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Arkansas Baptist State Convention

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'Lost Generation'

Arkansas Baptist

March 9, 1989

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The Price of Silence

*A Three-Part Series on
Child Sex Abuse*

Cover Story



(BP) photo / Jim Veneman

The Price of Silence 5

Sex abuse of children exacts a high price from its victims, but researchers and abuse workers say more Christians are beginning to help those who suffer because of this "unmentionable sin"

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IT'S UPLIFTING

Seeking Renewal

NOVI SAD, Yugoslavia—Thirty-four Baptists who lead youth work in 18 European countries have underscored "the urgent need for a renewal of Christian believers and churches in Europe." They passed a resolution in January stating, "We long for a stronger manifestation of the Kingdom of God and his healing power in our churches and societies." They confessed "not being faithful enough" in their work, but reaffirmed their commitment to renewal.

Reaching All Ages

SINGAPORE—About 30 parents of Baptist young adults accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior during a recent evangelistic crusade in Singapore. Ninety people became Chris-

tians during the five-night crusade. The new believers ranged in age from 9 to 85. Baptists are working to reach the 850,000 people in Singapore who speak Mandarin or other dialects (only 2 percent are Christian).

Thai Concert Success

BANGKOK, Thailand—Thirty-nine people decided to become Christians and more than 200 said they wanted to know more about Christianity after three concerts in Bangkok, Thailand. The concerts of contemporary Christian music were followed by concise messages about the Christian life. Decision cards indicate 68 people asked to enroll in correspondence studies and 111 asked for a book on Christianity.

GOOD NEWS!

Remember Jerusalem

Psalm 137

Alexander Solzhenitsyn told the story of life in Stalin's forced labor camps in his book *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*. Shukhov, as Ivan is called, is talking to Alyosha, the Baptist, about prayer. Shukhov says, "Prayers are like those appeals of ours. Either they don't get through or they're returned with 'rejected' scrawled across 'em.'"

The Jews of the Babylonian exile must have felt the same despair. Their lament in Psalm 137 graphically depicts a broken-spirited people. Into this desolate environment the Hebrew poet dared to inject a revolutionary vow: "Remember Jerusalem! Remember Jerusalem no matter the cost!"

Jerusalem and what it stood for had a lasting significance in the psalmist's memory. The city served as his connection with a glorious past. His memory kept him alive in the present.

To remember Jerusalem was to remember a rich heritage—The past of Jerusalem was resplendent. Over the centuries Jerusalem had become the most sacred city in the world, the symbol of God's presence, the door to heaven, the city of God.

Jerusalem faltered in her God-designed purpose. Moral and social evils plagued the city. There the great prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Amos, and Hosea, thundered God's judgment.

In 586 B.C. Jerusalem was besieged by the Babylonians. The soldiers shattered the

walls, razed the Temple, killed many of the inhabitants, and reduced the city to ruins.

For more than a generation, 586-520 B.C., Jerusalem lived only in the memory of God's people; but that memory of past glory kept Jerusalem alive. With aching hearts and unremitting grief, the Jews still looked to Jerusalem as home (vv. 1-2).

To remember Jerusalem was to remember a present judgment (vv. 3-4)—The present wounds of God's people went deep into their souls. They experienced the pain of memory.

God's people could not forget. The rivers of Babylon, the silent harps, the un-sung songs of Zion were visible reminders of present judgment.

They experienced the biting memory of remorse. Jerusalem and all that could have been was ruined. All that remained was bitter remorse.

To remember Jerusalem was to remember a future hope (vv. 5-6)—The focus of the psalmist's vow was renewed hope. Jerusalem lay in ruins but would someday rise again. This was God's city, and they were God's people.

This hope was more important than life to the Hebrew poet. He knew that Jerusalem would once again be the focus of Israel's faith. He knew that God had not forgotten his people.

The psalmist refused to die by the rivers of Babylon. He refused to give in to despair. He remembered, and in so doing he recaptured his faith and grew stronger.

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Shameful Tragedy

J. EVERETT SNEED

Southern Baptists have been basically ineffective in reaching people for the past several years. This fact is underscored in an article on page nine in the March 2 ABN which is entitled "1988 SBC Gains Elusive." This same flatness, particularly in baptisms, is evident in our own Arkansas statistics. In 1988 all of our churches baptized only 11,676 people, which was 234 less than in 1987. The area in which we have had the greatest decline is among youth ages 12 to 17. If we as Baptists are to be what God desires us to be, reaching the lost must again become our number one priority.

In 1972 Southern Baptists baptized 137,667 young people. By 1987 this number had dropped to 79,900. On the SBC level this represents a 42 percent decline in baptisms of young people ages 12 to 17. Arkansas has done considerably better with a decline of 29 percent. If this same pattern continues across the SBC in 1997 we will baptize only 30,000 young people nationwide. (See article on pp. 6-7.)

It is easy for us to do our second best. If our baptisms are to be, any portion of what God expects them to be there must be a continual emphasis from the pulpit and in practical demonstration of soul winning in each of our churches. It is tragic indeed that 236 of our Arkansas Baptist congregations baptized no one during 1988. This is almost one out of five of our churches.

It is likely that the number of churches that baptize no one in Arkansas could be dramatically reduced if only a few simple steps were followed. It is tragic that many of our churches do not even hold a single revival meeting. Many of those who do hold revivals fail to make proper preparation. To simply announce a revival usually means that very little results will occur. Proper preparation includes discovering prospects (individuals who are lost and unchurched), involving church members in ardent prayer for the upcoming revival and making every effort to confront prospects with the gospel before and during the revival.

Second, every church should conduct a Vacation Bible School. A Vacation Bible School which includes a decision day often will reach young people for Christ.

Finally, churches should utilize camps and assemblies. Churches should send lost and unchur-



ed young people to Siloam and Paron and associational camps. Here they will be presented with opportunity to trust Christ.

Christ utilized opportunities to confront people with the need to accept him as Master. One of the excellent examples is found in the encounter with the Samaritan woman. It would have been easy for Christ to have offered excuses. Jesus was tired, having travelled a long distance across the rugged countryside. He was cooling himself beside the "curb of the well."

The woman was a Samaritan, who the Jews considered to be even lower than the Gentiles. For this reason the Jews had absolutely no dealings with the Samaritans. The quarrel between the Jews and the Samaritans was an old, old story.

Still another excuse or barrier that Jesus could have used to avoid witnessing to her

was the fact that she was a woman. Strict rabbis would not even greet a woman in public. Some rabbis would not even speak to their own wives or daughters or sisters in public. For a rabbi to be seen speaking to a woman in public could be the end of his reputation.

Finally, it was obvious that the woman was of poor character. No decent man, let alone a rabbi, would have been seen in her company or even exchanged words with her. Yet, Jesus spoke with her and led her to examine her life.

