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Arkansas Baptist State Convention

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ARKANSAS BAPTIST



Volume 94, Number 13

June 29, 1995



EVANGELIST BILLY GRAHAM

DELIVERED THE CLOSING
MESSAGE DURING SOUTHERN
BAPTISTS' SESQUICENTENNIAL
CONVENTION AT THE
GEORGIA DOME IN ATLANTA.
OTHER MAJOR EVENTS
INCLUDED ADOPTING THE
"COVENANT FOR A NEW
CENTURY" RESTRUCTURING
PLAN AND A RESOLUTION OF
RACIAL REPENTANCE.

ARKANSAS BAPTISTS

Arkansas Baptists among those elected to SBC leadership roles

Arkansas Baptists were among individuals elected to major leadership roles in Southern Baptist life during last year's SBC annual meeting in Atlanta.

Ronnie Floyd, pastor of First Church, Springdale, was elected chairman of the SBC Executive Committee by a vote of 31-27 over T.C. Pinckney of Virginia. Rex Terry, an attorney and member of First Church, Fort Smith, was elected Executive Committee secretary by a vote of 35-24 over Texas Baptist pastor Forrest Lowry.

Floyd also was elected to preach the convention sermon during next year's SBC annual meeting in New Orleans. Bert Miller, administrator of operations at First Church, Springdale, serves on the SBC Order of Business Committee which nominated Floyd for the preaching assignment.

Last week marked the third consecutive year that Floyd has preached at the Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference which immediately precedes the SBC annual meeting. Both Floyd and Terry also served on the Program and Structure Study Committee which recommended the "Covenant for a New Century" plan adopted last week by SBC messengers.

Arkansas Baptist State Convention president Ronnie Rogers, pastor of Lakeside Church in Hot Springs, was elected chairman of the influential SBC Committee on Nominations. Wesley Kluck, a member of Second Church, Arkadelphia, also was elected to the committee. Barry King, pastor of Grand Avenue Church in Hot Springs, and David Uth, pastor of Immanuel Church, El Dorado, served on the SBC Committee on Committees which nominated Rogers and Kluck.

Opportunities for convention service by Rogers and King have been closely linked during the past two years. King nominated Rogers for his first term as state convention president in 1993. Rogers, in turn, named King to the ABSC Nominating

Committee and then appointed King chairman of this year's committee. Rogers also is a trustee of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and is serving on the ABSC executive director search committee.

Twelve Arkansas Baptists were nominated by this year's SBC Nominating Committee and elected for service by messengers. Arkansans serving on the Nominating Committee which made the recommendations were Thomas E. Hartley, pastor of Immanuel Church, Rogers, and Bill Bledsoe, a member of Lakeside Church, Hot Springs.

Arkansans elected to a first term of service are Barry King, Christian Life Commission; Larry Page, executive director of the Christian Civic Foundation and a member of South Highland Church in Little Rock, American Baptist Seminary; Ed Saucier, a trustee of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and pastor of Grand Avenue Church, Fort Smith, seminary representative to the Southern Baptist Foundation; and J. Kirk Thompson, a member of First Church, Springdale, Annuity Board.

Elected to a second term of service are Wyndham Cook, a member of Memorial Church, Waldo, Home Mission Board; Stephen P. Davis, pastor of First Church, Russellville, and Wallace Edgar, pastor of Trinity Church, Texarkana, Foreign Mission Board; John Finn, pastor of First Church, Parkin, and Jack Kwok, director of the ABSC cooperative ministries department, North American Baptist Fellowship; Ben J. Rowell, pastor of First Church, Rogers, Baptist Sunday School Board; Rex Terry, a member of First Church, Fort Smith, SBC Executive Committee; and Gary Underwood, director of media at Beech Street First Church, Texarkana, Radio and Television Commission.

Cover Story



SBC sesquicentennial

An estimated 20,230 messengers gathered for Southern Baptists' sesquicentennial convention last week. A message by Billy Graham and approval of a plan to restructure SBC agencies were among major agenda items during the June 20-22 meeting in Atlanta.

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ARKANSAS BAPTIST



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Henry re-elected president by acclamation

Southern Baptist Convention president Jim Henry has been re-elected to a second one-year term. Henry's election was among four re-elections to the convention's five national offices.

Johnny Hunt, pastor of First Baptist Church, Woodstock, Ga., nominated Henry, senior pastor of First Baptist Church, Orlando, Fla. Henry served churches in Alabama, Mississippi and Tennessee before going to First Baptist, Orlando, where he has been for 18 years.

"I'm overcome, humbled and honored that you would trust me again," Henry said in response to a standing ovation following his re-election. He also thanked messengers for their support and prayers during the past year. "I'm going to count on that in the coming year," he added.

In other elections:

■ **Larry Wynn**, pastor of Hebron Baptist Church in northeast metro-Atlanta, was elected first vice president. Wynn, 42, is immediate past president of the Georgia Baptist Convention. He was nominated by James Merritt, pastor of First Baptist Church, Snellville, Ga., and faced no opposition. Wynn has been pastor of Hebron Baptist Church 17 years.

■ **Gary Frost**, pastor of Rising Star Baptist Church in Youngstown, Ohio, was re-elected second vice president. Frost won election over Fort Worth music evangelist John McKay, 4,390 votes to 2,263.

In nominating Frost, an African American, Ohio pastor Kenny Mahanes called him both symbol and substance related to the convention's racial reconciliation resolution adopted June 20. "He has done exceptionally well," Mahanes affirmed. "His presence still needs to be felt."

Frost said he hopes his presence will help improve racial relations among Southern Baptists.

■ Recording secretary David Atchison was elected without opposition to his sixth consecutive term. Atchison, 39, is director of Turning Point, a Nashville, Tenn.-based discipleship ministry.

■ Registration secretary Lec Porter was elected to his 19th consecutive term. Porter, 66, won election over Clayton Spriggs, administrator at First Baptist Church, Edmond, Okla., 4,664 to 2,208.

During a press conference following



Florida pastor Jim Henry, accompanied by his wife, Jeanette, noted in a press conference following his election to a second term as SBC president that the denomination has begun to experience "some healing."

his re-election, Henry pledged to use his final year in office as a "rally point" for increased unity in Southern Baptist life.

Acknowledging that the SBC has entered a period of reconstruction after a 16-year denominational civil war, Henry added, "We have passed some milestones and we're going to keep moving on...I believe the best is yet to be."

Henry said the fact that several states apparently have experienced a record number of baptisms and a record increase in giving during the past year indicates to him that the denomination has experienced "some coalescing, some healing, some unifying."

"That doesn't mean that everything is right yet" within the 15.6-million-member denomination, he noted, "but we may have one of our best years in front of us."

'A different spirit'

Henry likened the denomination to a large ocean liner that "can't turn around fast. But the longer it's in the turn, the more you sense that there's a different spirit and a different attitude."

He categorized a resolution on racial reconciliation that SBC messengers passed overwhelmingly as "one of our finest moments in Southern Baptist life." He described the resolution as a major sign of optimism for Southern Baptists.

Henry said the resolution on racial reconciliation is "a huge statement to the African American community of who we are and what we're about. Some of our greatest growth in recent years has come

in African American churches. I believe that this (growth) will accelerate because they have seen our heart. We didn't heal everybody's prejudices, but I think we took a large step."

He pledged that an increasing number of ethnic minorities will be represented in his and other committee appointments.

Concerning the controversy over the role of Woman's Missionary Union in the SBC's reorganization plan, Henry said, "We will continue our historic relationship with the WMU." He said to dismiss the role the WMU has had in prayer, fundraising and education for missions would create a "vacuum we would be

hard-put to find any substitute for." He said he wants to make that relationship "tighter and not looser in the days ahead."

He said the leadership decided to allow amendments to the restructuring proposal so that people could speak to the issues. Although some parliamentary rulings during the restructuring debate drew audible protests from some messengers, Henry said he would be "grieved" if people felt that their concerns were not heard.

When asked about requests that the resolution be tabled for study, he deferred to chief parliamentarian Lester Cooper, who said a 1990 revision of Roberts Rules of Order stipulates that unless a body meets within quarterly increments, business may not be postponed beyond the current meeting. Since the SBC meets annually, the resolution could not be delayed until next year, he said.

After a brief rest from his first year, which he described as "more grueling and demanding than I had expected," Henry said he will set about working on his top priorities — leading the denomination to reach the world for Christ and to increase missions giving and missions sending.

He said another of his priorities is to keep young pastors from becoming "denominationally lost." He said many people who are joining Southern Baptist churches in metropolitan areas come from non-SBC backgrounds and have "no institutional memory." He said actions such as the race relations resolution will show the younger generation that "we are wired in right and we are sensitive."

JERRY SCHLEIFF

Furloughing missionary to Zimbabwe
Member, Central Church, Jonesboro

I felt that the convention this year was well-coordinated, had an open, friendly atmosphere, and that the great majority of our churches represented were committed to "Finishing the Task." The combined missions' presentation, the historical review of Baptist life in the SBC for the past 150 years, and the homey, gracious leadership of our president were especially appreciated. The commitment service, with its emphasis on "filling the shoes" of others who had gone before, was excellent.

I personally am thankful for the stand we are taking on the Bible and on race relationships. I am glad, too, for the emphasis on including, not excluding, our brothers in Christ.

JIM LAGRONE, pastor

First Southern Church, Bryant

Jim Henry did a great job to lead the convention through a challenging job concerning the restructure. It is exciting days as we re-tool and refocus toward the future! We have had a rich history during the past 150 years and it was great to celebrate. God is not done with Southern Baptists.

RAYMOND & AGNES COPPENGER
Members, First Church, Arkadelphia

We have found SBC annual meetings the equivalent, almost, of a mission trip from the standpoint of the logistics, the economics and, above all, the dynamics.

Starting with Crossover orientation on Friday night, door-to-door visitation and a block party Saturday; local church attendance and WMU annual meetings and the Pastors' Conference on Sunday and Monday; and the convention itself on Tuesday through Thursday morning, is a mountaintop experience.

The music of choirs, soloists and instrumentalists are "one foot in heaven." Messages, testimonies, theme interpretations and powerful preaching lift our sights and strengthen our resolutions. The skillful handling of business sessions of thousands of Baptists coming from many perspectives is a bit amazing.

Christian love, not acrimony, permeated the Georgia Dome. The Spirit of the Lord was and is very much evident, enough to move us to tears on a few occasions. Local papers sometimes pick up a spot of news for the front page, but totally miss the powerful testimony of 150 years of Baptist witness in and throughout the world.

Arkansans evaluate '95 convention

What an experience to hear Billy Graham who disregarded his doctors' orders as he and George Beverly Shea lifted us to the heights in the closing session.

DAVID UTH, pastor
Immanuel Church, El Dorado

A few years ago I read a historian who emphasized the importance of one's history by using the phrase "the presence of the past." This phrase sums up for me the wonderful and exciting sesquicentennial celebration of the SBC in our 1995 convention.

Our glorious past was captured in the present in so many ways. From the dramatic presentation of our history Tuesday evening to the resolution on racial reconciliation there was a "presence of our past" which charged the atmosphere of the Georgia Dome. While the celebration of God's blessings on our past was certainly prominent and appreciated in the meetings, there was in my heart a great stirring and excitement about the hope of our future. The "Covenant for a New Century" exemplifies the spirit of a convention who refuses to be static, focusing only on the past, but chooses to be a dynamic body meeting the needs of a changing world with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Even though there are concerns, I am thankful to be a part of a denomination who is more committed to the message of our faith than to the methods of ministering our faith.

Another example of our promising future is the adoption of the racial reconciliation resolution. When SBC president Jim Henry embraced Gary Frost, this resolution was symbolically affirmed and enacted in a dramatic and moving way. What a moment in SBC life.

During the 1995 SBC meeting in Atlanta the past collided with the future and the result was an air of excitement charged with thankfulness to God for our past and with the hope of God's continued blessing and work in our future. It was a great week for this Southern Baptist.

TOM WALKER

Minister of education
First Church, Russellville

Of all the great themes used to describe Southern Baptists over the 150 years of its history, none were more pronounced than evangelism and missions. Certainly this convention will be remembered as one of reconciliation and apology which are part and parcel of its clear, God-directed intention of returning to its basic roots of reaching the world for Christ. This was definitely the message sounded loud and clear — empowered by the Holy Spirit, Southern Baptists are positioning themselves to lead the fight toward carrying out the Great Commission.

Personally, the emphasis on giving evangelism and missions first priority caused me to recommit to Psalm 71:15-16, "My mouth shall show forth thy righteousness and thy salvation...I will go in the strength of the Lord God."

RANDY MAXWELL, pastor

South Highland Church, Little Rock

One of the highlights for me was the passage of the "resolution on reconciliation." As we remembered the birth of our denomination, the resolution lamented the slavery of our past and at the same time offered an act of repentance before God and an apology to all African-Americans for our present racism that is still so prevalent among our people. It was a very emotional and moving moment as Jim Henry, president of our convention, and Gary Frost, a black minister serving as second vice president, embraced with tears.

The sesquicentennial presentations also were highlights for me as we were challenged to step into the shoes of great SBC forefathers such as R.G. Lee, Gambrell, Flake, Annle Armstrong and Lottie Moon to continue the task of sharing the good news with our world.

It impressed me that we not only heard the rhetoric of the reports and messages but actually saw the result of God's work among His people. Many people from the Atlanta area came to know the Lord as a result of the witnessing done during our stay. As part of the pagentry Tuesday night, we were able to witness the baptism of two young men and during the week a group in the Brotherhood exhibit constructed furniture for a church in the area.

It was also significant to hear "one more time" the words of such spiritual giants as Billy Graham, Herschel Hobbs, Robert Naylor, W.A. Criswell, James Sullivan and Alma Hunt.

Billy Graham - a true Baptist hero

The most memorable moments in convention life are seldom scheduled or scripted. Last week's Southern Baptist Convention in Atlanta was no exception.

Even amid the historic impact of the SBC sesquicentennial celebration, the adoption of the "Covenant for a New Century" restructuring plan and the approval of a heralded "Resolution on Racial Reconciliation," the most dramatic moment unfolded near the end of the three-day gathering when legendary evangelist Billy Graham stepped onto the convention platform in the Georgia Dome.

Convention messengers had completed their scheduled business and were singing hymns while awaiting Graham's arrival. The crowd spontaneously erupted into a standing ovation as Graham made his way to the platform. SBC Executive Committee president Morris Chapman presented Graham a resolution which lauded the international evangelist as "a model of integrity." SBC president Jim Henry introduced Graham as a Baptist hero who reflects "our hopes, our dreams and our prayers of what we can be and what we ought to be as God's people."

Graham, whose global crusade ministry has spanned five decades, has preached at SBC annual meetings 15 times since 1951. Urging Southern Baptists to "light a candle that will banish moral and spiritual blight in America and around the world," Graham's words of challenge and encouragement were — as always — right on target.

Among other significant moments

STRAIGHT FROM THE EDITOR

By TRENNIS HENDERSON



during the annual meeting, the enthusiastic adoption of a resolution on racial repentance and reconciliation was a vivid example of history in the making. Acknowledging that "racism profoundly distorts our understanding of Christian morality," messengers agreed to "unwaveringly denounce racism, in all its forms, as deplorable sin."

The resolution drew national media attention, including a front-page article in the *New York Times*. An editorial in the *Atlanta Constitution* affirmed Southern Baptists' action as "a courageous act of genuine contrition."

Perhaps the most anticipated moment of this year's SBC was the adoption of the convention's restructuring plan. While some messengers sensed that several parliamentary rulings curbed adequate debate on the measure, it is equally clear that the vast majority of messengers supported both the moderating and the restructuring plan.

Arkansas Baptists Ronnie Floyd and Rex Terry, as well as the other members of the study committee, are to be commended for their countless hours of work on the historic proposal. The most challenging task is still ahead, however, as trustees of the various entities seek to implement the changes in the coming years. All Southern Baptists should make the SBC transition efforts a matter of consistent, consecrated prayer.

