

(BP)

-- BAPTIST PRESS
News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE:
SBC Executive Committee
901 Commerce #750
Nashville, Tennessee 37203
(615) 244-2351
Herb Hollinger, Vice President
Fax (615) 742-8911
CompuServe ID# 70420,1

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

May 2, 1996

96-77

VIRGINIA--Lewis urges multi-denominational effort to win America for Christ.
VIRGINIA--Foreign board to cut Japan force by 30%.
WASHINGTON--Graham: President wrong to veto abortion ban bill.
TENNESSEE--Historical Commission trustees vote transfer of copyrights.
TENNESSEE--Baptist historical society selects OBU as new home.
TENNESSEE--Involvement, not isolation, is church's call, Land says.
TEXAS--Defeat gangs by making friends, seminarian says; photo.
MISSOURI--Analysis: 70,000-plus men turn out for Promise Keepers K.C. rally.
KENTUCKY--Renewal touches county via 'Experiencing God.'

Lewis urges multi-denominational
effort to win America for Christ

By Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist Press
5/2/96

ALEXANDRIA, Va. (BP)--As the millennium draws near an end, Home Mission Board President Larry Lewis is asking Southern Baptists to work with other Christian groups to witness to every person in America.

"Our Bold Mission Thrust goal is to share Christ with every person in the nation by the end of the year 2000," he said. "Southern Baptists might be able to do that by ourselves in the South, but it's not possible in our largest cities or the West or North or Northeast" where Southern Baptist work is not as strong.

Lewis and other HMB leaders met May 1 with 175 representatives of Christian denominations and para-church organizations at a national conference on evangelism. The meeting was sponsored by Mission America, a network of Christian organizations committed to evangelizing the United States.

Participants learned about Celebrate Jesus 2000, a Home Mission Board initiative that includes praying, sharing the gospel individually and in groups and helping new Christians become disciples.

Sterling Huston, North American director for the Billy Graham evangelistic crusades, presented the strategy, which already has been endorsed by two of Mission America's leadership committees.

Reaction to the plan was positive. Conference participants called it "the best plan I've seen so far" and "a great attempt to put down some tracks for us to run on." One concern expressed was local church involvement.

"This will not happen if local churches do not come together under the leadership of their pastors," Huston said. "It is not a program superimposed from the top."

One Mission America goal is for church leaders in 1,000 communities across the nation to meet in March next year to develop cooperative evangelism strategies. Huston encouraged community leaders to use Celebrate Jesus 2000 as part of their strategy.

After the meeting, Lewis said the Home Mission Board will develop a manual to help churches and communities participate in Celebrate Jesus 2000. The strategy can be adapted for different cultural groups and can include various approaches to witnessing, from distribution of the "Jesus" film to sharing Christ in door-to-door surveys.

--more--

In the midst of the call to work together, the president of Moody Bible Institute reminded the group to seek biblical unity, not simply "oneness for oneness sake."

Based on John 17, Joseph Stowell said biblical unity is:

1. Based in Christ. Biblical unity does not contradict the person and work of Christ.
2. Centered on truth. "Few things are more important than unity, and truth is one of them. Doctrine divides truth from error; we can't let error grow for the sake of unity."
3. Essential in evangelism. "We are one in purpose to show a watching world what Christ is like."
4. Not the same as being identical. "Biblical unity does not cancel out our differences." Just as each member of the Trinity has a different function yet is part of one God, Stowell said Christian groups can serve various roles while remaining unified as one body of Christ.

"Unity in Christ transcends and tolerates individual differences," Stowell said. "The issue is not dumping differences, but coming together and learning to appreciate the differences."

--30--

Foreign board to cut
Japan force by 30%

By Louis Moore

Baptist Press
5/2/96

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--(BP) To make additional resources available in areas of the world where Foreign Mission Board leaders feel God is focusing their attention, the Southern Baptist agency will reduce the number of missionaries in Japan over the next three years by about 30 percent.

Even with the cutbacks, the Japan mission will have about 120 missionaries and will be the FMB's second-largest mission in the world, behind south Brazil.

The high cost of living and the high inflation rate in Japan -- dovetailed with the realization that Christian growth there has plateaued at low levels -- led agency officials to the difficult conclusion that resources deployed there could produce significantly greater results in other countries.

The decision to "rightsize" the Japan mission reflects the board's determination to accomplish strategic objectives by redeploying resources to both "harvest fields" and "The Last Frontier."

Harvest fields are areas of the world where God is producing an abundance of new Christians and churches. The Last Frontier refers to areas of the world where people have little or no access to the gospel.

Japan fits into neither category. Southern Baptists began work in Japan in 1889 and re-entered the country in 1947 after an eight-year interruption due to World War II. Statistics for 1995 indicate the Japanese Baptist Convention includes 269 churches, 99 preaching points and three new churches, with a combined membership of 35,000. Though the convention is considered nearly static in terms of growth, it does have its own home missionary force and sends its own foreign missionaries to three countries -- Thailand, Indonesia and Singapore.

"These statistics show there is a growing Japanese Baptist Convention that will continue to reach Japan and send missionaries to other countries," said Faye Pearson, director of Foreign Mission Board work in east Asia. "Some of our most dedicated missionaries serve faithfully in Japan."

