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**October SBC Cooperative Program  
eclipses previous year's month**

**Baptist Press  
11/5/96**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Southern Baptist Convention Cooperative Program gifts for the month of October were up more than 12 percent over the same month a year ago, according to Morris H. Chapman, president and chief executive officer of the SBC Executive Committee.

Gifts for October 1996 totaled \$12,315,117, compared to the same month in 1995 of \$10,937,383, for a 12.6 percent increase. The October receipts were \$1,377,734 more than October 1995.

The first month of the SBC fiscal year, 1996-97, saw the Cooperative Program Allocation Budget also exceeded for the month. The \$12,315,117 was 1.88 percent above the budget requirement for the month of \$12,087,791, or \$227,325.

Designated gifts for the month were down \$610,681 from the previous year's month. October 1996 totaled \$1,715,893 compared to October 1995 of \$2,326,574, a 26.25 percent drop.

The SBC Cooperative Program total includes receipts from state conventions and fellowships, churches and individuals for distribution according to the 1996-97 Cooperative Program Allocation Budget.

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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**Week of prayer & fasting stirs  
revival among church members**

**By Jan Franke**

**Baptist Press  
11/5/96**

EULESS, Texas (BP)--Responding to the call for Southern Baptist churches to hold a week-long spiritual awakening emphasis, pastor Claude Thomas reminded church members of the current direction of the nation, the decline of the church and the devastation of the family.

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"It is time for someone to do something that will affect our nation, our churches, our homes and our personal lives," Thomas said in his Oct. 27 sermon at First Baptist Church, Euless, Texas, at the outset of the Sunday-to-Sunday emphasis.

"God stands ready. It's now time for us to respond."

In a message aimed at drawing the congregation to a spirit of brokenness, repentance and confession before God and to a spiritual cleansing in preparation for the task ahead, Thomas challenged church members to dedicate Wednesday, Oct. 31, or a 24-hour period during the week to prayer and fasting concerning the array of spiritual needs he had cited.

The spiritual thrust continued during the Oct. 27 Sunday evening service. Through a "solemn assembly" time of prayer, spiritual brokenness stirred by God's spirit swept across the auditorium of the Dallas/Fort Worth-area church.

Thomas gave church members an opportunity to mark their sins on a spiritual inventory, confess them to God and either nail their card to a wooden cross or destroy it in a shredder.

"Whatever you do, don't leave this place with those sins," Thomas urged.

In response, more than 1,000 people, in a spirit of spiritual brokenness, walked the aisles to the altar to ask God to forgive them of their sins. "It was an opportunity for the people to do something in a tangible way to affirm their forgiveness and God's cleansing power in their lives," the pastor later recounted.

At the close of the Sunday evening service, Thomas blessed the congregation with a blessing akin to one Moses gave to the priests of Israel. With Thomas' final amen, the electricity in the church building blinked off and back on again as if God, himself, affirmed the blessing with his own "Amen!" The crowd erupted in applause over their renewed lives and the presence of God moving in the church, doing a mighty work.

The spiritual renewal emphasis continued Monday night, Oct. 28, during an "Awaken America" rally led by Ronnie Floyd, pastor of First Baptist Church, Springdale, Ark., who last summer had initiated the Oct. 27-Nov. 3 call to Southern Baptists to pray and fast for spiritual awakening.

In the rally, churches from across the Mid Cities area laid aside denominational differences and joined their hearts and hands together. "Tonight was a coming together of many churches, crossing denominational lines, agreeing upon the authority of God's Word," Floyd observed after the rally, "and the Holy Spirit was able to minister to us tonight at our point of brokenness before the Lord Jesus Christ."

Floyd, president of the Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference, said in the rally he had sensed a "true crying out from the people of God that they might know that God will have to demonstrate himself to them... (It) was truly a time of God calling his people back to him."

In calling people to revival, Floyd stated in the evening's message: "Revival is not an event. ... Revival is when you experience the manifested presence of God. Revival can only come about when the people of God overcome their unbelief, religious tradition, pride and broken relationships. Reconcile with your brother first, then come to the altar."

