our Readers Write

Unique opportunity

Thank you for your editorial in the Dec. 19 Baptist and Reflector. It serves as a powerful exhortation to the body of Christ, especially those members in affluent America. We have begun to conform to the world's example of celebration of the "Christmas season." We are overlooking the fact that the Christmas season affords Christians the marvelous opportunity to share the message of Christ in word and deed.

I have had the privilege to talk with many volunteers in prison ministries who have discovered this unique opportunity. They have begun to give gifts only to prisoners, adults, and juveniles, who are away from family and friends. They have also requested that their friends and family buy gifts for the incarcerated instead of for them (volunteers). The results have brought real joy, such as they had not known in past Christmas seasons. It also opened the door to building friendships with prisoners and to sharing the message of God's supreme gift of Christ the Savior.

Jim Whitley, chaplain
John S. Wilder Youth Dev. Center
Somerville 38068

Opposes action

I am writing in response to the action of the board of trust of Baptist Hospital on Dec. 19. That action took from the

Tennessee Baptist Convention the right and authority to nominate and elect trustees to that board. I have been a member of that board for five years; however, I had resigned from the board prior to the Dec. 19 meeting because of my impending move to Charlotte, N.C.

Had I been at that meeting, I would have been the lone dissenting vote. I believe the action of the Baptist Hospital board of trust only deepens the schism in Southern Baptist life and adds one more difficulty to the already precarious situation we face.

It is my prayer that Baptists in Tennessee and across our entire Southern Baptist Convention will begin to make decisions that will promote healing rather than a deepening division. That must take place on both sides of our denominational issues.

I will continue to pray for and support the work of Baptist Hospital in Middle Tennessee and the fine leadership of David Stringfield and Paul Moore, but I am disappointed in this decision.

Charles D. Page
First Church
Seventh and Broadway
Nashville 37203

Pastor needed

Calvary Baptist Church, a congregation of 100 people located in Lago Patria, Italy, near Naples, needs a pastor. The

congregation is mainly people connected with the American Military.

Our church is affiliated with the European Baptist Convention (English Language) and is founded on the principles and doctrines of the Southern Baptist Convention.

If God is leading you to pastor in a missions setting, please contact: Gary Elliott, AIRSOUTH Box 143, FPO NY 09524.

Gary Elliott, chairman
Search Committee
AIRSOUTH Box 143
FPO NY 09524

GUIDELINES: Opinions of Tennessee Baptists on pertinent subjects are welcomed. Letters should be concise, no more than 250 words. Writer's name may be withheld for sufficient reason. Only one letter from the same writer will be considered for publication per quarter. Letters must not make personal attacks on the character or integrity of anyone. Form letters and "open" letters will not be published. Writers should send original copy. Writers are encouraged to write in a positive, Christian manner. Address and phone number must be included. Letters not conforming to these guidelines will be returned.

Evangelism in military

As a member of the Chaplains Commission of the Southern Baptist Conven-

tion I was especially interested in the article written by Connie Davis about the evangelism explosion among service men in the Persian Gulf area. At our last Chaplains Commission meeting we received this news with great joy. These service men are placed in a situation where they face the realities of ultimate values.

I affirm that this evangelism outreach precedes the gulf crisis. Each year I travel to Camp LeJeune, N.C., for a reunion with old WWII Marine buddies and we all mix and mingle with the present generation of Marine and Navy medical personnel. It would surprise most Baptists to see how many young officers and enlisted men are struggling with the call to the ministry, how many Bible studies are conducted in homes and barracks at LeJeune, and the commitment to Christ of Major General Donald Gardner (who was at one time a deacon at Brentwood Church, Brentwood). General Gardner was commander of Marine Corps Base, Camp LeJeune, N.C.

One young Southern Baptist chaplain told me that on a 1988 Mediterranean cruise, 75 marines were saved in his battalion and that he baptized 37 of them in the Jordan River!

All these units predate the Iraqi crisis, and since the Second Marine Division is now in the gulf area, I am sure the evangelism efforts are even more intensified.

William H. Delaney
1000 Justine Lane
Chattanooga 37412

Pastoral leadership, vision keys to leaving plateau, researchers say

Editor's note: Following is the third in a series on plateaued and declining churches.

By Mark Wingfield

ATLANTA (BP)— Pastoral leadership and vision are the two most important factors in taking a church off a plateau, researchers and pastors of growing churches contend.

One professor explains this by an equation: "Pastoral vision shared with the people and implemented by the two together equals breakthrough," said Ebbie Smith, professor of missions at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

Smith and other experts know a renewed vision is essential to moving a church off plateau. What they can't say is where to find that vision or how to sell it to a congregation.

"This is where you get into a very spiritual dimension," Smith said. "This is where all our graphs and percentages fall apart. A pastor has got to demonstrate a concern for the people, and they've got to be convinced that things are going to work."

But charts and graphs do show some things clearly.

For one thing, there is a statistical

correlation between the arrival of a new pastor and the time churches begin to grow off a plateau. This was documented in a 1989 study comparing churches which remained on a plateau and churches which grew off a plateau.

The research, done by Kirk Hadaway of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, found that almost half of breakout churches called their current pastor immediately before they began renewed growth. Breakout churches are those that break away from a plateau with a new spurt of growth.

"Apparently a new pastor is often necessary to revitalize a stagnant church, and if a church is going to follow its pastor off a plateau the change usually occurs within the first few years," Hadaway said.

Simply changing pastors is not the key to this finding, however, because another 22 percent of breakout churches had the same pastor during their periods of plateau and significant growth.

The key is the vision the pastor communicates to the congregation. New pastors more frequently bring a new vision which results in growth,

Hadaway said.

But pastors can experience turnaround in their current churches if they are willing, added Jere Allen of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board. "There are excellent examples of pastors who have changed their style from business as usual to a determination to be proactive and make a profound difference in the growth pattern of the church."

Such a change in an existing pastorate often comes on the heels of a sabbatical leave, a fresh study of the meaning of the church, or a personal crisis, Allen said.

The success of breakout pastors is not based on preaching ability, seminary education, administrative skills, or an authoritarian leadership style, Hadaway and Allen concluded.

Instead, the ability to convey a vision of what could be is the critical difference. "The pastor who is able to generate enthusiasm is the one most likely to move a church off the plateau," Allen said. "A church needs a clear and simple, biblically based vision toward which all the other dreams lead."

Most often, this is accomplished by leading a church to re-examine its purpose for existence, to ask, "Why are we here?" Allen suggested. "The first thing a church needs to do is be intentional."

This is not accomplished by dusting off the church constitution for a review, he said. Rather, it happens when pastor and lay leaders work together to draft a new mission statement.

The process of creating the statement will prove to be more important than the statement itself, Allen said.

Unfortunately, many pastors are threatened by the prospect of real growth, even though they say they want the church to grow, added Charles Chaney, HMB vice president for extension. When a church begins to

grow, the pastor has to let go, which often is threatening, he said.

Likewise, growth can be threatening to laypeople. "It takes a lot of courage to grow," said Joe Finrock, pastor of First Church, Gentry, Ark.

Finrock led his small-town church to grow from a plateau of about 100 in attendance to about 370 in attendance currently. When he arrived in Gentry, Finrock said he found a church with low morale. "This was my first pastorate, and I didn't know any better, so I told them we could be a great church."

"The thing people run up against in small towns is a small-town mentality, that we're just a small church, and we can only do small things," he said. "That's just the lie of the devil."

BWA leaders express horror at execution

McLEAN, Va. (BP)— Leaders of the Baptist World Alliance have expressed horror and dismay at the news of the execution of an Assemblies of God pastor in Iran and have called on religious leaders of all traditions in Iran to defend the rights of the minority religious community.

In responding to the report of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board which reported the hanging of Hossein Soodmand on Dec. 3, Denton Lotz, BWA general secretary, said, "It is unbelievable in this 20th century that people are still being persecuted because of their faith."

The FMB report said the execution of Soodmand came amid "a new wave of repression against Christian believers and churches in the country." Soodmand was one of a handful of Iranian pastors serving those who had left Islam for the Christian faith.

"Religious freedom is the basis of all freedoms," Lotz said. "When this freedom is denied, then all other freedoms are in jeopardy."

Churches urged to return questionnaire

A questionnaire will be mailed to randomly selected Tennessee Baptist churches this month.