The Samaritan woman attempted to sidetrack Christ. She attempted to get him to debate with her where people should worship. For years there had been a debate between the Samaritans and the Jews regarding whether one should worship at Mt. Gerizim or Mt. Zion (Jerusalem). Jesus skillfully told her that such discussions were irrelevant. But he also stressed the fact that the Jewish nation had a unique place in God's plan and revelation. In witnessing one should never allow others to sidetrack them from the main objective; namely, presenting the claims of Christ.

Our overall baptisms are shamefully low. Our youth baptisms are declining to an unbelievable degree. It is tragic indeed the number of churches that baptize absolutely no one. The solution lies in making our number one priority the presentation of the good news of the gospel of Christ.

Years ago an ancient philosopher said, "If one is confronted by two goods and chooses the lesser, he has chosen evil." Now we have the privilege of choosing the highest good as we become consistent witnesses for Christ. May God help each of us to become involved in telling the good news of Christ's redemptive grace.

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DON MOORE

You'll Be Glad To Know

Thumbs up, to come and to go! It was wonderful to watch the concert of action as the airliner began to approach its docking gate. Standing by were baggage handlers, jetway operators, fuel handlers, food handlers, and others, I'm sure.

Appropriately situated was a man who, by hand signals, carefully guided the pilot to the exact spot outlined in paint for the front wheels to rest. On reaching that spot the guide signalled that movement should stop and engines should shut down. An immediate signal of a clenched fist with upraised thumb indicated all was well. Arrival had been completed.

Twenty minutes passed. Services are completed. New passengers have boarded. The same man positions himself in view of the pilot. Hand signals begin again. Engines are started. The jetway retracts. The tow vehicle begins movement away from the gate. A few feet away a momentary stop is made to disconnect the tow truck and communication lines. The tow truck backs away and pauses once again to give the "thumbs up" signal. Services and separation completed. "thumbs up" meant all was in readiness for departure. Thumbs up, coming and going!

I could see, in my mind, Arkansas Baptists converging on Little Rock like the busy workers on the plane. By April 11, our 96 committee members will be "thumbs up," happily announcing the arrival of 6,000 to 7,000 of you to the Foreign Mission Appointment Service at the Convention Center.

After having your hearts blessed and after having responded to what God has said to us, we'll have the "thumbs up" to make our departure into the world to which we have been called and sent.

Ever since the resurrection, Jesus has been giving us the "thumbs up" signal to move on out into the world. It's time for us to all join him. We can when we have separated from the things that would hold us, and provided our gifts through the mission offerings and the Cooperative Program.

Let's all move together in facilitating gospel proclamation. Let's go "thumbs up" for missions.

Don Moore is the executive director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention.



BOB PARKER

Today's Issues

ERUCA

Exposure, Repetition, Understanding, Conviction, Application. Such components are necessary for scriptural truths to be truly learned. The word "disciple" means learner. To be a true disciple, or learner, means that application of a scriptural truth absolutely must take place.

For instance, to really love God and neighbor, there must be genuine application of that love. We can't say "I love you" and then act or speak otherwise.

Too often the lost world around about us uses as an excuse for not becoming Christian statements such as "What you do speaks louder than what you say or profess to believe."

Jesus taught that not everyone who says "Lord, Lord" will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Such a glorious privilege belongs to the one who "does" what he teaches. (Mt. 7:21) James later wrote that "faith without works is dead" (Ja. 2:17).



The world in which we live, with its rapid growth of sinful influences, desperately needs those of us who will practice, or apply, biblical truths. Foy Valentine entitled one of his books on Christian ethics *Believe and Behave*. That says a lot!

To be genuine disciples of our Lord Jesus, for his sake and for the sake of our children, grandchildren, and a lost world, we absolutely must prayerfully apply every last one of the above components involved in truly learning.

We may have memorized much of the Bible; we may understand and have strong convictions about its teachings, but if we do not apply the truths of God's Word to everyday living, we are guilty of propagating a "dead faith." Application of biblical truths is indeed an important issue we face daily!

Robert A. Parker is director of the Christian Life Council.

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A SMILE OR TWO

"In ancient Greece, it was the custom that when a man proposed a law in the popular assembly, he did so on a platform with a rope around his neck. If his law passed, they removed the rope. If it failed, they removed the platform."

—Charley Willey



FIRST OF A THREE-PART SERIES

Child Sex Abuse

The Price Of Silence

by Greg Warner
Florida Baptist Witness

(BP)—Victims of child sex abuse learn early the price of silence.

From the onset of abuse, typically at 3 to 8 years old, the victim is convinced her world hinges on "keeping the secret" that she doesn't understand, according to the people who work with abuse victims. No price is too high when she believes her silence is all that keeps the abuser from acting out threats like: "I'll kill your mother."

Those few victims who reject the abuser's threats and tell the secret find the grown-up world isn't ready to hear it, they later report.

This new threat of unbelieving adults sends the child running for cover, counselors say. Silence becomes her refuge. This time, the price is guilt, shame, loneliness and loss of self-esteem.

The abuser often goes unpunished. The victim retreats into self-doubt and recrimination. By now convinced she is either at fault for the abuse or undeserving of better treatment, it's little wonder she is likely to be victimized again and by more than one abuser.

Burning inside the child all the while is an innate compulsion to tell, abuse workers report. But she usually carries the secret into adulthood, eventually hiding it even from herself. But a pattern of seemingly unconnected behaviors persists: social isolation, fear of intimacy, sexual dysfunction, promiscuity, exploitation by others, self-destructive behavior and anger.

It is here, in adulthood, that the victim typically becomes aware of her secret, abuse counselors say. Decades of denial give way to a renewed compulsion to tell—to find someone who will believe and love her anyway.

What she finds, however, is a society no more ready to hear her than before. And if she goes to a church for help, she is likely to find yet another deaf ear.

By ignoring the cries of the abused, Christians—shocked and overwhelmed—compound the victims' pain and make them victims again, according to abuse expert Marie Fortune of Seattle. "If they're not believed at church, (that means) they've been further victimized," she explains.

Christians are guilty of "a complicity of

silence," says Fortune, a minister and author. "We've been part of the problem."

Many victims agree.

"When your family turns its back on you, and the church fails in its responsibility, then where do you go?" asks Liz Mattern of Fort Myers, Fla., who was a victim of sex abuse as a child. She now works with a support group for incest survivors.

Mattern, who helped organize a sex-abuse workshop for pastors and teachers at Cypress Lake Baptist Church in Fort Myers, says: "The thing that touches me the deepest is how the churches turn their backs on them. Now most of them have turned their backs on the church."

Christians have perpetuated society's silence because they have responded to child sexual abuse as others have—with shock, fear, disgust and embarrassment, abuse workers say.

But the problem remains. Victims' advocates agree on two things: The problem is pervasive, and it's time to admit it.

