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May 8, 1996

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Bosnians seek peace in Jesus,
Southern Baptist visitor says

Baptist Press
5/8/96

TUZLA, Bosnia-Herzegovina (BP)--Thousands of people in this war-weary land seek peace for their battered spirits. Many are finding Jesus Christ is their only remedy.

Larry Cox, a Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board missionary from Greenwood, Miss., tells of Christian believers who described the day a rocket fell outside their house and killed six neighbor children who were playing.

"I have seen destruction after hurricanes and earthquakes, but the destruction here is much worse because it was deliberate destruction," said Cox, administrator for the board's central Europe work.

In a mid-April visit to the country, Cox visited some towns in which every building was destroyed by dynamite. Troops blew up some small houses so isolated they could be reached only by footpath, he said. In a Bosnian family's home where Cox stayed, the bedroom door was pocked by bullet holes.

In Sarajevo, he walked down the infamous "Sniper Alley," where -- not so long ago -- unseen gunmen mowed down pedestrians. Relative peace has settled into the city, but people still suffer. And they're looking for answers.

"There is a window of openness right now in Bosnia. People all over the country are open to talk about their relationship with God," Cox said.

Separate religions are interwoven into the heritage of each of the nation's three ethnic groups. For Bosnian Croats, it's Roman Catholicism; for Bosnian Serbs, it's Orthodoxy; for Bosnian Muslims, it's Islam. "But for most of the people, religious identity is just part of their background. Most are not practicing followers," Cox said.

In early April, more than 100 people publicly signaled their desire to become followers of Christ during a four-day evangelistic campaign in Tuzla, a key city in northeastern Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Bratko Horvat, a Baptist layman from Puscine, Croatia, organized the campaign as part of his efforts to start a church in Tuzla. Horvat runs an electronics business, but during the war became a leading Baptist relief worker in Croatia. He often sent his own trucks into battle-stricken Bosnia to deliver food and other aid to suffering refugees.

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Horvat's war-time ministry put him in touch with thousands of refugees. Now he is following up on those earlier contacts and has an open door to present the gospel. Bosnians of all backgrounds welcome him into their homes as someone who helped them when their need was greatest. And they listen carefully when he shares with them the joy of his relationship with Jesus Christ.

Twenty people attended a Bible study in follow-up to the Tuzla evangelism campaign. Cox was there. "These were serious, mature adults, ages 30 to 50, who survived the war. Now they are seeking something more in their lives."

Foreign Mission Board administrators are preparing a "mobilization plan" to help Southern Baptists respond quickly to post-war needs. And a church starter for Sarajevo is among the top priority requests for FMB personnel in 1996.

The break in relationships among the people will take years to heal, Cox said. He told of seeing groups of people stopped on the roadside in "safe passage zones." Cars parked together bore license plates from Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia. He found this puzzling until locals explained that for thousands of families who have intermarried -- Croatian and Serbian, for example -- such areas are the only places they can meet without fear.

"The scene looked almost like a tailgate party at a football game, but it's tragic to realize the real situation they're in," Cox said. "It shows how much some of them want to live together. These are not people who want to fight."

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Literacy missions results:
decisions, new churches

By David Winfrey

Baptist Press
5/8/96

ALPHARETTA, Ga. (BP)--Southern Baptist literacy missions volunteers recorded 836 professions of faith during 1995, according to a report from the Home Mission Board.

Literacy ministries also produced at least 99 church starts during the past 10 years, said Gayle Leininger, a national missionary for such work. Most churches were ethnic congregations, resulting from new Christians who took conversational English lessons, she said.

"The interesting thing about it is all of those churches were started basically by volunteers with the intent to minister to the needs of the people. And out of that God grew a church."

Literacy missions consists of three programs: adult reading and writing, conversational English lessons for ethnics and tutoring for children and youth.

More than 950 Southern Baptist churches are involved in literacy missions, according to annual reports from 30 state Baptist conventions. Last year nearly 19,000 students were ministered to in weekly classes.

