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-- BAPTIST PRESS
News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

JUN 19 1996

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June 11, 1996

96-101

NEW ORLEANS--News advisory.

NEW ORLEANS--SBC to collect offering to assist black churches victimized by fires.

NEW ORLEANS--SBC resolution expected to condemn Walt Disney Co.

NEW ORLEANS--African American leader urges SBC to address black church fires; photo.

NEW ORLEANS--Follow words with deeds, black leader urges SBC.

NEW ORLEANS--Preach without compromise, Baptist pastors challenged; photos.

NEW ORLEANS--Prayerwalk teams fan out to intercede in New Orleans; photo.

NEW ORLEANS--Ahead for WMU: traditional tasks, visionary options, leaders say.

NEW ORLEANS--Speakers urge Baptist women to action in a changing world.

NEW ORLEANS--SBC messengers elect Committee on Nominations.

NEW ORLEANS--HMB trustees challenged to take ministry risks.

NEW ORLEANS--Directors of missions create staff position.

NEW ORLEANS--Baptist Press celebrates 50; state papers' association, 100.

NEWS ADVISORY: Messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention in New Orleans June 11 elected Tom Elliff, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church, Del City, Okla., as SBC president and formally adopted the SBC restructuring, "Covenant for a New Century," reducing the number of SBC agencies from 19 to 12. Baptist Press coverage will be posted June 12.

**SBC to collect offering to assist
black churches victimized by fires**

**Baptist Press
6/11/96**

By Tom Strode

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--The Southern Baptist Convention will collect an offering during its 1996 meeting to help predominantly African American congregations in rebuilding their burned church buildings, SBC President Jim Henry announced June 10.

Messengers to the convention will be provided the opportunity to give during the Wednesday evening session, Henry said at an afternoon news conference. It will be the first special offering collected at the annual meeting since 1986, when messengers gave to combat world hunger.

The offering "will be dispersed in an appropriate way so that these churches will know that we have ... given some money towards" rebuilding their buildings, Henry said.

The offering will be part of a planned twofold response by messengers to a pattern of burnings of predominantly black churches in the United States during the last 18 months. There have been more than 30 such fires, most in the southeastern part of the country. Three church buildings have been burned in the last two weeks.

The SBC Resolutions Committee, meanwhile, is expected to present to the convention a resolution condemning arsons of black churches and proclaiming support for such congregations.

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The actions follow last year's racial reconciliation resolution apologizing for past and present racism in the convention.

Henry said he hopes the offering will motivate churches and state conventions also to take action to say to African American congregations, "We deplore this. We are going to help you as brothers and sisters in Christ. And I think that will show that we've come a long way since some earlier days when these kind of things happened and there was no response from our convention and evangelicals."

Southern Baptists "hope our brothers and sisters in Christ see that it's coming from our hearts and not just something to be said, but we care and we want this to say so," Henry said. In explaining the reason for the offering, he referred to a biblical passage, James 2:15-16, which says a person's faith is empty if he does not seek to meet the needs of the poor in tangible ways.

More than 17,000 Southern Baptist volunteer construction workers also are prepared to assist black churches in rebuilding, Henry said.

Members of the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission's construction fellowship -- consisting of groups in state conventions with names such as Baptist Builders and Builders for Christ -- "stand ready to move in," said James Williams, the agency's president.

The Brotherhood Commission will work in conjunction with the Brotherhood departments of the state conventions in the states affected to provide construction assistance for the black churches who desire it, Williams said.

Brotherhood wants to offer its services "with sensitivity," he said. Some black churches have said they want to rebuild on their own, Williams said, but some will not be able to without help.

Christian Life Commission President Richard Land, who decried the burnings in testimony before a congressional committee May 21, applauded Henry's "bold leadership in calling for" a special offering.

"What better way to stop these racist acts of violence than for Christians to reach out in reconciliation to each other in ways that increase racial understanding and acceptance, thus utterly frustrating the base and sinful motives of these arsonists," Land said.

Land introduced a version of a resolution opposing the burnings.

Since last year's SBC meeting, Southern Baptist agency heads have established a task force designed to implement in a practical manner within the convention the racial reconciliation resolution.

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SBC resolution expected
to condemn Walt Disney Co.

Baptist Press
6/11/96

By Dwayne Hastings

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Taking aim at a corporation known more for its cartoons than controversy, the Southern Baptist Convention's Resolutions Committee is expected to send to the convention floor a resolution condemning the Walt Disney Company for "anti-family, anti-Christian policies."

The committee, which can only recommend resolutions for consideration by SBC messengers during the June 11-13 annual meeting in New Orleans, endorsed the resolution which cited Disney's employee policy which embraces homosexual relationships, its production of objectionable materials through its subsidiaries and the promotion of homosexual and lesbian emphasis nights at its theme parks.

Meeting June 10, the committee debated whether a section in the proposed resolution which called for Southern Baptists to boycott the company's theme parks and products might be misunderstood by Southern Baptists and could make the denomination look foolish.

"We don't want to harm Disney; we just don't want Disney harming our family," one member said as the committee agreed on wording which instead called for Southern Baptists to monitor the entertainment giant's response to the resolution.

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The committee handily recommended to the convention a resolution prompted by the burning of African American churches across the southeastern United States.

Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, said he felt so strongly about the issue he stepped aside from his agency role to personally submit the resolution as a messenger from First Baptist Church, Franklin, Tenn.

"To burn a black church is to plunge a dagger deep into the heart of the African American community," Land said, explaining historically churches have been the core of the black community.

"The African American community needs to know we stand with them," Land said, in castigating those "who are sowing these seeds of hate and distrust."

The proposed resolution pledges Southern Baptists will pray for, support, encourage and stand with their sister churches who have been victims of the attacks.

A resolution protesting the worldwide persecution and denial of human rights of Christians also will be presented for action by messengers. Land noted there was a growing consensus in the U.S. Congress and society at large that the persecution is a matter which must be addressed.

Land said the U.S. State Department has been "pathetically uninvolved" in the matter, adding the situation was no better under previous administrations.

The Resolutions Committee also plans to recommend resolutions:

- denouncing physician-assisted suicide, affirming the biblical and Hippocratic prohibitions against such practices.

- labeling same-sex marriages unnatural, indecent and perverted, endorsing legislative and legal efforts "to oppose the legalization of homosexual marriages through judicial actions (and) public policy decisions."

- recommitting Southern Baptists to pray for the salvation of the Jewish people, warning a creeping universalism threatens to blunt evangelistic outreach to them.

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African American leader urges
SBC to address black church fires

Baptist Press
6/11/96

By Karen L. Willoughby

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--"Let the healing begin."

