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May 13, 1996

96-82

VIRGINIA--New FMB monthly video to tap kids' interest in missions; photos.
VIRGINIA--Emeritus missionary endured Japanese concentration camp.
TENNESSEE--Gene Getz Bible series examines men's character.
NEW ORLEANS--Baptist Christian schools' leadership seminar slated.
FLORIDA--Florida quarterback nixes magazine's 'scholar award.'
ATLANTA--First-Person: Expect 'something positive' from Butler's cancer bout.
TEXAS--Martin Coleman named to new position at RTVC.
TENNESSEE--Altar calls: Appropriate for appealing to the lost?

New FMB monthly video to tap
kids' interest in missions

Baptist Press
5/13/96

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Millions of American children today pursue the question popularized by a PBS kids' show, "Where in the world is Carmen San Diego?"

The Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board would like Southern Baptist children to start asking different questions: "Where in the world is God at work?" and "How are Southern Baptist missionaries helping?"

To help children ask those questions, the board will introduce in June a new video, titled "Kids On Mission." The eight-minute video, produced by the agency's electronic media department, is geared to grade-school children and can be used by Royal Ambassadors, Girls in Action and other children's groups in local churches.

The new video is one element in a three-part monthly package, "On Mission With God," to begin in June, replacing "Foreign Missions Update," which the board has produced monthly since 1980.

The children's video program is set in a mapmaker's shop. From there, the old-fashioned cartographer (mapmaker) and his computer-savvy assistant take their viewers (thanks to satellite, interactive and multimedia technology and a puppet character named Surfer Bob) all around the world to see the needs of people without Christ and to meet missionaries who want to share God's love with them.

One of the first stops for the show will be the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in New Orleans, where the Foreign Mission Board plans to appoint 54 new missionaries. These God-gifted people will talk about God's calling and their response.

"A huge need exists for quality Christian children's programming," said FMB President Jerry Rankin. "This program fills a void by creating awareness of and enthusiasm for God's Great Commission."

The program is designed to be used as a warm-up to an activity on missions, as a stand-alone program or as an element in a Vacation Bible School or similar setting.

"We have an obligation to meet the needs of young people with an inspiring, high-quality production," said Van Payne, director of electronic media and executive producer of the project. "This new product is part of the board's desire to be user-friendly."

Judging from the first reviews, the show's producers have hit a bull's-eye.

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One Vacation Bible School teacher said, "This will give a dimension to our material not presently available. We have tried to adapt some things to teach missions, but this is specifically designed for that purpose and it does the job in one handy package."

A parent said, "My children won't sit down and read through the pages of 'The Commission,' but I never have any problems getting them to sit for eight minutes in front of the television. This new video will be a great way to start your television viewing after school."

The new series will be released starting in June 1996. It features Alan Sader of Brunington, Va., as Mr. Christopher and Keia Jones, a high school student from Highland Springs, Va., as Meg, his assistant, along with a cast of thousands from around the world.

A second element in the new Foreign Mission Board video package is a two-minute segment called "Missions Awareness Series," featuring a quick introduction to what God is doing through Southern Baptists somewhere in the world. The segment is designed for churches to use during their Sunday morning and evening worship services as well as during Wednesday night activities.

The third segment of "On Mission With God," titled "On Mission," includes two features about what God is doing around the world, as well as a short message from FMB President Jerry Rankin.

A subscription to the new video costs \$3.95 a month; single copies are available at \$4.95. To order, call Marilyn Glazebrook at 1-800-866-FMB1 (-3621).

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(BP) photos (one vertical, one horizontal) mailed 5/13/96 to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press. Cutlines posted in SBCNet News Room.

Emeritus missionary endured
Japanese concentration camp

Baptist Press
5/13/96

CULPEPPER, Va. (BP)--Elizabeth N. Hale, Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board emeritus missionary to the Orient, died May 8. She was 90.

