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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE

SBC Executive Committee
901 Commerce #750
Nashville, Tennessee 37203
(615) 244-2355
Herb Hollinger, Vice President
Fax (615) 742-8919
CompuServe ID# 70420,17

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Martin King, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 898-7522
DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 333 N. Washington, Dallas, Texas 75246-1798, Telephone (214) 828-5232
NASHVILLE 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300
RICHMOND Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va., 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151
WASHINGTON Tom Strode, Chief, 400 North Capitol St., #594, Washington, D.C. 20001, Telephone (202) 638-3223

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True Love Waits 'hits roof,'
launches effort for schools

By Terri Lackey

Baptist Press
2/13/96

ATLANTA (BP)--Minutes after 18,000 teenagers and youth ministers watched 350,000 True Love Waits cards reach the roof of the Georgia Dome in Atlanta, Southern Baptists announced a new campaign to send the abstinence movement to schools.

To the beat of the Christian rock group Newsboys, the commitment cards were hoisted to the roof of the 27-story Georgia Dome as young people lifted their friends above the crowd in a fad known as surfing. Later, a spokesman for the Southern Baptist-sponsored abstinence campaign announced a new goal and theme -- "True Love Waits Goes Campus."

"On Valentine's Day 1997, our goal is to display True Love Waits cards on every school campus in America -- all 56,000 schools in the U.S.," Richard Ross, youth ministry consultant at the Baptist Sunday School Board, told those attending the "True Love Waits -- Thru the Roof" celebration at the Georgia Dome in Atlanta, Feb. 11.

The 350,000 cards pulled to the roof of the Georgia Dome were gathered from all 50 states and from 76 countries -- with the countries accounting for about half the commitments by young people.

More than 100 young people from First Baptist Church, Conyers, Ga., and Tulip Grove Baptist Church, Hermitage, Tenn., worked for hours the night before the event stringing the cards onto a 200-foot steel cable which was lifted to the roof of the dome by a giant wench and pulley mechanism. An overflow of cards, including some that were delivered the day of the celebration by attending teens, was added to a second cable.

True Love Waits, an international campaign to challenge teens and college students to remain sexually abstinent until marriage, was launched by the BSSB in April 1993. The first national True Love Waits rally was held in Washington, D.C. in July 1994.

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For more than a year, organizers have been planning a second national celebration to honor young people who have made commitments to remain sexually abstinent until marriage. The Thru the Roof rally coincided with Atlanta '96, a contingent of youth leaders representing 125 denominations and Christian youth organizations gathered in Atlanta for leadership training conferences. Other contemporary Christian artists who performed at the hour-long rally included DC Talk and Michael W. Smith.

With the new campaign, True Love Waits Goes Campus, young people are being asked to take the abstinence message to high school and college campuses, Paul Turner, international spokesperson for the abstinence campaign, said.

"I believe with True Love Waits Goes Campus, we are embarking on the most exciting phase of our abstinence campaign," Turner said. "It will empower students to take the message of Christ and abstinence to their peers at school."

This summer, organizers of True Love Waits Goes Campus plan to train high school and college students in using Christian clubs at school to coordinate abstinence campaigns on their campuses, Turner said. On Valentine's Day 1997, True Love Waits Goes Campus is expected to culminate with a visible demonstration of commitment cards at the schools that participate in the event.

"True Love Waits Goes Campus will allow students to take Christ to their campuses with the channels already in place," Turner said. "Campus clubs provide a natural vehicle for that, and campus club organizations and True Love Waits can partner to strengthen and support each other."

Young people who take the True Love Waits pledge to remain abstinent until marriage sign commitment cards which state: "Believing that true love waits, I make a commitment to God, myself, my family, my friends, my future mate and my future children to be sexually abstinent from this day until the day I enter a biblical marriage relationship."

Turner said he hopes President Bill Clinton's January announcement of a national campaign against teen pregnancy to be led by Nashville gynecologist Henry Foster will be used to promote sexual abstinence.

Each year, about 1 million American teenagers get pregnant. That is approximately 11 percent of females between the ages of 15 and 19, according to White House statistics. Twice as many teens have babies in the United States than in Britain, and six times more than in France, Italy and Denmark.

"We must share that abstinence is the only safe sex option that is 100 percent foolproof," he said.

Trinity Broadcasting Network of Anaheim, Calif., videotaped the True Love Waits -- Thru the Roof celebration for broadcast on Valentine's Day 1996.

More information about True Love Waits, which is supported by 42 other denominations and Christian student organizations, may be obtained by calling 1-800-LUV-WAIT. To order a True Love Waits Goes Campus kit, call 1-800-458-2772.

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(BP) photos (5 horizontals) to accompany this story are posted in the SBCNet News Room and are being mailed to Baptist state newspapers by the Sunday School Board bureau of Baptist Press.

Missionary, son in coma
after auto accident in Peru

Baptist Press
2/13/96

TRUJILLO, Peru (BP)--Foreign Mission Board officials are asking Southern Baptists to pray for members of a missionary family critically injured in an automobile accident in Peru Feb. 1.

Missionaries Wade and Nancy Watts of Memphis, Tenn., and their two sons, Marcus and Joshua, were on a mountain road outside of Huancayo, south of the capital, Lima, when the accident occurred.

Watts, 40, and Marcus, 9, have been in comas since the accident and were listed in grave condition Feb. 9. Neither Nancy Watts, 35, nor Joshua, 7, is in a life-threatening situation.

