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June 26, 1997

Arkansas Baptist State Convention

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ARKANSAS BAPTIST

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Nashville, Tennessee



To The
Cross

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SOUTHERN
BAPTIST
CONVENTION

Southern Baptist Convention messengers focused on the theme, "To the Cross," endorsed a boycott of Disney and were introduced to the new North American Mission Board during the June 17-19 SBC annual meeting in Dallas.

Messenger attendance hits 20-year low at Dallas SBC

Welcoming messengers to the 1997 Southern Baptist Convention in Dallas, Texas Gov. George W. Bush said people of faith must lead the way toward a "renewal of the spirit in America."

Bush's welcome came during the smallest SBC annual meeting held in Texas in nearly 40 years. Only 12,418 messengers registered for the three-day meeting, 2,500 fewer than projected by convention officials.

The last time the SBC met in Dallas, in the midst of a lengthy struggle for control of convention leadership, a record 45,519 messengers participated. That was 12 years ago in 1985. This year's messenger total was the lowest since the 1973 SBC in Portland, Ore., and the lowest in Texas since 1958.

Speaking during this year's opening session, Bush noted that babies born out of wedlock, families locked in a cycle of welfare dependency and rising crime are "warning signs of a culture which has failed."

"Government can be part of the solution," Bush said, "but all the laws in the world can't make people love one another."

Only faith can produce a change of heart, a rebirth of hope, and a recommitment to "bedrock values" such as individual responsibility, he emphasized.

"From the pulpits of our churches to the bully pulpit of government, we must issue a call to spiritual renewal and personal responsibility," he added.

In introducing Bush, SBC president Tom Elliff cited his personal admiration for the Texas governor and his father, former President George Bush. "It is a blessing to have parents with principle," Elliff said.

Offering a response from the convention, O. Damon Shook, pastor of Houston's Champion Forest Baptist Church, praised Bush as a leader dedicated to "the conservative positions which Southern Baptists hold dear."

Shook urged Southern Baptists to "stand tall and true," not allowing themselves to be distracted by trivial matters, but devoting themselves to "kingdom issues and kingdom business."

Pointing to this year's convention theme, "To the Cross," Shook challenged Southern Baptists to go "back to the cross and out to the world" with the gospel.

During convention business sessions, Arkansas Baptists Larry Thomas, pastor of First Church, Atkins, and J.N. Williams, a member of Balboa Church, Hot Springs, were elected to serve on the 1998 SBC Committee on Nominations. The committee is responsible for nominating persons next year to serve on SBC boards, commissions and committees.

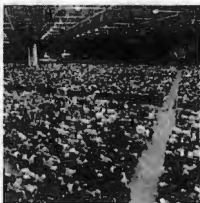
Messengers also elected James Merritt, pastor of First Baptist Church, Snellville, Ga., to preach the 1998 convention sermon at the SBC annual meeting in Salt Lake City. Robert Witty, age 90, of Jacksonville, Fla., was elected the alternate preacher.



Texas Gov. George W. Bush welcomed Southern Baptist messengers to last week's SBC annual meeting in Dallas.

ARKANSAS BAPTIST

news magazine



Cover Story

SBC '97

Southern Baptist Convention messengers focused on the theme, "To the Cross," endorsed a boycott of Disney and were introduced to the new North American Mission Board during the June 17-19 SBC annual meeting in Dallas.

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New missions agency officially begins

Trustees elect Reccord as president of North American Mission Board

In their first-ever meeting, trustees of the Southern Baptist Convention's new North American Mission Board overwhelmingly elected presidential candidate Robert Reccord but immediately put their own stamp on the agency by amending several key documents prepared for their adoption.

Reccord, pastor of First Baptist Church of Norfolk, Va., was elected president of the new mission board, which replaces the Home Mission Board, Brotherhood Commission and Radio and Television Commission.

Reccord had been nominated for the post by a seven-person search committee called incorporators. For nearly two years, Reccord served as chairman of a related group, the Implementation Task Force, charged with working out the details of launching NAMB. Reccord resigned that chairmanship when he became an official candidate for the presidency.

Reccord was elected NAMB president with two dissenting votes. He was greeted with a standing ovation after the vote.

Reccord reminded employees and trustees that NAMB is a new organization, "not simply three existing organizations velcroed together." Employees should not look to fill someone else's shoes, he said. "We're bringing our own shoes with us."

Reccord said his first priority personally is "my walk with Jesus Christ." Other personal priorities are his family, the staff team at NAMB and his own ministry role in NAMB, he said.

He also outlined four "strategic areas" for NAMB's work: reaching the major cities of North America with the gospel, ethnic work, reaching junior and senior high students and reaching college students.

"We are losing our country," Reccord warned. "If we don't give it everything we've got and color outside the lines, we're going to lose it in this generation."

NAMB trustees convened their inaugural meeting June 19 at the conclusion of last week's SBC annual meeting. The five-hour meeting included a 90-minute executive session in which trustees elected four vice presidents nominated by Reccord and adopted a salary scale for all employees. Specific information about NAMB salaries was not made public.

However, after the meeting trustee chairman Charles Fuller said trustees had amended the presidential salary scale downward — "not by a great deal, but

downward." This was accomplished by lowering the upper level of the salary range, he said.

Salary ranges for other NAMB employees were not amended, Fuller said, but all salaries were frozen for one year for evaluation.

For several weeks prior to this first trustee meeting, salary scales developed by the incorporators for NAMB were the subject of intense discussion among some trustees. The concerned trustees said the pay scales had been set too high and did not include input from trustees. The new trustees had been asked to affirm a pay range of \$140,000 to \$210,000 for the president and \$100,000 to \$150,000 for five vice presidents. Only the president's salary range was reduced, bringing the maximum below \$200,000.

As soon as the NAMB trustee board was constituted, trustees began amending documents prepared for them by the incorporators and Implementation Task Force. In addition to the salary scale, trustees amended the agenda for the meeting itself as well as the proposed bylaws for the mission board.

Trustee David Stone of Oklahoma offered two amendments to the bylaws before they were adopted, and trustee Toni Clevenger of Florida offered another. All three were adopted. The effect of Clevenger's amendment was to ensure that trustees are given adequate notice of meetings.

Stone's amendments added three more members to the trustee executive committee — members selected by the full board rather than by the trustee chairman. Some trustees had expressed concern that the executive committee structure as originally proposed concentrated too much power in too few hands.

Stone also offered an amendment to the board's committee structure that put more responsibility on subcommittees and the full board rather than the executive committee on certain key issues such as review of missionary appointments and approval of church loans.

Fuller, pastor of First Baptist Church of Roanoke, Va., and former chairman of the SBC Peace Committee, was elected chairman with one vote in opposition. Two vice chairmen were elected without opposition. Gary Underwood of Arkansas, a former RTVC trustee, was elected first vice chairman. Donley Brown of Missouri,



A display panel in the SBC exhibit hall highlights the logo and purpose statement of the new North American Mission Board.

former Brotherhood trustee chairman, was elected second vice chairman.

Soon after his election, Reccord nominated and the trustee board approved men to fill four of five vice president positions. They are:

- Nate Adams, vice president for media and missions education. Adams has been vice president of operations for Christianity Today Inc., based in Chicago.

- Richard Harris, vice president for church planting. Harris has been director of mass evangelism for the Home Mission Board.

- Mike Day, vice president for strategic planning and mobilization. Day has been executive vice president of the Brotherhood Commission.

- Ernest Kelly, vice president for business services. Kelly has been vice president and chief financial officer for the HMB and has served since January as the HMB's interim president.

A vice president for NAMB's evangelization group has not yet been named.

Prior to adjournment, Fuller asked trustees to designate the chairman and the president as official spokesmen for NAMB. Prior to voting, Fuller said, "What this means is that guests here today can speak as they wish about what happened, but as trustees you will defer to the chairman and president." The motion passed without opposition. DALLAS (ABP)

A Pastor's Heart



Enall Turner

ABCS Executive Director

Surprise! Every now and then I get a surprise that I must share with you. (Don't quit reading yet — you will be more surprised than I was.)

Surprise! Recently I asked our state Baptist Student Union director to compile statistics reflecting students who have received Christ as a result of the Baptist Student Union ministry and compare those statistics with the ones reported by other national campus ministries, such as Navigators, Campus Crusade for Christ, etc. **Surprise!** On the only campus in Arkansas where there are national campus ministries, the Baptist Student Union reports more students receiving Christ than all the other ministries' reports

President's Perspective



Rex Horne

ABCS President

Charles Swindoll, in *The Grace Awakening*, relates a personal experience from a Bible conference. Swindoll, the Bible teacher, noticed a couple early in the week. He couldn't help but notice that the man fell asleep in every service, not 10 minutes after Swindoll started to speak. Swindoll was convinced the woman wanted to be there, but not the sleeper!

After the first service, the lady started to speak with Swindoll a few minutes. Again, Swindoll made a "judgment" that the lady was married to a carnal Christian. Instead she spoke of how this conference was her husband's final wish. He had a few weeks to live and wanted to come...even though the medication he took for pain made him sleepy, which was a great embarrassment to him.

The wife thanked Swindoll for the week and left. Swindoll wrote, "I stood there all alone, as deeply rebuked as I have ever been. I had judged my brother, and I was as wrong as I could possibly have been."

Friends, there is always more to the

combined. It's not even close!

And surprise! The Baptist Student Union leads these students to Christ with only a fraction of the number of full-time staff the other ministries use. **And surprise —** The Baptist Student Union is your church at work through the Cooperative Program — it does not compete for anyone's tithes nor with any church.

And surprise! Research shows that what is true in Arkansas is true across the nation.

Arkansas Baptists are not following when it comes to leading students to Christ — they are leading.

■ Have you read *Islam* by George W. Braswell, Jr.? (Broadman and Holman, 1997). This is a great source book on one of the world's fastest growing religions. Islam has more than one billion adherents — it will be our mission field or our competition for the souls in the next century. This book is a valuable book.

Executive director's schedule:

June 29 (a.m.) First, Marvell
July 9-11 Galatians 6:6 Conference,
Breckenridge, Colo.
July 13 (a.m.) Calvary, Dardanelle

story than you or I know, always. This is true in the relationships shared between Christians, churches and even in conventions. There is One who knows the entirety of a matter. Does this mean we always agree in the relationships I have mentioned? Of course not. It should mean, however, that we can contend for our beliefs without being contentious.

My son watched the recent U.S. Open golf tournament. It reminded him that golf was a game, maybe the only one left, where civility and sportsmanship are practiced by nearly all the participants. The game is one of competition between opponents, not enemies. I was trying to help him not to plead for the golfers' shots to end in the rough, water or bunkers while his guy (Tom Lehman) was exhorted to hit it down the middle!

Most of us, like Swindoll, have made some wrong "judgments" or been falsely judged. No one enjoys the experience. We may not be able to defend ourselves against false accusations, but we can determine our own behavior in our judging of others. A first step is to determine the enemy. No one of my brothers or sisters in Christ are my enemies.

Romans 14:13 says, "Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way" (NIV).

Rex Horne, pastor of Immanuel Church in Little Rock, is president of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention.

quotes

"If we do not preach the cross in America, America will be lost."

—Evangelist Luis Palau

"Nothing, absolutely nothing, can take the place of personally pointing people to the cross."

—Tom Elliff, SBC president

"Our hope is not in America. America's hope is in Christ."

—Richard Land, president,
SBC Ethics and
Religious Liberty Commission

ARKANSAS BAPTIST

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ARKANSAS BAPTIST NEWSMAGAZINE

SBC '97: Where were the messengers?

Amid all the attention focused on Disney, convention restructuring and world missions, at least one story was virtually ignored during last week's Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Dallas. The question that was quietly avoided remains unanswered: Where were all the messengers?

Following last year's SBC registration of only 13,706 in New Orleans, convention officials projected a messenger total of 15,000 when Southern Baptists returned to Dallas. As it turned out, that projection was far too optimistic. By the end of last week's annual meeting, a mere 12,418 messengers had registered — 2,500 fewer than expected.

To place those numbers in context, the last time the SBC was held in Dallas, a record 45,519 messengers attended. Of course, that was in 1985 at the height of the struggle between conservatives and moderates for control of the convention. A dozen years later, things are much quieter at the annual meeting.

But this much quieter? This year's messenger total was the lowest in 23 years,

Straight from the Editor



Trennis Henderson

Editor, Arkansas Baptist

the lowest in a southern state in 38 years and the lowest in Texas since 1958. That's low!

According to SBC president Tom Elliff, the meager messenger totals of the past two years are no cause for alarm. "Our conventions are issue-oriented," he remarked. "If there are no issues raging," he added, individual Baptists must make a conscious decision about "how they will use this week."

While that certainly sounds plausible, the fact remains that a key aspect of Southern Baptist cooperation is active,

personal participation on the grassroots level. Not only did fewer than 12,500 messengers register for this year's convention, thousands fewer than that bothered to actually show up for business sessions and vote on issues facing the SBC. Among the ballot votes taken during the week, an average of only 3,300 messengers cast ballots. That's a minuscule one of every 4,750 Southern Baptists!

What difference does it really make? As in any democratic process, the difference involves discerning the will of the majority. Whether voting to boycott Disney or establishing a new convention structure, the only voices heard on the national level are those who attend the SBC as registered messengers. No other Southern Baptists have much right to complain if their views go unheeded.

What does the future hold? Hopefully, Southern Baptists will realize that every SBC annual meeting is "issue-oriented." As we seek to impact our nation and world with the gospel of Christ, the more Southern Baptists involved in the process, the better.



letters to the editor

SBC struggle predates 1979

In the June 12 issue of the *Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine*, reference is made in a letter to the editor to "the struggles in our denomination since 1979." For point of clarification, the struggle dates a number of years previous to 1979. I do not believe a precise date can be stated. The election of Dr. K. Owen White of Houston, Texas, in 1964 and Dr. W. A. Criswell of Dallas in 1969 and 1970 to the presidency of the SBC were attempts by conservatives to stem the tide of liberalism in our convention. Their election resulted in little more than a symbolic statement in that neither understood the authority structure of the convention as related to the appointment of the Committee on Committees by the president.

