


BUREAUS

ATLANTA Martin King, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 898-7522, CompuServe 70420,250
DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 333 N. Washington, Dallas, Texas 75246-1798, Telephone (214) 828-5232, CompuServe 70420,115
NASHVILLE Linda Lawson, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300, CompuServe 70420,57
RICHMOND Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151, CompuServe 70420,72
WASHINGTON Tom Strode, Chief, 400 North Capitol St., #594, Washington, D.C. 20001, Telephone (202) 638-3223, CompuServe 71173,316

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EDITORS' NOTE: This story was written at the request of Baptist Press by a Southern Baptist worker in the third person about his own experience, following an astounding odyssey into the depths of starvation by Somali refugees in Ethiopia. He cannot be identified because of the sensitive situation in that part of the world.

Penetrating questions launch
spiritual odyssey in Africa

Baptist Press
6/17/94

ORLANDO, Fla. (BP)--Two questions asked by six Somalis in three different locations in Ethiopia caused unrest in the soul of a Southern Baptist relief coordinator working in Somalia.

Thus an astounding spiritual odyssey began, the relief coordinator told a group of Southern Baptists meeting in Orlando for the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Somalia in 1990 was a mess. Malnutrition was 87 percent among the general population. Death was a daily companion to food distribution, as those who died during the night had to be buried before those who survived the night could be fed.

At the height of the famine, a handful of Southern Baptist volunteers and relief workers provided food, medical assistance, fresh water and shelter for 50,000 persons in 10 refugee centers and 27 villages in three countries. And for every pound of food delivered, there seemed to be a ton of weapons being used by children and gunmen -- pawns of the infamous warlords of Somalia.

The workers had enough to do! But enough apparently wasn't enough.

Reports began to filter in about 1 million-plus Somalis dwelling in the desert region of Ethiopia, far from the CNN cameras and international concern. Research showed that an evangelical presence was last felt in that region in 1972 when a Presbyterian agriculturalist was martyred during the Ogaden War between Somalia and Ethiopia.

While 77 relief agencies were working in and out of Mogadishu, the capital of Somalia, only two were bringing any type of aid to a million people in the Ogaden who were perishing at high rates because of famine and civil war.

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If people die in the desert and no one is there to hear their cries, do they actually make any noise? The world's response made it seem they did not.

But an uneasiness fell upon the Somali relief team in October 1992 that caused them to think again of the Ogaden region. Reason after reason was given for not going -- more couldn't be done; ministries were demanding 18-hour days in three countries; just getting to the Ogaden would take three days by chartered flights from Nairobi, Kenya. Who could take a relief representative there? What about food, water, transport? Literally dozens of reasons existed for not going.

And only one for going -- the Spirit of God would not allow the workers to make excuses. He said "Go."

December 1992 saw a Baptist relief worker board a series of planes -- in frustrated obedience -- for the Ogaden. Miraculously, another Baptist worker in Ethiopia had made it possible for the relief worker to help a United Nations team on a survey trip to the area.

Miraculously, and practically on the way to the airport, another Christian working in Somalia came by with a strange "non-request."

In 1990, six Somali Christians were forced to flee Somalia into the Ogaden. For more than two years no one had heard from them. One was reported to have been shot. All were scattered, and only God knew where in the vastness of the desert.

The small Somali Christian community had prayed for them daily for two years. They had heard that the Baptist relief worker was visiting the region.

Believing it would be impossible to find six believers out of a million Muslims in an area larger than the state of Kentucky, the "non-request" was: "We know you could never find these six men. We don't know if they're alive or not. Just do this. Take their names that we have written on this card and, as you travel through the Ogaden, ask God to protect them if they are anywhere near."

The card went into the Baptist relief worker's pocket and the trip began.

Traveling to the Ogaden, he told UN personnel, "No, I've never been there. No, I know no one there. No, no one knows I'm coming."

Days of desert travel followed as surveys were accomplished and truck loads and camel and donkey trains of food were sent out to the worst-hit famine areas.

In the course of events, the relief worker began a friendship with his Muslim driver, "Mohammed," who just "happened" to be a refugee from Somalia. Mohammed just "happened" to have worked in Somalia with the Christian relief worker who just "happened" to have given the Baptist relief worker a card with six names on it.

Mohammed, it would turn out, just "happened" to know someone else.

On or about the sixth day in the Ogaden, the Baptist relief worker was eating the noon meal in a hut with the UN workers.

A tall Somali man with a mishapened face entered the hut and stood near the table gazing at the American.