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Marcus and his mother were airlifted to Memphis hospitals Feb. 6. Joshua, who was hurt the least, flew by commercial airline Feb. 5 with Foreign Mission Board missionary Kathy Phillips to Memphis, where they are staying with retired Foreign Mission Board missionaries Marvin and Jean Fitts.

Doctors considered the condition of Wade Watts too unstable to risk a lengthy flight to the United States. He is in a Peruvian air force hospital in Lima with injuries to the brain and internal organs. Doctors report no brain wave increase, Phillips said.

Marcus is in intensive care at Lebonheur Children's Medical Center in Memphis with possible brain damage.

Surgeons at Baptist Memorial Hospital-Central in Memphis repaired several fractures in Nancy Watts' face, thumb and wrist. She was in stable condition Feb. 9, and a full recovery is anticipated.

Immediately after the accident, Nancy Watts and Joshua were kept at a medical clinic near the accident site. Wade Watts and Marcus were taken by ambulance to a government-run hospital in Huancayo, where both underwent brain surgery. All were airlifted to the air force hospital where Wade Watts remains.

Nancy Watts and the boys were sleeping when the accident occurred about 2:30 p.m. Feb. 1. The family was on the way to Huancayo, where they planned to take a short vacation. Another driver involved in the wreck suffered shock and trauma and has been unable to recall the accident. Rescue workers cut him from the wreckage.

Watts and his wife, the former Nancy Tate, both of Memphis, Tenn., were appointed as missionaries to Peru by the Foreign Mission Board in 1986. They live in Trujillo, where he works in secondary education and men's work and she is a church and home worker.

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Mark Short sets retirement
as Louisiana Baptist exec

By Lynn P. Clayton

Baptist Press
2/13/96

ALEXANDRIA, La. (BP)--Mark Short, executive director of the Louisiana Baptist Convention since 1987, has announced his retirement, effective Dec. 31, 1996.

"I have been impressed by the Holy Spirit to announce this decision early in 1996," Short said in his letter of resignation, "in order that our Administrative Subcommittee will have enough time to seek God's appointed leader for this task."

The letter was addressed to Bobby Swanner, president of the Louisiana Baptist Convention executive board, who has announced the 15-person administrative subcommittee will form the search committee for Short's replacement.

Short, 67, came to the helm of the state convention from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary where he was a professor of church administration. He followed Robert L. Lee who held the post of LBC executive director 33 years.

Short said his plans for the future involve the continuation of his church growth and church administration consulting. He also plans to continue his speaking and writing ministries.

During the 10 years Short has been executive director, VISION 2000 has been the focus of the state convention, emphasizing starting and growing churches, increasing Cooperative Program gifts and strengthening the Baptist work in the city of New Orleans.

"There is much for which to be thankful in each area," Short said. "The numbers of churches and missions have increased from 1,447 in 1987 to 1,629 presently. Our resident membership for all our churches and missions has grown from 395,617 to 410,333 during that time.

"While we may think our Cooperative Program receipts have been rather flat, they actually have increased from \$15,532,454 to \$17,441,823 in the last nine years. Our work in New Orleans has grown from 116 churches and missions with 28,305 resident members to 165 churches and missions with 36,273 resident members.

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"There is still much to be done, but Louisiana Baptists have responded marvelously to the challenges. They have stepped out in faith during what have certainly been economically trying times."

Short has lead the convention during a time when "downsizing" of the executive board staff became necessary for efficient operation.

"Although we suffered the loss of some 75 positions, the work has prospered," Short said. "Performance goals have been met or exceeded."

A major financial accomplishment of Short's administration has been paying off a \$2 million debt the executive board incurred in 1985-86. The debt will be completely paid the first quarter of this year.

At the same time, three other major projects were accomplished without incurring debt. A half-million-dollar renovation of the Baptist Building in Alexandria was completed last year. At Tall Timbers Conference Center near Woodworth, \$500,000 worth of renovations and expansion projects were accomplished. Baptist Student Union buildings the convention owns on campuses across the state also were renovated.

Perry Sanders, pastor of First Baptist Church, Lafayette, who was chairman of the search committee that recommended Short, said the conviction Short was the person for the job "has proven, by the way God has used Dr. Short so significantly, to be true."

"Mark Short was not on anyone's list (of prospective leaders) when we began. But the committee was able to move in a magnificent way to the unanimous and overwhelming conviction that Mark Short was God's man. I pray that the present search committee can come to that point in its work."

Swanner, a layman at First Baptist Church, West Monroe, in announcing that members of the board's administrative subcommittee will serve as the executive director search committee, noted John G. Alley, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church, Alexandria, is chairman of the administrative subcommittee of the board's operating committee and thus will chair the search.

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Texas Baptist Men to build
Southwestern student housing

By Dena Dyer

Baptist Press
2/13/96

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Texas Baptist Men and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary soon will benefit from each other's ministries.

One of Southwestern's most popular housing alternatives for families will be expanded beginning in March. Texas Baptist Men, an organization of volunteer builders affiliated with the Brotherhood Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, will live in travel trailers while they build two new town houses in the J. Howard Williams Student Village at the seminary's Fort Worth, Texas, campus.

For 24 years, Texas Baptist Men has volunteered time and energy in various building projects around the country. Southwestern's new units -- containing 12 apartments -- are scheduled for completion in late April.