Despite the large force of SBC missionaries and the substantial outlay of money for work in Japan, the country ranks near the bottom in numerical growth indicators. Of 129 countries in which the Foreign Mission Board works, Japan ranks 114th in baptisms per church member and 48th in church starts.

Japan's Christian population has remained constant at 1 percent for the past 25 years, Pearson said.

--more--

The FMB's current budget for Japan, which has the highest cost of living in the world, is larger than five other areas of the world, each comprising from nine to 30 countries. The Japan mission consumes nearly one-fourth of the board's global cost-of-living budget for missionaries in expensive countries.

"This does not mean we do not have concern for the lost of Japan," said Avery T. Willis, the board's senior vice president for overseas operations. "This does not mean we are going to withdraw from Japan. What it does mean is that we recognize that the dollars and missionaries we are putting into Japan would go so much further in other places."

Willis also said, "The fact that Southern Baptist giving has not kept pace with (foreign missionary) appointments is the basic cause for our having to make this strategic decision. We are trying to be good stewards of the resources Southern Baptists have given us.

"We have made a commitment to be 'On Mission with God.' That means where God is working we have to respond," Willis said. "We also have an obligation to respond to taking the Great Commission to all the world, and we can't just focus on one expensive area while 2,161 people groups have little or no access to the gospel.

"We're going to have to be strategic with every person and every dollar the Lord is providing us," he said.

Pearson said the Japan mission will be pared down through attrition. Except in special situations, no new missionaries will be appointed to the country. While Pearson and Willis believe attrition will accomplish the rest, they will "make opportunities available to missionaries remaining in Japan to transfer to other areas."

Ironically, she and Willis say Japanese who live outside of Japan appear to be more receptive to the gospel than those living on the island. Other FMB geographic areas have been encouraged to target Japanese living in their countries.

The reduction is the second for Japan in eight years. In 1988, the FMB announced plans to reduce the Japan mission from about 200 missionaries to about 160.

Pearson said when she announced the cutback at the recent meeting of the board's trustee committee for east Asia "the trustees cried, but they understood why this was necessary."

She urged Southern Baptists to "pray for revival in Japan and the pouring out of his Spirit in a Great Awakening" there.

If signs appear that the Japanese are becoming more receptive to the gospel -- if a spiritual awakening or revival breaks out -- the board will consider beefing up its presence in Japan again, she said.

--30--

Graham: President wrong
to veto abortion ban bill

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press
5/2/96

WASHINGTON (BP)--Evangelist Billy Graham has joined the list of religious leaders declaring opposition to President Clinton's veto of the Partial-birth Abortion Ban Act.

Graham, a Southern Baptist, told Cal Thomas on the syndicated columnist's weekly television show for CNBC of his disagreement with Clinton, also a Southern Baptist. According to the May 2 issue of The Washington Times, Thomas asked the evangelist what he thought of the legislation, which Clinton vetoed April 10.

"I think the president was wrong in vetoing it," Graham said, according to The Times. "I had the opportunity of telling him that in person."

"How did he respond?" Thomas asked.

"I can't tell you that yet," Graham said.

The show was scheduled to be aired May 5.

Graham did not say when he voiced his disapproval to the president. A White House spokesman said the Grahams were honored with a tea May 1 at the White House but did not reveal if the veto was discussed at that time, The Times reported. The article revealing his comments appeared on the same day the evangelist and his wife, Ruth, were to receive the Congressional Gold Medal in the capitol rotunda.

--more--

Graham's acknowledgment of his difference with the president represents something of a reversal of policy. He has rarely spoken out on abortion, saying he wanted to focus on evangelism, and has avoided criticizing Clinton's actions. Graham prayed at Clinton's inauguration in 1993.

The world's best-known Christian evangelist joins the Vatican and eight Roman Catholic cardinals in the United States in condemning the veto.

In an April 19 statement supporting a letter from the cardinals and the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls called Clinton's action a "'shameful veto,' which, in practice, amounts to an incredibly brutal act of aggression against innocent human life and the inalienable rights of the unborn. The fact that this presidential decision legalizes this inhuman procedure morally and ethically imperils the future of a society that condones it."

The cardinals and Anthony Pilla, the bishops' president, said in an April 16 letter to Clinton his veto was "beyond comprehension for those who hold human life sacred." They called the late-term procedure which the president allowed to continue "more akin to infanticide than abortion."

They described their response in unison "virtually unprecedented" and said they will do all they can to educate people about the procedure and to inform them the president is the reason it continues to be legal.

Raymond Flynn, a Roman Catholic appointed by Clinton as ambassador to the Vatican, publicly sided with his church.

He had encouraged the president "in the strongest possible terms" to sign the bill, Flynn told Reuters News Agency, according to an April 20 article in The Washington Times. "I support the president very strongly. By the same token I think the Catholic church and the holy father are absolutely right on this."

The statement by Navarro-Valls was "about as strong as I have ever seen" from the Vatican, Flynn said. This is an issue which puts "the Catholic church and the president of the United States on a collision course," he said.

Evangelical leaders also have condemned the veto.

Among Southern Baptists, Richard Land, president of the Christian Life Commission, criticized it, saying the veto "means if there is a distinction between being pro-choice and pro-abortion, President Clinton has crossed the line into the pro-abortion camp." The trustees of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary unanimously passed a resolution opposing the procedure and Clinton's veto.