During the late 1950s, 1960s and 1970s when conservatives were struggling with the in-roads of liberalism in several institutions, we were told to write to their trustees. That was an exercise in futility! The trustees were solidly controlled by the moderate element of the convention. An interesting study is to research our own state's representation on SBC boards of trustees and commissions during that time. Less than 10 churches (that's less

than 1 percent of our total) held over 80 percent of our appointments during that time span. The pastors and a few laymen from those churches would rotate from one board to another while the rest of the state was left out.

1979 wasn't the year the struggle began; it was the year conservatives learned the process. Ever since conservatives have learned the process, moderates have been seeking to change the rules of the process. I have difficulty understanding why institutions, agencies and commissions of our state and national conventions do not want to reflect the will of the majority of their constituency. Ouachita is a major case in point.

James McDaniel
Brinkley, AR

Boycott settles old score

Arkansas Baptists deserve to know what I conclude as the primary reason for the Disney resolution at this year's Southern Baptist Convention. Dr. Jim Henry, pastor of First Baptist Church, Orlando, Fla., was elected president of the SBC in 1994 while the convention was being held in Orlando. Hundreds of members of Dr. Henry's church in Orlando are employed by the

Disney Corporation.

He was a conservative and fair-minded president who excelled in that office. The only problem with his election was the fact that he was not selected in advance by the powerful group which meets every year to set the SBC agenda. They chose an Alabama pastor whom the convention did not elect. The Disney resolution is an attempt to humiliate Dr. Henry and his wonderful church.

The Disney Corporation does produce entertainment which is not Christian and does not deserve our support. However, every secular media entertainment company in America produces it as well. Therefore, I ask: Why was Disney singled out? The answer is to get even with our immediate past president and his congregation. If you do not think these powerful men with great influence are above such petty and personal motives then evaluate the treatment given to other fine Christians in the past few years. The reason behind the resolution dishonors the churches of the SBC. Our leaders squander their moral influence to settle old scores. It is no wonder the world laughs at us.

Bob Parsley
Smackover, AR

Dwayne L. Monk, pastor

Fairdale Church, Hot Springs
The convention in Dallas has been a highlight in my life and ministry. I truly heard from God as we were brought back "To the Cross." Hopefully each messenger was touched as I was and can take the message of hope back to our respective places of ministry where we can make a difference in our communities.

Ken Bernard Jr., pastor

Calvary Church, Benton
It has been a good convention, much different from the one I attended here in 1985. There appears to be a spirit of oneness and cooperation among the messengers.

Our theme, "To the Cross," is so appropriate. If it were not for the cross, we would have no purpose for meeting. As we focus on the cross, we will see the urgency to share the gospel message to a world that is dying in its sin.

Overall I have been very pleased with the convention. The Pastors' Conference was very good — so worshipful.

David Crouch, retired pastor

First Church, Searcy

"Smooth as silk" seems to describe most of the sessions at the convention. President Elliff kept the sessions moving and still gave time for needed discussion. He was firm, but courteous in his decisions.

As usual the resolutions seemed to cause the most discussion. The Disney resolution was thoroughly discussed and the vast majority agreed that it should be passed as presented. The local press gave it the impact of a law for all Southern Baptists. Time will tell.

The fellowship in the halls was as noisy and friendly as usual.

Jeff Jones, associate pastor

First Church, Monticello

It's a pity that the national media will focus on the Disney resolution, for I believe this convention to be equal to some of the great ones: 1925 with the Cooperative Program, 1963 with the Baptist Faith and Message and 1976 with Bold Mission Thrust. With the creation of the North American Mission Board and International Mission Board, we are in probably the greatest position ever to reach the world and help our churches grow.

To The Cross

"For the preaching of the cross...
is the power of God!"

I CORINTHIANS 1:18

Arkansans evaluate 1997 convention

This year we've been able to disagree without being disagreeable, we've witnessed the unprecedented unity of the seminary presidents, and we've experienced what God is doing throughout the world as He uses Southern Baptists to point persons to the cross.

Tim Deahl, pastor

First Church, North Little Rock

The 1997 SBC meeting in Dallas was a delight from start to finish. Two things stand out. As is so often true, the convention music highlighted the worship. It may be that we have learned to worship together more through music than through any other means.

Another prominent element in this year's meeting was, to me, the abundance of personal testimonies. The testimonies, featured prominently during the evening sessions, spoke directly to my own experiences of salvation and call to service. The attendance in both sessions spoke of the desire to share together in God's calling to Southern Baptists.

Charles Mays, pastor

First Church, Runyan

I felt a very positive spirit in this year's convention. With the restructuring of our mission boards, we can hopefully reach more people with the gospel than ever before as we move into the 21st century.

The highlight that I really enjoyed was the Wednesday evening world missions report when new converts from around the world and across America shared their testimonies and the film, "The Harvest," was previewed.

Donnis Cordier,

director of missions
Conway-Perry Association

David King's message during the opening session was inspirational and challenging. Tom Elliff's presidential address was powerful and on target, but do we believe it and will we live by it?

The discussion and passage of the resolution on moral stewardship and the Disney Company changed my perception of the spirit of the Southern Baptists attending the convention. During the Tuesday sessions I sensed the presence of apathy. Not so on Wednesday when this resolution was presented for discussion and

passage. These Baptists showed a little life, a little passion. The resolution passed. Now we must preach hard to convince our young people to take this stand.

My perception is that it is not our intention to punish Disney and others, but rather, to say as children of God we cannot accept that which disregards and dishonors God. To preach the gospel of Christ, we must preach the doctrine of sin!

Dr. Richard Land's convention sermon was a masterpiece; maybe the high point of the convention. It sounded like the preaching I grew up on in the '50s and '60s. I was reminded that we need to once again become soldiers of the cross.

Mark Brooks, pastor

Elmdale Church, Springdale

If you ever question why you are a Southern Baptist, all you have to do is come to a convention. Seeing the six seminary presidents sign a historic covenant was a thrill. Hearing the testimonies of what God is doing through Southern Baptists around the world was a moving experience. Why on earth would you want to go fishing when you could experience all this glory?

Bill Milburn, pastor

Bingham Road Church, Little Rock

What a great blessing it was to be able to attend this year's convention. Each session was a worship experience and an encounter with God. Thanking to our Father for calling us to focus on the cross of Jesus Christ.

Elliff re-elected SBC president

Prayer for 'genuine spiritual awakening' cited as primary goal

Southern Baptist Convention president Tom Elliff was re-elected June 17 without opposition for a second one-year term as president.

Joining Elliff as SBC officers are Miles Seaborn, first vice president; David Galvan, second vice president; John Yeats, recording secretary; and Lee Porter, registration secretary.

Elliff, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church, Del City, Okla., was nominated by Ralph Smith, retired pastor of Hyde Park Baptist Church in Austin, Texas.

Seaborn, pastor of Birchman Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas, was elected over Wisconsin director of missions Dennis Hansen. Seaborn received 2,202 votes or 57.45 percent of the votes cast.

Galvan, pastor of Primera Iglesia Bautista Nueva Vida (New Life First Baptist Church), Garland, Texas, was elected second vice president in a run-off with retired Southern Baptist missionary Bill Wagner, now a professor at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary. Galvan received 1,586 votes or 57.53 percent of the 2,757 votes cast.

J.C. Mitchell of Florida and Bob Burch of Tennessee also were nominated for the second vice president position.

Yeats was elected SBC recording secretary over Mark Brooks, pastor of Elmdale Church in Springdale. Yeats received 1,939 votes or 58.74 percent of the 3,301 votes cast.

Yeats, a former pastor in Texas and Kansas, has been director of communications for the State Convention of Baptists in Indiana and editor of the *Indiana Baptist* since 1996. He succeeds David Atchison of Franklin, Tenn., who chose not to run for re-election to the office.

Porter, of Lawrenceville, Ga., was re-elected without opposition to his 21st term as SBC recording secretary.

Elliff began the traditional presidential news conference with a prayer and ended it with a challenge to those in attendance: "God's got a great plan for your life, and the only way you'll know it is if you know Christ as your Savior."

He described his election to a second



Officers of the Southern Baptist Convention for 1997-98 elected last week in Dallas include (left to right): David Galvan, pastor of Primera Iglesia Bautista Nueva Vida, Garland, Texas, second vice president; Tom Elliff, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church, Del City, Okla., president; and Miles Seaborn, pastor of Birchman Baptist Church, Fort Worth, Texas, first vice president.

term as SBC president as "one of the most gratifying experiences of my life."

Elliff responded to questions ranging from a resolution to boycott The Disney Company to a question about his views on current controversies surrounding military dismissals for sexual behavior.

" I don't think much is going to change unless God brings an awakening in our nation. "

TOM ELLIFF
President
Southern Baptist Convention

Elliff said his primary agenda as SBC president is to pray that God will bring "a genuine spiritual awakening" to the United States. "I don't think much is going to change unless God brings an awakening in our nation," he noted.

Voicing concerns over "activities which degenerate the moral climate of our nation," Elliff said convention leaders felt that "we had to speak out" concerning Disney's involvement with "film com-

panies that produced graphic pornography and illicit pornography, and gay and lesbian days in their theme park campuses."

Noting that "so many families trusted Disney" as a family-oriented corporation, Elliff said "Mr. and Mrs. Southern Baptist" will have to decide how they carry out the principles spelled out in the resolution. "The issue may or may not bring Disney down; the issue is (us) coming up to the level of scriptural morality."

Addressing the issue of morality among national leaders, Elliff emphasized, "Leaders have a heavier responsibility and ought to be expected to live with perhaps even closer attention to principle and

character than people who do not lead.

"I can't speak for the Army," he added, "but I can tell you it always causes me to weep when I hear of someone who has fallen morally."

Fielding questions about the issue of women's ordination, Elliff said the ordination of women "is not a scriptural position. If you hold that Scripture is indeed the inerrant, infallible Word of God, and you believe Scripture...speaks plainly, you cannot help but take passages relative to ministry and see that they plainly refer to a man of God."

Elliff said he affirms the SBC Committee on Nominations' guidelines against nominees for SBC boards who support Cooperative Baptist Fellowship ministries.

"It would be ludicrous to appoint someone, for instance, as a member of the International Mission Board who had strong ties to CBF, because they would place the president of that board in the unusual predicament of having a board member...who would have divided allegiance," Elliff said.

Although there is tremendous diversity in the way Southern Baptists conduct church, Elliff said "non-negotiable" issues involve beliefs about Scripture and salvation by faith in Jesus Christ alone. Citing plans to meet and pray with leaders of other Christian groups across the nation this year, he added, "Respect, toleration and compromise are different issues."

DALLAS (BP)

Messengers endorse Disney boycott

One year after warning The Disney Company that its "anti-Christian and anti-family" direction in product production and corporate policy might bring economic action against the company, Southern Baptist Convention messengers voted "to refrain from patronizing" the entertainment giant and any of its subsidiaries.

The resolution, which had overwhelming approval, noted that "The Disney Company has not only ignored our concerns, but flagrantly furthered this moral digression in its products and policies."

The resolution accuses the entertainment company of "increasingly promoting immoral ideologies such as homosexuality, infidelity and adultery." Among offenses

cited by Disney critics are a policy offering health-insurance benefits to the domestic partners of homosexual employees, allowing the continuation of "Gay Days" at theme parks and the distribution of R-rated movies through Disney subsidiaries.

Besides Disney's well-known theme parks, the company owns the American Broadcasting Company — which includes the ABC television network, ESPN, A&E network, more than 20 affiliated radio and TV stations, and a long list of trade journals, medical journals and software.

Other entities include Disney-owned film companies such as Walt Disney Pictures, Touchstone Pictures, Miramax Films and The Disney Channel. Disney also owns vacation planning services,

publishing companies and more than 20 general-interest newspapers or magazines.

In addition to targeting Disney, the resolution calls for extending the boycott to "any company that promotes immoral ideologies and practices."

Disney officials issued a brief response noting that the company "creates more family entertainment of every kind than anyone else in the world. We plan to continue our leadership role and in fact we will increase production of family entertainment."

In a related resolution, messengers approved a statement opposing corporate policies that extend employee benefits to "domestic partners."

The resolution affirmed businesses that decline to offer benefits to the partners of homosexual employees, stating that domestic partner benefit policies threaten to "crase fundamental and morally critical distinctions between homosexual relationships and heterosexual marriage."

IBM, AT&T, Sprint, Hewlett-Packard, Xerox, Time-Warner, Microsoft, Eastman Kodak, as well as Disney were cited as companies offering such personnel benefits.

During debate over the Disney boycott, Lisa Kinney, a messenger from Largo, Fla., drew applause as she told the crowd that the resolution "will affirm to the world that we love Jesus more than we love our entertainment."

"Jesus has called us to purity and we must take Him seriously," Kinney declared. "If we must turn off our televisions completely, so be it; it is no great loss."

Speaking against the boycott, Rick Markham of Snellville, Ga., noted, "If we pass this resolution, you have a moral obligation to cancel your ESPN coverage, get rid of the A&E channel, stop watching Lifetime (channel) and never watch ABC."

Voicing concern over Southern Baptists becoming "20th century Pharisees who strain at a gnat and swallow a camel," he added, "We are just reacting to an extreme while positioning ourselves at the other extreme. Let's get back to...winning our world to Jesus Christ."

Although "applying economic pressure does not take as much energy as biblical proclamation of the gospel," Resolutions Committee chairman John Sullivan told messengers, "There is a legitimate time when you have to say enough is enough."

Prior to adopting the resolution, messengers rejected an amendment by Walter Price of Beaumont, Calif., which would have limited the boycott to one designated month to emphasize its impact.

