



SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL  
LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES

Historical Commission, SBC  
Nashville, Tennessee

**-- BAPTIST PRESS**  
News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

DEC 1  
DEC 16 1996

NATIONAL OFFICE

SBC Executive Committee  
901 Commerce #750  
Nashville, Tennessee 37203  
(615) 244-2355  
Herb Hollinger, Vice President  
Art Toalston, Editor  
Fax (615) 782-8736  
CompuServe ID # 70420,17

December 13, 1996

96-217

TENNESSEE--MasterLife adapts for 'Christian-on-the-go.'  
HONOLULU--State evangelism leaders focus on soul-winning.  
TENNESSEE--First Priority youth outreach makes headway in public schools.  
TENNESSEE--Nina Shea urges Christians to decry global persecution.  
TEXAS--Hemphill: Journal suspension maintains 'apolitical' stance.  
MISSISSIPPI--Appointment service says thank you to Miss. churches; photo.

MasterLife adapts for  
'Christian-on-the-go'

By Terri Lackey

Baptist Press  
12/13/96

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--In a world of drive-through hamburgers where speed, convenience and quality are catchwords of the day, lengthy and intense discipleship studies have given way to accelerated, more user-friendly ones.

MasterLife, one of the most comprehensive discipleship courses the Baptist Sunday School Board has ever offered, has been revamped to more adequately meet the needs of today's Christian-on-the-go, according to James T. Draper Jr., BSSB president.

Speaking to state convention discipleship and family development leaders in mid-December, Draper recounted how the original MasterLife course helped his former church introduce the Christian faith to the new Christians he baptized each year.

"In the fall of 1979, I was burdened as the pastor of First Baptist Church, Euless (Texas), for the 200 people we baptized each year," Draper said. "Most had no background in Christian discipleship, and it was very frustrating; I was floundering trying to teach them."

MasterLife, only in production stages at that time, became his answer. "In 1980, I went to the first MasterLife workshop in California, where I spent an intense time of study," Draper said. There, he became certified to teach the course "that builds and sharpens Christians' skills for those who want to grow in the word." Later, he went back and initiated several MasterLife groups at his church.

"But one problem with it was its intensity," he said. "It's very intense for several (26) weeks. Many couldn't finish it."

That is no longer a problem, Draper said.

The MasterLife study has been divided into four, six-week interactive workbooks and no longer requires certification to teach it. Study sessions are between 45 minutes and one hour.

"It comes in four, user-friendly books that are available to all people; there are no restrictions anymore (certification requirements)," Draper said. "We've increased the leadership helps to offset the former requirement of taking a workshop before you could lead it."

The first six-week MasterLife course is: "The Disciple's Cross;" the second, "The Disciple's Personality;" the third, "The Disciple's Victory;" and the fourth, "The Disciple's Mission."

An increase in lay leadership is the result of churches offering the courses, Draper said.

"Of those who have taken MasterLife, 59 percent become Sunday school teachers, 23 percent become deacons, 21 percent become discipleship leaders and 21 percent become actively involved in missions," he said.

--more--

"If you've ever dreamed of the day when you'd have a waiting list to teach in the children's area, MasterLife offers the training, equipping and sharpening of skills where that could happen," Draper said.

Meanwhile, state discipleship and family development leaders were introduced to the writers of two new products expected for release next summer -- "Building Strong Families" and "Life in the Spirit."

"Building Strong Families," written by Bill Mitchell, a former teacher, principal and coach who founded the nonprofit organization, Power of Positive Students, is a home-activity resource for parents who want to train, teach, disciple and motivate their children to live strong Christian lives.

A family, according to Mitchell, of Myrtle Beach, S.C., is "two or more people pursuing a common goal," and the mission of "Building Strong Families" is "to take every family and turn it into a training school for building Christlike qualities in every member."

"It's not just teaching, but practice -- you've got to run the drills every day," said the former coach.

