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**Southern Baptists aren't alone
in challenging Disney Company**

By Art Toalston

**Baptist Press
8/1/96**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--The Southern Baptist Convention isn't a voice crying in the wilderness in its protests of the Walt Disney Company's drift from family values.

Add the National Association of Free Will Baptists.

And the Oklahoma State Church of God Ministerial Fellowship.

And the executive board of the Assemblies of God.

And Texas Catholic, the newsjournal of the Catholic Diocese of Dallas.

And Charisma magazine, the leading periodical of the charismatic movement.

And even 70 of 100 Southern Baptists surveyed by the Orlando (Fla.) Sentinel at Wednesday night services June 12, the day a threatened Disney boycott was approved by messengers to the SBC annual meeting in New Orleans.

The National Association of Free Will Baptists, encompassing 2,500 churches with 250,000 members, unanimously adopted a resolution July 25 during its annual meeting in Fort Worth, Texas, stating:

"Whereas, we are dissatisfied with the direction of the Walt Disney Corporation concerning their support and approval of homosexuality, which we consider a perverted lifestyle and a sin against God,

"Be it resolved that the National Association of Free Will Baptists go on record encouraging our churches to boycott their products and inform the Disney Corporation of our action."

The Disney resolution was the initial recommendation of a resolutions committee to 6,771 delegates attending the annual Free Will Baptist meeting, said Jack Williams, editor of the denomination's national publication, Contact.

Two days earlier, the Oklahoma State Church of God Ministerial Fellowship voted unanimously to adopt the Southern Baptist Convention resolution as its own. The fellowship encompasses about 100 Oklahoma ministers affiliated with the Anderson, Ind.,-based Church of God.

The fellowship additionally resolved to send a copy of its stance to all Church of God congregations in Oklahoma; to the Church of God's Leadership Council in Indiana; to all state assemblies of the Church of God in North America; to the editor in chief of Warner Press, the denomination's publishing house -- and to Michael Eisner, Disney's chairman and CEO.

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The fellowship action was initiated by P. Roger Brewer, pastor of First Church of God, Seminole, Okla., and formerly a pastor in Garden Grove, Calif., who lived within two miles of Disneyland.

"We always thought you could trust and respect what they were producing," Brewer said, "but with the new things that are being produced, I was concerned about what my grandchildren are going to see." Eliminating Pocahontas' conversion to Christianity in its recent animated feature, for example, is one of many evidences of Disney's agenda "to make it say what you want it to say," he said. Brewer also was director of curriculum development for Warner Press from 1979-89 and a 1968 graduate of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., with a master of religious education degree.

Brewer said his son intended to make a career of Disney after finishing college, but he left the company after three years, "disillusioned with the direction Disney was taking with the theme parks" once Eisner became chairman and CEO.

On other fronts:

-- A month before the SBC action, the executive board of the Assemblies of God officially canceled the denomination's participation in the Disney theme park promotional, "Magic Kingdom Club."

George Wood, general secretary of the Assemblies of God, wrote to Eisner, stating: "For over 20 years, our denominational headquarters has ... promoted visits to the Disney theme parks by providing membership cards to hundreds of our employees, as well as thousands of our churches and 2 1/2 million members as places they can visit knowing their family moral values will not be impinged." That support is no longer possible in light of Disney's promotion of homosexuality, Wood wrote, citing the company's assistance to annual "gay and lesbian days" at its theme parks; a book for teens, "Growing Up Gay," embracing the homosexual lifestyle, published by Disney-owned Hyperion Press; and Disney subsidiary Miramax's film, "Priest," about a homosexual clergyman.

A news release of Wood's letter was forwarded to the 56 district bulletins mailed monthly to pastors in the Assemblies of God, a denomination numbering 2.5 million members in 11,800 churches.

-- Texas Catholic, the newsjournal of the Catholic Diocese of Dallas, with a circulation of 75,000, editorialized June 28 in support of the SBC Disney resolution, noting: "... we applaud the Baptists for getting the message sent loud and clear to Disney."

"Baptists, Catholics, other Christians and even non-Christian families in the past have had confidence that Disney was the one company unequivocally supporting the family," Texas Catholic stated. "No longer. The Disney Company cannot be trusted in this regard. The company has ventured too broadly in trying to become a corporate conglomerate. Now, Disney clearly seeks to be all things to all people, even to those who have a vested interest in tearing apart the traditional concept of the family and the values that the family has held dear."

The editorial also quoted a Catholic Foundation executive in Dallas, Frank Rauscher, as saying, "Disney executives are simply not telling the public the truth about the kind of company they are."

-- The publisher of Charisma magazine, Stephen Strang, also editorialized in support of the SBC Disney resolution in the August issue of the Orlando-based periodical, with a circulation of 225,000.

"By standing with our Southern Baptist brothers and sisters, we can show Disney that Christians expect them to be part of the solution to the moral decay in America -- not part of the problem," Strang wrote, describing Disney as a company "with an increasing tendency to produce any kind of movie or product it thinks will make a buck."

"I sincerely hope the Walt Disney Co. will change -- just as Universal Studios did after Christians boycotted its parks and products over the blasphemous film 'The Last Temptation of Christ,'" Strang wrote. "But if it won't, I don't think it should just be the Southern Baptists who boycott. I think all Christians -- and all Americans who favor family values -- should boycott not only the theme parks but also all Disney products."

-- "No more Disney Channel. No more Space Mountain. And no more Mickey Mouse T-shirts," the Orlando Sentinel reported June 13, the day after the SBC resolution. "That's what the majority of 100 Southern Baptists in Central Florida pledged in an informal survey of churchgoers at 11 Wednesday night services. ... Of the 100 interviewed before and after services, 70 said they supported a boycott, 16 opposed it and 14 were undecided."