DALLAS (BP/ABP)

SBC Resolution:

Moral Stewardship and the Disney Company

WHEREAS, Everything Christians possess of time, money, and resources is given to them by God as a stewardship for which they will give an account before a holy God; and

WHEREAS, Those who serve the public in any manner also have a stewardship before God regarding their service, and those who have greater influence have greater responsibility for their stewardship and must give a greater accounting; and

WHEREAS, Many entertainment providers including, but not limited to, The Disney Company are increasingly promoting immoral ideologies such as homosexuality, infidelity, and adultery, which are biblically reprehensible and abhorrent to God and His plan for the world that He loves; and

WHEREAS, The 1996 Southern Baptist Convention passed a resolution regarding these issues with a specific appeal to The Disney Company, which had long been a respected leader of family entertainment in keeping with traditional moral values; and

WHEREAS, The aforementioned resolution called for our Christian Life Commission to monitor Disney's progress in returning to its previous philosophy of producing enriching family entertainment and the Christian Life Commission has now reported that The Disney Company has not only ignored our concerns, but flagrantly furthered this moral digression in its product and policies; and

WHEREAS, We realize that we cannot do everything to stop the moral decline in our nation, but we must do what lies before us when it is right through a proper use of our influence, energies, and prayers, particularly when it affects our nation's children;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, That the messengers of the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Dallas, Texas, June 17-19, 1997, urge every Southern Baptist to take the stewardship of their time, money, and resources so seriously that they refrain from patronizing The Disney Company and any of its related entities, understanding that this is not an attempt to bring The Disney Company down, but to bring Southern Baptists up to the moral standard of God; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That we encourage Southern Baptists to refrain from patronizing any company that promotes immoral ideologies and practices, realizing that The Disney Company is not the only such provider; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That we ask our pastors and church leaders to become informed regarding these issues and teach their people accordingly, and that we urge all Southern Baptists to graciously communicate the reasons for their individual actions to The Disney Company and other companies; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, That we pray that God would use these actions to help the employees of such companies to respect the enormous stewardship they have before God, and we affirm those employees who embrace and share our concerns.

Henry, Drake differ on impact of Disney boycott

On the pastor introduced last year's Disney resolution that set the stage for this year's boycott. Another pastor was president of the Southern Baptist Convention a year ago and presided over the business session where the initial resolution was adopted.

Twelve months later, Wiley Drake and Jim Henry found themselves on opposite sides of the Disney debate during last week's SBC annual meeting. Henry and Drake, whose churches are both located near Disney theme parks, disagreed on how the latest resolution will impact Southern Baptist witnessing efforts.

Henry, pastor of First Baptist Church, Orlando, Fla., located near Walt Disney World, opposed the resolution, citing concern that the boycott will harm efforts to lead people to faith in Jesus.

Acknowledging that he is concerned about Disney policies that support homosexuality, Henry said a boycott is the wrong strategy.

"The world will hear boycott and (think) that we are against homosexuals," Henry told reporters following the vote. "We are against the practice of homosexuality, not against people."

The former SBC president said last year's resolution damaged his church's influence in the community. "People would say to us, 'You're the Christians who don't want us in your church.'"

"We should not be removing ourselves from people. We should go to people. The greatest force in the world is the love of Jesus Christ," Henry emphasized. "Our weapons are not carnal; our weapons are spiritual. If we are going to bring Disney to its knees, we should get down on our knees first."

Drake is pastor of First Southern Baptist Church of Buena Park, Calif., located a few miles from Disneyland. He said he believes the resolution will help bring people to Christ.

"The world we live in today is not looking for a mamby-pamby bunch of Christians that don't take a stand," Drake declared.

Rejecting the idea that the resolution should have been defeated because it would present a negative image of Southern Baptists to the world, Drake added, "Most of the people in my church know I'm negative toward Disney, but we win people to Jesus."

Be it resolved...

Messengers adopt resolutions addressing issues of religious liberty, human cloning, home schools

In addition to adopting the widely publicized Disney resolution, Southern Baptist messengers approved 11 other resolutions last week on topics ranging from home schooling to human cloning.

Adopting a resolution on religious persecution, messengers asked Southern Baptists to prayerfully intercede on behalf of persons around the world who are being persecuted for their faith, and to "encourage our government officials to elevate religious liberty concerns to the highest priority in foreign policy."

The resolution noted American companies and government officials appear to value "economic gain over religious liberties" in the offending countries.

The plight of the world's hungry was addressed in another resolution approved by SBC messengers.

Noting that Southern Baptists support more than 200 hunger ministries worldwide, the resolution underscored the need for "regular and systematic giving" to the Southern Baptist World Hunger Fund.

Messengers approved a resolution calling for Texas Gov. George W. Bush to call a special legislative session to enact legislation to stem a pending lawsuit that "is causing the loss of hundreds of thousands of dollars to worthwhile religious and other charitable causes." The suit, *Richie v. SBC*, et al., seeks a claimed \$1 billion in damages because of alleged illegalities in issuing charitable gift annuities.

Support for Ten Commandments

Messengers also adopted a resolution on the display of the Ten Commandments on government property, as well as a resolution urging Bible publishers to resist efforts to modernize Bible translations.

Weighing in on the current debate over the display of the Ten Commandments, messengers pledged support for the scriptural text's public display "in government offices and courthouses." Alleging that prohibition of such displays is "clearly discrimination against religious expression," the resolution also endorsed pending congressional legislation calling for a religious freedom amendment.

On the heels of the decision of the publisher and translator of the New International Version Bible not to publish an inclusive-language version in the United States, messengers approved a resolution urging Bible publishers "to use time-honored, historic principles and refrain from any deviation to seek to accommodate contemporary cultural pressures."

An amendment "to request agencies, boards and publishing arms of the Southern Baptist Convention to refrain from using any such translation" in Southern Baptist denominational publications was accepted by messengers.

Recent dramatic developments in genetic technology, most clearly reflected in the cloning of a sheep in an Edinburgh, Scotland, lab, prompted SBC messengers to approve a resolution opposing the cloning of humans.

The resolution cited Southern Baptists' "consistent and vigorous opposition to the devaluation of human life and the encroachment of the culture of death," warning of the potential misuse of genetic testing "to stigmatize and discriminate against individuals on the basis of their genetic information."

While applauding the potential of genetic technology advancements for the treatment of disease, the resolution cautioned that genetic technology could throw open the door for "increasing the numbers of abortions through the use of prenatal genetic screening."

In a resolution stating that drug abuse contributes to the erosion of "the physical, moral and spiritual well-being of our nation," messengers urged Southern Baptists to be actively involved in efforts to reverse the growing problem of drug abuse.

Southern Baptist churches and entities are encouraged to "to minister to those who have been harmed by drug abuse," the resolution states.

In a resolution calling gambling a "tidal wave" that brings "pain and destruction" to the lives of children, the poor and elderly, messengers urged political leaders to pass legislation to restrict and eliminate "all forms of gambling and its advertisement."

Approving a resolution affirming home schooling, messengers acknowledged the rights of parents to teach their children at home. The resolution noted that Scripture identifies parents "as the principal educators of their children."

In an amendment, messengers affirmed "godly teachers in public schools who stand on the front lines to train and teach children."

The Resolutions Committee, chaired by John Sullivan, executive director of the Florida Baptist Convention, received more than 50 resolutions from messengers for consideration. Bill Elliff, pastor of First Church, Little Rock, served on the 10-member committee. DALLAS (BP)

SBC motions reflect concern over variety of moral issues

Southern Baptist messengers voted to consider adding a section on the family to their 1963 statement of faith, the Baptist Faith and Message. A total of 35 motions were introduced dealing with topics ranging from moral concerns to ways SBC agencies conduct business.

"There has been a concerted attack upon the family," said Charles Lawson, a messenger from Linthicum Baptist Church in Baltimore, Md. "The very meaning of family has been redefined by those whose agenda it is to include homosexual couples and generalized to include any two (or more) people living together."

Messengers adopted the proposal, which instructs SBC president Tom Elliff to appoint a committee to study the issue and bring an amendment to the 1998 annual meeting in Salt Lake City. If amended, it would be the first time the 1963 statement has been changed.

The convention also acted on a two-part motion introduced by Timothy Wilkins of Providence Baptist Church, Raleigh, N.C.

The motion's first part called on the newly formed North American Mission Board to "conduct a thorough study of homosexuality" and "develop and aggressively promote ministry resources" for churches to use in ministry to homosexuals.

The convention's Committee on Order of Business referred that item to the trustees of the new agency, but Elliff acted on the second part, a call to prayer, adopted by common consent.

"I hope that all of us as messengers to our Southern Baptist Convention will continue to devote time to prayer and the matter of ministry to homosexuals," Elliff told messengers before leading them in prayer.

In another motion related to homosexuality, a motion by Dino Senesi of First Baptist Church, Marengo, La., was referred to the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, instructing it to "communicate this convention's concerns about corporate America's support of homosexual and immoral heterosexual relationships."

Messengers also voted to "request its agencies and auxiliaries to refrain from the use of evolutionary ideology in the distribution of all materials."

The motion, made by Derek Staples, pastor of Lewisport (Ky.) Baptist Church, referred specifically to material printed recently by the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union.

The material in question was printed in

the optional resource kit for *Aware* magazine. It noted that "people have lived in China for more than 1 million years."

"At first glance, this statement may seem harmless to some. It has even been suggested to me that our GA leaders should sift through the plethora of material and use their own discretion as to the right sources for use in missions education," Staples remarked. "From my standpoint, theological fidelity is at stake."

WMU executive director Dellanna O'Brien said in an interview that the auxiliary's staff is "committed to presenting the truth in Scripture. Because of that we have doctrinal readers who read everything we produce. There's always the possibility of something slipping through that might offend." She called the motion "a good reminder to us to keep a watchful eye."

Messengers acted directly on only one other motion, by Debbie Everett of First Baptist Church in Calhoun, La. They approved the motion asking the Annuity Board to reconsider open enrollment in its group health insurance plan.

The majority of motions was referred to various SBC agencies in accordance with bylaws.

Referred to the SBC Executive Committee:

- Request that future conventions not be scheduled on the week immediately following Father's Day.

- Amend the SBC Constitution to provide for messenger representation based on the percentage of a church's contributions to the Cooperative Program.

- Consider the New York City area for a future convention.

- Instruct the SBC Committee on Nominations to apply no guidelines for eligibility for nominations other than the requirements mandated by SBC bylaws.

- Create a giving plan where churches can give money directly to the SBC Executive Committee, which, unless otherwise designated, would be split equally between the SBC and the state convention the church designates.

- Make messenger name tags readable from a distance of 10 feet.

- Require the Resolutions Committee to give a rationale for why it does not recommend a resolution, allow each person who submits a resolution two minutes to defend his or her resolution and allow messengers to vote on whether to hear such resolutions.

- Provide maps of the area surrounding the convention to all messengers beginning in 1998.

- Re-evaluate the existing policy concerning the size of meeting halls and exhibit space.

Referred to the North American Mission Board:

- Set a goal of having 10,000 "trained soldiers of the cross" for Crossover Salt Lake City.

- SBC entities acquire property in developing areas of North America and make it available for planting new churches.

- Instruct SBC agencies and committees to pursue an advertising campaign to reach the nation with the gospel.

- Develop alternative TV programs for children whose parents decline to use Disney programming.

- Reconsider the present NAMB salary structure and present a more reasonable salary scale to the 1998 annual meeting.

Referred to the six SBC seminaries:

- Review accreditation affiliations.

- Develop a strategy to educate ethnic students to be seminary faculty and curriculum writers.

Referred to the Baptist Sunday School Board:

- Include identifying information on writers for the Family Bible Series.

- Provide bookstore discounts to laymen.

Referred to the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission:

- Study how the "not-in-my-backyard" syndrome restricts church expansion.

Referred to all SBC entities:

- Provide no funding for Cooperative Baptist Fellowship ministries and encourage churches which contribute directly to CBF ministries to more fully support the ministries of their convention.

- Oppose a bill to restrict religious liberties now being considered in Israel's Knesset.

Motions determined to be resolutions were:

- Banning partial-birth abortions.
- SBC go on record opposing the killing of babies under any circumstances.

- Condemn "coercive evangelism" and support "the sensitive and loving evangelism" of all people.

- That African Americans be used more in the Pastors' Conference and positions of SBC leadership.

- SBC ask President Bill Clinton to issue an executive order facilitating social ministries by churches.

The following motions were ruled to be resolutions and were determined to be out of order because the deadline for resolutions had passed.

- Boycott the McDonalds Corporation because of its marketing agreement with Disney.

- Oppose persecution of Christians in China.

DALLAS (BP)



arkansas album

Arkansas Baptists were prominent at the Southern Baptist Convention, either on the program like Ben Rowell (top left), pastor of First Church in Rogers, who prayed during a session, or in the less formal setting of the exhibit area (top right), where Jerry Gay, associate pastor of First Church in Camden, and his wife, Barbara, had their photo made. Dennis Corder (left) director of missions for Conway-Perry Association and Bob Ulrey, pastor of First Church in Center Ridge, shopped in the Baptist Book Store while ABSC associate executive director Jimmie Sheffield (bottom left) helped messengers with their credentials. Arkansas Baptist Rex Terry (bottom right, at left), a member of First Church in Fort Smith, was elected vice chairman of the SBC Executive Committee. He is pictured with chairman James Merritt of Snelville, Ga., and secretary Joe Reynolds of Houston.



Presidential address

Elliff urges convention to tackle 'moral battles'

Southern Baptists still face "battles to be won and ground to be taken" in their effort to permeate American culture with the gospel, Southern Baptist Convention president Tom Elliff said during his address to the SBC annual meeting June 17.

The cross of Christ is the battle standard as Southern Baptists continue their spiritual struggle, insisted Elliff, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church in Del City, Okla. But he expressed his dismay at hearing a young pastor tell him, "The battle for the Bible has been won, and...all I have to do is pastor my church."

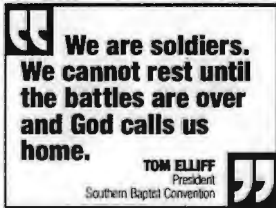
Elliff cited seven moral fields in which he indicated the battle has not yet been won. He said Southern Baptists still face battles:

■ "As long as any Bible publisher thinks that Southern Baptists are more likely to purchase Bibles on the basis of 'political correctness' than the fidelity of the (biblical) text, SBC leaders recently were involved in persuading the International Bible Society not to publish a 'gender accurate' version of the New International Version of the Bible. The Bible society said the new version would more accurately reflect pronouns found in the Bible's original languages but the SBC leaders charged the society with caving in to feminist forces that would defile the Bible's intended message.

■ "As long as any person of any rank would claim affiliation with Southern Baptists while having such a cavalier disregard for the sanctity of life that partial-birth abortion remains as an option." Numerous Southern Baptists have criticized President Clinton's 1996 veto of the partial-birth abortion ban, which would have prevented doctors from performing the controversial late-term abortion procedure.