They cite statistics to support their claims: Twenty percent of children—10 percent of boys and 38 percent of girls—will be molested sexually by age 18.

"We cannot look at those figures any longer and presume those high numbers mean it's someone else," Fortune says.

Southern Baptists are affected, Baptist counselors say. "Child sex abuse is not only in society and the Christian community, but in Baptist churches," says Bob Barnes, director of a counseling and treatment ministry in Hollywood, Fla. He estimates child sex abuse has invaded one of every seven families counseled by the center.

Still, many Baptists and other Christians are convinced they are immune, counselors say. Many have developed a false sense of security by teaching their children to shun strangers and keeping them surrounded by trusted adults.

But while abduction by a stranger is the most feared avenue of abuse, 90 percent of all child sexual abuse takes place within an ongoing, trusted relationship, surveys reveal. At least 50 percent is incestuous abuse within the family.

The typical molester outside the family is a 20- to 40-year-old churchgoer who is gainfully employed and well-respected in the community. If he is male, he likely is

neither sex-starved nor homosexual, even if he molests boys. He is married, has a normal sexual relationship with his wife and does not abuse his own children.

Child molesters go to great lengths to establish trust with their intended victims, often placing themselves in occupations or situations where trust-building is natural, observers report. In fact, sexual abuse is more likely to take place within schools, churches, day-care centers and youth organizations precisely because parents trust these institutions.

None of these "trust centers" is as likely a setting for abuse as the home, however, and the vast majority of workers in these institutions are trustworthy, caseworkers say. But the presence of molesters in trusted settings makes the abuse possible—and detection unlikely.

The National Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse reports an estimated 337,500 cases of child sex abuse in the United States in 1987. But abuse workers say that's just the tip of the iceberg. Reported cases account for only 20 to 30 percent of all actual abuse, they warn.

Sex abuse knows no socio-economic boundaries, although it is more frequent in modern "blended families," researchers note. A girl is almost seven times more likely to be molested by her stepfather than by her natural father, according to one study.

In perhaps the cruelest irony, sexually abused children tend to become sexual abusers in adulthood. One study found that 81 percent of adult sex offenders had been sexual victims in childhood. Also, women who as child sex victims learned to measure their self-esteem in relation to a dominating, abusive male later unwittingly pass the legacy of abuse to their own children by marrying men of similar character, who often become abusers.

Rather than being immune to the problem of child sex abuse, Christians may be more prone than most to feel its effects. As Grant Martin, author of *Please Don't Hurt Me*, points out, "Adult male offenders tend to be very devout, moralistic and conservative in their religious beliefs."

Abuse workers say several factors make child sex abuse—particularly incest—more likely to occur in Christian homes: The prohibition against sex outside of marriage sometimes makes the child the target of sexual abuse. And a stringent belief system and a dominant, controlling father also can contribute to the likelihood of abuse.

Religious commitment can be used by abusive families to undermine family loyalty, an important factor in maintaining the all-important "family secret."

As one adult survivor explains: "We're taught that you have to obey your parents, even when the father is raping you every night."

'Lost Generation'

by Mark Kelly
Managing Editor, Arkansas Baptist

There is a new "lost generation" coming of age in our land.

In the 1960s, that term referred to a multitude of teenagers and young adults who "turned on" to hard drugs and free sex and "dropped out" of the mainstream of American life.

In the 1990s and beyond, it will identify the hundreds of thousands of souls that Southern Baptist churches failed to win to Christ during their formative teenage years. It may well be dramatized by empty pews and unmet budgets in thousands of churches across the country.

For more than 10 years, Southern Baptists have been wringing their hands over a disturbing decline in baptisms, which are down 24 percent since 1972. In a denomination which likes to bill itself as fervently evangelistic, that failure in soulwinning is embarrassing, to say the least. But in their preoccupation with the overall statistics, most observers have missed something that borders on the scandalous: a frightening downhill slide in the number of teenagers professing faith in Christ and being baptized into local congregations.

"Scandal!" is not too strong a word. In 1972, Southern Baptists nationwide baptized 137,667 young persons between 12 and 17 years of age; 16 years later, only 79,900 were immersed into membership. Compared to that dropoff—a total of 42 percent—the overall decline in SBC baptisms seems almost insignificant.

The implications are staggering. Had Southern Baptist churches just maintained their 1972 level of youth baptisms, 588,000 more teenagers would have found Christ as savior. And if Southern Baptists allow the decline to continue unchecked, the whole denomination will be baptizing fewer than 30,000 teenagers a year before the decade is out.

Those facts raise profoundly disturbing questions about Southern Baptist methods and priorities in youth ministry and hold an ominous portent for congregations which fail to mend their ways.

What Has Happened?

The drastic decline in youth baptisms is a complicated phenomenon, and one that is not easily explained, says Dean Finley, a national consultant on youth evangelism with the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

One factor which has contributed to the

drop in youth baptisms, according to Finley, has been the overall decline in the number of teenagers in the United States population.

With the "Baby Boom" generation passing into middle adulthood, teenagers are constituting an ever-smaller percentage of the population. As a group, the number of teenagers has declined 13 percent since 1972.

Yet Finley points out that Southern Baptist youth Sunday School enrollments have replicated the decline in the youth population in general, while the bottom has fallen out of youth baptisms.

That only reinforces Finley's concern for

HMB photo / John Swain



A vision of empty pews

lost youth. "Those statistics tell us that not only are we winning fewer and fewer lost youth from outside the church, but we also are reaching fewer and fewer of our own teenagers who are enrolled in our Bible study programs," Finley says. "Particularly in the South, our churches have a high percentage of local youth enrolled in Sunday School, but they are not reaching them for Christ."

Whatever the causes of the decline, Finley believes one factor is not the lack of resources devoted by local churches to youth ministry.

"Without any question, churches today have more and better programs, more financial and physical resources, and more and better trained professional leadership

than they had in the early 1970s," he says. "And yet, in the midst of all that, baptisms have declined."

"That should tell us that the one thing we don't need is another youth program or emphasis. These things do not necessarily cause problems in reaching youth, nor do they need to be eliminated, but increases in those areas do not automatically mean youth baptisms will be turned around."

Finley speculates that one possibility is that churches are not confronting teenagers individually with simple questions like, "Would you like to accept Christ as your savior?"

"The gospel still draws individuals. It has not lost its power," says Finley. "And today's kids are as responsive to the gospel as ever. Whenever you declare the gospel and give them an opportunity to respond, they turn to Christ like they always have."

"It may be that, in the midst of all the other things we are doing for youth, we have stopped giving them opportunities to respond to the gospel. If we cannot identify a place in our programs where youth could get saved, we have to ask ourselves serious questions about what we are doing."