A group of mainline Protestant and Jewish leaders, however, expressed support of the veto in an April 30 letter to some members of the House of Representatives. They said, "Neither we as religious leaders, the president nor the Congress -- none of us can discern God's will as well as the woman herself, and that is where we believe the decision must remain."

Officials of the United Methodist Church, Episcopal Church, Presbyterian Church (USA) and United Church of Christ were among those who signed onto the letter.

The procedure banned by the bill involves the delivery of an intact baby feet first until only the head is left in the birth canal. The doctor pierces the base of the baby's skull with surgical scissors, then inserts a catheter into the opening and suctions out the brain. The collapse of the skull enables easier removal of the dead child. The bill allows the use of the method, also known as dilation and extraction, only when the life of the mother is endangered.

It appears any attempt to override the veto is several weeks off. The House of Representatives approved the bill in late March by a 286-129 vote. The Senate passed it 54-44 in early December. An override attempt must have a two-thirds majority in both chambers to succeed.

Historical Commission trustees
vote transfer of copyrights

By Kim Medley

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Southern Baptist Historical Commission trustees voted during their annual meeting to transfer copyrights of the commission's publications and videos to the Southern Baptist Historical Society after consultation with the Baptist Sunday School Board. The trustee meeting was held April 22 in Nashville, Tenn.

In February 1995, the Program and Structure Study Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee released its "Covenant for a New Century" proposed restructuring of the SBC, which was approved by the Executive Committee and, in June, by messengers to the SBC annual meeting in Atlanta. According to the covenant, the Historical Commission is among several SBC agencies to be dissolved.

Slayden Yarbrough, commission interim executive-director, met with Sunday School Board President James T. Draper Jr. and vice president Gene Mims in March to discuss the future of the commission's pamphlet series, videotapes and church history resource kit.

Mims outlined the Sunday School Board's agreement in a March 21 letter to Yarbrough. The board agreed: 1) "the Southern Baptist Historical Society should retain copyrights, inventories, and distribution of all materials presently owned by the Historical Commission;" 2) the SBHS would provide the BSSB with "materials concerning writing church histories in the local churches" (the BSSB will field these materials through the board's media department and in media centers across the convention); and 3) representatives from the SBHS and the BSSB's church growth group will meet at least once each year to determine appropriate historical information to be placed in the board's publications.

During their annual meeting, Historical Commission trustees voted to transfer copyrights of the commission's publications and videos, as well as a complete set of desktop publishing equipment, to the Southern Baptist Historical Society to continue the publishing of these resources.

"We've made some major accomplishments at the Historical Commission," Yarbrough said of steps taken at the agency in regard to the Covenant for a New Century. "We feel good about the direction of the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives; we've had good discussions with the Council of Seminary Presidents. They have been very open to our suggestions."

The Covenant for a New Century calls for the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, currently owned by the Historical Commission, to become property of the Council of Seminary Presidents.

Yarbrough told commission trustees that in some ways the SBHLA may actually be on better footing than it was with the Historical Commission, saying he believes there will be additional funding, filling of vacant staff positions and "the personnel (of the SBHLA) that has played an important part will continue to play an important part."

While Yarbrough said he is pleased with these outcomes, he admitted some things about the Historical Commission's closure are more difficult, "like what is to be done with the people. Yet, I feel like and believe that when it's all said and done, we will have treated our people in a kind and fair manner and done the very best we can for them."

Historical Commission trustees voted to give employees who will not remain with the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives a severance package that could include assistance with employment agency fees, an incentive benefit for those remaining with the commission through April 30, 1997, and medical insurance for early retirees.

Ronald Martin of California, commission chairman, noted the need to act with Christian concern for the commission's employees was a major factor in the trustees' deliberations. However, trustees also chose to treat the agency's financial resources "with conservative responsibility, remaining within the budgetary recommendations which the Executive Committee will be presenting to the convention in June."

Martin said he is "extremely pleased" with the announcement the Southern Baptist Historical Society would be moved to Oklahoma Baptist University. "By relocating its offices to Oklahoma, the society places itself in a site central to our nationwide Southern Baptist presence. Indeed as a Californian, I heartily, if a bit humorously, endorse this move to a somewhat less-eastern location."

Yarbrough, a religion professor at OBU, was selected as the society's director during the organization's April 22-24 meeting in Nashville.

In other action, trustees:

-- elected commission officers for the 1996-97 year. Officers are: Martin, chairman; Norma Pugh, New York, vice chairman; Elizabeth Wells, Alabama, secretary; and Yarbrough, treasurer.

-- presented plaques to the following trustees whose terms with the commission have concluded: Roy Myers, Mississippi; Slayden Yarbrough, Oklahoma; Max Daley, Northwest; and Sarah Phillips, Ohio.

-- recognized Sue Jones, administrative secretary, on the occasion of her 20th anniversary as an employee of the Historical Commission. Jones was presented with a plaque, a check and a framed print of the Nashville skyline.

-- adopted a proposed 1996-97 nine-month budget of \$478,641 and a 12-month budget of \$597,494 including a Cooperative Program allocation request of \$375,296 (nine-month) or \$512,494 (12-month).

