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April 10, 1996

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(BP) ADVISORY ON STATUS OF FMB MISSIONARIES IN LIBERIA

At 6 a.m. EDT Wednesday, April 10, ten Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board missionaries were staying inside a compound on the outskirts of the capital city of Monrovia in Liberia. Despite fierce fighting in Monrovia and rampant looting by hooligan militia groups, their compound had remained secure. They reported an apparent cease-fire at the time. Should they evacuate, they would first go to Dakar, Senegal, and then board a commercial flight to Lome, Togo, where the board has a conference center. The missionaries and their hometowns: Bradley and Carolyn Brown of Marietta, Ga., and East Point, Ga., respectively; Rachel DuBard of Carrollton, Miss.; Felix Jr. and Dene Greer, both of Jackson, Miss.; Edward and Fran Laughridge, both of Rock Hill, S.C.; John T. McPherson of Knoxville, Tenn.; and James and Jane Park, both of Paducah, Ky. Baptist Press will release a full news story if missionaries evacuate.

April 19, one year later:

5 who cope, grieve, believe

By Dana Williamson

Baptist Press

4/10/96

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)--For 168 people who died in the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building blast April 19, 1995, life is no more. But for the victims who survived and the hundreds of family members and friends of those who died, life now is seen differently.

"I'm not the same person because I'm not in the same setting anymore," said A.C. Cooper, whose wife, Dana, child care director at the building, and son, Christopher, 2, were killed in the bombing. "I don't have a normality I once had, and I still don't have meaning to my life."

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"I not only lost my husband, I lost my whole family," said Janet Walker, whose husband, David, was killed. "People think you should go on with your life, but it's not that easy."

"After a year of reflection, I've learned what is important in life," reflected Ruth Heald Schwab, who survived the blast but had numerous injuries, including the loss of sight in one eye. "A career or keeping a clean house aren't important. What's important is family, and showing them love."

"The holidays were very difficult," confessed Robbie Maroney, whose husband, Mickey, died in the building. "His birthday was in October, then Thanksgiving and my birthday in November and Christmas in December. We were very family oriented. Those are family times, and it was very hard."

"I've definitely learned to live for the moment a little bit more," said Carrie Brown, Dana Cooper's sister. "Not so much disregarding consequences, but realizing this is the only chance God gives us, and if we don't do his work the first time around, we're not going to have a chance to do it."

"Psychologists have told us that domestic strife and divorces of survivors, victims, emergency workers and families involved will increase," said Joe Williams, chaplaincy director for the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, who spent the days following the bombing at the site.

Many survivors will never work again, Williams said, and they will be in counseling or therapy for years -- depending on their ages, perhaps for the rest of their lives. More victims, survivors and emergency workers will become unemployable within a year, he said, adding some emergency workers have taken early retirement and some have not worked since leaving the bomb site.

"We have not had any of the predicted suicides," Williams noted, "but some have talked about it in counseling sessions."

Most domestic conflicts result from extreme anger, he continued. "They target a relative or good friend because they know they can get away with it, at least for awhile," he explained.

Although their lives have been turned upside down and will probably never return to normalcy and all are in counseling, Cooper, Walker, Schwab, Maroney and Brown said they have depended on their faith to see them through the bleakest year of their lives.

A.C. COOPER

"God gave Dana and Christopher to me as a gift, and I just loved the gift he gave me," Cooper said. "I try not to be selfish, but I am. I want them back with me. I always end my prayers with the fact that I love them, I miss them and I'll see them soon."

There were times during the year when he questioned God's fairness in taking his family from him, Cooper acknowledged.

"Dana and Christopher were my world, and it was sometimes hard for me to trust a god who would let my world be turned upside down," he recounted.

"But there is no doubt God has had his hand on me all through this. He has given me strength to get up out of bed and go on."

Cooper, a member of First Baptist Church, Nicoma Park, said even though he loves the people he works with, it is difficult for him to get out of bed and go to work.

"It's not that I really want to be at work, but if I didn't go, I would just lay in bed all day."

Cooper said when he learned the federal building had been bombed, he knew God would bring him through one way or another. He said he left work and went downtown.

"I still have the images of all the blood on the sidewalk, of people coming out that were bloody and how the fatalities looked as they came out."

Cooper said he will not observe April 19, 1996, as a day different than any other.

"I never use the word anniversary, because to me it signifies something to celebrate," he avowed. "This is not a day to be celebrated. If I do anything on this day I don't normally do, it's like letting whoever did this take a little more away from me. I'll celebrate their lives, their birthdays, our wedding anniversary, the good times we had together, but I'm not going to celebrate the death date."

Cooper said he will probably be in Texas for the wedding of a high school friend on April 19.

JANET WALKER

Walker emphasized God is even a greater part of her life now. "I find myself talking to him like a child talks to a make-believe friend," Walker said. "I know he is always there to listen and help me through the bad days. My faith has grown stronger and bolder. I won't hesitate to let people know that my husband was a Christian and that he is in heaven."

Walker said she knows David, a Housing and Urban Development environmental officer, is in a much better place, he is happy, he is not suffering.

"I loved this man with all my heart, and my soul aches to know I must live the rest of my earthly life without him," she said.

"But I also know that what he did for me is what helps me face tomorrow. Although I had always believed in God and Jesus Christ, I did not know Jesus as my personal Lord and Savior until I met David. He led me to the Lord and, at the seasoned age of 42, I joined (the) Nicoma Park (church) and was baptized. What a comfort to know I will join my husband in heaven."

Walker, who was married for five years, said one of the biggest burdens she has had to face since the bombing is that "we had not drawn up a will or a trust, and my name was not on his bank accounts, life insurance, retirement or incentives."

"But the worst part is that our once-loving family only communicates through attorneys," she lamented. "This situation has made me an advocate to let families know what can happen. Death can come without warning and you should not only be spiritually prepared, but your earthly affairs also need to be in order."

While her co-workers, neighbors, friends and church family have comforted her, Walker is in a Christian counseling group.

"I realize the feelings and circumstances I am experiencing are normal and are being felt by others," she said.

"We have all become very close, and I know we will be bonded for life. Last November, a member of the group started attending church with me. He has since accepted Jesus as his Lord and Savior and on Easter Sunday was baptized."

RUTH HEALD SCHWAB

Schwab had been at her desk for four minutes when the bomb exploded. Although she lost four units of blood, she remained conscious.

"I couldn't see because my eyes were filled with blood," she recalled. "A co-worker guided me over debris and down the fire escape."