The "five simple tools" taught through "Building Strong Families," Mitchell said, are:

-- conditioning. Work on it every day.

-- modeling. Be a positive role model.

-- climate. Maintain a cheerful family environment.

-- positive reinforcement. Lift up, express appreciation, stop put downs, don't take family members for granted.

-- express affection. Say, "I love you."

The "Building Strong Families Leader Kit," due for release in June 1997 contains resources a church needs to introduce the emphasis to families, a copy of the book, "Building Strong Families," a leader's guide, reproducible audiotapes featuring Mitchell, a videotape containing a 30-minute presentation for use at church or home.

A 12-week group study, "Life in the Spirit," written by Robertson McQuilkin, former president of Columbia (S.C.) International University, gives Christians tools to explore the practical ways the Holy Spirit works.

McQuilkin, who quit his job at Columbia University to care for his wife of 40 years who has Alzheimer's disease, said the book is "fundamental for every serious Christian" because it attempts to answer the question, "How can I live a Spirit-filled life?"

In his book, McQuilkin outlines how every Christian can aspire to a special quality of life characterized by a deep relationship with God, effective personal living and ministry to and with others.

At other times during the annual discipleship and family development meeting, state leaders were introduced to new resources, including:

-- children's resources, the 1997 TeamKID materials, "Wise Up," now expanded to 52 weeks, and new children's Bible drill resources, including "Learn-A-Verse: A Bible Skills Game," a board game offering three levels of challenges and "Children's Bible Drill Games and Activities, NIV," a loose-leaf notebook of games and activities.

-- youth resources, "Winning in the Land of Giants" (a "Building Strong Families" resource); "Life in the Spirit," Youth Edition; "How to Discover Your Spiritual Gifts;" "Until You Say, 'I Do';" and "Deepening Discipleship."

-- adult resources, "Day by Day in God's Kingdom: A Discipleship Journal," an interactive journal with a discipleship focus; "Thine is the Kingdom: The Reign of God in Today's World," a study of the kingdom of God and what it means in this world, at this point in time to live as citizens of God's kingdom.

-- young adult resources, "Destination: Principles for Making Life's Journey Count," aimed at "Generation Xers," and "Discover the Winning Edge," a book that gives college students the tools for positive self-esteem.

-- women's resources, "A Heart Like His: Seeking the Heart of God through a Study of David" and "Women Reaching Women: Beginning and Building a Growing Women's Enrichment Ministry."

-- LIFE Support courses, "New Faces in the Frame: A Guide to Marriage and Parenting in the Blended Family" and "First Place Bible Study: Pressing on to the Prize."

Additionally, state leaders were told five customized magazine options are available for churches wanting to carry their own message on an outreach resource. A minimum of 1,000 must be ordered. Magazines included are "Home Life Today;" "ParentLife Ministry Edition;" "Living with Teenagers Ministry Edition;" "Christian Single Ministry Edition;" and "Mature Living Ministry Edition."

For more information on products, call 1-800-458-2772; e-mail, CompuServe 70423.2526@compuserve.com; write, the Customer Service Center, 127 Ninth Avenue North, Nashville, TN 37234-0113; or visit the nearest Baptist Book Store or LifeWay Christian Store.

--30--

**State evangelism leaders  
focus on soul-winning**

**By Lynne Jones**

**Baptist Press  
12/13/96**

HONOLULU (BP)--State directors of evangelism, seminary evangelism professors and Home Mission Board staff seized the opportunity to practice what they teach during their annual winter meeting Dec. 4-8.

Seventy conference participants joined 100 Nuuanu Baptist Church members in a Saturday block party and intensive door-to-door witnessing effort resulting in 112 professions of faith in Jesus Christ.

Located north of downtown Honolulu, Nuuanu Baptist Church sponsored the project to reach its neighborhood for Christ. Thirty-five teams were sent into the communities surrounding the church to conduct a prospect survey and share the Gospel. Other volunteers went to a local park to provide a personal witness to the 600-plus people who came for the free food and entertainment.