-- acknowledged an earlier transfer of the Wardin-Alf Fund from the Historical Commission, SBC, to the Southern Baptist Historical Society at the request of the donor, Albert Wardin, former professor at Belmont University, Nashville, Tenn.

-- approved the transfer of two endowed awards. The Lynn E. May Jr. Study Grant Fund, named in honor of the commission's former executive-director, will be transferred by commission trustees to the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives. The award assists out-of-town researchers using the SBHLA with lodging and food expenses while in Nashville. The Norman W. Cox Award for the best article published in the journal Baptist History and Heritage will be transferred by trustee action to the Southern Baptist Historical Society.

Yarbrough told trustees many of his friends at Oklahoma Baptist University questioned why he would take a leave from his job at the university to come to Nashville and oversee the commission at this time. "I have been part of the work (of the Historical Commission) as a trustee for eight years," he stated. "I've grown to appreciate the people and felt a real commitment to help"

Yarbrough confessed to trustees closing out the commission has "not been an enjoyable task." However, he said, he has discovered a shift in perspective. "The new opportunities we have are so encouraging. Many of us have begun to dream dreams again of what can happen in terms of Baptist history.

"A year ago the trustees voted unanimously to oppose the PSSC report," Yarbrough noted. "At the same time, they instructed me to work toward implementation of that report if its approval is finalized (during the SBC meeting) in New Orleans The adoption of the implementation plan (by trustees) with excellent discussion and clear support evidenced their commitment and my commitment to move ahead."

If dissolution of the commission is approved at the June 1996 SBC meeting with a second affirmative vote on SBC Bylaw 15, the agency's implementation plan calls for all work to be completed by July 1, 1997. Commission trustees named Bill Sumners, director of the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, to oversee day-to-day operations in consultation with Yarbrough during what would then be the remaining year of the agency's existence. Yarbrough will return to his teaching schedule at OBU this fall.

Baptist historical society
selects OBU as new home

By Kim Medley

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--The Southern Baptist Historical Society, birthed by the Southern Baptist Historical Commission more than 40 years ago, is finding a new beginning, at a time when the Historical Commission faces dissolution under the restructuring of the Southern Baptist Convention.

At its first annual meeting, Historical Society leaders reported much to celebrate. In April 1995, it had only \$6,000 in its coffers. During its business meeting this year, treasurer Albert Wardin announced the society now has more than \$91,000 toward its goal of \$150,000.

The society also selected Oklahoma Baptist University at Shawnee as its new home, during its April 22-24 meeting at First Baptist Church, Nashville, Tenn.

The increase in society funds is the result of several donations, including a \$25,000 gift from Wardin, a retired professor from Belmont University, Nashville, Tenn., and \$4,222 from the estate of the late Emma Louise Thompson, a lifelong member of Fifth Baptist Church, Washington.

In addition, \$34,000 from the Wardin-Alf Fund has been transferred by Historical Commission trustees to the Southern Baptist Historical Society at Wardin's request. "I felt this was legitimate because first I had given the fund to the Historical Commission and the Historical Commission would be no more," Wardin stated. "Therefore, I, as the donor, wanted to be sure that the fund would be used properly for historical purposes. So I requested the commission to transfer the fund ... (to the society)."

Several Baptist-related higher education institutions have made pledges totaling more than \$10,000 annually, including Carson-Newman College, Baylor University, Hardin-Simmons University, Stetson University, Mississippi College, Dallas Baptist University and Shorter College.

The Southern Baptist Historical Society was first organized in 1938 and officially became a Historical Commission auxiliary in 1953. The society has encouraged and cooperated with Baptist historical work on the local, associational, state and national levels through such services as the Baptist History and Heritage journal, Baptist Heritage Update newsletter and awards for excellence/achievement in Baptist history work.

In May 1995, society officers voted to seek a new charter to make it an independent organization if the "Covenant for a New Century" SBC restructuring was approved during the convention's meeting last June in Atlanta. Messengers approved the restructuring.

Rosalie Beck, 1996-97 society president and associate professor of religion at Baylor in Waco, Texas, said she is pleased with the change in the society's status. "After all these years of an amicable and symbiotic relationship with the Historical Commission, SBC, the Southern Baptist Historical Society will be what it was intended to be from the beginning -- an independent, free, integrity-driven voice for all Southern Baptists. ... Every person's story deserves to be told and known. It deserves to be presented in the best way possible -- with honesty, with humor and with integrity before the Lord. ... It will not be easy. We are charting new territory."

With the dissolution of the Historical Commission, Beck noted, the society will need to be self-supporting. "We will need to think about ways in which the society can fulfill its mission of helping people and churches learn, teach and use their history while making a profit. Service and profitability, although an oxymoron in the corporate world, really will be the society's guide and watchword."

After receiving proposals from four institutions, members of the society voted during the Nashville meeting to move the organization to Oklahoma Baptist University.

OBU, Baylor, Tennessee's Carson-Newman and Missouri's William Jewell College all submitted proposals for hosting the SBHS. The proposals defined what each school was willing to contribute to the society in terms of financial support, physical space, office equipment, support staff, student assistance and release time for the director.

Representatives from each institution presented their proposals to the society's officers. Presentations were made by Rosalie Beck, Baylor; Slayden Yarbrough, OBU; Carolyn Blevins, Carson-Newman; and Adrian Lamkin and Jerry Cain, William Jewell.