"We have planned on building these units since 1991, but we haven't been able to yet because of funding," said Terry Caywood, director of business services. Now, with the help of the Texas Baptist Men and Southwestern able to provide the building supplies, the seminary can complete the project.

Hubert Martin, vice president for business services, has been in discussion with the Texas Baptist Men since 1994. When Ken Hemphill came to the seminary as president, Martin mentioned the possibility of calling upon the men to help build the apartments.

Hemphill was enthusiastic about the idea and immediately began talking with Wilton Davis, who was then their president, about the possibility of their help with the units, Martin related.

Davis has been involved with the Baptist Men for 18 years and served as the group's president from 1989-95. He estimated that the men have built 32 to 40 churches a year during that time, for a total of about 400.

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"Last summer, we had 402 volunteers who helped construct a multi-functional building for the Canadian Baptist Theological Seminary in Alberta," Davis said. "The men said it was one of the richest spiritual experiences of their lives, and we expect the same will be true of our time at Southwestern."

The volunteers view their service as ministry, Davis said.

"They come from a variety of backgrounds -- we have retired doctors, lawyers and CPAs -- but they love working with their hands and serving the Lord in this way," he said. "The men say that heaven must be like one of our projects -- working for the Lord during the day and fellowshiping with other believers and talking about how good the Lord is in the evenings."

Martin said the benefits of cooperation between Texas Baptist Men and Southwestern will be far-reaching.

"Not only will we be providing more housing for generation after generation of seminarians, but our students also will be able to see the Baptist Men in action. So when students graduate and take positions in churches across the country, they will know what the Baptist Men and the Brotherhood are all about, and they will be much more likely to support them in the future. It's really a win-win situation for everyone involved."

Nancy Blevins, Southwestern's associate director for personnel services, is coordinating with local churches to provide a hot noon meal for the men every Monday through Friday.

"With this kind of local church involvement, laypeople will literally see their Cooperative Program dollars in action," Martin said. "They also will be able to recognize what a tremendous resource we have on this hill. We have a so many good things going on -- we want people to know about them."

Blevins encouraged local churches to get involved with the project.

"We have a few churches and groups already signed up to help, but we still have a lot of openings," she said. "Any church who wants to bring food for the volunteers can contact me."

Davis emphasized that the organization is looking forward to their time on the Southwestern campus.

"From the time these men leave home, they will be 100 percent dedicated to getting those buildings completed," he noted. "You think you'd have to work and work to get people to respond to a request, but God calls them to be a part of it and they gladly respond. When people respond like that, you know that laymen receive a calling just as ministers do."

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Meeting youth counseling needs
requires range of ministry skill By Charles Willis

Baptist Press
2/13/96

ATLANTA (BP)--The growing need for counseling with teenagers means youth ministers may do more counseling than other church staff persons, a Southern Baptist psychologist and counselor told participants in Youth Ministry National Conference 5, Feb. 9-13 in Atlanta.

Youth problems, in fact, will only escalate in the next few years, according to Joe Richardson of Nacogdoches, Texas, because of the nature of life and society.

Child sexual abuse affects approximately 30 percent of youth, with abuse in many instances beginning long before adolescence, he said.

Also, he said, professional literature indicates 1 percent of today's youth have transient psychological disorders, 6 percent are neurotic, 3 percent have attention deficit disorders and another 1 percent have eating disorders.

Psychophysiological disorders, such as colitis, affect 11 percent; 1 percent are psychotic; 2 percent have a character disorder, such as compulsive lying; 4 percent are alcoholics or drug abusers; 10 percent have stereotyped movement disorders; 2 percent are mentally retarded; 4 percent have a developmental disorder; and 1 percent are bedwetters.

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The possible percentage of teenagers with such problems in any church youth group can be formidable for a youth minister who may need to address those needs.

"We've got a huge problem, and the sad thing is our thinking is, 'But that's not my youth group,'" Richardson observed. "We had better broaden our thinking, because kids have bigger problems than we think."

Youth ministers should counsel teenagers when there is an expressed need, a crisis, changes in the youth's behavior or family problems, Richardson said.

In contrast, there are times when counseling should be done by someone else with specialized expertise and less personal involvement, he added. In situations of sexual abuse, psychotic or neurotic behavior or when the youth minister is too emotionally involved to counsel, a referral is in order, he said.

"Just because there is the word 'Christian' or a related word in the title of the business doesn't always mean competency or morality," Richardson cautioned. "And just because there isn't Christianity in the title doesn't mean the service is non-Christian or incompetent. "

He encouraged youth ministers to interview local counselors about areas of experience and to learn their academic credentials before making referrals.

"If you are not a psychotherapist," he added, "don't get into long-term counseling with youth. Don't get involved in situations with lengthy counseling. When it begins to hurt you (emotionally), get out. You are in a perfect position to insist they get the help they need."

Warning signs that indicate a person needs counseling include a radical change in friends, rapid and immediate mood swings, concern expressed by friends, talk of suicide, a change in grades and eating disorders. Richardson said.

Counseling requires skill in accurate empathy, being able to understand what youth are feeling when they talk to the youth minister, he said. The word "bored," for example, may actually mean "depressed," he noted.

Other requirements of counseling are the ability to respect the youth as a person, the quality of genuineness on the part of the counselor and an element of self-disclosure -- "transparency that shows who you are," Richardson said.

Counselors must exhibit concreteness, the ability to say what they feel and mean, as well as confrontation, the ability to face a problem after the counseling relationship has been established, he said.

Immediacy, dealing with the "now" of the problem, regardless of when the problem began, is another need, he said.