Hale set sail for China in 1934 and worked there through World War II.

The depth of her commitment surfaced publicly when, during a second World War II prisoner exchange in 1943, the last of 87 Foreign Mission Board missionaries sailed out of Japanese-occupied China. She chose to stay.

In a Japanese concentration camp, she lived on near-starvation rations, working in the hospital with mothers and children and counseling fellow prisoners. She was there when the war ended. Against her wishes but under Foreign Mission Board orders, she left China shortly afterwards.

She worked in Malaysia from 1952 until she retired in 1971. Through self-support, she built and managed the Bethel Hill Home for elderly Chinese women in Malaysia until 1983. The home is still open.

Hale, a single missionary, was known to colleagues as unassuming, but driven to tell others about Jesus. She developed several thriving churches in China and Malaysia as God moved in the region to draw people away from heathen religions and strengthen His witness.

"Elizabeth saw beauty in everything and everyone," said Charles H. Morris, a missionary colleague in Malaysia. "The stars were her friends by name, and no sea shell was unnoticed and unknown to her. Her delight was to sit cross-legged and look out over the sea and relish God's beauty."

Hale's work at the Bethel Hill Home required special permission from the Foreign Mission Board. Using her own resources several years before her retirement, she secured land, built a home, planted fruit trees and started livestock herds for the day she would open Bethel. Such involvement by missionaries outside Foreign Mission Board programs is generally discouraged.

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After her pastor father baptized her at age 9, "I never wanted to be anything other than a missionary," she wrote. "From then on I loved the Lord Jesus with all my heart. I longed to tell those who didn't know him."

In Malaysia, she developed several churches in North Malaya, where she also started The House of Happiness for Indian and Chinese children. Many children who benefited from that have become pastors, teachers, church leaders and successful business people.

Hale graduated from the University of Richmond (Va.) and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky. After retirement, she lived at the Culpepper (Va.) Baptist Retirement Home. Memorial services were set May 11 in Culpepper and May 19 in South Boston.

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Gene Getz Bible series
examines men's character

By David Sutton

Baptist Press
5/13/96

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Despite the burgeoning Christian men's movement in the United States today, Gene Getz believes churches, ministers and lay leaders still have a lot to learn about encouraging and helping men to grow in their faith.

"Stop and think about it: Men need to reach men," said Getz, senior pastor of Fellowship Bible Church North in Richardson, Texas, and adjunct teacher in pastoral ministries at Dallas Theological Seminary. He affirmed recent progress but emphasized more is needed.

Getz, who has been closely associated with Promise Keepers, a national organization for Christian men, is completing a 12-volume anthology dealing with the lives of men in the Bible, highlighting biblical concepts and the principles that guided them. Volumes feature Joshua, Abraham, Joseph, Nehemiah, David and others. The series is being published by the Baptist Sunday School Board's Broadman & Holman Publishers.

"I have been teaching these concepts for years," Getz said. "I tried to get inside of these men and see what made them tick."

Character, he emphasized, is the distinctive traits of a person, good or bad. Character shines brightly for all to see and makes a positive or negative impact on others.

Getz said he did not choose his subjects for the book because they never failed.

"Some of these men 'blew it big time.' For instance, David blew it and he suffered for it. Some other men in these books made some mistakes, but God held them up and they turned out to be very consistent in their conduct and, eventually, in their teaching."

Getz said he sought to identify a dimension of the life of each biblical character with particular relevance to issues men face in the 1990s. Those are referenced in the subtitles, such as "Joshua: Living as a Consistent Role Model," "Jacob: Following God Without Looking Back" and "Nehemiah: Becoming a Disciplined Leader."

Joseph was incredibly consistent," Getz said. "He remained faithful through the trial of being sold into slavery, the temptation to engage in a sexual affair and the forgiveness of his brothers.

"Nehemiah's experience touches all of us -- whether we are husband, father, pastor, CEO, president, supervisor or director," he wrote in the introduction to that volume.