Information gleaned from the questionnaire, developed by the Tennessee Baptist Convention's church staff compensation study committee, will help churches be reminded of their stewardship and responsibility in making certain church staff members receive adequate incomes for today's living expenses, said Tom Sumners, layman at Parkview Church, Lewisburg, and chairman of the committee.

Churches who receive the ques-

tionnaire are urged to return it as soon as possible. All information requested will be confidential, Sumners said.

Information gathered from the survey will be published in the 1991 Staff Compensation Study booklet. The booklet can be used as a guide for congregations to measure the fairness of compensation packages for their staff, Sumners said.

The church staff compensation study committee is comprised of 15 laypersons from Tennessee Baptist churches.

Southern Baptist professor helps retranslate Living Bible

By Pat Cole

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)— As a member of the team that is retranslating The Living Bible, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary professor Gerald Borchert approaches the task with a mixed view of the popular version of Holy Scripture.

Borchert, T. Rupert and Lucille Coleman professor of New Testament interpretation at the Louisville, Ky., school, likes The Living Bible's flowing style and easy readability. However, he disagrees with its rendition of several New Testament passages.

Borchert and other Biblical scholars working on the project have an opportunity to make substantive changes to the translation. Their objective, he said, is to keep the paraphrased style of original translator Kenneth Taylor but strive to stay true to the Greek and Hebrew texts.

Borchert's assignment centers on the writings of the apostle Paul. He and two other scholars — each working independently — offer suggestions on passages where they may differ with

the present Living Bible. The three then meet, discuss their proposed changes, and reach a consensus. Their collective work goes to Taylor who critiques the style of the revised translation but not its meaning. Borchert said: "You will find that many, many people are buying The Living Bible and saying 'now I know what it (the Scripture) means.' Our task is to say what it means in the style of Kenneth Taylor."

Since Borchert had been "critiquing The Living Bible all of my academic life," he had some reluctance about joining the translation team. Yet he said he knew The Living Bible would continue to be popular because churchgoers "like the way it reads." He said, "I finally came to the conclusion that if I can help the average person understand it (the Bible) then that, in addition to teaching students, is what my business is all about."

Taylor's primary goal in the original Living Bible was "to translate it for his children in order that they could understand what the Bible is all

about," Borchert noted. The style of The Living Bible indicates that Taylor is a "fine literary figure," Borchert said. However, he added that Taylor's knowledge of Greek is "not the scholar's Greek" and some of the language's finer points cause him difficulty.

He also believes The Living Bible "tends to be very middle class, very Western, and very American in its perspective." The Living Bible thus "communicates very well with most North Americans," he said. "The only problem is that it isn't always correct in the translation. What we face is how can you maintain the integrity of the text and still communicate?"

The Living Bible's failure to communicate clearly the sufferings of the early church is an example of its American bias, Borchert said. "The early church was a suffering church and Americans don't want to suffer. I think that's (suffering) a very crucial aspect of the Bible. The Bible doesn't promise you that it will all go happily ever after. The Bible tells you that you

may have to suffer and you may even have to die for Jesus and there is not enough of that in The Living Bible."

The paraphrased style of The Living Bible gives the translators great freedom to communicate the meaning of the Biblical text, he said. Yet, Borchert cautioned that such latitude also opens the door for translators to insert their sociological and cultural context.

The translators are mostly people who have criticized portions of the original Living Bible, said Borchert, adding they represent a variety of theological perspectives. He described the translators as "conservative scholars who have a high view of Scripture without being rigid."

Borchert said The Living Bible will never be a substitute for a knowledge of Biblical languages nor will it even be a substitute for English translations that more closely follow the Greek and Hebrew texts. Still, he maintained that if the translators "can achieve a closeness to the meaning we have accomplished something."

CLC files friend-of-the-court brief in Kansas

WASHINGTON (BP)— The Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission has filed a friend-of-the-court brief with the Kansas Supreme Court in a case involving autonomy of a local Baptist church.

The brief was filed in December in the case of Kennedy, et al., v. Gray, et al. The case involves a membership dispute in a church in Kansas City, Kan. The CLC's brief does not take a position on the merits of the dispute between the parties. The CLC says the central issue for the Court is "whether the church will remain autonomous to resolve membership disputes which are inherently religious."

"This is the first case in Kansas to deal directly with a church dispute in a congregational-type church. We are urging the Court to apply the long-standing rule that civil courts will not interfere with the internal religious decisions of churches. We believe the rule should be the same for both congregational and hierarchical forms of government," Michael K. Whitehead, CLC general counsel, said.

The church, Pleasant Green Mis-

sionary Baptist Church, is not affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention. The brief says that the CLC and the Southern Baptist Convention "have a substantial interest in the public policy and significant constitutional issues" raised by the case.

The church's internal disagreement apparently began when David L. Gray, pastor of the church for 30 years, became ill. During his absence, a minority group of deacons and other members sought to "take control" of the church, according to the defendants' brief. The minority group involved denies the allegation, according to the plaintiffs' brief.

After Gray returned to his position the minority group requested through an attorney that the church provide the group access to and control of its financial records. The pastor and church refused. On July 24, 1989, the group filed suit in the District Court of Wyandotte County, Kan., against Gray and other church officials, seeking the naming of a temporary receiver to take over regulation of the church.

On July 30, 1989, Pleasant Green Missionary Church voted to remove the plaintiffs and those supporting them from membership. The defendants' brief says that the decision to expel was based on the church's doctrine that lawsuits against other members are opposed to the teaching of Scripture.

On Jan. 14, 1990, the church affirmed its removal of the plaintiffs. As a

Baptist Hymnal debuts at PraiSing II

NASHVILLE — Southern Baptist humorist Jerry Clower, vocalist Karla Worley, and keyboard artists Max Lyall and Al Travis are among personalities announced for the March 11 opening here of PraiSing II.

PraiSing II is a four-day worship and praise celebration.

Vocalist Cynthia Clawson, the Centurymen, handbell ringer Christine Anderson and dramatist Ragan Courtney will lead Tuesday's evening event. On Wednesday, pianists Stephen Nielson and Ovid Young, soprano Henrietta Davis and baritone David Ford along with 200-voice choir of Baptist college and seminary students will lead in worship.

The debut of the Baptist Hymnal, led by Wesley Forbis, hymnal editor and director of the Southern Baptist Sun-

result, the district court judge ruled in favor of the defendants, holding that the plaintiffs did not have "standing" to sue because they were no longer members of the church. The judge also wrote that "it is not the place of civil courts to inquire into the regularity of such an 'ecclesiastical' action by a religious body."

The plaintiffs appealed the ruling to the state supreme court.

Sunday School Board's church music department, will be Thursday evening. A 1300-voice choir, handbell ringers, and an orchestra directed by Camp Kirkland will present "Songs of Faith at the Heart of Baptist People." Each ticket holder will receive a souvenir, autographed edition of the Baptist Hymnal.

Throughout the week, simultaneous concerts will be offered at local churches, Opryland Hotel, and the Sunday School Board. Additional noontime concerts are scheduled in downtown locations.

Information about the week's program and cost of events is available by calling (615/251-2303) or writing the Sunday School Board (Box 24001, Nashville 37203).

Dismissals, CP giving, prayer . . .

(Continued from page 1)

be cut from \$391,796 to \$50,000. Messengers approved the action in June. In May President Jerry Vines announced messengers would not be

Morristown church calls Lampkin as pastor

Elmer Lampkin recently joined the staff of Calvue Church, Morristown.

This marks the third time Lampkin has served the church as pastor.

During his 30 years in the ministry, Lampkin has served Morningside, Fairfield, and Westview churches, all in Morristown; Barnards Grove Church, Bean Station; and Cedar Grove and Three Springs churches, both in Russellville.

He was ordained in 1960 at Fairfield Church, Morristown.

He and his wife, Dorothy, have one child.

allowed to see sections of a minority report on the BJCPA action.

- Jack Johnson, executive director/treasurer for Arizona, was elected to head the Radio and Television Commission.

- Lee Porter, Sunday School Board editor for 14 years was demoted and restricted from re-election as SBC registration secretary because of remarks made in June to seminary students visiting the convention, reported in late August by the Indiana state paper. He had been re-elected during the June SBC annual meeting although Tennessean Martin Bradley was unseated as recording secretary.

- A group of Southern Baptists formed Associated Baptist Press, a news agency, employing Dan Martin as interim editor.