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The newspaper quoted one boycott advocate, Debra Cole, 37, at First Baptist Church, Mount Dora, Fla., as saying, "It's an abomination against God's law to support homosexuality. It's black and white. ... We're definitely not going to Disney. We've dropped the Disney Channel from our cable and no more Disney movies."

In a June 23 editorial, the Orlando Sentinel acknowledged, "The Baptists' action may open the door for meaningful dialogue and constructive accommodation concerning Disney practices that many Baptists find offensive."

-- Conservative strategist Paul Weyrich challenged the naming of Georgetown University President Leo J. O'Donovan, a Catholic priest, to Disney's board June 25.

Weyrich described O'Donovan's appointment as "a good public relations move" in a July 9 column, but noted: "Georgetown has its own gay pride activities with the full blessing of O'Donovan. Indeed O'Donovan has done his best to remove what little vestiges of the Catholic faith remained at Georgetown."

Weyrich contended, "If Disney is serious about wanting some moral input, I am sure Dr. James Dobson, or the Presbyterian intellectual D. James Kennedy or one of the many former presidents of the Southern Baptists would be available. Or if Disney really does want the genuine Catholic point of view, I suggest Cardinal O'Conner of New York or Cardinal Law of Boston."

Weyrich wrote that Southern Baptists and another organization at odds with Disney, the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, "are still correct. What Disney is producing these days is a disgrace. The company should be boycotted. Real economic pressure will force real change."

Georgetown University did not issue a rebuttal to Weyrich's commentary.

-- A second Internet appeal for Disney has appeared at various homosexual Internet sites across the country. The latest declares: "This is a similar alert to one sent a few weeks ago. But, this time Disney is asking to hear from ANYONE who supports their gay-inclusive policies. It sounds like they are really being bombarded with a lot of hate mail or calls. You can e-mail your SUPPORT for their gay-inclusive policies to: brad_bergman@studio.disney.com." Bergman is a secretary in Disney Vice President for Studio Operations Reid Cline's office in California.

The latest message was brought to the attention of Baptist Press by Ronald Davidson, news editor of the AFA Journal, published by the American Family Association.

The AFA, led by Donald Wildmon, initiated its Disney boycott in February. The New York City-based Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights initiated its Disney boycott after Miramax slated "Priest" for nationwide release on Good Friday, April 14, 1995, later changed to April 19. "Priest" focused on five priests, each "a thoroughly tortured individual," the Catholic organization's publication Catalyst noted, citing film critic Michael Medved's description of "Priest" as arguably the most anti-Catholic film ever made.

The SBC resolution adopted June 12 encourages Southern Baptists "to give serious and prayerful reconsideration" to whether to attend Disney theme parks and purchase Disney products -- and to boycott Disney if it continues "this anti-Christian and antifamily trend."

The resolution cited five examples of Disney "corporate decisions, which have included but are not limited to:" 1) granting insurance benefits to partners of homosexual employees; 2) hosting homosexual "theme nights" at its parks; 3) a subsidiary's hiring of a convicted child molester to direct the movie, "Powder;" 4) a subsidiary's publication of a book aimed at homosexual teenagers; and 5) and "Priest," which "disparages Christian values and depicts Christian leaders as morally defective."

The SBC resolution asked the Christian Life Commission "to monitor Disney's progress in returning to its previous philosophy of producing enriching family entertainment."

Criticism of Disney practices also was voiced last fall by messengers to the Florida Baptist Convention.

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**Christian Coalition suit
may have broader impact**

**Baptist Press
8/1/96**

WASHINGTON (BP)--In a suit that threatens to have a chilling effect on political activity by issue-advocacy groups, the Federal Election Commission has accused the Christian Coalition of violating federal election laws by illegally spending nearly \$1 million to bolster the failed re-election bid of President George Bush in 1992.

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In a civil suit filed July 30, the FEC sued the group, considered to be the nation's largest political group of religious conservatives, for contributing in-kind more than \$1.4 million, citing in particular the coalition's disbursement of voter guides.

Federal election laws prohibit corporations from contributing money or services to any candidate or political group.

FEC documents allege the Christian Coalition illegally coordinated its endeavors with the campaigns of Sen. Jesse Helms, House Majority Leader Newt Gingrich, Reps. Bob Inglis, R-S.C., and John David Hayworth, R.-Ariz., as well as Oliver North in his bid for U.S. Senate in Virginia -- spending money on behalf of the candidates without reporting the expenditures as contributions.

The complaint also claims the group aided the efforts of the National Republican Senatorial Committee (NRSC), a committee which seeks the election of Republicans to the U.S. Senate.

The lawsuit has broader implications than just the operation of the Christian Coalition, suggested a Washington Post report, noting many organizations -- unions, environmentalists and pro-life and pro-choice groups -- have become more involved in the political realm while claiming their activity is only issue-oriented.

"We're going to start seeing a lot more of these kinds of cases," speculated Lisa Rosenberg of the Center for Responsive Politics, according to USA Today.

The action was triggered by a complaint made in 1992 by Sue Wrenn, chairman of the Democratic Party of Virginia, calling the Christian Coalition "nothing more or less an arm of the Republican Party; an arm that has been used to bend and break the law." The Democratic National Committee also complained to the FEC in 1992 the coalition was engaging in "express advocacy" of GOP candidates.

"Christian Coalition has abided by both the letter and the spirit of the law," said Ralph Reed, Christian Coalition executive director. "We are absolutely and totally confident that we will be fully vindicated and the courts will affirm that people of faith have every right to be involved as citizens and voters."

Christian Coalition officials have insisted since the group's founding in 1989 their efforts were designed only to "encourage active citizenship among people professing the Christian faith."

The coalition said their voter education activity was far less substantial than other organizations, citing the AFL-CIO, Chamber of Commerce and the National Education Association.