Arkansas Baptists also should pray regularly for convention leaders, including Floyd and state convention president Ronnie Rogers, who have been elected to two of the most influential positions in Southern Baptist life. Floyd is serving as the new chairman of the SBC Executive Committee and Rogers has been elected chairman of the SBC Committee on Nominations. Floyd, who also was chosen to deliver next year's convention sermon, is expected by many convention observers to be a candidate for the SBC presidency in the near future.

As Floyd, Rogers and other SBC leaders help guide the convention into its 151st year of ministry, we would all do well to emulate the worthy example of Billy Graham. In a world with few legitimate heroes left, Graham remains a true hero of the faith who consistently demonstrates "what we ought to be as God's people."

Of course, Graham would quickly point beyond himself to Christ — and Jesus must remain our one true role model if Southern Baptists are to maintain a vital witness for Him in the coming century.

Young people offer signs of hope

One of the brightest hopes in society today is what I see taking place in the lives of young people. Most of the problems we face in our society have grown out of or could have been prevented by good solid Christian homes.

With so many growing up without authority and without role models in the home it should not be a surprise that a generation of brutal incorrigibles has appeared on the scene. Intent on doing and getting what they want, the nation is held hostage. While most young people have not gone to that extent, the same spirit of self-determination exists even with Christian young people. Demanding every favor and consideration as a "right," they expect society to bow to their every desire. Many of the best are indulgent, insubordinate and inconsiderate.

Shaken to its roots by problems that neither legislation, money or law enforcement can handle, both Christians

YOU'LL BE GLAD TO KNOW

By DON MOORE
ABSC Executive Director



and non-Christians are beginning to see that the answers are to be found in the home and in spiritual values. What a dreadful thing to have sacrificed so many lives to drugs, gangs, alcohol, AIDS and incarceration before waking up to what the church has said all along.

The good news is that students on

secular campuses, to the consternation of many of their professors, are asking for more spiritual input in their studies. A network news clip reported this recently. This is reflected in Arkansas by the outstanding work of Baptist Student Union on our college and university campuses.

Our own Randy Brantley, director of youth evangelism for the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, has developed an approach to campus ministry that high school young people are buying into. Hundreds of "M-Pact" clubs, which Randy developed, are being formed in Arkansas, Louisiana, Texas, Ohio and Kentucky.

Tens of thousands of young men are becoming a part of Promise Keepers. Football stadiums are being filled with men who are willing to make deep, life-changing promises to God, their families and their church. This is encouraging. Let's lend a hand and our prayers to help all of these live out their commitments.

SBC 'Covenant' gains messenger approval

By a vote of almost 2 to 1, Southern Baptist Convention messengers adopted the Program and Structure Study Committee's "Covenant for a New Century" restructuring of the SBC. The ballot vote was 9,590 to 5,357.

Approval of the report reduces the number of SBC entities from 19 to 12 and sets in motion a restructuring process to be implemented by 1997. Messengers also approved a bylaw changing the entities in the new SBC structure. The bylaw also must be approved by messengers to the 1996 convention.

Two amendments — affirming the contributions of Woman's Missionary Union and changing wording related to home missions — were approved by messengers. Both were termed by SBC president Jim Henry as "friendly" amendments "for the good of the body and harmony of the convention."

An amendment to continue the Southern Baptist Historical Commission, one of three commissions slated to be dissolved, was defeated in a show of hands vote. After the vote, a request for a ballot vote was ruled out of order.

Three times during debate, questions about postponing the vote were ruled out of order. "When a body does not meet within a quarterly time interval, it cannot be postponed beyond the end of the meeting," explained chief parliamentarian Lester Cooper, pastor of Valley Hill Baptist Church, Riverdale, Ga.

The amendment affirming WMU was jointly presented by Roy Smith, executive director of the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, and John Bisagno, pastor of First Baptist Church, Houston.

It states: "We recognize and affirm the valued historic relationship with Woman's Missionary Union as an auxiliary to the Convention, and welcome the continued voluntary contribution of Woman's Missionary Union in mobilizing mission prayer support, promoting missions offerings and stimulating the missionary spirit within the Southern Baptist Convention."

Bisagno urged messengers to "pass this amendment, put this issue behind us, lock arms and get on with winning this world to Jesus Christ."

Following the session, WMU executive director Dellanna O'Brien said she was "very satisfied" with the amendment approved by messengers, noting it affirmed WMU's presence and partnership in the denomination.

Home Mission Board president Larry Lewis proposed three wording changes affecting the work of the new North American Mission Board to be formed by the merger of the Home Mission Board,



Members of the Program and Structure Study Committee respond to media questions at a press conference following the adoption of the SBC restructuring plan.

Radio and Television Commission and Brotherhood Commission.

Lewis's wording changes affirmed cooperative as well as direct mission strategies for the NAMB and authorized the NAMB to support shorter-term missionaries as well as career missionaries. A third change in an endnote of the report calls for larger, primarily southern state Baptist conventions to fund "a greater portion of" their evangelism and missions staff and program.

Lewis said the HMB "has more than 1,000 home missionaries in these states. They don't want to be transferred to be state convention missionaries."

Lewis, RTVC president Jack Johnson and Brotherhood Commission president James Williams pledged to work together in blending their agencies into the NAMB.

"We're connected at the hip where the wallet is," Johnson said.

Williams added, "The Great Commission of our Lord is bigger than the program structure of the Southern Baptist Convention."

The amendment to continue the Southern Baptist Historical Commission was proposed by Slayden Yarbrough, a professor at Oklahoma Baptist University, Shawnee, and a commission trustee now serving as interim executive director.

"Economically, the proposal (of the PSSC) not only will not save money for missions, it may well result in the loss of funds," Yarbrough said. He noted the Historical Commission currently receives about one-third of 1 percent of Cooperative Program funds, or about \$500,000 annually.

"I personally have spoken with several state directors of Baptist history who say that their work will increase if the PSSC

report is adopted, that they will ask their states for more money and that it will come from the CP funds that in the past were designated for the Historical Commission," he said.

Opposing Yarbrough's amendment, PSSC member Rex Terry of Fort Smith, said he did not believe "the fact that the commission only uses one-third of 1 percent of Cooperative Program receipts is an adequate reason to continue it."

In presenting the report, committee chairman Mark Brister called on messengers to unite in support of the proposed SBC mission statement:

"The Southern Baptist Convention exists to facilitate, extend and enlarge the Great Commission ministries of Southern Baptist churches, under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, upon the authority of Holy Scripture, and by the empowerment of the Holy Spirit."

"We need to do better what we do well," Brister said. "Our mission is more than tradition. When God calls us into covenant, we must be willing to change."

The report organizes SBC entities in five categories: world mission ministries (International Mission Board and North American Mission Board); church enrichment ministries (Baptist Sunday School Board); theological education ministries (the six Southern Baptist seminaries); Christian ethics and religious liberty ministries (Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission); and facilitating ministries (Annuity Board and Executive Committee).

The SBC restructuring will provide "less funding of bureaucracy and more fueling of ministry," Brister declared. "We must quit tapping the pipeline and give more fuel to the front line."

Arkansas committee members praise 'Covenant' adoption

Calling the adoption of the "Covenant for a New Century" a "crowning moment" in Southern Baptist Convention life, Program and Structure Study Committee member Ronnie Floyd added, "This puts the local church back in the center of the SBC.... The local church spoke today in the vote."

Floyd, pastor of First Church in Springdale, was one of two Arkansas Baptists who served on the seven-member study committee. Attorney Rex Terry, a member of First Church, Fort Smith, also served on the committee.

Affirming the convention's decision to reduce the number of SBC entities from 19 to 12, Terry declared, "This convention needs to lay aside the things that are not central to sharing the message of Jesus Christ."

Terry described the reorganization plan as "the logical progression from 1979" when conservative leaders began to gain control of the denomination.

"Since 1979, we have affirmed the inerrancy of the Word of God," Floyd agreed, "but we must change the way we carry out the message of the Word of God. This is the crowning moment. Today is a profound new day for the future of this denomination."

Floyd said the plan's goal of reducing convention structure in order to channel more funds into missions efforts "should absolutely skyrocket interest in reaching the world for Jesus Christ. I think the local church is the key to getting more dollars overseas and nationally to spread the message of Christ."

"It's a humbling experience to be chosen as one of seven out of 15-plus million people to shape the future of this denomination," Floyd added. "That is the providence of God."



Rex Terry, a lawyer from Fort Smith, was one of two Arkansas to serve on the SBC study committee.

Commission heads express sorrow, hope for ongoing work

Leaders of three Southern Baptist agencies eliminated by the convention's restructuring voiced sorrow over the decision and hope that the responsibilities of their agencies will continue.

The restructuring plan will eliminate the Historical Commission, Education Commission and Stewardship Commission. The Baptist Foundation will be merged with the SBC Executive Committee rather than existing as a separate organization.

During his report to messengers, Ronald Chandler, executive director of the Stewardship Commission, said he felt like the man sentenced to death. When asked how he wanted to die, the man replied, "old age."

Established in 1961, the Stewardship Commission is the convention's youngest agency.

"I hope that in the new organization stewardship will have a high visibility and be given the resources needed to assist the churches," Chandler told Baptist Press. "I would anticipate higher funding for Cooperative Program promotion now that the Executive Committee will have it as one of its responsibilities," he added, "and that would be good."

The most vocal dissent to the restructuring plan came from the Historical Commission. During messengers' discussion of the proposal, Slayden Yarbrough, interim executive director, offered an unsuccessful motion to amend the proposal and not dissolve the commission.

"I thought I had a fair hearing," Yarbrough said. He added, however, that

many people who wanted to address the proposal did not get a chance to speak before president Jim Henry announced time had elapsed and called for the vote. "An issue this significant should have had a longer discussion period," Yarbrough said.

Stephen Carleton, executive director of the Education Commission, said in a prepared statement, "Our Baptist colleges and schools have meant far too much to the Southern Baptist Convention, its churches and its causes to stop their momentum now."

"It is my hope the Association of Southern Baptist Colleges and Schools will continue to exist and assume the important functions of the Education Commission."

Likewise, Yarbrough said he expects the Southern Baptist Historical Society to "play a leading role in continuing to communicate and interpret our heritage."

Despite their concerns, the directors expressed a commitment to work through the transition.

"The messengers have spoken," Yarbrough said in a written statement. "It is our intention to carry out their wishes with integrity. We will cooperate fully with the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention in working toward a timely and thorough dissolution of the commission."

"The convention has voted," Chandler agreed, "and I fully intend to cooperate in every way that I can for a smooth transition and to help in every way possible. Our staff will continue to work faithfully until our ministry is transferred."



Agency heads James Williams, Larry Lewis and Jack Johnson share an embrace symbolic of their commitment to work together as their respective agencies join to become the new North American Mission Board.

Racial reconciliation draws national attention to SBC

A Resolution on Racial Reconciliation which garnered national media attention was one of eight resolutions approved by messengers to last week's Southern Baptist convention in Atlanta.

The resolution, which asked forgiveness from African Americans for racism, was approved by an overwhelming affirmative vote. The action was taken during the first day of business before messengers gathered for a pageant marking the convention's 150th anniversary.

The resolution marked the denomination's first formal acknowledgement that racism played a role in its founding. The SBC seceded from a national Baptist body in 1845 so slaveholders could continue to serve as missionaries.

Many Southern Baptists also opposed the civil rights movement in the 1960s. In recent years, however, the convention has worked to transcend its white, Southern image. About 1,900 of the 39,910 Southern Baptist churches are predominantly black, according to denominational records.

"We apologize to all African-Americans for condoning and/or perpetuating individual and systemic racism in our lifetime, and we genuinely repent of racism of which we have been guilty, whether consciously or unconsciously," the resolution said.

"This is an historic moment in our life as we celebrate our...sesquicentennial," said Resolutions Committee chairman Charles T. Carter. "We feel under God we have a unique opportunity in this historic moment."

Following the vote, Gary Frost, second vice president of the SBC and an African American pastor, accepted the apology of the convention.

Acknowledging that he could not speak for all African Americans or even for African American Christians, Frost added, "I do speak on behalf of all those African American believers in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who are committed to be obedient to the Word of God and long to see healing and unity in the body of Christ.

"On behalf of my black brothers and sisters, we accept your apology, and we extend to you our forgiveness in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ," said Frost, pastor of Rising Star Baptist Church in Youngstown, Ohio. "We pray that the genuineness of your repentance will be reflected in your attitudes and in your actions. We forgive you for Christ's sake."

Calling passage of the resolution one of Southern Baptists' "finest hours,"

committee chairman Carter, pastor of Shades Mountain Baptist Church in Birmingham, Ala., added that the vote was "the easiest thing we have done in this area.... Words must now be implemented by actions and attitudes."

Other resolutions adopted by SBC messengers included:

■ Opposing the confirmation of Henry Foster as U.S. surgeon general and calling for U.S. senators to "support any filibuster which may be waged against the nomination."

A filibuster effectively derailed Foster's nomination the following day despite a favorable recommendation by the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee.

One messenger said the resolution opposing Foster could be perceived as racist, but in a news conference after the vote, Frost said, "There is a clear distinction between racial and moral issues. The issue is abortion, which is an abomination before God."

"We pray that the genuineness of your repentance will be reflected in your attitudes and in your actions."

— Gary Frost
SBC second vice president

■ Favoring an amendment to the U.S. Constitution to guarantee the right to prayer and other religious expressions in public places where expressions of a "non-religious character" are permitted.

Such an amendment would "protect the freedom of private persons, including students in public schools, to engage in voluntary prayer and other religious expression" in places where expressions of a "nonreligious character" also are permitted, the resolution said.

One messenger objected that the resolution does not include any proposed wording of such an amendment. "I cannot possibly vote for anything that doesn't let me know how the Constitution is to be amended," said Larry Bishop, a messenger from First Baptist Church, Norman, Okla., and an attorney.

Kenton L. Hunt, a messenger from First Southern Baptist Church, Williamsport, Pa., said he opposed the resolution because students are already legally entitled to pray in schools.

But Michael K. Whitehead, an attorney for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, which originally proposed the resolution, told messengers that religious expression in public places is "under sustained attack."

Despite key court rulings and legislation, "school officials and school boards around America are still confused by contradictory decisions by lawyers and judges and civil liberties groups," said Whitehead, CLC general counsel.

■ Calling for a moratorium on the granting of patents on genes of animals and humans. The resolution, which drew no debate from the floor, was approved on an apparently unanimous vote.

According to the resolution, "Patenting genetically-altered animals essentially confers ownership of an animal type.... Humans may own individual or groups of animals of a given species, but not an entire species and its progeny.... God alone is Creator and owner of all creation."

■ Expressing concern for religious liberty and freedom of conscience around the world, especially in countries where "notable occurrences of oppression have occurred," such as Bulgaria, Russia, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Iran, Sudan, Yemen, Cuba, Romania, India and China.

Asking Baptists to pray about the matter, the resolution urges nations to honor human rights provisions in such documents as the United Nations charter and the Helsinki accord on human rights.

■ Acknowledging the grief of those affected by the bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma City. The resolution thanked volunteers and professionals who helped in the aftermath of the tragedy.

Wylie Drake, a messenger from First Southern Baptist Church, Buena Park, Calif., objected to the inclusion of President Bill Clinton among public figures thanked for their support of "assisting the citizens of Oklahoma and the nation in coping with and recovering" from the bombing.

Parliamentarian John Sullivan ruled personal comments by Drake out of order and then ruled the amendment out of order as well.

Messengers overruled Sullivan's parliamentary ruling and then decisively voted down the proposal to delete Clinton's name from the resolution.

■ Affirming the SBC's "continuing commitment to the theological education of African-American students."

