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-- BAPTIST PRESS
News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

August 22, 1996

96-149

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**Elliff: Convocations to ask God
to end nation's spiritual slide**

By Art Toalston

**Baptist Press
8/22/96**

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)--It's been sorely needed before, and it's needed now.

"We have now endured the longest period of time in our nation's history without a Great Evangelical Awakening."

Tom Elliff, beyond voicing those words, felt an urgency to take action.

Thus, the Southern Baptist Convention's new president issued a call to pastors and other church leaders for a series of one-day convocations on Baptist seminary campuses to emphasize the crucified life and prayer for spiritual awakening.

The convocations begin Aug. 29 and continue through Sept. 12.

"On several occasions during the brief history of the United States, God has chosen to interrupt our backsliding by bringing us to an awakened state of spiritual sensitivity," Elliff noted.

"The backdrop for each of these occasions was painted with the dark colors of moral and spiritual decline. Wickedness in all its perverted forms was left unchallenged by an indifferent and corrupted church. God's judgment was imminent."

With "increasing desperation," God's remnant cried out, knowing that "apart from his intervention, this nation, built and sustained by the treasury of his truths, would soon cease to exist," Elliff said.

God heard their prayers and "moved upon the hearts of men in an awesome display of his sovereign power."

"Prayer meetings became frequent and forceful. Pulpits soon resounded with the convicting preaching of praying men of God. As people came to the 'cross' and abandoned their agenda in favor of God's, great mission efforts catapulted believers around the globe bearing the message of salvation in Christ."

Elliff voiced his "conviction that our nation is, once again, similarly poised for the judgment of God."

His prayer for the upcoming convocations is that pastors and others in key church roles will "with fear and trembling acknowledge our nation's sin of disbelief and rejection and join our hearts in repentance."

Elliff noted, "Our prayers are empty unless we first come to the cross and there avail ourselves of its power."

"This is a call to the cross, a call to 'deny yourself, take up your cross and follow' him; a call to the crucified life ... a life that stands in stark contrast to every interest of our society.

"We are meeting to focus on Jesus. We are meeting to recapture the full meaning of 'surrender.' And we are meeting to offer all that we are and have for his enterprise, his great work in our midst. We are meeting to seek him for a great spiritual awakening in our time ... but also to pledge ourselves to the crucified life regardless of his divine disposition toward our nation."

The convocation schedule will be:

- Aug. 29, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C.
- Sept. 3, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas.

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- Sept. 4, Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Mill Valley, Calif.
- Sept. 5, Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, Memphis, Tenn.
- Sept. 10, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky.
- Sept. 11, Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Mo.
- Sept. 12, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Each convocation will begin at 10 a.m.

A convocation also will be held Sept. 9 at the Home Mission Board in Alpharetta, Ga., for the SBC agency's trustees and staff and members of the SBC Implementation Task Force involved in the "Covenant for a New Century" convention-wide restructuring.

Elliff, in a July 15 mailing to 40,000 Southern Baptist pastors and other leaders, issued an "urgent invitation" to the convocations. The 20th century, he noted, "is rapidly drawing to a close. Tragically, this could be the first century in our nation's history to pass without a great, sweeping move of God. Will that be the case? Many of us believe the Lord is saying 'turn to me!' He is calling us to revival: calling us to the cross; calling us to the crucified life."

The seminaries are opening their campuses to all concerned pastors and church leaders for a day "when all energies and interests will be focused on revival," Elliff wrote. He urged Southern Baptists to travel to the nearest campus "on the day most suited to your schedule." Elected SBC president at the SBC's annual meeting in New Orleans in June, Elliff is pastor of First Southern Baptist Church, Del City, in suburban Oklahoma City.

The one-day convocations will not boast a list of speakers, Elliff stated, explaining, "We will be gathered to meet with God, not to be drawn to some noted personalities announced in advance." Prayer -- for Southern Baptists to turn to the crucified life with Jesus and for spiritual awakening -- will be emphasized, not just preaching or singing, Elliff said.