Schwab had 100 stitches in her face and another 100 on her upper torso, in addition to surgery on her eyes.

"I couldn't have made it this year without my faith," said Schwab, who is still under doctors' care for the injuries she suffered. "I don't know how people who don't have faith have made it. The Psalms have been especially comforting to me."

Some days, however, she just sits and cries, she said.

A house representative with HUD, she will not be able to return to work because of her injuries, which include vertebrae and inner-ear problems.

Schwab was engaged to be married when the bombing occurred.

"My fiance stood by me the whole time," she said. "I told him the constant doctors appointments and surgeries weren't in the agreement when we decided to get married, but he said, 'Why would I leave?'"

A member of Midwest City Baptist Church, Meadowood, Schwab said she feels God saved her life so she could praise him.

"I also want to give back to my community," she said. "The city, schools and churches have been wonderful to me and my family, and I want to give something back."

ROBBIE MARONEY

Maroney works at McBride Clinic, five blocks from the bomb site where her husband, Mickey, a 24-year veteran with the Secret Service, had his office.

After the blast, which she said she thought was a boiler in the hospital next door, she walked toward the federal building, until she was turned away by officials.

"I went back to the clinic and waited for Mickey to call me and tell me he was OK," she remembered.

When the phone call didn't come, Maroney called her pastor at Council Road Baptist Church, Bethany, who came to pray with her.

"I believe God had me in shock through the end of August," she said. "There were so many things legally, financially I had to take care of. I believe he had me in shock for survival's sake.

It was at the close of summer Maroney said she started feeling more pain.

"The Lord has given me peace," she emphasized. "I know where my husband is."

It is only by the grace of God that she is getting through each day, she said.

"I don't know that I call what I'm going through pain, but loneliness and adjusting to being alone.

"I will admit that I was angry at God for a very short time. But I've had wonderful support from my church family. I know they are praying for me each day, and I thank God for that.

"I believe my faith is stronger. I'm just glad that I knew the Lord at that time and that my husband did too," Maroney declared.

CARRIE BROWN

"There's no other way to get through this except by God's peace," Brown said. "I never prayed for strength for myself, but I always prayed for his peace to fill me, so that I could allow him to make this into something that would benefit us all instead of becoming so focused on my pain."

Brown said her nephew, Christopher, was her pride and joy. "The sun rose and set in his eyes," she said tearfully. "I adored that child, and when he died, I had a real hard time finding joy in anything. More and more I've been praying not for my joy, because my Christopher is never coming back, but for God's joy to fill my life.

"If I let God's joy and the hope of resurrection fill my life, I know I'm going to have my Christopher and anyone else who meant anything to me in this life, as well as Jesus, for my own. If that's not capable of giving you joy, I don't know what else is."

Brown, also a member of First Baptist, Nicoma Park, said she is not so angry at the people who committed the crime as she is at some of the families, business people in the area and opportunists using the bombing to make money and create pity for themselves.

"They aren't doing anything to try to make this a positive experience in any way," said Brown, who asserted she believes positive things could come out of the tragedy.

"For example, my sister's entire life was focused on children," Brown related. "She was within one year of completing her teaching degree and had been working in day care since she was 16. When people look at stories written about us, they have to see the importance of children to Dana and our entire family.

"And the fact that we are having articles written about the victims and families a year after the fact that helps us explain how we are dealing with the deaths is a powerful witnessing tool. Anything that helps us witness is for the glory of God."

Chaplaincy director Williams agreed some good things have come out of the devastating tragedy.

"Many people have re-evaluated their priorities," he said. "And at least 20 people have made professions of faith, some who live out of state who had Christian friends who died in the bombing.

"I believe, also, the outlook in our churches has changed. I have not been to a church where they have not mentioned they are still praying for victims and their families."

There also is a greater awareness of being prepared for a disaster, Williams said, noting he and police chaplain Jack Poe have traveled across the country to give training for what should take place in communities and hospitals.

"We have spoken at military installations, law enforcement offices and hospitals," Williams said.

For Williams, he now has a greater burden for children.

"One of the greatest tragedies is that the perpetrators of this crime are people who were once little boys in our communities and they were missed by churches, RA groups, Boy Scouts and others that could have taught them values," Williams said.

"Many children come from homes where there is not a role model. Television has become the baby-sitter, and I get very angry with the quality of TV programs today.

"The bottom line is, we must reach the children in our society."

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Psychologist who survived:

'Love grows ... hate divides'

By Dana Williamson

Baptist Press

4/10/96

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)--About 250 people in the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building survived the April 19, 1995, bombing. Ninety percent of them were physically injured. All carry emotional scars.

Somewhere between 200 and 220 of those survivors are members of the Oklahoma City Murrah Building Survivors Association, Inc., headed by Veterans Administration psychologist Paul Heath.

When the bomb went off, Heath, a member of Oklahoma City's Exchange Avenue Baptist Church, was on the fifth floor, standing by the only seven feet of wall that withstood the bomb blast. The floor broke away eight feet in front of him, the wall above him was blown away, debris covered him up to his armpits and a steel safe the size of a desk from the ninth floor landed three feet in front of him.

Escaping from the debris, Heath started helping those who were injured out of the building. The first was a man who was holding his left eyeball in his hand.

"A piece of glass had lodged in his eye, and when he pulled it out, his eyeball came out with it," Heath said.

The next person was on the floor and his right eye was out; another had an eight-inch piece of glass in the back of his head. Heath said he took two survivors out on his first run, then grabbed a stretcher and helped carry out a 250-pound man.

He was allowed during the next few days to make 17 trips back into the building to retrieve VA records and was able to get 99 percent of the 1,200-plus cases.

All the computers in his office worked, he remarked. "The monitors were broken and the cords shredded by glass and steel fragments, but the hard disks were all intact."

The first few days after the bombing, Heath said he had a mild to moderate anxiety reaction. Then, he and his wife, Willetta, attended 68 funerals within 10 days of the bombing.

"I've had the gift of hearing many of the stories of those of us who got out alive, people who lost people in the building and numerous stories of people who almost came downtown that day, but didn't," Heath recounted.

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"I also had the gift of trying to keep the office staff's morale up and meet their individual needs."

Some other VA staff did not return to work for more than six months, and more than half have taken medical retirement, Heath said.

"One of the biggest effects on our staff was that we've had to move our office five times since the bombing," he said. The first office was set up in the VA Hospital the day after the blast, and the final move was made March 8 to the old Post Office building downtown.