"Can I help you?" the American finally asked.

"You have come. You are the one," the Somali replied and walked out.

Fifteen minutes later two more Somali men walked in and the scene was repeated.

"You are the one. You have come."

Ten more minutes passed and three additional Somalis entered and in Somali said, "God has sent you. You have come."

By now the UN workers were a bit bewildered. "We thought you didn't know anyone."

"I don't."

"Then who are these men?"

"I don't have a clue!"

"What do they mean by this, 'You are the one. You have come' nonsense?"

"I don't have a clue."

But he found out.

In October 1992, six Somali believers, scattered in three different locations in the desert of Ethiopia, independently of each other, prayed a simple prayer.

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"God," they cried out, "is this Jesus that we believed in years ago real? Is he really who we were told he was? And if he is God, do any of the Christians know we are still alive? Does anyone care?"

From three different locations in Ethiopia they prayed and they said the Holy Spirit told them to travel to a certain town in the Ogaden and await his answer for them.

Meanwhile in Somalia, hundreds of miles away, Baptist relief workers became troubled and sent one of their own to the Ogaden by way of Nairobi, Kenya.

Later that day the Baptist relief worker was understandably apprehensive as he was surrounded by these six men in the local market. They said that the driver, Mohammed, had told of his coming. They related they had "spied" on him as he did his morning devotions, said grace over meals and as he worked among refugees. They had met, prayed and decided that he was the one God had promised to send.

"Was he the one? Could he answer their questions: 'Is Jesus real?' and 'Do any of the believers from Somalia care or pray or remember?'"

One of the six men had been shot three times through the face. Two had lost all of their family. All had suffered terribly for their faith. They couldn't even meet together because of local persecution.

They waited for an answer.

The relief worker told of his pilgrimage of faith in Jesus to Somalia, through Kenya to Ethiopia.

"Jesus is exactly who you have believed him to be," the worker stated. "He is trustworthy and the Lord of all creation."

Then reaching into his pocket he pulled out a card. On that card were the six names of the men standing before him!

"Read the names on this card," he instructed. The six Somalis looked in puzzlement as they read their names.

"Where and how did you get our names?" they asked. "Your family in Christ remembers, cares and prays daily for you," the relief worker replied as he related the history of the card.

The men embraced him, overcome with emotion.

Shot, persecuted, scattered, afraid but faithful, these six men praised God for his goodness and grace toward them. They did not ask to leave the desert or to be resettled to a safe place. They just wanted to know if Jesus was real and if anyone cared or remembered to pray.

The relief worker flew back to Nairobi a week later carrying letters from the believers in the Ogaden to the believers in Somalia and Kenya.

One letter contained a phrase that would stay with him forever.

"To the family of Christ in Kenya. Thank you for sending our brother to us. As the Ethiopian eunuch awaited the coming of Philip, so did we wait. To us he appeared as from the sky and he left in the same manner. God is good. Remember our faith. Come when you can."

"You have come. You are the one."

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**28-year-old preacher's beliefs
took root during SBC struggle** By E. Michael Caner

Baptist Press
6/17/94

ORLANDO, Fla. (BP)--Steven Davidson is not unlike the other 20,000 registered messengers attending the Southern Baptist Convention in Orlando, Fla.:

He comes to the convention every year as an elected messenger from the church where he is pastor, New Harmony Baptist Church in Milford, Ohio.

He reunites with old acquaintances.

He eagerly worships with thousands of like-minded Southern Baptists.

He also participates in the process which governs this 15.5-million-member denomination.

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In one aspect, however, he is unique from the average Southern Baptist Convention veteran, for, at age 28, his ministry has been wholly shaped by the controversy which has dominated the SBC since 1979. In the 16 years since the debate began in earnest, Southern Baptists have fielded an entire generation of ministers for whom the the conservative resurgence has been their primary frame of reference.

"I became a minister in 1983, at the age of 17, at the Friendship Baptist Church in Cincinnati, Ohio," Davidson states, "and our pastor, Preston Richardson, disciplined and encouraged many young ministers." Davidson became aware of the rift within the SBC after he entered college in 1984.

"I had never been exposed to the opposing viewpoints concerning the nature of the Bible until I entered Cumberland College (a Southern Baptist College in Kentucky). After I began my studies there, I came face to face with the divisions among Southern Baptists. At Friendship Baptist, the veracity of the Scriptures was never debated. It was assumed."