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(BP) graphic -- an information block for use in state Baptist newspapers and Baptist association and church newsletters -- is posted in SBCNet News Room and available upon request from Baptist Press' central office in Nashville, (615) 244-2355.

Kelley among seminary leaders seeking spiritual awakening

By Debbie Moore & Art Toalston

**Baptist Press
8/22/96**

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Chuck Kelley is ready for -- yearning for -- a spiritual awakening to touch New Orleans' soul.

"Since arriving in the city of New Orleans as an itinerant evangelist over 20 years ago, a burden on my heart has been to seek revival in this place," said Chuck Kelley, who became president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary in February.

"There has never been a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit on either New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary or on the city of New Orleans," said Kelley, who has been a professor of evangelism at the seminary 13 years and director of Southern Baptist's first center for evangelism and church growth, located on the campus.

Thus, Kelley is eager for a Sept. 12 convocation emphasizing the crucified life and prayer for spiritual awakening, to begin at 10 a.m. in the seminary's Roland Q. Leavell Chapel. A special time of prayer will precede the convocation at 7:30 a.m.

It will be one in a series of convocations initiated by Southern Baptist Convention President Tom Elliff for pastors and church leaders across the denomination to meet on seminary campuses to seek spiritual renewal individually and as a denomination to help America turn back to God and, just as importantly, to help evangelize the world.

New Orleans' convocation will conclude the series, which begins Aug. 29 at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C., and continues Sept. 3 at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas; Sept. 4, Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Mill Valley, Calif.; Sept. 5, Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, Memphis; Sept. 10, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky.; and Sept. 11, Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Kansas City, Mo.

Each convocation will begin at 10 a.m.

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Kelley's evangelism training field was New Orleans' infamous French Quarter in the mid-1970s, where he ministered with his father-in-law, Bob Harrington, who was known across the country as the "Chaplain of Bourbon Street."

"There is great spiritual warfare New Orleans," Kelley said. "Satan has a real stronghold here. This is a city in particular where Satan wants to stake a flag and tell God, 'You can have any place on the earth, but I want New Orleans.'

"But I believe God wants to send revival to New Orleans. It will happen. It's going to happen.

"But the key is not a change in the city," Kelley said. "The key is a change in me, in you. Do we really want God to equip us for the type of spiritual warfare it's going to take for revival to break out here?"

Last November, the seminary sponsored a 24-hour prayer and fasting vigil the week before Thanksgiving. Since then, an increased emphasis on revival has been an undercurrent at the seminary, including daily student-led prayer times before the beginning of each school day. Occasionally spring chapel services were extended to several hours for personal testimonies. Historically, the faculty has met daily for prayer before the beginning of classes since the seminary's founding 79 years ago.

Seminary trustees have been praying for revival both personally and in large and small groups since their meeting this past March. "There is a hunger in our trustees for revival to happen," Kelley said. Trustee Ron Jackson, pastor of East Gaffney (S.C.) Baptist Church, chairs a trustee committee for a prayer emphasis on revival at the seminary and in the greater New Orleans area.

At Midwestern Seminary, President Mark Coppenger voiced anticipation akin to Kelley's: "We've been praying for the prairie fire of revival. We cherish the prospects of this day."

Said R. Albert Mohler, Southern Seminary's president: "This is an unprecedented event in our convention's seminaries, and we wait expectantly to see the continuing movement of the Holy Spirit on this campus."

Jim Elliff, resident consultant for the newly established Midwestern Center on Biblical Revival and brother of Tom Elliff, noted the convocations have not boasted a slate of high-profile speakers.

"The very fact that we are meeting together for a serious look at revival without interest in personalities is in itself worthy of note," Jim Elliff said. "It has been in such gatherings that God has chosen to reveal himself, as can be easily proven both in the Bible and church history."

Elliff continued: "What is most significant to me about this call to gather is the inclusion of the seminary community, the center of the most dramatic changes in our convention over the last few years. I know the presidents of these schools to be bent on revival and biblical reformation. It should be of considerable interest to us that virtually every great revival leader of the past awakenings was a young man, in most cases superbly trained. These young men were full of both truth and zeal, dead to self and alive only to God."