■ Voicing appreciation for the host city of Atlanta and for the Southern Baptists who planned and ran the convention.

Graham urges messengers to 'light a candle'

By Trennis Henderson

Editor, Arkansas Baptist

Billy Graham, the most prominent living legend in Southern Baptist life, concluded the Southern Baptist Convention's sesquicentennial celebration with a rousing call for fellow Baptists to "light a candle that will banish moral and spiritual blight in America and around the world."

Graham's presence electrified the convention's Thursday morning crowd. Messengers and guests interrupted a hymn to give Graham a standing ovation as he stepped onto the convention platform several minutes after he was scheduled to arrive.

Graham, who has preached at the SBC 15 times since 1951, recently was hospitalized in Toronto due to gastrointestinal bleeding. Despite his illness, Graham assured SBC president Jim Henry he would address the convention "if it's the last breath I've got."

SBC Executive Committee president Morris Chapman, his voice choking with emotion, presented Graham a resolution from the Executive Committee honoring his 50 years of worldwide crusade evangelism. The resolution affirmed Graham as "a model of integrity, exhibiting the humility, grace and courage of our Lord Jesus Christ."

'A Baptist hero'

Following special music by George Beverly Shea, Henry introduced Graham as a Baptist hero who consistently demonstrates integrity, vision, inclusiveness and an unequivocal commitment to God's Word.

Describing the sesquicentennial convention as "perhaps one of the greatest historic meetings Southern Baptists have ever had," Henry said Graham "seems to put all together our hopes, our dreams and our prayers of what we can be and what we ought to be as God's people."

Graham commended convention messengers "for your unity and for the tremendous spirit of this convention...and especially for the resolution that you passed on the race question. Thank God.

"Only when we individually and as a corporate group renounce racism in all of its forms and repent of all transgression will God choose to use us in the future to reach all people throughout the world.



Southern Baptist evangelist Billy Graham challenged messengers attending the 1995 Southern Baptist Convention in Atlanta to help "banish moral and spiritual blight" throughout the world.

God help us to pull down the barriers which divide and to cooperate together to end racism and injustice wherever it may be found."

Citing another convention-related issue which has generated widespread discussion, Graham said, "Thank God that you put your arms around the WMU."

Declaring that SBC founders "believed in the blood of Christ and they believed there was a hell and they believed there was a heaven and they believed the Bible was fully inspired of God," Graham added, "Thank God we are staying with our roots. As long as I live, I stand with you."

Concluding the convention's focus on the sesquicentennial theme, "Empowered for the Unfinished Task," Graham preached from II Corinthians 4 about "the person God will use for the unfinished task."

"What kind of a world will the 21st century be?" he asked. "Will the third millennium usher in a golden age of progress and happiness as some people are projecting or will it be a time of political chaos or social upheaval or economic collapse or ecological disaster as others speculate?"

Emphasizing that "we are living in a world beset by problems and upheaval," Graham pointed out, "People the world over have the same deep needs."

He said five specific areas of worldwide human need result from emptiness, loneliness, guilt, insecurity and fear of death.

"In every area of life something is happening that is frightening," Graham acknowledged. "The pieces are not fitting together and they never will until people discover faith in the Christ who died for us.

"This is the kind of world we are called to minister to. What kind of man or woman should you be for God to use in this unfinished task?"

The first key, Graham declared, is to "be sure you know Christ yourself." He added that "I've met too many people in the church and in the pulpit who have never been born again, in my opinion."

Emphasizing the need to boldly preach the gospel without apology, Graham noted, "The apostle Paul said, 'Woe is me if I preach not the gospel.' Let's preach it and declare in with authority — and the authority comes from this Book."

He also stressed the need to preach with simplicity, urgency and to "preach it to a decision."

Graham said another key is to be men and women of prayer. "I am convinced that no evangelism can be accomplished without prayer — deep prayer and supplication," he said. "Prayer will have a far greater effect on bringing people to Christ than anything else."

While "no one except God knows the future," Graham added, "I believe the Lord is coming and He's coming soon.

"While the devil is at work, God is at work," he declared. "I believe the wheat is going to overcome the tares and we're going to see a mighty moving of the Spirit of God before the end of the age.

"How can we be people that God will continue to use? How can we together be a denomination upon which His blessings will continue to rest?" He said the answer is to develop the gifts God has given each Christian.

"I do not believe that we should spend our time cursing the darkness; I don't believe we ought to spend our time pulling up the weeds. Let's let our light shine and let's let the wheat grow and overcome the weeds.

"Let's light a candle that will banish moral and spiritual blight around the world," Graham urged. "Let's light a candle that rolls back racism and social injustice.

"Let's light a candle of renewed faith in the authority of Scripture and a new dedication to missions and evangelism that will cause the devil to tremble and the saints to be encouraged and the lost to trust in Christ," he concluded. "Let's light a candle that by God's grace will never be put out."

Pageantry highlights SBC history

Southern Baptists were reminded that heated debate, as well as missions, has been part of their history from the beginning, in a pageant celebrating the convention's 150th anniversary.

But it was the living example of their continuing commitment to soul-winning that drew sustained standing applause June 20 when Bernard Miller, pastor of First Missionary Baptist Church, Griffin, Ga., a new church start and primarily black congregation, baptized his son Brian before the crowd.

Brian Miller's baptism gave messengers the opportunity to celebrate a historic event that had taken place hours earlier. In the afternoon session, they had overwhelmingly approved a resolution on racial reconciliation, repudiating the slavery which played a part in the SBC's founding and asking forgiveness of African Americans for racism in the messengers' lives.

Actors and actresses in period costumes, as well as narrators, told the story of SBC life. Video showed how Southern Baptists continue to fulfill the Great Commission and the objective of the convention's founding. Choirs, orchestra, soloists and congregation sang and played the story of salvation and missions.

The primary goal of the celebration was "to focus attention on our founding purpose," doing missions work in the United States and around the world, said Marshall Walker, chairman of the sesquicentennial celebration work group.

The planners wanted to help Southern Baptists "understand those people were just normal people trying to find God's will and work together," said Walker, special events coordinator of the Baptist Sunday School Board.

About half of the 20,000 registered messengers watched in the Georgia Dome as narrators recalled how Baptists from eight Southern states and the District of Columbia gathered in Augusta, Ga., in May 1845 to decide how to improve their missions effectiveness. Slaveholders had been rejected as missionaries. The assembly voted to become the Southern Baptist Convention and W.B. Johnson was elected president.

Southern Baptists may be the largest Protestant missionary-sending body in the world today, but their start certainly didn't foreshadow such an end, according to events portrayed in the pageant.

Eight days after the formation of the



Brian Miller, 13, was baptized in the Georgia Dome June 20 by his father, Bernard Miller, pastor of First Missionary Baptist Church in Griffin, Ga. The baptism was part of the Southern Baptist Convention's sesquicentennial pageantry.

new convention, Foreign Mission Board trustees had elected six corresponding secretaries — and none had accepted. When the next one turned them down, the sixth candidate, James B. Taylor, agreed to do the job two days a week. After that rocky start, finances doubled between 1846 and 1849 and again by 1853.

The Board of Domestic Missions, later to become the Home Mission Board, was established to "preach the gospel to the Black people, and to Indians." It, too, had trouble finding good help. It wasn't until 1882 when things began to turn around under the leadership of corresponding secretary I.T. Tichenor, who urged Southern Baptists to turn from supporting a variety of mission societies, telling them Southern Baptists ought to support Southern Baptist mission work.

The later founding of the Baptist Sunday School Board came only after strong disagreement about its founding had been settled by having leading proponent J.M. Frost and leading opponent J.B. Gambrell write a joint resolution calling for it.

Messengers affirm testimonies

But it was the emphasis on what is happening today that brought the strongest response from the audience.

Following Brian Miller's baptism, Marine chaplain Mike Langston told about seeing 51 service members come to know Christ as Savior and searching for an appropriate baptismal pool aboard ship after being called up for the Gulf War. Finally someone found some long metal boxes in the back of the ship. Langston recognized the boxes right away — body

transfer cases for anticipated casualties. Filled with water, they worked fine for baptizing a Navy doctor, a Marine major, a fireman from the engine room and a gunnery sergeant. The audience watched the baptisms on the video screen as Langston gave his testimony.

Next came the baptism of Dan Harper, a 13-year-old who made a profession of faith the previous Sunday in First Baptist Church, Augusta, Ga., where the SBC held its founding meeting.

The pageant ended with a challenge to messengers to continue to seek to reach the millions of people in the world who have never heard the message of Jesus Christ. Actors representing historic leaders J.B. Gambrell, R.G. Lee, Annie Armstrong, Arthur Flake, B.B. McKinney and Lottie Moon delivered monologues summing up their contributions and asking who would fill their shoes. They then stepped out of their shoes, leaving them on the stage.

SBC president Jim Henry took the stage to praise God for the past and challenge Southern Baptists to look to the future. As he stepped out of his shoes and left the stage, a harmonica began playing "Amazing Grace." On succeeding verses, a soloist, the choir and then the congregation joined in the hymn which has long been the unofficial anthem of Southern Baptists.

As many as 1,000 members of the 3,000 SBC churches started before 1845 sat in a special section and stood when recognized early in the presentation. While many were not represented, those 3,000 churches include names like Greasy Creek, Big Hurricane, Ephesus, Peavine, Ivy Log, Philippi, Bacon Creek and Skinquarter.

Baptists challenged to step into 'empty shoes'

Southern Baptists were challenged to step into empty missionary shoes to complete the unfinished task of winning the world to Christ as they continued celebrating the convention's 150th anniversary the evening of June 21.

The previous evening, messengers had seen six actors representing historic Baptist leaders step out of their shoes and walk off stage — symbolizing the constant need for new generations to commit themselves to home and foreign missions.

The Wednesday evening service concluded with six symbolic Southern Baptists stepping into empty shoes onstage to dramatize commitments to pray, give and go for the sake of the kingdom.

An estimated 60 people responded to SBC president Jim Henry's invitation to "sow your life and be a life-giver" in missions, while hundreds of others passed in cards registering their commitments to support an all-out effort to bring the world's 1.3 billion lost people to personal faith in Christ.

The task of winning the United States to Christ will require Southern Baptists' best efforts, said Home Mission Board president Larry L. Lewis.

While the U.S. population increased 22 percent between 1970 and 1990, the total number of churches increased only 7 percent, Lewis said. To just return to a 1970s level of Christian presence, 96,000 new churches would need to be started immediately, he said.

Although 1994 witnessed "unprecedented" progress in Baptist work overseas, 1.3 billion people in 2,000 people groups have yet to even hear the gospel, said Foreign Mission Board president Jerry A. Rankin. God will hold Southern Baptists accountable not only for those who have never heard the gospel, but also for their failure to reap a harvest of those ready to receive Christ, Rankin emphasized.

Six home and foreign missionaries shared examples from their mission fields, thanked Southern Baptists for the opportunity to serve and shared prayer requests during the program.

■ Kenneth Harrison is a media and music missionary in Malawi where 78 percent of the people are illiterate and 65 percent of the people have the virus that causes AIDS.

In response to desperation and lack of knowledge, missionaries have developed a tape ministry called "Faith Comes by Hearing."

Harrison asked Southern Baptists to pray that God will use New Testament tapes to bring people to a saving knowledge of Him.

■ Dorcas Camachu Byrd is director of mission centers in Houston where the missionaries and volunteers minister to 800 people a week. "Pray that we will practice what we teach," Byrd asked, especially in light of a mission center van being stolen the previous Monday night. She challenged messengers to give their time to missions and to invest financially in missions.

■ Daniel C. Moon, the first Southern Baptist church planter in the former Soviet Union, said his job is to "lift up the precious name of Jesus our Lord." During the last four years, Moon said the church planting team he works with has started 13 churches and baptized 530 people.

"My greatest joy is to make Jesus Christ known to all the nations," Moon said. "Missions is my life. Isn't it yours?"

■ Ken Weathersby, a home missionary in Memphis, Tenn., noted that Tennessee has 2.5 million people who do not know Jesus. Noting that many of those live in metropolitan areas, Weathersby urged Southern Baptists to "take back our cities."

Weathersby told of a church that started in February and has since reported five professions of faith. Another new church has reported 27 professions of faith in seven months.

■ Carol A. Brown, a church planting/field evangelist in Venezuela, told of a strategy of teaching people the Bible by telling stories. The witnessing process is

time-consuming, but it works well in places where people cannot read, she said.

■ Charles and Laura Lea Chamblce, church planters in Franklin, Mass., told of a youth named Jeff whom Charles met on a basketball court. "Last Sunday he was in church by his choice for the first time in his life," Chamblce said. He asked Southern Baptists to pray that Jeff would become a Christian. He also challenged them to "step outside your comfort zones and reach out to the Jeffs in your world."

In a prayer of commitment, Henry Blackaby, a leader of the prayer and spiritual awakening movement among Southern Baptists, said, "Lord, in this moment, we stand before you in fresh abandon and surrender to Jesus Christ. Take us where you will. Use us as you choose. Bend us to your will. Cleanse us until we as a people are a highway of holiness over which you can go to a lost world."

In his closing challenge, convention president Jim Henry urged messengers to pray one day a week for missions, to ask God to give them someone they can encourage toward mission service, to give to missions as much as they would spend on Christmas presents, to challenge their churches to increase budgeted missions giving and to "surrender all your plans, ambitions and dreams to Jesus Christ" so His will can be done through career and volunteer missions.



SBC president Jim Henry urged Baptists to "surrender all your plans, ambitions and dreams to Jesus Christ." Foreign Mission Board president Jerry Rankin (left) and spiritual awakening leader Henry Blackaby also participated in the program.

Messengers adopt record CP budget, deal with 44 motions

Southern Baptist Convention messengers adopted a record Cooperative Program budget and submitted 44 motions, including one asking for prayer for baptismless churches, during business sessions of the SBC June 20-22 at the Georgia Dome in Atlanta.

Messengers adopted a CP allocation budget of \$141,629,127 for 1995-96. The approved budget is a 3.7 percent or \$5,089,397 increase over the 1994-95 budget.

In another budget-related matter, messengers adopted a 1995-96 SBC operating budget of \$4,236,254. The 1994-95 SBC operating budget is \$4,103,786.

A recommendation by the Southern Baptist Commission on the American Baptist Theological Seminary to transfer complete governance and ownership of American Baptist College in Nashville, Tenn., to the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc., was approved.

The recommendation, which requires ratification by the National Baptist Convention and a second vote of SBC messengers in 1996, would end 71 years of cooperative funding and governance of the school.

Messengers also approved resolutions of appreciation for three retiring SBC executives: Landrum Leavell II, president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary; Lynn E. May Jr., executive director, SBC Historical Commission; and Milton Ferguson, president of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

A time for prayer

A call for the SBC to set aside time for prayer for Southern Baptist churches that did not baptize anyone last year was one of 44 motions offered during the meeting.

Cliff Brannon, a messenger from First Baptist Church, Longview, Texas, offered the motion, voicing concern that "10,000 Southern Baptist churches failed to report a single baptism last year."

Brannon, a 46-year vocational evangelist, said this "startling fact" should prompt "godly concern and...real compassion in our hearts" for these churches.

In calling the convention session to prayer, SBC president Jim Henry said the Committee on Order of Business will consider the scheduling of time in future conventions for prayer for these churches.

Floyd Battles Sr., a messenger from Pleasant Valley South Baptist Church in Silver Creek, Ga., moved that no business or educational institution that "condones the selling or serving of alcoholic beverages on its campus or at its social functions" be

allowed to exhibit at any SBC meeting. Stetson University, a Baptist-related school in Florida, recently lifted a ban on the use of alcoholic beverages on campus.

Messengers referred the motion to the SBC Executive Committee for further consideration.

