

**(BP)**

September 18, 1996

96-165

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**SBC Executive Committee OKs  
\$150,000 for college group**

**By Herb Hollinger**

**Baptist Press  
9/18/96**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--In a relatively quiet -- and quick -- meeting, the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee granted \$150,000 to a Baptist schools association following the early closing of the Education Commission and declined to act on a number of referred motions from the SBC annual meeting in New Orleans.

The Sept. 16-18 regular meeting of the Executive Committee concluded Tuesday at mid-afternoon following a one-hour plenary session where there was no debate and all votes on recommendations were apparently unanimous.

A shortened meeting appeared likely when the schedule eliminated a budget request presentation by each of the 19 SBC agencies, a regular part of the September meeting. Officials decided to do all of the budget preparation for the 1997-98 SBC year at the February meeting because of the denominational restructuring which reduces the number of SBC agencies from 19 to 12, including a new North American Mission Board which won't officially function until June 1997.

The Association of Southern Baptist Colleges and Schools (ASBCS) will receive \$150,000 over two years in a request from the Education Commission approved by the Executive Committee. The Education Commission will dissolve Dec. 31, 1996, and commissioners asked the Executive Committee to grant the funds from the commission's budget to help ASBCS get started. ASBCS will assume some of the functions of the Education Commission following its closure.

Action on the grant request came following a report by Implementation Task Force chairman Bob Reccord, pastor of First Baptist Church, Norfolk, Va. His report noted the "operational facilities" of the Radio and Television Commission in Fort Worth, Texas, would stay in Texas while the "executive leadership team" would relocate to the offices of the North American Mission Board in suburban Atlanta. Also, the Brotherhood Commission's property in Memphis, Tenn., has been listed for sale. The RTVC, Brotherhood and Home Mission Board will merge into the North American Mission Board in June 1997.

The Executive Committee took action, by declining to act in most instances, on 16 motions referred from the SBC annual meeting in New Orleans in June:

-- affirmed SBC Bylaw 16(5) has "sufficient instruction to the Committee on Nominations to ensure that the convention's interests are honored and declines to recommend any change to Bylaw 16(5)." The referral sought to prohibit agency heads and their elected staffs from suggesting candidates for service on their governing boards.

-- affirmed the SBC in annual session should continue to "exercise with care its right to elect qualified ministers and laypersons as its officers and declines to recommend any change in the SBC Constitution." The referral would require either the SBC president or a vice president to be a layman.

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-- declined to recommend SBC Bylaw 28(2) be amended. The referral would require convention entities to report to the maker of a motion any disposition of a motion referred to the agency by the convention. The Executive Committee said the referral is "announced to the messengers and published in the proceedings ... providing concerned messengers the opportunity to initiate communication with the (referred entity) and to obtain from the entity information about its response."

-- said it interprets SBC Bylaw 28(2) as requiring entities to provide specific information to the convention when declining to act on referred motions and declined any further action. The referral would require the agencies to provide a full explanation when declining to act on the motions.

-- said guidelines "are sufficient" for determining messenger credentials in declining to study the matter further on a referral seeking a mechanism to determine when a church is in violation of Article III, Membership of the SBC constitution.

-- said the committee will continue its current practice of responding to requests for information about certain groups and organizations but declined to broaden that practice as, apparently, sought in a referral which named the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and Alliance of Baptists specifically.

-- declined to publish a list of African American churches which have been targets of arsonist "because such lists are currently available from the Christian Life Commission and the Brotherhood Commission ... ."

-- requested the Christian Life Commission study the feasibility of a system of voting by proxy all investments held by entities of the SBC "so that Southern Baptists' moral views can positively impact corporate America." The committee asked the CLC to give a progress report at the February 1997 meeting with a final report by the SBC annual meeting in June 1997. The referred motion asked the committee to establish a system by which the CLC could vote by proxy all investments held by SBC institutions.

-- declined to adopt a policy of scheduling SBC annual meetings during the third week of June because "defining a specific week could restrict the choice of facilities and cities due to other prescheduled events." The referred motion sought a regularly scheduled SBC meeting for the third week of June.