The theological debate which ensued forced Davidson to examine his own beliefs. "Because the controversy had filtered down to every college in the SBC, I was forced to investigate all my beliefs and assumptions. As a result of this process, my convictions have become cemented, in that I not only view inerrancy as a vital personal belief, but the essential principle for the continued blessings of God on our convention.

"We learned from the example of our leaders," Davidson said, "that standing for inerrancy is not a roadblock to missions and evangelism, but a springboard."

Davidson said he feels the movement which he, like others, calls the "conservative resurgence" has drawn ministers back to the basic principles which formed the SBC in 1845. Citing Herschel Hobbs, past president of the SBC and author of the new book, "My Faith and Message," Davidson states, "In the previous generation of ministers, the emphasis in the seminaries was placed on the practical and pastoral aspects of the ministry. The controversy in the convention has focused our attention once again upon theology and the Bible.

"Doctrine and deed go hand in hand with one another," Davidson said. "Proper belief is a necessary precursor for proper behavior. Both sides of the debate have re-examined their fundamental and guiding tenets, which has been a positive side effect."

Davidson said the controversy has, in other ways, strengthened his generation of young preachers. "On both sides of the controversy, young ministers have not been viewed simply as 'preachers-in-training,' but a vital link in the convention process. We have been given a crash test in convention procedures and politics. The leaders on the differing ends of the debate have discovered that they need us not only to attend or listen, but to participate. This is a very important development in the past 16 years."

Has his immersion in the inerrancy debate affected his ministry? Davidson said it has ignited his work. "If anything, the conservative resurgence has caused me to lead my church to focus on missions, evangelism and the practical application of the Bible in their daily lives.

"If we are willing to fight over the nature of the Bible, we should be doubly willing to follow the principles of the Bible."

Continued Davidson, "Though many have viewed the controversy as tumultuous, it must be remembered that change is often painful. Growing pains, however positive, still hurt."

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Caner is a North Carolina pastor and free-lance writer.

Chaplains must adapt to changing roles

By Kirby Warnock

ORLANDO, Fla. (BP)--With the end of the Cold War, the need for a large U.S. military presence has diminished considerably. Base closings, reduced military budgets and a smaller standing army have become part of the "peace dividend." Fewer military personnel also means fewer chaplains.

The fact that this year's Convocation of Chaplains and Pastoral Counselor's was held at the Orlando Naval Training Center June 13 illustrates the changing nature of the military's role in the U.S. fabric. The base has been slated for closure by the Defense Department, and a rather rancorous debate is under way in the local media over how to use the 2,000-acre facility once the Navy departs. Many military chaplains find themselves asking the same question: What to do when the armed forces let you go?

But with new challenges come new opportunities. The chaplains who were on hand for the one day-conference definitely looked on the positive side of their changing role and their opportunity for Christian witness. It was not a day of hand-wringing. If anything, the group displayed the resolve and determination to continue their chaplaincy in new fields.

They came from different parts of the globe and from diverse ministries. Frank Johnson flew in from Yokosuka, Japan, where he is a commander stationed at the U.S. Navy's Fleet Activities base. There was Sing Yue, a chaplain at the Orange County, Fla., jail. Born and raised in Hong Kong, Yue came to the States in 1974. He now works with the Orange County sheriff's department as a volunteer chaplain, ministering to prisoners.

There are presently 2,331 chaplains in the Southern Baptist Convention. Of that number, 1,016 are in the military, 710 in hospitals and 303 in prisons. The remainder are located in business/industrial and miscellaneous settings. While there will still be military chaplains, future growth is now focused on the "miscellaneous" area.

The Home Mission Board's Huey Perry was blunt and to the point in his address to the group.

"We need to help our people as they move to a ministry beyond the military," Perry said. "It is extremely important that we work as partners. The HMB can only work one side of the street as we try to place you in civilian chaplaincy. It is incumbent on you to stay in touch with the local church and state conventions. Don't burn any bridges behind you and learn to network. You have the support of the Home Mission Board."

However, Perry went on to say that the HMB was having to reduce its 1995 budget by 6 percent, meaning funds would be limited.

In a rousing lunchtime speech, Larry Elliot, director of mission ministries for the Florida Baptist Convention, said that the reality is chaplaincy is not a priority with the Florida Baptist Convention. "Cooperative Program giving is down and will probably stay that way. We cannot count on them for funding," said Elliot. "But money doesn't matter. Chaplaincy is about helping hurting humanity."

Despite the continuing cutbacks in the military, Elliot outlined his vision of the growth areas for chaplaincy.