"Every time those students meet with a tutor or a teacher, the Bible is read," she said. "It's relational evangelism in its best form."

Southern Baptists trace their advent in literacy missions to 1956, Leininger said. Congregationalist missionary Frank Laubach Sr. challenged Southern Baptists at a Baylor University chapel service to get involved. "Out of that, the Home Mission Board conducted its first workshop to train people how to do it."

More than 4,800 workers minister to adults and children, she added. "I think we could do a lot more if we got the word out, but God is still doing a lot."

At Downtown Baptist Church in Orlando, Fla., volunteers teach English as a second language and a citizenship course for immigrants. English courses are important to immigrants, who often come from non-Christian backgrounds, said director Betty Lassiter. "It is a great way to reach lost people for Christ and to minister to their needs, because that's what Jesus did," she said.

The ministry recently began Bible studies before classes so students could learn more about the book they use to learn literacy. "The Bible study has revealed to me that these are people who are spiritually hungry."

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More information about literacy ministries is available from state literacy missions coordinators or from Leininger at (770) 822-4177.

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(BP) photos of literacy missions posted in the SBCNet News Room. Hard copies of the two photos are available from the Atlanta bureau of Baptist Press, 770-410-6535.

Florida board to vote
on charismatic issue

By Keith Hinson

Baptist Press
5/8/96

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (BP)--A special committee is scheduled to present a recommendation at the Florida Baptist state board of missions' May 16-17 meeting as to whether three churches with alleged charismatic practices and doctrines can continue to participate in the state convention.

The three churches are:

- Main Street Baptist Church in Inverness.
- Trumpets of Truth International in Homosassa Springs. The congregation was formerly known as the First Baptist Church of Homosassa Springs and, for a brief time, Citrus Christian Ministries.
- Riverside Christian Fellowship in Hernando, formerly known as Riverside Baptist Church.

All three congregations formerly were members of the Alachua Baptist Association -- a relationship that ended last fall after Main Street and Riverside withdrew from the association and Trumpets of Truth was expelled by a unanimous vote of the association's annual meeting.

The churches had planned to continue contributing to the Cooperative Program, as do approximately 25 "at-large churches" statewide not affiliated with any association.

But at the January meeting of the state board of missions, following a review by convention officials of documents related to the churches' departure from the Alachua association, the board's program committee recommended:

- the Florida Baptist Convention no longer receive Cooperative Program or any other mission gifts from the three churches;
- the churches be denied messenger credentials, which would revoke voting privileges in the annual meeting of the Florida convention; and
- officials meet with the pastor of Main Street Church, Leary C. Willis Jr., at his request.

John Sullivan, executive director-treasurer of the Florida convention, said at the time the churches were teaching "neo-pentecostalism."

"I urge that we stand along with this association," Sullivan told the board Jan. 26. "You cannot just believe anything and everything and be Baptist."

In the full board meeting, a motion was adopted that board officials meet with representatives from all three churches before voting to refuse CP funds.

The state board will convene in a regularly scheduled meeting at Lake Yale Assembly on May 16-17, when the ad hoc committee is expected to make its recommendation.

Sullivan, who is a member of the ad hoc committee, declined to comment on the status of the committee's April 12 dialogue with the churches or on related issues.

"We have another meeting of the ad hoc committee," Sullivan told the Florida Baptist Witness newsjournal, "so we will not really be ready to discuss that until after the meeting of the committee."

He indicated the ad hoc committee will not likely meet until the time of the state board meeting and has not yet finalized its recommendations.

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Don Hepburn, director of the Florida convention's public relations division, confirmed the ad hoc committee met with representatives of Main Street church and Trumpets of Truth. The Riverside church, Hepburn noted, declined to participate in the meeting.

Charles Brennan, Riverside's pastor, refused to participate, he said, because he received a copy of a letter Sullivan had written to the association after its action.

In the letter, Brennan said, Sullivan "made it plain there was no way he could tolerate the direction the Lord was leading us and if there was going to be any reconciliation, we would have to ... come back to the Baptist traditions, and that's the word he used, 'traditions,' traditional Baptist beliefs.