The convention voted to refer to the Executive Committee for study and a report to the 1996 SBC meeting in New Orleans:

■ A proposal by Home Mission Board trustee Wyndham Cook, a member of Memorial Church in Waldo, that calls for a revision of SBC bylaws "to prohibit SBC agency heads and elected staff from suggesting specific individuals for service on their own board of directors."

■ A proposed bylaw addition which classifies spouses of church and denominational employees as church and denominational employees.

■ A motion to increase funding for the HMB by 5 percent.

■ A request that a national Southern Baptist newspaper which is affordable and provides "the true message of the great positive things" taking place in the convention be created.

■ A request for a report concerning procedures for trustee removal.

■ A motion to amend the Bold Mission Thrust goals with a specific reference to rural Southern Baptist churches.

Other motions referred to the Executive Committee for further action included:

■ A call to provide scholarship assistance to African American students attending SBC seminaries, the funding to come from monies not expended due to the convention's action to discontinue a relationship with the American Baptist Theological Seminary.

■ A request to review the financial and ministry impact of the "Covenant for a New Century" restructuring approved by messengers.

■ A motion asking SBC agencies or boards to provide feedback to the originators of motions pertaining to the agencies and boards as to their disposition.

■ A motion that the Executive Committee seek a means "to include in fellowship and work all Southern Baptists."

■ A request to no longer use the term "black" to refer to African American churches and programs.

■ An appeal that messengers be given more opportunity to discuss matters brought to the convention floor.

■ A call to seek "alternate ways of providing adequate funding for Golden Gate Seminary to meet the missions

challenge" of the western United States.

■ A motion asking for the publication of a free devotional prayer calendar incorporating the names of all convention personnel.

A motion calling for the trustees of the Annuity Board to conduct an investigation and audit into the purchase of all electronic data equipment over the past five years was referred to the Annuity Board.

A motion for the Baptist Sunday School Board to update its study course book on the Baptist Faith and Message was referred to the BSSB.

The Home Mission Board will consider a motion that the HMB provide informational materials on Catholicism and the Reformation to agencies, state conventions and local churches.

The Foreign Mission Board and HMB together were assigned consideration of a motion to establish a new mission work among all Southern Baptists titled "prayer missionaries."

A motion concerning the portability of medical insurance for foreign missionaries and other convention employees was referred to the FMB and Annuity Board.

A motion to have the HMB, Brotherhood Commission and Radio and Television Commission plan and implement a televised "national convocation on revival and awakening" was referred to those agencies.

The Denominational Calendar Committee will study a motion calling for the first Thursday of every May to be named Southern Baptist National Day of Prayer.

Motions referred to all entities included:

■ A motion specifying that agencies and boards of the SBC become knowledgeable about the canonization of Scripture.

■ A request that SBC agencies provide closed-captioning on all video materials that they produce.

■ A motion to provide particular convention material in Spanish.

■ A call for investment assets to further moral values.

The convention voted to delete "Southern Baptist Foundation" from SBC Bylaw 15(1)(b) following a motion offered by Julian Motley, Oak Grove Baptist Church, Youngsville, N.C. The action was required to resolve an oversight in a recommendation passed the previous day by the convention relating to amendments to SBC Bylaw 15.

Among the motions ruled out of order, Jesse Russell, a coach and messenger from First Baptist Church, Saratoga, Texas, asked the convention "that single Christians be labeled 'unclaimed blessings' and accepted within that status by the convention." While sympathetic with Russell's motion, the Committee on Order of Business told the coach that his motion was "out-of-bounds."

Henry seeks new covenant, tolerant spirit

Encouraging Southern Baptists to recall but not linger in the past, convention president Jim Henry called on Southern Baptists to charge toward the future with a new covenant and a tolerant spirit.

The annual president's address to the Southern Baptist Convention came immediately after messengers voted to adopt the "Covenant for a New Century" restructuring plan and prior to a celebration of the convention's 150th anniversary.

"It's a two-edged sword we must carry," said Henry. "One edge looking back in appreciation; the other moving ahead in anticipation."

"To change the world, there are things we must change internally and externally. New paradigms can mean new possibilities. The status quo will not do in a rapidly changing world."

Citing Joshua 1:1-7, Henry said covenants are not new, but just as Joshua faced "a series of choices that would keep the continuity of the covenant," Southern Baptists, too, must do certain things to ensure the covenant.

First, there must be a commitment to the purpose, which is found in "giving, building churches, missions and evangelism," said Henry, pastor of First Baptist Church, Orlando, Fla. "Our business is to take the land."

Second, the past must be commemorated to remember God's faithfulness during the conquest, to teach future generations and as a testimony to the nature of God.

Henry acknowledged that one of the biggest challenges faced by Southern Baptists is "passing on the Baptist identity," which he pledged to do even with the dissolution of the SBC Historical Commission as proposed in the restructuring.

Third, Henry noted there will be perils to face.

Perils of impurity will "wink at the flaps of the tents of our hearts — personally, as churches, as denomination...Power, possessions, position, prestige, prominence, promiscuity, like Haman's gallows, stand ready to hang us."

He called for tolerance when faced with perils of incompatibility. "We have brothers and sisters in Christ who have decided differences in philosophy and in some cases doctrine and adherence to the integrity of Scripture who have opted to their chosen Jordan."

"Most of us have crossed the Jordan and stand ready to make a renewed effort to take the land. We have some who have crossed the Jordan with us, who have a tendency to narrow the meaning of conservatives until it becomes a lasso of legalism."

Henry said Southern Baptists have not been "our best" under a "dedication to



Southern Baptist Convention president Jim Henry encouraged Southern Baptists to follow "the way of the unstoppable King of the universe."

narrowness. The great mainstream of our people are biblically conservative and committed to the SBC. We must steadfastly resist the tendency to pit conservative against conservative, but foster a spirit of trust built on the unifying work of the Holy Spirit who binds our hearts in mutual love."

"We should not be so inclusive as to compromise the great basics of the faith, nor so exclusive that we...keep deserving people away from the table of fellowship and service."

— SBC president Jim Henry

Henry cautioned Southern Baptists against "two tendencies. One, to forget the dramatic renewal to biblical integrity, that kept us from sliding down the slippery slope of compromise. That must be a guarded commitment never relinquished.

"The other is a tendency to be biblically correct but reflect a spirit that is not of our Lord Jesus Christ." Quoting former SBC president Charles Stanley, Henry added, "God can use a man who may be in error, but whose spirit is right; but a man who is right in his theology, but wrong in his spirit, is a hindrance to God."

"How then, shall we live as a family of faith?" he asked. "We must show a practical demonstration of love. The word love should not be just a banner. We must do whatever must be done, at whatever cost, to show this love."

Henry added, "We should not be so inclusive as to compromise the great basics of the faith, nor so exclusive that we become ingrown, and inbred, keeping deserving people away from the table of fellowship and service."

Henry cautioned against the peril of the influence of culture. "We must keep putting the church in the world and doing everything we can to keep the world out of the church."

"In every legitimate way we should positively impact our world, but we must not depend on Caesar to Christianize our earthly colony."

He urged Southern Baptists to contend with culture "without being contentious and live our faith in dynamic boldness, letting the American Ahab's know there are evangelical Elijahs who carry swords wrapped in grace and hope in Jesus Christ, the ultimate answer to our national nightmare."

Henry challenged Southern Baptists to remember that God is in charge. "Through wars, depressions, financial failures, at least seven major controversies, we have survived and flourished because of our prowess in God's presence," he declared. "If we keep choosing the way of the unstoppable King of the universe, nothing can stop Him and nothing can stop us."

Leaders highlight SBC's 'unfinished task'

Southern Baptists must be empowered for the future with a cooperative spirit, evangelistic fervor and commitment to God's Word, theme devotion speakers told messengers in Atlanta June 20-22.

Nine speakers addressed the 1995 convention theme, "Empowered for the Unfinished Task," during the convention's sesquicentennial that drew an estimated 20,230 messengers to the Georgia Dome.

Southern Baptists "must abandon self" and work together like the people who started the convention in order to complete their mission, SBC Executive Committee president Morris H. Chapman said.

Those who began the SBC had a vision of a convention that would be "biblically based and mission-driven," Chapman said, adding that today's Southern Baptists "are their legacy."

"It doesn't matter where you come from; it does matter where you are going, and it matters what you do on the way," Chapman said.

The future has a basis in an evangelistic fervor that serves as an inspiration to the SBC today, Roy J. Fish said.

Fish, professor of evangelism at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, reminded messengers of their historical roots.

In 1755, he said, a "formidable army" of 16 Baptists established Sandy Creek Church in North Carolina. Within a short time, the congregation grew to 606 members who were responsible for planting 42 other churches.

When this "invasion of Separate Baptists" occurred, Fish noted, there were only 28 Baptist churches in all of the South. A little more than 30 years later, there were 410 Baptist churches in the South, accounting for more than half the Baptists in the United States.

"They had learned that Spirit-empowered evangelism was the open secret of church growth," Fish declared.

The future also is secured because of Baptists' commitment to the Bible, said W.A. Criswell, senior pastor of First Baptist Church, Dallas.

It is a reason for "infinite thanksgiving to God from my deepest soul that our convention and our churches, our pastors and our leaders have built" the SBC's outreach to the world "upon the infallible and inspired and inerrant and authoritative Word of God," Criswell noted.



Alma Hunt, retired executive secretary of Woman's Missionary Union, and James L. Sullivan, retired president of the Baptist Sunday School Board, were among nine theme devotion speakers who highlighted key aspects of the SBC's history during last week's sesquicentennial celebration.

This commitment "on the part of our forefathers and upon our leaders of our convention at this present moment is a harbinger of portent and a promise of the direction of our convention and our churches in these years that are yet to come," he said.

Emphasizing that "a New Testament church is a miracle," Robert E. Naylor, president emeritus of Southwestern Seminary, said individual churches represent the power of the SBC.

When Christ established the New Testament church, Naylor said, "Jesus announced that which had never been. It was to be the ultimate expression of His divine authority. It was to be the ultimate eventuality of a believer's salvation.

"We Baptists say that our churches are New Testament churches," Naylor added, "first of all because we recognize Jesus as Lord...in the New Testament, we're to find our structure, our doctrine, our mission, the definition of our generation, the expectancy that belongs to every believer in Christ Jesus."

The churches of the convention have been unified by Sunday Schools that present Southern Baptists an opportunity "to unite ourselves behind the Bible we are arguing about," said James L. Sullivan, retired president of the Baptist Sunday School Board and a senior Southern Baptist statesman and historian.

Sullivan urged Southern Baptists to be like Daniel, with "the Bible hidden in the heart, revealed in the light so the world will see the message revealed in us."

Through the 150-year history of the SBC, the denomination has contributed a distinctive soul competency as perhaps its greatest contribution to religious thought,

Baptist statesman Herschel H. Hobbs said.

Hobbs, pastor emeritus of First Baptist Church, Oklahoma City, said, "I want us to look at the phrase, 'the competency of the soul in religion.' Does that mean you could believe just anything and be a Southern Baptist?"

"No," he continued. "What it means is that every soul is made in the image of God...and is capable of having direct dealings with God without the benefit of any intermediary."

Soul competency, Hobbs said, "means that I can be a Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Jew or a Muslim — but I am responsible to God for my choice. It doesn't mean that

there is an equality of all of these so-called faiths, but it means simply that I am free. God does not coerce the individual, or else He would make us puppets on the string of faith."

Affirming that "I am a product of the local Baptist church," Alma Hunt, the 85-year-old retired executive secretary of national WMU, said she is still involved in programs such as Sunday School and WMU.

"I come with a bias in favor of missions," she told the crowd. "It was a missions organization in my church that turned the direction of my life, captured my greatest interest, led me to spend 26 years of my life with Woman's Missionary Union" and 21 years since then in continuing support for foreign and home missions.

Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary president Paige Patterson focused on Southern Baptist education, saying it must be characterized by scholarship which is respectable, reverent, courageous and liberating.

"Our students must be conversant with the ideas of the world in order to minister to the world," Patterson noted.

Greg Horton, a founding partner of Ryan's and Quincy's restaurant chains, and a member of Temple Baptist Church in Simpsonville, S.C., said he and his wife, Bobbie, both became Christians as teenagers and were married before having been disciplined about "how to have a Christian home."

Through trials of life, Horton said he began reading his Bible and praying every day with his family.

"Folks," he advised, "if you're reading God's Word and praying, it's hard to be fighting with one another in your homes, in your churches and...in the marketplace."

Speakers affirm vital missions role of WMU

A standing ovation greeted the report of national Woman's Missionary Union executive director Dellanna O'Brien who told participants at the organization's annual meeting that WMU was "not born by vote of this convention, nor will we die by it." The reference was to the omission of WMU's role from the proposed restructuring of the Southern Baptist Convention.

The value of WMU was echoed by numerous comments from speakers during the June 18-19 WMU meeting at the Georgia World Congress Center in Atlanta.

WMU's omission was addressed by SBC messengers June 20 when the restructuring plan was amended to include a statement of affirmation for WMU's work and contributions to SBC life.

During the WMU annual meeting, one of the 37 missionaries commissioned by the Home Mission Board during Monday's closing session explained that his call into career missions was a direct result of the grace of God and because of WMU.

Ron Lewis, appointed as a church planter in Calabash, N.C., told of his release from a 15-year drug habit when he was saved and a later call to missions after being dragged to a WMU mobilization meeting. "Don't forget where you were when God found you," said Lewis.

William O. Estep, a professor at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and writer of a history of the Foreign Mission Board, told the group that "the SBC would not be what it is today without the WMU."

Carolyn Miller, re-elected for a fifth one-year term as WMU president, said, "Have no fear, we will be the missions organization for the Southern Baptist Convention."

In his challenge to the missionaries at the commissioning service, HMB president Larry Lewis said the relationship of WMU to the HMB "will continue as it has in the past in the years ahead."

HMB executive vice president Bob Banks told the group that the HMB could not have survived throughout its history without the support of the WMU. "There were times when missionaries would have been called home from the field," had it not been for the WMU, he added.

Anise McDaniel, a 101-year-old woman from Clinton, Miss., told the gathering, "The world has come to our doorstep. We don't have to go overseas to do missions. There's a wonderful opportunity to do missions at home."

She emphasized that dedicated women will "do the work and keep the principles of Christianity. No matter what we're called, dedicated women will do the work."

Her words supported an earlier report



National WMU executive director Dellanna O'Brien told reporters that an amendment to the SBC restructuring plan affirms WMU's presence and partnership in the denomination. The amendment affirmed "the continued voluntary contribution of Woman's Missionary Union in mobilizing mission prayer support, promoting missions offerings and stimulating the missionary spirit" within the SBC.

from Linda Johnson, a home missionary based in Atlanta, who told the women about the Christian witnessing effort planned for the 1996 Olympics. These include a sports New Testament with the plan of salvation, a throwing disc which

functions as a tract with the plan of salvation in six languages, lapel pins for conversation starters, and an interactive pocket guide to the Olympics which is also a tract.

As part of an introduction to the WMU's next ministry emphasis, former SBC president Jimmy Allen told the story of the physical destruction of his family by AIDS. Allen, chaplain at Big Canoe Chapel in Big Canoe, Ga., said his daughter-in-law and grandson have died from AIDS.

WMU is producing materials to help churches minister to people with AIDS. WMU suggests several avenues of involvement: prayer, education and local and global ministry. Practical prayers include asking God for a vaccine, as well as preventive education, therapies and methods for compassionate care.

A mission offering during the meeting raised \$10,046 for the WMU's Vision Fund. O'Brien reminded the women that in 1994 they had led in the promotion of the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions of nearly \$86 million and for the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for home missions of \$37.18 million. Cumulative offerings for both since they began more than a century ago total more than \$2 billion.

"What person could deny the steadfast loyalty and exemplary service of the membership of WMU?" O'Brien asked. "The need of the world is too urgent, the call to share Christ with the lost of our generation and the next is too demanding to sideline the work of hundreds of thousands of committed, loyal partners in missions."