With these words E.W. McCall Sr. began his presidential address to the 200 people gathered at the Court of Two Sisters in New Orleans for the annual meeting of African American Fellowship of Southern Baptists. The meeting preceded the June 11-13 annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in the Louisiana Superdome in New Orleans.

"We have in our country today a problem too many people are talking about," McCall, pastor of St. Stephen Baptist Church in La Puente, Calif., said.

"We as Southern Baptists should not come to this convention and act as if it hasn't happened," he said, citing the arson fires that have destroyed or damaged more than 30 black churches in the southeastern United States during the last 18 months.

"Anybody who would burn down a church is wrong," McCall said. "We need to know we have a problem in the land. If we don't do something about it now, it will cross the Mason-Dixon line. It will go into the North and the West.

"We need to send a message loud and clear to the Southern Baptist Convention at large," McCall continued. "If we leave this convention this week and don't say something about it, something is wrong and reconciliation is just a word."

The healing will begin when people start praying and acting on their prayers, the president said.

During business sessions, a \$12,000 annual budget was approved.

McCall urged fellowship members to be involved in their association and state conventions as well as the national organization.

"I was very concerned about the paternalistic outlook in many of our state conventions," McCall said. "This is our convention. We are Southern Baptists."

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The fellowship met June 9 for worship at Franklin Avenue Baptist Church in New Orleans. Brazilian pastor Nilson Fanini, president of the Baptist World Alliance, brought greetings to the group from the world's more than 100 million Baptists.

In 1994-95, 195 new black churches were added to the Southern Baptist Convention, for a total of 1,947 black SBC churches, said Willie McPherson, church extension department of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

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(BP) photo and cutline posted in SBCNet News Room.

Follow words with deeds,
black leader urges SBC

By Mark Kelly

Baptist Press
6/11/96

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Race relations in the Southern Baptist Convention haven't soured in the past year, but it's time for SBC leaders to translate their good intentions into concrete action, a leader in the convention's efforts to start new churches in black communities said.

Several leaders of the convention's African American Fellowship, in a newspaper interview, criticized Southern Baptist officials June 10 for not including any blacks as speakers on the program for the SBC annual meeting June 11-13 in New Orleans. They also said Southern Baptist leaders have not been vocal enough in denouncing the 30-plus arson fires that have destroyed African American church buildings around the country.

The fellowship leaders' criticisms were leveled at what they saw as Southern Baptist failure to implement a resolution passed in the 1995 SBC annual meeting in Atlanta, apologizing for condoning slavery and pledging to work harder to achieve racial reconciliation.

"I don't think race relations are worse this year than last year," said Willie McPherson, director of black church relations for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board. "There are some serious efforts being made to deal with last year's resolution."

However, many African American Baptists will be watching closely to see whether convention leaders take any meaningful action this next year to include blacks in convention life, McPherson said.

"A person might understand that much of this year's program was already in the planning process when this resolution was passed," McPherson acknowledged. "But if we don't see any differences next year, we'll know the resolution had no meaning to the people planning the program."

McPherson praised SBC President Jim Henry for his efforts to build bridges to the African American community.

"Jim Henry has spent a lot of time and traveled a lot of miles trying to do things to reflect that Southern Baptists are serious about the resolution," he said. "He has worked with Gary Frost (SBC second vice president and an African American) to find things that could be done."

Southern Baptists have talked for years about racial reconciliation but have little to show for it, McPherson said. Black Southern Baptists need to see meaningful changes, he said.

"To put something on paper and appoint a task force and not do something so people can see results doesn't mean anything, especially to blacks," he said. "People expected things to be different this year because of the resolution."

In an address to the convention assembly June 11, Henry urged Southern Baptists to turn words into deeds.

"There is (an) area of exclusion we must make every effort to remove, and that is the sin of racism," said Henry, pastor of First Baptist Church, Orlando, Fla. "We're making progress. ... We're not there yet."

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Henry denounced the arson fires that have destroyed black church buildings across the United States in recent months as "acts of blind hatred" and urged Southern Baptists to prove their concern by collecting money and sending construction volunteers to help rebuild the devastated buildings.

"In the past, we have been too quiet when these things have happened. Those days are history," Henry said. "Out of the smoldering ruins of those houses of worship, new buildings will rise, but also a new message, built on our common bond of fellowship in Jesus Christ.

"That message to you is that we no longer say, 'You shall overcome,' but say with you, 'We shall overcome.'"

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Preach without compromise,
Baptist pastors challenged

By Lee Weeks

Baptist Press
6/11/96

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Southern Baptist pastors converging on the Crescent City June 9-10 at the Louisiana Superdome were challenged to preach the divine revelation of God's Word without compromise while praying and fasting for a God-led, heaven-sent revival throughout the Southern Baptist Convention and around the world.

"God's gateway to supernatural power in your life, your church, the SBC and our nation is by humbling ourselves through prayer and fasting," said Ronnie Floyd, pastor of First Baptist Church, Springdale, Ark.

Floyd was elected by acclamation as president of the 1997 Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference. He will succeed Johnny Hunt, pastor of First Baptist Church, Woodstock, Ga. The theme of the 1996 Southern Baptist Pastors' Conference was "Fruit That Remains," based on John 15:16.

Floyd, who said he has completed two 40-day fasts over the past 18 months, said the time to fast is "when you are desperate for God to do something great in your life, ministry and country. People in America are not desperate. There is no urgency, no serious thought about God doing something miraculous. How desperate are you?"

Tom Elliff, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church in Del City, Okla., echoed the urgency for revival.

"The great movements of God are led by people who believe it's a life-or-death issue and they're not afraid to speak it," he said.

Elliff, who is expected to be elected SBC president during the SBC annual meeting in New Orleans June 11-13, said Baptists cannot afford to waste an opportunity to sow the seed of revival across the world.

"The Southern Baptist Convention has not come all this way to hit no lay-up," Elliff said. "You either come when he calls -- or when you get there, he's gone. Delay will cost you. You cannot will yourself into the presence of God."

Spiritual renewal and revival must make its presence felt in society's political and social climate, evangelist Bailey Smith said.

"I'm not proud of a president of the United States that claims to be a Southern Baptist that backs every damnable cause that comes down the pike," Smith said as the audience erupted in a standing ovation. "It's time the people of God that have standards have a president in the White House. We need a revival in the White House. We need a revival in the church house. We need a revival in your house. We need a revival in my house."

Evangelist Junior Hill of Hartselle, Ala., said too many God-called men have been carelessly handling the Word of God for too long.

"I'm tired of seeing old-time preaching -- preaching that once convicted the saints and converted sinners -- now being replaced by dull and listless dialogue constructed upon doubt and built up by intellectualism and propped up by human reasoning," Hill said.