-- declined action to study holding annual conventions in northern and eastern states after the year 2002. The committee said these geographical locations are already considered in the current site selection policy.

-- declined to research holding satellite or regional meetings of the Pastors' Conference and the SBC annual meeting, citing no direct responsibility for the Pastors' Conference and increased costs, diluted fellowship and increased complexity in conducting the annual meetings as requested in the referral.

-- declined to act on a motion to hold annual meetings in a city where Southern Baptist work is not well established. The committee said the current site selection policy includes an evaluation of the support and encouragement of the SBC annual meeting to the work of Southern Baptists in cities under consideration.

-- will refer to the new North American Mission Board a motion to develop national television and radio spots to reach people for Christ, strengthen families and enhance the image of Southern Baptists.

-- affirmed the SBC's Inter-Agency Council for its plans to support Christian schools and home schools and the Baptist Sunday School Board's weekday education program assignment, in recommending no further study. A referred motion asked all SBC entities to develop ways to assist the schools associated with the SBC.

-- declined to study the establishment of a four-year, liberal arts university owned by the SBC. The committee cited more urgent priorities of missions and evangelism.

-- declined to create an additional track of Cooperative Program giving asked in a referral, citing current practices dating since 1925 which "have served the SBC well."

Three resolutions of appreciation were approved: Mark Short, retiring executive director of the Louisiana Baptist Convention; Orville H. Griffin, retiring executive director-treasurer of the State Convention of Baptists in Ohio; and Gene Wilson, who has taken disability retirement as executive director-treasurer of the Illinois Baptist State Association.

In other action, the Executive Committee approved an additional meeting for the SBC Committee on Order of Business for 1996-97; OK'd a proposed total of \$4,736,000, a 6.45 percent increase, for the SBC Operating Budget in the 1997-98 SBC Program Allocation Budget, citing a need to "cover the expense related to new ministry assignments to be funded" in the 1997-98 budget; approved the Baptist Sunday School Board's request to publish a new publication, "Church Stewardship Magazine;" approved an amended and restated supplement to the Southern Baptist Protection Program Convention Annuity Plan; OK'd staff structure changes and personnel decisions of President Morris H. Chapman relating to the committee's new ministry assignment of Cooperative Program Advancement upon dissolution of the Stewardship Commission; approved amendments to the committee's personnel manual relating to housing allowances for staff; and approved the firm of Arthur Andersen LLP as auditor for the fiscal year of 1996-97.

**Va. conservatives not pushing  
new conventions in other states**

**By Tom Strode**

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--After voting to form a new convention, conservative Southern Baptist leaders in Virginia asserted they would not recommend such action in other states, but they acknowledged their precedent-setting move was being keenly observed.

"I would not encourage conservatives in other states to do this unless, in their prayerful judgment, it is absolutely necessary," said T.C. Pinckney, an Alexandria layman who started a newsletter which is credited with helping unite conservative Southern Baptists in Virginia.

However, "Texas conservatives are watching us closely," Pinckney said. "Once (conservatives in other states) see that our group has done it, it makes it easier if they feel it is really necessary."

The unanimous vote by about 500 conservative Southern Baptists Sept. 16 at a Richmond church means Virginia now has two conventions identified with Southern Baptists -- The Baptist General Association of Virginia and the new one, which for now is named Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia. It is the first time Southern Baptists have had competing conventions in the same state, observers say.

Theological differences with the moderate-dominated BGAV and a desire to support fully the Southern Baptist Convention led Virginia conservatives to form the SBCV in 1993. Messengers to the BGAV already had voted to include a national, moderate organization, the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, in one of its giving plans. Most state conservative leaders advised like-minded churches to continue working within the framework of the BGAV for change. When the BGAV approved in November 1994 a bylaw change which markedly reduced messenger representation from conservative churches, however, the SBCV began studying the option of forming its own convention.