- The Christian Life Commission allocated 35 percent of its enhanced budget to expand its Washington office and place there two new employees.

Funnyside up

The only time the pastor ever sees some people is when they're hatched, matched, or dispatched!

* * *

I took my small grandson to church. He watched as the choir came out of the side door in white robes and took their places. Then he leaned over to me and whispered, "Look, Granddaddy! They're all going to get a haircut."

* * *

We church members are often like the farmer's well that freezes up in the winter and dries up in the summer.

* * *

Tal D. Bonham and Jack Gullede, The Treasury of Clean Senior Adult Jokes. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

Seminaries graduate 37 with state ties

Five of the six Southern Baptist seminaries graduated students with Tennessee ties in December. Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Mo., holds only one graduation ceremony in May.

Graduating students are pictured beginning with New Orleans (La.) Baptist Theological Seminary; continuing with Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C.; Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky.; and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas. Students appear in these groups in alphabetical order. Several seminaries did not provide photos of all graduates.

Not pictured from Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Mill Valley, Calif., is Prentis McGoldrick Jr., Brentwood, doctor of ministry.

Graduates from Southern Seminary not pictured include, in alphabetical order: Steven Copeland; Walter Jackson, Memphis, doctor of ministry; Cathy Kucera, Jefferson City, master of social work; Jonathan Nelms, Nashville, master of church music; James William Owen, Cross Plains, doctor of ministry; Peter Stillman, Knoxville, master of arts in Christian education; David Thompson, Old Hickory, master of arts in Christian education; and John Williams, Nashville, doctor of ministry.

A graduate from Southwestern Seminary not pictured is Cynthia Ketron, Kingsport, master of arts in social services.



MANER DENT JR.
Clarksville
New Orleans Seminary
doctor of ministry



EARNEST "BO" GRACE JR.
Jackson
New Orleans Seminary
master of divinity



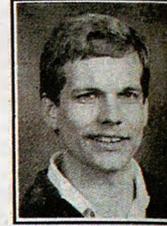
DERWARD RICHARDSON
Rogersville
New Orleans Seminary
master of divinity



HARRY ROWLAND JR.
Nashville
New Orleans Seminary
doctor of ministry



MICHAEL YOPP
Memphis
New Orleans Seminary
doctor of education



CRAIG WALKER
Bristol
Southeastern Seminary
master of divinity



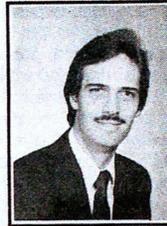
GARMON BROWN
Johnson City
Southern Seminary
master of art in Christian education



MARVIN CAMERON
Gallatinburg
Southern Seminary
doctor of ministry



BLAKE ESTES
Kingston
Southern Seminary
master of arts in Christian education



JAMES LEE FESLER
Nashville
Southern Seminary
master of divinity



JAMES GALLOWAY
Gallatin
Southern Seminary
diploma in Christian ministry



DAN HILL
Knoxville
Southern Seminary
master of arts in Christian education



STEPHEN HUTSON
Knoxville
Southern Seminary
master of arts in Christian education



DALTON MCKELLIP JR.
Cleveland
Southern Seminary
diploma in Christian ministry



MARY SANDERS
Clarksville
Southern Seminary
master of social work



JOEL SAMUELS
Memphis
Southern Seminary
master of divinity



JILL ARRINGTON
Nashville
Southwestern Seminary
master of arts in religious education



KELLY BILDERBACK
Sweetwater
Southwestern Seminary
master of arts in religious education



KAREN DUVALL
Murfreesboro
Southwestern Seminary
master of arts in religious education



MARK GALLAHER
Clinton
Southwestern Seminary
master of divinity



VIRGINIA GREGORY
Nashville
Southwestern Seminary
master of arts in religious education



WAYLAN PAYNE JR.
Coalfield
Southwestern Seminary
master of divinity



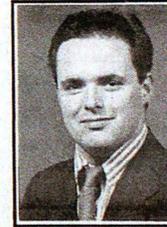
JAMES REASONS
Nashville
Southwestern Seminary
doctor of philosophy



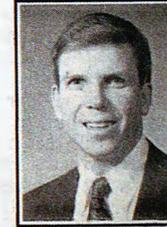
DAVID SMITH
Memphis
Southwestern Seminary
master of divinity



MICHAEL STIMPSON
Brighton
Southwestern Seminary
master of divinity



KEVIN TURNBO
Lawrenceburg
Southwestern Seminary
master of divinity with Biblical languages



PHILIP YOUNG
Wolland
Southwestern Seminary
master of divinity

Brotherhood Commission retiree recounts his four careers

By Steve Barber

MEMPHIS — At year's end, Time magazine makes headlines with its "Man of the Year." The Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission can do the national weekly magazine one better with a "Man of the Century."

Otis Lott, the Commission's 89-year-old accounts receivable clerk, retired Dec. 6, from what he calls "22 years of part-time retirement." Since 1968, he has handled Brotherhood's accounts with Baptist Book Stores and state Brotherhood departments.

The Brotherhood Commission stint represented the last of "four entirely different careers" for Lott.

Born in Laurel, Miss., on Oct. 18,



LOTT

1901, Lott worked for a national credit reporting agency in their Memphis office from 1918 until 1922 when he entered Mississippi A & M (now Mississippi State University) for two years. His roommate was John Cornelius Stennis, a cheerleader who became a U.S. senator.

He left college and entered the working world for good in 1924, returning to the credit reporting agency for 22 years. He was a reporter and service manager in Huntington, W.Va., Memphis, Cleveland and Toledo, Ohio, and Chicago, Ill.

In the years to follow, the Great Depression and World War II (he was too young for the first one) "couldn't put Otis H. Lott out of a job," he said.

He met his wife, the former Hettie Williams of Greenwood, Miss., while traveling in the Mississippi Delta. They married in 1930 and celebrated their 60th anniversary last June. They

have two sons and five grandchildren.

Another career began in the 1940s as Lott spent ten years managing a grocery store in Memphis.

By 1954, Lott left the grocery business and started work — primarily in inventory management — with the United States Department of Defense. That job took him from Memphis to Detroit, Mich., and Columbus, Ohio.

A desire to be closer to children and grandchildren brought the Lotts back to Memphis and at last, to the Brotherhood Commission.

Lott's local church involvement also reads like a history book. In 1931, the Lotts joined Bellevue Church, Memphis, when Robert G. Lee was pastor. Lott became a deacon in 1936 and still serves. He also served in a variety of leadership positions in the Yokefellows Sunday School class, where he has been a member since 1931.

The Lott's association with Bellevue

will soon be "full time," but not in the sense of another career. They will leave their apartment in midtown Memphis for Bellevue Woods, a housing complex for seniors located on the church's new property in east Shelby County.

Lott says he wants to stay active in retirement, with plenty of bowling and golf to go with his church activities.

Perhaps it all reflects his favorite verse of Scripture, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

Indeed, He has.

Tim Hobbs goes to Gallaway

First Church, Gallaway, has called Tim Hobbs of Arkansas as pastor.

Hobbs is the former minister of youth for First Church, Piperton, which ordained him last year. He is a graduate of John Brown University, Siloam Springs, Ark., and a student at Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, Memphis.

Speech impediment did not deter pastor of 50 years

By Bill Maples

KNOXVILLE — One Sunday in March 1940, a 20-year-old man stepped to the pulpit at First Church, Icard, N.C.

"A lot of people came in for curiosity," Ralph Berry recalls. "During the week, in the cotton mill where my job was, people made all type of fun of me. They said, 'Ralph is a Christian boy, but Ralph has made a big mistake. God would not call a man to preach that can't talk plain.'"

"But I prayed that week, and I said: 'God, reveal Yourself and manifest Your power that You called me to preach. You can show people this is Your work.'"

"I had always been scared to get up before a few people, but ... on that Sunday I wasn't scared."

Last March the congregation of Graveston Church and dozens of other friends honored Berry's 50 years of preaching at a reception.

And this year, on Jan. 6, Berry officially retired as pastor of the Knoxville congregation.

In an interview with the Knoxville News-Sentinel prior to his reception last year, Berry reflected on his ministry.

Recalling his first sermon, Berry says: "I read the story in the Bible of the prodigal son, and I started preaching. People didn't understand much of what I said, but, praise God, on that day He manifested His power. ... There was hardly a dry eye in the place, and many of those who had made fun of me the week before came around and put their arms around me and said, 'Ralph, we are proud of you.'"