■ "With Southern Baptist church debt at almost \$2.5 billion, with payments last year in excess of our combined Cooperative Program and missions giving and literally thousands of debt-encumbered churches baptizing few or no new converts," he said, "something is wrong with our concept of faith and stewardship."

■ "As long as any Southern Baptist believes a low view of the Scripture is



more scholarly,...as long as any endorse the ordination of those who do not meet the qualifications of the man of God as spelled out in II Timothy. Diverse interpretations of Scripture and debate over women's ordination have been among key issues that have divided Southern Baptists during the past two decades.

■ "When major entities look at the almost 16 million members of our Southern Baptist churches and question whether we are people of our word, whether we really mean what we say, and whether we are actually willing to sacrifice the enjoyment of their products, performances or media presentations." Supporters of a boycott of Disney have criticized the company for abandoning a pro-family stance.

■ "As long as there are those who believe that Southern Baptist churches and members are not loving unless they condone homosexuality, perform single-sex marriages and endorse fornication in its many forms, we have not communicated the true meaning of God's grace." In recent years, the SBC changed its rules to disallow affiliation by churches that condone or endorse homosexuality, particularly among deacons and pastors.

■ As long as religious persecution of Christians is "often endorsed by the trade and foreign policies of our own nation, not to mention the existence of corporate greed which must be satisfied at whatever the cost."

In light of those battles, Elliff said, "Southern Baptist believers must capture in our hearts this fact: We are soldiers. We cannot rest until the battles are over and God calls us home."

In waging those battles, Southern Baptists fight under the banner of the cross of Christ, Elliff said, noting that banners symbolize important truths. The cross stands for four truths, he added.

First, the cross is "the dividing point for every sinner," he said.

"Each of us is ultimately judged by the position of the cross in our lives," he stressed. Those who reject the cross and Christ's presence in their lives are "perishing people" while those who accept the cross are "being saved," he said.

In addition, the cross is "a disturbing presence to every scorners," Elliff said. "The cross, in fact, is often mocked and ridiculed....It was just that the cross is a disturbing presence — a reminder of mankind's rebellion starkly contrasted against God's righteousness."

The cross also is "a delightful prospect to the saved," he noted. As such, the cross is bittersweet for Christians, reminding them both of the depth of their sin and the power of God to overcome death.

Finally, the cross is "a demanding possession for the soldier," Elliff declared.

"We must come to the cross in such a way that it brings us together, before Him, with two passionate resolves," he said.

One is to "carry the cross," laying "every ambition, aspiration, expectation...on the altar" of sacrifice, he noted.

Another is to "confess the cross" by telling others about the saving power of God in Christ, he added. "Nothing, absolutely nothing, can take the place of personally pointing people to the cross."

"In the midst of all the positive reports about our convention, it remains a tragedy that we do not see multiplied thousands more coming to faith in Christ," Elliff concluded. "There is no substitute for God's plan — saved people pointing lost people to the cross." DALLAS (ABP)

Crossover makes spiritual impact

Pre-convention evangelism efforts lead 3,600 people to Christ

Lynne Jones

North American Mission Board

Crossover Dallas, Southern Baptists' 1997 pre-convention evangelism thrust, was a record-setting experience.

The June 13-15 event included 117 block parties as well as door-to-door evangelism and street evangelism. Crossover, in its ninth year, was planned not only to reach people for Christ but also to demonstrate different types of evangelism.

During the three days of activities, volunteers gave away three tons of chicken and thousands of New Testaments, conducted neighborhood surveys and shared the gospel in church and shopping center parking lots. More than 3,600 people made personal professions of faith in Christ.

"The record can be attributed to the sheer number of volunteers and the number of churches that participated in the event," said Toby Frost of the North American Mission Board. "The simple fact is that if we share the gospel more, more people are saved."

Bill Cox, who has coordinated Crossover block parties since their inception six years ago, said he was impressed with the wide variety of activities that Dallas-area churches used to reach people. "Churches have done a fantastic job of putting together their own programs and activities that reach their community," he noted.

"The Southern Baptist churches out here in Parkerville took different areas and coordinated to make sure all of the town was covered by Crossover," explained Gaylon Riddle, pastor of Parkerville Road Baptist Church in DeSoto, Texas.

With four teams fanning out in a section of DeSoto, about 75 contacts were made among 200 homes, generating 15 to 20 strong prospects for the church.

Two months prior to Crossover, members of Second Baptist Church, Dallas, began preparing for the event. "We needed \$1,600 to host our block party," said pastor Joe Smith. "Our church raised \$4,600."

"There's a low-income motel just down the block from here," said Louise Snyder, a member of Second Baptist and a volunteer at the party. "I used to live there, so I know what goes on — lots of drugs and prostitution. Second Baptist helped me get on my feet and now I have the opportunity to tell the people that they don't have to live this way. They have a choice."

Hot dogs and barbecued chicken drew the interest of two teenage boys who attended the block party sponsored by First Baptist Church, Lancaster, Texas. Both nailed down for certain their acceptance of Christ as Savior after the church's youth minister, Guy Strickland, shared the gospel with them.

"Our church needs this," affirmed Lancaster pastor Mark Fuqua. "This is eye-opening to our people."

'Have a blast'

The smell of a charcoal fire drifted around Mary Klee of First Baptist Church, O'Fallon, Mo., as a dozen other people circled to pray for a block party June 14 at the Willow Bend Apartments in Dallas.

A few minutes later, Kenton Johnson, bivocational pastor of Willow Bend Baptist Church, used the public address system to lead all the people gathered for the party in prayer. He asked that everybody be safe and that they "have a blast here today."

Willow Bend is one of six missions of Oak View Baptist Church in Dallas. The church and five of its missions held block parties. Minister of missions Jim Gerlach said such efforts are part of the church's "Jerusalem Project."

"We try to reach out to our own Jerusalem, which is the area within a mile of our church," he explained, noting that 18,000 people live in that diverse area. Spanish was spoken freely at Willow Bend; another of Oak View's missions is Korean.

Food was only one facet of the block party held by Rock of Faith Baptist Church in Duncanville, Texas. They also provided children's activities, music, health screening and information on employment opportunities as well as the Dallas Fire Department's "fire house" traveling safety demonstration.

"So far, we've won three people to Christ today and that was when we were just setting up," said pastor Hennon Cooper, who started the church in his home 12 years ago. The church started with seven members meeting in Cooper's house and now has about 600.

Bible Way Baptist Church, south of Dallas, staged a community job fair along with the traditional food, games and entertainment. "People in our area need jobs," explained pastor Willie Ray Smith. "They came for jobs and heard about Jesus."

Northlake Baptist Church in Garland distributed 2,000 fliers promoting a block party at a local swimming pool. More than 800 people packed the pool and heard the gospel.

At a block party in Saber Park east of downtown Dallas, Juan Aleajo led two brothers to Christ. "One is 18 and his brother is 17," explained Aleajo, a college student who also is pastor of a mission church. "I just talked to them about what they thought would happen when they died. They didn't know so I shared my testimony with them. The main issue is salvation." DALLAS (BP)



Charity Roller, 17, a member of Dadeville (Mo.) Baptist Church, paints the face of a young girl during a neighborhood block party held as part of "Crossover Dallas." The three-day evangelistic thrust held prior to the June 17-19 SBC annual meeting in Dallas also included door-to-door witnessing and other ministries.

Land urges activism

CLC leader warns Christians are targeted by campaign to exclude them from government

Christians in America are being targeted by a persistent campaign to exclude them from the halls of government and the public square, the president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Christian Life Commission said in the June 18 convention sermon during last week's SBC annual meeting.

Richard Land cautioned that there is a "conscious, concerted, clever attempt by the various ruling elites in this country...to marginalize Christians and to drive them from involvement in the public policy of this nation."

Land said Christians have allowed themselves to believe "this lie" and have consequently left the making of political decisions to their enemies.

"We must tell them we will no longer allow them to censor and suppress us and to keep us from our rightful place in the public square," he declared.

Land cited statistics on divorce, child abuse, violence, pregnancy, abortion and teen suicide to contend that America has declined since 1960. Other problems such as pornography, rape, domestic abuse and abortion further indicate decline, he added. "If America dies," he warned, "she will perish from self-inflicted wounds."

Land said Christians have contributed to problems caused by a generation and a half of "moral relativism" by remaining on the sidelines of civic involvement.

"It's our fault for not being willing to get involved and being part of the process," he remarked.

Land said he grew up attending Baptist churches where folks often said, "We're Southern Baptists. We don't get involved in anything controversial. We just preach the gospel."

"Folks, that's an oxymoron," he retorted. Jesus' command for Christians to be "salt and light" forbids non-involvement, he said. "Jesus intended for us to be controversial."

Decrying the persistent epidemic of abortion in America since 1973, Land compared Americans to the prodigal son in a parable told by Jesus in Luke 15.

"We have taken the inheritance of our unborn children, and we have gone into a far city," Land said. "There we have wasted that inheritance in riotous living, and now we are reduced to feeding among the swine for the huses of life."

"The only hope for America is to come to our senses, as did the prodigal and to shake the filth from ourselves and to

determine to go home...to the Father that is scanning the horizon, waiting for His people to come to (Him)."

Land said the epidemic of abortion is spiritually harmful to Americans. "We are being brutalized, desensitized and paganized by an ever-rising flood of the unborn's blood, as we continue to abort a baby every 20 seconds in the United States," he said.

Since 1973, one out of three pregnancies has been ended by abortion, Land noted. He warned that Americans may have destroyed their future leadership.

"Have we aborted the next Billy Graham? He could be a second-year seminary student if he had been conceived in 1973,"

Land said. "There's a one-in-three chance we aborted the one whom God sent to find the cure for cancer. She could be in her first year of medical school if she had been conceived in 1974."

"For those 31 million American babies, each of them is a child of sacrifice to the pagan gods of social convention, career advancement and material well-being," he said.

Positive change is possible

It is up to Christians who remember the 1950s and before to help younger generations believe that a different country is possible, Land said.

"We have behind us young people who do not know it can be any different," he observed. "They've never experienced America when it was right."

Land criticized Americans who claim that morality cannot be legislated. "When we pass laws making murder and theft and rape and racism illegal, we are not so much trying to impose our morality on murderers, thieves, rapists and racists," Land said. "We are trying to keep them from imposing their immorality on their victims — and that is our obligation and right."

But Land cautioned that legislation must not come from the judiciary, specifically the Supreme Court.

"It's time we gave (the Supreme Court) an amendment to the Constitution that makes it clear that the Constitution is what governs us — not nine judges' opinions about the Constitution."



"Our hope is not in America. America's hope is in Christ," Richard Land told SBC messengers during the 1997 convention sermon. Land is president of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission.

"We don't want the government to sponsor religion," Land said. "We want the government to quit suppressing our right to be involved. We want the government to guarantee a level playing field, then get off the field."

"Does that mean that false religions have the same rights to express their opinions and their beliefs as we do? Sure. Let them come on. I never saw Elijah backing away from a confrontation with the prophets of Baal; he just 'whupped' them good."

Although government cannot bring about revival, revival is essential to a revitalizing of America, Land said. But revival alone will not be enough, he declared.

"It's too late for just a revival," Land insisted. "The revival's got to come first, but the revival and the awakening have got to be applied to our government and to our culture. It's got to be from the inside out and it's got to be a regeneration of our nation through a regeneration of His people that culminates in a reformation that shakes America."

By the grace of God, Americans live in the greatest country that has ever existed, Land said. "But, you know, He's often blessed us in spite of ourselves."

"God knows I love my country. But Christians, our hope is not in America. America's hope is in Christ. Ask not what your country can do for God; ask what God can do for your country — and the answer is, of course, everything."

DALLAS (BP/ABP)

Testimonies affirm world missions

Missionaries, new converts share witness

Lillian Veles is not alone anymore. "When I came to Christ it was like there wasn't just my voice in my head anymore," the new Christian from Colorado said during the June 18 world missions program during last week's Southern Baptist Convention.

"God was with me and there was no longer silence," she said. "There was God and He was big and He was strong and it was the most incredible feeling of my life."

In addition to God, Veles said she has the support of Southern Baptists and the missionary couple, Kelly and Tasha Williams, they sent to start Vanguard Church in Colorado Springs, Colo.

Veles, the first Christian convert in the Williams' new ministry, was one of six people who shared testimonies about the value of Southern Baptist global missions programs. The testimonies, a video, a sermon by Adrian Rogers, pastor at Bellevue Baptist Church in Cordova, Tenn., and a mass choir combined to bring home the simple missionary message: "God is calling all of us."

Deep in a pit of unhealthy living — drinking, drugs and sexual deviance — 32-year-old Veles said she thought God had deserted her when her mother died. Radiance swept across her face, however, as she faced the thousands in the Dallas Convention Center and described the change Jesus and Southern Baptist home missionaries have made in her life.

Atsuko Shiroshima of Japan; Kathy Phillips of Portland, Ore.; Sekou Maiga of Niger Republic; Mike Woody of Fort Worth, Texas; and Kakda Tuon of Cambodia testified of similar changes in their lives because of Southern Baptist missionaries.

Issuing a call to missions involvement, former SBC president Adrian Rogers said, "The gospel of Jesus Christ is simply glorious and gloriously simple. Not only should we be witnesses, we should be evidence."

"God is calling you tonight to lift up the Lord Jesus," Rogers said. "God is calling some of you tonight to release your children to the mission field. God is calling some of you tonight to full-time missions service at home or abroad. God is calling others of you to remain in your present vocation but to go on interims across the sea or to some other city to share Jesus."

"God is calling all of us to go across the street," Rogers continued. "God is calling you tonight. God is calling an army of people to take the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ and you're part of that army."

Rogers invited those who made decisions to seal their commitment by coming to the front of the convention hall. About 100 people streamed forward — young and old, individuals, couples and families.

Steve and Jeanna Anthony of Cincinnati came to say they felt God calling them to home missions in California, a place neither of them had even visited.

"Miraculous things have happened in the last 24 hours," Steve Anthony said. "We just feel God moving us that way. We don't know why, but everything is falling into place."

Worldwide spiritual harvest

Earlier in the session, International Mission Board president Jerry Rankin emphasized that it's harvest time all over the world because God is moving and Southern Baptists are responding.

"All over the world there is the sound of rejoicing as the Lord of the harvest shouts, 'It's harvest time,'" Rankin declared.