Underscoring the theme of brokenness and repentance, Floyd also stated: "Our goal is always to call people to return to him (God) and hopefully see that demonstrated in spiritual brokenness before God."

God's spirit was evident in the response of those at the rally, as people flooded the aisles to ask forgiveness with broken hearts for their nation, their families, their churches and their own personal lives. Members of various churches gathered around their pastors to pray and encourage them to continue to lead out in awakening the nation and stirring the hearts of the churches. Additionally, broken relationships were tearfully mended at the altar.

Floyd closed by asking God "to continue to break the hearts of his children and to move his people to a fresh revival regardless of the cost."

On Wednesday night, Oct. 31, more than 1,000 First Baptist members across the church campus in Euless, in the midst of their separate activities, set aside a time to pray. Once again the focus was to pray for their nation, their church, their family and their own personal lives.

The week of prayer and fasting came to a close with a victory celebration Sunday night, Nov. 3. Thomas dedicated the entire service to a time of testimonies. For more than an hour, person after person shared how God had answered their prayers during the past few days and weeks. The congregation rejoiced in hearing how God answered prayers for reconciliation with friends and family members, for jobs, for victory over sin, for salvation of friends and family members, for healing, for renewed faith and for various other needs.

Describing the church's response to the week of prayer and fasting as overwhelming, Thomas said God did a mighty work in the people. Although the designated week of prayer and fasting ended that Sunday evening, Thomas said he anticipates its impact to continue as "people take on prayer and fasting as a way of life, people are drawn closer to God and people continue to experience major victories in their lives."

God's people, Thomas said, had truly experienced and seen the reality of spiritual awakening.

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Franke is president The Corporate Edge, a human resources development company based in Beford, Texas, and a member of First Baptist Church, Euless. Christy Taylor, a freelance writer and editor in Fort Worth, contributed to this story.

### Church members give testimony of God's touch in their lives

By Jan Franke

Baptist Press  
11/5/96

EULESS, Texas (BP)--A 9-year-old girl ... a senior citizen ... a newlywed couple and an unknown man in a "Jesus" baseball cap were quite different in their life walks and their reasons for being a part of services for prayer and fasting at First Baptist Church, Euless, Texas.

Yet they were among a wide range of people who experienced a touch from God.

The services were part of a Sunday-to-Sunday call to prayer and fasting in churches across the Southern Baptist Convention, Oct. 27-Nov. 3, initiated last June by Arkansas pastor Ronnie Floyd in his convention sermon at the SBC annual meeting in New Orleans.

At the Euless church, stories abound of God's spirit working through people's lives as a result of events leading up to and the actual launching day of the special prayer and fasting emphasis.

One woman, for example, told of God dealing with her as she fasted, feeling his call on her life. She came forward in the Oct. 27 worship service for salvation and baptism.

Four young married adult couples also felt God's touch on their lives and came to know him personally during the church's worship that morning.

A Sunday school teacher told of visiting an unsaved class member during the week and leading her to the Lord as a result of the emphasis on spiritual renewal.

A young man, driving down a crowded freeway, heard a spot by the church's pastor, Claude Thomas, on a local Christian radio station and came to know the Lord when he attended a service the week before the spiritual awakening thrust in which the church's vision and spiritual renewal task force gave a report.

Thomas had challenged the Euless congregation to set aside Wednesday, Oct. 31, or another a 24-hour period during the week to draw aside for fasting and prayer for their personal lives, their families, their church and the nation. On Sunday night, Nov. 3, a victory celebration was held to give church members a time to share what God had done in their lives through the week. In testimony after testimony, many voiced wonder at having experienced an outpouring of the mighty work of God in the hearts of his people.

One mother of a recently divorced adult son specifically prayed during her time of fasting for her son to seek the Lord for strength and guidance. At the very same time in another state, her son went home during his lunch hour to read his Bible and ask for God's guidance.