Virginia is not the only state which has experienced tension in recent years between a convention establishment which is uncomfortable with, or even opposed to, the conservative resurgence in the Southern Baptist Convention and conservatives who support the change in national leadership. Texas probably is the next best example of a state convention which has become increasingly identified with moderates, resulting in the establishment of an organization by dissatisfied conservatives. The possibility of a competing convention in Texas also has been mentioned.

Doyle Chauncey, the SBCV's executive director, said he thinks the decision by Virginia conservatives "reflects the frustration in some of the states where there's a large opposition to the Southern Baptist Convention, primarily the four big states of North Carolina, Virginia, Kentucky and Texas."

"I think it demonstrates the frustration level that's in those states with churches that want their state conventions to fully support the SBC, but then when they see this kind of hybrid giving system to where the CBF is included in with the SBC ... it disillusiones many of those churches, and they really don't want to be a part of a state convention that doesn't totally support the SBC," Chauncey said.

"So I think it will send a message to some of those states that this may be the alternative that they perhaps need to take. We're not advocating that. We're saying that Virginia is different. It's not like North Carolina; it's not like any of the other states. This is what we had to do under our special circumstance, so we aren't saying that this is anything that anybody else ought to do," Chauncey said.

Before the historic vote, Chauncey underscored the SBCV's commitment to the SBC by telling messengers 50 percent of the new \$774,000 budget would go to the SBC Cooperative Program.

A disappointed but not surprised BGAV Executive Director Reginald McDonough said, "I do feel that the future of denominationalism is going to be with people who have an affinity (who will) tend to come together and work together. My hope was that we could find a way to work together ... ."

He has three concerns, McDonough said, about the new state convention: 1) The confusion which will result in churches as they seek to determine which group to identify with; 2) the duplication of services, which he called "questionable stewardship," and 3) a potential weakening of the missions effort of both the state and SBC.

A new state convention actually will help missions, said a conservative leader.

This is "not something that needs to be repeated in every state convention," said Richmond-based evangelist Howard Baldwin, a former interim director of the SBCV. "We hope that it will not be. We feel like Virginia is unique and that we can get missions work done better by going in" separate directions.

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CORRECTION: In (BP) story titled "RTVC facilities to continue in use after SBC restructuring," dated 9/17/96, please correct the spelling of the city reported in the third paragraph to Alpharetta, Ga., not Alapahretta.

Also, in the third-from-the-last paragraph, please correct the beginning of the second sentence to read: "The ITF's report to the SBC in June said the vast majority of SBC employees will continue in their current jobs ... ."

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CORRECTION: In (BP) story titled "Virginia conservatives form new state convention," dated 9/17/96, please correct the third paragraph's last sentence to read: "The SBCV already had 115 contributing churches before voting to become a state convention."

Thanks,  
Baptist Press

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**Growing bilingual church offers  
unique ministries to community**

By Linda Lawson

**Baptist Press  
9/18/96**

CARROLLTON, Texas (BP)--In 1970, after a Cuban woman in the community became a Christian through the efforts of an Anglo member of First Baptist Church, Carrollton, Texas, concern arose about how she could participate in Bible study in her own language.

Pastor Wayne Allen was approached about the need for a Sunday school class in Spanish. FBC member Marta Iglesias agreed to be the teacher and the class started in a small building on the church parking lot with three people present.

Today, Primera Iglesia Bautista Hispana stands as a living tribute to the church's willingness to meet a need -- and the faithfulness of Iglesias, who still teaches an adult class. The church has about 200 members and is the largest of five congregations using the facility left vacant when FBC, Carrollton, moved to a new location. Others are Korean, Cambodian, Vietnamese and African American.

Iglesias attributes the growth of the congregation to "the grace of God. We're reaping what we sowed all those years. It's an illustration of his promise that if we're faithful to him, he's faithful to us."

Santos Ramos became pastor of the church in 1979 when the congregation included a large contingent of Cuban-Americans. Services were held in Spanish. Today, he said the church includes several Hispanic nationalities -- Salvadorans, Nicaraguans, Mexican-Americans and "Texicans who are very fluent in English."

Worship services are bilingual, which presents unique challenges to Ramos.

"In my case, I knew English before I knew Spanish," he laughed. "If I mess up, I'll mess up in Spanish."