WMU executive board approves budget

Woman's Missionary Union executive board members approved WMU's 1995-96 operational budget and selected Louisville, Ky., as the next site for a National Acteens Convention during its semiannual meeting June 17 in Atlanta.

The board, which met prior to the opening of the 1995 WMU annual meeting, accepted the recommendation of its finance committee to set the 1995-96 budget at \$14,879,000.

The Louisville, Ky., NAC meeting will be July 1-4, 1998. NAC is a national gathering for Acteens, WMU's organization for girls ages 12 through 17 and their leaders.

The first NAC was in 1972 and has been held on a five-year cycle since. The most recent NAC was in June 1994

in Birmingham, Ala. The 1998 convention was set one year early so that it would not create budget conflicts for churches wanting to send their youth to YouthLink 2000, simultaneous rallies set for Dec. 29, 1999, to Jan. 1, 2000, across the country.

In other business, the executive board set the 1996 goal for the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions at \$100 million and \$50 million for the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for home missions.

Board members also approved the components of the 1996-97 social issue emphasis, Project HELP: Child Advocacy. The national project will seek to involve Southern Baptist churches and individuals in understanding and meeting the needs of children.

Reports range from records to resignation

Southern Baptist missions agency leaders reported record gains in their work while heads of agencies dissolved under the adoption of the "Covenant for a New Century" reorganization plan focused on change and cooperation. Agency reports were presented June 20-22 to messengers attending the Southern Baptist Convention in Atlanta.

Foreign Mission Board

God has given Southern Baptists a vision to take the gospel to the world, said Jerry Rankin, president of the SBC Foreign Mission Board. He reported gains in missions strength across the globe, including 545 persons appointed as missionaries during the past year, for a net increase of 123 missionaries, the largest gain in almost 20 years. Another 300 persons are awaiting appointment.

Rankin reported that baptisms overseas, which had surpassed a quarter of a million for the past two years, increased 15 percent and exceeded 300,000 for the first time.

"We were empowered by resources you provided," Rankin told Southern Baptists, acknowledging receipt of the highest Cooperative Program funds and a record \$82.9 million in Lottie Moon Christmas Offering funds.

Home Mission Board

Southern Baptist churches are well on their way to reaching many Bold Mission Thrust goals related to home missions, Home Mission Board Larry Lewis told SBC messengers.

Lewis said Southern Baptists now have 4,913 home missionaries, only 87 short of the Bold Mission Thrust goal of 5,000 home missionaries by the year 2000.

He also noted that Southern Baptist churches baptized 378,453 people in 1994, an increase of 30,000 over 1993. Lewis noted that was the largest increase in his eight years as HMB president.

Southern Baptists also started 1,286 new congregations last year. The convention now has 39,910 constituted churches and about 8,000 missions, bringing the total number of congregations to nearly 48,000.

"We are well on target of reaching the goal of 50,000 congregations by the year 2000," Lewis declared.

Brotherhood Commission

Emphasizing the themes of transformation and cooperation, Brotherhood Commission president James Williams delivered one of his last reports to the SBC on the work of his agency as a free-standing commission. Speaking with obvious emotion, Williams said institutions, like individuals, are bound to change with the times.

Messengers earlier adopted a report to merge the Brotherhood Commission, Radio and Television Commission and Home Mission Board into a new organization to be named the North American Mission Board.

Disaster relief volunteers were applauded for their work. American Red Cross president Elizabeth Dole has noted that of the 18 million meals provided by the Red Cross since 1990, Southern Baptists have prepared 80 percent of them.

Baptist Sunday School Board

Stressing their role as partners in ministry, Baptist Sunday School Board staff highlighted a year of accomplishments during their annual report.

"We only succeed if we provide resources and services that help you minister where you are," said president James Draper. He said some of the year's highlights have included selling the 1 millionth copy of "Experiencing God," the board's fastest-selling discipleship course, and expansion of True Love Waits.

Draper also announced a new bookstore price-matching

campaign. In response to messengers' questions last year about the price of Baptist Book Store material, Draper said bookstores will match any advertised price for items in stock.

Historical Commission

While saddened by the convention's action dissolving their agency, Historical Commission leaders "pledge our complete cooperation in this difficult task," said Slayden Yarbrough, interim executive director.

"We are deeply saddened by the action of the convention which calls for the dissolution of the agency," said Yarbrough, who delivered the commission's report to the convention. "We do, however, pledge to work with integrity with the Executive Committee in carrying out the wishes of the convention."

Yarbrough added praise for Lynn E. May, executive director for the past 24 years, who was unable to attend the convention. Yarbrough called May "a friend to all who love Baptist history."

He also praised the commission itself. "It became a model for denominations throughout the United States who wanted to preserve and do their history with integrity and efficiency."

Education Commission

Stephen P. Carleton, executive director of the Southern Baptist Education Commission, thanked Southern Baptists for 80 years of support of the agency now scheduled to be dissolved as part of the "Covenant for a New Century" plan.

Carleton said the commission, charged with promoting the interests of 69 convention-related seminaries, college and schools, will now look to the Southern Baptist Association of Colleges and Schools to carry on the tasks of the Education Commission.

"It is my feeling that the Association of Baptist Colleges and Schools will continue to exist and the 63 schools that will not be a part of the national ministry strategy will continue in their own way to serve you well as Southern Baptists," Carleton said.

Stewardship Commission

If Cooperative Program gifts increase 5 percent in the next four months, Southern Baptists will reach their goal of \$150 million, said Ronald E. Chandler, president of the Southern Baptist Stewardship Commission.

Last year, more than \$142 million was given through the Cooperative Program. The \$150 million goal was adopted in recognition of the convention's 150th anniversary.

The commission is one of the organizations to be eliminated in the convention reorganization. The Stewardship Commission's responsibilities will be divided between the Baptist Sunday School Board and the SBC Executive Committee.

Southern Baptist Foundation

The Southern Baptist Foundation also will be eliminated in the SBC reorganization, and will be merged with the Executive Committee. In the foundation's report, president Hollis E. Johnson noted that the foundation's market value increased by \$8 million last year to a record \$166.7 million. Last year, the foundation's investments produced more than \$10 million income for Baptist institutions, agencies and individuals.

Annuity Board

The Southern Baptist Annuity Board will enter its fourth year without a premium increase due to increased participation and sound financial investment, said president Paul Powell.

Much of the report was devoted to a video on the Adopt an Annuitant program which permits Southern Baptists to designate \$50 a month to help the several thousand retired Southern Baptist ministers and widows living below the poverty level.

Recall heritage, recover zeal

Mohler calls Baptists to affirm 'great essential truths of biblical faith'

Southern Baptists must continue to defend their doctrines and convictions even after 150 years or expect to die a deserving death, R. Albert Mohler Jr. warned in the convention sermon at the SBC's sesquicentennial meeting.

Mohler, the president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, also challenged Southern Baptists to recall their heritage by renewing a passion for God, recovering a zeal to share the gospel and refocusing denominational programs to assist local churches.

Using Joshua 4 as a text, Mohler said there are truths Southern Baptists need to mark just as the Israelites had a memorial of stones from the Jordan River to remind them of what God had done. Much of his message focused on the need to uphold biblical truth in the church and culture.

While Southern Baptists "are a people of deep evangelical conviction," there is a danger they will "become a cut-flower denomination," one which appears beautiful but is dying because it is cut off from its roots, Mohler said.

"We live in an age which denigrates, rejects and compromises God's revealed truth," he warned. "We see in our midst the development of denominational amnesia which will quickly issue into theological compromise and doctrinal declension."

"When a denomination begins to consider doctrine divisive, theology troublesome and conviction inconvenient, consider that denomination well on its way to a well-deserved death," he said. "We take our stand upon the great essential truths of biblical faith, even when the world is at war with that truth."

"I bring a report from the front lines as I speak to you today," said Mohler, who has faced criticism for his decisions which led to the termination of Diana Garland as dean of the Carver School of Church Social Work and from homosexual activists for preaching against homosexual sin. "These are not easy days, and this is no season for the faint of heart. Our battles are not over, nor will they ever be."

"This denomination has experienced years of difficult struggle and painful conflict as we have been determined to see the truth of God's holy Word taught, defended and proclaimed. But the tendency of denominations and institutions and anything human hands touch and human beings lead is to drift away from allegiance to the truth. A humble determination to see that this drift does not happen is required at all times, by



Southern Baptist Theological Seminary president Al Mohler challenged Southern Baptists during the 1995 convention sermon to combat "denominational amnesia which will quickly issue into theological compromise and doctrinal declension."

all people of God, by all churches."

Many Southern Baptists are ill-prepared to deal with a culture marked by relativism, secularism and paganism, Mohler said.

Southern Baptists "have lived for generations in a cultural comfort zone but, brothers and sisters, we are about to find ourselves outside that zone and in the battle whether we want it or not," he said.

While Christians are commissioned to reach out in love with the gospel, "we are also described by our Savior as salt and light," Mohler emphasized. "We find ourselves living in the midst of an age which wants neither salt nor light, but it is hanging by a thread in the desperate need of confrontation with biblical truth."

'We must stand firm'

Among the truths compromised by the contemporary church is the exclusive nature of the gospel of Jesus, he said.

"The most wonderful, momentous truth in all the world is this: Jesus saves," Mohler affirmed. "But we must stand firm in preaching that there is only one name under heaven and earth whereby we must be saved, and that is the name of Jesus Christ."

The SBC was founded as a "convention of churches established for the urgent purpose of reaching the lost with the only gospel that saves," he said. "We often repeat to ourselves that missions and

evangelism are the heartbeat and focus of our energies, but I wonder if those who founded this convention would recognize in us that same urgent purpose."

While Southern Baptists have "history's largest foreign missionary force," the SBC is declining in baptism ratio and a majority of Southern Baptist churches are plateaued or worse, Mohler said.

"I believe we must hear our forefathers and foremothers asking, 'How is it that we did so much with so little, and you do so little with so much?'"

Southern Baptists need to remember the convention "is not an end but a means" to help churches fulfill the Great Commission, he said. "If we keep this right, we will never, as a denomination, go wrong. But if we get this wrong, we'll never be right."

There is a need also for Southern Baptists to not only thank God for His faithfulness in their first 150 years but to regain a passion for Him, Mohler said.

"We are not a generation marked by passion," he lamented. "This happens to denominations as well. Passion can be lost in programs and progress reports and institutions and calendars. In doing what is good, we may fail to do what is best."

"What would God do, brothers and sisters, with a denomination of churches driven and possessed by a passion for Him?"

'High and Lifted Up'

Pastors' Conference speakers challenge participants to preach Christ

Telling Southern Baptists "you can't just sit there," Chuck Colson urged participants at the Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference to become politically active and to "overcome evil with good."

Colson, a member of First Baptist Church, Naples, Fla., is founder and chairman of the board of Prison Fellowship Ministries. An aide to former president Richard Nixon, Colson was imprisoned for his role in the Watergate scandal that led to Nixon's resignation as president.

A month after his release from prison, Colson recalled, he was invited to speak to the 1975 Pastors' Conference. "It was there that I discovered Southern Baptists and shortly after I was baptized and joined a Southern Baptist church," he said.

"But look at what has happened in those 20 years. The year 1975 was the year of the evangelical," he observed. Noting the popularity of presidential candidate Jimmy Carter and athletes professing their Christianity in public, he added, "It was the biggest thing to be born again."

"Now 30 percent of Americans don't want a fundamentalist as their neighbor," he said. "How have we gone from the most fashionable group to the most feared group?"

To change America, Colson declared, Christians must show the country that "we worship the King, not the kings of the world."

"We've got to begin to see the world through God's eyes — a biblical world view," Colson said. "The only way we can turn this country around is for Christians to go to their secular neighbors" and spread the news of Christ.

The June 18-19 Pastors' Conference focused on the theme, "High and Lifted Up."

"I am here to encourage you, to tell you there is a reason to be encouraged despite the extreme difficulty you may be facing," John MacArthur said. "We need a vision of the glorified Christ."

MacArthur, pastor of Grace Community Church in Sun Valley, Calif., added, "We need the Lord high and lifted up so we can get things in perspective... We are called to minister in a sense of awe, of reverence, of holy fear."

The future of the United States is contingent upon Christians proclaiming Christ high and lifted up, Fred Luter warned.

"I believe America's greatest problem is she's suffering from a severe case of spiritual malnutrition," said Luter, pastor



Charles Colson, a former Watergate conspirator and founder of Prison Fellowship Ministries, urged Southern Baptist pastors to "overcome evil with good."

of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church in New Orleans. "And the only remedy, the only antidote, the only hope is for the church to stand up and be the church and lift Him up and proclaim the name of our Lord and Savior to a dying world."

Ravi Zacharias, an Atlanta-based speaker and author, noted violence in society is now being blamed by psychologists on a lack of fathers in the home. "If there are no

heaven and hell would increase our gratification to God and stir the waters of our baptismal pools," Patterson noted. "Culture has almost blinded us to the yawning chasm of eternity."

God has given the church eternal values that will survive through history and that will work in any culture, said Gene Getz, senior pastor of Fellowship Bible Church North, Plano, Texas.

"The only way we can turn this country around is for Christians to go to their secular neighbors" and spread the news of Christ.

**—Charles Colson, founder,
Prison Fellowship Ministries**

fathers in the home and violence is breaking out, what else could we have expected when we evicted the creator Father, the Father who has made us? We have evicted Him from the cosmic scene. That's why we are living in a world which has gone so wrong."

"Whatever you do, don't miss heaven," exhorted Paige Patterson, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

"An adequate consciousness of both

"The tragedy of today is that we too often serve the organization instead of allowing the organization to serve the purpose of Jesus Christ," Getz said.

"It is so easy to lock into tradition rather than the truth — into form over function," Getz added. "Our methodology should grow out of our commitment to the Word of God."

Jerry Vines said sin is as old as the Garden of Eden yet as current as what is happening in the U.S. today. "Sin is a serious matter — our contemporary culture would have us believe otherwise," said Vines, co-pastor of First Baptist Church Jacksonville, Fla.

Sinners don't need their transgressions whitewashed; they need to be washed white, he added. "It is the high cost of cleansing sin that required the shedding of blood on Calvary," he concluded.

'It's time for revival,' Floyd declares after 40-day fast

By Russell N. Dilday
Associate Editor, Arkansas Baptist

Declaring that "it's time for revival," Arkansas Baptist pastor Ronnie Floyd told participants during the Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference of his recent fasting "that changed my life."

He said his 40-day fasting period was a call from God. "The Lord spoke to me and told me to pray and fast for

40 days for revival in America, my church and in my life," he remarked. "I thought it was unusual. I thought it was extreme.

"But honestly, it has been the clearest call in my life since my call to ministry," he declared. "Oh, what God did in my life. Because of that journey with God, my life will never be the same."

Floyd said his fasting experience "answered the question, 'What is spiritual revival?' I believe today that spiritual revival is the manifested presence of God in your life."

Preaching from the book of Haggai, Floyd said, "I believe with all my heart that God is going to bring a mighty spiritual revival before He comes again. It will transcend all denominational lines, all cultures, all ethnic groups, all races.

"Haggai called the people to a renewed courage and faith in God," he emphasized. "He called people to reorder their priorities. Today I want to share with you this message of God. I'm going to call you today to get with God and to deal with your life."

Floyd highlighted three "specific times, three specific challenges" given in the passages leading to revival.

■ A time of sin. "There are two sins mentioned time and time again that are dominant in our '90s culture: Neglecting God and His agenda and the sin of self-indulgence," he noted. "The problem with America today has little

to do with politics, or the immorality racing strong in our land. It is that God's people are neglecting God. They have put God on the back burner of their lives and no longer have a passion.

"We are the reason that God is judging America today," he said. "It is our fault that 1.5 million babies are aborted every year, pornography is on the \$10 billion level, our schools are war zones, and our churches are dead.