"So what it has come down to is, we were not judged according to Scripture; we were judged according to Baptist traditions and beliefs."

Other ad hoc committee members include: Glen E. Owens, FBC assistant executive director; Shirley J. Jernigan, who represents Alachua association on the state board; and Ted Traylor, president of the Florida convention and pastor of Olive Baptist Church, Pensacola.

Dan Southerland, president of the state board and pastor of Flamingo Road Church in Fort Lauderdale, also is a committee member but was unable to attend the April 12 meeting, Hepburn said.

"Our focus was doctrine," said Hepburn, who attended the meeting as an observer. "The committee didn't want to get involved in a discussion of worship styles, which is an issue for some people, but that is not our prerogative."

Before the ad hoc committee concluded its discussion with Leary Willis and other representatives of the Main Street church, the committee concluded the church has three options, one of which is to withdraw voluntarily from the state convention, Hepburn said.

Hepburn declined to identify the other two options, noting, "The committee agreed that they would not make public those options until after the church had decided which option they were going to take."

In an interview with the Witness, Willis said one of the options discussed was the possibility of Main Street affiliating with another association of Baptist churches, which would allow continued participation as a cooperating Florida Baptist church.

Willis, who noted he has been a full-time Southern Baptist pastor since 1959, said he had a meeting with a pastor from Pasco Baptist Association and Don Walton, Pasco's director of missions.

But Willis indicated that possible affiliation with Pasco is not an attempt to circumvent the state board process.

"We would not take any action without the action being in complete agreement with the ad hoc committee, with Dr. Sullivan and, of course, with our church, that what we were doing was best for all of the parties: the Florida Baptist Convention, the state board of missions, the Pasco association, Alachua association -- all of the bodies involved," Willis stated.

Walton confirmed the meeting took place and said Willis "believed in our missions. He believed in supporting the Cooperative Program. ... I didn't see any (problem) that day in his statement of beliefs or anything Leary (Willis) said to me that day. That doesn't mean there's something there I don't know about. ... I didn't see anything that day, any problem with his beliefs.

"I did mention to him the possibility of them applying for membership in our association and, this is really important to me, I wasn't trying to proselyte him," Walton said. "They ought to be in Alachua association. ... That's what I hope and pray still might happen."

Joseph K. Maddox, Alachua's director of missions, said any readmission to the association would have to be studied by Alachua's credentials committee, brought to the associational executive committee and finally voted on at the association's annual meeting.

"I have not received any written request," Maddox said. "That's the way (a request) would have to come." He declined comment on whether non-written communications have taken place.

Jerry E. Waugh, pastor of North Cliff Baptist Church and chairman of Alachua's credentials committee, indicated, during its annual meeting, the association had been scheduled to vote on credentials committee recommendations to disfellowship Riverside and Trumpets of Truth.

But only a few minutes before the meeting began on Oct. 23, 1995, Waugh said he was given a letter in which Riverside indicated its desire to withdraw from the association.

When the votes were taken, the association accepted the departures of Riverside and of Main Street, which had written a withdrawal letter to the association the previous August. In a separate vote, the association voted to disfellowship Trumpets of Truth.

"I think it's commendable that Leary Willis and Chuck Brennan led their churches to withdraw based on their variations," Maddox said. "People don't understand that two churches withdrew from our association. We only withdrew fellowship from one church, not three."

Waugh and Maddox noted the credentials committee asked for doctrinal information from Riverside and Trumpets of Truth but did not do so with Main Street, which had indicated its desire to withdraw in the August letter.

In seeking doctrinal information from Riverside and Trumpets of Truth, Waugh said the credentials committee asked for the information in writing.

"We did not want them to be misquoted or misunderstood, so we gave them the opportunity to put in writing their answers to our questions of concern," Waugh noted. "Once they submitted that to us, those answers, we made copies of their own answers."

"We did not interpret their answers. What we did was mail the copy to all the churches in the association and told them to be prepared to vote on these churches, according to what (the churches) had given us in their answers," Waugh said, noting, "we did not go through this process with Main Street church."