Southern Baptist missionaries and their partners overseas baptized 283,000 new believers worldwide in 1996, while 2,367 churches and 23,000 new preaching points were organized, he said. A record 590 new missionaries were commissioned in 1996.

Because Southern Baptists gave to their World Hunger Fund, the International Mission Board was able to plant seeds of hope among refugees in desperate places

like Bosnia, Rwanda and West Africa, Rankin said.

Across the Muslim world, "spiritual seedlings are pushing through the barren soil as multiplying groups of believers abound...in spite of the persecution that accompanies their newfound faith."

But the sowing and planting work of missionaries would be fruitless if not for Southern Baptists at home who water the crop as they pray and give and go, Rankin said.

A total of 1.3 million accesses on the board's Internet prayer page, a record \$93 million international missions offering and almost 16,000 short-term volunteers make the overseas work possible," he said.

"Jesus told us to pray the Lord of the harvest that laborers would be thrust into the harvest," he concluded. "May we come to the cross to give our lives, but may we come with rejoicing. It's harvest time — all over the world!"

During an introduction of the new North American Mission Board, Robert Record told convention messengers, "We can have all the technology money can buy, we can have the most effective structure, but without hearts that break with a passion to reach people for Christ, we have nothing." Record, the nominee to become NAMB's first president, was elected to that position the following day by NAMB trustees.

NAMB officially began operation at the conclusion of last week's SBC annual meeting. A multimedia introduction of the new agency focused on the board's priorities of evangelization, church planting and technology. DALLAS (BP)



International Mission Board president Jerry Rankin told SBC messengers it is harvest time all over the world as God moves and Southern Baptists respond.

'Outpouring of the Spirit'

Pastors' Conference speakers issue call for spiritual renewal

Mark Kelly

International Mission Board

Pursuing the theme, "The Outpouring of the Holy Spirit," Southern Baptist pastors convened their annual two-day conference June 15-16 at the Dallas Convention Center.

Eighteen speakers confronted the pastors with the conditions necessary for God to move in power among the 40,000-plus churches of the Southern Baptist Convention.

If Southern Baptists are going to see God move in power, they must give up religious traditions and the pains of the past that stand in the way, said Claude Thomas, senior pastor of First Baptist Church, Euless, Texas. Thomas was elected Pastors' Conference president, succeeding Ronnie Floyd, pastor of First Church, Springdale.

"If, in God's sovereignty, He does desire to do something beyond that which is normally done, we want to be in a position where we can cooperate with what He wants to do," Thomas said. "While we can't give up the foundations of our faith or our allegiance to the Word of God, we must give up anything that would imprison us in past experiences and prevent us from progressing with God."

Bruce Perkins, senior pastor of Memorial Baptist Church, Grapevine, Texas, said too many pastors have lost touch with God and cannot lead their congregations to revival.

Citing personal experience, Perkins said Memorial Baptist Church experienced rapid growth, slow growth and then decline because "I lost the influence of God in my life.... The programs were in place, but the passion was not there."

Perkins said the church began to grow again only after he realized the church needed a new pastor — him — surrendered to God.

"The best thing you could do is resign this weekend — not to your church, but to God," Perkins told the pastors.

Seek 'fresh touch from God'

Stan Coffey, senior pastor of San Jacinto Baptist Church, Amarillo, Texas, urged the pastors to seek a "fresh touch from God" that will put the pastor on his knees in prayer, on his face in worship and on his feet in service.

"It is on your knees that you will get your victory," Coffey said. "God brings us down to lift us up."



U.S. Congressman J.C. Watts of Oklahoma was among featured speakers during last week's SBC Pastors' Conference.

Adrian Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Cordova, Tenn., said the Spirit of God is more a burden than a blessing to the Christian who does not understand the power of the Holy Spirit in his life.

"We are in a battle and we are not going to win apart from the Spirit-filled life," Rogers said. "We are to be redeeming the time, for the day is evil. The days are too short; the gospel is too wonderful for living in carnality."

If revival is going to come to Southern Baptist churches, pastors must have church members who will commit themselves to praying for their pastor, said John Maxwell, president of INJOY ministry of San Diego, Calif.

"The most valuable player in the church is the man or woman who will stand in the gap for a pastor and ask God to give that pastor an anointing of the Holy Spirit until revival breaks out in that church," Maxwell said.

Citing a survey revealing that 70 percent of pastors have no one they consider a close friend, he challenged the pastors to return home and seek out church members who would support them in prayer.

"The only hope we have for revival in our churches is to raise up prayer partners who can make a difference," he declared. "If we are going to have revival, we are

going to have to mobilize our people to come alongside and pray with us and for us, because only together can we do what God want us to do in our churches and in our communities."

Keith Thomas, senior pastor of First Baptist Church, West Palm Beach, Fla., said a powerful movement of God's Spirit will not come as long as churches cling to routines of traditional worship.

"If there's going to be an outpouring of the Holy Spirit, God must be welcomed and free to work," he asserted. "Business as usual will not work."

Thomas voiced concern that many Christians in Southern Baptist churches "believe the right things" but have "lost a passion for God."

James Merritt, senior pastor of First Baptist Church, Snellville, Ga., said bold biblical preaching will be required if America is to be turned back from destruction.

"Preach the word," he urged. "If you preach this book, you will not only meet every felt need there is, you will uncover needs people don't even know they have."

Ed Young, senior pastor of Second Baptist Church, Houston, highlighted the importance of balancing correct doctrine with compassion and witness if a congregation is to make an impact on its community.

A pastor may faithfully preach a biblical message, but the church will be ineffective if members are "barricaded in the church" or bound by a "cold formalism," he said, adding that an effective church must combine biblical doctrine with compassion for the lost and skill in sharing the gospel.

O.S. Hawkins, senior pastor of First Baptist Church, Dallas, said in their scramble to create an inoffensive setting where "seekers" can be comfortable, many churches have offended the "Seeker" who calls a lost world to repent of its sins.

Churches that compromise the gospel for the sake of cultural relevance trade away "God's standard of excellence" for a "sorry substitute," Hawkins declared. He warned pastors against substituting a "cheap imitation" for the plain gospel message of sin and salvation.

"God has established a standard of excellence for His church," Hawkins noted, "but as we approach the new millennium, many people are buying into a new-fangled, market-driven public relations approach that in many ways is foreign to the gospel."

DALLAS (BP)

Women offered choice of two pre-SBC events

A first-ever-for-ladies-only session of the Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference attracted an estimated 3,000 pastors' wives and "other female Christian leaders" June 16.

Meanwhile, across the expansive Dallas Convention Center, fewer than 500 women gathered to conduct business of Woman's Missionary Union, the convention's 109-year-old missions auxiliary.

While planners of both meetings downplayed competition between the two events, the choice was symbolic of changes affecting the SBC.

"We just sensed this year a real need for pastors' wives to have some speakers to speak to their needs," said Jeana Floyd, planner of the new Monday meeting for women.

Asked if she was concerned that the session might appear to compete with the WMU annual meeting, Floyd, wife of Pastors' Conference president Ronnie Floyd, said: "No. I didn't even know they were meeting at that time."

WMU, which for decades has met on the two days prior to the annual convention, has traditionally drawn 3,000 or more women to receive reports, hear missionary testimonies and conduct business. An estimated 1,000 registered for this year's two-day WMU meeting.

WMU leaders, including executive director Dellanna O'Brien, said the two meetings were not competitive. Few of the women participating in the Pastors' Conference session would have attended WMU otherwise, they said. Most WMU leaders are not pastors' wives, for whom the other session was intended.

Instead, they said, the decline in WMU attendance in recent years mirrors the decline in SBC attendance, which this year was the lowest in more than 20 years.

The pastors' wives, who met during one of five Pastors' Conference sessions, sang praise music and were advised on deepening their spiritual lives and aiding their husbands' ministries.

WMU has traditionally been a service-oriented group—doing hands-on mission work, teaching missions in local churches and supporting SBC missions financially. DALLAS (ABP)

WMU members encouraged to serve 'beyond the walls'

Southern Baptists not only are going "beyond the walls," they are breaking them down, members of Woman's Missionary Union were told during their annual meeting.

Speakers addressed the theme, "Beyond the Walls," during the 109th annual session of Woman's Missionary Union June 15-16. Approximately 1,000 women registered for the two-day meeting at the Dallas Convention Center.

Though WMU members and guests learned ways Southern Baptists are breaking down barriers, they also heard of many walls that still must be broken down.

One of those walls is racism, WMU executive director Dellanna O'Brien said during her annual report. "Racism still thrives in our land. People of color still experience discrimination and mistreatment.

"I challenge you, our total membership, to use your influence to make a difference in your community as we focus our attention on cultural diversity," she said, referring to WMU's fourth annual Project HELP emphasis.

International Mission Board president Jerry Rankin and his wife, Bobbye, told participants that Southern Baptist missionaries are reaching beyond the walls of communist oppression, economic instability and misconceptions about Christianity to share the gospel of Christ worldwide.

The Rankins credited the "mobilized" prayer support of WMU members and other Southern Baptists for the "opening of doors" to new sports and medical ministries in traditionally hard-to-reach

countries such as North Korea and Cuba.

Baptist World Alliance general secretary Denton Lotz emphasized that walls must be broken down for people to come to know Christ. Among those walls, he said, are racism, poverty, injustice, hostility and tribalism.

"May God give each of us the courage, wisdom and spirit to break down these walls," Lotz urged.

WMU president Wanda Lee of Columbus, Ga., pledged WMU's continued commitment to missions.

"Woman's Missionary Union is committed to our missionaries and to telling their stories," she said. "May their example of loving service in turn challenge us at home to move beyond the walls of indifference to a more committed lifestyle of love in action."

During a meeting of WMU's executive board June 14, the missions support group also signed an agreement with Habitat for Humanity to provide volunteers and resources for the charity.

The agreement with Habitat for Humanity calls for WMU to recruit up to 320 volunteers and raise \$258,000 in money and/or materials to build eight Habitat houses in 1998 and 1999.

WMU's Volunteer Connection would process volunteers for the projects and the WMU Foundation would handle financial contributions for the houses through the WMU Vision Fund.

Millard Fuller, executive director for Habitat, called the agreement "historic" because it was the first such agreement that Habitat has made with a women's organization. DALLAS (BP)

First pastors' wives event highlights renewal

We are here today asking God to fill and renew us, to minister to our wounded hearts and heal our broken hearts," said Jeana Floyd as she convened the first pastors' wives session to be held in conjunction with the annual Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference.

Floyd organized the meeting with her husband, Ronnie Floyd, president of the Pastors' Conference. They planned the meeting and invited speakers Beth Moore, Teresa Brown, Barbara O'Chester and Nancy Leigh DeMoss, as well as soloists Diane Machen and Michelle Gage.

All the speakers and musicians shared their personal stories of going through troubled times and how God had restored them.

"This is the worst of times but also the best of times," said Moore, founder of Living Proof Inc., and author of a popular women's Bible study and videotape series, "A Woman's Heart: God's Dwelling Place," published by the Baptist Sunday School Board.

"I believe God is up to something huge today in the heavens," said Moore, who this past year suffered the loss of an adopted son whose birth mother reclaimed him and the critical illness of her mother, for whom she is primary caregiver.

"The goal of life is not the absence of pain," Moore said. "The goal of life is the presence of God's glory in your life, and with God's glory comes His goodness."

Draper offers SBC 'deep apology' for trouble with ordering system

Be patient with us and pray for us, the president of the Baptist Sunday School Board urged messengers during last week's Southern Baptist Convention.

During the BSSB report to the convention, Draper offered a "deep apology" to churches and other customers who have had trouble with the board's new ordering and distribution system.

"Our goal is to provide you with the best service possible, but that's not what you've been receiving for the past several months," Draper noted. "We haven't been able to give you the quality we anticipate, but we believe we'll be able to do that again."

During the transition period, Draper said the BSSB is taking several steps to help alleviate the problem: employment of 40 new customer service representatives; installation of additional phone and fax lines; enabling customers later this summer to place orders on the Internet or with a touch-tone telephone; making adjustments to shipping and handling charges; simplifying the customer discounts policy; and clarifying billing statements.

"In many ways, this has been a very difficult year for us, but it has been very exciting," Draper acknowledged. "This has been one of the darkest nightmares you can imagine at the board.... We are working very diligently, and I think you'll be very pleased as we move forward."

Draper also told messengers the BSSB

plans to propose changing its name through a three-step approval process: BSSB trustees in September; Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee in February 1998; and finally from messengers to the 1998 SBC annual meeting in Salt Lake City.

Explaining the need for a more descriptive name, Draper told messengers the BSSB was founded in 1891 when producing Sunday School literature was its only assignment. By contrast, the board today also produces a variety of products and services related to music, discipleship, family and student ministries, vocational ministry, health issues, book publishing and leadership development.

Under the SBC restructuring plan currently being implemented, the BSSB also has received convention assignments for stewardship promotion, Christian schools and home schooling.

Draper also noted two key facilities operated by the BSSB are celebrating anniversaries. Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center is 90 years old and Gloriaeta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center is 45 years old.

Messengers heard Draper report on Vacation Bible School statistics from 1996. He noted that approximately 28,000 churches and more than 3.1 million pupils enrolled in VBS programs in Southern Baptist congregations, with 53,810 reported conversions. DALLAS (BP)

Powell announces annuity milestone

The Southern Baptist Annuity Board has just passed a key financial milestone, according to board president Paul W. Powell.

"Last week, we crossed the \$6 billion mark in assets," said Powell, who spoke to messengers during last week's annual meeting. "We're off to another good year."

During what will likely be his last report to an SBC annual meeting, Powell told messengers he hopes the search committee for his successor will complete its task by the end of the year.

"I want you to know this is entirely my decision (to retire)," Powell said. "It's been a joy to serve you. So I leave with a sense of satisfaction and with a sense of deep appreciation. It's been a good watch for me, and I thank you for the opportunity to serve you and to serve our convention."

Powell reported that the Annuity Board has begun offering more flexibility and variety for its participants. Since Jan. 1, clients have been offered 13 investment

options instead of the previous four.

"We have had excellent earnings this year," Powell said, adding some Annuity Board investment options have posted as much as 19.4 percent earnings so far in 1997. He noted previous years' maximum earnings of 19.8 percent in 1996 and 34 percent in 1995.

