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-- BAPTIST PRESS  
News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

APR 09 1996

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April 4, 1996

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WASHINGTON--Assisted suicide rulings open way to euthanasia, ethicist says.  
GEORGIA--Deacon denies refusing to allow church wedding.  
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ADVISORY: Baptist Press will be closed for Good Friday, April 5.

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SBC officials: Consultant's tie with lottery regretted

By Herb Hollinger

Baptist Press  
4/4/96

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Southern Baptist Convention officials have expressed concern after learning that the Executive Committee consultant for restructuring the SBC also performs an auditing function for the Texas lottery.

"We regret that there is the connection, however minimal, between Coopers & Lybrand and the lottery, and we regret that we did not know about it when the contract was signed," said David E. Hankins, Executive Committee vice president for convention policy and staff liaison with the Implementation Task Force.

Coopers & Lybrand, a large international firm hired by the Executive Committee to provide assistance during the restructuring of the denomination, was the auditor for the Texas lottery from 1992-94. Presently the firm attests the accuracy of lottery drawings, Hankins said, which is the reason the firm's name appears on television when lottery results are announced.

Ted Warren, executive vice president and chief operating officer for the Baptist Sunday School Board, who led the consultant interview process for the ITF, said, "We checked numerous references on Coopers & Lybrand, including Baptist institutions and found they have an excellent record." Warren indicated the ITF dealt with Coopers & Lybrand's consulting division, not the auditing division in Texas which apparently performs the attesting function.

In a response to an inquiry this week, the firm has assured the Executive Committee, Hankins said, they do not endorse participation in the lottery and they have not functioned in any way in managing or promoting the lottery. The role they fill is required by law as a guard against error or abuse.

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When informed of the matter, Morris H. Chapman, president and chief executive officer of the Executive Committee, said, "In no way do we excuse, justify or defend any business relationship with the lottery. The Executive Committee and Southern Baptists remain staunchly opposed to all forms of gambling, illegal or legal. In a perfect world this issue would not have arisen. Practicing 'being in the world and not of the world' is often a precarious journey as our contract with Coopers & Lybrand demonstrates.

"Although we anticipate the same outstanding performance they have given other Baptist clients, it is still disappointing to learn of their association with the lottery. Neither the Executive Committee nor the ITF would make any decision intentionally which would support or appear to support gambling interests."

In commending the ITF, Chapman said, "Wrestling with the many and varied legal, organizational and financial considerations of the restructuring is a monumental task. The Executive Committee and the SBC are being well-served by this group of dedicated Southern Baptists who unselfishly are giving time and energy to the work assigned them."

The ITF, a 10-member committee appointed by the Executive Committee, is working with the various SBC agencies in the transition required by the "Covenant for a New Century" restructuring approved last year by the SBC in Atlanta. A \$495,000 consulting contract was signed in March by the Executive Committee upon a recommendation from the ITF.

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Assisted suicide rulings open  
way to euthanasia, ethicist says By Tom Strode

Baptist Press  
4/4/96

WASHINGTON (BP)--The latest federal appeals court ruling striking down a law against physician-assisted suicide, coupled with a similar opinion less than a month earlier, opens "wider the door which leads to active euthanasia," a Southern Baptist ethicist warned.

A three-judge panel of the Second U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals struck down April 2 a New York law prohibiting physician assistance in a suicide. In his opinion, Judge Roger Miner said there was no difference between the prescribing of drugs for a suicide than the withdrawal of artificial life support.

On March 6, the Ninth Circuit Court in California overturned a Washington law banning assisted suicide. In its opinion, the Ninth Circuit said there was a "constitutionally protected liberty interest in determining the time and manner of one's own death."

Since earlier decisions upheld the right of surrogate decision-makers to act on behalf of the patient, "there is no legal reason why even patients in a coma or patients who are mentally incompetent may not have a 'right' to lethal medications," said Ben Mitchell, consultant on biomedical and life issues for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission.

Miner's opinion "rejected the long-held rule that the state has an interest in preserving life at all times," Mitchell said. "Now the state may become an accomplice in medicalized self-murder. Ultimately, active non-voluntary euthanasia is certain to follow."