Adult Sunday school classes, except for one college and career class, continue to be held in Spanish. Classes for preschoolers, children and youth are conducted in English.

The church has a long tradition of strong Sunday school and discipleship training ministries, Ramos said.

"We have very fine teaching," Ramos said. "We try to get our teachers to Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center and associational training sessions. They are well equipped."

Ramos, who taught church training every summer at Glorieta for 19 years, led the adults in building a discipleship training ministry using "La Fe Bautista," the Baptist Sunday School Board's discipleship training periodical in Spanish, and its successor begun in October 1995, "Discipulado Cristiano."

While Ramos was comfortable and accustomed to "La Fe Bautista," he acknowledged some had grown tired of its traditional format.

He cited a member, Reina Henriques, who travels on business every two weeks to El Salvador. After receiving a copy of Discipulado Cristiano, "she read it all the way through and couldn't put it down."

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"She picks out people on the plane and shares the stories with them," Ramos said. "She just fell in love with the material and has been able to share with other people."

Because the church currently does not have a discipleship training director, Ramos said he enlists adults to lead individual units of the curriculum. While leading a unit dealing with the needs of single parents, Sanjuna Almaguer said she gained a better understanding of the needs of single parents she works with through the food and clothing ministry sponsored by FBC, Carrollton, and located at the missions site.

"She has at least two professions of faith a week and tells me Discipulado Cristiano has opened her eyes and she's identifying needs," Ramos said.

Throughout its history, the church has had a variety of ministries with Hispanic people in the community. Until recently, most church members "were concentrated in apartments. Just recently they have begun to buy their own homes.

"This church is known in the community. It gives a witness," Ramos said. "There are referrals from one person to another about this church."

In addition to ministering to Hispanic people who have moved to Carrollton and stayed, Ramos said the church has had a unique ministry "to people as they come by and stay three months, six months or a year." He cited former church members who have moved on to Canada or returned to Mexico and have written back to "tell us they have started a church."

Also, church members employed in the computer industry have begun bringing people from Central and South American countries who have traveled to the Dallas area for several weeks of computer training. Ramos cited a man from Venezuela who recently made a profession of faith after hearing the gospel for the first time. After completing his training, he returned to Venezuela as a Christian.

For the future, Ramos said he believes the value of a Hispanic church for Hispanic people will increase.

"Those who do not know English well will not go to an Anglo church," he said. "If they are going to attend a church, it will have to be Hispanic."

At the same time, he acknowledged some Hispanic Christians, especially college graduates, will move to predominantly Anglo churches, in part because facilities often are better.

To upgrade their facilities and reach more people, Primera Iglesia has launched a capital campaign, Vision 2000. The other four congregations located in the buildings are conducting similar campaigns. FBC, Carrollton, will match all funds raised.

"This may be one of the first examples of ethnic congregations raising money in this way," Allen observed.

Meanwhile, Ramos said his church will continue its emphasis "on reaching people and using to the fullest extent the facilities we have here. We're going to be here. People are catching a sense of responsibility and accountability."

Discipulado Cristiano and other Spanish materials are available from the Sunday School Board. For more information, or to order, call 1-800-458-2772. A Spanish-speaking operator can be reached by calling 1-800-257-7744.

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(BP) photo to accompany this story is posted in SBCNet News Room.

**World Changers' commitment  
evidenced by record offering**

**By Shelley Smith**

**Baptist Press  
9/18/96**

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (BP)--When participants at this year's 37 World Changers projects gave a record \$28,112.61 to support the work of ministries in Memphis, Tenn., and Savannah, Ga., they underscored their commitment to Christ and fulfilling his Great Commission.

It wasn't enough that they had traveled from all corners of the country, forfeited a week of their summer vacation and sacrificed the comforts of home.

"This offering represents the largest amount ever given by World Changers participants," said World Changers director Andy Morris. "It represents their commitment to a complete missions experience of not only praying for missions and doing missions, but also giving to missions."