In a letter to the associational executive committee regarding the two churches, Waugh said the committee wrote, "It is our belief that both churches are a body of believers who have trusted and love our Lord Jesus Christ. ... It is our belief that both congregations adhere closer to pentecostal doctrine than to Baptist doctrine."

"That's so important to me," Waugh declared. "Even though we are not having associational fellowship with these churches, we have affirmed that they are brothers and sisters in Christ, and we have affirmed their right to priesthood of the believer. But we have also affirmed that their doctrine is different from Baptist doctrine."

One of the issues discussed by the state board in January was the impact disfellowshipping would have on the three churches' staff ministers in making them ineligible for retirement and insurance programs of the Southern Baptist Annuity Board.

While Trumpets of Truth has no pastor and Brennan said he has never participated in Annuity Board programs, Willis said the issue is important to him.

"It still is a concern, because if our church is not affiliated with the Florida Baptist Convention, then the cooperative agreement (regarding annuities) would not be effective," noted Willis, age 59. "So my participation in the annuity program at that point would not benefit."

Willis noted he would not receive matching funds from the Florida convention, if Main Street is excluded from the convention. Willis said he has not had Annuity Board health insurance for several years.

Asked if he felt the matter is being handled fairly, Willis replied, "I do. ... I want to thank all of (the committee) for the very Christlike way in which they have addressed this issue. ... Having been a Florida Baptist all of my life, except for seven and a half years in Tennessee, I love Florida Baptists."

Jimmy K. Sheets, a spokesman for Trumpets of Truth, was asked why his congregation wants to remain Southern Baptist.

"I don't think any of us are to try to be Baptists," replied Sheets, who is described as an apostle for Trumpets of Truth. "If I can be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ and there's a Baptist name over the door, that's fine. ... "I'm willing to forego whatever if the Baptist folks can see me as a Baptist and believe in the things from Scripture I believe. ... I just feel like we've done all we can to bring this glorious truth to our Baptist brothers and sisters," Sheets declared.

"What they do with it, we'll all have to stand before the Lord," Sheets continued. "I don't mean that in a hateful way or any kind of super-spiritual way. It's out of my control. I held on with everything I could hold on with. ... Whatever the Lord wants to do is up to him."

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Theology key concern
in Florida controversy

By Keith Hinson

Baptist Press
5/8/96

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (BP)--Doctrine and theology were at the heart of three churches' departure from Alachua Baptist Association last year.

In separate interviews with the Florida Baptist Witness, representatives of Main Street Baptist Church, Riverside Christian Fellowship and Trumpets of Truth International discussed some of the theological issues that were raised during their recent doctrinal dialogues and discussions.

"Where we differ with the major leaders of the convention on this issue is the leaders take a 'cessationist' approach, that is, that tongues and prophecy have ceased," said Leary C. Willis Jr., pastor of Main Street church. "They draw that from 1 Corinthians 13. ...

"The question is, 'When will that take place?'" Willis noted. "We believe it will take place at the second coming of Christ. They believe it took place at the time the canon (number of books in the New Testament) was closed."

The passage in 1 Corinthians 13 says tongues and prophecy will cease when the "perfect" has come, Willis said.

"The question is, Is that a reference to the Scriptures themselves, which are perfect in every way, ... or does it refer to the second coming of Christ?" which is what the Main Street church believes, Willis said.

Asked whether all Christians should speak in tongues, Willis answered, "No. Absolutely not. We believe the baptism of the Holy Spirit is subsequent to salvation. At salvation, we are indwelt by the Spirit, but the baptism of the Holy Spirit is a subsequent issue. Sometimes it is referred to as being filled with the Spirit."

He said the Main Street church believes "tongues is a gift of the Spirit. We do not take the position that all (Christians) do, should or will (speak in tongues)," Willis stated.

He said the evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit is power, which is manifested in two primary ways: witnessing and developing the fruit of the Holy Spirit as listed in Galatians.