The suit was applauded by groups who have a history of scrapping with the 1.6 million member group. "The political sins of Pat Robertson and Ralph Reed are finally catching up with them," responded Barry Lynn, executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State. "The Christian Coalition from day one has been a hard-ball political operation cloaked in religiosity."

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Compiled by Dwayne Hastings.

**SBC Cooperative Program:
July down, year still up**

**Baptist Press
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NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Southern Baptist Convention Cooperative Program gifts for the month of July dropped 2.54 percent under the previous year's month but the year's total is 1.5 percent above last year, according to Morris H. Chapman, president and chief executive officer of the SBC Executive Committee.

The total for July, \$11,411,336, is \$297,518 below that of July 1995, or a 2.54 percent decrease.

But the SBC's year-to-date total, from October through July, remains 1.5 percent above the same period for the previous year: \$122,834,012 compared to \$121,023,134, or an increase of \$1,810,878.

Designated gifts for the month of July dropped from the previous year's month: \$4,699,223 compared to \$5,624,435, down \$925,212 or 16.45 percent. However, for the year to date, the 1995-96 year totals are \$133,130,017 compared to the previous year of \$127,328,164, up \$5,801,853 or 4.56 percent.

For the SBC Cooperative Program Allocation Budget, the July totals are 3.31 percent or \$391,090 below the budget requirement of \$11,802,427. For the year-to-date total, the budget requirement of \$118,024,272 was exceeded by \$4,809,740 or 4.08 percent.

The SBC Cooperative Program total includes receipts from individuals, churches, state conventions and fellowships for distribution according to the 1995-96 Cooperative Program Allocation Budget.

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The Cooperative Program is Southern Baptists' method of supporting missions and ministry efforts of state and regional conventions and the Southern Baptist Convention. Designated contributions include the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions, the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for home missions, world hunger and other special gifts.

State and regional conventions retain a percentage of Cooperative Program contributions they receive from the churches to support work in their areas and send the remaining funds to the Executive Committee for national and international ministries. The percentage of distribution is at the discretion of each state or regional convention.

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**Gall bladders, not gunshot wounds,
focus of surgery in peacetime Gaza**

**Baptist Press
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GAZA (BP)--Peace? To Dean Fitzgerald it means operating on sick gall bladders instead of gunshot wounds.

The Southern Baptist physician and surgeon still goes to work each day at Ahli Arab Hospital and still has a heavy caseload. But the adrenaline-pumping shootings so predominant during the Intifada -- the Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation -- have vanished.

As Gaza struggles to lift itself to self-government, conditions approaching normal are returning to this narrow strip of rocky land tucked between Israel, Egypt and the Mediterranean. "Normal," of course, is hard to define here.

On the surface, things look better. The nightmarish painted slogans of death once covering most storefronts during the Intifada have been whitewashed over. Burning tires have long gone and perennially poor roads are getting patches.

"I think there's a good deal more pride in the surroundings now that people feel they have possession of the land more or less," said Dona Fitzgerald, a Southern Baptist representative who ministers through Gaza Baptist Church in Gaza City.

Stores and shops are filled with goods, indicating more prosperity than actually exists. Asked if business is good, several shopkeepers in Gaza City just shook their heads sadly. "Business? There isn't any. Nobody has any money," said one businessman.

Israel has kept its borders with Gaza closed more or less tightly since February after a series of terrorist bombings designed to sway the elections in Israel and derail the peace process between Israelis and their Arab neighbors. Although lines of heavily laden trucks come and go at border crossings, only a relatively few Palestinians can be seen crossing into Israel. That's where the jobs are.

During February and March almost all cross-border traffic was stopped. By early July the Israeli government was allowing some men over the age of 45 to enter Israel to work. Later the age was dropped to 35.

The scarcity of jobs in Gaza forces people to depend on Israel for work. In Gaza City businessmen have opened a pasta factory, a cookie-making operation and small clothes-making businesses. But most of these depend on people who have money to spend. And with few allowed into Israel to work, the economic picture remains grim.

Earlier this year, Gaza donkeys were feasting on carnations because flower growers could not move their short-lived plants across the border. Ironically, local markets have had better-quality fruits and vegetables for sale than normal because farmers were unable to transport them to Israel. Products that do cross into Israel are greatly delayed by fastidious inspectors searching for bombs.

"Food is plentiful in the markets -- but expensive. Fruits and vegetables grown here are less expensive than other products but still more expensive than before. Anything brought in is very expensive. A lot of people here are living on \$200 a month -- that's too little for healthy living," said Dona Fitzgerald.

One Palestinian believer said he was working two jobs, but the \$600 he earns each month is not enough for rent, food and other basics. "About 40 percent of the people here have lots of money and the rest have little," he said. "There is less of a middle class now and more extremes of wealth and poverty."

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Members of Gaza Baptist Church have helped some needy people directly. But Palestinians still depend on the United Nations Relief and Works Agency to help the neediest cases. Recently the agency has been trying to teach women jobs skills to support their families as one way to combat infant malnutrition.

Still, Palestinians who have returned from abroad have brought money back with them. High-rise apartment buildings are going up all over the city. A new park with shrubs and paved plazas has opened in downtown Gaza City.

It is a shaky economy and an uncertain peace. But for Palestinians who have endured more than 25 years of war and occupation, it is a kind of normal.

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(BP) photo (horizontal) mailed to state Baptist newspapers by the Richmond bureau of Baptist Press on Aug. 1. Cutline available in SBCNet News Room.

**Transplant overseas a first
in mission-related hospital**

**Baptist Press
8/1/96**

ASUNCION, Paraguay (BP)--In July, doctors at the Baptist Medical Center in Asuncion, Paraguay, performed what is believed to be the first heart transplant in an overseas Southern Baptist mission-related hospital -- and the first in Paraguay.

Receiving a new heart was Pedro Nunez, 36. He was released July 22, recovering satisfactorily.