Powell urged messengers to remember the plight of some older ministers and their widows. "We mail checks to 28,000 people every month, and over 10,000 of them receive \$200 or less. We're not always sure how much they have in addition to that...but we have to assume if they're only receiving \$200...that they are living at a near-poverty level."

The Annuity Board's Adopt-an-Annuity program allows needy retired ministers and widows to receive a \$50 per month supplement. Currently, the board sends supplements to 2,124 retirees. Powell said he hopes that number will increase to 3,000 by the end of 1997.

CLC's Land lauds sanctity of life, religious liberty

Southern Baptists must uphold morality and righteousness in the United States, Richard Land, president of the Christian Life Commission, said in his June 17 report to the 1997 Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting.

Land quoted from the Old Testament Book of Ezekiel, where God was searching for a man to stand in the gap between Himself and a nation.

"One of the...differences between Judah and the United States of America is God has found a people who want to stand in the gap—and those people are Southern Baptists," Land said.

The CLC president said the organization has focused on the sanctity of human life in the past year and will continue to do so. He pointed out that a baby is killed every 20 seconds in the United States and that the country's preoccupation with death extends from the nursery to the nursing home.

"We are in a struggle to the death for the soul of this culture and the enemy's poster boy is Dr. Jack Kevorkian," Land said. "We are going to defend the helpless...Every human life is of inestimable value to God. We're going to stand for God-given life."

He said the CLC will oppose the cloning of human beings and will strive to make it illegal around the world as "a crime against the human race."

The CLC president also addressed the issue of persecution. "It will not stop unless the Christians of America insist that it stop and we are going to insist that it stop."

Land encouraged messengers to convey to legislators their support of the religious liberty amendment sponsored by Rep. Ernest Istook, R-Okla.

"This amendment will tell the Supreme Court to sit down, shut up and butt out," Land said.

He also encouraged messengers to boycott the Walt Disney Company.

Concerning the 1996 resolution challenging Disney's moral drift, Land said, "They don't think that Southern Baptists are significant."

"I suspect that tomorrow when you vote to refrain from giving of your resources to any of Disney's enterprises...Disney is going to find out just how many regiments and just how many divisions of godly people Southern Baptists have." DALLAS (BP)

Seminary leaders sign covenant with SBC

With a pledge to keep their institutions "anchored in the Book" and "lashed to the cross," the presidents of Southern Baptists' six seminaries signed a covenant with the convention as part of their June 17 report during the SBC annual meeting in Dallas.

Titled "One Faith, One Task, One Sacred Trust," the document was presented by Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary president Ken Hemphill in the absence of Al Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Mohler, the author of the document and president of the Council of Seminary Presidents, had been hospitalized in Louisville, Ky., suffering from blood poisoning.

The five presidents present for the report took turns signing the document while sitting in the chair of Southwestern Seminary founder B.H. Carroll whom Hemphill said admonished his successor, L.R. Scarborough, "to keep the seminary lashed to the cross." Mohler signed the document prior to the report.

Hemphill affirmed the presidents' commitment to keep the seminaries "anchored in the Book, lashed to the cross, responsive to the churches and committed to world evangelization."

Southern Baptist Convention president Tom Elliff said the covenant represented the fulfillment of a personal dream. After visiting the seminaries in the fall of 1996, Elliff approached Mohler with the idea of a covenant between the seminaries and Southern Baptists.

'Biblical fidelity'

The covenant, which pledges to uphold Baptist doctrines, states: "Let the churches in the Southern Baptist Convention know that our seminaries are committed to theological integrity and biblical fidelity." It declares that the seminaries will teach "the authority, inspiration, inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible."

The seminary presidents also described their individual calls to ministry and introduced students from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds who shared testimonies of God's call on their lives.

Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary president Bill Crews told of the fulfillment of his mother's prayer as she dedicated his life to God while he was still in her womb.

Crews introduced Fermin Whittaker, executive director of the California Southern Baptist Convention and a Golden Gate doctoral graduate. Whittaker thanked Southern Baptists for the missionary they sent to Panama who shared the gospel



Ken Hemphill (left), president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, addresses SBC messengers before he and other SBC seminary presidents signed a covenant with the denomination. Other presidents (left to right) are: Paige Patterson, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary; Mark Coppenger, Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary; Chuck Kelley Jr., New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary; and Bill Crews, Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary. Al Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, had been hospitalized and did not attend the SBC.

message with him. "God didn't ask me for a visa or passport or require me to speak English correctly," Whittaker said, "but for this young sinful heart to repent and receive Jesus Christ."

Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary president Mark Coppenger told of the prayer his parents offered in dedicating him to the Lord as a newborn. When as an adult he sensed God's call to ministry, Coppenger said he had believed "God would pursue me and never let me rest until I said, 'Yes.'"

Jedidiah Blake, a native of the West Indies and a master of divinity student at Midwestern, shared how God had assured him of his strength for the task in preparing for ministry. "My prayer life, personal tragedy and a godly wife have helped to clarify that call," he added.

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary president Chuck Kelley noted that when a crisis in his family led to doubts about fulfilling his call, he learned that "the call of God is not based on the circumstances of our lives," but on God's purpose and plan.

New Orleans Seminary student David Fleming told of the heartbreak he and his wife experienced "over all we thought we were leaving behind" to come to seminary. Instead, he said, he experienced "the reality of a holy God" and has been "challenged in the classroom and on the field to love Him and trust Him more than anything in my life."

Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary president Paige Patterson struggled as a youngster with conviction

about the sin in his life while "every evangelist who came to our church had a special mission to convert the son of the pastor." When he accepted Christ, Patterson recalled, "God spoke with a clarity I could never, ever forget."

Southeastern Seminary student Jose Rondon of Venezuela told of leaving behind expectations of a professional baseball career to prepare for the ministry. "Without any kind of shame or doubt or frustration, I am satisfied with Jesus Christ," Rondon said. "He has given me every single thing I've been needing in my life and I give Him glory and honor."

While headed toward a career as an Air Force pilot, Southern Seminary student Shawn Merithew realized God had other plans for his life, calling him to the ministry. After spending six months in mission service overseas, Merithew sold his car to finance the first semester's tuition and hitched a ride to the seminary. He said he wants "nothing more than to be able to stand behind a pulpit and share the Word of God with people in need."

Hemphill told of responding to a call to salvation as a 9-year-old in the small North Carolina church where his father was pastor. He said God used his wife's boldness to lead him to respond to God's call to the ministry.

Chris Davis of Springfield, Mo., told of laying aside his planned career in law and his desire to become successful and wealthy to answer God's call to ministry, adding that "the Lord has prepared me and trained me and blessed me in ways I could never imagine." DALLAS (BP)



Hundreds of Southern Baptist young people helped introduce "YouthLink 2000," a teen-focused evangelism event, during a report to Southern Baptist messengers.

Teenagers storm SBC stage to promote YouthLink 2000

They stormed the stage dressed in white T-shirts and baseball caps. They filled the front of the convention hall and sang "I believe in Jesus."

They were several hundred Southern Baptist youth and they came to the 1997 Southern Baptist annual meeting June 17 to present YouthLink 2000, an SBC-wide initiative to evangelize the age group before the end of the millennium.

Amid pyrotechnics and energetic music, co-chairmen of YouthLink 2000, Dean Finley and Richard Ross, said the event is a "once-in-a-thousand-years" party for teenagers and students to gather and welcome the new millennium with hope.

According to Finley and Ross, YouthLink is a coordinated effort of the International Mission Board, Baptist Sunday School Board, Woman's Missionary Union and the newly organized North American Mission Board. Its goal is to enrich the youth of America as they congregate in Anaheim, Calif.; Atlanta; Denver; Houston; Philadelphia; St. Louis and Tampa, Fla., Dec. 29-31, 1999.

"We expect over 150,000 youth to attend. We expect over 1,500 to accept Jesus Christ as their Savior," Ross proclaimed to the SBC audience. "We expect another 1,500 to respond to pastoral and ministry calls and we expect yet another 1,000 to answer the call to become missionaries."

"The seven cities will be connected by satellite and ground link," Finley explained, "so whatever event takes place in one city will take place in every city. The days will

be filled with opportunities for worship, theme-related Bible study, ministry and interactive booths."

Ross added, "This event will not only serve as a catalyst to help Christians once again turn the world upside down, but it will also provide these youth with an accurate vision of what the entire scope of Baptist life is all about."

Registration for YouthLink 2000 officially began with the presentation.

In the exhibit hall, the first three registrants were all from the state of Missouri. Thirteen-year-old Mandy Wade of First Baptist Church, Rolla, registered, along with her father, Bruce Wade, minister of youth who signed up 40 youth from the church.

Jeff Lagsdon from Salem Baptist Church in Florissant registered 30 youth and Bob Curtis of Ballwin Baptist Church signed up 100.

The co-chairmen announced that the event will accept reservations at its toll-free phone number, 1-888-YOUTHINK, and also will provide updated information at its Internet web page at <http://www.youthlink2000.org>.

"Many of you in this convention hall remember where you were when Kennedy was assassinated. Many more remember where you were when the Challenger space shuttle exploded. Our youth will remember where they were and what they were doing when 1999 becomes the year 2000," Finley said. "YouthLink 2000 is the coolest way to spend the turn of the century." DALLAS (BP)

Palau: Preaching of the cross needed to rescue nation

Without preaching about the cross of Jesus Christ, America is destined for ruin, international evangelist Luis Palau warned listeners in the final sermon of the 1997 Southern Baptist Convention.

The message of God's love, as expressed by the life and sacrifice of His son, Jesus, has to be fresh for each generation, he said.

Highlighting the convention's "To the Cross" theme, Palau said he wanted to make two points: the cross as it applies to the United States and as it applies to "you and me as servants of God, as followers of Christ, as leaders of the church."

America is what it is because of the preaching of the cross of Jesus Christ, Palau said. But thousands of Americans have two wrong concepts: That God automatically is in all of us and that God is dead.

"I feel we have a chore before us," Palau said. "We have to say to this new generation of Americans, 'Look, God is not dead. He's alive! But He doesn't live in each one of us unless we repent and receive Jesus Christ.'"

"No matter how glorious the past, every generation needs to be re-evangelized," Palau emphasized. "Every generation...needs to be converted."

Palau explained how society changes: Thousands of spiritual conversions result in moral and ethical changes that result in stronger families. Then comes justice followed by peace and freedom, out of which comes economic success that leads to a flourishing creativity. Then structures and institutions begin to change.

"In America we need a fresh touch of God," Palau said. "If we do not preach the cross in America, America will be lost. In two generations we could have a dictatorship."

"But in this generation," Palau said, "if we are ashamed of Jesus Christ, this nation will not be a Christian nation, and that's all there is to it."

"It's either back to the Bible or back to the jungle," he continued.

"Let's share the resurrected Christ, without any fear and without any holding back or else the jungle will take over and it will never be America the same and our children will suffer," he said. DALLAS (BP)

Diverse culture groups gather for fellowship at SBC

Southern Baptists of diverse languages and cultures met for fellowship in conjunction with the SBC annual meeting.

About 300 attended the African American Fellowship June 16. Outgoing president E.W. McCall Jr. advised members and guests to take a wait-and-see stance about changes in the Southern Baptist Convention. McCall addressed structural change in the convention and a rumble of African American frustration about the change process.

McCall acknowledged "some brothers have been furious over NAMB structure. Some have been right to be furious," McCall continued. He was referring to the North American Mission Board being created from a merger of the Home Mission Board, Brotherhood Commission and Radio and Television Commission. "We were not asked one question during the restructuring process about how to help the African American community and some of us were furious."

"I tell you, we need to consider carefully," McCall said. "We must become proactive. We must be willing to wait and see what's going on. We must work with

whatever paradigm is in place."

At the 10th annual meeting of the National Southern Baptist Hispanic Fellowship, its leaders noted the organization is moving its focus to integrating Hispanics into the missions work of state conventions and local associations.

The fellowship, which drew almost 200 participants, incorporated in 1996. It serves 21 state Hispanic fellowships, encompassing 3,800 Hispanic churches with nearly 500,000 members.

Recommendations approved during business June 14 included accepting the invitation of the Southern Baptist Hispanic Fellowship of Greater Orlando (Fla.) to temporarily adopt their location as headquarters for the national fellowship and agreeing to establish an Hispanic newspaper for distribution among Hispanic Southern Baptist churches.

About 300 Korean-speaking pastors and laypeople, 50 English-speaking Koreans and about 30 who relate to the Japanese culture met in addition to the African-Americans and Hispanics.

Gatherings of the specific culture groups offer fellowship, training and busi-

ness sessions, said W. David Terry, director of the ethnic missiological department of the Home Mission Board's language church extension division.

"It's been exciting to see what God is doing among them as they assume leadership, reach out to their people group and outside their people group," Terry said. "Their baptism ratio is one out of 12 as opposed to one out of 40 for the SBC as a whole. They're starting 500-plus new congregations a year — 552 in 1996."

Cultural celebration

Colorful flags of dozens of countries bobbing up and down in a sea of faces representing many ethnic groups marked the "Celebrating Ethnic Southern Baptists" rally and parade held June 15 in Dallas.

An estimated 800 people from at least 50 different language groups met at First Baptist Church, Dallas, to proclaim their solidarity and to thank the SBC for facilitating what organizer Russell Begaye called the largest denominational inclusion of ethnics in the world. Begaye directs the HMB language church extension division.

The SBC's 22 culturally specific fellowships include Hispanic, with more than 3,000 congregations; African-American, 2,300 congregations; Korean, 800 congregations; deaf congregations, 800; and American Indian congregations, 600.

"Because of us, Southern Baptists have become the most ethnically diverse denomination in the world," said Begaye, an American Indian. "We chose to be Southern Baptists."

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MINISTRY

Ministers' wives event draws 800.

On-site counseling and two hours of encouragement were the primary features of the 1997 Southern Baptist Ministers' Wives Conference held during last week's Southern Baptist Convention.

With the theme, "Singing in the Rain," the 42nd annual luncheon meeting for all wives of ministers—pastors, staff members, chaplains, missionaries and denomina-

tional workers—focused on "the minister's wife's most longed-for need: encouragement," explained conference president Dolores Taylor.