"I'm not talking about more preaching and less skating or volleyball," he continues. "Those things are not mutually exclusive. You can do activities and declare the gospel. But perhaps we need to declare the gospel more and give individuals more opportunities to respond. When that happens, youth baptisms will begin to turn around."

A Little Better Off

Although they have nothing to brag about, Arkansas and most of her neighbors have fared better than the national average in baptizing youth.

In 1972, Arkansas Baptists baptized 3,980 youth ages 12-17, according to Home Mission Board statistics. In 1987, they registered 3,063, a decline of 23 percent, very close to the overall decline in baptisms nationally. Neighboring Oklahoma experienced a 27.2 percent decline. Texas Baptists baptized 31.6 percent fewer teenagers in 1987 than in 1972.

But not all were so lucky. Tennessee's 16-year decline of 41.5 percent almost matched the national average, and Missouri posted a devastating 55.3 percent dropoff.

And the trend continues in Arkansas. In 1988, 700 Arkansas Baptist churches and missions reported 2,826 youth baptisms, 237 fewer than in 1987. That 7.7 percent decline brought the state's 17-year loss to 29 percent.

And the baptisms that were reported were not evenly distributed among the state's congregations. Half of them were

registered by 111 congregations, only 8.5 percent of those reporting. More than 600 churches and missions recorded no youth baptisms at all.

Johnny Burnett, minister to youth at Russellville's First Baptist Church, says he and his colleagues have seen what is going on in Arkansas and are troubled by the trend.

"It's discouraging to see what it takes to get in the top 20 in baptisms in this state," he observes. "And, with the exception of a few churches which are making headway, we are not seeing teenagers walk the aisles in our churches."

Burnett expresses reservations about Finley's claim that teenagers are as responsive as ever. He sees significant cultural developments which have affected youth responsiveness and hampered church efforts to reach teenagers.

He notes that, whereas community institutions used to plan their calendars with local churches in mind, today congregations increasingly find themselves competing with school activities, and see parents allowing their youth to choose the school activities.

The church is outside of and running counter to the culture, asserts Burnett, and

that generates pressures on youth which were not as pronounced 20 years ago.

The problem is further complicated by adults who fail to model the witnessing Christian life, Burnett adds. "Teenagers exaggerate the wrong they see adults do. If they don't see their parents witnessing to their lost neighbors, then they won't witness to their lost friends. They just fall into the mold."

Burnett believes one-to-one relationships are the key to winning youth to Christ. While enjoyable, group activities are necessary because today's youth, like their parents, are entertainment-oriented, it is nevertheless difficult to translate decisions made in a large group setting into baptisms and personal discipleship.

"Activities are important," he says. "We need to share the gospel in a culturally relevant manner without compromising it. But group activities cannot replace one-to-one relationships. That is where a turnaround in youth baptisms will have to happen."

Randy Brantley, minister of youth at Jonesboro's Central Baptist Church, agrees with Burnett's assessment. He fears many youth programs have shifted away from one-to-one relationships toward the "Big Event."

"It may be our churches are guilty of entertaining kids, rather than discipling them," Brantley speculates. Parents of teenagers who want them "kept interested" exert tremendous pressures on church leaders. Eventually the question degenerates into who has the bigger and better show. But instead of capitulating, youth leaders need to strike a balance between good programs and intentional evangelism, he says.

Brantley advises youth leaders who find their programs well-attended but their baptists dry to ask themselves several questions:

— "Is my message watered down to make Christ more acceptable?"

— "Have we made Christian living such a legalistic burden that we have turned kids off to Christ?"

— "Is there consistency in my own Christian life in terms of my work habits, my witnessing, my personal life, and my relationships with other Christians?"

— "Am I the role model for youth that God wants me to be?"

"Students today are looking for an anchor. They want to keep their lives on course," concludes Brantley. "When crisis comes, their anchor will be that they have been grounded in the Christian life. If we fail to give them that anchor, we have failed them."

The Future at Stake

Southern Baptists absolutely must address themselves to the decline in baptisms generally and with youth particularly, says Jim Lagrone, associate in the Arkansas Baptist State Convention Evangelism Department.

"This is a crisis of astronomical proportions," asserts Lagrone. "We apparently are not even reaching our own teenagers, much less those in the lost world."

"We are literally talking about hundreds of thousands of teenagers who are lost to eternity, teenagers we would have won to Christ 20 years ago. They are struggling hard, looking for answers. Some of them have become so despondent they have turned to suicide to escape the pain."

"But the problem doesn't stop there. We also are talking about the generation that should be moving into the leadership of our churches. Since we have not been winning them to Christ, who will stand in our pulpits? Who will teach our Sunday School classes? Who will help us meet our budgets?"

"If our hearts cannot be burdened by the thought of hundreds of thousands of teenagers going into eternity without Christ, perhaps we can be moved by a vision of empty pews and unmet budgets."

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Dr. Adrian Rogers, Pastor
Bellevue Baptist Church
Memphis, Tennessee

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MILLIE GILL

People

Keith Clutts recently observed three years of service as minister of music at Second Church in Hot Springs.

Tim Grosshans will join the staff of Park Hill Church in North Little Rock March 19 as minister of education and outreach, coming there from Forest Park Church of Joplin, Mo. He also has served on the staff of other Missouri churches. Grosshans is a graduate of Dickinson State College in Dickinson, N.D., and Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, Mo. He and his wife, Carol, have two sons, Joshua, six, and John Mark, 21 months.

Mark Jones will join the staff of Central Baptist Church in North Little Rock March 19 as minister of youth and activities, coming there from Boiling Springs Church in Boiling Springs, N.C. He is a graduate of Oklahoma State University in Stillwater and Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley, Calif. He and his wife, Diane, have a daughter, Sierra.

Wes Keith is serving as pastor of First Church of El Paso.

Marguerite Spain, a native of Greene County, died Feb. 22 at age 85. She was a Sunday School teacher at Immanuel Church in Paragould. Survivors include her husband, Robert L. Spain, a retired Southern Baptist evangelist; two brothers, Burnus Emmert and Cecil Emmert, both of Paragould; two grandsons; and five great-grandchildren.

Charles Cockman of Little Rock is again serving as director of music for Nalls Memorial Church in Little Rock.

Bob Kary has resigned as music leader at First Church of Bay.

Briefly

Springdale First Church has announced plans for "Operation Andrew: The Feeding of the 5,000," a major prayer and enlistment emphasis which is scheduled for

March 5-April 23. Campaign goals include, enrolling approximately 500 new Sunday School members, 5,000 participating in a week of outreach Bible studies; and an April 23 Sunday School attendance goal of 5,000.

New Life Church at Alexander observed homecoming Feb. 12 with 52 in attendance for Sunday School. Other activities included a fellowship dinner and afternoon service.

University Church in Jonesboro observed payment of a \$65,000 indebtedness with a noteburning service Jan. 15. The note covered costs of construction on an educational building valued at \$130,000. This building was constructed as the church was retiring a \$27,000 indebtedness on a youth director's home.