As the one-year mark of the bombing attack approaches, Heath acknowledged he sees fear, uncertainty and disquieting that the terrorist bombing has brought upon Oklahoma City.

"But I think the way we get over that is to see the goodness in people's lives before they died, and get the event (how they died) more in perspective with the goodness that those lives represented and would have represented had they lived," he said.

"That's what I have to focus on personally. That drives me to do what I do with the Murrah Building Survivors Association. I don't want the world to forget what those people might have been, had they been allowed to live."

Heath said he also wants to tell the story of the murderous attack on three fundamental institutions -- the family, church and school and the government at all levels.

"That was a city street where the truck with the bomb was parked," he noted. "Those were state buildings across the street, and that was a federal building that belonged to the whole country."

Heath said he believes the bombing was done "to disquiet us. Whoever did this act was hoping we would overreact as a country, and in doing so cause other citizens to be inconvenienced or even victimized by the overreaction.

"But I don't think the government has done that. Instead, we have wisely said good overcomes evil, and we will come back. We will survive. We will once again demonstrate in our own lives that goodness is represented and the fundamental institutions of our society do work together for good.

"This will not accomplish what the terrorists had intended, and that is to cause mass confusion and some kind of statement of revolution. I think people see it for the evil it is."

The Murrah Building Survivors Association is dedicated to helping each other get over the bombing, he said.

"We do that through helping each other and helping others in the community."

So far the survivors group has had four "health fairs," where each member is an exhibitor bringing ideas that will help fellow survivors and the community. The group also gives a "Goodness of Community Award" each time it meets.

Heath said he would summarize the events of the past year with the word "love."

"Love grows and multiplies when shared," he said. "Hate divides when shared, and makes everybody and everything smaller.

"It's the love in people that made it possible for more than 90 percent of us to get out of that building alive, because most of us came out in the hands of our co-workers. We came together and did what we needed to do."

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Seminarian's hope steadfast
despite family's tragedy

By Bryan McAnally

Baptist Press
4/10/96

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Some events sear themselves into the mind: Dec. 7, 1941; Nov. 22, 1963; Jan. 28, 1986. People remember where they were when they first heard Pearl Harbor had been bombed, John F. Kennedy had been assassinated or the space shuttle Challenger exploded.

April 19, 1995.

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Beverly Bradley remembers exactly when she heard the news of the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City.

"I'm a school bus driver, and we were on a field trip and I heard the other bus drivers talking about it."

Bradley, a student at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary's San Antonio campus, had reason to be concerned about the news that Wednesday afternoon. She is from Oklahoma City and had family members who worked for the federal government.

"At 4 a.m. on Thursday, Mom got a phone call. There were three generations of siblings there in the building when it blew up."

Bradley was on the phone that afternoon when her sister first called to relay tragic news.

"I didn't realize what she was calling about and I told her I was on a (seminary-related) long distance call and hung up on her. Then she called back and told me, and I just collapsed on the table."

Among the 168 dead in the blast were Bradley's sister, Cheryl; 4-month-old great-nephew, Gabrion; and 3-year-old great-niece, Peachlyn.

Her niece Dana, 21, gained national notoriety as the young woman whose leg had to be amputated so she could be removed from the wreckage. She also suffered burns and tissue damage.

Another niece, Felicia, 24, had an ear blown off and sustained head injuries when she was hit by an iron slab. Her arm was broken so badly rescuers simply wrapped it in wire. She was burned from her head to her knees. Doctors were pulling parts of the bomb from her body months after the explosion, yet she has no memory of the blast, Bradley said.

"I was in shock," Bradley said. "My sister, Patrice, told me that Dana and Felicia were in the bombing and they couldn't find Cheryl and the babies. I remember sitting at the table in shock. I think I told them I'd be right there."

As the first anniversary of the blast approaches, Bradley reflected on the healing God has done in her family.

"The Lord has let us know he is still in control. He is giving us new blessings daily. There are still difficult days ahead, and some are better than others," she said.

Her nieces refuse to grant interviews and the family will not take part in any anniversary ceremonies, Bradley said.

"Anniversaries will happen every year, but we don't need them. We already know. If you can't let go, you can't move forward."

Bradley said Dana saw the yellow Ryder truck that carried the explosive.

"Dana remembers going to the counter in the Social Security office on the first floor to hand her mother, Cheryl, some papers. When she was returning to her seat she saw the truck, and as she sat down the building began falling down around her."

Dana knew she was burned and her leg was trapped, Bradley said. "She asked the doctor not to leave. She begged him not to leave, but the doctor had to leave. Before he left he told her he couldn't get her out with the hand-held Jaws of Life. When he came back 30 minutes later, he told her he had to amputate her leg."

Bradley said the tragedy and its aftermath has forced her to cling to God.

"God has become my very best friend. Through this all, he has sustained me and allowed me to keep on schedule to graduate in May."

She said she also believes the tragedy strengthened both her faith and her ministry.

"I have learned to not hold anything too tightly. We must learn to hold things loosely because we don't know when we'll lose them forever. Losing Cheryl taught me that.

"Everything does not belong to us. It all belongs to God."

Including the outcome of the upcoming trial -- to be held in Denver -- which she and her family will not attend.

"We're disappointed that it's not in Oklahoma, but we believe God will judge them wherever they are," she said. "We have no bitterness or hatred -- revenge belongs to the Lord. We don't want the electric chair for any of them. We want them in prison for the rest of their lives. Their conscience will do the rest. Putting them to death will not bring anyone back."

Bradley said God has given the family grace to forgive.

"If we allow ourselves to be angry at the person, we allow hatred into our lives and we can't shine for the Lord. And that makes us worse off than that person. Our focus is on the healing process and being a witness to other families affected. This didn't just affect our family -- the people killed were neighbors, classmates, the grocery man."

Yet Bradley said her family has at times struggled with their loss.

"I had a hard time on my birthday. Cheryl's and my birthday are only a week apart and for that week, it's like we are twins. With her not around to celebrate, it was hard."

But she said great solace comes from seeing how Oklahoma City and the rest of the country reacted to the bombing.

"Whatever walls of prejudice that were up there have been torn down. What's going on in Oklahoma City now has nothing to do with ethnics, race, education or wealth. The whole city has pitched in," she said.

"I've been constantly in prayer that the Lord would work a miracle. He did. God is still good. He's blessed us with two out of five. Some people in Oklahoma City have no one left."

But she said her nieces are in denial about the spiritual aspect of the tragedy.

"God still needs to intervene. He was there for the main part, and we need him for the rest. We are in tremendous need for much prayer."