He said the church in large part has lost its voice in America because many preachers have stopped proclaiming the infallible, inerrant Holy Bible.

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"I'm tired of seeing old-time righteousness, old-fashioned Bible separation that made our forefathers strangely different from the world, now meekly retreating before the common demands of homosexual preachers, beer-guzzling deacons and baby-killing abortionists," Hill said.

Mack Brunson, pastor of Green Street Baptist Church, High Point, N.C., said preachers should never stray from the text of God's Word when standing behind the pulpit.

"We've been called to preach a word from divine revelation and not something from our sanctified imagination," Brunson said. "A lot of us have fallen in love with the sound of our own voice. ... It matters whether or not you met the master in the text."

Evangelist Rick Amato of Lincoln Park, Mich., concurred that Southern Baptists need to focus on passionately preaching the crucified Christ in what may be the closing days of such opportunity.

Amato said preachers need to proclaim "not Jesus the Republican and not Jesus the psychoanalyst but Jesus the crucified, buried and risen again from the dead."

Ron Phillips, pastor of Central Baptist Church, Hixson, Tenn., said revival in America is dependent on believers returning to their first love of Jesus Christ.

"When is the last time you went into the arms of Jesus Christ and said, 'I love you?' What price will you pay? How will you show him your love?"

Southern Baptist preachers need to be careful not to quickly associate church growth with revival, warned Ken Hemphill, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas.

"Church growth is not an appropriate goal for the church, but obedience to the will of God," Hemphill said.

Hill agreed that a church may grow numerically without growing spiritually. He said that churches wanting to grow are "developing an insatiable hunger that wants to grow to the point that it becomes an obsession rather than a vision granted by God."

"The blessings of God have never been demonstrated by calculators," Hill said. "Folks, the blessings of God are demonstrated sometimes in ways we can't see."

Herb Reavis, pastor of North Jacksonville Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Fla., called for Southern Baptists to break from their traditional doldrums of worship.

"It's a time of celebration," Reavis said. "Baptist folks have gotten so dead that if you act like you're alive they think you're charismatic."

Southern Baptist churches, Reavis said, can grow without watering down God's Word. "Lost people don't like preaching," he said. "We don't give them what they like. We give them what they need."

With revival comes conflict, warned James Merritt, pastor of First Baptist Church, Snellville, Ga. "The enemies you make by taking a firm stand for what is right will have more respect for you than the friends you have for straddling the fence. Those who stand tallest for God will always be the ones to draw the fire."

Smith, who served as SBC president from 1980-82, said Hollywood is a major enemy of Christians.

"There are some enemies of the cross that need to back up," Smith said. "I want you to say to the Hollywood crowd 'back up.' It's interesting to me that the favorite word of cussing today in Hollywood is the word 'Jesus Christ.' Why don't they pick on Buddha and his flabby bellybutton? They're not going to pick on Buddha because he doesn't hurt anybody. They're not going to pick on Islam with its commitment to violence. That fits right into the terror of the Hollywood screen."

But before revival may begin in the church it must start in the home, former SBC Presidents Adrian Rogers and Jerry Vines said.

"The measure of a man of God, whether he is in the ministry or out of the ministry, is the spiritual condition of his children," said Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in suburban Memphis, Tenn.

Vines, co-pastor of First Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Fla., agreed. "Your home is your greatest preaching station," he said.

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Henry Blackaby, who coordinates prayer and spiritual awakening for the Home Mission Board, Foreign Mission Board and Baptist Sunday School Board, urged Southern Baptists to resolve to evangelize the world against all odds.

"You can go into China and see that communists have declared they will crush Christianity," he said. "But if they take 10, 20 will replace them. If they take 20, 100 will replace them. If they take 2,000, 2 million will replace them. The love of Christ produces the fruit that remains. ... Now God is trusting the love he gave his Son will send us also out into the world. I pray that love will be evidenced in us. I am absolutely confident that the love of God will produce absolute fruit that remains. May this generation be the source of fruit that remains in our broken world."

Other Pastors' Conference officers elected by acclamation in addition to Floyd were Ronnie Yarber, pastor of Gross Road Baptist Church, Mesquite, Texas, vice president, and Mike Routt, pastor of Rose Hill Baptist Church, Ashland, Ky., secretary-treasurer.

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Steve Achord, Martin King, Daniel Guido and Tom Strode contributed to this article. (BP) photos and cutlines of Rogers and Elliff posted in SBCNet News Room.

Bailey Smith accuses editors
of opposing revival in the SBC

Baptist Press
6/11/96

By Lee Weeks

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Former Southern Baptist Convention President Bailey Smith accused state Baptist editors critical of the SBC's conservative direction of opposing God's will for revival in a June 10 sermon during the SBC Pastors' Conference at the Louisiana Superdome in New Orleans.

"State editor, I want to say directly to you, if you keep writing those blistering editorials against the movement of God, you're standing in the way of what God wants to do in revival in the Southern Baptist Convention," Smith said at the conference preceding the June 11-13 SBC annual meeting.

Bill Webb, president of the Association of State Baptist Papers, called Smith's comments "at the least, irresponsible, and at most, mean-spirited."

"State editors are a diverse group of Baptists committed no less to Christ than is Bailey Smith," Webb said.

Smith, who served as president of the world's largest Protestant denomination from 1980-82, called for an end to criticism from some editors of state Baptist papers across the convention who he said have opposed the national convention's conservative swing begun in 1979.

"I know that a few years ago those that would not go with us called themselves denominational loyalists," Smith said. "The denominational loyalists under their loyalism are now stealing denominational schools, taking denominational mission money, taking denominational seminary students under the guise of being cooperative Baptists. I wish our state Baptist editors would be as concerned about that organization that is dividing us as they have been about the great conservative resurgence that never once sought to divide the Southern Baptist Convention."

Webb, who is also editor of Word & Way, the state Baptist paper of Missouri, said Smith's rhetoric fails to fairly characterize many state Baptist papers.

"His suggestion that state paper readers are subjected to a continuing diet of editorials against a movement of God tells me he has not been reading state papers very carefully," Webb said.

Smith was quick to point out that not all state Baptist editors have unfairly criticized the work of the convention.

"(But) I tell you frankly I'm tired of non-soul-winning editors who go to non-soul-winning churches who have not seen a revival in 50 years telling us what's wrong with ours," Smith said, drawing a resounding ovation from the audience.

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Smith said a revival that continues today was conceived in the Southern Baptist Convention in 1979.

"In 1979, God gave us revival in Houston, Texas, with the election of Adrian Rogers," Smith said. "We've seen across this great denomination a new love for the Bible, a new high standard in morals, a new commitment to soul-winning, all of the signs of revival."

Smith defended the convention's conservative swing, calling for the "feline enemy of liberalism with its nine lives (to) back up."