His speech impediment had caused him to resist the call to preach in the first place. The impediment did not leave after he accepted the call. Local doctors could not help him.

Then, through a Winston-Salem, N.C., hospital representative who came to speak at his church, Berry learned

doctors in the hospital might help him. He went there. A doctor performed the operation that brought out his ability to talk, and the 29-year-old Berry worked with a speech clinician for nine months learning to talk.

The clinician said his speech had improved 85 percent and would get even better.

Shortly, his home church, Oak Ridge Church in Connelly Springs, N.C., called him as pastor. He was its pastor eight and a half years. He also was pastor of Coolidge, First Church, and Cedar Hill Church in LaFollette; East Cumberland Avenue Church in Middlesboro, Ky.; First Church, Whitnel, N.C.; Shawanee Church in Shawanee;

Bonding of new members essential: Edgemon

By Terri Lackey

NASHVILLE (BP) — "If a new member does not become bonded into the training and fellowship of a church within six months, you're going to lose him," warned Roy Edgemon, director of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's Discipleship Training department.

Edgemon defined bonding as the training and fellowship a new member should receive to know the Southern Baptist church and feel like a part of its family.

Edgemon was speaking to state Discipleship Training directors and associates during annual December planning meetings in Nashville.

"We are not giving people who join our churches the foundations they need to understand Southern Baptists," Edgemon said. The result is a dropout rate that exceeds new membership.

Edgemon said in 1988-89 Southern Baptist churches gained 17,734 resident members, but lost 77,308 resident members to non-resident status. Non-resident members are those who move away from one church and fail to join another.

"We are losing members to the cults of inactivity and indifference," he said.

Fairview Church in Corryton and, for the past six years, Graveston Church.

He has preached in 130 revivals in eight different states and has visited the Holy Land three times. He has baptized 665 people.

He has taken care of himself physically, by lifting weights with professional equipment. Berry also plants a half-acre vegetable garden every year.

He plays on the Graveston softball team and participated in state tournaments the past two years.

He and his wife, Grace, have two grown children, Rachel and Kenneth.

— Maples is staff writer for the Knoxville News-Sentinel.



BERRY

"There is such a lack of commitment in churches today."

Churches that want to gain more in membership than they are losing must set goals to that effect, Edgemon said.

Edgemon cited a Foreign Mission Board study which revealed "that more than 80 percent of (Southern Baptist) churches today do not have goals. And 92 percent of those that have goals have them in the wrong place."

Goals should be set to strengthen the discipleship base of the church, he said. "If you have a strong discipleship base, you can build off that pyramid and begin extending your church through new classes or new missions."

"Churches must build a base of strong leadership before they become concerned about growing in other areas," he said. "Some churches set their priorities at the top of the pyramid before they've set goals for a strong foundation."

"So many churches do not have the

proper infrastructure (of Discipleship Training). No wonder 70 percent of our churches are either losing members or have plateaued because of the way they are doing church work," Edgemon said.

A study between the years of 1969-80 revealed that 87 percent of the people who joined Southern Baptist churches did not receive any new member training, Edgemon said.

"And today, in the 1990s, we are reaping that kind of result by not having solid leadership and having people not committed to evangelism."

Edgemon said churches must start immediately "planning a training program to strengthen their people."

That could include Discipleship Training resources such as "Survival Kits for New Christians," new member material, doctrine studies, and Lay Institute for Equipping courses such as MasterLife.

"These are the kind of things designed to give a strong membership," he said.

Sunday School Board sponsors shipment of literature to military personnel

NASHVILLE (BP) — More than 35,000 copies of surplus Southern Baptist literature are headed to Saudi Arabia for use by U.S. service members involved in Operation Desert Shield.

The Southern Baptist Sunday School Board is sending copies of five Bible study and devotional periodicals to 15 Southern Baptist chaplains serving in Operation Desert Shield, according to Marvin Nail, coordinator of the board's on-going project.

The chaplains will receive 6300 copies of Open Windows, a daily devotional guide; 12,000 copies of Sunday School Adults and 4500 copies of Sunday School Young Adults, both Convention Uniform Series Bible study materials; 12,000 copies of Bible Book Study for Adults; and 500 copies of El Interpretate, Convention Uniform Series Bible study materials in Spanish, Nail said.

Also the chief of chaplains for the Fifth Army headquarters at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, will forward additional surplus Bible study materials to any Fifth Army units assigned to Operation Desert Shield. Nail said materials will be provided for that purpose.

He said the special ministries department personnel considered shipping literature to military commands involved in Operation Desert Shield, but decided to send material directly to Southern Baptist chaplains when their names were provided by the Home Mission Board.

Surplus material was set aside for this project in early December when the material normally would have been destroyed. For more than three years, the Sunday School Board has provided outdated church literature to military, prison, hospital and institution chaplains, based on their requests.

For the mailing earlier in December, 520 chaplains on the order list received 60,000 pieces of material.

Chaplains receive an order form at the beginning of each quarter. The requested material, if available in surplus, is mailed in the third month of each quarter, Nail explained. Additional chaplains are added to the list each quarter, while those who do not order are dropped from the list, he said.

Eventually, Nail said, he hopes to offer all 1900 Southern Baptist chaplains an opportunity to order surplus literature.

One Word More

By Wm. Fletcher Allen, editor

We were building a house.

It was to be our "dream" house, and would be on a choice, spacious, piece of land in our home county. And — it would be close to family.

We had been collecting ideas for years, and had selected a floor plan that was best for us. The day the blueprints arrived was a time for celebration. One more step had been taken.

A good builder was selected. He had many examples to show us — fine homes he had built for folks we knew. And, when we sat down with him to negotiate, he was honest, forthright, and steered us away from pitfalls.

We didn't like everything he said, because he advised us against some of the things we really wanted to do with that house. But — because we trusted him, we followed his advice.

We were not disappointed. He made promises — and kept them. When the footings were scheduled to be poured, they were poured. When the roof was supposed to be completed — it was.

We noticed that his employees did not waste time, and they were frugal with the lumber, the trim, the plumbing, the bricks.

Just as he had promised, the work crew cleaned up the home site each day before leaving. It was always a clean work site, and a good advertisement for the builder and for us.

We moved in on schedule. Nothing was broken, the house was as near flawless as could be. We were ready to turn it into a home.

Life is like that. Jesus talks about building on a sound footing, a solid foundation. As He preached and taught, healed and prayed, He was busy "cleaning up" the home site. The lesson He taught by action and words were lessons for life-building. He keeps promises, warns us of life's traps.

The blueprints He talked about are part of His Word. We can read those lessons every day. The brickwork, the walls, the roof of the structure are also in His teaching.

Everything Jesus gave us in words was meant to be more than information. He was giving us building instructions. Along with the blueprints, He gives us the necessities for completing that "house" as a sturdy structure. It is we who make it home.

For 1991, the opportunity is ours again to rebuild if necessary. Lives can be renewed. It will be the same as renovating the home. If we have not been all we can be — then, as the calendar turns the page, so let us.



ALLEN

Teen suicide becoming national crises; churches must respond

By Denise George

Teen suicide is quickly becoming a national crisis. Last year more than 6000 teenagers in the U.S. completed suicide, one every 90 minutes. Some believe the number is two to three times higher since suicide often falls within "accidental death" categories. Many more attempted suicide but failed. The rate of youth suicide has tripled in the last three decades. Suicide is now the second leading cause of death among adolescents 15 to 24 years of age.

Teen suicide is a problem within the church as well as outside the church.

On a Wednesday evening last spring, Elizabeth Hudson, 15, left prayer meeting early at her church, Shades Crest Church in Birmingham, and walked to her nearby home. A friend walked with her. On the way, Elizabeth told her friend she was going to finish cleaning her room and then kill herself. Thinking Elizabeth was being overly dramatic, her friend didn't take the threat seriously.

At 8:15, Elizabeth's mother found her in her room shot to death.

The youth at church later told the Hudsons that Elizabeth had talked on many occasions about killing herself, but in a subtle and almost joking way. As early as fall of 1988, Elizabeth had told a friend about finding a gun hidden in her parent's closet.

"None of our five children even knew we owned a gun," said Mrs. Hudson. "We kept it trigger-locked, unloaded, and hidden in the closet, with the trigger lock key in another part of the closet."