Burke Balch, director of the National Right to Life Committee's department of medical ethics, said in a prepared statement the decision "threatens people -- like those with Alzheimer's disease and other conditions that fog their mental abilities -- with death, even though they never asked for it and may not wish it. Thus, the so-called 'right to die' will quickly become the duty to die."

Judges in this country, Mitchell said, should observe the results of euthanasia in The Netherlands, where studies indicate more than 1,000 patients a year are killed without their consent.

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"Do we really want to create an atmosphere where patients fear going to the hospital because their lives might be snuffed out by immoral physicians?" Mitchell asked.

"In an era in which managed care, through HMOs, for instance, is on the rise, assisted death becomes a very attractive way to manage health care costs," he said. "Managed care becomes managed death. It's not hard to imagine a scenario in which an HMO says, 'Mrs. Smith has used up her allocation of health care resources; it's time to help her end her suffering.'"

In his opinion, Miner wrote, "The withdrawal of nutrition brings on death by starvation, the withdrawal of hydration brings on death by dehydration, and the withdrawal of ventilation brings on respiratory failure. By ordering the discontinuance of these artificial life-sustaining processes or refusing to accept them in the first place, a patient hastens his death by means that are not natural in any sense. It certainly cannot be said that the death that immediately ensues is the natural result of the progression of the disease or condition from which the patient suffers.

"Moreover, the writing of a prescription to hasten death, after consultation with a patient, involves a far less active role for the physician than is required in bringing about death through asphyxiation, starvation and/or dehydration.

"Withdrawal of life support requires physicians or those acting at their direction physically to remove equipment and, often, to administer palliative drugs which may themselves contribute to death. The ending of life by these means is nothing more nor less than assisted suicide. . . .," Miner wrote.

In the Washington case, the Ninth Circuit has asked for briefs to be submitted to decide whether the full court should rehear the case.

Both circuits' decisions are expected to be appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court.

"We hope that the Supreme Court will now settle the euthanasia issue in a manner that will restore protection to vulnerable groups likely to be pressured into accepting death in place of real solutions to their human problems," Balch said.

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Deacon denies refusing  
to allow church wedding

By James Dotson

Baptist Press  
4/4/96

THOMASVILLE, Ga. (BP)--A deacon who asked that a mixed race baby be moved from the church cemetery now stands accused of saying that the parents of the infant could not attend the church or be married there because they are "living in sin."

Deacon Logan Lewis, however, said a request to be married in Barnetts Creek Baptist Church never was made, and he only expressed doubts that the couple was ready for church membership because of their apparent lack of repentance about their lifestyle.

The controversy began in March when the hours-old infant, Whitney Johnson, born with only a partially formed skull, died and was buried in the church cemetery. Church leaders later learned the child's father was black, and Lewis made a request on behalf of church deacons that the family consider moving the body to another cemetery. The family refused, however, and the matter was dropped by the church and apologies later were extended. But the case has since continued to extensive national publicity -- including an April 2 appearance on NBC's "Today" show.

Lila Wireman, great-grandmother of the infant, was quoted in news reports as saying Deacon Logan Lewis, in a telephone conversation March 30, "said he would not allow them to walk down the aisle of his church because they were sinners and their baby was born in sin. I said, 'You mean to tell me that two young Christians who want to turn their lives around and live for the Lord, they're not going to be able to get married in that church?' He said, 'Nope.'"

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"I told them they wanted to get married, join the church, straighten out their lives," she told a reporter for The Atlanta Constitution. "I figured this would be a good way to show the world that racism was gone out of our church."

Lewis denied a request for marriage in the church was ever made, however, and he said that in the conversation with Wireman he stated only he didn't think church membership was a good idea because of their continued cohabitation outside of marriage.

"I tried to counsel her on the fact that I didn't think these people were repentant enough to present themselves for membership in a missionary Baptist church," he said.

Lewis's wife, Opal, noted he did mention to Wireman a probable first step for the couple if they wanted to join the church would be to get married. But she confirmed no request for a wedding at Barnetts Creek was made.

"They were quoted again as saying that I denied them permission to use the church for a wedding, and they have never requested use of our church for a wedding to anyone in the church," Logan Lewis said.