"We have been told since 1979 that the enemies of this denomination were Adrian Rogers, Charles Stanley, Jimmy Draper and Jerry Vines," said Smith, referring to four conservative leaders who have served as SBC presidents. "My friend, they're not the enemies of this great Bible-believing, Bible-preaching denomination. Enemies of the Southern Baptist Convention through the years have been those in our schools that have destroyed the faith and the power of a young man, to send him out to destroy your church, and the administrators that allowed it to happen."

During his sermon, Smith took issue with an article published recently and written by Pat Anderson, moderator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship from Lakeland, Fla., titled "Facing Fundamentalism." The article, which appeared in a newsletter published by CBF, a group of moderate Baptists critical of SBC leadership, charges that liberal or moderate Southern Baptists were defeated "at the hands of fundamentalism -- a well-organized political machine which gave momentum by stimulating hate, fear and exclusion."

Smith responded: "Now, brother Anderson, we do hate. We hate sin. Yes sir, we do fear. We fear failing the Father. And we are for excluding anything that destroys the witness of the world's greatest denomination. We can't stand for it any longer."

Smith pointed to the flames of revival currently being fanned on the campus of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., as evidence of God's movement in the SBC.

"But now since the coming of Dr. Paige Patterson (as seminary president), for the past two years the seminary has been the fastest-growing divinity school in the world. In 1992 when he took over, the full-time equivalency enrollment was 488; it's now 1,300. A full one-third of the student body is going to the mission field. The seminary has pioneered the church-planting master of divinity (degree) enabling missionary students to complete their degree on the mission field.

"At this very moment there are 25 students in the seminary who are soul-winning in every province of Cambodia, the most heavily mined country in the world," Smith continued. "For the first time, the seminary saw 29 people saved in the annual Sandy Creek Week Revival. Thank God for the revival that has come to the Southern Baptist Convention."

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Prayerwalk teams fan out
to intercede in New Orleans

By Tim Tune

Baptist Press
6/11/96

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Scores of Southern Baptist Prayerwalk teams fanned out across the Crescent City, interceding at strategic sites for specific needs and key activities leading up to the June 11-13 annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention at the Louisiana Superdome in New Orleans.

The purpose of the Prayerwalk teams, who hit the streets on Friday, June 7, primarily was "to go before, to prepare the way, first of all for the Crossover New Orleans evangelistic effort," Randy Sprinkle, director of the international prayer strategy office of the Foreign Mission Board, said.

Sprinkle was a coordinator of the prayerwalking effort which sent teams to local churches and areas where on Saturday, June 8, there would be Crossover block parties and where evangelistic teams would be going into neighborhoods to share the gospel.

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"Any evangelistic effort will bear fruit in direct proportion to the amount of prayer that went before," Sprinkle said.

"Prayerwalk New Orleans" was sponsored by the Bold Mission Thrust Prayer Mission Team which includes representatives from various Southern Baptist agencies and organizations. The Baptist Association of Greater New Orleans and the Louisiana Baptist Convention also supported the effort.

"We had held in past years what we called a National Prayer Conference," said Sprinkle. "We wanted to move toward a more direct involvement." He said the BMT team wants "to be sure that we are not just talking and training about prayer but actually becoming involved with praying."

About 125 people attended the morning training session at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and then after lunch scores of two-member teams fanned out for Prayerwalk New Orleans.

"The key to prayerwalking," Sprinkle said, "is just a practical expression of our created purpose: that we walk with God. What God is doing when we walk with him out among the people of the world is that our intercessions move to a whole new level."

Sprinkle explained that prayerwalking is simply walking along with a partner in a place where there are needs and praying as the Holy Spirit makes participants sensitive and aware of the needs.

"You probably would not know people are prayerwalking," Sprinkle said. "But you are constantly talking to God and to your partner; we are co-laborers together. Really we are three-member teams -- it's a three-way conversation and prayer time.

"Being there helps you see and hear and sense; and that fires our prayers with what God is doing and how he wants us to pray," Sprinkle said. He said someone has described this method as "praying on site with insight. The insight is brought by the spirit of Christ."

Sprinkle teamed with Henry Blackaby, a leader in prayer and spiritual awakening for the Home Mission Board, to prayerwalk in the French Quarter.

They prayed "in unbroken intercession," Sprinkle said, for the needs of people they saw and encountered on Bourbon Street, "endeavoring to be sensitive to the spirit of Christ," praying as they walked for the tourists and people who work there.

Other Prayerwalk teams strolled and prayed their way through strategic sites such as the Superdome, the site of the 1996 SBC meeting. Teams also prayerwalked major hotels where messengers and leaders would be staying and conducting meetings. Other teams, Sprinkle said, went to colleges and universities and to the riverfront, where intercessors saw and prayed for the merchant seamen who come from all parts of the world.

Sprinkle said prayerwalking is both practical and strategic. It is a "practical expression of walking with him."

Strategically, he said, "Whenever God decides to send his blessing, he calls people -- the intercessors -- to prayer." Sprinkle said prayer not only supports but prepares the way for God to bless.

And, Sprinkle said, "Prayerwalkers often have the opportunity to talk, witness and minister to people they pray for."

In a debriefing session later in the day, Sprinkle said there "weren't any specific outstanding stories, nothing dramatic." However, a young teenager reported leading another youth to Christ and one team was invited into a home in a neighborhood.

"We know that there will be results because we have that promise" from God, Sprinkle said. "We follow the spirit of God's leading and when we're obedient he always blesses."

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(BP) photo and outline posted in SBCNet News Room.

**Ahead for WMU: traditional tasks,
visionary options, leaders say By Lonnie Wilkey**

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union will continue its traditional tasks while exploring visionary new opportunities, said the organization's newly elected officers.

Wanda Lee, of Columbus, Ga., and president of Georgia WMU since 1993, was elected as 16th president of the national organization June 10. Janet Hoffman of Hornbeck, La., a former Louisiana WMU president, was elected recording secretary. The two women, along with WMU Executive Director Dellanna O'Brien, held a press conference immediately after their election.

The women replace outgoing officers Carolyn Miller of Huntsville, Ala., president, and Martha Wennerberg of DeFuniak Springs, Fla., recording secretary. Both completed five-year terms.

WMU has been and will continue to be an auxiliary to the SBC, Lee said.

WMU's roles in missions education and promotion of the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for home missions have not changed, she emphasized.

Also, WMU will continue to work with the two mission boards under their new names, Lee said. Southern Baptist Convention messengers are expected to approve a bylaw change during their June 11-13 annual meeting that will be the final step in approving a downsizing the denomination from 19 national agencies to 12. The plan will change the Foreign Mission Board's name to International Mission Board. The Home Mission Board will merge with the Brotherhood and Radio and Television commissions to form the North American Mission Board.