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Sponsored by the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission, World Changers offers youth an opportunity to participate in a variety of coeducational missions projects involving home construction and renovation through World Changers or participation in inner-city ministries and paint projects through World Tour.

Each year World Changers sponsors an offering which goes to a special missions project or need. In previous years, offering funds have been used to purchase materials to help build an inner-city playground in Kansas City, Mo.; a church building in Montana; and a Christian academy in Nicaragua. This year's offering, however, will be used differently.

"This offering goes beyond meeting needs specific to World Changers," said George Siler, World Changers associate director. "We specifically chose ministries which we've worked with and built relationships with through World Tour."

Since Memphis and Savannah are stationary locations for World Changers and World Tour projects, it was decided the offering would be divided equally between the two cities. Ministries chosen to be recipients of the offering include Brinkley Heights Baptist Church in Memphis, the Union Mission in Savannah and Savannah Baptist Center.

Brinkley Heights Baptist, a small mission church located in a transitional area of Memphis, offers emergency food and clothing assistance, summer children's clubs, apartment Bible studies, substance abuse counseling and health-care screening. Union Mission in Savannah provides homeless people with housing as well as education and job training programs and substance abuse treatment. It also offers ministry to AIDS victims. Savannah Baptist Center offers age-graded Bible studies, a food pantry and clothing closet, tutorial services and literacy classes.

"Ministries such as Brinkley Heights, Savannah Baptist Center and Union Mission embody the spirit of what we are trying to teach participants in all our projects -- that serving Christ means serving others and being unafraid to get dirty. It's taking Christ to the people. It's hands-on charity," Siler said.

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Smith is associate editor of World Changers materials at the Brotherhood Commission.

**G-rated movies at box office  
more profitable than R-rated**

**By C.C. Risenhoover**

**Baptist Press  
9/18/96**

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--While broad audience movies propelled the year-end box office in 1995, R-rated movies dragged down the total gross.

In Ted Baehr's "Report to the Entertainment Industry," he said throughout 1995 Hollywood seemed shocked some of its prized, big-budget movies flopped at the box office.

"For example, 'Jade,' 'Strange Days' and 'The Scarlet Letter' were dead on arrival and resulted in as much as \$150 million in losses that left many people in the industry shaken," said Baehr, chairman of the Christian Film and Television Commission, with offices in Norcross, Ga., and North Hollywood, Calif.

Baehr, one of the first recipients of a "Covenant" award from the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission for promoting values in media, said a top studio executive expressed his concern by saying, "I don't know what the lessons are here, except we're making a lot of movies that people don't want to see."

For Baehr, the lessons are more easily understood. In 1995, the average gross receipts of G-rated movies were 250 percent more than those of R-rated movies. Gross receipts of PG-rated movies were 168 percent more than R-rated films, and PG-13 rated movies were 213 percent more than those with an R-rating.

Other 1995 big-budget flops mentioned by Baehr were "Judge Dredd," "Vampire in Brooklyn," "The Mighty Morphin Power Rangers," "Fair Game," "Showgirls" and "Assassins."

"Famous directors' film noirs such as Oliver Stone's 'Nixon' and Martin Scorsese's 'Casino' failed to find many people who were interested in revisionist history and Mafia violence," Baehr said. "The failure of 'Assassins' and 'Showgirls' raised questions about the salaries of some studio executives and about the appeal of several stars. The stars are not the cause of the failure of these films, but rather the change in the attitudes of the American people who no longer want to be fed an entertainment diet of perverse sex, porno-violence and revisionist history."

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Baehr said in 1995 an end-of-the-year surge in worthwhile entertaining films like "Toy Story," "Jumanji," "Sense and Sensibility," "Sabrina" and "Father of the Bride II" brought a broad audience of moral Americans back to the local multiplex and saved the yearly box office gross from being a total disaster.

The Hollywood Reporter reported 1.26 billion tickets sold for a gross of \$5.51 billion, whereas Variety reported 1.22 billion tickets sold for a gross of \$5.35 billion.

"Only seven pictures broke through the \$100 million level, as measured in combined U.S.-Canadian grosses," Baehr said. "The year's biggest hit was 'Batman Forever' at near \$184 million, which is a strong morality tale that was written by two Christians who are actively involved in Christian ministry in Hollywood.