A sell-out audience of 800 women heard speakers Dixie Lusher of Berea, Ky., and Dennis Swanberg of Fort Worth, Texas.

Swanburg, who bills himself as the "minister of encouragement," delivered a variety of humorous impersonations.

"Too many of y'all in ministry are too serious," he said. "You need to loosen up a little bit. We need to encourage each other."

A first-time feature of the conference was on-site "individual counsel for women who may be experiencing difficulty or distress in their lives," Taylor remarked. Counseling was provided by eight staff members of LeaderCare, part of the Baptist Sunday School Board's pastor-staff leadership department.

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DOMs delay organization's restructuring vote until '98

The Southern Baptist Conference of Associational Directors of Missions asked a study committee appointed last year to further refine a proposal that would change the organization's name and broaden its mission to meet changing ministry needs into the 21st century.

Members discussed the first draft of the committee proposal with the intention of presenting the report for final approval at their 1998 meeting in Salt Lake City.

After some participants expressed concern about a final vote being taken in 1998 when attendance might be lower due to travel distances, a motion was adopted to refer the proposal back to the committee for further revisions.

Russell Bennett, DOM for Long Run Baptist Association in Louisville, Ky., suggested that the committee make further changes, mail the revised proposal to members, present the proposal for a first reading in Salt Lake City in 1998 and hold a final vote at the 1999 meeting in Atlanta.

The proposal called for the group to change its name to the National Conference of Southern Baptist Associational Staff, allowing any full-time associational employees to join. The plan also called for the conference to broaden its scope to provide more training opportunities for members throughout the year.

The proposal draft emphasizes "it is the responsibility of this organization to orient

and train associational staff," explained conference president Larry Rose, director of missions for Tarrant Baptist Association in Fort Worth, Texas.


More than 400 people attended the meeting, Rose said, including more than

200 DOMs, their families and other guests.


The program also featured William M. Pinson Jr., executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, who noted that "commitment to Baptist polity...is essential. A church relates directly to the association, directly to the state convention and directly to any other Baptist entity. The churches do not need to go through any of these to the other; nor do any of these need to go through the other to the churches."

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Arkansas pages help keep convention moving

While messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention were voting, meeting and worshipping, at least two Arkansas Baptists were working from sunup to well past sundown to keep the convention rolling smoothly.

Nigel Bearden, a member of First Church in Mansfield, and Shad Black, a member of First Church in Sherwood, were two of 22 pages chosen to serve at the 1997 SBC. Sixteen were male, six were female Acteans members.

"We worked registration, helped in the news room with the press and we helped at the microphone monitors with the different motions and resolutions," explained Bearden, 18.

Both of the young men said the hardest part of serving as pages was the amount of time involved. Black, 16, said a page's day "starts at 5:30 in the morning and ends at 10 or 11 when we get to go home - to the Holiday Inn Select."

Despite the long hours and hard work, the two said many teens who have been active in the Brotherhood Commission's Challengers activities applied for the job.

The two were recommended by their pastors and had to fill



SBC pages Shad Black (left) of First Church in Sherwood and Nigel Bearden of First Church in Mansfield stuffed mailboxes for press as part of their duties at the Southern Baptist Convention.

out an application before being selected to serve by state Brotherhood leaders and national Brotherhood personnel. In addition to their work at their churches, both Black and Bearden have distinguished themselves through their service at Royal Ambassador camps in Arkansas.

They also considered the hard work "an honor," said Black. "We get to come up here and work and be a part of the convention."

"Most of us are working microphones and so unless we're doing some order of business we're usually sitting there and that gives us a chance to listen," he said. "It gets you updated on what's going on in the Southern Baptist Convention."

While they were often seen helping with convention business, pages also were required to keep alert for convention security.

"When we first got here," said Bearden, "we had an orientation with (SBC registration secretary) Dr. Lee Porter and he told us to look carefully at anything directed to the convention president or anything directed to the Executive Committee due to bombs."

"If you aren't a part of what's going on, then you don't realize that stuff can happen like that," Black added.



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CHURCH MUSIC

Musicians gain encouragement for addressing changing needs

Equipping church musicians to meet changing needs in changing times was the focus of sessions during the June 15-16 Southern Baptist Church Music Conference at First Baptist Church, Richardson, Texas.

During seminars for church, educational and denominational staff, musicians discussed how to develop healthy working relationships, update church music curriculum in colleges and seminaries and adjust to state and national restructuring.

As many state conventions are restructuring, one impact on church musicians is how to access resources for worship, said Dan Johnson of the Baptist Sunday School

Board's music ministries department. Johnson led a seminar on "Restructuring the Church Music Department."

In a seminar to help local church musicians deal with relationships, conflict and stress, Glenn Booth, coordinator of the Ministries Counseling Center for the Baptist General Convention of Texas, said church staff relationships can be fragile.

"When you have to get down to the bottom line of staff relationships, you learn quickly you have to do things together," Booth said. "It has nothing to do with your call, your ability or your skills; it has to do with persons relating to other persons."

Charlie Fuller, acting chairman of Ouachita Baptist University's department of church music, called the conference "a wonderful time of inspiring music and of learning about new and innovative methods of ministry through music."

New officers include president-elect Rob Hewell, director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention church music ministries department.

MK prayer calendar

Missionary kids attending college in Arkansas with birthdays in July:

■ July 1: Jennie Johnson, OBU Box 3984, Arkadelphia, AR 71998-0001; Japan.

■ July 2: Jay Gaunt, OBU Box 3383; Dominican Republic.

■ July 4: Matt Litton, OBU Box 3336; Brazil.

■ July 4: Julie Packwood, OBU Box 3911; Ecuador.

■ July 13: Jason Greer, OBU Box 4228; Liberia.

■ July 13: Brent West, OBU Box 4505; Taiwan.

■ July 15: Andi Ater, OBU Box 4575; Estonia.

■ July 17: Jeff Verlander, OBU Box 3918; Senegal.

■ July 21: Joanne Baillio, OBU Box 4027; Honduras.

■ July 27: Nathan Stefanini, OBU Box 4078; Belize.

■ July 29: Josh Packwood, OBU Box 4326; Ecuador.

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Dickerson offers campus ministers 'top six' list

Arkansas campus minister Arless Dickerson offered fellow Southern Baptist campus ministers from across the nation "Six Things We've Got to Do" in campus ministry. He shared his comments during the 20th annual meeting of the Association of Southern Baptist Campus Ministers, held June 13-15 on the campus of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Dickerson, who was elected the ASBCM's vice president for continuing

education, is director of the Baptist Student Union at Arkansas State University in Jonesboro. He told participants that "there are six things we've got to do to have successful campus ministries today." The list, "in no particular order," he noted, includes:

■ "Work with churches to help them be successful. We have the responsibility to be the initiator," he said. "We must go to the churches and say, 'Here are ways we can work together.' We must communi-

cate better and we must do a better job of listening. One of the mistakes we make is that we talk to university ministers and assume they are talking to the pastors."

■ Use music and drama to reach students. "Every generation has a key to that generation," Dickerson noted. "Right now that is music and drama. However," he added, "as much as I believe music and drama is a vital part of this generation, we cannot let music and drama be the end—we cannot have concert Christianity."

■ "Speak to students' practical needs in their own language." Students don't attend BSU ministries "out of guilt anymore," he said. "We need to tell them, 'We can make you a better leader' or 'We can help you with your relationships' and provide them the resources to do that."

■ Establish a freshman ministry. "The best idea in collegiate ministry is a specialized ministry to freshman," he emphasized, noting that parent ministries or seminars also can be held in conjunction with freshman ministries.

■ Improve your image. "The perception of your ministry is more important than ever in the community, with the administration, with churches and in the denomination," Dickerson said. "When they see what you're doing, they will support you. It is not enough to do a good job; they need to know what you are doing."

■ Keep fund-raising in mind. "Money is shrinking," he said. "What happens? The rich will get richer and the poor will get poorer. More and more, people want to direct their money. Make sure they know you're there."

In raising support for BSUs, however, "do what is best for overall student ministries in your state, not just your ministry," he said.

"We are doing the best job, per staff member, per dollar in reaching campuses. Let's tell that story."

Participants also heard Ted Cabal, assistant professor of philosophy of religion at Southwestern, identify Christianity's main adversaries in the academic arena as evolutionary naturalism and the postmodernism/New Age movement tandem.

His seminar, "Understanding the Times," established the importance of knowing the enemy, explained the tenets and relationship of evolutionary naturalism and the postmodernism/New Age movement and gave an outline of how campus ministers could prepare themselves and their students to answer the challenges in academic settings.

Dealing with popular philosophies begins with the realization that Christians possess "the non-negotiable essential, the power of God's Word," he said.

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EDUCATION

Colleges form independent association

Members of the Association of Southern Baptist Colleges and Schools (ASBCS) met in annual session June 8-10 for the first time as an independent organization, ending a 48-year partnership with the Southern Baptist Education Commission which closed Dec. 31, 1996.

Members approved an annual budget, accepted the resignation of their executive director, appointed an interim director and approved revised qualifications for membership.

Approximately 60 presidents and chief academic officers took steps to chart a new course for the organization whose 68 member institutions include Southern Baptist-related seminaries, colleges, universities, Bible colleges and high school academies.

Since 1948 when it was founded, ASBCS had been supported by the Education Commission staff. The commission's executive director also served as director of the association.

In return for early dissolution of the commission, previously scheduled for June 19, as part of Southern Baptist Convention restructuring, members of the commission and the Implementation Task Force granted ASBCS \$150,000 over a two-year period beginning Jan. 1. The funds were to help ASBCS assume some of the tasks of the Education Commission.

During the annual session, chairman Ben Elrod, president of Ouachita Baptist University, informed members that Steve Carleton, executive director of the association and former executive director of the Education Commission, had announced he was resigning to accept employment with a private medical education foundation in Oklahoma City, effective July 1.

Howell Todd, president of Mississippi College in Clinton and chairman of the ASBCS executive director search committee, informed members that the committee and the association's operating board had contracted with Tim Fields, president of Fields Communications and Publishing of Nashville, Tenn., and former assistant director of the Education Commission, to serve as interim executive director.

In other action, members of the operating board approved revised membership qualifications for schools wishing to apply for membership. The new qualifications, which would limit new members to post-secondary institutions, sparked debate during a business session of the full membership. PALM BEACH, FL (BP)

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Seeking — part-time minister of music. Send resumes to: Search Committee, Calvary Baptist Church, 150 Ragland Avenue, Monticello, AR 71655.

Accepting resumes — for full-time music/education director. Send to: First Baptist Church, 501 N. Main, Fordyce, AR 71742.

Seeking — Airline Baptist Church seeks full-time youth minister. Send resumes: Airline Baptist Church, 4007 Airline Drive, Bossier City, LA 71111.

Accepting — full-time music/youth minister resumes. Send to Calvary Baptist Church, PO Box 825, Osceola, AR 72370.

Accepting — full-time minister of music resumes. Send to First Baptist Church Sherwood, 206 Falway, Sherwood, AR 72120. Submit by July 15, 1997.

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'SBC evangelists rally around 'strength'

Approximately 1,000 evangelists and guests gathered June 18 for the 39th annual Conference of Southern Baptist Evangelists at First Baptist Church in Dallas. The ministry of evangelists, the destructive nature of pride and the triumphant flight of the eagle were brought together around the afternoon's theme, "In The Strength of the Lord."

W.A. Criswell, pastor emeritus of First, Dallas, told participants that "there is nothing comparable to your work, preaching the gospel and visiting the lost, making appeals to the soul and asking God to give you souls."

Evangelist Henry Linginfelter of Alcoa, Tenn., said the biggest problem Christians face is the sin of pride.

"Pride gets into our lives through a heart that is not surrendered to God," Linginfelter said. "Pride is undue self-esteem and undue feelings of superiority and wanting to control other people."

Linginfelter said six signs of a proud heart are: a satanic nature, an excess of "me" and "I" statements, teaching that adds to the "wholesome pure word of God," the lack of a prayer life, breaking God's commandments, and arguments and problems in churches.

Ron Herrod, an evangelist from Loudon, Tenn., said the eagle is a God-given symbol for believers. He told listeners that eagles fly alone, but other birds flock together.

Herrod said commitment is the "missing ingredient" required to win the nation, churches and the SBC denomination to Christ. "We need to revisit genuine old-fashioned, extremely radical commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ and what He is calling us to do."

Special awards were presented to several evangelists for lengthy service, including COSBE president Tom Cox of Mountainburg. Darrell Robinson of the North American Mission Board recognized Cox, saying that Cox evangelizes in "the hard places in America where many never go: the places where the churches are small and where they need someone come to encourage and help draw the net. Tom and Kay are there."

He also noted that Cox has led more than 1,100 revival crusades in over 80 countries. "Thank you for your passion for evangelists and this conference," he told Cox.

Also honored was Texas evangelist Freddie Gage for 45 years of service. In accepting his award, Gage commented about SBC leadership.

"We were the celebrities of the SBC and three of our seminary presidents were saved under a full-time evangelist," Gage said. "Now evangelists are treated like the stepchild of the SBC and have a hard time getting press coverage and promotion for their events."

Gage also commented about the current leaders' track record in baptizing youth, charging that "youth evangelism has died in the SBC."

"I'm an inerrantist. God help us to build a fire under the inerrantists. We are going to have to have another resurgence to begin to get the fundamentalists back on fire for souls," Gage said.

Southern Baptist pastors who preach inerrancy and have a soul-winning church but do not use a full-time evangelist should not be allowed to hold office or serve on any committee, he said. DALLAS (BP)



Tom Cox, an evangelist from Mountainburg, presided over the 1997 Conference of Southern Baptist Evangelists for the second year. He also was recognized for 25 years of service as a full-time evangelist.

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Family Bible

Jesus the builder

By T. Clifford Toney, member,
Central Church, Jonesboro

Basic passage:

Hebrews 1, 3:1-6

Focal passage:

Hebrews 3:2-6

Central truth:

Jesus Christ is the only builder on whose foundation we can depend.

In our day there are those who say that many paths lead to God. From a human perspective, it may appear that there is a common thread in religions other than Christianity. This passage gives us one illustration characterizing Jesus Christ as more than just another religious leader.