Baptism of the Holy Spirit may be followed by speaking in tongues, Willis indicated, but "for others, they may never speak in tongues, but they will have power for witnessing."

Asked if a Christian could speak in tongues before the baptism of the Holy Spirit, Willis said it is "not likely." When asked if one could exercise other spiritual gifts, such as mercy or helps, prior to the baptism of the Holy Spirit, Willis declined to comment.

Charles Brennan, pastor of Riverside, said baptism of the Holy Spirit may sometimes occur at the moment of salvation.

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"In most cases, it is something that occurs after salvation, but it is not a second work of grace," Brennan said. "I believe that when a person is saved, if he were to take a straight line toward Jesus Christ, this would be an automatic progression.

"But because our path is not always straight toward Jesus, it (baptism of the Holy Spirit) may appear as a second work, but it is not," stated Brennan, who said he has been a Southern Baptist pastor since 1977.

Brennan said he does not believe tongues are an evidence of salvation and he does not believe tongues are evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. "I believe the initial evidence of the baptism of the Holy Spirit is power to witness for Jesus Christ," he said. "I do believe tongues are a gift and it is a valid gift and it is for today. ...

"We're not charismatic or Pentecostal," Brennan declared. "All we are is, flat out, people trying to do it the Bible's way. What many Pentecostals and charismatics are saying is you've got to speak in tongues."

Jimmy K. Sheets, a spokesman for Trumpets of Truth, which does not currently have a pastor, also was asked if tongues are an evidence of salvation.

In his response, Sheets, who is not a paid staff member of the church but described as an apostle for Trumpets of Truth, cited his interpretations of Old Testament feasts of Israel.

During salvation, Sheets said, "When the blood of Jesus Christ touches our sins, we experience personally the feast of Passover." But it is during a Christian's experience of the feast of weeks, also known as Pentecost, "we experience the baptism of the Holy Ghost. That's what happened on the day of Pentecost," Sheets said.

Sheets was asked if a Christian could experience the feast of Passover (salvation) without experiencing the feast of Pentecost (speaking in tongues).

"I would never condemn anybody to hell, but I would say, Who has the right to say, 'I will experience the feast of unleavened bread (Passover), and I will refuse to experience the feast of (Pentecost)'?" Sheets said.

"There's a lot of saints out there that want more, and they're locked up in theology and religion, and I know that God's merciful and he won't condemn them to hell, but there's more to experience to satisfy their hunger," Sheets declared.

Brennan said most of the tongues-speaking by his congregation is done as a "private prayer language" rather than in public worship.

"The fact is that we have only one person that speaks in tongues in our fellowship (during public worship), and she's only done it about four times," Brennan said.

He suggested rumors about Riverside's mode of worship are unfounded.

"There wasn't a single pastor or, to the best of my knowledge, any of the representatives (from the association) that ever came to our services," Brennan said. "According to what some of them were saying, we were jumping over pews, ... and that was a lie."

Brennan added he himself has never spoken in tongues.

Asked if he wishes he had the gift, Brennan replied, "Yes, sir. I do. I've asked the Lord to give it to me but he has not seen fit to give it to me at this time. My gift is pastor-teacher."

Willis said tongues-speaking in public worship has happened only twice at Main Street church during the past year.

"It was interpreted both times," Willis stated. "It was spontaneous. ... Both times, the message in tongues was given, and immediately someone stepped forward with the interpretation."

Another doctrinal concept the Alachua credentials committee, and ultimately the association, found objectionable was the idea of a "five-fold ministry."

The concept comes from Ephesians 4:11-12, which lists five types of leaders Christ gave to the church: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers.

"I believe in the five-fold ministry," Brennan said. "We have men in our church and women in the church that have the gift of prophecy."

Brennan said there is no one in the Riverside congregation with the gift of apostle yet "but the Lord will raise someone up."

Sheets said in the late 1960s and early 1970s "the operation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit were restored to the church. Then in the mid-1980s ... the gifts of the prophet and the apostle in the local church was a restored truth that is being revealed."