"The response of the local people to the visitors from the mainland was incredible," said Rick Lazor, pastor of Nuuanu. "Usually the Hawaiians are reluctant to new people."

Lazor added the block party was unique because of the mixed demographics of the attendees. The census tract where the party was held has the youngest population in Hawaii and backs up to the largest high-rise of senior citizens in the city.

"We were able to reach affluent retirees as well as gang leaders and drug addicts. What an incredible God we serve," said Lazor.

At the conference, Bill Darnell, founder of People Sharing Jesus, gave a message based on Matthew 13. Using the parable of the sower and the seeds, Darnell named four building blocks needed to construct a bridge that will take America into the 21st century.

"America has traded God for gold," he said. "What this country needs is a God-sent, Holy Spirit anointed revival."

The first step is to agree with the philosophy of Jesus. "We must go out and sow seeds, cultivate those seeds with patience and then harvest the fruit," he said. The second building block is to understand that participation is necessary. According to Darnell, church members have given up ownership of ministry "because they feel they have professional staff to do it all."

Third, Darnell said, is realize that preoccupation is the motivation. "A preoccupation with Jesus Christ is the only motivation for soul winning." Lastly, he exhorted, believe productivity will occur. "It is easy to share Jesus when we understand that the pressure is not on ourselves. The power is in the seed, not the sower."

In other business, C. Thomas Wright, HMB's director of evangelism materials, introduced a new web site that will provide an evangelistic voice to the Internet community. "The on-line lost need on-line Christians to build on-line relationships," Wright said.

--more--

The web site features information and tracts telling how to become a Christian. It also provides access to all available HMB evangelism resources as well as e-mail access to HMB evangelism staff, state evangelism staff and seminary evangelism professors. From the web site (located at <http://www.thegoodnews.org>), the user can link to other evangelical organizations including other SBC agencies.

--30--

**First Priority youth outreach  
makes headway in public schools**

**By Keith Beene**

**Baptist Press  
12/13/96**

FRANKLIN, Tenn. (BP)--"If we measure success by how many kids we have coming to our church, we're failures. Our success is measured by how many kids we send out."

Mark Roberts' comment underscores First Priority of America as a different sort of youth outreach. While rooted in local churches, it also is planting seeds for the gospel on junior and senior high school campuses.

"We send these kids to practice all the time, we cram them full of discipleship materials," Roberts said, referring to church youth programs. "But we only send them into the game maybe once a year. First Priority actually lets them be ministers. First Priority is providing them a game to play in."

Roberts, of Atlanta, who heads up First Priority's city development efforts, said he gets his biggest joy from kids' faces, "seeing the light come on and seeing kids go, 'Wow, I can make an impact on my campus and I'm not alone.'"

The multi-denominational organization held a training conference Dec. 4-6, in Franklin, Tenn., for youth ministers who are coordinating or hoping to begin First Priority Christian Clubs in their communities. During the informal three-day sessions, founder Benny Proffitt, a former bivocational youth minister and secondary schoolteacher, and several of his staff were on hand to answer questions and lead ministers through the initial steps of instituting a First Priority network.

Proffitt devised the First Priority strategy after several failed attempts at starting Christian clubs on school campuses during his teaching career, leaving him frustrated because he felt cut off from students at the schools surrounding his church. But when Congress passed the Equal Access Act in 1984 permitting Christian clubs to meet on campus -- as long as they were student-initiated and student-led -- Proffitt felt God was at work. Proffitt challenged his youth group to begin clubs at their schools and began contacting every youth minister in town asking them to do the same.

Thus First Priority was born, with a simple strategy at its core:

-- First, train youth pastors to network with all the churches in their community wanting to reach young people for Christ.

-- Second, encourage these people to equip, empower and encourage Christian students to unite into one positive peer group on their secondary school campuses.

The result is Christian students who are becoming missionaries at their schools.