"The practice of organ donation in Paraguay is relatively unknown, and not well accepted due to cultural and religious beliefs," said Marlin Harris, a Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board missionary from Prattville, Ala., and the medical center administrator. Many Paraguayans fear that an incomplete body might not be received well by God in the next life. Foreign Mission Board missionary Hebert Palomino, medical center chaplain, was called to counsel the families of Nunez and the donor, Juan Bautista Chaparro, 41, who had suffered a massive cerebral aneurysm.

"It was not an easy task to be involved in," said Palomino, a former Texas pastor and native of Colombia. "On one hand, there was a family in despair, sadness, disappointment and grief. On the other hand, there were the expectations and hope of a patient and his relatives who were eager for him to live."

Paraguay media responded with wide coverage. And Palomino, who has appeared frequently on a widely viewed Paraguayan television talk show, was invited along with Jose Corvalan and his transplant team to tell viewers about Nunez.

The spiritual impact was significant. "Through this historic chain of events, the Lord spoke to Pedro about more than physical life. Just days after the transplant, Pedro believed and received Jesus Christ as a born-again Christian," said Palomino.

On July 18, the donor's widow and daughters and Nunez, his wife and five children participated in a thanksgiving service in the medical center chapel. An overflow crowd spilled into an adjoining hall.

The Baptist Medical Center was started by Franklin Fowler, a former missionary and staff member of the Foreign Mission Board. Management and ownership were transferred to a Paraguayan board of administrators in May 1995, after a transitional 10-year partnership with Baptist Medical Center of Jacksonville, Fla.

"The event made the public aware of the tremendous value and need for organ donation," said Harris.

"The history of Baptist Medical Center in Paraguay will now be remembered in two great testaments: before the transplant and afterwards," he added. "We are now in a new era. We do not fully understand why the Lord chose to use our institution for this event of such national prominence, but we know he has his purpose, and we desire to be faithful to it."

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**Annuity Board top \$5.4 billion;
retirement, relief set records****By Thomas E. Miller Jr.**

BOSTON (BP)--Assets of the Annuity Board of the Southern Baptist Convention reached \$5.423 billion on June 30, 1996, a 13.1 percent increase in 12 months. Retirement and relief benefits set new records for the first six months of 1996.

Financial and operations reports highlighted the summer meeting of Annuity Board trustees July 28-30 in Boston.

Contributions to participant accounts that totaled \$130 million, along with earnings of \$291 million in the January-June period, pushed total assets to a new record. Board treasurer Harold D. Richardson said total earnings for the first six months were the second highest in the 79-year history of the board, exceeded only by the record of the same six months in 1995.

Richardson reported benefits paid January through June totaled \$107 million, and total benefits for the year are expected to exceed \$200 million for the first time.

The board's Adopt An Annuitant ministry, which provides an extra \$50 each month to annuitants with low benefits, now has funding for 2,635 individuals or couples, including 488 who have been added since Dec. 31, 1995. Funding for this \$1.6 million annual expenditure comes from direct or designated gifts. Another \$1.1 million from the SBC Cooperative Program is paid out in relief benefits. The Annuity Board receives no Cooperative Program money for operations. It pays all operating expenses from earnings on assets.

Relief payments totaled \$667,005 in six months which exceeded, by \$76,387, the amount received from the Cooperative Program. The board's Retired Ministers' Support Fund, supported by direct gifts to its endowment department, supplements the relief funds provided by the Southern Baptist Convention.

The board's relief committee considered 141 relief requests at the meeting. Trustees approved 77 two-year monthly grants, three three-month monthly grants, 22 two-year expense grants and two one-time grants. Thirty-seven requests were declined for being outside guidelines. The number of requests considered, and grants approved, both set new records for the program.

Paul W. Powell, board president, noted strong six-month performances of the board's four investment funds, all of which exceeded their individual benchmarks. The Variable Fund was up 11.2 percent; International Equity Fund up 7.5 percent, Balanced Fund up 5.9 percent; and the Fixed Fund credited 3.1 percent to participant accounts.

Powell also spoke of "intense activity" by staff and state annuity representatives who are conducting investment seminars in every state convention to prepare retirement plan participants for a new investment structure on Jan. 1, 1997. More than 30,000 participants already have attended seminars.

A new computer operating system is being developed for participant record keeping, including daily valuation of accounts and entering participant choices among 13 new investment funds. Powell said, "It is safe to say that no time in our history has the board undertaken so complex and comprehensive a project."

The Southern Baptist Convention Managing General Agency, a wholly owned subsidiary of the Annuity Board that endorses a line of property and casualty insurance products sold by the Preferred Risk Group, declared a dividend of \$120,000 that was contributed to the board's Adopt An Annuitant ministry. Trustees were told a second quarter dividend of \$78,000 also will go to Adopt An Annuitant.

In other business, trustees continued an ongoing study of executive succession to ensure orderly preparation for the retirement of Chief Operating Officer W. Gordon Hobgood in 1998 and President Powell in 1999. No actions were taken relative to the discussions.

Annuity Board trustees continued their review and approval of activities leading to possible conversion of investment funds into registered mutual funds. Committees were appointed to nominate 10 directors for each of two business trusts, with six directors to come from among current board members and four "disinterested" directors from among a slate of nominees approved by the Southern Baptist Convention in June 1996.

On Sunday, July 28, trustees were guests of Grace Baptist Church, Hudson, Mass. Pastor Mark D. Acuff represents the Baptist Convention of New England on the SBC Executive Committee.

Monday evening, July 29, more than 30 New England Baptist executives, Greater Boston Baptist Association pastors and laypersons were guests at a trustee dinner in Boston.

The next meeting of Annuity Board trustees will be Nov. 4-5 in Dallas.

**Understand small churches before
trying to lead, consultant says**

By Chip Alford

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Leading a small church to grow first requires understanding its unique characteristics, a church leadership consultant from the Baptist Sunday School Board told a group of church leaders attending National Sunday School Leadership Training July 29-Aug. 2 at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center.