"In the state of Florida, we have a sizable retirement community. Our prison population is growing daily. We are a major tourist destination, and more and more cruise ships are based out of our ports. This gives us tremendous opportunities. There is room for more chaplains in our prisons, at retirement communities, in resort areas or campgrounds and on cruise ships."

Elliot went on to say that the thrust of this ministry has to come from volunteers, as few of the previously mentioned businesses could underwrite a fulltime chaplain's position.

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"We are put under more demands and scrutiny, since we are out in the public and not in a church," says Bill Donovan, director of institutional and business/industrial chaplaincy at the Home Mission Board. While a chaplain's needs and goals are decidedly different from a pastor, each of them feels a special call from God.

"You have to come to the realization that as a chaplain, your primary ministry is not on Sunday mornings," said Ralph Gibson, commander of recruit ministry at Orlando's Naval Training Station. "But seminary didn't prepare me for that."

Others echoed this struggle, saying it was hard to have just one or two people present during worship services. Unlike pastors, who have a permanent church home and congregation, chaplains serve by standing and waiting. They are literally on call to help whenever a person is hurting or in need. They can be asked to perform a funeral or a worship service at a moment's notice, at any location. They are on the front lines of Christian witness, working in secular settings without a pulpit.

The military's need for chaplains was expressed by Orlando Naval Training Center Base Commander Thomas Largomarsino in his remarks to the group.

"Many of our new Naval recruits come from broken homes and a less than desirable background," said Largomarsino. "The military usually represents the first time that they have had any structure or order in their lives. It's a major shock to most of them. A chaplain provides young recruits with a nonjudgmental person to pour out their heart and soul to. He is someone they can speak with who will not impact their rank or promotion."

"If a pastor identifies himself to a person and then tries to witness, there is a reluctance," added Donovan. "A chaplain has more opportunities to spread the gospel."

The need for a nonjudgmental person to be available for prayer and counsel is just as strong in the civilian world as in the military. Already some businesses and factories are placing chaplains in the workplace, but their number is small. The challenge for the future of chaplaincy is to expand to the secular workplace, vacation destinations and prisons, not to proselytize, but to be an ear, ready to help.

In closing the meeting, the HMB's Donovan offered this perspective on military chaplaincy's changing role:

"The Pharisees saw Jesus' work as the death of their system. If he succeeded, there would be no more need for Pharisees. They could either lose their institution, or get rid of Jesus. They chose to get rid of Jesus.

"If our concern is just to save our jobs, then we are no better than the Pharisees. Let's don't preserve our jobs; let's preserve our ministry."

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While SBC meets in Orlando,
World Changers impact lives

By Joanna Suyes

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6/17/94

ORLANDO, Fla. (BP)--As some 20,000 messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention met in Orlando to discuss descisions concerning the convention's future, more than 150 youth came to Orlando to change the futures of 24 familes in some of the poorest areas of the city.

Dorothy, an Orlando resident, described the presence of the youth in her neighborhood as an enjoyable experience: "It's been a lot of life (in the neighborhood), a lot of good life, not the drug mess. I enjoy this."

More than 6,000 youth and leaders will participate in 22 World Changers work projects throughout the United States and Puerto Rico this summer. The Orlando project was held June 11-18. Churches from Texas, Georgia, North and South Carolina, Louisiana and Kentucky took part in the project.

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World Changers work projects, sponsored by the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission, are designed to give junior- and senior-high youth hands-on experience in missions work. Projects for senior adults and college students occurred in April in Missouri and Louisiana.

Youth in Orlando worked on 24 project sites in Parramore Village, one of the city's poorest areas, only a short distance from the Orange County Convention/Civic Center where messengers to the SBC met.

These crews painted and replaced window and door frames. Corey Canipe, 16, from First Baptist Church in Spruce Pine, N.C., came to Orlando not for the resort experience, but to help people in the city: "The most important thing is being able to witness to the little kids," one of whom, he said, had never heard anyone say, "I love you."

Reagan Brown, a 16-year-old senior from New Hope Baptist Church in Cedar Park, Texas, enjoyed seeing the change in both the house and in himself.

"I like getting to see (the house) before and after. I've never gotten a taste of this culture before. I've heard about it and seen it on television but never actually experienced it before."

Jacob Johnson, youth intern at First Baptist Church in Natchitoches, La., believes World Changers is an opportunity for youth to grow in several different ways.