Confidentiality is important to protect the client, but secrecy is not required when matters such as child sexual abuse are involved, Richardson noted.

"There are some things kids tell you that you don't have a choice about. You have to tell someone. Know the laws in your state regarding reporting abuse. The child is your client, not the abuser. And you don't have to tell the youth group to let them pray about it," he cautioned.

To facilitate growth in teenagers, encourage them to explore the problem, understand the problem and take appropriate action, Richardson said.

"Counseling is not about what you say to youth. It's more about the way you listen, the compassion you show," he concluded. "In the process of getting everything out, it's amazing the number of times youth reach a reasonable conclusion for themselves. "

Youth Ministry National Conference 5 was a project of the Baptist Sunday School Board, Brotherhood Commission, Foreign and Home mission boards and Woman's Missionary Union.

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Reaching only white youth
no longer effective ministry

By Terri Lackey

ATLANTA (BP)--Southern Baptists can no longer act as if Caucasians are the nation's dominant race if they want to reach all Americans for Christ, a former missionary said.

"The U.S. is the third-largest unsaved nation behind India and China, and if you want to reach people for Christ in this country now, you had better be bilingual and multicultural," Thomas Wright told youth ministers attending Youth Ministry National Conference 5 at the Georgia International Convention Center in Atlanta, Feb. 9-13.

Wright, who works with the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board evangelism section, formerly has been a missions worker in Thailand and has been a home missionary.

"We are persons of predominately white outreach methods, but the United States is composed of more than 600 ethnic groups," Wright said. "And if you are going to survive in youth ministry, you need to have a plan for reaching those groups."

The mission of youth ministers who live in areas of ethnic diversity is to reach the young people at their cultural level and bring them into the church, Wright said.

Cultural groups may exist beyond ethnicity, he said, explaining young people could be thought of as a culture unto themselves. Different types of young people must be reached with varied methods.

Evangelism, Wright said, is "presenting the uncompromised gospel of Jesus Christ in the socio-cultural, ethnic and linguistic background of the person so they can respond and be disciplined into a local church."

Wright gave youth ministers a strategy for reaching persons of diversified cultural groups who live within their church's outreach area.

"The first thing you need to do is set up a purpose statement. It can't be too broad; it must maintain focus. It must get at your desire to reach the ethnic groups in your area and bring them to Christ."

Youth ministers and leaders must then learn about the language, culture and people of those ethnic groups, Wright said.

"It's a big mistake to pick up what you tried to do as youth minister at your last church and bring it into your new area of work," he said. "You have to find out what the people are before you stroll in and use everything you used in your last congregation.

"People prefer to come to Jesus by crossing the fewest number of social, cultural and linguistic barriers."

Some of the cultural elements Wright advised the youth ministers to learn about include:

- the religious background of the community where the church is located.

"We seem to assume that everyone has a Judeo-Christian background, but that's just not true. We can't start talking to these kids about God and the Bible if they don't even know what that is yet."

- the person's relationship to his or her family and friends.

"Relationships with family and friends establishes a person's identity and background," he said.

- the person's primary language.

"That includes dialect, too. We don't need to use pontifical, religious dialogue. We need to just be real, and by all means, be clear and simple," Wright said.

- the person's attitude toward money and possessions.

"You have to understand a kid's background and where they come from." He explained that taking a wealthy young person on a mission trip and housing him or her in a rundown hotel might not impress them enough to join the church, whereas doing a small, inexpensive project with a young person from a lower economic background might be enough to bring them to Christ.

Another key to reaching people of different ethnic backgrounds is to "identify who is going to help you," Wright said.

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"You can probably count on 10 percent of your group to help you. If you have 60 youth, then you have six you can count on. That means you have got to modify your strategy based on how many people you have to work with," he said.

"You can't reach everybody a little bit. In most situations you need to recognize what you can most accomplish. You've got to modify your program based on the people you can count on."

Next, Wright said, youth ministers must reach people of different cultural groups by determining how they are going to reach them.

"You have to go get your hands on every resource you can get your hands on, and you have to develop a yearly calendar. You need to determine what you want to do each month and include training events."

Wright also advised youth ministers to remain focused on the gospel message while being culturally sensitive, provide training for volunteer leaders, perform a yearly analysis, change to meet the resulting needs and "communicate, communicate, communicate."

"When you start a growing youth group, you have to be sure the leadership and congregation is informed about what's going on. When a group becomes large, it can sometimes scare the rest of the church who are afraid it will become autonomous," he said.

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To get youth into church,
be relational, minister says

By Charles Willis

Baptist Press
2/13/96

ATLANTA (BP)--Getting 1990s youth interested in church requires more than a 1970s approach of building campfires and singing songs, a youth minister told his peers during Youth Ministry National Conference 5 in Atlanta.

"If you want to go where they are, if you want them to come where you are, you have to build relationships," said Juan Sanchez Jr., minister of youth at First Baptist Church, Eastman, Ga.

Southern Baptist youth ministry, Sanchez maintained, has been aimed at the middle and upper economic classes.

"After all," he illustrated, "who else can afford to go to a summer camp that costs \$200?"

Youth ministers must evaluate their ministries and ask themselves if they are going where God is working or if they are providing an "entertainment service" for the middle-class families of their churches.

Apologetics, a defense of the faith, is as important as relationships in reaching today's youth, Sanchez said. A balance of good theology, good biblical teaching and positive relationships is essential for youth ministers, he said.