Barry Campbell of the board's pastor-staff leadership department said there are currently about 22,000 Southern Baptist congregations classified as "small churches." That means they have a church membership of less than 300, a Sunday school enrollment of less than 150 and a Sunday school attendance of less than 100. Including congregations from denominations other than Southern Baptist, Campbell said about 250,000 churches nationwide fall into the small church category.

And while each is unique, they do share some common characteristics, he said.

"Primarily, they are single-cell entities," Campbell, author of the book, "Unleashing the Power of the Small Sunday School," explained. "When there's a meeting, everybody goes. When there's an event, it's for everyone."

Decision-making in small churches has been compared to a "family chapel," where everyone gets involved but power is limited to one strong leader or a handful of influential members.

"Usually, there is one person who is very powerful and it can be a matriarch or a patriarch. A lot of church business is taken care of in advance of the business meeting (through these leaders)," Campbell said.

Members of this power base can come from the church deacons or officers, the nominating or finance committees, or families who have been members for many years, he said.

In his early days as a pastor, Campbell said he often viewed these powerful leaders as the "enemy."

"But 95 percent of the time, they are not the enemy," he said. "They are simply people who have had authority thrust upon them. Often it's because they have been willing to do things no one else was willing to do."

Pastors, too, can be very powerful in small churches, Campbell said, especially those who have a long tenure with one church. On the other hand, many small churches are used to pastors staying only a few years, so they avoid giving him too much power, he added.

Those called to lead small churches must also understand that their history is very important to these congregations.

"You must understand their stories; know where they've been and what they're about," Campbell said.

Other common characteristics of small churches, he said, include:

-- a strong emphasis on relationships.

-- limited resources. "They, usually, though not always, have less money. ... But in some ways they have unlimited resources because they can offer an intimacy that a larger church usually can't match."

-- They are much more comfortable with projects or events than ongoing processes or programs.

"Homecomings and special events like that are very important to these churches," Campbell said. "I don't think we need to fight against them or overcome them; we need to go with them."

National Sunday School Leadership Training is sponsored by the Sunday School Board's Bible teaching-reaching division. Eleven training sessions were held this summer at Ridgecrest, Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center and Green Lake (Wis.) Conference Center, drawing more than 10,000 church leaders.

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**Ministry center offers hospitality,
unique opportunities for ministry**

By Teresa Dickens

**Baptist Press
8/1/96**

ATLANTA (BP)--"Welcome to Atlanta! Free water and clean rest rooms inside."

This message was repeated again and again to passersby at 44 Broad St. in downtown Atlanta July 22-26. The message came from Southern Baptist volunteers. "Inside" referred to the ministry center sponsored by Atlanta International Ministries (AIM '96).

But the verbal invitation was only one of the tools volunteers used to draw the attention of pedestrians.

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An offer of a free gift bag was a popular way volunteers got their attention. Volunteers gave away at least 10,000 of the bags, provided by Woman's Missionary Union members from several states and filled with items such as Band-Aids, sunscreen, snacks and tissue paper. Free face-painting and concerts by creative arts teams also enticed pedestrians to stop for awhile.

Upon entering the ministry center, a passerby quickly became a guest. He or she was greeted at the door by a volunteer with a hearty, "Welcome!" followed by directions to the rest rooms and the cafe counter where water was available at no charge and soft drinks and a variety of snacks could be purchased at a nominal fee.

Along with these services, guests also could find a variety of other activities in the ministry center. He or she could visit an information booth, stocked with maps of Atlanta, tourist brochures, New Testaments and a variety of Christian tracts, magazines and booklets in multiple languages. Or join artist Frank Murphy, a volunteer from Rome, Ga., in the creation of a large Olympic painting. Or maybe just sit at one of the tables and relax in the air conditioning for awhile. While resting, a guest often was entertained by a creative arts group or watched Olympic coverage on a big-screen television.

It was during the times when pedestrians came inside the center or stopped on the sidewalk along the front of the building that volunteers engaged them in conversation. The conversation most always led to the introduction of the "More Than Gold" Interactive Pocket Guide -- a booklet containing Olympic information and the plan of salvation -- and a verbal presentation of the gospel. Some 300 of these presentations resulted in people praying to receive Christ.

On occasion, volunteers were able to help guests with unique things, like reuniting them with their friends. That was the experience of Ruth Guill, a WMU member from Weatherford Memorial Baptist Church, Richmond, Va.

On Tuesday morning, July 23, Guill was stationed on the sidewalk in front of the ministry center handing out gift bags. When Guill offered a gift bag to a lady approaching her, the woman told her she had gotten separated from her friends on Monday night and did not know what to do to find them. Guill took the woman, named Sue, inside the ministry center and introduced her to Patsy Davis, a Southern Baptist missionary to Venezuela who also was volunteering at the center.

Davis gave Sue food and directed her to an area of the center where she could rest while Davis attempted to locate her friends. Working with Atlanta's missing persons officials, Davis was able to contact Sue's friends and at 2:30 that Tuesday afternoon accompanied her to where she was reunited with her group.

Volunteers also discovered they could use language skills they thought they had lost in order to help guests. That was the experience of Sharon Vincent from Augusta, Ga., and Kim Weast from Hannibal, Mo.

Vincent, a member of a Women on Mission Enterpriser team from WMU, spent most of her week as a volunteer at the AIM center working at the cafe counter. One afternoon, a Frenchman came in for a cup of water and asked for directions to Athens, Ga. Recognizing the man's English was limited, Vincent did not think she would be able to communicate with him since it had been more than a decade since she had studied French.

But as she began speaking in her broken French, "The Lord brought back to my mind the French words I needed to communicate with him," she said. "The man was very patient with me," she added. "Between the English he knew and the French I knew, I was able to give him directions to Athens."