Another homemaker shared that she prayed, "Lord, I just want this time to be different. I don't know how to give you more of myself, but I desire this from you." The next morning during her quiet time, she said God showed her the bottom line that she had to lay down for him -- her discontentment with her present home. She said she finally came to a point where she said, "No, Lord, the size of our house doesn't matter. All that matters is that I am content where you have me today."

"God is digging a little deeper," a single mother reflected, while another single parent took her spiritual inventory and nailed it to a cross, asking God "to draw me closer to you and help me to stop loving the world."

An adult daughter caring for her sick mother in a hospital was in the depths of loneliness when she began to pray and ask God for a support group to encircle her. Through a night of sitting up with her mother, three separate nurses ministered to her and became the answer to her prayer.

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A young career man shared how his time of prayer and fasting led him to see how God deals with the difficult circumstances of people's lives. "It's like God is spending all this time with me," he said. "Thanks, God, for taking time for me and my struggles."

A mother of a daughter with a chronic illness said after their family's time on their knees before the Lord, "Life is a journey and we're all searching for joy in our hearts. Rather than depending on circumstances, we must depend completely on God, because nothing takes God by surprise."

Because of downsizing in the work place, one mother shared how their family had gone through the painful process. Her husband had been downsized during the last year and the previous week she had been informed her job had been cut.

She told God, "Excuse me, God, twice is quite enough," knowing she was God's child and that he would take care of their family. After being challenged to pray and fast, she set aside Monday and felt led to continue to fast and pray the next day. At 3 p.m. on Tuesday, while fasting and praying, she received a call from her manager that her job had been saved.

One of the most moving prayer and fasting experiences was told by a 9-year-old girl named Natalie.

"The Lord really changed me," the youth said. "Just a few weeks ago, I just sat in church and really didn't listen to the pastor. Last Sunday night, when I put my paper on the cross, I felt washed clean of my sins. On Wednesday when I fasted, I really learned how important the Bible was to me and how fun it was for me to learn Bible verses. I was really clean! The Lord really provided for me and I was so blessed by fasting and praying."

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**Committee named to nominate  
next Annuity Board president**

**By Thomas E. Miller Jr.**

**Baptist Press  
11/5/96**

DALLAS (BP)--A presidential search committee has been named to find the next president of the Annuity Board of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Paul W. Powell, president since March 1, 1990, will turn 65 in December 1998 and has told board trustees he expects to retire when he is 65. By tradition, but under no bylaw requirement, Annuity Board officers retire at the annual board meeting in February following their 65th birthday.

Richard C. Scott, chairman of the board, named J. Ray Taylor of Texas as chairman of an eight-member committee to conduct a nationwide search, with no set date for reporting. Scott announced the committee appointments at the Nov. 3-5 regular meeting in Dallas of the Annuity Board.

Scott emphasized naming the search committee at this time is part of an ongoing process to ensure orderly succession of both Powell and chief operating officer W. Gordon Hobgood Jr., who will be 65 in August 1997.

"Dr. Powell and Mr. Hobgood initiated this process with trustees last February, and we began discussions," Scott said. "We all are aware that the size and complexity of Annuity Board operations presents a unique challenge in executive leadership. The fact that the two top executives are so near the same age compounds the challenge. I want the committee to have plenty of time to receive input from all interested persons."

In addition to Taylor, Scott named T. Jack Colvin of Mississippi, Alton L. Fannin of Oklahoma, Thomas A. Shaw of Oklahoma, David C. Sheppard of Missouri, J. Kirk Thompson of Arkansas, S. Glenn Weekley of Tennessee and Donald H. Wills of Texas to serve on the search committee. The chairman of the board will be an ex-officio member of the committee.

Scott asked the search committee to compile a list of the characteristics desired in the next president. The list will be discussed by trustees at the next meeting of the Annuity Board, Feb. 24-25, and will then be published in conjunction with an invitation for nominations. Each nominee will be evaluated on each characteristic.

"The only deadline to be included in the committee's first report is a date by which names and biographicals should be submitted," Scott said. "The search committee will have total independence, all the time and resources they need, and just one mandate: find the best chief executive officer in Southern Baptist life for this job."