In verse 3:2, Moses is commended as being faithful in all his house. Moses was known as a leader of the house of Israel, but this passage goes on to characterize Jesus Christ as the builder of the house to which Moses was faithful. Verse 6 claims that we are part of this house if we stand firm.

According to verse 1:10, Jesus is the one who laid the foundation of the earth. This is a wonderful point concerning the distinction between Jesus Christ and others considered to be religious leaders.

Verse 1:2-3 says that Jesus is the heir of all things, Creator, manifestation of God's being, Sustainer of all things, Savior and exalted Lord. In verses 8-9, Jesus is the everlasting God, on the throne and anointed. He is both God and

annointed by God. Jesus is both God and with God. Jesus is both God and at the right hand of God. He is the builder and the building.

If Jesus had been just another man trying to lead humanity to a higher plane, then we might conclude that other paths are as profitable. This passage teaches that Jesus is not simply on a path. Jesus Christ is the path. Moreover, He created the path and the earth on which the path is built.

The world's religions are led by people. They may have good intentions and they may even have some good ideas, but they are imperfect, just as we are imperfect. Only Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith. Others may attempt to construct a way to God, but only Jesus laid the foundation for the world. Others die.

Only Jesus is risen from the grave. Jesus is superior to Moses. He is superior to the angels (Heb. 1:5). Jesus Christ is the only Builder on whose foundation we can depend if we hope to have a right relationship with the one true God.

Life and Work

The Good Shepherd, our gracious host

By Joe A. Fitzpatrick,
minister of music,
Park Hill Church, North Little Rock

Basic passage:

Psalm 23

Focal passage:

Psalm 23:1, 5-6

Central truth:

We can be assured of God's continual love and protection as He provides for our every need.

The shepherd, David, sings of his Shepherd, Jehovah God who is all sufficient, ever present and cares so very much for His own. Psalm 23 is a beautiful solo song exhibiting an affirmation of a secure faith unlike any ever written. It employs the metaphors Shepherd (vv. 1-4) and Host (vv. 5-6). These two images assure the psalmist of total security in the presence of his Shepherd and abundant provision for all of his needs within the intimate presence of his gracious Host.

The Shepherd is adored for the way He provides (v. 1), guides (vv. 2-3) and comforts (v. 4) His flock. The personal nature of the word usage "my" indicates the intimate closeness the psalmist experienced with his Shepherd. The personal relationship we have with the Lord is affirmed when we recognize it is God alone we ever need. He leads us to follow Him down the right path and to the best places designed just for us. The honor of His name guarantees this. A shepherd, by trade, has a reputation based on a proven record he intends to uphold. The LORD will not violate His

name as Righteous One by leading us astray.

The writer moves in verse 4 toward a more personal pronoun from the third person "He" (vv. 2-3) to the second person "Thou." He tells of the Shepherd who walks closely beside him as He protects him with His staff and club. Although there are times we find ourselves in the darkest valleys, we have no reason to fear with God as our companion. It is comforting to know we have the final victory over death, hell and the grave because of the Risen King, our Good Shepherd.

The psalmist expresses in verses 5-6 the care and abundant provision the LORD shares as He serves as our gracious banquet Host. The shepherd finds himself in the protection of the LORD as his enemies can but sit and watch while the Host lavishes him with oil and blessings overflowing.

It is the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ, who as the Sacrificial Lamb, laid down His life for His sheep. It is this same Jesus who sits on His throne, the Gracious Host, providing for our every need as we enjoy the presence of His company for eternity.

Explore the Bible

Obedience is a reponse to grace

By James Swedenburg, member,
Trinity Church, Benton

Basic passage:

I Corinthians 9:19-11:1

Focal passage:

I Corinthians 10:1-11

Central truth:

God's grace and expectations teach obedience.

Chapter 9 closes with encouragement to believers about self-denial and discipline. Paul illustrates the importance of self-control with the story of the Israelites' leaving Egypt. They had miraculously been led into their promised land, yet, because of disobedience, the majority of them perished without receiving the promise (vv. 10:1-5; Num. 14:16, 29).

Paul believed that the Israelites ought to learn from both the gracious things that God had done and from the accountability to which He held them (vv. 10:6a, 11-12, 14).

■ **His grace:** God guided them by sending a cloud, He gave them food to eat and water to drink, He saved them from death at the Red Sea, He destroyed their enemies and He freed them from slavery.

■ **His accountability:** God gave a warning not to set their hearts on evil things (vv. 6, 11), Paul made it clear that God's acts were recorded so that with future generations, God's accountability is the same.

The Israelites' failure to properly acknowledge God's revelation of Himself through His care and hope for them was the cause of their destruction.

We know what happened to the Israelites to whom God revealed Himself. The same thing will happen to us if we ignore God's will. We cannot afford to live our lives as we please. We must discover our gifts and talents as Christians and use them in the church and community. Also, we must never be presumptuous and assume that we are more special than others. God does hold us responsible for our obedience and commitment. If anything, we are more accountable than the Israelites. We have the revelation of God in Christ.

God is still extending His grace and care to us through Christ. He is always with us. God holds His accountability before us. He desires that we do justly, love mercy and walk humbly before Him (Mic. 6:8). He wants us, in view of God's expectations to offer ourselves as a part of our spiritual worship (Deut. 6:46; Matt. 23:37-39). He wants us to love Him with all our total being (Rom. 12:1).

LESSONS FOR LIVING

In heaven Jesus is above every creature. There is nothing that was not put under Him. If God had not been mindful of man, Jesus would never have suffered. But God was mindful of man. Therefore, Jesus left the glory of heaven. He was made a little lower than the angels. He became one of us.

This passage describes Jesus as our brother. The purpose for this is to bring many sons to glory (v. 10). Jesus became a man so that the lost might be saved. We cannot save ourselves. For God to save us, He had to become one of us.

Jesus suffered being tempted. Because of His experience as a man, Jesus was able to relate to our struggles as our propitiation before God. He is our merciful and faithful High Priest because He sympathizes with our pain and suffering.

The effect of Jesus becoming our brother is twofold. By becoming a man and suffering as one, Jesus was perfected as the captain of our salvation. There was no imperfection in Christ. However, as a man who had suffered, Jesus also became experi-

enced in our situation. The word "perfect" has the idea of "completion."

When Jesus rose from the grave, He defeated death. No other man could have done it. As God and man, Jesus defeated the grave for all men. As the captain of our salvation, Jesus released those in bondage from their fear of death.

Jesus became a man of His own choosing. Verse 11 indicates that Jesus was not ashamed to call us brethren. Jesus was more than willing to become a man in order that by His suffering, we might have eternal life. He who was above death died in order that we might live. He did all this because He was mindful of us. In other words, He loves us. How could anyone reject such love?

Verse 3 indicates that there is no escape for those who neglect so great a salvation. God became our brother. He suffered temptation and the ultimate humiliation of the Cross. If we neglect the provision of God in Jesus Christ, then there is no hope. Jesus is the only way.

The Bible instructs us not to forsake the privilege of corporate worship (Heb. 10:25). It is a blessing to derive encouragement, hope, fellowship and instruction when we gather to worship the living God. The psalmist laments in Psalms 42 and 43 that he is unable to worship God corporately at the Temple in Jerusalem. His separation from the pilgrimages to worship in the midst of fellow believers causes him to sense alienation from God.

These two psalms actually comprise one poem. Three stanzas make up the total poem, each ending with an identical refrain.

Stanza 1—Thirsting after God (vv. 42:1-5). The psalmist seeks after God, just as a deer in a drought runs to and fro in search of water. We have the privilege of coming to Jesus who provides us with living water. After coming to Him, we find we will never thirst (John 4:14, 6:35, 7:37).

He reflects on the joyful times of processing to the Temple for worship in the great festivals (v. 4). Reflecting on the good times, contrasted with his present exiled state, caused him to fall into an

inner soul-searching, leading to the first refrain (v. 5). He literally talks to himself as a means of therapeutically lifting himself up from the depths of depression finding hope and encouragement.

Stanza 2—Engulfed with despair (vv. 42:6-11). He despairs in the midst of taunting enemies and floods of sorrow. Yet, he finds a song for God, the Rock, who pours out His steadfast love.

Stanza 3—Appeal for exoneration (43:1-5). The composer makes an earnest appeal for the Lord as judge to vindicate him from his accusers. He had, through his sorrow and doubt, demonstrated before his enemies a lack of confidence in God, but now takes a stand to acknowledge God as his strength. It is there he will praise the Lord with his harp as his needs for hope and encouragement are met.

Read or sing all of the stanzas of "Blest Be the Tie." This hymn exemplifies in a beautiful way that the tie of fellowship and Christian love is a rich blessing as it brings encouragement experienced within the realms of corporate worship.

The divisions, cliques or parties, mentioned at the first of the letter (v. 1:10) appear again, apparently in new forms. Earlier the divisions were about factions in leadership. Now, in the context of worship relating to the Lord's Supper, divisions continue to exist (v. 18). Divisions were between the rich and the poor. The rich were overeating and drinking and the poor were hungry. The Jewish Christians and the Gentile Christians had long been divided over eating meat offered to idols. Finally, there should be no schisms or divisions regarding gifts in the body (vv. 12:25-26). The body should be brought together. The pain or pleasure of one part should be common for all.

The study of these scriptures indicate that schisms exist today. The differences center around the "cup" - the New Testament in Christ's blood.

Some Christians believe that the wine/grape juice actually becomes the literal blood of Christ. Some believe that it represents His blood, in essence, because it is present in communion. The blood is seen as present in the same way as the

Holy Spirit was present at His baptism. It was a pledge of His presence. Still others believe that the supper is received as a symbol of Christ's broken body and shed blood. They are symbols around which worship is celebrated.

There is another contemporary division in the church. The division centers around who should receive the memorial supper together. Again there are three divisions: Everyone who knows Christ as personal Savior; everyone of "like faith and order" and only the local church. Since Baptist churches are free to choose their own polity, all three are practiced in the various Baptist churches.

The purpose of the Lord's Supper as a worship experience is to remember His vicarious death for our sins and to proclaim Christ's death until He comes again. The memorial meal begins by giving thanks. Jesus distributed the broken bread and the wine. Paul called for a self examination and confessions of one's sins (vv. 27-30). This worship experience should draw believers together rather than strengthening existing divisions.

Family Bible Jesus, brother and captain

By T. Clifford Toney, member,
Central Church, Jonesboro

Basic passage:

Hebrews 2:5-18

Focal passage:

Hebrews 2:5-18

Central truth:

Jesus became our brother, then suffered the Cross to become the captain of our salvation.

Life and Work Blest be the tie

By Joe A. Fitzpatrick,
minister of music,
Park Hill Church, North Little Rock

Basic passage:

Psalm 42:1-43:5

Focal passage:

Psalm 42:1-4

Central truth:

Much hope and encouragement is found in the experience of corporate worship.

Explore the Bible Lord's Supper: Purpose and Participation

By James Swedenburg, member,
Trinity Church, Benton

Basic passage:

1 Corinthians 11:2-12:11

Focal passage:

1 Corinthians 11:17-34

Central truth:

The Lord's Supper draws us together.

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Bold Mission Thrust to feature weekly prayer, fasting

DALLAS (BP)—Prayer and fasting every Wednesday in 1998 and 1999 is set to undergird Southern Baptist's final push toward Bold Mission Thrust by the end of the year 2000.

Bold Mission Thrust — the goal of sharing the gospel with every person in the world by the year 2000 — was adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in 1976.

Roy Edgemon, director of the Baptist Sunday School Board's discipleship and family development division, announced the prayer and fasting emphasis during the annual Bold Mission Thrust report June 17 on the opening day of the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Dallas.

Edgemon recommended each church member's day of prayer and fasting be broken with an evening church fellowship meal. "Could you imagine what God would do if 40,000 Southern Baptist churches fasted every single Wednesday?" Edgemon asked. "May God help us to undergird what we're doing with prayer and fasting, to commit ourselves totally to the power of God to bring about what we prayed for since 1976 — that every person have the opportunity to hear and respond to the gospel by the year 2000."

Chaplains reminisce, look ahead to new day

DALLAS (BP)—Gathering for their final convocation under the auspices of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, approximately 100 Southern Baptist chaplains and pastoral counselors met June 16 at Baylor Medical Center in Dallas.

After spending the morning reminiscing with retired HMB chaplaincy division staff, participants devoted the afternoon to looking ahead to new opportunities with the North American Mission Board.

Currently, more than 2,500 endorsed Southern Baptist chaplains serve in all 50 states and U.S. territories and in more than 25 countries. Retired HMB staff member Lowell Lawson said the guiding philosophy has been, "Where two or three are gathered, there ought to be a chaplain."

Looking at emerging trends related to chaplaincy, current HMB chaplaincy division staff predicted a bright future for chaplaincy, even in an era of downsizing.

Missions organizations affirm cooperation with IMB

DALLAS (BP)—Cooperation among independent missions organizations and the Southern Baptist International Mission Board was the focus of the Fellowship of World Ministries breakfast meeting June 16.

Arkansas evangelist Jack Hazelwood, president of the 21-member fellowship, remembered when working together was little more than a goal. "Five years ago it was an adversarial relationship and now we're linking hands," Hazelwood said of the members' relationship to each other and to the IMB. "It's great to see us come together and work with each other and the International Mission Board.... We're here to enhance each others' ministries."

Jim Furgerson of the IMB affirmed the board's desire to continue a strong working relationship with various missions organizations. "We need help," he shared. "We should never cancel an evangelistic trip because of lack of response."

Messianic Fellowship leader urges servanthood example

DALLAS (BP)—Christ's self-effacing pattern is the key for effective witness, noted R. Michael Smith, president of the Southern Baptist Messianic Fellowship. The fellowship encompasses 17 congregations across the nation and other points of contact in schools, colleges and communities.

Stressing the importance of following the example of Christ to reach the Jewish community, Smith encouraged the crowd to "serve the people with humility. Jesus washed the feet of His disciples to teach servanthood. His message was grounded in His self-emptying."

Smith noted that strife between the Jewish community and the Southern Baptist Convention emerged a year ago from a resolution on Jewish evangelism adopted during the 1996 SBC annual meeting. The resolution states that the convention will "direct our energies and resources toward the proclamation of the gospel to the Jewish people."

Insisting that "the servant model of evangelism is absolutely necessary," Smith added, "We must serve. We must do so willfully and we must do so lovingly."