McGehee First Church has completed a week's evangelistic crusade that resulted in 103 recorded decisions, with 60 professions of faith and 10 additions by letter, according to Pastor Kerry Powell. Wayne Bristow, director of evangelism for the Oklahoma Baptist State Convention, was evangelist. Music was led by R.L. and Beth Sigrest from Mississippi.

Photo / David Vann



Hot Springs First Church has begun construction on its fourth annual Living Cross under the workmanship of (left to right) Cecil Branch, Woody Ottwell, and Ralph Lawson. The production will be "The Highest Place," a Easter musical and drama. Larry Bradley and Janis Perceful will direct the 60-voice choir and 25-piece profession orchestra. Free tickets will be available through the church office March 13 for the performances which will be at 7:30 p.m. Friday, March 24, and Sunday, March 26.

Wanted: Christian School Teachers

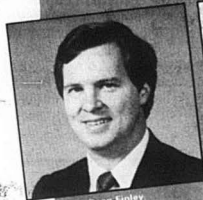
Asuncion Christian Academy in Asuncion, Paraguay (South America), needs church-active, missions-minded, evangelical Christian teachers for school year 1989-90 and beyond. The Academy is a PK-12 school which follows a U.S.A. curriculum. All instruction is in English and the school year runs from 18 July to 25 June with a summer vacation during December, January, and part of February. Needed are: (1) Primary school teachers for grades PK, 2, 4, 5, and 6. (2) Secondary school (grades 7-12) teachers of: typing, social studies, literature, English, general science, biology, chemistry, physics, mathematics (7 & 8), algebra, geometry, trigonometry, advanced math, business math, U.S. history, world history, psychology, sociology, geography, American government, Latin American studies, boys and girls physical education/team coach. Qualifications to teach two or more of the foregoing subjects are desirable and certification, or qualification for certification, is required. If interested in serving your Lord, travel/adventure, and learning/improving Spanish, write for more information using U.S. mail to: Director, Asuncion Christian Academy, American Embassy, Asuncion, APO Miami, FL 34036.

1989 STATE YOUTH CONVENTION

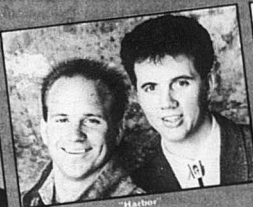
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Christi Freel
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SPECIAL FEATURES

In The Evening Session

An Intercontinental Phone Call - Live With
Debbie Moore
Hope, AR
Missionary to Liberia



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COMMISSION '89

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April 11, 1989 • Statehouse Convention Center • Little Rock, Arkansas

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SESSION HIGHLIGHTS

Morning - 10 A.M.

Make A Difference!
...At Home

Music - Harbor
Testimony - Jerry Cound
More Music - Adoration,
SBC Ensemble
Message - Dean Finley

Afternoon - 2 P.M.

Make A Difference!
...At School

Music - Harbor, Adoration,
SBC Ensemble
Testimonies - Alex Ennes,
Christi Freel,
"Miss Teen
Arkansas"
State Youth Bible Drill
State Youth Speakers'
Tournament

Evening - 6 P.M.

Make A Difference!
...In the World

Music - Harbor, Adoration
Missions Video
Missionary Phone Call
Message - Dean Finley
Commitment Service

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Vines to Address Arkansas Rally

Jerry Vines, president of the Southern Baptist Convention, will speak at the Annual Evangelism Rally for Little Red River Association, March 15, 1989 at 7 p.m. at First Church, Heber Springs. There will be a Youth Rally at 6 p.m. and Dr. Vines will briefly address that meeting.

The rally is expected to draw the largest crowd ever to attend an association meeting in the Little Red River Association, with an attendance goal of 700.

Music will be provided by the choir of the host church.



Vines

More Bibles For Russia

Brotherhood Challenges Arkansas Baptist Men

Arkansas Baptist Men have been challenged to provide 1,000 Bibles for shipment to the Soviet Union.

The project will be part of a worldwide effort organized by the Baptist World Alliance and promoted by the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission. A similar campaign last year sent 100,000 Russian-language Bibles to the Soviet Union prior to the celebration of the 1,000th anniversary of Christianity in the Soviet Union.

In February, the *Arkansas Baptist* reported that the Soviet Union had granted permission to the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists to import an additional 100,000 copies of the Scripture. Because the U.S.S.R. is ethnically diverse,

this second shipment will include Bibles in Estonian, Armenian, and other languages.

Glendon Grober, director of Brotherhood Department for the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, has challenged Arkansas Baptist Men to provide 1,000 Bibles, at a cost of \$5 each, for this second shipment.

Because of the scarcity of copies of the Scriptures, Soviet Baptist leaders estimate each Bible will be read by eight to 10 people.

Contributions, made out to Arkansas Baptist Men and designated "Bibles for Russia," may be sent to the Brotherhood Department, P.O. Box 552, Little Rock, AR 72203.

Arkansas Baptist Deaf Conference

The Arkansas Baptist Conference of the Deaf will hold its annual meeting May 6-8 at Camp Paron. Following the theme "Knowing the Will of God," Wilbur Huckleba from the Cruselle-Freeman Church of the Deaf in Atlanta, Ga., will address deaf persons and those who work with the deaf.

Comprised of about 20 churches in the state, the Arkansas Baptist Conference of the Deaf is affiliated with the Southern Baptist Conference of the Deaf. The state organization held a planning session for the annual meeting Feb. 26 at Park Hill Church, North Little Rock.

For more information, contact Randy Cash, Baptist Building, P.O. Box 552, Little Rock, AR 72203; telephone 501-376-4791.

Guardians Needed

Guardian, Inc. is seeking volunteers to serve as limited guardians for adults living at Human Development Centers around Arkansas.

Volunteers become guardians of individuals who have no family or friends that are able to make decisions on needed treatment issues which will improve their quality of life.

After training, volunteers will review treatment plans and visit with the individual at least once a month.

For more information, contact Diann Cumbie at 376-2420 (collect).

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Vines Announces Willingness

by Kathy Palen

Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs

NASHVILLE (BP)—Southern Baptist Convention President Jerry Vines has announced he plans to allow his nomination for a second one-year term during the convention's annual meeting in Las Vegas, Nev., June 13-15.

Vines, pastor of First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Fla., made the announcement during an address to the SBC Executive Committee meeting in Nashville Feb. 20.

Citing his excitement about the SBC's potential for witnessing, Vines said a second term as president would allow him

to continue his emphasis on that priority.

During the past eight months, Vines said, he has felt called to remind Southern Baptists of the priority of "personal evangelism, being a witness to Jesus." That emphasis has led to his own commitment to be a better soul winner, he added.