Todd Roberts, Mark's twin brother and First Priority's city director for Birmingham, Ala., often tells people he's starting churches on school campuses.

"What's first Priority? A Bible club? No. A Christian club? No. It's a Great Commission club. These kids' goal is, 'What can I do to reach my classmates for the gospel?'" Roberts said.

In Birmingham alone, the organization's pilot city, there are more than 500 churches and 99 schools with some sort of First Priority affiliation. Roberts explained each school with a First Priority club belongs to a network of other geographically related schools. Within Birmingham there are 10 networks.

--more--

First Priority now exists in more than 20 cities across America. Additionally, statewide networks have been formed in Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina and Illinois. The First Priority Campus Club Support Strategy is also supported by youth-related components at the Baptist Sunday School Board and the evangelism department at the Home Mission Board.

Since the organization involves a network of youth ministers, it keeps no accurate figures of the number of students, youth pastors, church laypeople and Christian businessmen involved nationwide.

Many of the youth ministers attending the recent conference echoed the founder's sentiments of feeling cut off from students. Many became involved in First Priority because they felt imprisoned by church "desk work" and wanted to be on the "mission field," which for them is their cities' public school campuses.

"Over the course of five years of developing a youth ministry, I realized there was an element missing in my ministry," said Dean Burrow, First Priority city co-director in Charlotte, N.C. "God revealed to me that it was in the area of campus ministry."

When Burrow first heard the philosophy of First Priority from Todd Roberts, he said he knew instantly it was the missing link in his ministry and that someday he would be a part of it.

"This is the element of youth ministry we are missing in the church -- it's campus ministry. It's the strategy we need to take (the message of Christ) to the school campus," Burrow said.

Burrow began earnestly pulling together a network of other youth ministers while still on staff at Hickory Grove Baptist Church in Charlotte. Initially, Burrow only knew five other youth ministers on a first-name basis. But after sharing the vision of First Priority with these friends and aggressively introducing himself to others, he now leads a youth ministry network of 45 youth ministers and their youth groups.

The grass-roots organization is flourishing, Burrows said, because it relies heavily on the local church.

"First Priority is successful because it's God-ordained. It is utilizing and maximizing the greatest strength that believers have on the face of the earth and that is the local church. I believe that's the reason First Priority is going to continue to escalate and soar.

"There is a tremendous amount of validity to working within the church," Burrow continued. "It's established; it's the biggest operation that believers have; and it's just fine-tuning one area of the church -- the youth ministry -- and asking how can we do it more effectively."

Burrow said leaving his church to become a staff member with First Priority was difficult, but he knew it's what God wanted.

"I put it to my (church youth) this way: For the last five years I've been on the practice field with them. Now it's time for me to get on the playing field with them. I had been sitting at practice -- on Sunday morning, Sunday night and Wednesday night -- saying, 'You need to live this way; you need to live that way, you need to do this,' and I had never really given them the tools. I had never really been out there with them. So now it was time for me to be out there on the school campus with them and really see this thing come to fruition."

Pat Siler, who serves as youth minister at First Presbyterian Church, Grand Haven, Mich., also works as the volunteer coordinator of First Priority in the Grand Rapids region.

Siler served for about 10 years as a marketing/sales manager for a major outdoor recreation corporation before getting into youth ministry, but he remains aware of the business world and the benefits of networking.

"Networking without a plan is nothing more than a business luncheon," Siler said.

His initial attempts to bring other youth ministers together failed because turf issues always seemed to spoil his efforts. After reading some First Priority promotional materials, he contacted Proffitt and participated in training workshops. Then he knew he had his youth ministry "plan."

--more--

In September, his area's first club began after 400 students attended a "See You At the Pole" rally. Today, there are five clubs, with a potential of reaching 6,000 students in three school districts. "It's just like that salesman who you train and you train. You send them to training school, you send them to sales school and you send them to leadership school, and it isn't until he goes out and makes his first sale that he has that confidence in himself that he can do it.