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**90-year-old realizes  
'I needed to be saved'**

**By Luana Ehrlich**

HOUSE, Miss. (BP)--It wasn't that Clayton J. Townsend hadn't ever heard the gospel of Jesus Christ before. He had heard it hundreds of times during his 90 years.

It wasn't that he hadn't ever read God's Word for himself. He had read, even taught, the Bible at the Antioch Baptist Church in House, Miss., for more than 70 years.

What made Townsend respond to pastor James Young's gospel invitation one July Sunday morning was his realization that, although he knew a lot about church work and about being a deacon and about the Bible itself, there was one thing he didn't know. Clayton Townsend didn't know peace.

"I knew I wasn't ready," he explains in a voice shaky with age and the latter stages of Parkinson's disease. "I needed to be saved." When Townsend walked the aisle, he took the pastor's hand and said, "I want to be saved today. I don't have any peace."

Pastor Young, who has been at Antioch five years and who has ministered to Townsend through several serious illnesses, comments, "A big factor in his decision was that he had no peace in his heart about dying." Although he thought he was saved when he was a teenager, when Young asked him, "Do you believe you have eternal life?" the answer was a definite, "No."

Maurice Townsend, one of Clayton's five children, was in the morning worship service when his father turned to his mother and said he had to go forward during the invitation. Maurice wasn't shocked, but he says, "I was surprised, because I always felt my daddy was a Christian. We weren't just taken to church, church was a big part of our lives."

The pastor showed Townsend the same Scriptures which he had read and studied and taught for many years. Yet, this time, the words were like a two-edged sword piercing his soul, and he prayed a prayer of repentance and asked the Lord to save him. He describes how he felt before he was saved, "Before I got saved, it was like I was in really bad health, like I had had an operation. I just hurt all the time.

"Now I feel great."

At last, he says, he has peace and is looking forward to heaven. "I think heaven will be a glorious place. I dream about heaven now."

Although he has difficulty walking, wears a pacemaker and has a history of heart problems, Townsend insisted on being baptized. Several of his deacon friends helped him descend the stairs into the baptismal waters, while others stood in the baptistry with pastor Young to assist in his baptism. It was a time of great rejoicing for the church family.

Townsend is well-known in the small rural community and is a native to the area. People have always known him to be a man of few words, yet an extremely hard worker. For most of his early life he worked in the sawmills, walking five miles to work each day. Later, he also farmed and ran a small dairy cattle business.

Young notes how difficult it was for Townsend to admit his lost condition. "This took a lot of courage. He was willing to put everything aside, and to make sure he knew where he was going when he died. I know there was a struggle with pride and wondering what everyone was going to think."

Both the pastor and Townsend have rejoiced at how the Lord has used his decision for Christ to cause some within the Antioch church family, who had been having doubts about their own salvation, to come to know the Lord. "Three people told me it was definitely a factor in settling their own struggles and doubts," Young says.

On Oct. 14, the Townsends celebrated their 68th wedding anniversary along with their five children, seven grandchildren, seven great-grandchildren and three great-great-grandchildren.

The Bible has always been a central focus in the home. Maurice Townsend says he'll always remember his dad as "constantly reading his Bible. He doesn't watch much television or read anything else. You can usually find him in the kitchen with the Bible in his lap."

"I love all the Bible," Townsend explains, "but I guess my favorite book is John. I've read John three times this year already." His favorite chapter is John 14. Perhaps that's because of the promise of Jesus in verse 27: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you."

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Ehrlich is a freelance writer in Norman, Okla.

## Nevada Baptists adopt first \$2 million budget

LAS VEGAS (BP)--In their 18th annual meeting, Nevada Baptists adopted their first-ever \$2 million budget.

The \$2.05 million 1997 budget -- an 8.35 percent increase over the current year -- includes an increase in giving to world missions to 26.5 percent, up .25 percent.

The annual meeting, which drew nearly 250 messengers and guests, was held Oct. 22-23 at Desert Hills Baptist Church, Las Vegas.