"I can't talk about it if I don't do it,"

Vines challenged other SBC leaders to take active roles in promoting witnessing as a convention priority. He asked each state Baptist newspaper editor to write an editorial sharing a personal witnessing experience. He also called upon the executives of SBC entities to begin their

reports at the annual meeting in Las Vegas with one-minute testimonies about their own witnessing experiences.

Acknowledging that problems exist within the convention, Vines encouraged Southern Baptists to face those difficulties and deal with them honestly. He pointed out three major problem areas:

—Financial difficulties. "We have less dollars and more things we want to do."

Southern Baptists must study their decline in giving, Vines said, adding that pastors need to preach about the importance of stewardship.

—Institutional difficulties. "Some institutions tend to lose their sense of priority and forget why they were brought into existence in the first place," he said.

The priority for every SBC entity should be evangelism and missions, Vines said.

—Attitudinal difficulties. "There are problems in the hearts of our people," he said.

Southern Baptists have access to a "tremendous tool" in prayer, he said calling on them to pray that "God will do something wonderful in our Southern Baptist Convention."

Committee Approved

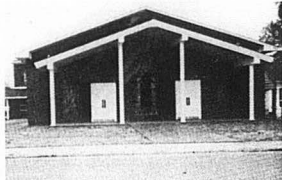
NASHVILLE (BP)—A special committee of the Southern Baptist Executive Committee will be appointed to receive Southern Baptists' communications of concern about developments in the denomination.

Action to create the special committee came during the Feb. 20-22 meeting of the Executive Committee in Nashville. Any recommendations of the special committee would be reported for consideration to the Executive Committee through its administration and convention arrangements subcommittee.

Creation of the new body was recommended as a process for responding to a "memorial" from messengers to the 1988 Baptist General Association of Virginia meeting, Nov. 15-16, in Virginia Beach to messengers to the 1989 Southern Baptist Convention meeting, June 13-15, in Las Vegas, Nev.

The memorial expresses concerns about the relationship between the SBC and state conventions, and calls for a re-examination of the partnership they share.

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BJC Budget Survives

by Marv Knox
Baptist Press

NASHVILLE (BP)—The Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs survived four attacks on its budget during the Feb. 20-22 meeting of the Southern Baptist Executive Committee in Nashville.

The Baptist Joint Committee is a Washington-based coalition of nine Baptist conventions. It focuses on the twin First Amendment issues of religious liberty and church-state relations.

The BJC has been criticized by Southern Baptist Convention conservatives for being too liberal, especially in its positions on school prayer and abortion. They also have said the BJC has failed to be accountable to the SBC, which provides most of the committee's funds.

BJC staff and supporters have countered that the organization has represented Baptists' historic stand on separation of church and state and thus was correct in not endorsing the school prayer amendment. They have said that the BJC's program assignment prohibits it from being involved in the abortion debate, which is not a religious liberty matter. And they have said the BJC is accountable to its full 54-member board, on which the SBC has 18 seats.

During the past three years, the SBC Executive Committee has created three special committees to study the SBC's relationship to and funding of the BJC.

The most recent committee reported to the Executive Committee at its February meeting. The committee suggested that the SBC create a new Religious Liberty Commission, which will represent the SBC in Washington and through which the SBC will fund and relate to the BJC. The Executive Committee approved that proposal and will present it to messengers to the SBC annual meeting this summer. Creation requires approval by messengers to two successive SBC annual meetings.

In the meantime, the SBC must decide how much support it will give to the BJC.

At its Jan. 18-20 meeting, the Executive Committee's program and budget subcommittee voted to recommend that the BJC take the same 2.05 percent budget cut to be incurred by most SBC entities. That would drop its allocation from the current \$400,000 to \$391,796.

But when the subcommittee reconvened during the full Executive Committee meeting, it entertained a motion to escrow the SBC's contribution to the BJC "until such time as they give accountability for the funds we provide."

Supporters of the motion cited the accountability issue, noting Southern Baptist members of the BJC had been denied items a majority of them requested, such as staff expense accounts, correspondence and personal interviews. They also cited displeasure with BJC Executive Director James M. Dunn, particularly "inflammatory" comments he made in a *Houston*

Chronicle article.

Opponents of the motion cited successful BJC support of SBC causes, such as problems with taxes levied on missionaries overseas and legal counsel for churches and agencies embroiled in disputes with the government. Opponents also cited the process already underway to start the Religious Liberty Commission and warned cuts in BJC funds would jeopardize the initiative.

The subcommittee then considered a substitute motion calling for the SBC to shift its First Amendment assignment to the convention's Christian Life Commission. It proposed that 1989-90 BJC funds be allocated to the CLC, that the CLC maintain the convention's relationship to the BJC and that the new CLC assignment be funded "from the present allocation to the BJC."

Supporters of the new proposal cited the cost advantage of expanding the CLC's program assignment, as opposed to creating a new First Amendment agency. They also expressed confidence that the CLC would handle First Amendment issues more to their liking than the BJC has done. Some said the CLC assignment could be an interim measure until the Religious Liberty Commission could be started in 1990.

Others expressed concern about making a major budgetary change while the Religious Liberty Commission is being considered. They said the proposal presented bylaw, charter and procedural questions that it did not answer. Specifically, they noted that the proposal made no provision for the future of the SBC Public Affairs Committee.

Classifieds

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Needed—Music/youth minister. Part-time. Start June. FBC, P.O. Box 40, Prairie Grove, AR 72753; 501-846-3939. 3/9

Classified ads must be submitted in writing to the ABN office no less than 10 days prior to the date of publication desired. A check or money order in the proper amount, figured at 85 cents per word, must be included. Multiple insertions of the same ad must be paid for in advance. The ABN reserves the right to reject any ad because of unsuitable subject matter. Classified ads will be inserted on a space-available basis. No endorsement by the ABN is implied.

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New Commission Proposed

Approved by Exec Board as Alternative to BJC

by Dan Martin
Baptist Press

NASHVILLE (BP)—Creation of a new Religious Liberty Commission has been approved by the Southern Baptist Executive Committee on a 42-27 secret ballot vote.

The vote came during the Feb. 20-22 meeting of the 76-member Executive Committee after a seven-member study committee recommended creating the new entity as "an alternative to accomplish the program and funding" of the Washington-based Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs.

The action, however, specifies that the SBC "would continue its relationship with the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs through the Religious Liberty Commission."

In order to create a new entity, messengers to two consecutive SBC annual meetings will be required to approve the action by majority votes. Thus, messengers to both the 1989 annual meeting in Las Vegas, Nev., and the 1990 annual meeting in New Orleans must give their assent.

Members of the Executive Committee approved a package that includes the recommendation to create the new agency, along with a charter, program statement and preliminary bylaws.

Under the proposal, messengers to the Las Vegas convention will be asked to approve creation of the new entity. Then, messengers to the New Orleans annual

meeting will be asked to vote on the matter again, and also ballot on a charter, program statement, funding, and election of 27 trustees to the new organization.