Bradley said she hopes people will continue to learn from the Oklahoma disaster.

"This has been a great tragedy, but there is a lesson for America to learn. If we miss the lesson, we miss the blessing. God speaks through tragedy," she said.

"The lesson from the beginning -- which must not be tainted by Satan -- is that in God there is hope. This brought people together and barriers fell. The love that went across Oklahoma and America showed that even in tragedy, there is hope."

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(BP) photo of Bradley available upon request from Southwestern's office of public relations.

Traylor: Biblical exposition
is cure for faulty doctrine

By Dwayne Hastings

Baptist Press
4/10/96

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--It has been 30 years since the cover of Time magazine screamed, "Is God Dead?"

The front of the early April 1966 edition was published without a picture -- the first time in the magazine's history -- and with only those three words and a question mark, said Ted Traylor, pastor of Olive Baptist Church in Pensacola, Fla.

Thirty years later to the week, Traylor pointed out, the April 1, 1996, edition of the magazine featured a picture of Christ and the headline, "The Search for Jesus."

"Evidently God is not dead and they've starting looking for him again," Traylor said to applause from the April 9 chapel audience at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Noting the cover story in Newsweek during the same week addressed the validity of the resurrection -- the article quoted several who debunked the gospel accounts -- Traylor said the proliferation of misguided theologies demands churchgoers be exposed to biblical exposition.

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"Somehow we've gotten away from doctrine," Traylor said at the Wake Forest, N.C., seminary. "What are the Christians going to believe? We've got to give them some doctrine."

In Malachi's day, the religious leaders had grown lax, Traylor recounted from the Old Testament. Since they were no longer listening to God, they were accursed and set apart from God, he said.

"We need to expose our people to the exposition of the Word of God," said Traylor, who also is president of the Florida Baptist Convention. Without the anchor of Scripture, he said, the natural progression is for a church to drift away from evangelism and toward fellowship.

Citing the prophet Malachi's words, Traylor said every time believers gather, God's Word should be opened to God's people.

"You don't have anything else to say other than this," he said, patting his Bible. "This is our message."

There is a great need in pulpits across America for pastors to take a leadership role in their churches, Traylor continued. "It will take courage; it will take innovation; it will take vision," but above all, "it will take leadership to take a church where it should go."

It may take "the discipline of a monk and the will of a hurricane," Traylor said, but those called to lead must lead with the example of a holy life bent toward God.

Calling to memory his grandmother's advice when he answered God's call to preach, Traylor said Sunday morning should not be the occasion for preachers to simply beat up congregations.

His grandmother stressed the word, "gospel," means good news, and Traylor said he hasn't forgotten her message, recounting her words: "There'll be a lot of hurting people in your church. I've gone out of church so many times feeling like a whipped dog. It's fine to preach hard. Preach against sin; preach hard; bring the Word of God to us. But tell us some good news before we leave."

When a pastor preaches the Word, it will bring conviction and correction, Traylor said. But, he added, Scripture also exhorts, bringing godly construction.

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Promise Keepers, Brotherhood
urge local church ministries

By Tim Palmer

Baptist Press
4/10/96

ST. LOUIS (BP)--If any Promise Keepers participants this year hail from Southern Baptist churches without organized men's ministries, it won't be for lack of Brotherhood Commission resources to start them.

And it won't be because Promise Keepers isn't encouraging them to do just that.

These two facts came through loud and clear at the Midwest Regional Legacy Builders Rally sponsored by the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission March 29-30 at First Baptist Church, Ferguson, in St. Louis. Approximately 200 men gathered for a Friday night/Saturday program that combined inspirational messages, information sharing and music.

Glenn Wagner, vice president of the Denver-based movement, said the 22 Promise Keepers rallies this year -- which will draw an estimated 800,000 men to stadiums, coliseums, domes and two motor speedways across the country -- are simply a tool. The "critical event," he explained, is "one man making and keeping his promises in and through the context of the local church."

Wagner used terms such as "catalyzing agent," "jump start" and "igniter" to describe Promise Keepers' role in men's spiritual lives. Though many find the rallies a "mountaintop experience," God never had anyone live on a mountaintop permanently, Wagner said. "You can build a strategy off of that, but it's not the whole thing."

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Many times, Wagner said, what happens among men as they travel to and from a stadium rally in a van is more significant than what happens at the rally itself. Relationships are built.

The New Testament is presented in relational terms, Wagner noted. Men tend to avoid relationships by turning to tasks, he said, and yet a man's Christian walk needs to be lived out in relationships.

Wagner, who was a pastor for 20 years, offered suggestions for starting men's ministries in the local church, beginning with a profile of the men's interests, needs and desires. This can be done through focus groups or similar means, Wagner said. If, for example, no one golfs, it would be pointless to organize a golf outing, he said.

With a core group of men with a vision for reaching the community, Wagner advised, have them spend three or four months doing nothing but praying for the men in the church.

Next, develop a mission statement, Wagner said, commenting that the chief complaint he hears about men's ministries in churches is: "I don't know where we're going." Men are target-driven, Wagner said. "Develop that statement and make it fully yours."

Keep the group focused on relationships, not programs, Wagner said. The mark of success is not the number in attendance, but whether men deepen in their relationships with other men and with Jesus Christ, he said, explaining out of the overflow of these deepening relationships comes involvement in the church's ministries.

It is not chauvinistic to have men-only activities, Wagner stated; women in churches have been meeting that way for years. Men enjoy being together and they share more freely with other men, he said.

A men's group should have the pastor's support but should not be pastor-led, Wagner said. Pour Ephesians 4 into the men, he advised the pastors present, then release them to do their work.

Wagner proposed making the group flexible, varied and creative. Budget need not be a major consideration -- a fathers-and-sons spaghetti dinner could bless families for a total cost of \$25, he said, cautioning against trying to do too much too soon.

As a final word, Wagner reiterated the importance of the local church in reaching and discipling men for Christ. "Promise Keepers will come and go, but the church will stay forever."

Jim Burton, Men's Ministries director for the Brotherhood Commission in Memphis, Tenn., outlined the options and materials available to men's groups through the agency. The list includes four traditional ministries -- team builders, prayer teams, mission action teams and evangelism teams. Three newer areas -- career support teams, recovery ministries teams and encouragement teams -- complete the selection.

Unemployment is a critical issue in many men's lives, Burton pointed out. Don Aycock, Men's Ministries special projects editor for the Brotherhood Commission, led a workshop at the Legacy Builders Rally on starting a career support ministry in a church.