"It gives kids a chance to help others, to do work that they have never done, as well as to have a wonderful time with fellow Christians and to mature spiritually. They also learn to deal with conditions they may have never witnessed before."

Brown added: "I've seen how God is preparing me this week for what he wants me to do with my life."

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Suyes is a free-lance writer for the Brotherhood Commission.

SBC pages help make
the convention work

By Tim Yarbrough & Steve Barber

Baptist Press
6/17/94

ORLANDO, Fla. (BP)--God's kingdom, not the Magic Kingdom, was the focus of pages serving at the 1994 Southern Baptist Convention June 14-16 at the Orange County Convention Center.

Pages work behind the scenes to keep the convention machinery moving smoothly. Among their duties are relaying the more than 1,000 emergency messages participants receive during the week. Pages deliver messages to Lee Porter, SBC registration secretary, who decides whether they are displayed on the convention's closed-circuit TV for all to see.

Other duties of pages include working in registration, the convention newsroom and darkroom, on the convention floor and in the information center. Pages have served at the annual Southern Baptist Convention since the late 1940s. The Brotherhood Commission took over sponsorship of pages in the 1960s.

The work of pages starts on Saturday prior to the convention when they participate in a pre-convention training session and pep talk led by Porter.

Expectations of first-year pages are mixed. Stephen Stewart, 17, of Tennessee, said he expected one thing as he served as a 1994 page: "Calluses."

Stewart was right. During the convention, pages are constantly on their feet. Pages remain at the convention hall long after most messengers are gone each evening.

Matt Wade, 18, of Texas, who assisted with SBC Day Camp in Houston last year, plans to attend college this fall and perhaps seminary later in preparation for a youth ministry career.

"I knew it would be hard work. (But) this has to be easier than chasing down kids," he smiled.

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Sixteen-year-old Matt Callen of Missouri is a page by virtue of winning the 1994 High School Baptist Young Men's Speakout award. Callen presented his award-winning speech, "A Volunteer Hero," at the annual Brotherhood breakfast.

"I'm excited, but nervous, about presenting my speech," he said. "I feel like God has a message in this speech."

Callen said "fellowship with other Christian guys" is a high point of the page week at the convention.

"You make a lot of new friends ... and they're from all over the country. The diversity of the people is neat."

Johnathan Wright and Greg Buchanan, both of Texas, haven't had a lot of time to think about their involvement as SBC pages. The two are fresh from a wilderness training camp held in Santa Fe, N.M.

"I haven't seen home for two weeks now," said Wright, who holds the distinction of being the first black convention page. Wright said wilderness training is much like serving as a page. It is difficult, but rewarding. "You get to know your limits real fast. There comes a time it doesn't seem rewarding because all you want to do is get off the mountain."

Tim Bearden and Jeno Smith of the Brotherhood Commission coordinate the work of pages. Assisting this year is Steve Currie, a Brotherhood intern from Texas.

"It's a hard week that really builds character in young men," said Bearden. "Here they can learn firsthand how their denomination works."

High School Baptist Young Men qualify to be pages by completing 300 hours of personal missions involvement. In addition to the young men, eight Acteens pages join the group on the opening day of the convention following their work at the Woman's Missionary Union annual meeting.

High School Baptist Young Men pages serving at the 1994 convention were Jason Kilgore and Nathan Holmes, Alabama; Jonathan Bartlett and Dennis Bradley, Georgia; Chris Choate, Illinois; Josh Minton, Louisiana; Matt Callen, Missouri; Brian Spearman, South Carolina; Jason Roy and Stephen Stewart, Tennessee; and Greg Buchanan, Matt Wade, Wes Butler and Johnathan Wright, all of Texas.

Acteens pages were Jennie Kaye Bell and Melissa Kay Bryant, Kentucky; Kayla Giska, Louisiana; Megan Johnston, Missouri; Sornalay Rasavong and Cindy Sequra, Texas; Carrie-ann Segraves, Tennessee; and Ashley Marie Ward, South Carolina.

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**Largest-ever day camp
relates Epcot to missions**

**Baptist Press
6/17/94**

By Julie Wilkerson & Steve Barber

ORLANDO, Fla. (BP)--More than 370 children and staff participated in this year's SBC Missions Day Camp, making it the largest in history.

Sponsored by the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission, the Day Camp offers elementary school children an alternative to convention proceedings.

"The SBC Missions Day Camp gives children a chance to learn about missions and the work of the convention in a way they can understand and appreciate," said Tim Seanor, national Royal Ambassadors director and day camp coordinator.