"You can't do just one thing to reach everyone," he observed. Today's youth fall into three categories as they relate to church.

"Lookers" are youth who have little interest in church or the things of God, Sanchez said. They come to look around during the fun activities, but leave if they are not constantly entertained.

"Learners" have an interest in the things of God and the church. He said they have a genuine desire to learn and consequently ask many questions.

"Leaders" not only have an interest in God and the church, but also an interest in letting others know about God.

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Many youth ministers have directed their program to lookers, while others have a tendency to work only with the youth who are already in church. Both categories have common group and individual needs, Sanchez said. Youth groups want to belong, to be heard, to be entertained, to avoid embarrassment and to have a safe place. The individual needs are for attention, encouragement and love.

The challenge, Sanchez said, is "how to bring in lookers, get them to become learners and develop them into leaders."

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Prof: Troubled marriage may
harm teens more than divorce

By Terri Lackey

Baptist Press
2/13/96

ATLANTA (BP)--Moms and dads living in troubled marriages sometimes can have a more detrimental effect on teens than parents who go ahead and get a divorce, according to a faculty member who teaches youth education at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Some youth will say "they would rather have (their parents) divorced than living in conflict," Allen Jackson, an assistant professor at the seminary, told youth ministers attending Youth Ministry National Conference 5 at the Georgia International Convention Center in Atlanta, Feb. 9-13.

Marital conflict seems to contribute to the stress young people experience even more than divorce, he said, adding that teens who live in a home with a troubled marriage may show signs of depression, anxiety and lower levels of physical health.

Twenty-five percent of recently surveyed young people who have experienced the divorce of their parents say the end of the marriage was a positive change, Jackson said. Further, other studies confirm "adolescents prefer the eventual divorce to the conflict-ridden marriage of their parents. Once the divorce goes through, a feeling of personal control is returned to the teenager," Jackson said.

Jackson, however, said he does not discount the trouble divorce can cause to children and teens.

"Kids of divorced parents have been shown to have lower self-esteem, a higher incidence of at-risk behavior and less mature coping strategies (than those in healthy households)," he said.

Of 100 young people, more than half have lived at least some part of their lives in a single household, he said. Since 1972, 1 million children have gone through the divorce of their parents.

Jackson listed four major family styles, three of which he said have the potential for creating a troubled home life. They are: the traditional family, the frightened family, the fighting family and the healthy family.

In what he termed the traditional family, Jackson said fathers are usually emotionally separated from their children, relating to them through the mother. The father is the absolute authority of the family, and affection is only shown by the mother. Fun is considered unnecessary.

Youth who come from this type of family background "make excellent students because they tend to be obedient."

Because of the lack of communication between the children and the father, dysfunctional relationships can develop, ultimately causing a troubled marriage and home life, he said.

Frightened families are ones in which the members feel it is them against the world. "They turn inward, and they are very dependent on each other. No one is allowed to make a decision apart from the whole group."

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The fighting family, Jackson said, is one where mothers and fathers tower over the children.

"There is a great deal of fighting between the dad and the mom. In this family, it's every man for himself. Everybody makes his own decision."

Discipline and response to discipline is done through manipulation, Jackson said.

Finally, the healthy family, Jackson said, is "all for one and one for all."

"There is shared decision-making, but with parental veto possible. Victory and defeats are shared within such a family, and communication is common."

Jackson said ministers of youth are often the first to spot if there is a problem in a teen's family life.

"As youth ministers, we see a lot of what's happening in families, but at what point do we initiate intervention?" he asked. "We are very much tempted as youth ministers to intervene when we see cultural differences in parenting styles, but it's not ours to intervene in that.

"But when we see abuse, we do need to intervene."

Jackson defined abuse as discipline without teaching that poses a danger to the well-being of the child.

"We shouldn't intervene, however, when we see verbal abuse of a parent to a child without another opinion," Jackson warned. "A lot of kids would die for a person who would yell at them -- as long as they said something."

Jackson listed several ways youth ministers can help if they are nearly certain a teen is experiencing a troubled home life. Those are:

- Attempt to make contact with each parent, individually and then together.
- Think multigenerational. "If your first line of defense doesn't work, and a troubled family is totally out of hand, maybe the extended family could help."
- Honesty should be a priority. "Let's help our parents tell it like it is. If moms and dads are having problems, let's not make the teen suspect it by listening to their fights at the top of the stairs."
- Resist making promises you can't keep as a minister. "Don't say, 'If you don't get this worked out, you can come live with us.'"
- Encourage and assist young people to continue to grow as individuals.
- Help kids stay kids. "Some kids have had to grow up too early because of their home lives. Our role is to prod them into having fun."
- Be prepared to give advice for custody situations. "Be prepared is the operative word. Do your homework in case you have to give advice, but approach it with a professional manner."
- Help everyone focus on the primacy of the marriage. "The relationship between the husband and wife is the primary one, not the relationship between children and parents."
- Know when to hand off the problem. "Realize when the problem is too big for you to handle."

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Prof lists warning signs
for assessing resignation

By Charles Willis

Baptist Press
2/13/96

ATLANTA (BP)--The ideal time for a minister to leave a church is when the ministry is at its peak, but such career moves unfortunately are not the norm, according to an expert in youth ministry.

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Philip Briggs maintained most ministers resign at only two times -- too early or too late. "But the call of God is not a life sentence," observed Briggs, professor of youth education and recreation at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas. "The God who called you into ministry can call you out of ministry."