Leon VanLandingham, the church's pastor, could not be reached for comment on the recent development.

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Resurrection week unites  
believers on rival campuses

By Ken Camp

Baptist Press  
4/4/96

DALLAS (BP)--One hundred miles and an intense gridiron rivalry separate Texas A&M and the University of Texas at Austin. But a common commitment to sharing the good news of the risen Christ united Christian Aggies and Longhorns during Resurrection week.

The week of student-led evangelistic activities leading to Easter was observed for the fourth consecutive year at Texas A&M and for the second year at UT-Austin.

At both universities, the interdenominational emphasis included active participation by Baptist students.

Evening rallies featured speakers and contemporary Christian musicians, along with Christian blues, rap and alternative rock performers. Daytime activities included prayer breakfasts, dramatic vignettes, ministries among homeless people and on-campus surveys designed to spark religious interest. One survey at UT-Austin asked students to identify the source of the inscription on the university tower, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

Texas Baptist Men -- including volunteer groups from Beaumont, Bryan and San Antonio -- barbecued 4,000 pounds of brisket for Palm Sunday gatherings at the two schools.

The first Resurrection week observance four years ago grew out of the vision of one Baptist student, according to Brenda Crim, associate Baptist Student Ministry director at Texas A&M.

At the time, Bobby Dean was Corps of Cadets student chaplain. Dean, who is currently a student at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, coordinated the emphasis that now involves 17 evangelical campus organizations and thousands of students.

Each year since its beginning, the student chaplain for "the Corps" has served as chairman for Resurrection week activities in College Station. Like each of his predecessors, this year's chairman, Steven Woodward, is Baptist.

"Aggies aren't afraid to believe God for big things," said Crim, who became a Christian while a student at Texas A&M. "I think that's why they are able to see God do some magnanimous things."

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At UT-Austin, "One Savior, One Hope, One Message" was the theme of Resurrection week activities sponsored by the Christian Council. Participating organizations included Baptist Student Ministry, the Wesley Foundation, Campus Crusade, Navigators, Inter-Varsity and the Fellowship of Christian Athletes.

On Good Friday, students at UT-Austin scheduled showings of the Campus Crusade "Jesus" film about the life of Christ in 16 languages. The university has about 3,900 International students from 126 countries.

"The idea is to reach as many people as possible with as many tools as possible," said David Kemerling, Baptist Student Ministry director at UT-Austin.

About 300 UT students joined in a prayer walk around the campus that ended with a concert of prayer on the south mall. Appropriate, Kemerling noted, since student-led prayer meetings birthed the Resurrection week emphasis in Austin.

"Four years ago," he said, "it all started with a group of students praying at 7 o'clock each morning for spiritual awakening."

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Mark Wingfield nominated  
as Kentucky paper editor

Baptist Press  
4/4/96

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Mark Wingfield has been nominated to become editor of the Western Recorder, the weekly newspaper affiliated with the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

Wingfield, 34, was unanimously approved for the post by the Western Recorder's board of directors April 2. The nomination by the Recorder's board must be confirmed by the KBC executive board May 6 to be effective.

The Recorder is an agency of the KBC with its own board of directors to manage the newspaper's affairs and set its policies. However, a covenant agreement between the Recorder and the KBC stipulates that the KBC executive board must confirm by simple majority vote the person selected as editor by the Recorder board.

Wingfield has been serving the Recorder as interim editor since last December, when the former editor, Marv Knox, became associate editor of the Baptist Standard in Texas. Wingfield joined the Recorder's staff in July 1991 as news director.

Wingfield was presented to the Recorder board by a four-member editor search committee, chaired by layman Frank Hatfield of Shepherdsville, Ky. Hatfield said the search committee reviewed the resumes of 13 other candidates.

"We are convinced that Mark's experience with the Recorder, his commitment to continuing the direction set by the board for the Recorder, plus his vision for the ongoing improvement of the Recorder make him clearly the best choice for the editor's position," Hatfield said.

Other members of the editor search committee were Tom Curry of Louisville, Don Mantooth of Morehead and Bill Thurman of Lexington.

"I deeply appreciate the confidence the search committee and the entire board of directors have expressed in me," Wingfield said. "My commitment to Kentucky Baptists is to continue to produce a newspaper that is innovative, relevant, factual and easy to read."