Recovery ministries include alcohol and substance abuse ministries, along with divorce recovery. "Have you ever noticed how few Alcoholics Anonymous groups are in Southern Baptist churches?" Burton asked. The Brotherhood Commission encourages such ministries using Baptist Sunday School Board materials that define the "higher power" -- Jesus.

Encouragement teams are an up-and-coming area of ministry. "This is where we intersect most with Promise Keepers in the local church," Burton noted. Bob Carey of the Brotherhood Commission led a workshop on how to start such teams. They often are called "accountability groups," said Carey, editor of Missions Today magazine, but he prefers to emphasize affirmation.

He stressed the need for confidentiality -- a man must be confident that something he shares with the small group won't be voiced in the following Wednesday's prayer meeting. Also, men must be honest and transparent with each other.

Men in churches want materials that are short, simple and bite-sized, Carey said -- things they can start and finish. He recommended a pair of four- to five-week studies called Friendship Course and Home Run Course. Both were developed by the Little Rock, Ark., -based organization Dad the Family Shepherd, which has been in a partnership with the Brotherhood Commission since 1994. That partnership formed when the Brotherhood Commission adopted the Dad the Family Shepherd conference as part of its Men's Ministries Journey curriculum, which includes Legacy Builders and a series of similar weekend events focusing on men's issues.

Carey said pairing some type of mission action with the encouragement ministry improves a team's prospects for success. "When you put the two together, they tend to keep afloat a lot longer," he said. "Men are doers, and it keeps them interested."

The small group should not be so locked in to a study that it fails to meet its members where they are in their struggles, Carey said. "There is no set pattern to an encouragement team."

Missions Today magazine contains curriculum for the team builders and prayer teams options of Men's Ministries, as well as for encouragement teams. In an interview, Burton acknowledged some frustration that more Baptist men do not know about and take advantage of such Brotherhood Commission resources.

Some men go to the Promise Keepers stadium rallies and develop an instant "brand loyalty" to Promise Keepers, Burton said. After that, they only want to use Promise Keepers' materials, even though -- as Wagner noted -- the organization has deliberately avoided publishing curriculum.

It is technically illegal for a group within a church to call itself a "Promise Keepers group," Wagner added, because the organization has declined to license its name or logo. "We didn't do it because we want the men in your church to identify with your church."

The marriage of Promise Keepers enthusiasm and Brotherhood Commission know-how can be seen in First Baptist Church, St. John, Mo. Cliff Harlow, Brotherhood director for the St. Louis-area church, said men's work there had been foundering before men started going to Promise Keepers stadium rallies in Indianapolis and Dallas the past two years.

This spring, besides having some men at the Promise Keepers rally in Kansas City's Arrowhead Stadium, the church is conducting a Legacy Builders weekend retreat -- another Brotherhood Commission resource -- at Windermere Baptist Assembly. Associate pastor David Iannacone said such fellowship opportunities allow men to get to know one another beyond "Hi, how are you doing?" when they see each other Sunday mornings.

Iannacone used "sleeping giant" to describe Baptist men. Burton compared them to "latent images" on a roll of film that has been exposed but not processed. When Iannacone attended the first Promise Keepers pastors rally in February in Atlanta, a man from another denomination asked him, "What's with you Southern Baptists? You're everywhere!"

He told the guy, "Southern Baptists have been doing men's ministries all along." More men are doing them across the SBC, said Brotherhood Commission President James D. Williams when he addressed the Legacy Builders rally. According to Annual Church Profile records, Brotherhood enrollment climbed by 100,000 in the last church year.

The question that will be answered in the weeks, months and years after each Promise Keepers rally is: Will more Baptist churches see more Baptist men doing ministries and missions through their local churches? It is a question the men who plan to attend might want to ask themselves before they go. For information on Brotherhood Commission or Dad the Family Shepherd materials, contact the Brotherhood Commission at 1-800-727-6466.

**Sunday School Board launches
publishing medium on SBCNet**

By Chip Alford

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--In what they described as "a historic event," leaders of the Baptist Sunday School Board's Bible teaching-reaching division have announced the launch of a new publishing medium which will allow customers to purchase and download Christian education resources electronically via their computers.

Carrying the new imprint "WORData," the electronic files will be available for purchase in a new area on SBCNet, Southern Baptists' private forum on CompuServe. The "SBCNet Resource Center" opens to the public April 15. Products will be offered in different formats, including text-only documents or files with graphics and illustrations.

"This is truly a historic event because of what it represents for the future," Bill Taylor, director of the Bible teaching-reaching division, said. "Churches and individuals won't have to wait days or weeks to get these products; they can download them immediately and use them however they want. ... I believe this is the beginning of customization of Christian education materials for our churches."

While original products are expected to be developed, initial files available for downloading will be drawn from existing or previously published materials, such as "StraigTrak" undated Bible studies for youth, "Outreach Bible Study" and articles from Biblical Illustrator magazine which relate to lessons in current Sunday school curriculum lines. Other products expected to be offered include Herschel Hobbs' commentary for Vacation Bible School, commentaries on other Bible books, and "The Best of Advanced Bible Study." Articles also will be available on subjects such as reaching and caring for youth with substance-abuse problems, how to hold effective department meetings, how to delegate, evangelism, effective planning and many others.

While the Bible teaching-reaching division will have the majority of files available for purchase initially, SBCNet coordinator David Haywood said that will likely change soon. Woman's Missionary Union, for example, will offer for sale a resource kit for "Project Help" when the new Resource Center opens April 15. The kit promotes AIDS awareness and ministries in local churches.

"As this new area develops, I feel confident other components at the Sunday School Board will get involved, as will some of our other SBC agencies and institutions," Haywood said. "We want the Resource Center to offer a wide variety of products that meet the differing needs of churches and individual Christians."

Prices for the electronic products will vary, Haywood said, with charges being billed to a customer's CompuServe account only after the successful completion of the download. There is no charge for download time.

All files posted in other SBCNet forum areas, such as "EXTRA!" supplemental teaching helps for Sunday School teachers, will continue to be free, Haywood said.

SBCNet may be accessed by using a computer, modem and a membership kit distributed by the Sunday School Board. Kits, which provide access to services of CompuServe and SBCNet, contain software and account information. New members receive 10 free hours of CompuServe and one free month of SBCNet. Kits are available in DOS, Macintosh and Windows versions.

For more information about SBCNet, or to order a kit, call 1-800-325-7749.

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The logo for the WORData imprint is posted in the SBCNet News Room and a copy also is being mailed to state Baptist newspapers by the BSSB bureau of Baptist Press.