Elizabeth went to a great deal of trouble to find the gun, bullets, and trigger-lock key.

"Sometimes when things get so bad," Elizabeth had confided to a friend, "I get the gun out and sit there with it in my mouth."

Elizabeth Hudson was a pretty girl who was dedicated to the Lord, active in church, made good grades, and excelled in music. But Elizabeth had severe physical problems caused by congenital birth defects. She also had had major surgery several years before, and suffered from chronic back pain. Her physical pain and condition also caused emotional pain.

"It is apparent to us now that Elizabeth planned her death some time before she killed herself," said her mother, Carolyn. "She made elaborate preparations in her room that Wednesday night. She placed her music awards neatly in a plastic laundry basket, turned photos of herself face down, laid out clothes she wanted to be buried in, and left a note."

The note began: "I love you all and I'm so sorry . . ."

Later the Hudsons received a long-distance phone bill that recorded long and numerous calls Elizabeth had made to friends two to ten days before her death.

Word about Elizabeth's suicide spread quickly throughout the church that night. Pastor Jim Auchmuty called a special meeting for the congregation in the church gym. Counselors from a local high school, as well as the city's crisis center, gathered at the church to speak and to counsel with the large group that assembled there.

Berry High School counselor, Frances Moon, remembers that night. "The mood was tense, somber, and

serious. Some of the kids were hysterical and blamed themselves for Elizabeth's death."

The next night, the church offered a "crash course" in suicide prevention for the church family. A week later Elizabeth's parents talked with the youth, parents, and friends at church about her death.

What causes a young person to end his or her life? The reasons are varied, but some contributing factors are: loneliness, isolation, intense frustration, and depression; a feeling of worthlessness and/or failure; drug and alcohol use; lack of family attention and/or stability; grief caused by divorce; and the loss of a close friend to suicide, which often leads to a "copy cat" or "cluster" suicide. And in Elizabeth Hudson's case, intense physical and emotional pain motivated her. There is also an alarmingly high incidence of adolescent suicides in homes where a gun is available.

When teens experience problems, they often perceive the problem as inescapable. They may feel that suicide is an attractive way out. Most suicide victims don't really want to die, but they can't envision a future without pain.

What can parents and church members do to help prevent youth suicide?

1. Watch for suicidal symptoms. Experts believe that 85 percent of potential victims communicate their desire to die before they attempt suicide.

2. Take suicidal symptoms seriously. If you notice suicidal behavior in your child, even subtle clues, be direct, and ask your child if he is thinking about suicide. Often we think the problem will go away if we don't talk about it. But it won't. Talk openly, and then listen. And get help.

If you are a church leader, Sunday School teacher, or youth worker, and you observe suicidal behavior in a

Suicidal symptoms

We can watch for clues, such as:

- irregular patterns in eating and sleeping, and changes in behavior, i.e. a sudden cheerfulness after a time of depression.
- withdrawing from family, friends, and social activities.
- a preoccupation with death and dying.
- waning interest in personal appearance.

appearance.

- an increase in alcohol and/or drug use. (Drugs and alcohol are involved in two out of three suicides.)
- a lack of interest in hobbies, work, school, etc.
- talking about committing suicide.
- giving away prized possessions and beginning to prepare for death.

young person you work with, talk with him about it. But don't be sworn to secrecy. Immediately talk to his parents and your pastor, and seek help from trusted Christian counselors in your church and/or community crisis center. Your immediate action may save his life.

3. Organize youth suicide prevention programs/seminars in our churches. Plan a church-wide evening where parents, teens, and church workers can listen to trained Christian counselors talk about suicide prevention. Contact organizations in your community or local high school counselors or the American Association of Suicideology and let them advise you on how to set up a suicide intervention program in your church. Provide a safe place where troubled teens can speak to trusted Christian counselors who can help them.

4. Involve church youth in meaningful programs and social activities. Provide your teens with weekly programs of Bible study, active leadership roles in church and choir, and regular fun and meaningful activities. Show them they belong to a church who prays for them, loves them, supports them, cares about the pressures they face, and believes they are an essential part of the church community.

What should fellow church members do when teen suicide happens within

the congregation?

"In those dark, dark days immediately following Elizabeth's death, I felt as if my very soul had been ripped apart," said Carolyn Hudson. "I felt like an empty shell of my former self, one merely going through the motions of living."

We can love, support, and pray for the victim's family. We can pull close to them and encourage them with our visits, phone calls, and letters. For a while the family will most likely feel cut off from others. They will need many many months of loving care from fellow members.

We can also give the family opportunities to talk about their pain. Often we feel uncomfortable when they talk with us or feel we open up deep wounds. But most families want to talk, and talking will help heal those wounds.

The members at Birmingham's Shades Crest Church enveloped the Hudson family with love after Elizabeth's death.

"Our church members and other friends supported us in a physical sense with visits, conversations, calls, letters, and cards. And I knew they were supporting us in a spiritual sense, too, with their prayers. I could truly feel that force and I continue to feel it," says Mrs. Hudson.

Denise George is a native of Chattanooga, and author of many books on the Christian life. Her husband is Timothy George, professor of church history at Samford University. This article first appeared in the Alabama Baptist and is used by permission.

TeamTalk

By D. L. Lowrie

As I finished up 1990 I had some time to do some evaluations and reflections. One of the things I have been reflecting on is the failure of communism. During 1990 its failure was finally confirmed. The failure was total. It failed politically, economically, morally, and spiritually.

Why did it fail? Some misguided souls in Washington want to take credit for the failure. They point to our superior military might and to our free enterprise system. While I am grateful for both, I do not believe that either of them caused the failure. There is a more basic cause.

Communism failed because they sought to build a nation and world without God. It is impossible to exclude God from His world. He always has the last word.

The God they denied has the final word in all of the elements that are needed for national and personal success. He sends or withholds the rain.

The students of the weather tell us when it may rain, but God is the power behind it. Russia found out that you can not feed your people if the God who controls the weather does not bless you.

The God they denied is the only One who can fill the emptiness of the human heart. Jobs, money, the state, nothing can take the place of the living God. You cannot build a great nation with an empty-hearted people.

There is another thing. They could never destroy the faith of the faithful. God's minority kept on crying out to Him for relief, and He heard them. Their prayers spelled the doom of communism. You do not destroy ideas with bombs, but by the power of God.

There is something for us to learn from this. Increasingly it appears that we are attempting to build a nation without God. Capitalism will not fare any better than communism if God is excluded. Our nation is no better as an object of faith than the communist state.

Will the fall of greedy, corrupt capitalism be next? Could be! 1991 needs to be the year of personal and national repentance and revival. Does it need to start in my heart?



LOWRIE

HMB appoints Tennessean

ATLANTA — Huntingdon native, Reginald Thomas, was appointed to mission service by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board in December.

Thomas will serve with his wife, Jeannine, in Dallas, Texas, where he will be national consultant for the Baptist General Convention of Texas. Mrs. Thomas will work in family and church service.

A graduate of Union University, Jackson, and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, Thomas is a former pastor and Sunday School teacher.

Butler church calls White

Harvey White is leading Sink Valley Church, Butler, as pastor. White, a bivocational pastor, was ordained in 1981.

He and his wife, Sandy, have one child.



THOMASES

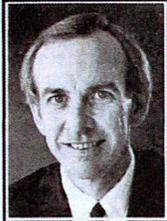
Tennessee

... From Collierville, up to Sadlersville, then east to Surgoinsville ...

Colleges ...

Claude O. Pressnell Jr., has been named director of financial aid at Belmont College, Nashville. He comes to Belmont from Southwest Baptist University, Bolivar, Mo.

Steven H. Simpler has been named dean of the School of Biblical Studies and Ministry at Belmont College, Nashville. He has taught at Belmont for four years and has been acting dean of the religion program since June 1. The Waco, Texas, native graduated from Baylor University, Waco, with a bachelor's degree in journalism, and a doctorate in religion. He earned a master of divinity degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas.



SIMPLER

Union University, Jackson, will offer three classes through the seminary studies program on Mondays during the spring semester. The classes will be the history of Christian missions, taught by Bryant Hicks of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky.; the worshipping church,

taught by Joe Blair of Union; and elementary Greek, taught by Hyran Barefoot, Union president. For more information call (901) 668-1818.

Ordinations ...

Clifford Whitaker was recently ordained as deacon at Parkview Church, Lewisburg.