During Wingfield's tenure as news director, he and Knox redesigned the 171-year-old publication and received national recognition for news, feature and editorial writing, as well as the visual presentation of the paper.

"I take seriously the Western Recorder's positioning statement that we provide 'Practical Resources for Christian Living,'" Wingfield said. "My emphasis will continue to be upon addressing religious trends and real-life issues that impact all Christians, while providing concise and factual coverage of Baptist issues."

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In addition to publishing the weekly editions of the Western Recorder, the agency also has developed publishing partnerships with four smaller state or regional Baptist conventions. The Recorder staff provides publishing services for the Utah-Idaho Southern Baptist Witness, the New England Baptist, the Hawaii Baptist and the Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist.

Wingfield holds the bachelor of arts degree in journalism from the University of New Mexico and completed additional studies in theology at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas. Prior to joining the Recorder staff, he had been associate director of news and information with the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, director of news and information for Southwestern Seminary and assistant editor of the Baptist New Mexican.

He and his wife, Alison, are the parents of twin preschool-age boys, Luke and Garrett. The Wingfields are members of St. Matthews Baptist Church in Louisville.

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EDITORS' NOTE: The following two stories can be used for Mother's Day, May 12.

FIRST-PERSON

Mom's words echo to teen:  
'I loved you enough ...'

By Jenna Lomazzo

Baptist Press  
4/4/96

MELBOURNE, Fla. (BP)--"Good afternoon, Nature's Touch Florist," sounded the voice on the telephone.

"Hi, is Patty there?" I chirped.

"One minute, honey."

My mother soon responded.

"Mom? Hi, it's me. How was your day?" I asked. "Karyn just invited me to the Pearl Jam concert. She already has the tickets . . . . Oh, and her boyfriend will be driving. Please? Please, Mom!"

"... Hi, Jenna," Mom said. "Now what was it you were saying? Slow down. Oh ... I have a customer. We'll talk this over at dinner."

That night I prepared everything for dinner before my parents arrived home from work. Everything was perfect.

"No," they both answered firmly after talking it over.

"No?" I choked, tears brimming my eyes and starting to roll down my cheeks. My chin quivered, a silent but obvious, "I hate this!"

I stomped away from the table and locked myself in my room for over an hour. And isolated I remained until there came a quiet knock.

My mother sat on the end of the bed, and, staring beyond my reddened eyes and wounded soul, explained it was no 13-year-old's "business" to go to Orlando alone, especially to a concert that ended at 2 a.m.

"But Mom ..." Placing a finger over my lips and hushing me, she explained what she felt were more justifiable reasons for not letting me go.

All I could think of, however, was Karyn and Pearl Jam and all the fun I'd be missing. The words passed hollowly through my ears. I heard little and took nothing into serious consideration. I don't remember my mother leaving the room. I still hated them for it. My sore spirit throbbed.

Days passed ...

I threw my books down and slid open the door. There on my bed I found my fresh, clean laundry atop which lay an envelope. A letter from my mother unfolded, I read in silence as each single tear mapped its way down my face. I still thought about the concert.

Years passed ...

I got over Pearl Jam's singer, Eddie Vedder, and the fact I didn't go to that concert. Just the other day, while cleaning out my sock drawer, I heard something crackle. I shoved the socks around and there lay a crumpled envelope bearing my scribbled name.

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Carefully unfolding it, I began to read. It started out with the words, "I loved you enough . . . ." The memory rekindled, I again received my mother's wise word and, this time, somewhat differently than before.

But most of all, it ended, "I loved you enough to say 'no' when you hated me for it. That was the hardest part of all. I love you, Mom."

I placed the letter back into my drawer, in the back under all the socks. I realized for the first time in my life that it wasn't as easy I thought it was for her to parent me. I then fully realized she was my best friend. And I realized how much I truly did love my mother.

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Lomazzo's article first appeared in the Florida Baptist Witness. She is a student at Eau Gallie High School, Melbourne, Fla.