"Circumstances change, cultures change, societies change, but people never change," he said. "They still have feelings and needs and desires. Their principles are our principles."

He said he hopes the series will be helpful to churches in strengthening accountability among Christian men.

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"The books are designed for personal use, yet they encourage accountability in a group study. We need to develop small groups in the local church," he said. "The local pastor is the key element of success in this area. We must remain incredibly strong in the men's movement through the local church.

"The format is basic," he continued. "I write about the principles men live by, personalized principles where the Holy Spirit speaks to you."

His goal, Getz noted, is to "get into the Scripture in depth" and encourage readers to act on what they have learned and studied.

While the primary target of the series is men, Getz maintained that women also would benefit.

"I think they (the principles) apply to women," he said. Also, "women need to understand men and how to help them become men of character."

Getz enlisted longtime friends, including Louis Cole, Howard Hendricks and Paul Meier, to write forewords to each volume.

"What better person to write about Elijah than Dr. Meier (co-founder of the Minirth-Meier New Life Clinics)," Getz said. "Elijah dealt with depression."

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Sutton is a free-lance writer in Lynnwood, Wash.

Baptist Christian schools'
leadership seminar slated

Baptist Press
5/13/96

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Author and preacher Peter Marshall will be among the featured speakers during the Southern Baptist Association of Christian Schools' "Christian School Leadership Seminar 96" June 13-15 at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

The Southern Baptist Association of Christian Schools is a professional Christian education organization of Southern Baptist Christian schools and their leaders. Registration information may be obtained by phoning the association at 1-800-722-2764.

The association was founded in 1979 and, in 1993, hired an executive director, John Chandler.

SBACS President Frank Webb of Mt. Juliet (Tenn.) Christian Academy said the annual business meeting Thursday afternoon will include discussion of establishing a SBACS Foundation and an honor's recognition program for students in writing, music, art, drama and sports.

Marshall, who will speak at 1 and 7 p.m. Thursday and 11 a.m. Saturday, is the co-author of two books on God's hand in American history, "The Light and the Glory" and "From Sea to Shining Sea." The Thursday evening session, in the seminary chapel, is open without need for registration.

Other seminar speakers and topics will be:

-- Glen Schultz, southeast regional director for the Association of Christian Schools International and member of First Baptist Church, Snellville, Ga., "Christian Education: Preparing for the Future."

-- Dave Opalewski, president, Grief Recovery Inc., Saginaw, Mich., crisis response planning.

-- John Cooley, of Roanoke, Va., legal consultant for the Association of Christian Schools International, Christian school legal issues.

-- David Culpepper, headmaster, Statesville (N.C.) Christian School, starting and operating a Christian school.

-- Dan Smithwick, founder and president, Nehemiah Institute, Inc., Lexington, Ky., a worldview testing process.

-- Bill Haycraft, vice president for development, Graceland (Ind.) College, establishing a SBACS Foundation.

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Additionally, breakout sessions will focus on such topics as recruiting students; school finances; the pastor's role; school committees and boards; teacher and administrator certification; joint SBACS and ACSI school accreditation; discipline; computers and electronic networks.

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Florida quarterback nixes
magazine's 'scholar award'

By Keith Hinson

Baptist Press
5/13/96

GAINESVILLE, Fla. (BP)--Danny Wuerffel, a senior at the University of Florida and the school's nationally known quarterback, has turned down the "Scholar Athlete Award" for Playboy magazine's 1996 Preseason College All-America Football Team.

"It's just not something I want to be associated with, and there's a whole lot of bad connotations that go along with that magazine," said Wuerffel, who has attended First Baptist Church of High Springs, Fla., the past three years.

For athletes from across the country who accept the honor, the magazine "was going to fly us all out to Arizona, put us up for the weekend" and make photographs of the players, Wuerffel noted.