Lee and Hoffman, however, said WMU also will be involved in visionary social needs projects.

During the last two years, WMU has focused on hunger and AIDS, Hoffman said. The 108-year-old woman's organization will deal with child advocacy and cultural diversity over the next two years, she continued.

"In the society we live in, it is imperative to address these issues and do it with a spiritual basis," Hoffman said.

Lee also took note of WMU's pilot Christian Woman's Job Corps project targeted toward women on welfare.

"We want to help these women develop skills, become marketable and get out of poverty," Lee said. The program is currently being piloted in three South Carolina sites, Bismarck, N.D., and San Antonio, Texas.

As WMU president, Lee automatically becomes a member of the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee.

While not sure what her role will be, Lee said she will be there "as a member of the team with voting privileges. I intend to exercise those privileges after prayerful consideration."

Both women expressed excitement about their new roles. "I owe a great deal of my missionary knowledge to WMU," Lee said. "I hope to give something back to WMU."

Hoffman, who has been involved in WMU organizations since she was a 3-year-old "Sunbeam," agreed.

"It's always exciting to have an opportunity to serve God. I can think of no better vehicle to serve the Lord than through WMU," she said.

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**Speakers urge Baptist women
to action in a changing world**

Charles Willis & Lonnie Wilkey

**Baptist Press
6/11/96**

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Keynote speakers for the 1996 annual meeting of Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union challenged Baptist women to action in a variety of avenues in a changing world environment.

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Author Lyle Schaller, who described himself as a "longtime fan" of the auxiliary to the Southern Baptist Convention, said he believes WMU is "at a crossroads" and he urged Baptist women to evaluate the direction of their organization.

"Life has changed," the research associate for the National Evangelistic Association told approximately 2,500 registrants for the meeting. "Being a pastor is more difficult and competition among churches has increased."

He said missions organizations were created in the 19th century in response to churches asking for help in fulfilling the Great Commission (Jesus Christ's command to take the Christian gospel to all people in the world) beyond their communities. Today, they ask for help in fulfilling the Great Commission with immigrants and other groups that offer missions challenges within their communities.

Concurrently, he said, restructuring in the Southern Baptist Convention reduces the role of the national, denominational agencies; expands the role for state conventions; challenges associations to do more in missions and ministry; and encourages congregations to turn to parachurch organizations for help. Among examples he cited is the large number of Southern Baptists participating in Promise Keepers, an organization for Christian men.

He said the role of WMU could change with the addition of two initials -- "R" and "D," representing research and development. He said he believes WMU has the potential to "invent new ways of doing ministry with new generations of people."

"We used to raise children up in a denominational heritage," Schaller observed. "Today, we have a free market. Younger generations shop for church homes. It's a shopper's world, not a seller's world."

"I think the number one need is to make a better world for children to be born into," he said, suggesting WMU revise its mission statement to include building partnerships with congregations, associations and state conventions to fulfill the Great Commission with today's and tomorrow's children all around the world.

Schaller told participants "we can't depend on you. You will either pull out, move away or die. Some will do both," he joked. "We have to always reach new generations for Jesus Christ."

Meeting the needs of children and becoming advocates for children's needs was the challenge focus of Diana Garland, formerly Gheens professor of Christian family ministry at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky., and now on the staff of Presbyterian Seminary, also in Louisville.

Jesus said whoever welcomes little children in his name welcomes him, Garland said, citing Mark 9:37.

"If we believed Jesus, we'd have waiting lists to teach children's Sunday school and lead Vacation Bible School," she said. "If we really believed this, we couldn't find enough children for people to tutor or enough at-risk teenagers for church members to mentor."

Churches are living out our culture's thinking, Garland said, by buying "good stuff" and providing professional services.

"In the meantime, children are growing up without loving, caring adults in the community of faith. Our society neglects children and our churches do too."

Most parents, she added, "are pouring their lives into their children, working to support them and working in time for them all around the edges."

Today's children have fewer significant adults in their lives than in any other time period, she insisted. "The majority of adults do not have a significant relationship with any child in the congregation except those they are related to or those they teach in church."

"Children can't speak for themselves," Garland said, "and that is why they need advocates. I don't feel very powerful, but God likes to work through people like Moses who was terribly shy and had a speech impediment. He used a little boy with a slingshot and rocks to fell a giant."

"God doesn't expect us to be successful, only faithful."

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Noted speaker, author and educator Leonard Sweet gave WMU members some bad news and good news.

"This world is in trouble. This world is dying," Sweet, dean of theology at Drew University, Madison, N.J., said.

In addition, the structure, strategies and skills used by churches in the past aren't working as well as they used to, Sweet said. The good news, however, is that God is working to send one of the greatest spiritual awakenings this world has ever seen, he said.

Sweet gave WMU leaders eight words he said would change the church, the world and one's life.

-- "Show up." Acknowledging that if he had a choice, this is not the time in history he would have chosen to live. "But in the sovereignty of God, he has chosen me and you to show up in the 1990s and the early 21st century. God is birthing the greatest spiritual awakening in history. God is calling you. Are you going to show up?"

-- "Be present." A lot of people show up, Sweet observed, but they spend their time complaining about why they have to be there. He reminded those in attendance that God didn't send Jesus to condemn the world but to save the world. Don't spend all your time condemning the world," he challenged. "Deal with it."

-- "Be yourself." "God made you to be just like you -- not somebody else."

-- "Let go." These are the hardest of the eight words to follow, Sweet confessed. "Any parent knows that." He observed that many individuals and churches don't let go because they want to be in control. Let go and let God be in control, he urged.

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**Ethnic leaders' task force
to uphold 'conservative roots'** By Joni Hannigan

Baptist Press
6/11/96

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--The Ethnic Leadership Task Force (ELTF) held initial meetings June 9-10, forming an organization with a mission "to lead ethnics in the Southern Baptist Convention to stay committed to traditional Southern Baptist values."

"Ethnics need to remain true to our conservative roots and free to minister as Southern Baptists," Russell Begaye told task force members. Begaye is the director of the language church extension division of the Home Mission Board.

"There are non-Southern Baptist organizations giving wrong messages to our ethnic churches that are causing them to consider joining these other groups.

"Ethnic people need to know that we are conservative and we will remain conservative," Begaye declared.

In this crucial time when the SBC is restructuring its agencies and programs through the "Covenant for a New Century" blueprint, it is especially important that ethnics know "we are for the restructuring," said Rudy Hernandez, a popular Hispanic evangelist from Grand Prairie, Texas, and a former SBC vice president.