Asked how or to whom God revealed the gifts of apostle and prophet were being restored, Sheets answered, "Different people studying the Word and in prayer. It was a revelation worldwide, like a wind that blew all over the world. ... That revelation is blowing on the body of Christ today and people are becoming aware these offices ... are being restored to the church today.

"The modern-day apostle is one that's being used to bring restored truth back to the body of Christ," Sheets said.

Brennan said an apostle is "one sent out primarily into new fields. This is the ministry today. There is a valid need for the apostle in churches today. They need a fresh anointing, a fresh touch. This is what apostles do."

Apostles are "under the pastor in a local fellowship, as members of a local fellowship," Brennan said. "But in their calling, when they go out into the field, they're under the Holy Spirit."

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Nobles gets 7-year sentence
for diverting college money By William H. Perkins Jr.

Baptist Press
5/8/96

JACKSON, Miss. (BP)--Former Mississippi College President Lewis Nobles was sentenced May 2 in Jackson to more than seven years in federal prison after he pled guilty to stealing more than \$2.8 million in donations intended for the Baptist-affiliated school in Clinton.

"There's no question about acceptance of responsibility," the 70-year-old Nobles said in a loud, strong voice as he stood before U.S. District Judge William Barbour.

Acting on Nobles' Jan. 17 guilty plea to five counts of a 20-count federal indictment that included charges of wire fraud, mail fraud, money laundering and income tax evasion, Barbour imposed prison terms for each count and then ordered that the terms run concurrently.

Nobles will in effect serve a sentence of seven years and three months, with automatic credit for the year and three months he was held in federal custody without bail. Federal law does not provide for parole.

Barbour also ruled Nobles is unable to pay a fine or additional restitution. As part of his plea bargain, Nobles previously had surrendered to Mississippi College nearly \$500,000 in assets.

Nobles' Oxford, Miss.,-based attorneys, Grady Tollison and Amy Whitten, cited their client's health problems and positive community contributions in asking Barbour to consider the "whole person" when imposing sentence.

"Any sentence Dr. Nobles receives is a life sentence," Whitten said. After submitting a stack of letters more than an inch thick from people supporting and commending Nobles, his attorneys called a single witness to testify on his behalf.

Clinton attorney Johnnie Ruth Hudson told the court she had worked for Nobles in a number of capacities during his 25 years as Mississippi College president.

She credited Nobles with overseeing a doubling of the college's enrollment in both undergraduate and graduate studies; building the school's endowment to unprecedented levels; starting the law and nursing programs; and actively lobbying the Mississippi legislature on matters affecting private colleges in the state.

Nobles, speaking briefly on his own behalf before the court, said he hoped to once again become a contributing member of his community, and he became emotional as he thanked his family "for staying with me."

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Barbour told Nobles his age, health and family and community ties were "not relevant" to his sentencing.

Describing Nobles as a "high-level thief," Barbour said his supporters "need to understand that you were not what you purported to be."

The judge also quoted Proverbs 22:1 (NIV) -- "A good name is more desirable than great riches; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold."

"I assume you know more about that than anyone in this room," Barbour said.

U.S. marshals returned Nobles to the Madison County Jail, where he has been held while awaiting final disposition of the criminal case against him.

Nobles faces a number of civil lawsuits filed against him by the college. At least one attorney who has represented the college in the civil litigation was present at the sentencing.

The U.S. Bureau of Prisons is expected to assign Nobles to a federal prison within the next few weeks.

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Same-sex marriage ban needed,
Mississippi Baptists contend By William H. Perkins Jr.

Baptist Press
5/8/96

JACKSON, Miss. (BP)--The Mississippi Baptist Convention's Christian Action Commission May 3 joined a chorus of state pro-family groups calling for a special legislative session to address the possibility that Hawaii may soon sanction same-sex marriages, forcing other states to accept the unions under provisions of the U.S. Constitution.

A spokesperson for Mississippi Gov. Kirk Fordice, who has sole responsibility for calling special legislative sessions, reported May 7 the governor believes a special session would be "premature" until litigation on the matter is settled in the Hawaii court system.