#### FIRST-PERSON

Teen mom, childless couple

linked by 4-week-old Andrew

By Marjory A. Bruszer

Baptist Press

4/4/96

LAKELAND, Fla. (BP)--Only 16 years separated mother and child, who reflected one another in their blue eyes, strawberry blonde hair, long fingers and toes, their vulnerabilities, dependence and needs for love, security and a future. Her name is Christina. His name is Andrew.

Christina was barely 16 when she realized she was pregnant. She turned to her youth pastor, who did two vital things. He told Christina's father that his daughter was pregnant, and he called Florida Baptist Children's Home, which responded at once to assist with a living arrangement, medical care and counseling.

During her pregnancy, Christina struggled with her choices -- to parent or adoption. Prior to Andrew's birth, she had made a thoughtful, selfless, prayerful and necessary decision to insure her baby's future. She wanted him to have two parents, the best chance in life.

Andrew was born Easter Sunday of 1995, a day of hope and promise. Christina enjoyed him during their short hospital stay -- admiring, feeding, changing, holding, photographing, doing all the things new mothers do. But unlike most mothers, she had to say goodbye as Andrew went into another pair of loving arms -- those of a foster mother.

Christina began her recovery. The physical discomfort was minor and brief compared to the emotional pain. A baby, her baby -- Andrew -- was no longer an expectation. The hard part was still to come.

"God's grace is sufficient," her wise foster mother reminded her.

Christina sought and received peace for the decision she had made to place Andrew into yet other loving arms, those of an adoptive mother and father. Just because it was right for Andrew did not make it easy, but "God's grace . . . ."

Meanwhile, in another part of the state, a young childless couple answered their telephone and heard the voice of a Florida Baptist Children's Home social worker. Their years of childless yearnings were about to end. Their names are Rob and Sheila.

During the weeks following Andrew's birth, Christina prepared a letter to her son, conveying her love and reasons for choosing adoption. The album she prepared, with photos and scripts, captured the essence of Andrew's beginning, her family and friends. Someday he would know of her favorite things, such as salt-and-vinegar potato chips, long walks, horses, being outdoors, goats, soccer and Chinese food.

Rob and Sheila also were preparing. Extended family beamed with the long-awaited news. Friends were ecstatic. The shopping began. The final touches were added to the nursery, a room prepared many years earlier and used only when they eagerly baby-sat the children of others. They had never given up that one day their child would rest his head in that crib, sway contentedly in the swing, be enraptured by the musical mobile.

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4/7/96  
And now he was almost home.

They and their church family continued to pray for Christina, the courageous young mother who chose to give life and who chose them to nurture that life.

Then came the first Sunday in May. Andrew was four weeks old. Rob and Sheila had arrived in the area the night before because they couldn't chance a traffic jam on the interstate or a weather delay. They tried to appear calm, but they weren't fooling anyone. They had come to take their new son home.

They gathered that evening at First Baptist Church. The lives God had ordained to come together suddenly became real to one another. Christina, with tears and a courageous spirit, gently placed her much-loved Andrew into the adoptive parents' loving arms.

Rob and Sheila were overwhelmed. With tears streaming and hearts overflowing, they thanked Christina for choosing life, for choosing them, praising God. Finally, a child -- their child.

The finish to this special day was a dedication service where Christina was affirmed by her church family and Rob and Sheila promised to raise Andrew in the Lord. The baby slept, cradled in his new daddy's arms.

And then it was over, a bittersweet and powerful culmination of what God had orchestrated long before. Four lives remain interconnected by the One whose purpose came to fruition ... on the first Sunday in May.

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Bruszer is program administrator for Florida Baptist Family Ministries, Lakeland.

Author helped Jimmy Allen  
share family's AIDS story

By Lonnie Wilkey

Baptist Press  
4/4/96

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--As an accomplished author, Barbara Jenkins has no problem recognizing a good story when she sees one.

Writing is one thing. Serving as an agent for someone else is another; however, that's what Jenkins decided to do in the case of Jimmy Allen, former president of the Southern Baptist Convention and its Radio and Television Commission.

Jenkins, coauthor of the international best-sellers "The Walk West" and "The Road Unseen" and author of "I Once Knew a Woman," knew of Allen's tragic story about his family and AIDS long before Allen approached her about helping publish his book, "Burden of a Secret: A Story of Truth and Mercy in the Face of AIDS."