**Preventive management urged
to guard church integrity**

By Debbie Moore

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--People should be looking at churches and saying, "I want to run my household and my business like that church," a CPA told students at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Instead, the IRS and lawyers are looking at churches and seeing a goldmine because of their careless lack of compliance to rules and regulations, said Rex Frieze, former chief business and financial officer for First Baptist Church, Orlando, Fla., and now a tax law specialist and church business consultant based in Orlando.

Frieze was on the New Orleans campus the first week of April presenting continuing education conferences, a chapel message and a special event for the seminary's division of Christian education ministries.

Frieze listed eight tools churches should use for preventive management to fend off frivolous lawsuits and negative IRS audits:

-- Organizational structure: "This is an intentional structuring of roles assigned to people within the church so that the church can achieve its objectives efficiently, effectively and economically," he said. "This would include staff, committees and other lay leaders. Responsibilities should be divided so that no one person will control all phases of any transaction."

-- Personnel: "All full-time and part-time employee applicants should be required to complete an employee application and be properly and adequately screened," he said. But he also said certain volunteers should be screened, such as children and youth workers and drivers of church-owned vehicles, "because the church will be held liable for its people's actions."

-- Policies: A church's most important document after its articles of incorporation and its bylaws is its policies and procedures manual, Frieze said. "Policies should be clearly stated in writing and should be systematically organized into handbooks, manuals or other publications," he emphasized, since official documents are the first thing IRS agents and lawyers will ask for. The church policies must, of course, conform with applicable laws and regulations and should be periodically reviewed and revised when circumstances change, he said. Frieze has developed manuals of forms and procedures churches can work through.

-- Procedures: Procedures are the "means to carry out activities in conformity with prescribed policies ... for an effective and efficient ministry," Frieze said. One of the most important procedures a church should have in place is to have at least two individuals in charge of money from the time it goes into the offering plate until it goes to the bank. Another important procedure is to prepare and maintain proper and adequate documentation of the church's operations. Also, "to reduce the possibility of fraud and error, procedures should be so coordinated that one employee's work is automatically checked by another who is independently performing separate prescribed duties."

-- Budgeting: While Frieze emphasized budget preparation by those responsible for budget areas, he also endorsed a "zero-based budgeting philosophy" for almost all financial budgets. "All budget amounts should be supported with documentation which justifies the request," he said, "and should be based on objectives for the year."

-- Accounting: "Original documents are critical!" Frieze said, for meeting IRS requirements. It's not enough just to scribble down an amount on a piece of paper, he said. "You must have a receipt with not only a record of the amount, the date and the place, but also of the purpose and the people you were with." All reimbursements must be made within 60 days of the event. Furthermore, a church must have written policies for reimbursements. "All entries in the church's books of accounts must be supported by original documentation that gives rise to the transaction," he said. A church must use purchase and fund request forms, and there should be a bank receipt for every deposit and every withdrawal. "Don't just memo something," he said. "You must have original documents." He also said "all books of original entry and subsidiary records/ledgers should be balanced on at least a monthly basis."

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-- Reporting: "Reports should be as simple as possible so that everyone in the church can understand them," Frieze said. "They should include only information that serves the needs of the readers. Common classifications and terminology should be used as much as possible to avoid confusion."

-- Internal reviews (audits): "This is where to start to look for places we can be nipped by lawyers and the IRS," Frieze said. "Internal reviewers should not control or direct action. Their responsibility is advisory, to provide information as a basis for decision-making and action." Frieze said the areas of highest degree of risk exposure should be reviewed first.

"The church must be the pacesetter in demonstrating to its members and to a lost world the highest levels of integrity in organizing and operating its ministry affairs," Frieze said.

"As the Lord's people in the Lord's house, we should not be saying, 'All these rules are such a pain,'" he said. Instead, "We should be taking pains to do what is right to protect the Lord's house and to be an excellent example, not because of possible punishments, but because of our testimony."

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CPA's checklist for churches:

25 key operational controls

By Debbie Moore

Baptist Press

4/10/96

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--In a day when lawyers think they can make some easy money by suing churches, church leaders must take the time to evaluate their areas of risk, said Rex Frieze, a CPA and church consultant based in Orlando, Fla.

"It used to be unheard of for a church to be sued," Frieze said. "Now lawyers see churches as easy targets with deep pockets."

But a sadder situation, he said, is embezzlement of church funds is at an all-time high. "It is a fact that 15 percent of churches have been, are being or will be victims of embezzlement," he said. That number in actuality is higher, he added, because church embezzlement is so easy to cover up with the sloppy way some churches keep their records.

Speaking during conferences at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary the first week of April, Frieze gave a list of 25 key operational controls of a church, which also are the areas of highest degree of risk exposure, to be reviewed immediately:

1. "Are the articles of incorporation current as they relate to your state's nonprofit corporation laws, and are the bylaws adequately documented, up-to-date in content and being properly adhered to?"

2. "Does the governing board, as defined in the articles of incorporation and/or bylaws, consist of a majority of members who are not employees or staff and/or related by blood or marriage?"

3. "Has a conflict of interest policy been:

a. approved and appropriately documented?

b. distributed to all corporate/governing officers and directors?

c. re-evaluated at least annually?"

4. "Is your church operating under a policies and procedures manual which addresses such areas as ministry matters, finances, personnel, facilities and general administration? Is this manual adequately documented, current in content, and appropriately distributed to the church's governing officers/directors, staff and key lay ministry leaders?"

5. "Have policies and procedures been established which address possible sexual molestation of children and other minors by staff and/or volunteers during ministry-related activities?"

6. "Are all fund-raising appeals:

a. clearly identified as to the purpose and program to which donations will be applied?

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b. presented in such a manner that they do not create an unrealistic donor expectation?

c. presented in such a manner that they do not compel the donor to make a gift under pressure?

d. avoided when they do not directly relate to the purpose/mission statement of the church?"

7. "Has management created a workable organizational chart showing lines of responsibility and authority, and does this structure facilitate effective communication upstream, downstream and across functional lines?"

8. "Are all actions of church business meetings, governing board meetings, executive staff meetings, committee meetings, etc. properly and adequately documented in minutes and permanently filed in a secured filing system on the church premises?"

9. "Is the church operating under an approved annual general operating budget?"

10. "Are at least two unrelated, trustworthy individuals always in custody of offerings until they have been safely deposited in a bank or places in a secure night depository?"