"The governor does feel preservation of the traditional family is very important," said Johnna Van, the governor's communications director. "He supported the bills that died in committees (during the regular 1996 legislative session) that would have prohibited same-sex marriages."

Paul Jones, CAC executive director, said he doesn't feel a special session would be premature.

"Dealing now with this issue by legislative statute will present a stronger defense in court than if we address it after the fact -- when we have same-sex couples flying to Hawaii, getting married and then returning to Mississippi to demand recognition.

"Furthermore, we believe Mississippians are offended that inaction by the legislature in the regular session allowed two bills to die that would have dealt with this issue. We believe Mississippians are willing to pay for a short special session that will allow the state to control same-sex marriages," Jones said.

Forrest Thigpen, president of the Mississippi Family Council (MFC), agreed with Jones.

"The state's only recourse is to demonstrate that there is a strong public policy against such a marriage. Current state statutes do not offer that proof," Thigpen said.

Jones said the governor should be encouraged to call the special session, and state residents should let their local legislators know how strongly they support action on this issue.

"We must be proactive. We cannot set idly by and allow enemies of the family to define the future of the family unit," Jones said.

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**Mark Wingfield elected
Ky. newsjournal editor**

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

Wingfield, 34, was nominated for the post April 2 by the newspaper's board of directors. Under terms of a covenant agreement between the Recorder and the state convention, the state convention's executive board retains the right to elect the editor upon the Recorder board's nomination.

The Kentucky Baptist Convention executive board affirmed Wingfield's nomination May 6 with a standing vote. Three negative votes were cast out of the 102 executive board members present. There was no debate.

Wingfield has served as interim editor of the Recorder since December 1995, when former editor Marv Knox moved to the Texas Baptist Standard as associate editor. Wingfield joined the Recorder staff in July 1991 as news director.

A native of Oklahoma and New Mexico, Wingfield previously served as associate director of news and information with the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board in Atlanta, as director of news and information for Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, and as assistant editor of the Baptist New Mexican in Albuquerque, N.M.

The Western Recorder, which traces its roots to 1825, received its current name in 1851. It is considered the second-oldest Baptist newspaper in America. The paper's name is derived from the fact that in the early 19th century, Kentucky was considered to be in the western portion of the United States.

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'Mommy,' he asked, 'if I died tonight, would I go to hell?'

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5/8/96

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (BP)--"Mommy, if I died tonight, would I go to hell?"

The day after Chip Register posed the question, his dad, Chuck, asked his soon-to-be-7-year-old son, "Chip, are you scared that if you died you would go to hell?"

"He looked up at me with big old eyes and said, 'Dad, why do think I get in bed with you every night?'" recounted Register, director of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary Leavell Center for Evangelism and Church Growth, keynote speaker at Arkansas Baptists' April state youth convention in Little Rock's Statehouse Convention Center.

"I thought it was just a fad, something that little 7-year-old boys like to do, to crawl in bed with their parents," Register continued. "I didn't realize how significant getting into bed with us every night was."

Register said he led his son to the Lord that afternoon. "He seized the day," Register said, calling it "a day I'll never forget as long as I live ... the day my son seized eternity by giving his life to Jesus Christ."

"I was reminded of some very important principles," Register added. "God reminded me that:

-- "Everybody thinks about death and dying. Here was Chip, just a few weeks away from his seventh birthday, and the burning of his heart to his mother that night was, 'Mommy, if I die tonight, will I go to hell?'"

-- "Most people who don't know Christ are trusting in something or someone other than Jesus to get them to heaven when they die. Chip was suffering what I call snuggle-up faith. He thought that if he were snuggled up to his dad, he would be OK."

-- "People who don't know Jesus have someone praying that they'll come to know Christ.

"If you don't know Jesus as your Savior, there are people praying that you will," Register told the Arkansas youth. "We want you not to just seize the day but to seize eternity."

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Based on reporting by Russell N. Dilday.

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