Messengers voted to increase their giving to world missions for the fourth year in a row, with 26.5 percent of Cooperative Program dollars going to world missions in 1997. Anticipated Cooperative Program receipts for next year are \$739,000 from the state's 160 churches and missions.

Messengers debated a constitution change regarding membership of the executive board. The constitution limited participation on the 18-member board to six laypeople. A proposed change would have allowed up to eight laypeople on the board. After much debate, messengers unanimously changed the constitution to allow no less than six laypeople and no less than six ministers to serve on the board at any time.

Joe Taylor, pastor of South Reno Baptist Church, Reno, was elected president of the convention on the first ballot in a three-way race. By virtue of office, Taylor also will serve as chairman of the NBC executive board. Elected first vice president was Roberto Lopez, pastor of Mision Bautista Bethel, Las Vegas. Steve Colquitt, pastor of Walker River Baptist Church, was elected second vice president.

In other business, longtime Nevada pastor Stanley Unruh and his wife, Florence, were named "Nevada Baptists of the Year" for their faithful service in the state. Featured speaker for the convention was John Bisagno, pastor of First Baptist Church, Houston.

The 1997 Nevada Baptist Convention will be Oct. 21-22 at First Baptist Church, Carson City.

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## NOBTS trustees focus on prayer for revival

By Debbie Moore

Baptist Press  
11/5/96

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Trustees of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, during their annual fall meeting Oct. 28-30, installed Charles S. Kelley Jr. as the seminary's eighth president and met several times specifically for prayer during the inaugural week.

During the Oct. 29 inauguration, trustee chairman William M. Hamm Jr. of Shreveport, La., officially installed Kelley as the new president, followed by a presentation of the presidential medallion by Landrum P. Leavell II, NOBTS president 1975-95, in the seminary's Roland Q. Leavell Chapel.

Kelley's inauguration was a culmination of 40 days of prayer by trustees. Since Sept. 20, trustees have been praying for various events involved with preparations for the inauguration. The day following the inauguration was devoted to prayer and fasting, led by trustee Ron Jackson, pastor of East Gaffney Baptist Church, Gaffney, S.C., appointed in March by Hamm as chair of a trustee prayer committee.

On Oct. 30, trustees joined with seminary faculty, staff and students for prayer in the chapel. Jackson, who is responsible for scheduling prayer emphases for trustees during and following trustee meetings, also has encouraged trustees to link up with prayer partners.

During their plenary session Oct. 30, trustees named Leavell as president emeritus for his years of service at New Orleans Seminary; he also holds the title professor emeritus of evangelism. Leavell and his wife, Jo Ann, now live in Wichita Falls, Texas, where he is pastor emeritus of the First Baptist Church, where he was pastor from 1963-75.

Several recently retired faculty also received the emeritus title: Billy K. Smith, professor of Old Testament and Hebrew since 1976, as well as provost and academic dean of the graduate faculty since 1992; Billy E. Simmons, professor of New Testament and Greek since 1976; and Robert B. Barnes, professor of church history since 1982.

Trustees appointed Will Hayes McRaney Jr. as assistant professor of evangelism; James Jeffrey Cate as instructor in New Testament and Greek; and Stephen Nelson Rummage as instructor in pastoral ministries in the school of Christian training.

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McRaney, originally from Panama City, Fla., completed the bachelor of arts degree in business administration at Mississippi State University in 1985 and both the master of divinity (1989) and doctor of philosophy (1992) degrees at New Orleans Seminary, with specialization in evangelism and discipleship. He has served as minister of youth and college at Faith Baptist Church, Starkville, Miss., 1986-87; pastor of Jackson Avenue Baptist Church, Pascagoula, Miss., 1987-91; adjunct professor at Colorado Christian University, Lakewood, Colo., and Denver Seminary in Englewood, Colo.; and as founding pastor of Daybreak Community Church, Littleton, Colo., 1992-96. He has been a contract teacher of evangelism at NOBTS since August 1996. He and his wife, Sandy, have three daughters: Blakeney, 7; Hadley, 4; and Macy, 1.