Following the presentations, officers voted to recommend OBU to the membership during the society's April 24 business session.

Beck, in her presidential address, challenged society members to evaluate their thoughts regarding moving the society. "The issue of where the SBHS will be located has weighed heavily on the minds of the leadership of the society," Beck noted. "When the society relocates to a university, there might be the idea among some of you that you have lost the SBHS, that it will simply be an extension of the educational arm of Southern Baptist life. That is wrong. This society is now, has been and always will be, if I have anything to do with it, for the people and for the churches."

At the business session, society members voted unanimously to place the organization at OBU with Slayden Yarbrough, interim executive-director of the Historical Commission and professor of religion at OBU, as the society's new director.

"The Oklahoma Baptist University family is pleased and excited to welcome the Southern Baptist Historical Society to our campus," said Bob Agee, OBU president, in a news release following the meeting. Agee cited OBU's Baptist history faculty, curriculum offerings in Baptist history and the Herschell H. and Frances Hobbs Lectureship in Baptist History and Heritage as evidence of the value the school places on the preservation and communication of Baptist history.

Agee announced the university has established the Herschell Hobbs Baptist History and Heritage Center at OBU. The center will house Hobbs' library, personal papers and audio/video tapes of his sermons. It will also serve as home of the Southern Baptist Historical Society.

"OBU's commitment to serve the needs of Southern Baptist churches fits so well with the ... membership of the society," Agee said. "It is imperative that we as Baptists are diligent about the task of collecting, preserving and communicating Baptist history. It will be a pleasure to have the society on our campus."

Yarbrough said he is "thoroughly committed to serving as the director of the society on the OBU campus. I believe that some great days are ahead for the society ... I am very pleased with the growing support of Baptist colleges and universities, state conventions and state historical programs to ensure that many of the contributions originally provided by the Historical Commission will continue for our churches through the Southern Baptist Historical Society."

In other action, SBHS members:

-- received word Historical Commission trustees had voted to transfer copyrights of the commission's pamphlets, videotapes and resource kit for church history to the Southern Baptist Historical Society. Slayden Yarbrough reported the Baptist Sunday School Board has been supportive of the society continuing the publication of these resources.

-- voted to change SBHS bylaws to allow the society's president, vice president and secretary to serve up to two consecutive one-year terms.

-- voted to add a Council of Advisors to the society. The council will provide guidance to the society regarding its membership, finances, goals and effectiveness. It may bring recommendations to the membership during annual session and will serve as a liaison to other organizations with an interest in Baptist history. The council will consist of an indefinite number of members elected to three-year terms. Advisors will be expected to pay their own expenses to meetings of the council.

-- were informed that the SBHS is working on a home page on the Internet and can now receive e-mail at the following address: kmedley@edge.net.

"We have a sense of opportunity in which we will no longer have to depend upon the Historical Commission," Yarbrough said in a report to the organization, titled, "A Look to the Future."

Said Yarbrough: "... we have superb resources -- in our people, in our ideas and in our actions."

For more information about donations to or membership in the SBHS, call 1-800-966-BAPT or message Kim Medley at the e-mail address listed above.

**Involvement, not isolation,
is church's call, Land says**

By Dwayne Hastings

JEFFERSON CITY, Tenn. (BP)--An obligation for social involvement is rooted deep in Baptist history, said Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Christian Life Commission.

The call to bring religious faith into the public arena is not a new teaching, Land said April 25. Reading from the Baptist Faith and Message, a statement of faith adopted by Southern Baptists in 1925 and modified in 1963, he said, "Every Christian is under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in his own life and in human society."

Early Baptists understood Christians ought to be involved in society, Land said, citing John Leland, a pastor known for his activism against state control of the church in the Virginia colony in the 1770s.

"Leland became involved up to his eyeballs in politics to defend religious liberty," Land said, noting Leland's efforts prompted the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

It is not uncommon for Southern Baptists to claim they avoid the controversial because they are called to simply preach the gospel, Land said during an East Tennessee Pastors' Conference at Carson-Newman College, Jefferson City, Tenn.

"Yet the gospel, by its essence and nature, is controversial," Land said, in refuting that familiar refrain.

Acknowledging there is confusion within the church about what constitutes appropriate and inappropriate involvement in society, Land said if the church is going to confront the culture as Jesus commanded, "We have to rethink a mind-set in which Christians withdraw from society and their community and engage only in an intensely pietistic, individual, congregational-only and inward-looking faith.

"One of the most persistent and pervasive myths we face in America today is the myth that you can't legislate morality," Land said. Yet Romans 13 says Christians must do just that, he continued, noting there are laws against murder, theft and rape, which he said are all the legislation of morality.

"You have the right to bring your religious convictions into the public arena and to seek to convince people that the moral deductions from your religious convictions are right."

While Christians themselves are not disqualified from the public policy process, he said there is a clear line that the church should not cross.

Citing the apostle Paul's words to the believers at Rome, Land said there are three divinely ordained institutions: the home, the church and the civil magistrate.

"God has ordained civil government not to perform the role of the family and not to perform the role of the church, but to perform the role given by God and outlined by Paul in Romans chapter 13 -- to restrain evil and promote the good," Land explained.