"Aside from the fun attractions, games and crafts, ethnic foods and missionary speakers, each child has an opportunity to tour the SBC exhibit area and speak to staff persons of various agencies."

Many of the activities offered during day camp would appeal to all ages. On Tuesday, the "campers" toured exhibits for Mexico, China, Japan, Canada, as well as The Land/The Living Seas at Epcot Center. Missionaries who serve in those countries or in missions work that promote agricultural/environmental education then spoke to the children.

In one group, China and Japan were featured countries.

Activities, such as Origami, the art of folding paper into objects, served to represent the beauty of quiet activity. The Japanese do not yell, the youngsters were told, and respect is of utmost importance.

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Another way of conveying the Japanese experience was through missionaries Rhonda and John Wright, who told about life on the missions field in Tokyo, Japan.

The children were especially delighted with the display of traditional Japanese toys --flat marbles, a ball and holder, and other objects.

The Wrights, both former missionary kids, stressed the importance of properly pronouncing Japanese words. "Please read this tract" could easily become, "Would you marry me?"

The children also learned the ability to eat unusual food is almost a prerequisite for an effective missionary. Because the Japanese are careful to use everything, a fish head, used as seasoning, may be found floating in a bowl of soup.

At the China pavilion, the children feasted on sweet and sour chicken, fried rice and egg rolls. For many, this was their first taste of Chinese food and a highlight of the trip.

This year's day camp exceeded last year's total by about 110 participants.

The SBC Missions Day Camp was sponsored by the RA/children department of the Brotherhood Commission and was staffed by youth and adults from First Baptist Church of Cuero, Texas. The Cuero group served in this capacity last year in Houston. Helen Reese was day camp director. Matt Gaines, Cuero FBC minister of music/youth, assisted.

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**Budget shortfall sidelines
Historical Commission at SBC**

**Baptist Press
6/17/94**

ORLANDO, Fla. (BP)--Due to an ongoing budget shortfall, the Historical Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention was unable to present an exhibit at the national meeting June 14-16.

According to Executive Director-Treasurer Lynn E. May, "We have not had an exhibit the last several years.

"To man an exhibit we would need more people and more funds," May said.

"We can communicate more effectively through other media" since "we're low on funds," he said.

May noted the commission will present a sequicentennial exhibit honoring the SBC's 150th year during the 1995 convention in Atlanta.

In recognition of the sequicentennial, the commission will "encourage each agency to carry a historical theme next year," May added.

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**'God loves me anyway,'
Rapha luncheon told**

By Kay Moore

**Baptist Press
6/17/94**

ORLANDO, Fla. (BP)--A pastor's wife who said she was reared in the home of an alcoholic father and entered her marriage with many insecurities from her past urged Southern Baptist church leaders and their spouses to seek help when painful past issues or other struggles of life overwhelm them.

Leigh Lowery, wife of Fred Lowery, pastor of First Baptist Church of Bossier City, La., told the group of more than 1,500 attending a June 13 luncheon preceding the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention that she wanted to be a perfect wife, mother and pastor's wife and yet found that the imperfections of her past and other conflicts in her life colored her view of her self-worth.

"I grew up in Mississippi in an antebellum home where on the outside things looked great, but inside it was a house torn apart by alcoholism, abuse and unfaithfulness," Lowery said at the luncheon, sponsored by Rapha, a manager of psychiatric care and substance abuse treatment from a Christian perspective in hospitals nationwide.

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Lowery said in 1989 she began seeking answers for her self-worth struggles and subsequently read "Search for Significance" by Rapha founder Robert S. McGee. She said she learned Satan had taught her the lie that "my performance plus the opinions of others equalled my significance." She said learning that she was totally forgiven, completely accepted and fully pleasing to God "renewed my mind."

"I exchanged an imperfect earthly father for a perfect heavenly Father," she said. "I began to understand how God loves me. When you learn to love yourself like Jesus wants, you can love others."

Alan Day, pastor of First Baptist Church of Edmond, Okla., and his son, Cheyne, a student at Oklahoma Baptist University, told the audience they sought professional help in 1992 when Cheyne as a young adult became depressed and suicidal after surrendering to the ministry.

The elder Day said that before this time, he felt he never had experienced any trial that he, his wife, the Lord and significant others couldn't handle. "I thought I could fix everything for my kids," he said.

When he allowed himself to become vulnerable, he sought help from Rapha, and Cheyne spent 27 days in a Rapha treatment center in Houston.