Cate, from Birmingham, Ala., completed the bachelor of arts degree in 1990 with double majors in religion and history at Samford University in Birmingham, where he received numerous academic awards. He completed the master of divinity degree with emphasis on biblical languages in 1993 at NOBTS. He is currently a doctor of philosophy degree student at NOBTS, with plans to graduate in May 1997. He has served as minister of youth and education at Commission Road Baptist Church, Long Beach, Miss., 1991-92, and minister to single adults and college students at First Baptist Church, Covington, La., 1994-95. He was a teaching intern in the Christian studies department at Union University in Jackson, Tenn., 1995-96, and contract teacher of New Testament and Greek at NOBTS, 1994-95 and since August 1996. Cate currently is primary collator of the Gregory-Aland Greek manuscript 157, an 11th-century minuscule manuscript of the text of John for the International Greek New Testament Project, which will be entered as part of the data used in the forthcoming publication by E.J. Brill. Cate and his wife, Mary Ann, have an infant daughter, Amanda.

Rummage, a 1990 graduate of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, holds a bachelor of arts degree in communication studies and public relations. He completed the master of divinity degree in 1993 at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C., and is currently a doctor of philosophy degree student at NOBTS with a major in preaching. He has served as pastor of Cedar Rock First Baptist Church, Castalia, N.C., 1992-94. He currently is pastor of Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church, Covington, La. Since 1985 he has been active in music evangelism. He has been a contract teacher in the NOBTS school of Christian training since August 1996. Rummage is married to the former Michele Henderson, also of Greensboro, N.C.

In other action, trustees:

-- approved Charles L. Register to occupy the Roland Q. Leavell Chair of Evangelism. Register, originally from Starke, Fla., has been an assistant professor of evangelism at NOBTS since 1994; in March he was named director of the Leavell Center for Evangelism and Church Growth at NOBTS.

-- approved a new faculty evaluation process involving input from self-evaluation, students, peers and the division chair on such areas as personal discipleship; church, community and denominational service; contributions to the life and work of NOBTS; scholarship; and classroom effectiveness.

-- approved a resolution on Cooperative Program distribution, requesting the SBC Executive Committee increase the percentage allocated to the six seminaries.

-- established a long-range planning committee with trustee Davis L. Cooper, pastor of University Hills Baptist Church, Denver, as chair.

-- established a presidential review committee, with Hamm as chair.

Trustees closed their evening meeting by joining hands and praying together for revival in the country, in the city and on the campus.

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### Israel tourism agency names evangelical advisory group

Baptist Press  
11/5/96

JERUSALEM (BP)--Seventeen American Christian leaders, including Atlanta-area Southern Baptist Richard Lee, attended the inaugural meeting of the Israel Christian Advisory Council (ICAC) Oct. 21-28 during a tour of the Holy Land.

The council was organized to advise the Israeli Ministry of Tourism on ways to encourage Christian travel to Israel. Council members from the United States represented such organizations as the National Religious Broadcasters, Radio Bible Class, Luis Palau Evangelistic Association, American Tract Society and American Family Association.

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Council members affirmed the travel emphasis as an opportunity to enhance spiritual growth among Christian leaders and laypeople.

"Christians come to Israel for a spiritual experience," said ICAC spokesman Don Argue, president of the National Association of Evangelicals. "They want to learn more about the Bible, to feel what Jesus felt, to see what he saw. But they want to worship God and to grow closer to him while they are in Israel, and they want to enjoy fellowship with other Christians."

The ICAC, which toured Jerusalem, locations around the Sea of Galilee and other Holy Land sites, recommended the government find ways to prepare pastors and other Christian leaders to help make trips more meaningful to participants. Argue reported the group's strong interest in encouraging travel to Israel as part of ministerial training in colleges and seminaries.

Suggestions also included recommending sites to visit in Israel, highlighting Bible passages to read or study at various sites, establishing a mentoring system to encourage involvement and producing a video describing historical and cultural sites in Israel from a Christian perspective.