Christians must hold government to that standard and not expect it to perform the role of the church, he said.

The ideal situation, Land said, is for government to provide a level playing field and then to get off the field.

Land said the 1963 decision by the U.S. Supreme Court which decreed state-sponsored prayer unconstitutional was in line with Baptist beliefs. Referring to the Baptist Faith and Message again, he said traditional Baptist thought forbids the commingling of church and state. "The church should not resort to the civil power to carry out its work," he said.

Yet subsequent judicial rulings went far beyond the original intent of the Supreme Court decision, unduly restricting students' rights to religious expression, Land said.

"In far too many cases and far too many places, this ruling has been interpreted as requiring a hostility to the religious, a censoring of religious expression by citizens," Land said, echoing Justice Arthur Goldberg's warning in his concurring opinion to the 1963 decision.

"This decision should not be interpreted as requiring a brooding hostility to religion; that would be just as unconstitutional as what we have just ruled against," Goldberg wrote.

Land said the Christian Life Commission has joined with others committed to clarifying the law by supporting a Religious Freedom Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. The proposed amendment does not go back to "pre-1963" conditions, Land said, explaining it expressly protects student-sponsored, student-initiated religious expression.

"When you have the state sponsor a religious observance at a public school, that's a violation of the establishment clause. When you have the government saying the students can't talk to each other about religious things and that students can't pray or do book reports about religious subjects, that's a violation of the free exercise clause," Land said.

Rex Horne, pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church, Little Rock, Ark., also spoke during the conference. Horne, who is well-known as Bill Clinton's pastor, said being the president's pastor has brought his family much heartache.

"The greatest challenge has been the impact upon my family. My kids and my wife have endured some cruel things," Horne said, noting his church has been the target of picketing and threats from those who disagree with the president.

"There's not a lot of people you can call for encouragement," Horne said of the challenges of being pastor to the nation's chief executive. "We didn't even have a class on it in seminary," he added smiling.

Acknowledging he disagrees with Clinton on the issues of abortion and homosexuality, Horne said of those protesting the president's views outside of Emmanuel, "There's a right way and a wrong way to do things. We have elections every four years.

"We have a responsibility to pray for him," Horne said, "to pray he would have wisdom and courage to do what the Lord directs."

--30--

Defeat gangs by making
friends, seminarian says

By Dena Dyer

Baptist Press
5/2/96

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Gangs of Hispanic boys prowl the streets of Fort Worth, Texas. That's a known fact. But they don't all wield knives and guns. Some are armed with spray paint cans -- they're known as a "tagging team" -- and their competitions are not fought with fists and weapons but with talent. Still, danger is a very present reality.

Anthony Ybarra was a member of a tagging team on the city's south side. But the youngster knew in his heart there must be a better life.

Enter Chris Brummett, student at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and Anthony's next-door neighbor.

One afternoon last fall, Chris saw Anthony and his younger brother, Jesse, sitting on their front porch. So he decided to introduce himself, and it didn't take long for Chris and Anthony to develop a friendship.

"I thought he was weird or something," Anthony said. "Nobody had ever come up to us like that before and just talked to us." He explained the former resident of Chris' student housing duplex often called security on the two boys.

Later, Jesse went to a Christian alternative to a Halloween haunted house and Anthony stayed home. But when Jesse came back from the Halloween outing as a new Christian, Anthony began to feel curious.

"We began to talk a lot about spiritual things," Chris said. The more the two talked, the more Anthony began to realize something was missing in his life -- something Chris, and now his own little brother, had.

"My cousin asked me to go to church with him," Anthony said. "He's not that much of an angel either, but I went with him. I started listening to the stories the preacher told, and they touched me."

--more--

Anthony's curiosity reached a peak following a Christian concert he attended with some of his family. "A bunch of people were going down front and getting saved, but my family was leaving," he said.

Chris was home that night when he heard a knock on the door.

"Anthony came over about 10 o'clock and started talking to me," Chris said. "He was upset that he had to leave the concert, because he had wanted to go forward. So I told him that he didn't have to be at church or at a Christian concert to make a decision. And that night, he prayed to receive Christ."

The difference in Anthony's outlook since that night is amazing, Chris said. "I could tell he was changed. He has hope and vision for the future now."

"I couldn't even see the future before I accepted Christ," Anthony said. "I lived each day like I was gonna die."

He told of the normalcy of seeing peers murdered by rival gangs.

"One guy last week was 'set up' by a girl. He left the house to meet her at 3 a.m., and they found him the next morning, stabbed and shot with his eyes cut out."

Living daily in such a war zone had left him cold and hopeless, Anthony said. "I never thought about the people I would leave behind if I died. I only cared about surviving."

Anthony's grandmother, Jsita, with whom he lives, is thankful Chris took time to get to know his neighbors.

"I'm so glad Chris talked to Anthony," she said. "He's different now. He used to do whatever he wanted, and I didn't like it. I was scared that he might get hurt or something. I hoped to God that he would stay out of trouble."

But Anthony admits to experiencing his fair share.

"I've been in trouble so many times, but I've never been in jail and I don't want to find out what that's like. I did get caught once for being out tagging after curfew, and that scared me."

So Anthony now uses his talent in more productive ways -- and hopes to make a career out of his art. "He has started 'tagging' for Jesus!" Chris said.