Cheyne told the audience that in this setting he experienced the truth that "the love and forgiveness of Jesus was unconditional" in spite of his difficulties. Through the experience Cheyne worked out his own sense of calling to help others learn about this unconditional love, he said.

Sunday School Board President James T. Draper Jr. told the audience about two new Sunday School Board products to help churches start support groups for persons who are addicted to alcohol and other drugs. He said the products, "Conquering Chemical Dependency: A Christ-Centered 12-Step Process" and "Conquering Chemical Dependency: First Steps to a Christ-Centered 12-Step Process," will offer practical, life-changing helps to "a segment of society that we've not traditionally ministered to." The materials were written by McGee and Dale W. McCleskey and are part of the Board's LIFE Support Group Series.

Jerry Vines, pastor of First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, Fla., told the audience he is thankful for Christian psychologists "who have taught us how God has put the human personality together."

Through the motif of mythical character Billy Baptist, who Vines says represents an average Southern Baptist pastor, Vines urged church leaders to keep themselves physically, emotionally and spiritually healthy in order to "be a whole person in a broken world."

He said one of the most psychologically mature things a person can do is to "get out of himself and to begin to tell others about Jesus Christ."

**Gregory will not 'trash'
Dallas church in his book**

By Toby Druin

**Baptist Press
6/17/94**

DALLAS (BP)--Joel Gregory "harbors no ill will or bitterness," and will not "trash" the church or its senior pastor, W. A. Criswell, but he is writing a book about his experiences at First Baptist Church of Dallas where he abruptly resigned a 21-month pastorate Sept. 30, 1992.

"Too Great a Temptation: The Seductive Power of America's Super Church" is the title of the book to be released in early October by The Summit Group, a Fort Worth publisher Gregory said contacted him about writing it. He has a standard royalty agreement with the publisher and has not received any advances, he said.

Gregory and officials of the publishing house held a press conference at Dallas' Fairmont Hotel, June 10, to counter what they called "inaccurate rumors" prematurely circulating about the contents of the book.

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Gregory walked out of the sanctuary of First Church after reading a brief resignation statement to a Wednesday evening prayer meeting crowd. Effective "immediately and irrevocably," the resignation statement expressed frustration that Criswell, pastor of the church since 1944, had not moved off the scene as Gregory had anticipated and was expressing a desire to stay until his 50th anniversary this fall.

A press statement released by The Summit Group about Gregory's book noted the "ironic coincidence" that publication of the volume will coincide with the Oct. 2 celebration of Criswell's anniversary.

In a statement to media at the press conference, coincidentally held across the street from the church, Gregory said he had accepted a proposal to write the book for several reasons -- that it is best for him to tell the story, he has insights into the 15-year Southern Baptist controversy and he hopes it will make a positive contribution to the church and the kingdom of God.

While saving the details for buyers of the book, Gregory commented on several aspects that will be covered in it.

Though he reiterated that the primary reason he left was because of the leadership question with Criswell's remaining on the scene, Gregory was kind to him in his remarks, calling him a "great man whose historic position is secure" and noting that a man who can serve a superchurch for 50 years with all of its pressures "is amazing."

But what happened to him during his 21 months at the church is a story he needs to tell, he said. "No one wears a black or white hat; we all wear gray hats. There is a seductive power in the situation that is explored in the book."

The press conference was held in the presence of an armed guard, an off-duty Dallas police officer. Gregory said the guard was present because he likes to be "cautious." Asked if he had received threats, he said, "I have reasons to be cautious, substantial reasons."

The book will deal with the superchurch, not strictly First Church, Dallas, and will confront the question, "Is this what Jesus Christ came to found as the church in the world?" Gregory said. He added he felt Jesus had something more simple in mind.

"I think one thing that will come out in this book is that the church is a divine/human institution. And when you really show it warts and all in one sense it is a tribute to the power of the gospel that is has survived 2,000 years."

He said he will also deal with the SBC controversy in which he said he was a "double agent," acquainted with strategies of both sides, with the firing of Russell H. Dilday Jr. at Southwestern Seminary and the departure of Baylor University from its traditional relationship with Texas Baptists.

Gregory said his viewpoint on the Baylor issue "has changed substantially," that he still is opposed to the method used by the university in essentially severing its ties to the state convention but regrets that his reaction cut him off from his alma mater.

The 44-year-old Gregory, once possibly the most sought-after preacher in the SBC, said that since his resignation he has been working for a Fort Worth funeral home/cemetery going door-to-door selling pre-arranged funerals.