Noting she had studied French thinking she would someday serve as a missionary in a French-speaking country, Vincent said, "This was the 'missionary experience' God prepared me for and it was in the state where I live." Vincent is a former WMU employee now living in Augusta, Ga.

Weast's experience was similar to Vincent's, in that she also was providing directions to someone who spoke another language. The difference was the directions were spiritual rather than geographical.

Weast and a group of students from Hannibal-LaGrange College, Hannibal, Mo., were in front of the center making balloon animals when a Spanish woman and her two children came by. Weast noted the woman spoke Spanish, a language she recognized but could not speak very well. Weast asked the lady to come with her inside the center, hoping she would find someone who spoke Spanish fluently. When she couldn't accomplish that, she retrieved a Spanish version of the Interactive Pocket Guide and Spanish Bible for the lady who accepted the gifts and left the center.

Feeling somewhat defeated by her inability to communicate with the woman, Weast began to pray that God would use in some way the witness she had been able to give. A few hours later, Weast walked through the cafe area and to her delight saw the woman talking with missionary Patsy Davis. The woman had read the Bible and had returned to the center to learn more about its message. Davis explained the plan of salvation and the woman prayed to receive Christ.

"God used balloons, bad Spanish and a missionary to bring someone to Christ," Weast shared. She also recounted that the woman lives in Jonesboro, Ga., where First Baptist Church has recently decided to start a Spanish Bible study. "God has even provided a place for her to grow in her new relationship with him."

The experiences of these women were repeated again and again by the volunteers assigned to work at the ministry center. Some volunteers met people who had just lost their jobs. Others visited with homeless individuals who returned to the center several times. And others visited with members of the U.S. wrestling team, an Olympic swimmer from Siberia and a Secret Service agent traveling with Vice President Al Gore, who was in a meeting in the building across the street from the ministry center.

While not every encounter between a volunteer and guest resulted in a decision for Christ, every contact was important, said Dorothy Humphrey, a WMU member from Greater Grace Baptist Church, Little Rock, Ark.

"We were here to plant seeds," she said. "We have to let God do the cultivating."

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Baptists dotted the roads leading to Atlanta Olympics

**Baptist Press
8/1/96**

ATLANTA (BP)--Roads leading to Atlanta are not paved with gold, but this summer they were lined with messages that a relationship with Jesus Christ is more valuable than Olympic success.

From South Carolina to Alabama, Southern Baptists put up tables and tents at highway rest stops to witness to travelers.

In Georgia, Southern Baptists operated booths at 11 visitor information centers near the state borders. The booths were part of "cultural pavilions" sponsored by the Georgia Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism.

People from all 50 states and 102 countries, including 13 nations where Southern Baptists have no missionaries, stopped at a booth near the Georgia-South Carolina state line, said Benny Turner, director of missions for Tugalo Baptist Association.

One group of Brazilians who had been touring the United States for almost a month came by the booth, Turner said. Japanese people were shocked to find tracts in their language; virtually all the guests were surprised to find souvenir Olympic pins for free.

The pins, of course, were the "More Than Gold" pins used as a tool to share the gospel. Turner said volunteers at the northeast Georgia booth gave away 6,000 pins in two weeks. They also distributed 15,000 interactive Olympic pocket guides that include the plan of salvation.

Hospitality bags were another item in demand at the rest stops. Assembled by Bible school children and mission groups throughout the South, the bags include items such as lip balm, sunscreen and adhesive bandages. At an information center in west Georgia, volunteers gave out 1,500 bags in one day.

In a makeshift rest stop along Highway 78 near Hamilton, Ala., Baptist volunteers welcomed Olympic-bound travelers with a banner sporting the More Than Gold logo.

Although most travelers "are really in a hurry, they see the name 'Olympics' and stop," explained Pat Doss, Woman's Missionary Union director for Alabama's Marion County Association.

Noting volunteers seek to share information about the witnessing guide, she added, "It's wonderful to share Christ, and it's the only way we'll get to minister to some people. We hope we have at least planted a seed. We know if we plant the seed, God will give the increase. That's why we're so excited."

Carolyn Brazil, a member of Eastside Baptist Church, Winfield, Ala., worked alongside Doss during one 90-minute shift. She said her primary goal was to "meet people going to the Olympics and talk to them about God. It really does mean more than gold."

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Volunteers at a visitor information center just east of the Alabama-Georgia state line on Interstate 20 found themselves the target of a protest by the Atlanta Freethought Society. A small group of protesters arrived July 20 to challenge the Baptists' presence at the state-owned welcome center. About 30 protesters showed up the next day to picket the Baptist table.

"Basically they felt it was a separation of church and state issue," said Roland Brown, pastor of First Baptist Church, Tallapoosa, Ga., who helped coordinate the welcome center activities. "They didn't think a church should be allowed to have a table on public property."

The commotion caused by the protesters had a positive side, however, in that it helped draw the attention of the hundreds of visitors who stopped by the Baptists' table each day, Brown said.

"We had several people come in and ask if we were the ones the protesters were picketing," Brown said. "They wanted to see what we were giving away."

Describing the effort as "very relational, non-confrontational evangelism," Brown added, "When people come up and you offer them something free, they love it and it opens a door.

"We've had several people pray to receive Christ here," Brown said, "but I think the greatest impact will be later. We've talked to people from all over the world."

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Compiled by Sarah Zimmerman, Trennis Henderson and Carrie Brown. Photos and cutlines posted in SBCNet.

Olympics security officers receive Baptist hospitality

By Eddy G. Oliver

**Baptist Press
8/1/96**

ATLANTA (BP)--When law enforcement officers from around the world came to the Olympic Games in Atlanta, local Southern Baptists were ready with Southern hospitality and friendship.

Through a program called the Atlanta Connection, members of the Olympic Security Team Program (STP) were linked with individuals, families and groups who corresponded prior to the Summer Games beginning on July 19.