The ICAC will be helpful not only to Israel, but also to Christians in America as well, said Lee, pastor of Rehoboth Baptist Church, Tucker, Ga., and the only Southern Baptist on the ICAC.

"We have a vested interest," observed Lee, a former president of the Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference. "Baptists love the Bible and the land of the Bible because it brings the Bible alive." He also noted "so much of our biblical heritage springs from this place."

Shabtai Shay, acting director of the Israeli Ministry of Tourism, told a press group which accompanied the ICAC that council members were enlisted because of their "experience and know-how to promote tourism in Israel."

He acknowledged "the pilgrimage traffic to our country has become more important by the year" and Israel suffers from a "perception problem."

"The story of our life is a problem of perception," Shay said. "We are perceived to be a place of war and terrorist activity."

The reality, Shay noted, is "occasional outbreaks of violence" which are reported widely in the media, creating the perception that it is a constant way of life. "Outbreaks of violence happen not just in Israel, but worldwide," he added.

"We are asked again and again about safety," Argue agreed. "I feel totally safe in Israel -- a lot safer than in a lot of American cities."

Lee also noted a need for "correct positioning" regarding the safety of travel in Israel. "It's still a safe and wonderful place to come to," said Lee, who was making his sixth trip to Israel in recent years. He added that visits to the Holy Land should not be thought of in terms of a vacation, but rather as "a place to see the Bible come alive."

The ICAC plans to meet in Dallas next May to complete organizational details and again in Israel next November for another full-length consultation. Members agreed to nominate colleagues to be a part of the upcoming ICAC meetings.

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Compiled by Lonnie Wilkey, Trennis Henderson, John Pierce and Todd Deaton.

**George: Christians must return  
to principles of Reformation**

**By James A. Smith Sr.**

**Baptist Press  
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KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)--With a "culture that has gone mad in its divorce from God and his ways," 20th-century Christians need to "come back to the Reformation," Timothy George contended Oct. 31 at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Rather than a "nostalgic fit" over the Reformation, modern-day believers need to return to the theological principles which were the basis of the 16th century's revolt against the Roman Catholic Church, George said.

"In all of their sinfulness and humanity and depravity, the Reformers saw so clearly the truth that we are saved by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone. And we have this confidence on the basis of Holy Scripture alone," George said. "Those are the only things that are going to see us through the next century and whatever years God may give us before he comes again."

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The chapel address by George celebrated the Kansas City, Mo., seminary's "Reformation Day," the anniversary of Martin Luther's posting the "Ninety-five Theses" on the Castle Church door in Wittenburg, Germany, in 1517. Luther's call for a debate on the granting of indulgences by the Roman Catholic Church is dated by historians as the beginning of the Protestant Reformation.

Although indulgences and other practices of the church had caused cries for reform throughout Europe, "At the heart of (Luther's) protest, there lay a deeper concern," George said. "Fundamentally, the Reformation was about the Word of God."

Luther's theological convictions came about as a result of intense Bible study in the course of pursuing his doctorate in biblical theology. The discovery of the doctrine of justification by faith alone in Romans 1:16-17 settled Luther's tormented soul concerning how he could have peace with God, George said.

"The Reformation grew out of that fundamental insight into the gracious character of God," said George, dean of Samford University's Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham, Ala. "The gospel of his righteousness comes from outside of ourselves, imputed to us by the merit of Jesus' finished work on the cross of Calvary."

The result of Bible study in Luther's own spiritual pilgrimage caused him to believe that everyone should have access to the Scriptures. For that reason, Luther translated the Bible into the German language, George noted.

"One of the great inheritances that we receive from the Reformation today is the legacy of an open Bible."

According to George, a church historian who is an expert on the Protestant Reformation, throughout history the devil has used three strategies "for undermining the Scriptures."

The destruction of the Bible "literally, physically" is the first satanic strategy.

"But it never has worked because God's Word is alive and powerful and, in the providence of God, he has never allowed his Word to be completely destroyed, but has sustained it and preserved it even to this very day," George said.