Wuerffel was notified of Playboy's invitation by the University of Florida's sports information department.

"They told me about it, and I told them to call (the magazine) back and tell them it was something I was not interested in doing," said Wuerffel, who has spoken at churches, "True Love Waits" rallies and youth conferences sponsored by the Florida Baptist Convention.

Asked if he had received feedback from athletic peers or other students, Wuerffel said, "Actually it only came out yesterday (May 9), so I'm not even sure if anyone knows about it. A few of the faculty have come up to me and commended the decision.

"I really haven't talked to many players. Most of them would probably think I was a little silly but that's all right," Wuerffel said.

Eddie Gandy, pastor of the High Springs church since last August, said Wuerffel "exemplifies what being a Christian should be in an age when we've become sports-dominated. ... Danny shows us what the Christian commitment means in the midst of all the worldly exaltation we put on sports."

Gandy moved to the High Springs church from a pastorate in Huntington, W.Va., where he already had become aware of Wuerffel's Christian testimony.

"A young man from my former church had moved to Georgia, and he heard Danny speak at a conference in Atlanta," Gandy said. After hearing Wuerffel's testimony, the young man told Gandy, "When you move to Florida, you've got to get (Wuerffel) to speak in your church." To Gandy's surprise, Wuerffel was already attending the High Springs church.

"Danny is not impressed with himself," Gandy observed. "He just takes it all pretty much in stride."

Although Wuerffel grew up as a Lutheran and has not joined a Baptist church, he has attended the High Springs congregation since moving to the Gainesville area.

"I have some close friends that live out in High Springs. I've attended the church with them pretty regular for three years. I guess you could pretty much say it's home base," Wuerffel noted, adding travel schedules and speaking engagements in other churches have frequently kept him away from High Springs recently.

"This whole spring I've been out of town more than I've been in town," he said.

Wuerffel said his father has served as a Lutheran pastor and is currently a chaplain at Edwards Air Force Base in California in an interdenominational setting.

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Spiritual growth in Christ diminishes the appeal of recognitions like being named to the Playboy All-America team, Wuerffel indicated.

"I'm really growing in my relationship with God and with Christ, and the closer you get with him, the less important things like this become," Wuerffel said.

Wuerffel is "very personable, very warm, very open, very accessible, just really genuine in his relationships," Gandy stated. "You don't usually find kids in this day and age who are so person-oriented."

Wuerffel told the Gainesville Sun he had considered the possibility he might receive such an invitation from Playboy. The newspaper reported one of Wuerffel's close friends and teammates -- offensive tackle Jason Odom -- was on last year's Playboy team.

But another friend of Wuerffel's -- center Clay Shiver of Florida State University -- turned down an opportunity to be on last year's team.

Shiver, who was active in First Baptist Church of Tallahassee during his college days, said he has no regrets.

"My team chaplain felt like I would be named to (the Playboy) team," said Shiver, who lives in Tifton, Ga., where he is a member of First Baptist Church. "Before I was ever notified, he told me I needed to think about the decision.

"I decided it would be double-minded if I accepted. I felt like I couldn't really go and speak to kids and churches especially about the dangers of premarital sex -- and be in a magazine of that type," said Shiver, who noted he is moving to Texas on June 3 to join the Dallas Cowboys as a center, having been a third-round draft choice.

Shiver was asked how his peers responded to his decision to turn down the Playboy recognition.

"A lot of people really didn't understand why I would make a decision of that nature," Shiver recalled. "It gave me a chance to share my faith with a number of people in a number of ways. ... A lot of times, it was from the pulpit because people would invite me to come speak about the decision.

"A lot of people said it would hurt me as far as All-American teams are concerned. ... In my mind, I knew that God would take care of that. I felt like I would honor him more by turning it down than by accepting it."

Still, Shiver said his FSU teammates were not surprised. "For the most part, they knew where I stood on those issues," Shiver observed.