Through mutual friends, Bruce and LaJuana McIver of Dallas, Jenkins learned about the Allen family's crisis with AIDS while she was undergoing a stressful time of her own, dealing with a divorce in 1986. Allen's daughter-in-law became HIV-infected through a blood transfusion and ultimately passed the deadly virus to her two sons at birth. All three have since died.

Allen's son, Scott, a Southern Baptist minister, was forced to resign his church because his wife had the disease, through no fault of her own. In addition, Allen has another son who is a homosexual and also has contracted the HIV virus and is now dying of AIDS.

"LaJuana shared Jimmy's story with me then and we prayed for his situation and my own," Jenkins recalled. "Little did I know that six years later I would help him with his book project.

"None of us know what the future holds or how God crisscrosses our paths," added Jenkins, an active member of Woodmont Baptist Church in Nashville, Tenn.

Though she had not done any "agenting" before Allen contacted her in 1992, Jenkins "knew enough about the industry and how it works" that she thought she could easily help Allen.

"Little did I know of the struggles and difficulties before us," she said of the process which took two years before she landed the first publisher.

Jenkins cited two reasons for the long delay. "The religious publishers were scared of the story because it dealt with a famous religious figure and the failure of the institutional church to have compassion on people with AIDS."

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Secondly, the "secular press saw it as a religious story and did not want to touch it," she observed.

Throughout the process "I knew this was one of the most powerful stories I had ever come across and I felt no one could tell it like Jimmy Allen because of his unique voice and position," Jenkins said.

"I was convinced this was a story that needed to be out there. My job was to convince someone else."

Jenkins finally found a New York publishing house willing to take a chance on the story and signed a contract. But a series of events followed that caused Jenkins to eventually pull the book after contractual obligations were over and begin searching for another publisher.

Her efforts paid off when she connected with a Nashville-based publisher and eventually signed a contract in 1994 with Moorings-Random House to publish Allen's story.

The book was published last November and is beginning to get national exposure, Jenkins said.

Allen recently taped an interview with "20/20." They talked about the book, she said, adding "it is national exposure you cannot buy." Allen's story also has been shared through other television stories and numerous magazine and newspaper articles.

In addition, three major Hollywood film companies are looking at making Allen's story into a movie, Jenkins said.

"It's been a long process to get the story out," Jenkins admitted, but the efforts have paid off.

Allen's is "more than a story about AIDS. It's a story about God's people and a wake-up call to the church. It's a cry for compassion," Jenkins said.

Though she didn't write the story, Jenkins recounted, "I felt compelled (to get the book published). I felt God tapped me on the shoulder and said, 'Barbara, this is something I want you to do.'"

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She's taught Sunday school  
for about 80 of her 96 years      By Joyce Sweeney Martin

Baptist Press  
4/4/96

OAK GROVE, Ky. (BP)--Alice DeVries holds a record few people can come close to: She's taught Sunday school for most of the last 80 years.

Although she can't remember much about her first Sunday school teaching experience -- "it's just too long ago" -- the 96-year-old can talk at length about her current assignment. For almost 20 years, she has taught the "ladies 45 and up" class at Oak Grove (Ky.) Baptist Church.

DeVries "inherited" the class from her daughter when she moved from her native Illinois to Kentucky in 1979. "My daughter thought I had more experience," she said. After all, by that time the elder DeVries had been teaching Sunday school for more than half a century.

DeVries and the ladies' class have been a perfect match, Oak Grove pastor Ron Wells said. And she is an inspiration to the entire church as well, he said, noting "(she) encourages us all by her faith and her knowledge of the Bible and her willingness to keep on keeping on."

"I just love my class," DeVries said. Her task as teacher is easy, she explained, because class members know the Bible so well. "We have such good discussions."

She herself has read the Bible through so many times class members often tell her she "knows it by heart."

And she loves preparing to teach. In order to "have in mind what the lesson is about," she begins her study on Monday morning, she said. She continues to study until time to teach the next Sunday.

How many more years will she continue to teach?

"I keep telling my class when they find someone else to teach, I will step down," she said. "But they won't let me go."

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HOUSE MAIL

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