Although the task force program statement is aligned with the Home Missions Board's program statement for ethnics, Begaye said, the task force is not limited to HMB influence. He said the group will speak to SBC agencies, state conventions, associations and churches.

Designed primarily to represent ethnics from different language groups in the United States, Begaye said the task force will seek to involve Anglos and African Americans in planned activities.

The mission statement of the task force includes a call for Southern Baptist churches with ethnic congregations to establish better avenues of communication. The statement encourages the development of better ways to inform, train, motivate and mobilize their congregations.

Calling also for solidarity, strength and support, the statement specifies three core values:

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- 1) "Firm faith in the triune God and his inspired Word;"
- 2) "Fervent faithfulness to our SBC and our denominational constituents;" and
- 3) "Faithful furtherance of God's kingdom among all people."

The mission statement also lists objectives and goals to include an increase in all forms of communication through SBC channels and agencies and a mass meeting scheduled for Sunday, June 15, 1997, in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Dallas.

Speaking to the group's public support of the Covenant for a New Century, Roberto Lopez, pastor of Bethel Baptist Church in Las Vegas, said it is necessary for the ethnic leaders and pastors to come together, on record, to assert a conservative stand.

"It is imperative that we stand up and be counted as defenders of God's inerrant biblical principles," said Lopez, the newly elected president of the National Hispanic Southern Baptist Fellowship. "In this critical hour, we ethnics must have the courage to face the opposition at any cost in order to maintain our denomination as committed and loyal to the Scriptures and its message."

Lopez said the task force is "like a dream come true." He said he was surprised to come to America 18 years ago from Cuba to find that the Southern Baptist Convention included groups of people who believed differently from the "very conservative" church he attended there.

"It's an answer to prayer that this group is concerned about bringing ethnics back to the roots of the SBC."

Defining his perspective on what it means to be a "conservative," American Indian pastor Leslie Clark, of Glorieta Baptist Church in Oklahoma City, said he was told a long time ago you are a Southern Baptist by what you believe.

"I believe the Bible is the absolute truth of God without any mixture of error," Clark said.

"Straight as an arrow" is how Clark described the pastors of the largest and fastest-growing predominantly American Indian churches. "They are conservative and believe the Bible is literally true -- and they preach it just as it is."

"The Scripture is what brought Jesus to my people," Clark said.

Pastor Simon Tsoi of First Chinese Baptist Church of Phoenix, Ariz., said he believes ethnics coming from different backgrounds join together in choosing to be Southern Baptists knowing the SBC is sound biblically and theologically.

"The way Southern Baptists have been doing missions, baptism and education -- we want that to be continued and not deviated from."

"We see Southern Baptists as a gift from the Lord. We want ethnics to see they are a part of it and to continue."

Jose Molliner, pastor of Northside Baptist Church in Hialeah, Fla., who came to the United States from Cuba 14 years ago, recalled what it was like to be a Southern Baptist there in the '60s and '70s.

"The real reason we were able to survive the Castro regime was ... the conservative doctrine we learned in the SBC. When we came to the U.S. we brought that with us."

"We believe the defense of those principles will make us continually strong and secure. We are convinced that the SBC will be strong in the next millenium if we maintain what has kept us strong in the past century. That's what helped us grow in these times of great conflict, and it is what will make us grow in the next century."

Molliner said other Christian denominations didn't fare so well in Cuba. "They disappeared and the government itself asked how come the Southern Baptists were able to remain, with them against us?"

"Other groups had the backing and reliance of the government and were practically dead," Molliner said. "The answer we always gave was that we maintained steadfastly on the conservative principles we learned from the Southern Baptist Convention."

"Fruit that remains!" Molliner stated emphatically, pointing to the logo used on the 1996 SBC Pastors' Conference meeting logo.

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Begaye said many of the ethnic groups have given up on cultural religions in order to claim faith in Jesus Christ. Calling Christianity "our true religion," he said the growth among ethnics has been "phenomenal" and credited this to "the conservative stand we have always taken."

"We do not want to depart from that stand," Begaye said. "When we stop being conservative is when we will stop growing."

And that growth has been important to Southern Baptists, he said, accounting for a 6 percent increase in overall growth this year, instead of a 3 percent decrease without counting ethnics.

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SBC messengers elect
Committee on Nominations

Baptist Press
6/11/96

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Southern Baptist Convention messengers elected two people from 35 state and regional Baptist conventions June 10 to serve on the SBC's Committee on Nominations.

The committee will bring nominations of Baptists to the 1997 SBC meeting in Dallas to serve on the SBC's various boards, commissions and committees.

The committee --nominated by the SBC Committee on Committees -- is made up of two people from each state or regional convention, one layperson and one in church-related vocational work.

Committee members, listed by state, name, residence and church, are (an "*" indicates layperson from each state):

Alabama: Henry H. Cox, First Baptist Church, Bay Minette;
*Trish Carter, Valleydale Baptist Church, Birmingham.

Alaska: Jeff S. Anderson, University Baptist Church, Anchorage; *Jim Whisenant, University Baptist Church, Fairbanks.

Arizona: Barry McClellan Jude, Mountain View Baptist Church, Tucson; *Billy Van Camp, Jr., Gilbert, First Baptist Church, Chandler.

Arkansas: Larry Odus Pillow, Second Baptist Church, Conway; *Doyle S. Moore, Bryant, Geyer Springs First Baptist Church, Little Rock.

California: David L. Daffern, First Southern Baptist Church, Hemet; *Michael A. Dixon, Calvary Baptist Church, Lafayette.

Colorado: James Vaughn, First Southern Baptist Church, Cortez; *Bob Davis, Littleton, Riverside Baptist Church, Denver.

District of Columbia: *Charles Lewandowski, Potomoc, Md., Brazilian Baptist Church, Washington; *Shirley Brown, Crest Hill Baptist Church, Bowie, Md.

Florida: Charles William Martin, Jr., Seminole, First Baptist Church of Indian Rocks, Largo; *James H. Brown, Ormond Beach, First Baptist Church of Daytona Beach, Daytona Beach.

Georgia: Kenneth E. Keene, First Baptist Church, Vidalia; *Ann M. MacLeod, Norcross, First Baptist Church of Lilburn, Lilburn.

Hawaii: James E. Parker, Sr., First Baptist Church of Wahiawa, Wahiawa; *Pearl Maeda, Palisades Baptist Church, Pearl City.

Illinois: Richard Ezell, Naperville Baptist Church, Naperville; *Stephen Foster, Elkhaville First Baptist Church, Elkhaville.

Indiana: Bradley S. Butler, Memorial Baptist Church, New Castle; *Daniel S. Hunter, First Southern Baptist Church, Terre Haute.

Kansas-Nebraska: Guy S. Sanders, III, Celebration Baptist Church, Wichita; *Al Fransen, First Baptist Church, Bellevue.