New Orleans messengers also will be asked to dissolve the 18-member Public Affairs Committee, a standing committee through which the SBC relates to the BJCPA.

All of the votes to create and organize the new commission will be simple majorities; only the vote to dissolve the PAC will require a two-thirds majority.

Members of the Executive Committee—and messengers to the annual meetings—were presented the total package "in order to give them a total view" of the scope and work of the new entity.

"We are providing the total package in order not to ask messengers to vote without having all of the information," said Harold C. Bennett, president of the Executive Committee.

The recommendation is the latest action in the stormy relationship between the SBC and the BJCPA. In recent years, three special committees appointed by the Executive Committee have looked into the relationship between Southern Baptists and the BJCPA, a religious liberty watchdog comprised of nine Baptist bodies in the United States and Canada.

The BJCPA and its executive director, James M. Dunn, have been under fire from convention conservatives who charge the BJCPA is unresponsive to the wishes of

Southern Baptists and is unaccountable to the SBC because it has only a third of the trustees while providing the majority of the funding.

The action of the study committee that recommended creation of the new entity also is controversial, as Dunn protested not being invited to participate in the deliberations that resulted in the recommendation.

Dunn said he was not asked to provide input until the study committee met Monday, Feb. 20, and called the process "shabby, unfair, unethical and improper."

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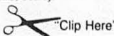
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Convention Uniform

Living a Worthy Life

by Michael D. Johnson, First Church, Pine Bluff

Basic passage: Colossians 1:1-14

Focal passage: Colossians 9:9-11

Central truth: In addition to knowing about God, we must be obedient to him in order to truly please him.

This lesson begins a three-week study of Paul's letter to Colossae, a major textile center located in western Asia Minor. Even though it is not believed that Paul established this church, Paul wrote this letter to counter the work of false teachers he had apparently heard about (2:4,8).

Paul begins his letter with a prayer addressing some of the concerns and needs of the Colossae Christians as he understood them. The prayer begins with Paul expressing his appreciation to God for the Colossians' faithful response to the gospel. There were problems in the church, to be sure, but Paul's stance was to move toward them in love instead of criticizing them for straying from the true teachings of their faith. Paul sought to affirm that which they did well, specifically the embodiment of the three Christian distinctives of faith, hope, and love (vv. 4-5).

At verse 9 Paul's prayer turns from one of thanksgiving to one of petition. The thrust of Paul's prayer expresses the deep desire that each Christian live a "life worthy of the Lord" (v. 10). The key to living such a life includes having knowledge of God.

Here Paul addresses the root of the problem faced by the young church at Colossae. Some of the teachers in the church, known as gnostics, were claiming that knowledge was the goal of the Christian life. Furthermore, this knowledge could only be achieved by a few "super-Christians." Paul attacked this notion by asserting that while knowledge of God is certainly a vital ingredient of the Christian life, it is not a means to an end.

Unfortunately, many Christians have an extensive knowledge and understanding of the Bible and Christian doctrine but never apply that knowledge in any tangible way. Paul teaches that as the Christian grows more and more in the knowledge of God, he will be compelled to act. The life of the obedient believer is marked by spiritual maturity, fellowship with other believers, witnessing to the unsaved, and ministering to others.

This lesson treatment is based on the International Bible Lesson for Christian Teaching, Uniform Series. Copyright International Council of Education. Used by permission.

Life and Work

Love Must Be Prominent

by Don Moseley, Sylvan Hills First Church, Sherwood

Basic passage: 1 Corinthians 12:31b to 13:8,13

Focal passage: 1 Corinthians 13:8a,13

Central truth: Love is the necessary ingredient in the effective working of all spiritual gifts.

In chapter 12, the Apostle Paul discusses the giving of spiritual gifts and their purpose and in chapter 14, Paul discusses the proper exercise of the gifts, especially the language gifts. But in chapter 13, at the center of his discussion, Paul addresses motive and attitude as he introduces his thoughts by saying, "yet show I you a more excellent way" in which God has planned for the operation of the gifts.

Spiritual gifts were present at Corinth but the missing ingredient was love. Nothing substitutes for love. Love is that characteristic that more fully describes the character of God. ". . . God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him" (1 Jn. 4:16). Love is the mark of God's ownership in our lives.

In verse 1 Paul indicates that though we may speak with the greatest possible eloquence, but do so without love, we would be nothing more than a "sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal." Just noise. It would be of no more value than the ecstatic noises that were accompanied by gongs and clanging cymbals in the rites honoring the pagan deities of Cybele, Bacchus, and Dionysus.

Paul adds that prophecy, proclaiming God's truth, without love is without effect. Knowledge without love just produces pride and is useless. Faith without love will produce nothing.

In verse 3, Paul indicates that even benevolence and martyrdom without love is nothing. *Agape* love is self sacrificing, but not all sacrifice comes out of love. Some sacrifice may be self serving. There may be the selfish motive of recognition or one may be trying to buy the love and respect of another.

Paul then gives a detailed description of love in verses 4-7. And his key thrust is found in verse 8a when he says, "Charity (love) never faileth. . . ." When love motivates the gifts, there will not be failure. Love is that more excellent way and the basis by which all spiritual gifts must operate in the church.

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Bible Book

Reaching Beyond

by Timothy L. Deahl, Olivet Church, Little Rock

Basic passage: Acts 11

Focal passage: Acts 11:1-4,17-26

Central truth: New converts need to be embraced by the church.

Isn't it annoying how we feel a personal need to approve what God has already done? Nevertheless, the church has a responsibility to "test the spirits" to see whether or not God has authorized that which is claimed to be from him. Having determined the validity of the claim, the church has occasion to offer both endorsement and participation. Acts 11 illustrates the unfolding of this process in the early Jerusalem church.

When the church leaders in Judea heard that Peter had preached to Gentiles, they took issue with him. Preaching the gospel to the Gentiles was to them not proper. It was not how evangelism was to be done. If someone wanted to become a Christian, first let him become a Jew.

Nevertheless, the church leaders listened as Peter explained the situation (v. 4). Peter reminded them of Jesus' words and shared how that the Holy Spirit came on the Gentiles just as he had come on the Jewish believers. When they heard Peter's direct testimony, they stopped objecting. The early church leaders followed a scriptural principle in investigating a questioned practice, after which they willingly submitted themselves to God's evident working.

The same principle is applied again in verses 19 through 23. In this case (v. 20), God used second generation believers to share the gospel with Gentiles in Antioch. When the Jerusalem church heard that many had believed, they sent a messenger to investigate. Whether by wisdom on the part of church leaders or by a more direct intervention from God, Barnabas was chosen.

No person in the early church seems to have been more tolerant and trusting than Barnabas. A lesson should be observed here: new converts need care, comfort, and instruction, not indoctrination into "hardline" church policies.