Calvary Church, Parsons, ordained Danny B. Roberts to the Gospel ministry Dec. 9.

Tony Thompson and Dale Medlin were ordained as deacons recently at First Church, Sardis.

Deacons Jimmy Morris, Mike Kelly, and Bob Thomas were recently ordained at Hopewell Church, Savannah.

Jehu Henley was ordained to the deacon ministry Dec. 9 at Mt. Gilead Church, Bethel Springs.

Keith Smith was ordained to the Gospel ministry Dec. 23 at Walnut Grove Church, Savannah.

West Side Church, Trenton, ordained Curtis Barber as deacon Dec. 9.

Tom King was recently ordained to the Gospel ministry at Lincoln Park Church, Knoxville.

First Church, Roan Mountain, recently ordained Jay Denton Sr. to the deacon ministry.

Missions ...

Missionaries to Kenya Marshall and Julia Duncan have retired from active missionary service. He served as a general evangelist and she was a church and home worker. Both consider Knoxville their hometown. They may be addressed at 701 Kentwood, Knoxville, Tenn., 37912.

The following missionaries with ties to Tennessee have arrived on the field.

Barton and Jane Anne Gibbs, missionaries to Burkina Faso, have completed language study in France and can be addressed at Mission Baptiste, 01 BP 580, Ouagadougou 01, Burkina Faso. He is a native of Memphis, and she is the former Jane Anne Bailey of Nashville.

Missionaries to Hong Kong Gerald and Carol Hale, of Camden and Knoxville respectively, can be addressed at 189 Boundary St., Kowloon, Hong Kong.

Mary Mangrum, missionary to Panama and a native of Nashville, can be written to at Apartado E, Balboa, Republica de Panama.

Gary and Nell West, representatives to Mexico, may be addressed at Apartado 627, Oaxaca, Oaxaca, 68000 Mexico. The former Nell Fleming was born in Athens and considers Cookeville her hometown.

Leadership ...

Richard Long, native of Missouri, has joined the staff of Antioch Church, Johnson City, as pastor. Long came to Antioch from Glyndale Church, Brunswick, Ga., where he had been pastor for five years. He is a graduate of Union University and Southwestern Seminary. He and his wife Diane have two children.

Fort Robinson Church, Kingsport, recently added two new bivocational staff members Norris Gilliam was called as minister of music, and Chris Bowen was called as youth director.

Ken Kyker resigned as pastor of Fairview Church, Watauga, Dec. 23, to accept the pastorate of Skyline Heights Church, Johnson City.

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Tennessee Baptist participates in BSSB test project

NASHVILLE — In an effort to combine the best of a Sunday School Board consultant and a church staff member, the Sunday School board's youth Sunday School program section is undertaking a pilot project for regional field consultants.

Five contract field consultants, including four full-time church youth

ministers and a youth Sunday School volunteer worker will fill the vacancy of one full-time Sunday School Board consultant during the test period through September 1991, according to Myrte Veach, manager of the youth Sunday School program section.

Veach said the regional consultants will lead conferences, work directly with churches, and provide feedback to the Sunday School Board. While remaining in their current roles, the regional consultants will spend 14 days in consultant work for the board during the test period.

"This is a pilot project to test using people who are still in their jobs in churches to provide information to us and services to other churches," Veach said.

"We want to keep the sharp edge of

a person on a church staff who is daily doing the work," she explained.

The five regional consultants along with the three full-time consultants at the board will be assigned a list of churches in Project 100, an effort to contact each of the top 100 churches in youth Sunday School enrollment.

The five regional consultants are Chuck Gartman, First Church, Conroe, Texas; Hugh Kirby, New Hope Church, Fayetteville, Ga.; Steve Knutz, First Church, Euless, Texas; Jerome Smith, Travis Avenue Church, Fort Worth, Texas; and Barbara Warfield, Priest Lake Community Church, Nashville.

Although the five are called regional consultants, they will not be limited to specific geographic areas for assignments, Veach said.

Smith said the consultant role will allow him to work with other youth ministers on a peer level. He said he believes he can help other churches with youth work and, at the same time, provide helpful information to the Sunday School Board.

In addition to the five regional consultants, Pattie Kline, a youth worker at Brentwood Church, Brentwood, will work part time in the youth program section office coordinating responsibilities of the regional consultants and doing other in-office consultant responsibilities.

Veach said the test project will be evaluated after September 1991 to determine whether to continue the regional consultants or hire an additional full-time consultant.



TENNESSEAN PARTICIPATES — Barbara Warfield, left, a volunteer youth worker at Priest Lake Community Church, Nashville, and Hugh Kirby of Fayetteville, Ga., are two of five persons participating in a Sunday School Board regional field consultant test project.

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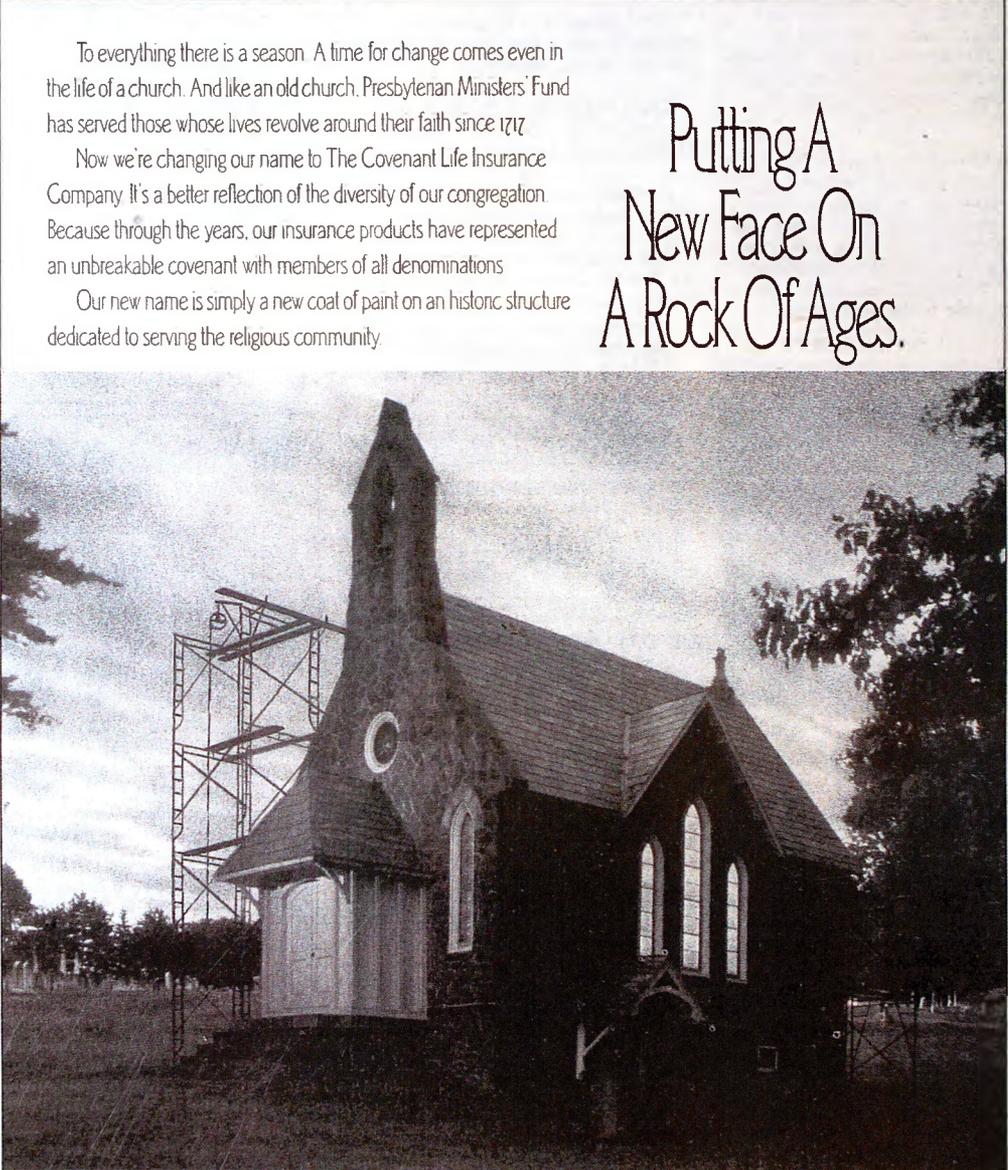
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God's compassion

By A. Ray Newcomb, pastor; First Church, Millington

This chapter is one of the best known and most beloved chapters in the life of Jesus. The Pharisees and scribes could not understand Jesus' interest in lost and sinful men and women. They murmured among themselves, saying, "This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them." In answer to the murmuring of the scribes and Pharisees, the Lord Jesus related the threefold parable. We need not think three separate parables. It is the story of the grace of God pictured in three ways.