11. "Are separate individuals assigned the responsibilities for each of the following tasks:

a. counting and depositing the offerings?

b. recording donor contributions?

c. preparing disbursement checks?

d. signing checks?

e. reconciling bank statements?"

12. "Has a policy been established which outlines guidelines for restricted/designated giving, and has this policy been adequately communicated to church members and donors?"

13. "Are all financial transactions being accounted for in a general ledger which is organized under a ministry-directed chart of accounts, and is this ledger being balanced and reconciled to other supporting records on a monthly basis?"

14. "Are purchase orders and fund requests being used to control church purchases and advanced payments?"

15. "Are monthly financial reports with budget comparisons and explanations of significant variances being prepared, and are they being reviewed on a timely basis by the governing board, executive staff and appropriate lay leaders and committees?"

16. "Does the church evaluate the status of each service provider of the church to determine if they are either an employee or self-employed for federal income tax purposes, before payment for services rendered is made (this would include ministers)?"

17. "Are procedures in place which allow for the accurate and timely completion of the following federal reporting obligations:

a. federal payroll taxes (i.e., form 941, forms W-2 and W-3, forms 1099-MISC/1096, etc.)?

b. charitable contributions receipting?

c. donee information returns (form 8282)?

d. annual certification of racial nondiscrimination (form 5578) relating to Christian schools?

e. unrelated business income (form 990-T)?

f. federal wage and hour standards?

g. federal bus regulations relating to church-owned vans/buses?

h. copyright of materials (literature, music, software, etc.)?"

18. "Are all perspective employees (full-time and part-time) required to complete an application for employment, and are they properly screened through:

a. reviewing the application?

b. contacting personal and professional references?

c. performing a personal interview?

- d. verifying educational training and professional credentials?
 e. performing appropriate background checks (i.e., former employers; criminal, drivers and credit records; sexual molestation)?"
19. "Are all employees (full-time and part-time) and functioning committees working under a current ministry position description, and are they properly understood and followed?"
20. "Has the following documentation been thoroughly prepared, updated and maintained relating to personnel matters of the church:
 a. application for employment?
 b. personnel files?
 c. performance appraisal/evaluation forms?
 d. employee handbook?
 e. progressive discipline reports?
 f. immigration I-9 forms with backup support?
 g. time cards for non-exempt employees?
 h. separation notices on dismissed employees?"
21. "Are all employees functioning under a properly structured compensation program which addresses pay rates/salary, minister's housing allowances, employee fringe benefits and employee expense reimbursements?"
22. "Has the church established an 'accountable' expense reimbursement arrangement for all of its ministers and other employees for the purpose of maximizing their personal tax savings with no additional costs to the church?"
23. "Are insurance coverages evaluated and reviewed with a competent insurance professional on at least an annual basis for the purpose of determining appropriateness and adequacy of coverages?"
24. "Are proper daily and weekly computer file backup and retention procedures in place, and are they being properly adhered to by all those using church computers?"
25. "Has an internal audit committee been established to assist the governing board and executive staff in reviewing the church's operating systems for effectiveness, efficiency, compliance with applicable governmental laws and regulations and assessment of possible risks and exposures to the ministry?"

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Evangelism is simple
& for all, Roberts says

By Debbie Moore

Baptist Press
4/10/96

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--"Evangelism doesn't need to be a complicated issue," said the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's director of interfaith witness.

"It's so simple," said Phil Roberts during the April 4 annual spring Missionary Day service at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. "Just tell others what Jesus means to you."

Roberts, director since 1994 of the HMB office seeking to raise awareness and involvement in interfaith witnessing, told of the simple childhood salvation experience of a new Southern Baptist Convention Foreign Mission Board appointee to Latin America.

His neighbor, noticing the children didn't attend Sunday school, asked his parents if she could take the children with her. The parents, eager for some free time, agreed. Through that simple act of kindness and simple telling of what Jesus meant to her, Roberts said, the entire family accepted Christ and the son is now on his way with his family to share the gospel in another country.

"The good news is that America will be evangelized," Roberts said. "The bad news is that there is a concentration of other groups in America who are not sharing the gospel, who are sharing something else."

At least 1,650 different religious movements -- with at least 2,000 members each -- exist in the United States, Roberts said. "American is probably the most religiously diverse nation in the history of the world."

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One group in particular is passionately evangelistic, the Latter-day Saints, with 50,000 full-time missionaries, he said. When children in the LDS turn 6, their parents take them to the bank to open their own account -- not for spending money, not for college expenses -- for their first mission trip.

"In the LDS, the exceptions are the people who don't go," Roberts said.

"And for us, sadly, it's the other way around.

"We have to reverse that pattern," Roberts said, "so those who don't go and who don't give will be the exception."

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Former mission leader
in Europe dies at 83

By Marty Croll

Baptist Press
4/10/96

BROWNWOOD, Texas (BP)--John Allen Moore, an architect of post-World War II Southern Baptist mission work in Europe, died April 5. He was 83.

During his 40-year career as a Foreign Mission Board missionary, Moore helped establish seminaries in Yugoslavia and Switzerland and started the European Baptist Press Service. He built inroads into newly communist Eastern Europe and, for seven years, worked as field representative for board work throughout Europe.

A Tupelo, Miss., native, Moore was appointed in 1938 as the first Southern Baptist missionary to Yugoslavia. Two years later he married the former Pauline Willingham of Macon, Ga. In 1941 they opened a seminary with six students in Belgrade, Yugoslavia.

About six months later, German bombings forced them to evacuate to Hungary. War forced them to leave there, also, and in Egypt they worked with Yugoslav refugees for a United Nations program. In 1948 they were assigned to Switzerland, to help set up Ruschlikon Baptist Theological Seminary. While there, Moore taught church history and missions and worked as a registrar.

In 1955 after an unsuccessful attempt to move back to Yugoslavia, the Moores moved to Vienna, Austria, hoping to make frequent trips to Yugoslavia. But they wound up working with a rising tide of Hungarian refugees there. In 1957, they returned to Ruschlikon.

From 1961-66 he was the first director of the European Baptist Press Agency, begun by the European Baptist Federation to service publications of Baptist unions on the continent. In 1967, still teaching at Ruschlikon, he became the board's first fraternal representative to Eastern Europe. That job required him to make regular trips into the region, establishing a pattern of ministry the Foreign Mission Board used until communism crashed.

In 1969 Moore became a field representative for the board, helping its Richmond, Va.,-based office develop Baptist contacts in Europe and provide for the needs of missionaries there.