It is our fault the people in our land no longer yearn for God."

Warning participants of "the sin of self-indulgence," Floyd described self-indulgence as "nothing more than egotism. It is self-worship. God is not pleased where many of us are. When pride walks into our churches, God walks out."

■ A time for evaluation and

repentance. "I challenge you to evaluate. It is time for you to change, for you to repent of sin," he urged. "When is the last time you stood in front of people and said you've been freed of a sin? It is time for repentance beginning with you, the leaders of God.

"Repentance will come inwardly," he said. "How can this revival come? God wants all of your heart. He is sick of half-hearted commitment."

■ A time for revival. "It is time to stop comparing our churches. All it does is give us an ego trip and all that that junk means," he said. "I'm no longer going to worship the unholy trinity of baptism, buildings and budgets. It is possible God can bring a revival to a preacher. It has come to this one. We need to go back home praying, fasting for spiritual revival.

"It's time for revival," Floyd concluded. "It is time for us to repent of sin, to seek God with our whole heart and for God to make a God-powerful, soul-searching, glory-filled revival. It can happen. You need to let go and let God do what He needs to do."



Springdale pastor Ronnie Floyd called on Southern Baptists to "let go and let God do what He needs to do."

"It was on Calvary that Jesus Christ was between two thieves high and lifted up," said John Phillips, author and minister from Memphis, Tenn. He said Christ's crucifixion brought a "horror of great darkness" in which God reached out and put His hand on the sanctuary.

As Jesus hung on the cross at Calvary, God put His hand upon the veil and rent it so it was "hanging like a ruined rag," he said. "Now God was saying, 'Come on in, whenever you like and stay as long as you like. Ask for anything you like.'"

Adrian Rogers said when one recognizes Christ as his Savior, he is born for battle. "You were born for victory—God is calling us to victory."

Rogers said the people of God must take hold of the weapon of God but let God's strength be their strength.

It is time Christians depended on God and what He can do, said Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church, Cordova, Tenn. He added, "Don't get the idea it is always going to be all honey and no bees."

With an emphasis on strengthening the family in the midst of this battle, Jerry Sutton, pastor of Two Rivers Baptist Church, Nashville, Tenn., noted it is not just secular families who are under attack today. "Many ministry families are on the rocks."

Sutton challenged his listeners to make family a priority by loving one another, modeling what they believe and guiding and guarding their children.

"The homes of pastors are under greater attack and experience greater crises than ever before," agreed Danny Akin.

"I have never met a man who lost his ministry because they spent too much time with their wife and children," said Akin, dean of students at Southeastern Seminary. "My church will not suffer if I give my best to my Savior, wife and children."

"While men are looking for strong starters, God is looking for finishers," Jack Graham, pastor of Prestonwood Baptist Church, Dallas, told conference attendees.

"If we finish strong, it's because of the One within us. He alone can get us across the finish line," Graham said, emphasizing that Christians must be determined to "stay after souls, stay in Scripture, keep family strong and be accountable to others."

Johnny Hunt, elected as president of the 1996 Pastors' Conference, said: "It is my prayer that Jesus will continue to be lifted high." Hunt is pastor of First Baptist Church, Woodstock, Ga. Bob Piton, of Carboy Woods Baptist Church, Memphis, Tenn., was elected as the conference's vice president. Elected secretary-treasurer was Paul Childress, Concord Baptist Church, Granite, N.C.

Church news



ARKANSAS ALL OVER

By MILLIE GILL

East Side Church in Osceola observed its 25th anniversary with a homecoming June 4. The church, organized in 1969 with 42 charter members, has a current membership of 408. More than 100 attended the anniversary celebration that included Sunday School, morning worship, a noon fellowship meal, an afternoon gospel music program featuring groups from First Church in Luxora and the host church, recognition of charter members and a memorial service. Tom Doty is pastor.

Immanuel Church of Magnolia was in revival June 7-10 with Wallace Edgar and James Staggs serving as leaders. Miss Arkansas Beth Anne Rankin spoke to youth June 9, as well as presenting special music. Other guest musicians were Miss Northwest Arkansas Erin Wheatley, Mike Goodwin, Josh Kee, Leah Jo Wilson, Renee Eads, Paul Whitley, Maxine Shapley and the Men of Calvary. Cliff Mayton is pastor.

Springdale First Church music ministry will present its fifth annual summer freedom celebration July 2 at 9:30 a.m. "Revive Us, O Lord" is the theme for the musical that involves approximately 400 members in the choir, orchestra, drama cast and crew.

Ashdown First Church honored pastor Butch Riddle June 11 with a luncheon and fellowship in recognition of his fifth anniversary of service. He and his wife, Glenda, were presented with a love offering.

Rogers First Church music ministry presented a "Down Home Singing" June 25 which included several ensembles from the church, as well as old-fashioned congregational singing and a message from pastor Ben Rowell. Other special musical events to be held include patriotic worship services July 2; an instrumental worship night July 9; the Ambassador Singers, a Korean touring choir, July 23; a youth orchestra weekend July 29-30; the Davis Sisters in concert Aug. 13; and a composer weekend with Dick Baker Aug. 26-27.

Wardell Church will have a homecoming celebration July 30 in conjunction with the 150th anniversary of the Southern Baptist Convention. Activities will include Sunday School at 9:30 a.m., morning worship at 10:20 a.m., a carry-in dinner at noon and an afternoon service at 1:20 p.m.

Monette First Church is planning a "Note Burning Day" July 9 to celebrate the final payment of its 15-year indebtedness through a bond program. All former pastors, interim pastors and church members will participate in activities that will in-

clude the noteburning as a part of the 11 a.m. worship service, followed by dinner-on-the-grounds and an afternoon musical program. Bert Self is pastor.

Obituaries

Ray Morgan of Batesville died May 13 at age 74. He was a member of Rehobeth Church of Moorefield where he had served as a deacon since 1948. Survivors are his wife, Edna, and two sons, John David and Bobby.

James Benton Wofford of Conway died May 26 at age 87. He was a Baptist minister, having served churches in Arkansas and California. He also served as a missionary, working among the Navajo Indians in Arizona. Wofford, a veteran of World War II and the Korean war, began the first Vacation Bible School on Guam. He was a member of First Church in Conway. Survivors are his wife, Faye Terrell Wofford; a son, James Terrell Wofford of Montgomery, Ala.; and a sister.

Roy Vernon Cook of Texarkana died June 16 at age 66. He was a retired Southern Baptist minister, having served Faith and Calvary churches of Texarkana, Lonoke Church and South Highland Church of Little Rock as well as churches in Louisiana. Survivors are his wife, Beverly Coleman Cook of Texarkana; four sons, Roy Cook Jr. of Tifton, Ga., Tim Cook of Benton, Mark Cook of Hoboken, N.J., and Greg Cook of Pensacola, Fla.; two daughters, Karen Cook of Maumelle and Jennifer Cook of Little Rock; one brother; and four grandchildren.

Staff changes

Richard "Ricky" Ernest Lee has accepted the call to serve as pastor of First Church in Booneville, going there from Mount Olive Church in Crossett where he has been pastor for four years. He previously served as pastor of First Church in Prescott and Malta Church in DeKalb, Texas. In addition, Lee was interim pastor of University Church in Ruston, La., and a staff member of Temple Church in Ruston. Lee is a graduate of Louisiana Tech

University in Ruston and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He and his wife, Rickie Lynn, have two children, Stephen Richard and Bryan David.

Scott Miller began serving June 4 as pastor of Oak Grove Church in Van Buren, going there from First Church of Plainville. He is a graduate of the University of Central Arkansas and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Miller and his wife, Tana, have two children, Shelby and Nathan.

R.L. Williams has accepted the call to become pastor of Nimmons Church. He previously has served churches in Arkansas, Missouri and Michigan.

Russell Roderick began serving June 18 as full-time youth minister of First Church in Hazen, coming there from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He and his wife, Heather, are originally from Missouri.

Roland W. "Lanny" Loe has announced his resignation as pastor of Cornerstone Church in Texarkana, effective June 18. Loe has served the church since its 1988 merger with another Texarkana church in a transitional community. He currently is a member of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention Executive Board and previously has been pastor of Piney Grove Church of Lewisville as well as churches in Texas and Utah. He has accepted the call to join the staff of First Baptist Church of Broken Arrow, Okla., as associate pastor to the staff and minister of missions. Loe is a graduate of East Texas Baptist College in Marshall, Texas, and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He and his wife, Isabel, have two children, Samantha Isabel and Toni Elizabeth.

Robert Norton resigned May 28 as bivocational pastor of Elxir Church at Harrison, following more than six years of service. A graduate of Williams Baptist College, Mid-America Seminary and Dallas Baptist University, he is co-owner of a Harrison construction company. Norton and his wife, Vicky, reside at 210 Coy Street in Harrison; phone 501-743-4198.

Ordinations

Big Fork Church at Mena ordained Tom Curtis in the deacon ministry May 28.

Indian Springs Church of Bryant ordained Mark Akers, Rich Cowell, Dennis Haynie, Tim Huddleston and Hidehiro Kanai to the deacon ministry June 4.

Lancaster Road Church of Little Rock recently ordained Dale Ford to the deacon ministry.



Jim Lagrone, pastor of First Southern Church in Bryant (above, right), helped messengers clear registration problems in his role as a member of the SBC credentials committee. Kathy and Trey Berry (below, at left) of Ouachita Baptist University answered the questions of visitors to Ouachita's booth in the SBC exhibit area.



Arkansans at the SBC

From conducting business to leading worship experiences, Arkansas Baptists were active participants in last week's Southern Baptist Convention. Seven Arkansas Baptist youth participated in the 110-voice choir (below) which sang for the SBC annual meeting the day before leaving for a singing tour of England.



Southern Baptist Home Mission Board president Larry Lewis talks to HMB trustee Ed Harrison (above), pastor of Dollarway Church in Pine Bluff, during dedication ceremonies of the HMB's new national headquarters located in Alpharetta, Ga. Tom Cox of Mountainburg (left, center) was elected national president of the Conference of Southern Baptist Evangelists.

Crossover '95: More than 1,380 conversions

More than 1,380 people made professions of faith as a result of Crossover Atlanta, according to preliminary reports.

The evangelism thrust preceding the Southern Baptist Convention also trained hundreds of people to share their faith, offered ministry to area residents and resulted in prospects for local churches.

Crossover saturates areas with the gospel and creates a climate to discuss spiritual issues, said Darrell Robinson, Home Mission Board vice president for evangelism.

"Crossover has a tremendous catalytic effect across the Southern Baptist Convention as people see and experience different models of evangelism," he said.

Crossover Atlanta included neighborhood surveys, block parties, street evangelism, preaching in local churches and, this year for the first time, a sports ministry in local youth detention centers.

Neighborhood surveys: Teams of two went door-to-door in areas near 65 churches. Surveyors asked residents whether they were involved in a church, sensed an increase in spiritual concerns or had any prayer requests.

The teams approached 10,563 homes, conducted 3,588 surveys and presented the gospel 1,366 times. They reported 122

professions of faith and 1,406 prospects.

Block parties: Local churches hosted 24 block parties. In initial reports, 17 had reported 558 professions of faith. In an evangelistic block party, churches invite local residents for food, entertainment and fellowship. Members then share a Christian witness with guests.

The parties attracted 4,552 guests. Participants distributed 4,150 Bibles and tracts. A Christian witness was presented 2,260 times, organizers said.

T.G. Ashford, pastor of New Jerusalem Missionary Baptist Church, called the party at his church an answer to prayer. About 60 people became Christians at that party.

"I believe it will have a great impact on our total community," he added. "The smaller children were excited to know, 'Is this what church is all about?'" He said the Lord had given him a vision for his church to reach into the community, but he didn't know how to assemble the resources until he received a brochure about Crossover.

Sports ministry: A 12-member softball team from Kentucky, sponsored by the Brotherhood Commission, played four games and ministered to more than 150 inmates at the youth detention facilities in Fulton and Cobb counties.

"The two things I love most in life are sharing the love of Jesus and playing softball," noted team shortstop Mark Mangum of Louisville. "When you can do both, that's pretty much heaven for me."

Street evangelism: Five teams sang and gave drama presentations of the gospel, resulting in at least 47 professions of faith.

Kevin Phillips of Missouri said a potential fight turned into witnessing opportunities. When a man took a swing at Phillips while he was witnessing, about 50 people gathered around, expecting to see a fight.

Instead, Phillips said, team members jumped at the chance to share the story of Jesus with all who would listen.

Crossover helps put the convention in a proper mind-set for its annual meeting, said Toby Frost, HMB associate director of mass evangelism.

Frost said he is especially excited about block parties because they help reach black and ethnic communities.

"In areas that we thought were traditionally difficult to reach with the gospel, we are excited to have a method that is truly effective at reaching the inner city areas for Christ," he said. "We have finally found an effective bridge across which we can share the gospel."



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Seminary leaders report, host alumni events

One in five American seminary students is enrolled in a Southern Baptist seminary, the convention's six schools reported to messengers at the SBC annual meeting June 21.

William Crews, president of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, stressed the seminary's commitment to provide seminary education through extension sites. Funding is one of the biggest challenges in the regional education approach, Crews said, because the Southern Baptist method of funding seminaries rewards main campus growth and expansion.

Milton Ferguson, retiring president at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, praised the dedicated service of the seminary's faculty and graduates and thanked Southern Baptists for the opportunity to serve as president of the school. Ferguson is retiring this year after nearly 23 years as Midwestern president.

Kenneth Hemphill, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, said his first year as president had been one of healing and revival. He noted especially a March chapel service that launched a spirit of revival that spread to Fort Worth-area churches and other states.

Landrum Leavell, outgoing president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, reported the seminary has completed endowment of 19 faculty chairs in its drive to fully endow every faculty position. The seminary also is expanding its use of technology to improve and expand theological education, Leavell said. Interactive video now allows professors at the New Orleans campus to talk with students in off-campus sites, he said.

Albert Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, noted several milestones, including inaugurating the Billy Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Church Growth and offering a new doctor of ministry degree taught entirely in the Korean language.

Mohler acknowledged dramatic changes are taking place at the seminary but said the changes served "the cause of the truth of the gospel, integrity and confession."

Paige Patterson, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, noted an "unprecedented" enrollment increase of 32 percent in the 1994-95 school year. He said another increase of at least 10 percent is projected for the next school year.

During June 21 luncheons, seminary alumni met to elect officers and recognize distinguished graduates for their service.

Midwestern Seminary

An emotional Milton Ferguson shared his last official address with Midwestern Seminary's National Alumni Association.

Ferguson was named as a 1995 honorary alumnus. The program also included the presentation of awards to two other 1995 honorary alumni and two alumni of the year designees.

Honorary alumni included former Midwestern academic dean Vernon Davis and Morton Rose, executive director of Blue River-Kansas City Baptist Association in Missouri.

Alumni of the year included T.O. Spicer Jr., director of missions for Spring River Baptist Association in Missouri, and Sam Turner, a Southern Baptist missionary serving in Kenya.

The association also named James E. White, pastor of First Baptist Church, Newport News, Va., president-elect. The 1995-96 president of the national alumni association is Terry Lamberth, director of missions for Clay-Platte Baptist Association in Missouri.

New Orleans Seminary

"New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary is superior to many, equal to any and second to none," said Landrum Leavell for the final time as the institution's seventh president.

National alumni officers presented a plaque of appreciation to Leavell on behalf of all alumni, expressing love and gratefulness for Leavell's 20 years of service at the seminary.

Junior Hill, an evangelist from Hartselle, Ala., received the seminary's 1995 distinguished alumnus award.

Elected as president of the alumni group was Rex Yancey, pastor of First Baptist Church, Pascagoula, Miss.