As to a future ministerial career, he said he hasn't "begun to approach" that possibility but said he doesn't feel publication of the book will close any doors that wouldn't have been closed already.

There are some who won't welcome the book, he said, but "that is not troublesome to me either. When you have the kinds of experiences over the last five years (that I have had) you kind of learn to wake up in the morning and nothing really bothers you."

"It is refreshing to relate to God as a layman," he said.

**Baptists in Colombia
aid avalanche survivors**

By Mary E. Speidel

CALI, Colombia (BP)--Baptists are providing food, medical care and materials for temporary shelter to some of the 11,000 or more people left homeless by an earthquake and avalanche in Colombia's Cauca state.

The June 6 quake has been called the worst natural calamity in Colombia since 1985, when the Nevado del Ruiz volcano erupted and buried the town of Armero, killing about 24,000 people.

At least 600 people died and nearly 1,700 are missing and presumed dead in the recent quake and resulting mudslides. About 125 people were injured, according to press reports.

A team of Southern Baptist missionaries and Colombian Baptists traveled June 9 to several towns accessible by land to assess needs and how Baptists could help. Some parts of the disaster zone can be reached only by helicopter since the temblor and mudslides wiped out some roads and entire towns.

On June 11 and 13 two other teams distributed food, blankets and plastic sheets and asphalt roof tiles for quake survivors to use in building temporary shelters. One team member, a Colombian architect and engineer, helped survivors assess damage to homes and advised them on rebuilding. Baptists also gave out Bibles and tracts.

"We tried to talk about spiritual food that will last much longer than the food we gave More people wanted Bibles than we had to give to them," said relief worker David Kammerdiener, a Foreign Mission Board music missionary from Lane, Kan.

Other missionaries who traveled with Kammerdiener are Arnold Pessoa, from Morton, Texas, and Rodney Coleman, from Hereford, Texas. All live in Cali, several hours' drive from the Andes Mountains disaster zone. The team worked in cooperation with local officials in the area.

Missionary physician Sandra Gustin, from San Antonio, Texas, and a Colombian Baptist physician were to travel to the area June 16 to provide medical care to survivors. The doctors will work several days in Jambalo and Pitayo, towns which received food and supplies from Baptist relief teams.

They also will check into the possibility of sending a Baptist medical caravan later this summer. The caravan, a ministry of Baptist Hospital in Barranquilla, might also include construction and evangelism volunteers, Kammerdiener said.

In addition, a 10-member team of Colombian Baptists and missionaries is expected to return to distribute additional relief supplies June 21-23. During that trip Baptists hope to lead some evangelistic services.

Southern Baptist missionaries don't normally work in this area, where Colombian guerrillas are active. But Baptist relief workers had no problems with safety during their trips, Kammerdiener said. Team members wore T-shirts clearly bearing the name "Baptist Emergency Committee."

Colombian Baptists have planted a small mission congregation in Piendamó, a town in the disaster zone. Many indigenous people, particularly the Paez Indians, live in the area.

"Generally, these people live on what they grow," Kammerdiener said. "But when they lose their homes, then they have to start rebuilding. That costs a lot of time, energy and resources."

He told of seeing one family "living out under plastic -- they had their three beds with plastic draped over them. That's how they were sleeping." Nights are fairly cold in this mountain area.

The family had no food, so Baptists gave them a package of such staples as rice, peas, beans, coffee, sugar and cooking oil. They also provided more plastic sheets for shelter.

Some of the people whose houses were damaged but not destroyed were living outdoors because they were uncertain about staying inside.

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"There were still a lot of aftershocks when we went on Monday," Kammerdiener said. He heard about a young woman who reportedly had died of fright when the quake's aftershocks shook her village.

So far, \$5,000 in Southern Baptist disaster relief funds has been used for the project, and missionaries requested \$10,000 in additional disaster funds from the Foreign Mission Board. Colombian Baptists will contribute another \$5,000. The Baptist World Alliance also has committed \$5,000 in aid.

Colombian Baptists hope to create a long-term relief project in the area. Baptists and Southern Baptist missionaries provided initial and long-range relief after the Armero disaster, and two Baptist centers and churches resulted from those projects.

Kammerdiener said he got involved in the latest disaster project because he and other missionaries in Cali saw the disaster and were able to do something about it.

"I'm a music professor and music minister. I don't have experience in this area," he admitted. "But God provided help each step of the way."