Kentucky: Don Short, Eddyville, Briensburg Baptist Church, Benton; *Herbert R. Booth, Burlington, Florence Baptist Church, Florence.

Louisiana: Calvin Phelps, First Baptist Church, Winnfield; *Marilyn Dickinson, Florida Boulevard Baptist Church, Baton Rouge.

Maryland-Delaware: Wayne Kempson, First Baptist Church of Waldorf, Waldorf; *Jacky Waller, Ellicott City, Md., First Baptist Church of Savage, Savage, Md.

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Michigan: Karl E. Chadrick, Clarkston, Orion Oaks Baptist Chapel, Lake Orion;
*Karen Villalpando, Memorial Baptist Church, Sterling Heights.

Mississippi: Phil Walker, Ridgecrest Baptist Church, Madison; *Evans Whittle,
First Baptist Church, Tupelo.

Missouri: Perry Wolfe, Lebanon First Baptist Church, Lebanon; *Charles D.
Fitzgerald, Middlebrook, First Baptist Church, Lesterville.

Nevada: Russ Turner, First Baptist Church, Caliente; *Valonne Harmon, First
Baptist Church, Las Vegas.

New England: Randy Fearon, Fellowship Baptist Church, Hanover; *Emma
Freiberger, Mt. Vertnon, Farmington Baptist Church, Farmington.

New Mexico: Donald A. Seigler, First Baptist Church, Alamogordo; *Bill
Richard, Edgewood, First Baptist Church of Moriarty, Moriarty.

New York: Wayne Dyer, Hartwick, Maryland Baptist Church, Maryland; *Zully
Maldonado, First Spanish Baptist Church Manhattan, New York.

North Carolina: Benjamin Shaw Gault, Jr., Pleasant Grove Baptist Church,
Fayetteville; *Earl Cobb, West Asheville Baptist Church, Asheville.

Northwest: David B. Young, Trinity Baptist Church of Lakewood, Tacoma, WA;
*Ron O. Shelby, Richland Baptist Church, Richland, WA.

Ohio: Herbert Slaughter, Chestnut Ridge Baptist Church, Elyria; *James
Christian (Archie) DeBoard, Lane Avenue Baptist Church, Columbus.

Oklahoma: Steve Patterson, First Baptist Church, Lindsay; Joan Butcher, First
Baptist Church, Elk City.

Pennsylvania-South Jersey: William R. Dunning, Pittsburg, North Park Baptist
Church, Allison Park; *Vera Blizzard, Paoli, Emmanuel Baptist Church, West
Chester.

South Carolina: Charles David Gallamore, Rock Springs Baptist Church, Easley;
*Raymond D. Brown, Big Stevens Creek Baptist Church, North Augusta.

Tennessee: Randy D. Isbell, Hopewell Baptist Church, Savannah; *Gail Yvonne
Ferrell, Ridgedale Baptist Church, Chattanooga.

Texas: Christopher S. Osborne, College Station, Central Baptist Church, Bryan;
*Loyd O. Freeman, First Baptist Church, Odessa.

Utah-Idaho: Lu Gilman, Gate City Baptist Church, Pocatello; *Georgia Herod,
First Baptist Church, Brigham City.

Virginia: Barry Chinn, West Hampton Baptist Church, Hampton; *Sidney Ellis,
London Bridge Baptist Church, Virginia Beach.

West Virginia: Gerald Dewayne McKinney, Silver Springs Baptist Church,
Princeton; *Chuck Tommy, Grace Baptist Church, Parkersburg.

Wyoming: Edgar W. Bryan, III, First Southern Baptist Church, Powell; *Madonna
Havner, Northwest Community Baptist Church, Cheyenne.

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HMB trustees challenged
to take ministry risks

By Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist Press
6/11/96

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Home Mission Board executive committee
members were challenged to take risks in ministry during their June 10 meeting in
New Orleans.

In addition, they appointed a couple to develop evangelistic ministries among
Jews and elected a director of ethnic evangelism.

The restructuring of the Southern Baptist Convention will bring new problems
and pressures that require new creativity, Rick Warren, pastor of Saddleback
Community Church in southern California, said. The changes also will create new
possibilities that require courage.

"Without faith it is impossible to please God," Warren said. "Never make any
plans that don't require faith. Otherwise you're not pleasing him."

Dottie Williamson, home missionary working in multi-housing areas in
Pascagoula, Miss., challenged board members to "start the ministry and risk making
mistakes."

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Williamson said at first she hesitated to work in apartment complexes and mobile home parks because signs warned against soliciting on the property or said only residents were admitted. She began to talk to property managers, however, and found an openness to church ministries.

One apartment manager told Williamson she wanted a Sunday school class on the property. Williamson recruited a retired pastor and his wife to lead the class. All 10 children who attended the first week made professions of faith. "You can't do better than that under a tree in Africa," she quipped.

Williamson said she has quit approaching managers about ministry possibilities because she doesn't have enough church volunteers to lead the programs.

In later comments, HMB President Larry Lewis underscored Williamson's appeal for churches to take the gospel to their communities. "The church needs to get off its seat, on its feet and in the street," he said. "That's far more important than any Home Mission Board program."

While acknowledging additional funds could be used for supporting missionaries and starting churches, Lewis said "ultimately reaching our nation will not depend on HMB funds. I believe we can do it, but our main resource is the outpouring of God's spirit on the nation."

In personnel issues, board members appointed Jim and Kathy Sibley national missionaries to develop evangelistic ministries among Jews. The Sibleys previously have worked in Israel as Foreign Mission Board appointees in Jewish evangelism.

The HMB chaplains commission also endorsed 25 chaplains, bringing the number of Southern Baptist chaplains to 2,475.

Eliu Camacho-Vazquez was elected director of ethnic evangelism, a position that has been vacant several years. Camacho-Vazquez has been director of the HMB Caribbean Office since 1991, but board members voted in April to close that office and transfer supervision of Caribbean work to the HMB national office.

Two people were elected to the church loans staff. Daphne Lynch of Atlanta was named loan manager for the real estate owned office and John R. Welch, minister of administration at Immanuel Baptist Church of Highland in San Bernardino, Calif., was elected loan officer. Welch will continue to live and work in California.

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Directors of missions
create staff position

By Orville Scott

Baptist Press
6/11/96

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--More than 400 directors of missions from Southern Baptists' 1,200 geographic associations meeting June 9-10 in New Orleans established their first administrative staff position.

They also adopted a resolution urging educational institutions "to provide training within their curriculum to raise the level of understanding, awareness and appreciation of associational missions ministry."

The resolution cited the strong need for increased reliance on the association in the 21st century and the fact that the association is the closest denominational entity to the local church, fostering cooperation, a hallmark of Southern Baptist ministry, among local churches.