Notice finally that the church, after investigating and endorsing what was demonstrably of God's initiative, became directly involved in the new work (vv. 25-26).

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CHRISTIAN LIFE COMMISSION

First High Court Briefs Filed

by Louis Moore

SBC Christian Life Commission

NASHVILLE (BP)—For the first time, the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission has joined in filing friend-of-the-court briefs with the U.S. Supreme Court.

The CLC, the social and moral concerns agency for the 14.8-million-member denomination, joined with Citizens for Decency through Law in a pornography case, and with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and the National Association for Evangelicals in an abortion case.

The two cases mark the first time the commission has filed friend-of-the-court

briefs, and is an important expansion of the CLC's activity on moral issues, said to Richard D. Land, the agency's executive director.

"It is my hope that we can be active on select issues in coming years in seeking to influence the legal status of many issues with which we deal," Land said. "Participating in filing of amicus (friend-of-the-court) briefs in appellate cases will be a significant part of this effort."

A friend-of-the-court brief is a legal opinion presented by an interested party urging the court to issue a certain kind of conclusion.

The filing of the brief in the abortion case was announced Feb. 24 in a news conference on the steps of the Supreme Court in Washington.

CLC Commissioner Gray Crum, a professor at George Washington University in Washington, participated with representatives from Missouri Synod Lutherans and the NAE. He read a statement from Land concerning the action.

A press release handed out at the news conference said the three organizations had asked in their brief that the Supreme Court overturn *Roe v. Wade*, the 1973 case that permitted legalized abortions.

In the pornography case, the commission joined Citizens for Decency through Law, an Arizona organization specializing in legal issues related to pornography, in urging the high court to uphold a federal anti-pornography statute.

In the abortion case, the CLC joined Missouri Synod Lutherans and NAE in urging the Supreme Court to uphold the constitutionality of a Missouri law restricting the practice of legalized abortions.

The pornography case, *Federal Communications Commission v. Sable*, grew out of a challenge to a new federal law against indecent and obscene speech via telephone line. Sable Communications of California Inc. provides "dial a-porn" services, using long-distance telephone calls for pre-recorded messages containing sexually explicit material.

A federal judge struck down a portion of the law dealing with indecent speech. The friend-of-the-court brief seeks to have that section upheld.

The abortion case, *Webster v. Reproductive Health Services et al.*, is considered by abortion supporters and opponents to be a significant opportunity for the Supreme Court to reconsider, revise or even overturn *Roe v. Wade*, which set the stage for legal abortions in the United States.

American women today undergo about 1.5 million abortions annually, and since 1972, 22 million legal abortions have been performed, Land said.

"The abortion debate within Southern Baptist life, as signified by resolutions adopted both by the Southern Baptist Convention and many state Baptist conventions, is one which has been mainly about a rather narrow range of exceptions under which abortions would be permissible," he said. "A broad consensus exists among Southern Baptists that abortion on demand is a moral and human tragedy that needs legal remedy."

The abortion brief was written by the St. Louis lawfirm of Draheim & Pranschke. The pornography brief was written by Ben Bull, legal counsel for Citizens for Decency through Law.

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NATION

Leavell Urges Cooperation

by Breena Kent Paine
Baptist Sunday School Board

NASHVILLE (BP)—"When we become so consumed denominationally with any agenda other than winning people to Christ and discipling them, . . . then it's lights out for (our) denomination," Landrum P. Leavell II told Southern Baptist institutional and agency heads.

Speaking during a Feb. 21 luncheon in support of the Southern Baptist Cooperative Program unified budget, the president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary said, "The gospel, especially in the book of Acts, teaches cooperation, not on the basis of some external conformity, but rather on internal compulsion."

New Testament church history shows the clearest focus of the power of the Holy Spirit was when the believers were "of one mind" or "in one accord," he said.

"The New Testament church was so totally dominated by the power and the movement of God's Holy Spirit that their differences were erased, their motives were purified, their love for one another was heightened, and the result was cooperation," he added.

"With a burden for the masses of unsaved people, Southern Baptists received from God a plan that could involve every individual member and every local church in carrying out the Great Commission to the ends of the earth. That plan has served us well now for over 60 years, and it has the potential for continued usefulness until the Lord Jesus Christ returns to this earth."

Leavell offered his "exegesis" on the oft-used statement—"It is unconscionable to ask me to support with my money what I don't believe."

"First, the individual who says that, if he or she is an American citizen, is both inconsistent and untruthful," he said, because Americans pay income tax, although they may not believe in such governmental acts as federally financed abortions, cocktail parties and military operations that may be viewed as immoral.

"We pay (income tax) because this is the best there is. I believe in America, and I intend to be a part of the United States."

The statement is also hypocritical, he added, "because most of those same pastors turn around and ask every member of their church to participate in the subscribing of the budget," although many members may not agree with parts of that budget. Yet they are urged to participate "because of the good of the world."

Furthermore, the statement is dictatorial because the one speaking really is saying, "If you don't do it my way, I won't be a part of it," he said.

"If we (are to) remain cooperating Southern Baptists and maintain the viability and the integrity of the Cooperative Program, there will be points at which every one of us will have to give a little. The Cooperative Program is our God-given way, the best presently known to humanity, for (individual Baptists) to be personally involved in work and missions...."

However, "antithetical to the cooperative spirit that has united us in the past, increasing numbers of churches are keeping larger percentages of their income at home for projects sponsored by the local church."

"Some of our churches divert their missions funds for the support of independent missionaries who are not associated with our denomination. It took us 100 years to get over that mindset."

"It may be satisfying egotistically for you to say, 'I know this missionary personally, and we're putting money into the life of this family, and I know what they're doing.' You can't know what 3,800 of them are doing. But you can know every night when you put your head on your pillow that you've had a part in giving support to them, and they're out there faithfully serving the Lord."

Evangelize, Disciple

NEW ORLEANS (BP)—"The business of the church is winning people to Christ and discipling them," Ralph Smith told students at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary during campus revival.

Christians should share Christ with others "as you are going," said Smith, pastor of Hyde Park Baptist Church in Austin, Texas.

"As you are going to the grocery store tonight, . . . as you're going to play golf on Saturday, . . . as you're going to get your car filled with gas, talk to somebody about Jesus," said Smith, who has been president of the Baptist General Convention of Texas and chairman of the Southern Baptist Committee on Committees.

"According to the 1987 world population sheet, . . . there were 139,101,802 new babies born in our world in 1986. In 1986, all of the churches that are under the Christian umbrella . . . baptized less than 9 million people!"

Christians also should disciple people who have made the decision to follow Christ: "We have a way sometimes of winning them to Jesus, and then forgetting them. People need a doctrinal mindset that is rooted and grounded in their faith and in the word of Almighty God."

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