The attitude of the Pharisees toward those who did not observe all their rules and regulations was, "The sinner must be destroyed." The attitude of the compassionate Jesus was, "The sinner must be saved."



NEWCOMB

The young son's rebellion (vv. 11-13)

A certain man had two sons. The younger son was rebellious against the home. He wanted to be free to try life on his own. He asked his father to give him the portion of goods that falleth to him (v. 12). Jewish law at the father's death allotted one-third of the estate to the younger son and two-thirds to the elder (Deuteronomy 21:17). The father honored the request of the son. He divided his state between "them." The elder son got his share also. The father did not play favorites.

The young son departed to a far country. He pictured (1) sin — selfishly leaving the father's house; (2) the wages of sin — waste, want, wandering, and wroughtness, (3) repentance realizing the father's provision, resolve at honest confession.

Notice the progress when the son began using "I." I perish; I will arise; I will go; I will say; I have sinned; and I am no more worthy.

The father's rejoicing (vv. 20-23)

The father was constantly looking for the son. When he saw his son at a great distance, he ran to him. The compassion and joy of the father over the prodigal's return is vividly expressed with a robe, ring, shoes, and feast.

BIBLE BOOK

January 13 Lesson

Basic Passage: Luke 15:1-32

The elder brother's rage (vv. 25-32)

"Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing" (v. 25). From a servant he learned the cause of such merriment (vv. 26-27). His long lost brother had returned, and his father was giving him a feast. Instead of joining in the celebration he was angry and "did not will to enter." Literally, "he flew into a rage." His father came and "kept begging him to come in." Instead he accused his father of being "unfair to him." "Lo these many years do I serve thee. Neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make

merry with my friends. But as soon as this, thy son, (he did not call him his brother) was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf" (vv. 29-30).

Jesus was painting the portrait of the Pharisees. Their claim of self-righteousness and salvation by merit, and their attitude toward publicans and sinners are all here.

The father expressed love for the lost son as well as the son who stayed home. "Son, thou art ever with me, and all I have is thine," (v. 31). All the father hath was his to enjoy, but he did not enjoy it. The Father's blessings were available to the Pharisees, but they would not receive them.

The legalist can never understand the grace of God. It is utterly foreign to him.

God help us not to fail to understand and appreciate the grace of God. The parable expounds the truth of Psalm 103:11, 12, "For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us."

The ten maidens

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

A question which Jesus was asked on numerous occasions is not unlike the question asked by many Christians in these days. It seems that many religious-minded people in every age have been consumed with curiosity about the "end times."

Throughout His earthly ministry Jesus refused to predict or foretell the time of the end of the world. On the contrary, He was always cautioning people to be prepared for it whenever it should come.

This is the subject of the parable of the ten maidens in our lesson this week. Readiness is what our Lord asks of us. Readiness for His coming and readiness to continue with the work until the time He does come.



NAIL

All look for the coming

All of the maidens were looking for the coming of the bridegroom. All of them knew he would come soon and made arrangements to meet him and celebrate the wedding with him.

Every year at about this time we witness an illustration of this story. Several college football teams have been selected to play in the many bowl games which come around at the beginning of the new year.

Often a team which had played well all year is destroyed on the day of the game. Many armchair quarterbacks reckon the poor performance is the result of too much partying the night before.

In our parable this week, the prepared and the unprepared are distinguished at the beginning.

Five wise maidens

We must admit here that some parts of the wedding customs of that day are a bit obscure to us. We cannot be ab-

solutely sure about the functions of these maidens in the wedding or the reception which followed.

It seems that there were to be servers or attendants at the reception following the arrival of the bride and bridegroom at their future home.

CONVENTION UNIFORM

January 13 Lesson

Basic Passage: Matthew 25:1-13

All of the maidens brought lamps with them to use as lights for themselves should the arrival be after dark. Five of them brought enough to last the night even should the coming be at a late hour.

As it turned out, the coming was much later than expected (the mid-night hour). In the mean time, all of the maidens had gone to sleep to be fresh when the bridegroom arrived. But when they awoke at the announcement of his arrival, only five still had oil for their lamps.

Five foolish maidens

They had not thought the bridegroom would tarry so long. When they awoke they found their oil supply was

depleted. Immediately they looked for help from those who had come prepared.

They asked for the other maidens to share from their supply, but were refused. They were told instead to go into a nearby village to buy some oil.

The tragedy was that while they were gone to buy oil, the bridegroom arrived and the door was shut behind him and his guests.

Price of unreadiness

The five foolish maidens tried to enter the house and be a part of the festivities, but were refused entrance. Perhaps the refusal was based on their seeming lack of proper respect for the bridegroom by being late to the festivities. Whatever the reason, they were left out.

Many interpretations might be given to the various aspects of this story. However, we must remember what Jesus said as He began the story. This parable tells us about what God is like.

God uses those who are prepared to serve Him. God comes for those who are prepared to go with Him. He will not wait; we must be ready.

Sight for the spiritually blind

By John C. Compton, pastor; Oak Grove, Mount Carmel

Jesus walked by a beggar blind from birth. The disciples asked why he was blind. Was it because of his sin or his parent's sin? In this case, as it was in Job's, the answer was neither. Jesus did not focus on the "why" question. He focused on the "what" question. God wanted to work in his life. Jesus spat on the dirt, put mud on the blind man's eyes and told him to wash at the pool of Siloam. When he obeyed, he received sight.

The man had never before seen a flower or his mother. He had no hope of ever seeing at all, until Jesus put an end to the talk and did something for him. Like the 12, it is easier for us to talk about a lost person than it is to lead him to see a need for



COMPTON

Christ. Our mission is to help others see themselves as sinners and Jesus as Savior. Four things will help us become better witnesses.

First, we must be sure we know Jesus as our personal Savior. The blind man was a good witness because he knew Jesus was the one who healed him. Nothing could change the facts. It did not matter that the Pharisees persisted in saying Jesus could not have done it, because he was a sinner. The Pharisees themselves were blind when they urged the man to give God the glory for the miracle rather than Jesus. Under pressure we will only hold on to those things we are certain about. Do we have an unshakable assurance of salvation?

Second, we must be sure we are verbal about knowing Jesus as Savior. The man was courageous enough to turn the Pharisees' argument against them. After they had confirmed with the parents the man was blind from

birth, they admitted Jesus might have put the mud on the eyes, but God gave sight. They said Jesus was a sinner, born in sin. Their father was Moses, but there were many questions as to who might be Jesus' father. The man agreed, a sinner could not have done it, only a man of God could have given him sight. Like the blind man, are we ready to give an answer to everyone, who asks us about Jesus?

LIFE AND WORK

January 13 Lesson

Basic Passage: John 9

If we visit a shut-in and meet all his basic needs, the shut-in would appreciate us deeply. But no matter how long we may visit, the shut-in would never figure out how to be saved unless we were verbal about knowing Jesus. No man has ever figured out how to be saved by noticing the dif-

ference in a believer's life. How we live may gain an ear, but what we say leads a heart to a saving knowledge of Christ.

Third, we can be sure we will be rejected for knowing Jesus as Savior. As the Pharisee did not want to acknowledge Jesus as the Holy Son of God, many in our generation will not either. They will take offense. The blind man lost his membership at the synagogue. We might lose memberships in several places if we act like Jesus is the only one who really matters.

Fourth, we must be sure we let all men know there is no neutral ground spiritually. Men are in darkness or in the light. Jesus came to save, but those who do not believe though they have seen and heard are judged more severely than those who have never heard of the Savior. May God help us do our best to lead our neighbor and world to see Jesus as the only hope.

(BP) BRIEFLY

Compiled from Baptist Press, news service of the Southern Baptist Convention

Bivocational ministers elect officers, adopt constitution

MEMPHIS — The Southern Baptist Bivocational Ministers' Association held its organizational meeting in mid-December at Southland Church in Memphis. More than 50 participants approved a constitution and bylaws and elected their first slate of officers.