Lowell Lawson, a chaplaincy consultant with the Home Mission Board who organized the program, said nearly 400 names were given to participants. Representatives from 57 countries began arriving in late June. More than 2,000 served in all venues as part of the STP for a period of 21 to 35 days, Lawson said.

Although she did not have any event tickets, Traci Muller said she wanted to be a part of the Olympic experience and wrote to 17 people. Within two weeks she had her first response. "I thought this would be a safe, fun way to be a part of the various cultures involved in the Olympic experience," she recounted.

Muller received eight letters, including STP members from England, Switzerland, Canada, Germany, Australia and the United States. She met most of them, and they have sampled local cuisine, cultural events and visited Wal-Mart. "They loved it when I said 'y'all.'"

An opportunity to share her faith in Christ came when a police sergeant began talking about his family and they shared common experiences. "I didn't hit him with the 'Four Spiritual Laws,' but instead told him how my faith helped me cope with some difficult situations," she said.

Tammi Kimsey requested names from Australia because she had lived there previously. She corresponded for six months with five STP members and felt like she knew them "even before they arrived." Kimsey took her newfound friends to Nashville, Tenn., and they helped her move into a new home.

Lawson and his wife, Ann, hosted two members of the STP from India in their home. He conducted a Protestant worship service with participants from the United States, India, Hong Kong, South Africa and Holland. "The commonality of Christ bonded us together," he said. Lawson also gave sports New Testaments to Buddhists, Muslims and Hindus at their request.

"It's a seed-sowing venture, and we may never see the results," Lawson said. "But hopefully the contacts we make will have an impact for the cause of Christ around the world."

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**Homebound ministry: It isn't
just for seniors, he contends****By Chip Alford**

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Alan Raughton is on a crusade.

His mission: change Southern Baptists' perception of homebound ministries as an outreach only to senior adults.

"For many years there was a feeling that homebound ministries were just for senior saints, folks who had served in the church for years but could no longer attend because of sickness. We would drop by for a visit, maybe go over the Sunday school lesson with them or leave them a tape. But it is so much more than that," Raughton, an adult consultant in the Baptist Sunday School Board's Bible teaching-reaching division, said.

Raughton led a seminar on homebound ministries during National Sunday School Leadership Training July 29-Aug. 2 at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center.

Homebound ministry, Raughton said, can reach adults of all ages, such as:

-- a man in his 30s who is out of work for 18 months because of a back injury.

-- a woman in her 40s with chronic fatigue syndrome.

-- a woman in her 20s confined to bed rest for several months because of a difficult pregnancy.

"Homebound ministry is for any adult 18 and older who is unable for whatever reason to attend church on a short-term or long-term basis," Raughton said. "Once you look at it this way, you will see your opportunities for ministry increase."

And there are plenty of opportunities waiting to be discovered, Raughton said, noting there are approximately 8 million adults in the United States who are homebound because of illness, handicap or disability. More than 50 percent are not Christians.

Add that to the realization the American population is becoming much older, and it begins to sink in that homebound ministries are more important than ever before, he said.

Southern Baptists are only making a small dent in reaching this target group. According to the 1995 Annual Church Profile, 7,927 SBC churches reported homebound ministries with a total enrollment of 111,751.

Homebound ministries are part of the Sunday school, Raughton said, not a separate ministry of the church. A homebound department should be part of the Bible study organization, just as any adult Sunday school department. A director should be appointed, and perhaps even an outreach leader and secretary.

Teachers who are "inspired" by the work should be selected and assigned no more than four homebound class members. "If you give them more than that, they'll burn out quickly," Raughton said.

Teachers should be people who are good listeners, dedicated, dependable and able to express concern. They should visit each homebound class member once a week, with visits lasting from 45 minutes to an hour, Raughton said. About 20 minutes of that time should be spent in Bible study and the rest in listening and ministry.

Visits can be made anytime during the week, Raughton said, adding teachers should check with class members to choose a time that's best for them. Teachers often have to work around doctors' appointments, medical treatments and other scheduling needs. "Flexibility is a key, but class members usually like to set up a routine and they don't like to deviate from it."

Homebound ministry isn't limited to the person who is sick or disabled but can reach out to caregivers as well, Raughton said. Perhaps the caregiver needs a listening ear or a chance to get out of the house for a while. Both of these helps can be provided by homebound teachers.

The Sunday School Board offers a Bible study resource for homebound ministries. "Homebound Bible Study Teachers A" contains 26 Bible study sessions on black-and-white reproducible sheets, and a separate pack of leaflets is available for class members. A new resource, "Special Delivery: Bible Study for Homebound Adults," is scheduled for release in January. The latter product will provide a year's worth of undated Bible study lessons designed to meet the needs of people disabled by accident or disease, younger as well as older homebound adults, people who care for homebound people, people living in nursing homes or intermediate care facilities, people with declining health, and aged people.

Raughton said some homebound adults may prefer to stick with their regular Bible study quarterly, particularly if their absence from Sunday school or church will be short-term.

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"You can do that. The teacher just needs to adapt the regular Sunday school lesson. They will need to make it more conversational to make it work one-on-one."

National Sunday School Leadership Training was sponsored by the Sunday School Board's Bible teaching-reaching division.

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**Church broadening its concern
for healing racial division**

By Ken Walker

**Baptist Press
8/1/96**

ERLANGER, Ky. (BP)--When Jeff Kennedy set out to record the impact of a church burning in western Tennessee, he had no idea it would spur a meeting on race relations attended by a diverse religious and racial group.

More than 100 people turned out for a July 24 session at Erlanger (Ky.) Baptist Church -- its timeliness accentuated by the destruction of a vacant African American church in western Kentucky the day before.