Besides his wife, survivors include a daughter, Marilyn Moore, and a son, Edward W. Moore, of Brownwood, Texas. A memorial service was scheduled April 11 in Brownwood.

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Dad the Family Shepherd
selects new president

Baptist Press
4/10/96

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (BP)--The board of Dad the Family Shepherd has named Jim Neal president of the Little Rock, Ark.,-based ministry.

Dad the Family Shepherd is a 12-year-old ministry for training men as fathers through live and video seminars and small groups or "Encouragement Team" studies. More than 88,000 men have attended DFS conferences in local churches, conference centers and military installations across the United States and abroad.

The ministry also has worked in cooperation with the Southern Baptist Convention Brotherhood Commission since 1994, when the SBC agency adopted the Dad the Family Shepherd conference as part of its Men's Ministries Journey curriculum.

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Neal comes to DFS after seven years as senior vice president of Youth for Christ/USA. In that capacity, he served as the group's chief operating officer in its Denver headquarters. Previously, he held various executive leadership positions at the international relief organization World Vision from 1974-88.

Neal replaces Norman Hoggard, who headed DFS for the past four years, following a career as a CPA and business executive. That period saw the transition from a "one-man" ministry by the late founder/speaker Dave Simmons, to a multi-speaker organization. Simmons died in an auto accident in November 1994 at the age of 52.

For several years Neal has served on the teaching faculty for Promise Keepers and will help present DFS conferences in the future.

Looking forward to his new work, which he began April 1, Neal said, "Speaking to thousands of men over the past few years, I have recognized a serious vacuum in fathering skills and commitments. The future of our nation rests upon renewed commitment to fatherhood. Dad the Family Shepherd is uniquely positioned to assist in bringing about everlasting change in the lives of men."

Neal and his wife, Ruth, will be relocating to Little Rock. They have four children and six grandchildren.

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Covenant tour natural fit
for RTVC ministry's director

By C.C. Risenhoover

Baptist Press
4/10/96

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--A year ago Debbie Wall had no idea 1996 would put her in Southern Baptist churches across the country. Then the Radio and Television Commission began a cooperative effort with Christian pianist Dino to promote its "Covenant" ministry with a series of concerts called the "Dino 'Family Values' Concert Tour."

Wall, who directs the Covenant ministry, has since been in Southern Baptist churches from Colorado to Virginia.

"It has been a wonderful experience," she said, "because I've had opportunity to bond with other Southern Baptists throughout the country. And, while we may be separated geographically, I've been impressed with our similarities. We may live in different parts of the country, but it's as if we are all family because of the bond of Christ."

Wall thinks Covenant, the cause she represents, is one that all Southern Baptists can agree on.

"I haven't met a Southern Baptist, a Christian for that matter, who doesn't agree on the reason for Covenant," she said.

Covenant is an effort taking action to make a positive difference in today's media, Wall said, by producing and distributing Christian family values television programming, by educating American families to discern good media from bad and by commending the positives in media.

"Simply put, Covenant is committed to ministering to America's families by promoting Christian family values in media," Wall said.

All Covenant programs are broadcast nationwide on either FamilyNet or ACTS, the television program services of the RTVC.

"Miracles," an inspirational TV program and video featuring Dino in concert, was made possible in part through a large gift to Covenant, which, Wall said, made him a natural to be a spokesperson for the ministry.

"Dino is a strong advocate of Christian family values programming, especially programming for children," she said. "That has come across at all the concerts on the tour. He is very committed to the Covenant ministry and all that the RTVC is attempting to accomplish."

At all the concerts on the tour, a video about the Covenant effort is shown. Copies of a brochure and "Beam International," the official publication of the RTVC, also are distributed. At many of the concerts, Jack Johnson, president of the RTVC, also speaks about the ministry.

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"I think we leave a positive impression everywhere we go," Wall said. "Many people tell me they have been praying for something like Covenant. Others tell me it is definitely time for something like Covenant."

Covenant will not end with its last sponsored Dino concert in May. It is an ongoing ministry. Along with Dino, the singing group "Sierra" are now spokespersons for Covenant. They promote the ministry in the more than 200 concerts they do annually.

Wall, a native of Mississippi; is a graduate of the University of Mississippi at Oxford, where her father is a professor. She also has a degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

Promoting Covenant has been a natural fit, Wall said, because she had Christian family values instilled in her from the time she was a baby.

"I have three sisters and a brother, and we were all raised as Southern Baptists," she said. "We were members of First Baptist Church at Oxford, which is where I grew up. If something was going on at the church, we were there. I never saw 'Wonderful World of Disney' on television because it was a Sunday night program and we were in church."

Wall said she can appreciate the music she has heard every night while on tour with Dino because of her own rich musical background.

"I started taking piano lessons when I was in the second grade and, though I took lessons for seven years, I never got over 'sweaty palms' at recital time," she recounted. "I can remember getting so nervous at times that I completely forgot how my piece started. That makes me admire an incredible God-given talent for piano like Dino's all the more."

Singing, Wall said, came much more naturally to her. She sang her first solo in church when in elementary school.

"Christian music impacted my life a great deal," she said. "Our music director at First Church Oxford was George McFadden, who exposed us to many ministry opportunities through music. I considered majoring in music in college, but music classes turned something I loved into drudgery."

At the University of Mississippi, where she graduated magna cum laude, Wall minored in music and majored in communications. She still sings as often as possible in churches and performs in a Christian drama group.

Wall said her theater background makes her even more aware of the need for the Covenant ministry.

"When I majored in theater in college," she said, "I intentionally chose to work on a B.A. degree instead of a BFA (bachelor of fine arts) because the BFA majors were required to audition for every school-sponsored play. And there were many plays I didn't feel comfortable with as a Christian."

"It would be exciting to see more plays, movies and television programs produced that promote Christian family values. I know there are many Christians who want to be involved in the media and entertainment industry, but it takes money and producers who are willing to invest in wholesome projects."

Following her junior year at the university, Wall was a Baptist Student Union (BSU) summer missionary in Florida.

"I helped start a new church in Jacksonville," she said. "I worked with Vacation Bible School, visitation and the children's music program."

"My decision to serve as a summer missionary surprised many of my friends and family because previously I had spent every summer performing in musicals at the university. I really didn't miss performing that summer because I knew I was doing what God was leading me to do. That was the start of my interest in working in full-time Christian ministry."

"From the world's perspective, many of my experiences might seem very unrelated," Wall said. "But from a spiritual viewpoint, I can see how God allowed these things in my past to prepare me for the task of promoting Covenant on this concert tour."

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