Southeastern Seminary

Alumnus Charles Page, pastor of First Baptist Church, Charlotte, N.C., received the school's distinguished alumnus award at a luncheon that included more than 500 participants.

In his address, president Paige Patterson noted the opening of Southeastern Baptist Theological College this spring brought some "negative publicity" that actually prompted greater-than-expected interest.

The seminary will have five extension centers operating by this fall, Patterson said, citing off-campus centers for theological education in Augusta and Gwinnett County, Ga.; Charlotte, N.C.; Norfolk, Va.; and Nairobi, Kenya.

The group elected Julian Motley, a member of Oak Grove Baptist Church, Youngsville, N.C., as president-elect of the national alumni association.

Southwestern Seminary

Financial stability, student recruitment and staying ahead of the needs of the local church are the three greatest challenges facing theological education at the turn of the century, said Southwestern Seminary president Ken Hemphill.

Luncheon participants pledged nearly \$25,000 to the seminary during the luncheon June 21. Two seminary supporters agreed to triple that amount, bringing the total to \$75,000.

Three distinguished alumni awards were presented at the luncheon attended by more than 500 Southwesterners. Honorees included R.C. Campbell, David Gomes and Bob Edd Shotwell.

Buckner is former president of Buckner Baptist Benevolences in Dallas; Gomes is founder and director of "Bible School of the Air" in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; and Shotwell is retired minister of education at Hyde Park Baptist Church, Austin, Texas.

Southern Seminary

Six denominational leaders received 1995 distinguished alumni awards at the annual Alumni and Friends Reunion.

Honored alumni included Jesse Bottoms, Sr., the first African-American to be awarded a Southern Seminary degree, who was honored posthumously. Others recognized were: Charles Carter, pastor of Shades Mountain Baptist Church in Birmingham, Ala.; Theodore Sisk, pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church in Lexington, Ky.; Dan Stringer, who has served Arizona, Florida and Northwest Baptists as executive director of their state conventions; John Lee Taylor, pastor of First Baptist Church of Gainesville, Ga.; and Arthur Walker, who was executive director of the Southern Baptist Education Commission.

Assuming office as president of the Southern Seminary Alumni Association was Gary C. Redding, pastor of First Baptist Church of North Augusta, S.C.

Golden Gate Seminary

Golden Gate Seminary's alumni and friends luncheon was held at the Georgia World Congress Center. In an earlier address, seminary president William O. Crews stressed the seminary's commitment to provide seminary education through extension sites in southern California and Portland, Ore., and planned campuses in Arizona, Denver, and Albuquerque, N.M.

Funding is one of the biggest challenges in the regional education approach, Crews said. However, the school will continue to offer theological education by seeking financial support from Baptist state conventions and other supporters, he said.

Arkansas pages find Atlanta convention 'a lot of hard work'

By Russell N. Dilday
Associate Editor, Arkansas Baptist

For Thomas Gage and James Collins, serving as pages at the 1995 Southern Baptist Convention was "a lot of hard work." Collins and Gage, both members of Lake Hamilton Church in Hot Springs, were two of only 16 Brotherhood Challengers throughout the SBC chosen to serve as pages at the convention. Eight Ateens also served the three-day convention as pages.

The Challengers' duties ranged from delivering messages and operating microphone stations to stocking registration forms and stuffing press mail boxes.

"It was very hard and strenuous," said Gage. "I've tried hard to get four hours of sleep a night. I was going to stay up all night, but my plans have changed."

"They told us it would be hard but I didn't expect this," reflected Collins. "I didn't expect such a large turnout. I'm used to the state convention."

Although the job was challenging, said Collins, it beat "sitting at home and being bored. I could be working and making money, but I'd rather be up here."

"I'd probably be outside fishing and catching nothing," echoed Gage. "But I'm enjoying myself. This would probably be my first choice."

The Arkansas pages received high marks from Jenó Smith, Challengers materials editor for the Brotherhood Commission and co-coordinator for the pages.

"They've done an excellent job in their positions," Smith said, "whether it has been as a runner or getting information at a microphone that goes to the platform."

"They kept long hours," he added. "They are up at 5:30 and we are on site usually by seven and stay till 11 p.m. They

had long hours, quick meals and no complaints."

"Everything was happening pretty fast," Collins noted. "Pages gotta keep moving messages back and forth. If you get tied up it will back up on you and you'll get 30 minutes behind in just five minutes."

It was fitting that the two often worked side-by-side during the convention. "We are both Challengers at our church," said Collins. "We are both active in Bible study, we go to the church and mow for money for camps. We basically do everything."

They were recommended for the positions by Lake Hamilton Church pastor Howard Kaiser.

Collins said his favorite duty was working on the platform "because you get to sit by all the important people.... You are up in front of the cameras."

Gage said his favorite job was registration "because I couldn't sit down. When you sit down you get tired."

They said that working on the floor of the convention changed their perspectives

about the way Southern Baptists do business.

"We just got through changing the entire Southern Baptist constitution," said Collins. "Five minutes of talking can change your whole church life."

"They took away the Brotherhood Commission," interjected Gage, "they elected an African-American (as an officer), changed the convention structure-wise (by adopting the report of the Program and Structure Study Committee) and ethnic-wise (by repenting of past racist practices)."

Both said they want to return to serve as pages during the 1996 Southern Baptist Convention in New Orleans.

"All pages have two chances to make it again," Gage explained, "but the chances of making it again are slim."

The two said that fatigue was the most prevalent part of the job. Despite the fatigue and lack of sleep, though, there were rewards.

Collins said being named to the posts was a "high honor."

Gage agreed. "There are probably thousands of guys who would die for this chance, but there were only 16 of us chosen. That's a privilege."

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On July 9, 1995, Calvary Baptist Church of North Little Rock, Arkansas, will celebrate the 20th anniversary of their Minister of Music, Glen Blevins, with a concert at 6 p.m. followed by a fellowship in the dining room. Friends and non-resident members are urged to join the congregation in this celebration.

For more information, contact the Discipleship and Family Ministry Dept., ABSC, P.O. Box 552, Little Rock, AR 72203 (501)376-4794, ext. 5160

DOMs affirm relationships as key to ministry

Baptist associations are uniquely positioned to assist Southern Baptist churches. That was the message for the Conference of Associational Director of Missions in a June 18-19 meeting.

Affirming that churches are primary and that the association is the most effective way to help them, T.O. Spicer, the group's

president, urged members to "shoot with the precision of a rifleman" as they help churches deal with challenges such as technology and the need for revival.

"All of you have witnessed the irony of seeing a church in a graying community call a youth minister," he said, urging the associational leaders to gather information

from community leaders and share it with churches to help them recognize and adapt to age-group shifts.

Glenn Akins, a researcher for the South Carolina State Convention of Southern Baptists, called for DOMs to take a systematic approach to helping churches solve problems, seeking to deal with root causes rather than treating symptoms.

"Waiting for the congregation to come to you is deadly," he said, urging DOMs to develop relationships within each congregation so laypeople as well as ministers will turn to them when problems develop.

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Position open — Full-time minister of music/youth, Grandview Baptist Church, Anchorage, Alaska. Send a letter of interest to Herb Cotton, Search Committee, 3389 Checkmate, Anchorage, AK 99508. You will be sent a packet of information needed to apply. The deadline for mailing letter of interest is July 31.

Youth/college minister — Harlan Park Baptist in Conway is receiving resumes for a part-time youth/college minister. Tremendous potential in one of the fastest growing cities in Arkansas. Please send resumes to Harlan Park Baptist Church, 1895 Hwy 286 West, Conway, AR 72032, attention Jerry Hogan.

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The Specialist

MINISTERS' WIVES

Garland challenges Christians to invest in children's lives

"As Christians, we must recognize that your children are my children," Diana Garland told more than 500 women gathered for the 40th annual conference of Southern Baptist Ministers' Wives June 20 at Atlanta's Hyatt Regency Hotel.

"Good parents have strong support systems," said Garland, Gheens professor of Christian family ministry and professor of social work at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary since 1983.

Drawing from scriptural examples of Simeon and Anna's blessings on the Christ child, as well as an example from *National Geographic* of gorillas nurturing children in communities, Garland addressed the conference theme of ministry to children.

Garland was invited a year ago to speak during the luncheon. Earlier this year, she was dismissed as dean of the SBT's Carver School of Social Work in a controversy with seminary president R. Albert Mohler Jr. Garland received a standing ovation from the audience at the conclusion of her address.

Family support system

It's easy to lose sight of "the joys, the blessing, the promise of parenting when we carry the burdens all by ourselves," Garland said. She encouraged churches to take on the responsibility of being that support system families need.

"Every child and parent in our church programs need to be adopted by caring adults who know that child's name and gift and interests," she said. "No children should ever come to church and have the only adult with whom they have contact be their Sunday School teacher."

Entwining the lives of children in the life of the church is especially important for children from single-parent homes, Garland emphasized. "These children will make it okay if, and that is a big if, they are imbedded in a loving, supportive community and not plunged into poverty, ...left to fend for themselves," she said. Parents need the support of people who will hold their children, bless them and be aware of their gifts and promise, said Garland.

"Children need aunting, uncling and grandparenting, as well as parenting," she said. "They need an adult who thinks they are special....They need the love of Christ demonstrated in the loving arms of the church."

Also during the luncheon, conference officers reported the establishment of a Distinguished Service Award. The first recipient is Carolyn Weatherford Crumpler, former executive director of national Woman's Missionary Union and current moderator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. Officers will present the award to Crumpler during the 1996 luncheon.

In other action, Betty Baggott of Opelika, Ala., was named president. Jeanette Henry of Orlando, wife of SBC president Jim Henry, will be the featured speaker for the next Southern Baptist Ministers' Wives Luncheon when the SBC meets June 9-11, 1996, in New Orleans.

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BSSB trustees elect two vice presidents

Jimmie B. Carter and Mark Scott were elected to fill vice presidential positions at the Baptist Sunday School Board during a called meeting of BSSB trustees June 21 at the Southern Baptist Convention was in afternoon recess.

Carter, of Dallas, will become vice president of the finance and business services group and BSSB treasurer, effective July 1. Scott, a 12-year employee of the board and interim vice president of the retail group since December 1994, will assume the position July 1 on a permanent basis.

"These two highly qualified men bring a mixture of business skills with tremendous spiritual commitment and churchmanship," president James T. Draper Jr. said. "These men are both outstanding leaders and excellent team members. This completes our executive management group and positions us for increased effectiveness in ministry."

Carter has held executive positions with several Texas corporations since retiring in 1981 as a lieutenant colonel in the U.S. Army. As vice president of finance and business services, he will develop and coordinate the board's financial plans and policies.

He also will be responsible for its accounting practices and relationships with lending institutions and other areas of the financial community. He will oversee the work of more than 500 employees of the business and finance, production

services, facility management, distribution services, human resources and information systems departments.

Carter, a member of First Baptist Church, Dallas, is a graduate of Hardin Simmons University in Abilene, Texas; Southern Methodist University in Dallas; and the U.S. Army War College. He and his wife, Jeanine, are the parents of two sons.

As vice president of the retail group, Scott will lead the nationwide chain of 65 Baptist Book Stores and Lifeway Christian Stores, as well as the board's direct marketing operation. Total employment in the group is approximately 800.

Before becoming interim vice president, Scott served as retail division director and assistant to the vice president for trade and retail markets. Earlier, he managed the board's budget and financial analysis section, 1986-92; served as budget and financial analyst, 1985-86; and was lead internal auditor, 1983-85.

A graduate of Belmont University, Nashville, Tenn., Scott is a certified public accountant. He is a member of Two Rivers Baptist Church. He and his wife, Susan, are the parents of a son and a daughter.

In another matter, BSSB chief operating officer Ted Warren told trustees that revenues of \$115 million in the first six months were 2 percent over budget.

He praised employee efforts at "controlling expenses with good results and a great spirit."

To end the year within budget, Warren said, "We've got to be ahead of budget going into the last quarter and that's where we are."

HMB dedicates new office building

Home Mission Board leaders dedicated a new national office building during the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting, saying the offices will help them accomplish their goal of reaching people for Christ.

In addition to offices for 340 staff members, the building will be used by a new church, said HMB president Larry Lewis. The Church at North Point will meet in the board's 500-seat multi-purpose room.

About 2,000 people attended the open house and outdoor dedication service which was shortened by rain.

The 34-acre site was purchased in 1990, and the building was funded primarily through the sale of the board's former Atlanta location. The new building has approximately 184,000 square feet.

Bob Banks, executive vice president, recognized people and organizations which donated money to furnish specific rooms or projects. "All of the gifts are for one purpose - that people will know Jesus as Lord and Savior. The epitome of that is giving of one's life."

Banks then recognized Joshua Grijalva, who served 52 years as a home missionary, 1941 to 1993, who led in a dedicatory prayer for the building.

William G. Tanner, executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma and former HMB president, summarized the Home Mission Board's 150-year history. "May God continue to work through this agency for one objective: to lead the nation to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ," Tanner urged.

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Alternative conference offers speakers national platform

A small crowd of 300 to 400 Southern Baptists heard words of encouragement and calls to spiritual holiness and servant-hood during the "Building His Church" Preaching and Worship Conference held June 18-19 at Wieuca Road Baptist Church in Atlanta.

The meeting, held the same time as the Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference, provided a national platform to "great Southern Baptist preachers" who have been excluded from the Pastors' Conference program in recent years, said Don Letzring, conference coordinator.

A call for pastors to assume a servant's heart came from Phil Lineberger, pastor of First Baptist Church, Tyler, Texas, who said the model of service came from Jesus, who "worked among people who were constantly rejecting Him."

Lineberger said ministers with servant hearts will demonstrate vision for the person, compassion beyond cynicism and skepticism, devotion from prayer, and action.

Crises in people's lives will never come

at a convenient time, promised William Hull, provost of Samford University in Birmingham, Ala. "How many times have clues and whispers of the hurting gone off like flairs in the dark skies?" he asked. "We can't hear."

A minister needs to seize the moment of opportunity when disaster strikes, he said. "The church needs to be 'ready, vigilant, responsive to experience the pinnacle of life' through ministry."

Brian Harbour, pastor of First Baptist Church, Richardson, Texas, encouraged participants to look beyond their own feelings of inferiority that come from negative input and placing false goals in one's lives. "We are more than conquerors," he said.

Too many congregations are caught up in the bigness syndrome, thinking "maybe we don't quite have it," he said. "Many of us as Christians are paralyzed for the challenges of life. We have confused the idea of humility with the idea of inferiority."

Harbour suggested that the feeling of inferiority can be overcome by remem-

bering who we are, what has been given and what is expected of us.

"We're not about success as the world measures it, we're about faithfulness. Feelings of inferiority will dissolve in the light of graciousness."

Dan Francis, pastor of the First Baptist Church, Nashville, Tenn., cited passages from Acts to plea for a gospel unhindered.

Saying television and movies today are the two most powerful forces in culture, Francis added, "Christ is not against culture. He's seeping his way into culture."

"You and I are custodians of the message of God," he said. "We have to translate so ultimately they know that believing is seeing. We must make sure people know that they can be kings and queens, no matter what they are."

Evangelist Richard Jackson cited Paul's letter to the Colossians as a church whose reputation is worth emulating. Paul told the Colossians he had "heard" about the church and its faith in Christ Jesus. "The church ought to be known for faith and proclamation of Jesus Christ and the gospel. We have drifted from that in many ways."

The church also should be known for inspired love of the saints, Jackson said, which "astounds an unbelieving world."



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Seminary alumni leaders 'grieved,' resign national posts

Citing changes at the institution "that grieve us," two Southern Baptist Theological Seminary alumni leaders have resigned from the alumni organization.

Walter G. Nunn, president of the alumni association, and Howard Cobble, immediate past president, announced June 21 that they were distancing themselves from their alma mater.