"It's the same thing the church has been doing for years with these kids. We've been training and training them; we just haven't given them the opportunity to get on the field and get them in the game. First Priority is getting them in the game," Siler said.

--30--

Beene is a freelance writer in Murfreesboro, Tenn. For more information, write to First Priority of America, P.O. Box 681119, Franklin, TN 37068-1119. First Priority materials are included in Student DayMaker, a time management resource for Christian teens produced by the BSSB. To order Student DayMaker or any of the First Priority manuals, call 1-615-221-4963.

**Nina Shea urges Christians  
to decry global persecution**

**By Linda Lawson**

**Baptist Press  
12/13/96**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--More Christians have died for their faith in the 20th century than in the previous 19 centuries combined, according to a human rights attorney and author.

In nations as far flung as China, Sudan, North Korea, Iran, Bosnia, Pakistan, Egypt, Cuba and Iran, Christians are beaten, raped, tortured, sold as slaves for as little as \$15 and brutally murdered, according to Nina Shea, director of the Puebla Program, a division of Freedom House, which investigates and documents instances of religious persecution throughout the world.

A human rights attorney who has devoted the last 10 years exclusively to the persecution of Christians, Shea is the author of "In the Lions Den," a book to be released Jan. 15 by the Baptist Sunday School Board's Broadman & Holman Publishers. She spoke Dec. 11 to B&H staffers attending a winter sales meeting.

"This is the biggest story that has not been told," Shea said. "Christians today are the most persecuted group in the world. At the time of the Jewish Holocaust, we said 'never again' and it's happening again."

For example, she charged that in China Christians are allowed to worship only "in the confines of atheist-controlled churches." Other devout Christians who worship secretly in house churches often are persecuted.

In Egypt, Shea said the "Christian community is vanishing under the onslaught of militant Islam." Christians in Sudan are regularly bought and sold as slaves. Since 1994, she said four top Protestant leaders in Iran have been murdered "under mysterious circumstances." In Bosnia, the United States has criticized persecution of Muslims but "no one is talking about persecution of Christians there."

The attitude of the U.S. government has been "appalling indifference," she stated. "Indifference may be a generous term.

"We will pressure China on intellectual property theft, but the issue of religious persecution of Christians has never been raised," said Shea, who recently was appointed by President Clinton to a State Department religious liberty advisory committee.

"I'm worried that this (committee) is window dressing," she said. "We haven't met."

While expressing strong dissatisfaction with the stance of the U.S. government, Shea said churches and the secular press are becoming energized about the issue.

--more--

Steve Forbes, publisher of Forbes magazine and honorary chairman of Americans for Hope, Growth and Opportunity, said in endorsing Shea's book: "The West must not be ignorant about the atrocities being done to Christians or those of any faith in Asia, Africa and the Middle East. Nor can we be silent. We must expose persecution to the light of day and be the champion of free people, free markets and free elections."

As Christians become aware of the scope of persecution, Shea said their initial response is, "I never knew." They quickly move to "I want to do something."

Shea said she hopes as a result of reading her book "Christian voices will be raised to counterbalance lobbyists for trade, commerce and secularists."

In his foreword to Shea's book, Charles Colson, founder and chairman of Prison Fellowship, warned: "So if Christians in America stand by and do nothing as their brothers and sisters in other parts of the world suffer, they are abandoning the proudest heritage they have as Americans. They are also abandoning their birthright as Christians."

To marshal support for persecuted Christians, Shea directed a conference sponsored by Freedom House in January 1996. It was attended by representatives of many religious bodies including Southern Baptists. Participants organized an International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church which was observed Sept. 29.

Southern Baptists adopted a resolution on Christian persecution at their June 11-13 annual meeting in New Orleans denouncing "the denial of fundamental human rights and all religious persecution anywhere in the world."

The resolution also urged leaders "to call Christians worldwide to fervent prayer for the constant protection and power of the Holy Spirit in the daily lives of all Christians everywhere who may be vulnerable to persecution."