The whole episode with Anthony is really a product of prayer, Chris noted.

"All of these people live around the seminary and no one has told them about Jesus. My hope is that we will start to get a glimpse of what could happen if we really began to minister to the world right around us," he said, noting one act of friendship toward his next door neighbors has resulted in even more witnessing opportunities.

"It's inreach -- now I've been able to share Christ with easily a dozen people, just because Anthony and I have developed a relationship."

He added Anthony has shared a tract with his girlfriend, a "Jesus" video in Spanish with his mother and stepfather and has started praying for his uncle. He and his brother have composed Christian rap and have been faithfully attending a mission church close to their home.

"I've learned as much from him as he has from me," Chris said. "And I'm really excited, because he is asking intelligent questions about the Bible, and I'm having the opportunity to disciple him and keep him accountable. He's already read most of John and Luke."

"This isn't hard," Chris stressed. "You just gotta be friends with your neighbors."

--30--

(BP) photo (horizontal) of Chris, Anthony and Jsita available on SBCNet and through Southwestern's office of public relations.

ANALYSIS

70,000-plus men turn out for
Promise Keepers K.C. rally

By Tim Palmer

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)--What do you make of this thing called Promise Keepers? Is it a Spirit-filled, power-preached, musically stirring time for 70,000 men to raise hands clasped by strangers/brothers in the united purpose of worshiping Jesus Christ?

Is it a major self-help seminar, with popular advocates of godliness in the home sharing how our country lost its way and telling men how to reclaim the responsibility of passing the baton to the next generation?

Is it a racial/denominational reconciliation rally that paints a picture of Galatians 3:28, and holds up a mirror to make men see if prejudice stares back at them?

Is it a haven in the firestorm of pornography, infidelity, uncertainty, fear, searching, loneliness and misdirected priorities that buffets the American male in 1996?

Pastor Richard Eakins tells a Promise Keepers story that has unfolded in who-knows-how-many churches over the past two or three years. Four men from First Baptist Church, Nixa, Mo., went to a stadium rally last summer in Denver. Then 17 went to Dallas in the fall. The impact on the church, Eakins confirmed, was "Tremendous, tremendous."

"I feel more support as a pastor than I have in years," he reported. A dozen or more guys gather around him to pray before the Sunday morning service. Men are getting off drugs. They are studying the Bible and witnessing for Christ in the community. Some have even surrendered to the ministry.

Eakins and 43 other men from the church attended the April 26-27 Promise Keepers rally Arrowhead Stadium in Kansas City, Mo. They left their Ozarks base Friday morning and arrived early enough to commandeer seats on the stadium floor close to the towering stage.

Eakins served as a counselor during the invitation that followed Tony Evans' sermon Friday night. The Dallas preacher pointed to Solomon -- a fellow who had it all in a material sense if any man in history did. And yet Solomon concluded all is vanity, and he confronted the fact the fate of the fool was his fate as well.

"Men, I have some bad news for you tonight," Evans roared. "You're gonna die!"

He compared this life to playing Monopoly, which ends when you pack up the game. "When they close the box on your life, you're gonna go to the real world. And it's not gonna matter what you left behind but what you forwarded ahead."

A scene like a Billy Graham crusade followed Evans's suggestion to "come on home -- take that walk down here." The aisles filled with men streaming forward to accept Christ as Savior or to rededicate their lives to him.

South Carolinian Bruce Wilkison stepped up next and took aim with a sledgehammer at the bricks of sin Christian men continue to pile into their lives after they are saved. Depart from iniquity, 2 Timothy 2:19 instructs a man, Wilkison said, asking, "How come Christ is so weak in our minds?" and how Jesus could heal the sick and raise the dead but he can't get men to quit pornography and adultery.

Saying sin in a man's life is like a bungee cord that pulls him away from God and back into the world, Wilkison challenged the men to identify their problem areas and commit to overcoming them within 72 hours.

Saturday morning in a large tent, men shopped for Promise Keepers shirts, windbreakers, books and tapes. Letha Colley, a volunteer helper, was happy to see them file in. "I think it's great," she said. "That's why I picked the hats -- I figured the men would be most interested in the hats." Her husband, Tom, is a Promise Keeper; the Colleys are members of Quivira Road Baptist in nearby Shawnee, Kan.

It seems a few men from the church went to a rally in Boulder a while back ... by now you've got the picture. "I'd say the men are closer," Letha observed. "And there's a lot more fellowship between them."

Fluorescent lime-green caps made the 100-plus-strong delegation from First Baptist Church, Greenwood, Mo., stand out. Leader Dan Van Sickle called them a group on fire for the Lord.

He credited Promise Keepers for men taking leadership positions in the church, which is without a pastor but is growing anyway. When a woman called to say her son had suffered a heart attack while roofing her house, 16 men went over and finished the job. "Men want to have a purpose," Van Sickle stated.

The purpose of Saturday morning's speakers was to improve relationships between husbands and wives and fathers and children. Gary Smalley of Branson, Mo., explained the best method he's ever found for handling arguments between spouses: James 1:19. Be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to anger, Smalley said. Make sure each person understands the other's feelings about the problem before moving on to the search for a solution. "How many will go home and outserve her in listening?"