Speaking to participants in Youth Ministry National Conference 5 at the Georgia International Convention Center in Atlanta, Briggs said some warning signs can indicate the need for considering the need to move on in one's ministry.

Signals that a "bumpy road" lies ahead are:

- an obvious loss of support from the minister's focus group in the church, other staff members and the congregation.
- complaints that begin to surface in business meetings and in other settings.
- a decrease in attendance and financial contributions.
- a radical change in lay leadership, either through volunteer positions that go unfilled or through a major change in persons placed in leadership positions.
- staff persons who begin to take immovable stands on issues, especially when the staff person has been flexible in the past.
- ministers beginning to feel defensive about the program they lead or about themselves.

"I'm not sure we see the signs," Briggs said, "because we are too close to it."

Contributing to career difficulties can be factors within the church, he added. Among those are congregational stress, many times of long standing; some who are not pastors but want to be, both from within the staff and within the church membership; "sidewalk superintendents;" competition syndrome; confusion over the New Testament role of the pastor; lack of fellowship within the church; lack of awareness of the mission of the church or a group within the church, such as the youth group.

Factors which may contribute to solving problems and avoiding an untimely career move can include maintaining communication within the staff and the personnel committee, a process of accountability and evaluation, regularly planned and conducted staff meetings, retraining and retooling of ministers and attempts at mediation.

Briggs said vocational factors that heavily influence success in a church staff position include creative achievement, successful interaction with others and one's genuine uniqueness.

"We tend in our younger years to overinvest in one of the first two," he observed. "At middle age, the imbalance begins to be felt. We neglect ourselves or we overinvest in ourselves while neglecting the other two."

For a youth minister to monitor his standing with a church, Briggs suggested, "Look at yourself, your family, your program and your youth. Look at your church. Like people, they have personalities. And they are also prone to change.

"Don't take yourself too seriously," Briggs cautioned, "But take your job seriously."

Youth Ministry National Conference 5, Feb. 9-13, was a project of the Baptist Sunday School Board, Brotherhood Commission, Foreign and Home mission boards and Woman's Missionary Union.

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(BP) photos (two horizontals and one vertical) related to Youth Ministry National Conference 5 are posted in the SBCNet News Room and are being mailed to state Baptist newspapers by the Sunday School Board bureau of Baptist Press.

New York City couple active
on the streets, in academia

By Dan Nicholas

Baptist Press
2/13/96

NEW YORK (BP)--For Taylor Field, ministering to the needs of New York City's poor transients and teaching the Bible at a Southern Baptist seminary center in an upscale neighborhood near Central Park are linked closely.

Both reflect his life goal of "seeing the face of Christ."

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For his wife, Susan, keeping a foot in both the academic world and in street ministry provides a better understanding of others because "it's easy to get isolated from hurting people."

The couple met in 1978 when Taylor was doing church and community ministry in Harlem and Susan was a summer missionary in Queens. Following a biblical pattern, Taylor and his roommate cast lots for the opportunity to romantically pursue Susan. Taylor won the friendly contest and they were married in June 1979.

Taylor was born and raised in Enid, Okla., graduated from Princeton University and received a Ph.D. in biblical studies from Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary outside of San Francisco. Susan is a Texan who grew up in Durham, N.C., and received a political science degree from Emory University, Atlanta.

Susan is pursuing a master of divinity at the New York City Center of the Northeastern Baptist School of Ministry. Taylor teaches New Testament and Greek at the same 72nd Street and Broadway urban "campus," which is also home to the Southern Baptist's Metropolitan New York Baptist Association and several ethnic churches.

Taylor's ministries include a storefront called Graffiti Baptist Ministry Center and East Seventh Baptist Church, which constituted as a church with 48 members on Jan. 28, Super Bowl Sunday.

The Graffiti Center, so named because of the free-style "artistic" expression that often covers the outside walls, offers homeless people and poor residents of Manhattan's lower east side 16 weekly support groups and many social services, including a "Free Lunch in the Park" (FLIP) program that draws partnership with suburban Christians each Saturday. About 600 people are touched each week by the ministries, Taylor estimated. Graffiti's ministry often is practical and down-to-earth. On one recent morning, for example, Taylor was helping a mugger write an apology note to the person he had assaulted.

The church has purchased an abandoned synagogue and set plans to renovate it over the next few years.

Susan keeps busy as the Southern Baptist campus minister at both New York University and Columbia University. She spends one full day a week at each campus leading Bible studies, planning special activities and meeting individually with students. Susan has worked for six years on the NYU campus and now sees a core group of 20 students. She started at Columbia in December. In addition, she directs the Christian education program at East Seventh Baptist, urging the students to be involved in the church and ministry tasks.

Taylor decided to come to New York City when, as a Golden Gate student 10 years ago, he faced a choice between teaching the Bible or serving in a social ministry. A preacher suggested he pursue "what makes your heart sing." That's why today he ministers and teaches in an urban setting. Taylor finished his Golden Gate dissertation one afternoon and left with Susan for New York City the next day.

He said he sees no dichotomy in teaching New Testament Greek at NeBSM/New York and performing social ministry at Graffiti. "For me, both working with the biblical text and working with people in difficult circumstances allow me to see the face of Christ. They're both ways I can see God working."

Susan enthusiastically agreed: "It's like two hands. You cannot understand theological principles if you've never touched a leper, so to speak."