"In 1994, 10 films reached \$100 million, including two that soared to \$300 million. Those two, 'Forrest Gump' and 'The Lion King,' were both strong morality tales.

"The top 10 of 1995 grossed \$1.23 billion, which was \$352 million, or 22 percent below, the \$1.58 billion for the top 10 of 1994."

Baehr said while only 35 percent of movies produced in 1995 reflected biblical principles, 40 percent of the top 10 grossing films reflected such principles.

He said films that had clear biblical principles, such as ontological realism, were "Dead Man Walking," "Sense and Sensibility," "Toy Story," "Father of the Bride II," "Braveheart" and "First Knight."

"It is impressive that 40 percent of the top 10 box office grossing feature films for the United States and Canada for 1995 featured Christian and biblical principles, themes and/or worldviews," Baehr said. "There were 14 percent more movies with biblical themes, worldviews and elements in the top 25 hits in 1995 than there were in 1994.

"There were 209 percent more movies with Christian themes, characters and worldviews in the top 25 hits in 1995 than there were in 1994. And, movies that featured a strong Christian worldview earned an average of 269 percent more than movies that had anti-Christian elements and 113 percent more than movies with strong New Age or occult elements."

Baehr said there were a number of movies from unexpected sources that lift up Jesus Christ.

"One of the most evangelistic movies of all time," he said, "was 'Dead Man Walking,' which presented the Gospel of Jesus Christ with great care and passion. 'Richard III,' 'Restoration,' 'Braveheart,' 'Sense and Sensibility,' 'The Feast of July,' 'Othello,' 'Persuasion,' 'First Knight,' 'Les Miserables,' 'Cry the Beloved Country,' 'While You Were Sleeping' and many, many other movies presented the Gospel, extolled Jesus Christ and commended church. This is a significant change and bodes well for the future of the entertainment industry."

Baehr said he found it interesting that a USA Today survey found going to church was a favorite activity of Americans, surpassing going out to eat, sports and movies.

"Church attendance in 1995 was 5.3 billion," he said. "Movie attendance was 1.22 billion. In 1995 Americans gave \$105.1 billion to church and charity. They spend \$13.8 billion on videos and \$5.3 billion at the box office.

"According to a 1993 Gallup Poll, attendance at religious functions totaled 5.6 billion, which was 54 times greater than the 103 million people who attended professional football, baseball and basketball games."

Despite all this, in the 1993 television season the Media Research Center found that negative references to clergy outnumbered positive ones four-to-one in a study of 1,000 hours of television programming. The same study found that portrayals of lay believers was even worse, with 68 percent of churchgoers on TV depicted negatively and only 18 percent presented positively.

"Although the portrayal of clergy and churchgoers improved in 1994," Baehr said, "the amount of anti-Christian bigotry in prime-time fiction television continued to be shocking with 31 percent of clergy and 35 percent of Christian laity portrayed negatively."

Baehr quoted Gallup and Barna Research surveys showing 60 to 70 percent of all Americans are saying religion is "very important" to them, and only 8 to 14 percent of the population is saying religion is "not important" to them.

He also mentioned a large 1994 Times Mirror study that found eight out of 10 adults describing themselves as God-fearing churchgoers who pray, and a U.S. News & World Report poll that found 62 percent of Americans saying the influence of religion in their own lives is increasing.

"It should come as no surprise that during a period in which there has been the beginnings of revival in the church, attitudes in America have changed considerably," Baehr said. "Ten years ago less than 50 percent of the people in America were concerned about the breakdown of morality in society. In 1995, New York Times and Gallup polls showed that 80 percent of the American people were concerned."