A copy of the resolution will be sent to each college, university and seminary operated by any cooperating Southern Baptist body.

The group, meeting prior to the June 11-13 annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention, voted to employ as their first executive treasurer John E. Dent Sr. of Walhalla, S.C., a retired director of missions who also serves as the organization's treasurer.

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Outgoing President Charles B. Nunn Jr., executive director of missions for Richmond Baptist Association, Richmond, Va., told his fellow directors of missions the work of the Baptist association is where the spiritual action is among Southern Baptists.

Every association of Baptist churches should seek to foster and facilitate the spread of the gospel locally as well as globally, he said.

Today's director of missions, Nunn said, is a key resource person, an administrator, an equipper and enabler, a community leader and a change agent to assist churches to make the changes in attitudes and priorities that enable them to respond to the rapidly changing spiritual needs and challenges that confront them daily.

He urged directors of missions to encourage their associations to observe a week of prayer and offering goal for associational missions.

Officers elected to serve in 1996-97 are: president, Larry Rose, Tarrant Baptist Association, Fort Worth, Texas; first vice president, David R. Dean, Metropolitan New York Baptist Association; second vice president, Ed Gilman, Suncoast Baptist Association, Largo, Fla.; secretary, Ernest K. Sadler, Jackson Baptist Association, Pascagoula, Miss.; treasurer, Dent; editor of "DOM Viewpoint," Gerald Jeffries, Dixon Baptist Association, Bland, Mo.; and host director, Gary Hearon, Dallas (Texas) Baptist Association.

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Find freedom from stress,
veteran chaplain counsels

By Mark Kelly

Baptist Press
6/11/96

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Corporate downsizings and mergers send shock waves that can reverberate through communities for years, but clergy who hope to minister to devastated lives first need to discover freedom from debilitating stress for themselves, a veteran counselor told an assembly of Southern Baptist chaplains June 10.

The accelerating barrage of constant change experienced by most people today can push vulnerable individuals into stress-induced dysfunction, said Eugene Huffstetler, until recently director of pastoral services for Southern Baptist Health System in New Orleans. Understanding the keys to emotional and physical well-being can help people act in a decisive way to transform their circumstances, he said.

Huffstetler drew on his own experiences in a recent consolidation of New Orleans area hospitals to help the chaplains understand how to survive monumental change -- and help others regain control of their lives.

He spoke to several dozen chaplains and pastoral counselors gathered at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary for their annual convocation sponsored by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, which endorses chaplains for ministry in hospitals, prisons, military bases, factories and other arenas of daily life.

Mercy Baptist Hospital (formerly Southern Baptist Hospital) merged with a New Orleans Catholic hospital and then within a year the merged health-care organization was sold to a for-profit corporation, Huffstetler said. Too much change too fast left many employees struggling to just get through each day.

"Southern Baptist Hospital was an icon of stability and security in the community," he said. "We had people who had worked there for 40 years.

"But there came a point when more than 240 people were laid off in one day. It sent shock waves through the community," he said.

"Chaplains at the hospital had to minister to people coping with change at the same time we were trying to deal with it ourselves," Huffstetler observed.

"Chaplains have to remember we're made out of the same stuff as the people we serve and that the best preaching is often done by example."

Huffstetler identified three characteristics of "hardy" people that help them cope with change-induced stress:

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-- Commitment: a sense of purpose and meaningfulness that leads people to active engagement in life events and with other people.

-- Challenge: the belief that change is normal in life and can stimulate growth.

-- Control: the tendency to believe and act as if one can influence events when faced with adversity.

These traits, combined with an activistic network of social support, allow people to break out of a process that otherwise leads to breakdown, Huffstetler said.

There are worse things in life than losing a job, Huffstetler said he told his fellow hospital employees.

"No job can be the source of our security and happiness," he said. "Losing relationships with others, losing your integrity are far worse than losing any job."

Pleasure and pain are not the last words on the meaning of life, Huffstetler reminded his audience.

"Jesus looked suffering (of the cross) in the face and prayed, 'Not my will but thine,'" he said. "Sometimes the very thing that seems most threatening to us is the one that leads to holiness."

More than 2,430 chaplains and pastoral counselors endorsed by the Home Mission Board served in 50 states and 27 foreign countries during 1995, Huey Perry, director of the HMB chaplaincy division, reported. They recorded 27,356 professions of faith and 5,712 baptisms during the year.

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Baptist Press celebrates 50;
state papers' association, 100 By Charles Willis

Baptist Press
6/11/96

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--The 50th anniversary of Baptist Press, news service of the Southern Baptist Convention, and the 100th anniversary of the Association of State Baptist Papers were the news items reported in the denominational press report to messengers at the 1996 SBC annual meeting.

Herb Hollinger, vice president for convention news for the SBC Executive Committee, told messengers that in 1946 state Baptist editors asked the Baptist Sunday School Board's department of survey, statistics and information to serve as a clearinghouse for transmission of important news events.

The following year, responsibility was transferred to the Executive Committee and "BP" became the logotype, "at that time roughly equivalent to the two major news services, AP for Associated Press and UP for United Press." The (BP) logo was designed in 1959 and is a U.S. registered trademark.

Hollinger said in its first years, Baptist Press tried to enlist "stringers," "correspondents" and "field reporters," but that system never worked well. In 1958, Baptist Press created bureaus in Washington, D.C., and Dallas.

Today, three additional bureaus are in Atlanta, Nashville and Richmond. The service is a voluntary coalition, dependent on the cooperation of an extensive network of professionals and the participation and support of Baptist organizations, he added.

Hollinger said the news service has two purposes: "to provide news media of all kinds the most useful and effective reporting of, about and for the work of the SBC" and "to strengthen the denomination's efforts to achieve in national and international news media a clearer, more comprehensive interpretation of who Southern Baptists are and what we are doing in the cause of Christ throughout the world."

Its objective, he said, is "to provide dependable, factual, full, fair and balanced accounts of newsworthy developments in SBC life and of special interest to Southern Baptists."

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As a part of the press report, a copy of the recently published history of the state Baptist newspapers, some of which are older than the 151-year-old Southern Baptist Convention, was presented to SBC President Jim Henry.

Fletcher Allen, editor of Tennessee's Baptist & Reflector, told Henry that the newspapers' "long history of reporting and interpreting news to our readers" led to the selection of the book's title "Contending for the Right to Know," a phrase used by the late Everett Sneed who was editor of the Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine. The volume is available through state Baptist newspapers.

In 1995, Baptist Press released 1,820 news and feature stories through a variety of news media throughout the world, including the 39 state Baptist newspapers that make up the Association of State Baptist Papers.