How does the busy ministry couple find the time to keep their lives together and at the same time raise their two young boys, Freeman and Owen? "We are very clear to have a sabbath family day each Friday and to mark it on our calendars," Susan said. "We will always find the time to do what we want to do," she reflected.

Family is a priority for Taylor and Susan. They try to include the children in whatever they do, Taylor said, and the boys often travel with them on out-of-town trips. "When we take the boys with us, they meet people who are cooler than Mom and Dad," Susan added.

Taylor and Susan enjoy the partnership they have with other urban pastors and church leaders through NeBSM/New York. "It's a privilege being part of their growth. NeBSM offers us a wonderful experience and it's part of our commitment to New York City," Taylor said.

In addition to the New York City center, where Taylor and Susan participate, the Northeastern Baptist School of Ministry (NeBSM), has centers in Pittsburgh and Harrisburg, Pa., Boston, Baltimore and Silver Spring, Md., under the direction of Andrew Y. Lee of Staten Island, N.Y. NeBSM degrees are granted through a partnership with Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky.

To provide theological education and ministry training in the context of the Northeast via NeBSM and other contextualized endeavors, the Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware, the Baptist Convention of Pennsylvania/South Jersey, the Baptist Convention of New York and the Baptist Convention of New England established the Northeastern Baptist Education Consortium (NeBEC). NeBEC also partners with Southern Baptist Seminary Extension and the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

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More information on the Northeastern Baptist Education Consortium can be obtained by phoning 1-800-749-5956 or faxing (410) 671-7795.

ANALYSIS

More positive than negative
in Best Picture nominees

By Phil Boatwright

Baptist Press
2/13/96

HOLLYWOOD, Calif. (BP)--Not bad.

Each of the five movies announced Feb. 13 as Oscar contenders, to one extent or another, carries a positive message.

The five films up for Best Picture at the upcoming 68th annual Academy Awards -- APOLLO 13, BABE, BRAVEHEART, THE POSTMAN and SENSE AND SENSIBILITY -- beat out insider predictions for heavier and often depressing movies such as LEAVING LAS VEGAS, CASINO and NIXON.

Keeping in mind that Hollywood's view of Academy Award-worthiness often falls short of biblical teachings, the following synopses of Best Picture nominees are offered so you can decide which films are suitable for your family.

Armed with this information, you also can discuss the merits of each nominee without having to subject yourself to any objectionable material.

And the nominees are ...

APOLLO 13. Tom Hanks, Kevin Bacon, Gary Sinise. Universal. True-life drama. PG (1 scene features a playboy using double entendre and sexual innuendo to entice a young woman; around 50 profanities & obscenities; an astronaut regurgitates in the capsule -- not a pretty sight). The exciting true story of a trip to the moon that kept the world on the edge of their chairs after hearing those eventful words, "Houston, we have a problem." Although it contains a surprising amount of foul language for a PG film, it was not as offensive to me as most recent action pics due to the positive messages about teamwork and not giving up. Engaging, emotional and inspirational. Directed by Ron Howard. If you do not want to hear the profane language, try this Video Alternative: FOR ALL MANKIND, a documentary about the first men to land on the moon.

BABE. James Cromwell. Universal. Fable. G (parents of very small children may have to give a moment of comfort when the piglet's mother is taken away for you-know-where; a sheep is killed -- off-screen by a wild dog; a dog fight occurs, but this violence is very brief and mild by today's movie standards). A little pig is adopted by a farmer and taken under wing by the different barnyard animals. When our hogling hero discovers what happens to any animal that doesn't provide a service on the farm, he tries to become a sheepdog. One of the most charming allegories I've ever seen. Humorous, touching, insightful, a true delight for young and old.

BRAVEHEART. Mel Gibson. Paramount. Historical adventure. R (lots of graphic medieval battle scenes; brief sexuality). Gritty look at Scotland's struggle for freedom and the legendary tale of the man who led the rebellion. Directed by Mel Gibson. A well-made film, but I prefer the Vid. Alts. SPARTACUS or EL CID.

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THE POSTMAN. An Italian film with subtitles. No bad language, no disrespect for God, no violence, just a gentle story about a meek Italian postman who befriends a renown poet visiting a quaint island. When the postman falls for the town beauty, our hero turns to his new friend for help in winning her love. If you're tired of robotic acting and high-decimal special effects, treat yourselves to a warm, funny, romantic picture that will not bombard your senses with negative images. Rated PG, I found nothing objectionable.

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY. Emma Thompson, Hugh Grant. Columbia Pictures. PG (No profanity, no sexual situations, no violence -- just great storytelling). An engrossing screenplay by the film's star, Emma Thompson, from the Jane Austin romance novel about two sisters discovering the joys and tribulations of young love. Set in prim and proper 18th-century England, the beautifully photographed and splendidly acted melodrama is full of humor, wit and passion. Women may have to drag their significant other to this one (alas, men, nothing explodes) but trust me, guys, it's a great date movie).

While not nominated for a Best Picture Oscar, DEAD MAN WALKING did receive a Best Actress nod for Susan Sarandon, Best Actor nod for Sean Penn and Best Director nod for Tim Robbins. Gramercy Pictures. Drama -- R (several obscenities, but I did not catch many misuses of God's name; a brutal rape-murder is seen several times in flashback using long shots; bigotry, but it's exposed for what it is; an execution by deadly injection is portrayed; the film is very intense due to the subject matter but, unlike most R-rated entertainment, here nothing abusive is exploited or glorified). Based on a true story of a nun who responds to a death row inmate and helps him on his road to spiritual repentance as he faces his execution. A remarkable piece of film, it focuses on redemption and Christ's command to love one another. The most astute attempt at portraying spiritual themes this reviewer has seen since SCHINDLER'S LIST.