Noting the devil's question to Eve in the Garden of Eden: "Hath God really said?" George said Satan's second strategy against Scripture is to "undermine confidence in its truthfulness."

Although there have been theologians and biblical scholars "who have questioned the truthfulness of God's Word," this design has also largely failed, George said. "Wherever there is a people of God, redeemed by the blood of Christ, sustained by the Spirit of God, there is a hunger and thirst for the Word of God."

Calling the question of biblical authority among Southern Baptists a "settled conviction," George declared, "We can confess today, as we Southern Baptists do and should, that we believe that what the Bible says, God says. What the Bible says happened, happened. Every miracle, every event in every book of the Old and New Testament is altogether true and trustworthy."

A third strategy of the devil, George said, is "to get people who believe the Bible is the infallible, inerrant, inspired Word of God to neglect the Bible ... to use it as a shibboleth or to put it on their shelves and never, or seldom, to enter into it faithfully, steadily, with an open heart seeking for God."

Seminary students and theologians, George warned, are not "exempt from this temptation. Sometimes we are the most vulnerable to this kind of temptation. And we need, as much or more than anyone else, to come anew and afresh like a little child to the living waters of God's holy Word."

George told of a student who approached him after he had given a lecture on the Reformation years ago. The student was puzzled by the willingness of the reformers to die on behalf of their cause and told George, "I don't think I believe in anything that I would be willing to die for."

"Do you believe in anything deep enough, hard enough, long enough, strong enough, that, if necessary, you would be willing to die for it? Or even live for it?" George asked the Midwestern Seminary chapel audience.

"Luther said there are some things more important than personal security," George said. "There are some things more important than even than institutional survival."

Reminding the seminarians of Luther's "A Mighty Fortress is Our God" which they had sung heartily minutes before he spoke, George quoted, "Let goods and kindred go. This mortal life also. The body they may kill. God's truth abideth still. His kingdom is forever."

**Understand seniors' realities,  
Lucien Coleman says in lectures**

**By Dena Dyer**

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Every eight seconds, another baby boomer turns 50. The U.S. population is growing older -- and fast. But what does such a statistic mean to the church?

To Ken Hemphill, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, it means "if you're going to grow a church in this decade, you must understand the issues of aging."

His statements referenced the annual Kellogg Lecture Series, designed to equip students and the seminary community for ministry to senior adults. Lucien Coleman, retired professor of adult education at Southwestern and keynote speaker for the lectures on the seminary's Fort Worth, Texas, campus, offered numerous insights into how church leaders can grasp and grapple with those issue.

"Older adults ask themselves, What does my life mean? For whom and what shall I live? And where does the ongoing purpose of God connect with my own meaning?" Coleman related in his opening address, "Getting It Together: The Quest for a Life Well-Lived.

"How does one bring this quest to a successful conclusion?" Coleman asked, answering:

-- First, older adults must "embrace the past by finding satisfaction with the good but accepting the bad," he said, quoting the apostle Paul's assertion in 2 Timothy that he had "fought the good fight, kept the faith and finished the race."

-- Second, they must "live generously in the present," Coleman said, quoting Paul's letter to the Phillipian Christians: "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit but in humility count others better than yourselves. Let each of you look to the interest of others."

-- Third, Coleman emphasized that senior citizens need to find their identity in Christ, not in their previous roles. "One of the common experiences of aging persons is a loss of the things around which we build our identities. And society prescribes certain expectations about these roles," he said. "Most of the things with which we attach our identities change -- especially in old age. In aging experiences, we see our identity peeled off little by little, like the layers of an onion."

During his lecture, "Live a Little Before Die a Lot: Creative Living in the Later Years," Coleman said the fact of old age "is a reality that will come to many of us. But the experience of old age varies to a remarkable degree from person to person."

Creative living makes the difference, Coleman noted. "It implies vitality, growth, movement, productivity, discovery and openness to new horizons of experience," he emphasized.

So what is the secret to creative aging?

"To live openly and courageously in old age, one must manage to transcend the crippling expectations of a culture that is youth-centered."

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