Shiver said he supports Wuerffel's decision "in every way. I know him really well, and I expected nothing less than that. ... I'm glad he turned it down."

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FIRST-PERSON

Expect 'something positive'
from Butler's cancer bout

By Victor Lee

Baptist Press

5/13/96

ATLANTA (BP)--The baseball strike was at its height, a crisis atmosphere permeating. There were no popular players. Spring training should have begun weeks before, but the only gathering of players in Florida or Arizona was to explain their position to minor leaguers -- and to try to discourage any of them from crossing union lines.

By this time I was leery of even the players I liked. There were too many contentious tones, too much serious talk associated with what was once a game. Immediately after a meeting in West Palm Beach, the players scattered. All except one.

Some minor leaguers wanted a deeper explanation. A few more of the media wanted to talk. Brett Butler lingered. He took no offensive tone, didn't appear impatient. He sat on a tabletop and calmly tried to explain.

In the midst of a "crisis" in the game, during a time when talk was cheap and abrasive, Butler was a picture of calm and poise.

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Now he is learning about real crisis. He has been diagnosed with cancer of the tonsils. The survival rate looks good: 70 percent. But it's the 30 you think about.

It is in a crisis that you see the true makeup of a person. And experience tells me this: What you will see from Brett Butler from this time until the matter is resolved is the same thing I saw in that meeting room in Florida: poise, calm, peace.

Just ask Tim Cash. The former pro baseball player now ministers to athletes with Unlimited Potential, Inc. Cash and Butler are members of Hebron Baptist Church in Dacula, Ga.; Cash leads a weekly Bible study during the winter in Butler's home.

"I think Brett is a man of genuine Christian integrity and character, and based on his faith in Christ, I think it's been predetermined how he will respond, regardless of testing or trial," Cash said.

Atlanta Braves pitcher John Smoltz and Florida Marlins third baseman Terry Pendleton are other regulars at the Bible study.

"I think if everybody were to get this, the majority would not know how to handle this as well as Brett," Smoltz said May 9. "That's not to say that Brett isn't a little scared, but he has the foundation to take this in stride and make this positive instead of negative.

"He's been so solid on and off the field. He's the type of person that, whatever comes of this, he will show something positive."

Pendleton said Butler "was never one to sit around and sulk. He's a fighter. With God on his side, he's in a win-win situation."

Butler is the epitome of a professional, but he's more. He's compassionate, reasonable, a normal guy in an industry of abnormal individualists. He has long been every man's ballplayer. His shock of gray hair and unimposing body have made him seem more like one of the boys.

He was a fan favorite in Atlanta, Cleveland, San Francisco and Los Angeles, not to mention consistently being one of the game's top lead-off hitters (career .291 hitter with an average of more than 35 stolen bases per season). He went to the Mets as a free-agent last April, but the Dodgers missed his leadership and clubhouse influence so badly they traded for him.

Now he's even more like a regular guy, his unfortunate disease helping to dispel the indestructible athlete persona. Brett Butler is the kind of player and man we have always looked up to, and now -- in the twilight of his career -- we are able to watch him teach his greatest lesson.

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Lee, based in Wake Forest, N.C., is a free-lance writer and columnist for Sports Spectrum, a Christian sports magazine. He formerly was a sportswriter for the Palm Beach Post, West Palm Beach, Fla.

Martin Coleman named
to new position at RTVC

By C.C. Risenhoover

Baptist Press
5/13/96

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--In 1977 Martin Coleman was on the rooftop of his parents' home in Louisville, Ky., praying God would tell him what he wanted him to do.

"During my prayer two words popped into my head," Coleman said. "Those words were 'Christian media.' I thought some details would be forthcoming, but that's all that ever came."

Coleman spent the next 17 years trying to get a handle on the words "Christian media," but it was not until 1994 that he fully comprehended what God wanted him to do. That was the year he got the call to become producer of "Home Life," a daily television program produced by the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission.