Kennedy and a friend, Jim Wilson of Cincinnati, visited Tigrett, Tenn., in late June to photograph members and the remains of Mt. Pleasant Baptist Church. Gutted on May 14, the church is one of five burned in the region since January 1995.

The two-man team also interviewed several people, including the pastor, Paul Lusby, and the elderly caretakers of the building.

They produced a 21-minute documentary on the burning's impact on the small congregation.

Their trip, paid for by Erlanger Baptist, was spurred by an informal discussion between Kennedy and pastor William Crosby Jr. before a joint worship service earlier this summer with First Baptist of Elsmere, a black church in a neighboring suburb.

The slide-and-audio presentation, which kicked off the July 24 meeting and was covered by the Cincinnati Enquirer, featured part of Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech and interviews, concluding with a dramatic reading of the dozens of churches burned nationwide.

Among those attending who made remarks afterwards were:

-- Alter Peerless, of Cincinnati, a representative of the American Jewish Committee, which is supporting the National Council of Churches' Burned Churches Fund. It was his first visit to a Baptist church.

-- Jackie Thompson, president of J. Thompson Public Relations of Nashville, Tenn. The firm represents Atlanta's New Birth Missionary Baptist Church, part of an association promoting race relations meetings around the South.

-- Darren Lewis, youth pastor at Kenwood Baptist Church in Cincinnati, which sent a group of teens to Tigrett to dig a trench for the foundation of Mt. Pleasant's new building.

"We need your help," Thompson said. "This is not just to focus news attention on the issue. We have to get men of God talking together and worshipping together before the country will listen to us.

"How can we love one another if we don't worship together?" she asked. "It's because we don't know one another. We have to stand together."

Crosby said he thinks one reason there isn't more interracial worship is a matter of style.

Commenting black churches are often still worshipping when he's on his way home for a Sunday afternoon nap, he told Thompson, "If you came here, you might feel shortchanged."

"It's a matter of preference," agreed a woman in the audience. "It's not that one is right or wrong, it's just different."

"I think we have to break the mold," responded Thompson, who attends a Missionary Baptist church. "Sometimes we have to be a little uncomfortable to get to know each other."

Later, she mentioned more social activities, such as picnics and other gatherings, as a way blacks and whites can get better acquainted.

A member of Erlanger Baptist agreed with that suggestion. Lena Buzzee said it is easier to talk with someone over dinner than during a worship service.

"I was pleased this was so well attended," she added. "It lets me know it's not just me and a few members who are concerned."

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"This brought home the amount of churches that have been burned," said Janet Burriss, a member from Edgewood. "It showed the feeling that people have when their church burns is the same as when their home burns. It's a part of them."

Although it has held joint worship services with First Baptist, Elsmere twice a year since the mid-1980s, Crosby said the documentary reinforced the reality of racial problems.

"Only 3 percent of Kenton County's population is black," he said, "so we've been oblivious to it. What I hope develops from this is awareness and a sense of community, a realization of what it must be to see your church burn."

While the church is still formulating plans to follow up on the meeting, the pastor thinks it is good to openly discuss racial issues.

For example, he noted it was the first time a frank discussion of differing worship styles has been held in Erlanger Baptist's sanctuary.

"What I want to see happen is for us to get to know each other," Crosby said, "the same way we know white folks."

Kennedy already experienced a taste of that on his trip.

"I never met a more noble group of people," said the project engineer for an electrical contractor. "If you ask them if this happened because of race, they are so reluctant to falsely accuse people, they don't want to say anything unless they're sure. That's a noble trait."

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**Texas Baptists promote Camp,
hire Martin as newswriter**

By Orville Scott

**Baptist Press
8/1/96**

DALLAS (BP)--Ken Camp, newswriter since 1984 in the office of communications of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, has been promoted to news and information coordinator, effective Aug. 1, said Thomas J. Brannon, director of communications.

Succeeding Camp as newswriter is Dan Martin, a veteran editor and writer for Southern Baptist agencies, also effective Aug. 1.

"Texas Baptists are blessed to have a team of Camp's and Martin's journalistic skill and Christian commitment serving in their office of communications," Brannon said.

"Both are highly respected among both secular and Baptist media and will continue to advance the Texas 2000 goal by using all available media to create the most favorable atmosphere for sharing Christ with every Texan by the year 2000."

Camp succeeds Orville Scott, who retired July 31 after 35 years with Texas and North Carolina Baptists as writer, editor and photographer.

A native of Greenville, Texas, Camp earned the bachelor of arts degree from East Texas State University, Commerce, and the master of arts degree in communication from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas.

He previously worked for the Greenville Herald Banner and the Farmersville Times/Princeton Herald, both in Texas, and taught high school English and journalism at Royse City, Texas.

He has won top awards in newswriting and print media in the Baptist Communications Association awards competition.

Camp and his wife, the former Diane Lea Press, have three children: Daniel, Matthew and Nathan.

Martin earned the bachelor of arts degree from Midwestern University, Wichita Falls, Texas, and attended Southwestern Seminary.

He was a reporter for the Dallas Morning News, Fort Worth Star Telegram and Rocky Mountain News (Denver) before serving as press director for the BGCT office of communications from 1973-76.

He was editor of news services for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board from 1976-80; news editor of Baptist Press, Nashville, Tenn., from 1980-90; founding editor of Associated Baptist Press; and executive director of Texans Against Gambling. He is the recipient of numerous writing awards.

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Also Martin was pastor of churches in Dallas and Quanah, Texas, and in Bakersville, N.C., and was part-time instructor of journalism and communications at Mars Hill College, Mars Hill, N.C.

He and his wife, the former Colleen Taylor, a secretary for Dallas Baptist Association, have four children and six grandchildren.

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CORRECTION: In (BP) story titled "Baptist hospital chaplains aid Olympics bomb victims," dated 7/31/96, please change the date of the bombing to July 27, not April 27.

Thanks,
Baptist Press

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