Similar resolutions have been adopted by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and the Episcopal Church. The General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church has written a letter of support. The National Association of Evangelicals was an early leader in adopting a statement of conscience in January 1996.

Shea predicted the chorus of voices opposing persecution of Christians will escalate into the 21st century.

"Christian churches are becoming outraged about this," she said. "We have to inform ourselves about this situation. We must talk about it and we must pray about it."

--30--

**Hemphill: Journal suspension  
maintains 'apolitical' stance**

**By Craig Bird**

**Baptist Press  
12/13/96**

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Cancellation of the spring issue of the Southwestern Journal of Theology in November was guided by "doing what is right for Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and the Southern Baptist Convention," seminary President Ken Hemphill said Dec. 12.

Hemphill, president of Southwestern and editor-in-chief of the Southwestern Journal of Theology, raised the question of the "possible perception of unbalanced treatment" of the spring topic, the SBC's Baptist Faith and Message statement.

Development left the journal with several writers who formerly were faculty members at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary who now teach at non-Southern Baptist institutions, Hemphill said. "It would have been inappropriate for Southwestern to provide these authors with such a platform without opportunity for balanced response."

--more--

Scotty Gray, vice president for academic administration and institutional planning, said, "The content of the articles was not the basis of the decision: The concept of balance deals with the possible perceived lack of balance in the selection of contributors. The decision was based on the possibility that people who heard about the journal articles but did not read them would assume they were unbalanced."

The editorial board discussed several options, such as adding more writers to the issue or spacing the articles over subsequent issues and pairing them with differing viewpoints, he said. "But the consensus was to suspend publication and implement a redesign of the journal," Gray explained. "There was no formal vote taken so I can't say the consensus was unanimous. But no one demurred when we settled on cancellation."

Hemphill first suggested a redesign more than a year ago but the concept had not advanced much beyond the idea stage. Tommy Lea, dean of Southwestern's school of theology, also felt the discussion of the editorial board reflected a need to protect the seminary from being cast into a political role. "Dr. Hemphill is apolitical when it comes to leading this institution," Lea said.

Three of the authors are prominent Baptist scholars who left the faculty of Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky.: Bill Leonard, now dean of Wake Forest University divinity school; Molly Marshall, presently a professor at Central Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Kan.; and Texas Christian University professor William Hendricks.

Hendricks told Associated Baptist Press he understood Hemphill's perspective. Producing the issue, as it was formulated, "would have presented a problem for any of the Southern Baptist agencies at this time," he said. "I bear no ill will."

Others included Larry Baker, pastor of First Baptist Church, Pineville, La., and former executive director of the SBC Christian Life Commission, and Warren McWilliams, a professor at Oklahoma Baptist University.

Two current Southwestern faculty members, William Estep, distinguished professor of church history, and Jeff Pool, assistant professor of systemic theology, also contributed articles. Pool also was the issue's editor and had enlisted the authors. All but Green and McWilliams are Southwestern graduates.

In interviews with Associated Baptist Press, Pool, Marshall and Leonard insisted the articles were balanced.

Gray, a faculty member at Southwestern for 30 years, said academic freedom was not impinged. "It was the concern of the faculty editorial board that the possibility existed of the spring issue being perceived as unnecessarily one-sided and that suspension of the journal would probably be appropriate," he said. "As editor-in-chief, Dr. Hemphill typically does not read the articles before they are published and has not read these articles. He opened the discussion by saying, 'We have a problem,' and asking how we could solve it. He offered observations and suggestions but did not invade the prerogative of the board."

Although Southwestern had purchased and thus "owned" the manuscripts, the editorial board willingly agreed to return them so the authors can look for other publishers.

"Southwestern has set an intentional course to be faithful to our Southern Baptist constituency, to honor God's Word and to turn out students who love the Lord, his church and the lost world," Hemphill said. Southwestern remains committed to producing a journal of excellence that will present scholarly articles as well as practical applications of theology and helps toward spiritual formation."