Nunn is pastor of University Baptist Church in Huntsville, Ala., and a former president of the Alabama Baptist Convention. Cobble is pastor of Severns Valley Baptist Church in Elizabethtown, Ky., and former president of the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

Another alumni, Susan McBride of Fredericksburg, Va., who originally

accepted the nomination as national alumni president-elect, refused to allow her name to be presented for election. In addition, at least four state association alumni presidents have resigned.

In a prepared statement Nunn and Cobble noted, "From our perspective the institution is being transformed into a school we do not know. We cannot love that which we do not know. We cannot support that which we do not love."

Cobble and Nunn charged that seminary president Al Mohler's "lack of compassion and a heavy-handed administrative style are not consistent with the gospel of love and Christian fellowship."

"I see the theology at Southern being moved to a different era than we have been comfortable with in recent years," Cobble said. He specifically referred to Mohler's view of Calvinism as opposed to the traditional Baptist view of a mixture of Arminianism and Calvinism.

Seminary spokesman Michael Duduit called the alumni leaders' protest "much ado about nothing." He noted that Nunn and Cobble, whose terms would have ended in September, did not have "formal responsibilities" left to complete.

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Convention Uniform

Raging judgment

By David Welch, associate pastor,
Geyer Springs First Church,
Little Rock

Basic passage: Amos 4-5

Focal passage: Amos 4:12, 5:14

Central truth: God hates religious expression that does not change one's behavior.

God's judgment is not at all like the recent earthquake in Russia where over 2,000 people were suddenly killed within two minutes. His anger is much more like the 1980 eruption of Mount St. Helens, where seismic activity, scientific data and belching plumes of ash and smoke warned for months of the impending explosion. It stands as the most massive and powerful explosion recorded in human history. Yet everyone had plenty of time to escape. So it is with God.

An Old Testament example is found in Amos 4-5. Though chilling and hard, the prophet is giving ample warning that an impending explosion of judgment is coming.

Empty, heartless religion brings God's judgment. God was judging Israel for their empty relationship with Him. The Israelites were very religious, but their behavior remained unaffected. Though they over-thought, and over-offered, the expressions were empty. The offerings and sacrifices did not come from hearts that were moved by compassion for helpless, not from hearts who loved justice. They were much like us: selfish, self-centered and blind to their own spiritual ugliness. And God hated it! If our worship is not breaking our hearts for our own sin, or for the lost and helpless world around us, then it is an empty religion that deserves God's most severe judgment.

A genuine desire to "seek good" and "hate evil" is the only remedy. In 5:14, if they would turn to "seek good" and "hate evil," then God would be "with them" and they would "live." God yearns for genuine hearts who simply desire to seek Him. That desire changes everything about a person. It will change one's perspective, attitude, behavior and character.

Prepare to meet thy God (4:12). This is a chilling statement. Amos is declaring that it is over for Israel. It is too late! Ultimately, the Assyrians utterly demolished Israel and over 90 percent of its population was killed by raging warriors. Our empty forms will bring the same judgment, unless we are willing to turn in genuine repentance and "seek good."

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Life and Work

Lord of all

By David Napier, associate pastor,
Immanuel Church, Little Rock

Basic passage: Colossians 1:13-23

Focal passage: Colossians 1:19-20

Central truth: Jesus is the only Lord, and the only Lord we need.

It seems that everywhere we turn today someone is offering a new philosophy, a way to find meaning in life. From horoscopes and yoga to the "new age" movement, people are searching for spiritual fulfillment. Many Christians are alarmed by this trend and think that it is unique to the 20th century. However, we learn from our study of Colossians that this is nothing new. The church at Colossae was mixing man-made philosophies with the simple message of the gospel. Paul's response in our scripture passage is that Jesus is all-sufficient and preeminent.

First, Paul reminds us in verse 15 that Jesus is the image of the invisible God. In Jesus we see God, who is the omnipotent creator. Those who struggle, wanting to "see" God, need only look to Jesus. Since He is the creator, the beginning and the everlasting, nothing can take His place.

Verse 17 reminds us that it is Jesus who "holds everything together." From the stars and planets of the solar system, to the protons, neutrons and electrons of the atom, He holds everything in place and in order. Nature yields itself to His will and order is maintained. The same applies for the Christian whose life is so yielded.

In verse 18 Paul states that Christ alone is head of the church. He is its founder and sustainer. The church does not belong to the deacons, the pastor or any other individual or group. It is not ours, but God's. Those who are unfaithful to the church because they don't like a staff member or teacher, or don't agree with a decision of the body, do a disservice to Christ, not to those with whom they have conflict.

Paul closes with a detailed reminder that Christ is our reconciler. The purpose of this reconciliation is to bring personal holiness to each of us. So many Christians today live defeated lives. They can't move ahead to the promising future God has for them because they can't leave behind the sins of their past. We should remember that to deny the holy standing Jesus gives us before God is to refute the meaning of Christ's death. Therefore, it is imperative that every Christian move beyond the sins of yesterday and claim God's rich blessings for today.

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Bible Book

Wilderness sanctuary

By Marty Watson, pastor, Baring Cross Church, North Little Rock

Basic passage: Ezekiel 4:1-11:25

Focal passage: Ezekiel 11:14-25

Central truth: God promises to be a "sanctuary" for Israel in the wilderness of exile.

As the book of Ezekiel unfolds, the motivation for God's judgment as well as the result of that judgment continues to become clearer. God's charge against Jerusalem is leveled in chapter five when He accuses them of having "rebelled against My judgments by doing wickedness more than the nations.... They have refused My judgments, and they have not walked in my statutes" (Ezek. 5:6). He declares, "My eye will not spare, nor will I have any pity" (Ezek. 5:11). Israel's sin is all the more detestable because she has known the truth and not heeded it. God expresses His grief over their idolatry when He says, "I was crushed by their audacious heart which has departed from Me" (Ezek. 6:9).

The judgment of God concerning Israel is never punitive alone, however. It always carries with it the intention of reconciliation. Although Israel was exiled because of sin, God promises to be a "little sanctuary for them in the countries where they have gone" (Ezek. 11:16). God's judgment of Israel was intended to bring them back to Him. It was intended to break them of their idolatry and remind them of His love.

He promises to gather them "from the peoples," assemble them "from the countries where they have been scattered" and "give them the land of Israel" (Ezek. 11:17). He further promises to "give them one heart... put a new spirit within them and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh" (Ezek. 11:19). His purpose for this promise of redemption is that they "may walk in His statutes and keep His judgments and do them" (Ezek. 11:20a). God then declares that "they shall be My people, and I will be their God" (Ezek. 11:20b).

God's promise to Israel to be their sanctuary even in their exile is a reminder to us of His great love. It is a reminder that God is always reconciling the world to Himself. II Timothy 2:13 says, "If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself." Even when we are unfaithful, our Father remains faithful to His love for us.

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Convention Uniform

No greater love

By David Welch, associate pastor,
Geyer Springs First Church,
Little Rock

Basic passage: Hosea 1:1-3:5
Focal passage: Hosea 3:1-5
Central truth: The greatest truth in our existence: God loves us no matter what.

A man in mid-life crisis had an affair with an 18-year-old co-ed. His wife discovered his infidelity. In utter devastation, she confronted her husband and he immediately left her and filed for divorce and moved in with his young girlfriend. Subsequently, the young girl became pregnant and the man left her as well.

Then, an incredible turn of events. The teenager put the newborn baby up for adoption. When the time came to meet the adoptive mom, she discovered that it was her lover's ex-wife! What an incredible act of sacrificial love and forgiving mercy on the part of this beautiful woman.

Even more powerful is the story of God's forgiveness toward our sinfulness. It is beautifully illustrated in the life and message of Hosea, who marries a woman who continually prostitutes herself. Yet Hosea take her back! This incredible story convinces us of God's immeasurable love for us.

The story teaches us that God's love is constant in all circumstances (2:7). Even when Gomer continued to pursue her lovers, Hosea remained committed to her. So it is with God. Though He may judge you for personal sin, He stands ready to forgive and restore you because His love never ends!

The story contrasts radically God's love with the utter triviality of human affections (3:2). We are so trivial. Gomer stayed with her lovers because they offered her raisin cakes. We stay with lovers (materialism; lust for luxury, etc.) because they offer us an empty fulfillment.

The story teaches us that God's love is willing to restore relationship no matter how terrible the offense (3:1). Hosea is commanded to "go and love (her)." ... even though she was a rebellious adulteress. That is God's love for us. No matter how terrible, nor how constant the sin, God wants us back. Though His love is both tough (judgment) and tender (restoration), it always calls us back.

Life and Work

Rejoicing, responsibility

By David Napier, associate pastor,
Immanuel Church, Little Rock
Basic passage: Colossians 1:24-2:5
Focal passage: Colossians 1:24-27; 2:2
Central truth: Rejoicing and accepting the responsibility of faith leads to Christian maturity.

"What's in it for me?" "What will I get out of it?" These questions reflect an attitude that is prevalent in our world today. Most people don't want to give their time to anything that doesn't allow them to derive some benefit. Paul opens our scripture passage with a totally opposite attitude. As he rejoices in his suffering, his question seems to be: "How much will God let me put into this?" Paul's persecution for the cause of Christ was varied and intense over the years of his ministry, yet he rejoiced! How immature we must seem to God when we complain about minor inconveniences today that keep us from being as faithful as he should. Every day Paul was willing to suffer and even die for his faith.

Paul's perspective was also shaped by his recognition of the responsibility he had as an advocate of the gospel. In verses 25-27, he relates his call. It was not a matter of choice. He was commissioned by God, and understood the importance of being faithful to his assignment. If he had compromised with the Jews and not ministered to the Gentiles, he could have avoided much hardship and suffering. Our commitment to Christ would be much greater if we would take our responsibility as Christians as seriously as Paul.

Paul closes this portion of scripture expressing his desire for Christian maturity for the church at Colossae. The evidence of this maturity is as applicable today as then. First, Paul expresses the desire for all Christians to be encouragers, comforting and lifting one another. Secondly, we should be "knit together in love." The mature Christian seeks to be a peacemaker, not a troublemaker. Christians should also demonstrate enrichment that comes from understanding. Rather than complaining about what we don't have, we should recognize the vast resources we have in Christ. Finally, we should have strong assurance of our salvation through Jesus, "...knowledge of God's mystery, of Christ." Rejoicing in our faith, and accepting the responsibilities of that faith will lead us to develop these characteristics.

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Bible Book

Judging false prophets

By Marty Watson, pastor, Baring Cross Church, North Little Rock
Basic passage: Ezekiel 12:1-14:23
Focal passage: Ezekiel 13:1-16
Central truth: It is a serious transgression to speak falsely in the name of the Lord.

The message of Ezekiel, as well as his contemporary, Jeremiah, continues to fall on deaf ears as the book of Ezekiel progresses. The general attitude of the people is one of apathy. In Ezekiel 12:22 the Lord speaks to Ezekiel and says, "Son of man, what is this proverb that you people have about the land of Israel, which says, 'The days are prolonged, and every vision fails.'" Their response to Ezekiel is that he had prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem, but nothing has happened. They were literally proclaiming Ezekiel to be a false prophet.

The attitude of apathy was reinforced by the numerous false prophets who were predicting a quick end to the exile. God describes these false prophets as men who "follow their own spirit and have seen nothing!" (Ezek. 13:3). He declares them to be like "foxes in the desert" (Ezek. 13:4). He accuses them of having seen a "futile vision" and of speaking a "false divination" (Ezek. 13:7). They are men who claim to speak with the authority of God, who claim to be able to say, "thus saith the Lord" and yet, God has not spoken to them.

God proclaims that their seduction of His people will not go unpunished. God describes the word of the false prophets as a wall "plastered with untempered mortar" (Ezek. 13:10). It will not stand the test of the truth of God. They have caused the people to trust in their lies. They have encouraged them to build upon their falsehoods. Thus God will send a storm to attack their "wall." He promises to "break down the wall you have plastered with untempered mortar" (Ezek. 13:14). He promises to expose them as false prophets, to exclude them from the assembly of Israel, to erase them from the record of the house of Israel, and to refuse them entrance into the land of Israel (Ezek. 13:9).

It is a serious matter to speak falsely in the name of the Lord. God's judgment of the false prophets reminds those of us who are teachers of the awesome responsibility to speak only His truth, speak it only in love, and speak it only as He gives us utterance.

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Madden encourages musicians to personalize worship

Southern Baptist musicians focused their attention on the theme of "We Are God's People" at a two-day conference preceding the Southern Baptist Convention.

About 200 people attended the sessions at Peachtree Corners Baptist Church, Norcross, Ga. Seminars addressed the topics of worship planning, pageants, administration and the differences between psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.

If the church is to accomplish its great mission in the world, God must be its first priority, an Arkansas Baptist music minister told the church musicians.

Lynn Madden, minister of music at Immanuel Church in Little Rock, said worship is the highest form of love — a love given to God.

Worship planning should be a direct outgrowth of a person's relationship to Christ, Madden said. "The church is the bride of Christ and as ministers we've been charged to lead that bride in worship," he said.

Madden defined worship as "a personal, human expression of that relationship by which we honor and praise God as supreme."

During a business session, Bill Green, director of the church music department for the Oklahoma Baptist Convention, was installed as president of the organization.

Hispanic Baptist Fellowship votes to incorporate

In action its leaders described as historic, the Hispanic Southern Baptist Fellowship voted to incorporate and to become a fellowship of churches, rather than just pastors. The group also approved a new name, the National Fellowship of Hispanic Southern Baptist Churches, although the name is still subject to change.

There are 3,478 Hispanic Southern Baptist churches and missions with about 350,000 members. The decision marks the "end of an old era and the beginning of a new era," said Rafael DeArmas, newly elected fellowship president.

"My hope is that we use this to give our Hispanic churches an opportunity to do what Baptist churches do, particularly Southern Baptist churches. What Southern Baptist churches do better is cooperate and do missions work through the Cooperative Program," said DeArmas.

BWA leader: Jesus Christ offers hope to helpless world

Baptists around the world may be in helpless situations, but they are not hopeless because they have Jesus Christ, Denton Lotz, general secretary of the Baptist World Alliance, said in his report June 21 to the Southern Baptist Convention.

The Baptist World Alliance is a worldwide fellowship of Baptists of 180 conventions and unions with ministry in more than 200 countries and a total membership of 38,542,276 in 150,619 churches and meeting places.

"We offer hope because we offer Jesus Christ," said Lotz. "We belong together and you as Southern Baptists are part of that larger family."

Lotz presented a litany of crises within the world that affect Baptists and their efforts to reach the world with the gospel.

In Liberia, a tragedy affects more than 585,000, leaving them without food, clothing, electricity or water. Yet Baptist leaders told Lotz, "We're Christians; we may be helpless but we're not hopeless," he reported.

Lotz told of a visit to the first Baptist church in Nepal, a country closed to the gospel for 200 years which now has 20 churches and 35 missions "because they have hope."

Campus ministers focus on ministry for the 21st century

Exploring the theme, "Charting a Course for the 21st Century," the Association of Southern Baptist Campus Ministers met June 16-18 on the campus of the Georgia Institute of Technology.

Lloyd Allen, a former pastor and campus minister who now heads the department of Christian studies and philosophy at Mississippi College in Clinton, spoke on "Avoiding the Mire of Inauthentic Spirituality."

"A central avenue of spirituality is our denominational identity," Allen noted. Traditional Baptist distinctives, such as soul freedom and the separation of church and state, must be taught and maintained, he said.

Michelle Tooley, a former campus minister who will begin a position as assistant professor of religion at Belmont University, Nashville, Tenn., on Aug. 1, spoke on "Radical Discipleship in a Secular Society: Ethical Challenges for the 21st Century."

She said "radical discipleship" is incarnational, adding that it "unashamedly tackles the problems of society."

Dennis Stokes, campus minister at Northeast Missouri State University in Kirksville was elected 1995-96 president.