Surprisingly open to all sides of the capital punishment debate, the gut-wrenching plight of victims of crime is never overshadowed by the fate of the perpetrator. Although Robbins and Sarandon are renown for their extreme political and social ideals, here they seem tempered by an openness to every point of view. The audience is never subjected to sermonettes, but rather we see average people dealing with terror, loss, guilt and forgiveness. Although I hesitate to recommend the film due to the R material, the strong message of the courage and strength of Jesus overrides the movie's brutality. The events of this true story reveal how a heart ruled by patience and faith can "move mountains." Several ending scenes focus on the outcome of a life dedicated to spiritual truths. We see how hurting and ignorant hearts can be changed when we live the greatest command -- to love.

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Boatwright, a Southern Baptist, is a movie reviewer based in Thousand Oaks, Calif.

ANALYSIS

If it were a term paper,
Stone's 'Nixon' would fail

By Phil Boatwright

Baptist Press
2/13/96

THOUSAND OAKS, Calif. (BP)--The scene: President Richard Nixon alone, drinking, contemplating. The compact room dimly lit by a homey fireplace. It is silent, except for the crackling logs. However, upon closer examination, the astute movie buff will notice the fire is gas-generated.

The logs are fake. So where is the crackling coming from? Nit-picky, granted, but highly significant.

It testifies to the viewer that this is make-believe. As a serious biographical examination, it suffers from Oliver Stone's treatment of history. A college student applying the same tactics to a U.S. history term paper would undoubtedly flunk the assignment.

In Hollywood, however, filmmakers are given huge amounts of money not to present truth, but to entertain -- and in various instances take the liberty to disseminate their personal philosophies.

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NIXON, which thankfully did not receive an Oscar nomination Feb. 13, is an illusionary examination of the 37th president's childhood, private adult life and his last days in the White House. We are told the filmmaker is attempting to find the real Nixon's inner drive, but the filmgoer leaves the theater with only an artist's obsessive, one-dimensional sketch.

We see a dark side, but little else. Stone's central figure is emotionally vapid, unapproachable, vulgar and often cartoonish. Any achievement of Nixon's presidency is additionally undermined by the grotesqueness of Anthony Hopkins' Quasimodo posture and demonic smile, which combined with the film's ghoulish lighting, make his character appear to be a Bram Stoker child of the night. Certainly, Mr. Nixon was not the most charismatic of world leaders, but neither was he a hobgoblin.

This production requires one to assume everything -- from Stone's viewpoint. Did Nixon meet with right-wing J.R. Ewing types who threatened to end his presidency if he didn't guard their interests? Did he walk down the hallways, drink in hand, talking to the paintings of ex-chief executives? And what was said between Dick and Pat in the privacy of their bedroom?

Are there really moviegoers who believe Stone has answered these questions?

Noted Bob Woodward in the Los Angeles Times on Dec. 25: "... about half the movie is based on facts. The other half ranges from sound speculation to borderline slander."

"When Stone lacks a record, he makes one up," noted Edwin M. Yoder Jr. in the paper Jan. 7. Others, including Billy Graham, have voiced similar assessments of NIXON.

One of Stone's "hypothesized" scenes finds Watergate co-conspirator E. Howard Hunt insisting to White House counsel John Dean that Nixon knew of the original break-in that triggered the Watergate scandal. That conversation never occurred, Dean, a paid consultant on NIXON, told "Dateline NBC."

Stone himself conceded, "... we've made speculations and we've conjectured. We have created scenes ... which nobody ever, ever witnessed" (Los Angeles Times, Dec. 24).

Missing are the significance of Nixon's triumphs -- opening trade with China, beginning friendly negotiations with Russia, ending the Vietnam war. Although touched upon, these events receive little focus.

Will young people gain insight into the man's psyche? Not really. Only assumption and opinion. Does the film offer any detail concerning his successful college years? His honorable service in World War II? His terms in the Senate? No. Nor that he created the Environmental Protection Agency, or that he promoted Affirmative Action, or that he poured money into black colleges, or created the National Endowment for Arts & Humanities.

What they will learn is that he was forced from office because of something called Watergate. The question of why that hotel was burgled is never fully addressed.

This is not meant as a defense of Richard Nixon. It is important, however, for future generations to be cautious of a filmmaker's interpretation of political events within a dramatic presentation. Depending on the artist's slant, the main character can either be vilified or deified.

Veteran reporter Sander Vanocur said of this film, "One part of me rebels against looseness with the facts. The other part says that people have a right to interpret history in their own way" (Los Angeles Times, Jan. 5).

I question that philosophy. Who does it serve when history becomes subjective? Only those with an agenda.

NIXON tells more of its creator than its subject. Looking at Mr. Stone's body of work (JFK, PLATOON, BORN ON THE FOURTH OF JULY), one can assess this man more astutely than any of his characters. His NIXON is propaganda, not truth. Illusion, not substance. Like gas logs in the fireplace.

NIXON is rated R for profanity & obscenity throughout; J. Edgar Hoover is portrayed as a homosexual, making passes at every busboy he encounters; adult subject matter. Video Alternative: RICHARD M. NIXON REMEMBERED (Turner Home Entertainment).

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