President of the association for 1990-91 is James Greer of Pineville, La. Other officers include: Charles Stewart, Ashland, Ky., first vice president; Leonard Foster, Carlsbad, N.M., second vice president; Frank Phillips, Gainesville, Fla., secretary; and Ken Cook, Jackson, Miss., treasurer. Stewart is the brother of Clarence Stewart, director of the Tennessee Baptist Convention's Partnership Missions Department.

Bivocational pastors attending the annual meeting of the National Council on Bivocational Ministries late in 1989 decided to create the organization. After discussion this year, participants voted to limit membership to persons actually engaged in bivocational ministry on an on-going basis. Those who join during 1990-91 will be designated as charter members.

Members chose "ministers" instead of "pastors" for the association's name in order to encourage participation by bivocational ministers of music and other staff members. More than 9000 Southern Baptist pastors serve bivocationally, and at least 25,000 ministers of music are part-time, volunteer, or bivocational.

Wife of BSSB president undergoes heart surgery

NASHVILLE — Sue Elder, wife of Southern Baptist Sunday School Board President Lloyd Elder, is recovering after bypass heart surgery on Dec. 24. Surgery was performed at Baptist Hospital in Nashville.

Mrs. Elder began suffering heart problems in September and subsequently underwent two angioplasty procedures. Doctors recently determined Mrs. Elder needed single bypass heart surgery.

Hospital officials said Mrs. Elder is in stable condition. She returned to her home Dec. 31 and is doing well. A full recovery is expected.

Elder said his wife is responding well, and he requested continued prayer support.

Ministry to community is best evangelism, Porter says

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. — The most effective way for a church to evangelize its community is to develop ministries which meet the needs of hurting people, a Southern Baptist church and community missionary said. Nathan Porter of Waco, Texas, offered a simple solution to pastors who believe their church can't

develop community ministries because they do not have the people or the budget funds to finance such ministries.

Porter challenged participants at a National Church Growth Conference to conduct community surveys by taking teams of lay people to visit local community service agencies. Porter, a Southern Baptist Home Mission Board staff member who works with migrants, homeless, and hungry people, cited numerous examples of small churches which have sponsored such community surveys and discovered needs they could meet with almost no budget support.

Most church members are not aware of the needs of hurting people in their communities, Porter said. The best education a pastor can do is schedule a community survey and assign groups of two or three lay people to visit each community action agency, he explained. "All you have to do is sit down with the administrator and ask three simple questions," Porter said. They are: "What are the greatest needs you see among people in our community? What is your organization doing to help meet these needs? How can we as a church and as individuals help meet those needs?"

Porter urged pastors to help lay people discover their gifts for ministry, and to equip, train, and trust them enough to let them do the work of ministry. He said most lay people don't really feel they have any gifts for ministry, but when they see the needs of hurting people, and hear community leaders tell about ways the church and individuals can help, they usually respond.

Moscow Choir completes U.S. tour

MEMPHIS — A recently completed concert tour of the U.S. by the choir from Moscow Church of Evangelical Baptists garnered praise as well as some ministry money for the Soviets. About \$22,800, generated above expenses by love offerings and book and tape sales, will be sent back to the Soviet Union by the tour sponsors as funding for the ministers of the choir, called Logos, and the Soviet Evangelical Baptist Union.

The Oct. 25-Nov. 13 tour, co-sponsored by the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America and New Call to Peacemaking (a cooperative effort of the Church of the Brethren, Friends, and Mennonites), covered 4000 miles in 13 states and 35 performances. An estimated 18,400 people heard the sounds of Soviet presented by the 43-member chamber choir and orchestra, which already has been invited back to perform another program now in preparation.

"The tour's biggest success was the fulfillment of its purpose — to change perceptions about our Soviet brothers and sisters and to see them from a Biblical perspective, not a political perspective — (to see them) as the Church," said tour coordinator Clyde Weaver, who made the journey with the musicians. Weaver said the farewells as the group departed from host families in each U.S. city "illustrate the degree to which church folk could identify with them (the Soviets) as part of the Church, the world, and God's family. Music cuts through all the pretensions and speaks to one's heart."

Testimonies of the choir's impact followed each stop as choir members also reported transforming experiences from their trip.

Openness to change required for 21st century, speaker says

By Mark Wingfield

SCOTTSDALE, Ariz. (BP) — The kind of openness to change that made Southern Baptists boom in the early 19th century will be necessary for growth in the 21st century.

That's the assessment of Paul Pearson, a Presbyterian and dean of the school of world missions at Fuller Theological Seminary. Pearson spoke to Southern Baptist state directors of missions during their annual meeting in Scottsdale, Ariz.

"As societies change throughout

history, God raises up new forms of the church," he said. "Southern Baptists above all should know this.

"If there was a creative new form of the church in early 19th century America, it was the Methodists and the Baptists on the American frontier."

Pearson cited new forms of selecting and training leadership, new forms of proclaiming the Gospel, and new forms of evangelism as things Baptists did to break the mold of more traditional churches. These changes resulted in rapid evangelization, he suggested.

As on the American frontier, current changes in society call for the church to rethink how it presents the Gospel, Pearson suggested.

"Our task as Christians is not simply to repeat tradition but to ask how we can best communicate the Gospel to our generation," he said.

"The kind of people to whom our traditional churches appeal is decreasing."

Pearson cited music, worship style, preaching, and seminary education as examples of areas where change must be considered.

Preaching, he said, should be taught as a means of communicating the Gospel in ways people will understand. Instead, most seminaries teach students how to preach a "proper" sermon, he said.

Music is one area where changes in society are most readily seen, he said, citing the trend of younger adults to sing praise choruses rather than hymns.

Pearson, who said he is more than 60 years old, offered this advice to those of his generation: "We don't realize how radical the hymns of Wesley and Watts once were. They are tradition to us, but they were radical in their time.

"We need to be as open to new forms of music and worship as our forefathers were a century and a half ago when Baptists and Methodists introduced new forms of church on the American frontier."

Pearson cited a number of trends churches must grapple with in anticipation of the 21st century:

1. Absence of denominational loyalties.

"The old denominational loyalties are weak for those inside the church and even weaker for those outside the church," he said. "Denominational labels of a half century ago are increasingly irrelevant to the people we're trying to reach."

Even if accepting this change distresses those who maintain denominational loyalties, churches should adapt for the sake of the lost, he warned. "Our goal is not to pin this or that label on people. Our goal is to communicate the Gospel."

2. Lessons from the success of the charismatic movement.

While not a charismatic himself, Pearson said he believes the evangelical church should learn a few lessons from the success of that movement.

Namely, he cited the need for relating God's power to the everyday crises of life.

Charismatics have "shown us God is not an absentee landlord, but that he's alive and working today," Pearson declared.

3. Missiological renewal.

"Theological renewal in itself is not enough," Pearson said. "We also need missiological renewal."

4. Internationalization.

During the 20th century, the focus of evangelical Christianity has spread beyond North America and Europe, Pearson said.

Because of this shift, North American Christians can learn from Christians in other countries and are being increasingly called upon to form partnerships with them.

Baptist Beliefs

By Herschel Hobbs

Was Judas a Christian?

"Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spake of Judas Iscariot . . . for he it was who should betray him" — John 6:70-71.

Was Judas a Christian? The answer must be "no." Note that Jesus said that "one of you is a devil," not was a devil. He was not one when Jesus chose him.

Why Jesus chose Judas will ever be a mystery. Probably He saw qualities in Judas which, if surrendered to Him, would be beneficial in His work. But Judas never surrendered them. Apparently Judas thought Jesus was to

establish an earthly kingdom and he wanted a prominent place in it. His motives were self-centered from the beginning. In all likelihood he started the effort to make Jesus a political-military Messiah (John 6:14-15). This explains why at this time Jesus called him a devil. He saw him beginning to become a tool of Satan in an effort to divert Jesus from the Suffering Servant role of the Messiah.

To me the clearest evidence that Judas was not a Christian is seen in Matthew 26:21-25. Eleven of the apostles called Jesus "Lord" (v. 22). Judas called Him "Master" or "Rabbi" (v. 25). Judas never called Jesus "Lord," only "Rabbi" (cf. Matthew 26:49, Rabbi).

Those who use Judas as evidence that one can be saved and then lost again miss the point. He never was saved in the first place.



HOBBS