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After producing 102 episodes of "Home Life," Coleman was recently named director of program acquisition and development for the RTVC. In this capacity he will serve as a liaison between FamilyNet and ACTS (the broadcast and cable television services of the RTVC) and all program producers, including producers of in-house productions.

"Martin's responsibilities include reviewing all programming to determine its suitability to reach audiences in the most effective manner," said Jerry Stamps, RTVC senior vice president of administration. "He will be involved in shaping program content, format, talent recommendations, market research, focus groups, program critique groups and so on. He will participate in the development of new programs that we will produce and will also seek to acquire programming through joint venture, sponsorship, co-production and barter. In short, he will use every appropriate means to bring the finest programming to the largest number of viewers in a way that will change their lives."

Coleman reports to Deborah Key, vice president of network operations at the RTVC and general manager of FamilyNet and ACTS.

"With Martin's help, we'll be making some major strides in programming in the near future," she said. "We've formed some strategic relationships that put us in position to make a major impact in Christian broadcasting."

"This is where God wants me to be," Coleman said. "I spent many years preparing for this responsibility, though during that time I often wasn't sure why I was involved in various work and projects. For a while I thought I was just wandering with no sense of direction, but every work experience I've had was God's way of preparing me for what I'm now doing."

Following high school, Coleman enrolled in Belmont College in Nashville, Tenn., where he graduated in 1983.

"I was still looking for meaning to the words 'Christian media,'" he recounted. "Then I heard about a master of arts in communication program at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. And it was the same year my father (Lucien) was leaving a teaching position at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville to take a position at Southwestern. So, I decided God must want me to go to Fort Worth to produce programs for ACTS."

Coleman said he was so sure he enrolled at Southwestern and, in the spring of 1984, got a job at the RTVC.

"My title was material services coordinator," he said, laughing. "What the job entailed was working in the mail room and doing anything that wasn't in someone else's job description. But, I learned some valuable lessons. I learned that the people being hired in TV had secular experience. People who had seminary degrees were not being hired as producers. I guess you can say that I saw the handwriting on the wall, so I left after only a few months."

Surmising ACTS might not succeed and the seminary was not the way to get where he wanted to go, Coleman said he felt as if he was back at square one. He dropped out of seminary and spent a year at Texas Christian University in Fort Worth, taking courses and working on the school paper. He also spent a couple of years as a sports editor for the Plano (Texas) Star-Courier.

"I was wandering, searching, but nothing was working out," he said. "In 1987 I decided that if I really wanted to be in TV, I needed to make a commitment. So I enrolled in the radio-television-film program at the University of North Texas in Denton."

Approximately 18 months later Coleman was hired by Westcott Communications in Dallas as a writer and production assistant. He became a producer, then program manager. During his five years with the company, he produced almost 1,000 programs.

"In June of '94 Westcott stock dropped 60 percent overnight and the knee-jerk reaction was a corporate cleansing and layoff," Coleman said. "I had been praying that God would change my job situation because of burnout and no satisfaction in what I was doing. But being laid off was not the answer I anticipated."

After learning his fate, Coleman's first call was to Bernie Hargis, an RTVC producer and his Sunday school teacher at Travis Avenue Baptist Church in Fort Worth. Hargis put him in touch with Bob Thornton, RTVC vice president of television services, who told him about a new program called "Home Life" that the SBC agency wanted to produce.

"After Bob told me about 'Home Life,' I felt I was truly born to produce the show," he said. "But there was no producer job available because the budget hadn't been approved."

Coleman said he felt so strongly he needed to be available for "Home Life" that he turned down another job a month after talking to Thornton.

"Bob called me a month after I turned the other job down and asked me to produce 'Home Life,'" he said. "It was an answer to prayer. I've never had any doubt that the RTVC is where God wants me to be, but it took a few years and a half-dozen jobs for God to prepare me and lead me here. If I've learned any lesson on my bumpy road, it's that God's timing may not always coincide with our own. And now I understand what God meant when he put those words, 'Christian media,' in my head."