Baehr made reference to a 1995 USA Today/CNN/Gallup poll dealing with broader entertainment industry issues. This survey of 65,142 viewers found:

- 96 percent are very concerned or somewhat concerned about sex on television;
- 97 percent are very or somewhat concerned about vulgar language on TV; and
- 97 percent are very or somewhat concerned about violence on TV.
- 83 percent of those polled said that the entertainment industry should make a serious effort to reduce sex and violence in movies, music and TV, and
- 68 percent believe that reducing the amount of sex and violence in movies, music and TV would significantly improve the moral climate in the USA.
- 65 percent of those polled felt the entertainment industry is seriously out of touch with the values of the American people.

"A startling 63 percent of those polled felt that the federal government should become involved in restricting the sex and violence presented by the entertainment industry," Baehr said. "This figure shows the degree of concern about the influence of movies and entertainment."

"For many cogent reasons, we do not think that the government is the best institution to deal with this issue, mainly because the values of those in government often do not reflect the values of the American people. Instead of government intervention in the creative process, we believe that the entertainment industry should adopt standards, just as other professions have standards, so that it can regulate itself. Furthermore, the entertainment industry should work with the Christian Film and Television Commission, the SBC Radio and Television Commission and other concerned groups to appeal to the broadest possible audience in order to fend off government censorship."

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**Max Lucado receives  
Texas Baptist award**

**By Dan Martin**

**Baptist Press  
9/18/96**

SAN ANTONIO, Texas (BP)--Max Lucado, popular author and Church of Christ preacher, was presented the 1996 Texas Baptist Communications Award during a banquet Sept. 16 in San Antonio, Texas.

Lucado, pulpit minister of Oak Hills Church of Christ in San Antonio, is author of 14 best-selling Christian books as well as host of a 15-minute radio program broadcast over more than 180 stations in the United States.

In presenting the award, Martha Atchison, of McAllen, chair of the communications advisory committee of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, noted one of the criteria for the award is that the recipient has made "creative and original use of a communications medium."

The recipient, she added, "is selected on the basis of service to the religious life of the community and/or state" and not because of their religious affiliation.

While the 2.6-million member Baptist General Convention of Texas has given the communications award to persons of other denominations, Lucado is the first member of the Church of Christ to receive the honor.

William M. Pinson Jr., BGCT executive director, told Lucado the award is a way to "say thank you for what you do and the way you have demonstrated the values that we Texas Baptists hold dear."

Pinson alluded to Texas 2000, the effort of Texas Baptists to share the gospel with every Texan by the year 2000, and said: "Communicating the gospel is what we are about as Texas Baptists. You have given your life to that through teaching, preaching, your books, your radio broadcasts."

In presenting the award, Charles Wade, pastor of First Baptist Church of Arlington and president of the BGCT, noted among Lucado's many writings are several children's books, including the most recent, "The Crippled Lamb," which was written with the assistance of Lucado's three daughters, Jenna, Andrea and Sara.

"A lot of people can communicate, but not everybody can communicate with children," Wade said. "If you can communicate with a child, then you can communicate with everyone."

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A longtime friend, Buckner Fanning, pastor of Trinity Baptist Church of San Antonio, told of exchanging pulpits with Lucado and of participating in a monthly ecumenical gathering where participants pray for their city and discuss "what we can do to help make it a better place."

"It has been said that the 21st century will be spiritual or it will not be. Max Lucado, as much as any person I know -- through his life, his work, his writing and his preaching -- has ministered to all of us," Fanning said.

San Antonio Mayor Bill Thornton, a member of Trinity Baptist Church, noted Lucado has "touched the lives of many people" and read a certificate of recognition of Lucado from the San Antonio City Council.

Two other of Lucado's friends -- Lewis Lee, director of missions of the San Antonio Baptist Association, and Bill Thompson, pastor of Concordia Lutheran Church of San Antonio -- also brought greetings.

In his response, Lucado told the 100-plus people at the banquet he "felt awkward receiving an award for doing what I love to do so much."

He likened himself to the burning bush which spoke to Moses in the Bible or to the donkey which carried Jesus into Jerusalem. "They were very different vehicles for transporting the message of the kingdom and they were chosen because they just happened to be in the right place at the right time," Lucado said.

"When God chooses to reveal himself," Lucado said, "any old donkey will do. I just happened to be at the right place and at the right time."

HOUSE MAIL

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