Thinking about redesigning the journal was sparked 18 months ago after a study by Hubert Martin Jr., vice president for business affairs, showed the journal had run a deficit of \$115,000 over the past six years, a significant drain on a tight budget.

William Tillman, associate professor of ethics and managing editor of the journal, said the journal had relied on subsidy for years because it was viewed as a positive contribution by the seminary to subscribers, students and the evangelical Christian academic world. Subscription rates had been raised, he said, helping reduce last year's deficit, which was between \$6,000 and \$7,000 instead of the \$15,000 to \$18,000 loss of the year before.

Circulation, in addition to current students who are required to purchase the journal, is 600.

Members of the editorial board present for the discussion were Tillman; Alan Brehm, assistant professor of New Testament; Karen Bullock, assistant professor of church history; Al Fasol, professor of preaching; Dan Kent, professor of Old Testament; and Bob Brackney, professor of social work. Lea, who also is professor of New Testament, Gray, who also is professor of church music, and Hemphill are not members of the board but participated in the discussion.

--30--

**Appointment service says  
thank you to Miss. churches**

**By William H. Perkins Jr.**

**Baptist Press  
12/13/96**

JACKSON, Miss. (BP)--The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board appointed 51 missionaries Dec. 8 at First Baptist Church, Jackson, Miss., in a service that concluded a year in which FMB sent 587 new missionaries around the world to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The church was selected for the missionary appointment service in appreciation for the support from Mississippi churches for foreign missions and the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions.

First Baptist Church, Brookhaven, and First Baptist, Jackson, have for several years led the entire Southern Baptist Convention in gifts to the Lottie Moon Offering.

In addition, Mississippi churches in 1995 led the SBC in per-member giving to the Lottie Moon Offering. Kewanee Baptist Church, Toomsuba, and Pace Baptist Church, Pace, led Mississippi in per-member giving.

The service began with a processional of international flags and a prayer and welcome by First Baptist pastor Frank Pollard to the 3,500 people assembled in the church's sanctuary. A number of Mississippi churches canceled Sunday night services so their members could attend the appointment service.

Bill Blanchard, pastor of First Baptist Church, Soddy-Daisy, Tenn., and chairman of the FMB board of trustees, made the formal recommendations for the missionaries' appointments.

The appointments were unanimously approved by the FMB trustees in attendance.

Each of the missionaries then gave a brief testimony regarding their call to foreign missions.

Frank Gunn, pastor of First Baptist Church, Biloxi, and an FMB trustee, offered a prayer of dedication for the work of the new missionaries.

In the most emotional moment of the service, many of the people in attendance surrounded the new missionaries and placed their hands on them during Gunn's prayer.

FMB President Jerry Rankin, a Mississippi native and graduate of Mississippi College in Clinton, told the near-capacity crowd in his charge to the missionaries, "I believe this is the last generation of missionaries."

Rankin read from Jeremiah 18, where God told the prophet Jeremiah to go to the potter's house and watch as the potter reshaped a flawed pot on his potter's wheel.

He recounted how he felt in 1952, when he attended a Billy Graham Crusade in the stadium behind Bailey Junior High School in Jackson.

As he left the stadium stands and walked across the football field during the time of commitment that night, Rankin said he remembered thinking, "I wish everyone in the world could know Jesus."

"It was at that moment God put me on the potter's wheel," Rankin said, adding it changed his life forever.

As the congregation sang "Take My Life, Lead Me Lord," during the time of commitment, two young people came forth to commit themselves to missionary service.

--30--

(BP) photo and cutline posted in SBCNet's BP Photo Library and to be mailed 12/16/96 to Baptist state papers by the Richmond bureau of Baptist Press.

HOUSE MAIL

<b>(BP)</b>	<b>BAPTIST PRESS</b> 901 Commerce #750 Nashville, TN 37234
F I R S T  C L A S S	Southern Baptist Library and Archives