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Altar calls: Appropriate
for appealing to the lost?

By Chele Caughron

Baptist Press
5/13/96

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--The public invitation conceived by Separate Baptists in the late 1700s has throughout this century been a trademark of Southern Baptist churches across the country.

The Separate Baptists, who preceded Southern Baptists, were moderate Calvinists who believed that sinners may freely choose or refuse life in Christ. Their belief aroused a zeal for evangelism, and Separate Baptists are thought to have extended altar calls even before Charles Finney popularized the public invitation during the revival era of the 1800s.

But as this century comes to a close, some pastors have decided the traditional altar call must be set aside if the spiritually needy of today are to be reached.

Others, meanwhile, voice concern that sacrificing the public invitation for the sake of not offending may leave lost people without opportunity to find Christ.

When Chris Hembrough took the pastorate of a new church start, Atlee Community Church in Mechanicsville, Va., he felt an altar call could be a barrier to those he was trying to reach.

"We have done one walk-the-aisle public invitation, and some of our folks were very uncomfortable with it because we promoted ourselves as being a church that is non-threatening," Hembrough said. "I don't think we'll ever do it again."

Rod Chaney, pastor of Sunrise Church in the Chapel Hill, N.C., area, said he also forgoes a formal invitation in an effort to avoid violating people's intellect, emotions and will.

"We don't want to violate their emotions by singing four verses of 'Just As I Am' and trying to manipulate them," Chaney said.

Atlee and Sunrise churches target baby boomers. Both Hembrough and Chaney said if they were at more traditional church bodies, they likely would offer a formal public invitation.

Without an invitation, said Jerre Brannen, a layman from Gainesville, Fla., who actively shares his faith, "My greatest fear is that we would lose our urgency of inviting people to receive the Lord Jesus.

"An invitation is an urgency to accept God's cure for the world's most deadly disease, sin," Brannen said. "Not to give an invitation would be like sharing the cure for a terminally ill disease and then not expressing the urgency to receive that cure."

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After the annual Christmas concert at Rock Hill Baptist Church in St. Louis, Bill Bowyer in the past never offered an invitation, although he did at virtually every other worship service. This past year he came under conviction to offer a public invitation at the concert as well.

"The gospel had been explained so beautifully in the music, and sometimes people just need to know what to do next," Bowyer said.

Circumstances do not always allow for the traditional altar call, however. For example, because of the stage set at Rock Hill's Easter pageant, there was no room for people to come forward. The church instead provided response cards for attenders to sign regarding any decisions they had made there.

Response cards are among the alternatives to the public invitation many of the seeker-targeted churches like Atlee and Sunrise are using to invite people into a personal relationship with Christ.

Others include:

- an open prayer time at the altar.
- a hospitality room open to inquirers.
- a prayer room open during the worship service.
- a sinner's prayer offered from the pulpit.
- an invitation to inquirers to come forward after the service.

"We offer some form of an invitation every week, but it is not a public walk forward in front of everybody," said Larry Trotter, pastor of North Wake Baptist Church in Wake Forest, N.C.

North Wake offers a hospitality room after the service where Trotter and other staff members are stationed to field questions in one-on-one conversations.

Rob Myers, pastor of Harvest Church of the Valleys in California, said he has found that an altar call can work even in a seeker-targeted church.

"If you try to take everything out of the service that might offend the unbeliever you'll have them sitting there looking at four blank walls," Myers said. "You're going to have to risk confronting with the gospel.

"We feel like people need a point of decision. A lot of times if it's not offered, they won't do it," he said. "If you are as creative giving an invitation as you can be, you can be seeker-sensitive with the invitation."

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Caughron is a free-lance writer in Wake Forest, N.C. Adapted from SBC LIFE, published by the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee.

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