Pastor/author Stu Weber of Portland, Ore., cited a litany of sad statistics showing the United States' deterioration over the past 30 years. He laid the blame on failure in high office -- the highest in the land.

"It's called dad," he declared. "It's the most powerful title you will ever wear.

"What's killing us in the Heartland is fatherlessness in America."

Along about the Industrial Revolution, men stopped getting masculine affirmation of their identity in the home and started seeking it in their accomplishments, Weber stated. Fatherhood is the legitimate focus of a man's life. We give our children everything, he lamented, but we seldom give them our hearts.

Many fathers and sons were in evidence at Arrowhead, including Mark and Zac Beiting of Omaha, Neb. Mark, the dad, said he appreciated Weber's reminder a son never stops wanting to hear his father say he loves him and he'll be there for him. Zac, the oldest of four Beiting boys, said, "I need more sleep."

You could find some droopy eyelids through the drizzly hours after lunch Saturday, as Rod Cooper of Denver, Haman Cross Jr. of Detroit and, finally, Promise Keepers founder Bill McCartney of Denver spoke. By then the pens were put away, the hands that had taken notes and clapped to the music stayed beneath rain slickers or clutched umbrellas.

What do you make of this thing called Promise Keepers? You can buy the Kansas City Star at a convenience store to see how that newspaper covered the event. And as you wait to pay for it, your eye might fall on the newest issue of Rolling Stone magazine, a survivor from the Woodstock era that apparently continues to reach young people today.

The cover story is on a band called Oasis. Headline: "They're hard-drinking, groupie-shagging, drug-snorting louts. They're the Gallagher brothers. And they're huge."

Is the Promise Keepers movement big enough to do battle with the culture of the world for the lives and souls of our sons and daughters? Maybe that depends on how big your God is.

Friday and Saturday at Arrowhead, he loomed large in the hearts of men.

--30--

Renewal touches county
via 'Experiencing God'

By Ken Walker

Baptist Press
5/2/96

MAYFIELD, Ky. (BP)--The excitement a dozen churches in a Kentucky county felt during their recent Simultaneous Experiencing God Weekend is getting stronger.

"God came," said Leamon Blalock, pastor of Clarks River Baptist Church in Graves County. "It can be summed up in those two words." Various individuals have commented about what God did in their lives, Blalock said. "He brought healing personally and to the church."

"I think we're going to see tremendous changes," said Charles Simmons, director of missions for the county Baptist association. "I'm already seeing a change in relationships in the churches.

"People are much more loving and friendly and talk about things they can do. I think you'll see the biggest change in what we call the marketplace."

--more--

Since the fall of 1994, approximately 15 churches across Kentucky had hosted the special weekend, which provides an overview of the 12-week study course. But this was the first area-wide emphasis.

More than 1,500 people attended. Eight churches participated in Friday-through-Sunday activities. Four others hosted special Sunday morning services that weekend featuring team members' testimonies about the seven realities of God taught in the widely used Experiencing God course.

More than 200 Southern Baptists were part of the leadership teams, about half from Kentucky and the rest from 12 other states and four foreign countries. That included approximately 40 college students who led youth rallies.

The training that preceded the weekend was the largest such session ever held, according to state Brotherhood director Bob Simpkins.

Blalock said God repaired much of the damage at Clarks River, which suffered a split in 1994. The concluding service lasted three and a half hours and saw spontaneous testimonies, confessions of sin, repentance and prayer, the pastor said.

That morning, members were surprised when a church member in her 70s came forward to say she had never accepted Christ but wanted to do so.

"We were thrilled that God revealed her need to her," said Blalock. "There was such a tremendous spirit that weekend. Everyone was aware the Lord was there. Southern Baptists need a move of God and this may be the way it's starting."

At Cuba Baptist, pastor Ray Werline said there has been a recent influx of young, unmarried pregnant women -- and thanks to the lessons of Experiencing God, members see that as an opportunity to minister.

He said the weekend has stirred a revival. Although Cuba Baptist started an Experiencing God class in January, that simply made the weekend better, he added.

"Everyone has shared how God has changed their heart and life," he said. "One lady said she always thought she loved God but realized she didn't love him with all her heart and soul. This has revitalized her walk."

The course has had a broad impact, Werline noted, telling of two young Marines who were saved and baptized last December and who received a copy of the course during boot camp. While on leave at Easter, they shared how they had studied it at night by flashlight.

"They talked about how the book had encouraged them," Werline said. "One man said he saw the hand of God in everything that happened to him. He became a platoon leader and finished with special honors."

At First Baptist Church in Mayfield, where many members had already completed the course, pastor Bob Wilson said the weekend helped reinforce the lessons, particularly team members' testimonies.

During their closing service, a number of people received prayer for physical and other personal needs, reflecting the spiritual growth Wilson sees taking place.

"There's more of a desire to reach out to others," he said. "I'm sure there will be a deepening of commitment on people's minds."

Simmons said many team members were affected by the weekend, such as a man from Tennessee who decided to begin leading such weekends in his state's prisons.

"A lot of people got things straightened out," said the director of missions. "One couple said they had been wrestling with a problem for nine years and they got it resolved."

HOUSE MAIL

(BP)

BAPTIST PRESS
901 Commerce #750
Nashville, TN 37234

F
I
R
S
T

C
L
A
S
S

Southern Baptist Library
and Archives