To Southern Baptists, Jim Elliff urged, "Please join in praying for such a day again."

Special plans at the seminaries include:

-- At Midwestern, a public reading of the Word on the seminary hilltop from 7-7:15 a.m., followed by a campus prayerwalk from 7:15-7:45 a.m. beseeching God's blessings on the day.

-- At Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in California, "We are excited to open our Mill Valley campus from dawn to dusk for pastors and laypersons in the West who want to spend the day seeking God's face in prayer and reflecting upon God's Word and his desire for renewal in our land," said President William Crews. Further information about Golden Gate's convocation is available by calling (415) 380-1310.

On Sept. 10, Crews also will lead a 10 a.m. convocation at Golden Gate's Pacific Northwest Campus, which holds classes at Mill Park Baptist Church, Portland, Ore.

-- A complimentary box lunch will be served at Southern Seminary to those making reservations by phoning (502) 894-4205. Lunches at the other seminaries can be purchased in the campus cafeterias.

A number of state Baptist papers have helped publicize the convocations by carrying without charge a block which lists the locations and dates.

For those who cannot make it to the convocations, Paige Patterson, Southeastern Seminary's president, suggested they choose at least one of those days, if not all of them, "and join us in their homes, businesses or schools in prayer on those particular days beginning at 10:00 a.m. and asking the intervention of God on our nation."

In southwest Wyoming, for example, the Green River and Overthrust Baptist associations' annual meetings, Sept. 9 and 14, respectively, will include a "Turn Our Hearts to the Lord" focus for spiritual awakening, according to Charles Crim, director of missions.

Crim wrote to Elliff, affirming, "I join you in believing this is what America needs today."

Destiny Church embarking on multicultural journey

By Tim Ellsworth

HOFFMAN ESTATES, Ill. (BP)--Destiny Church co-pastors Allen Eaton and Keith Russell Lee believe they're on the same page ministry-wise. Never mind that Eaton is white and Lee is black.

They credit that unity, as well as the providence of God, to the success of a recent merger of First Baptist Church, Hollman Estates, Ill., and Destiny Church into what has become a multicultural congregation.

And not just multicultural in the sense of members. Eaton, who was First Baptist's pastor, said many churches claim to be multicultural but have a completely white staff. Not so with Destiny.

"What makes Destiny special is that we are intentionally saying that this is a multicultural church," Eaton said. "That is the whole thing."

And the pastoral relationship is the key to making the church work, Eaton and Lee said.

"We've made a commitment to each other that we be loyal number one to God and, then, number two to each other," Lee said. "It's been really a very good working relationship. It seems like there's areas that I'm weakest in he's strongest in, and areas where's he's weak and I'm strong."

The merger process all started in 1995, when First Baptist started the Destiny mission and called Lee to be its pastor.

"The Lord started really laying on my heart this vision that we needed an African American church that was strong and viable in our community," Eaton said.

Destiny started with 17 members and attendance grew to around 100 in only a matter of weeks.

As the two churches worked together, Eaton and Lee developed a strong relationship.

"We found out that we had complementing visions and that they would probably work together, even though we never stated, 'Let's do the joining together,'" Lee said.

The idea of merging came from the churches' membership, Lee said, not the pastors.

"Even when we would have our meetings, First Baptist people, who were predominantly white, would come and say, 'Wow. Wouldn't it be neat if we could just worship together?'" Lee said.

So, the two groups started seeking God's will.

"We committed, in that whole process before any decisions would be made, that we would get together four times a month and pray for God's direction. It wouldn't be anything but prayer," Lee said. "Those prayer sessions were very illuminating in so many ways. It really called us to be honest with ourselves and ... our racial feelings. We dealt with all of the issues that we had to work out."

Both groups felt God was leading them to join together. Eaton and Lee were each called as co-pastors, and on March 10, 1996, the congregations united. The church has since voted to call itself Destiny Church.

The merger wasn't without its difficult moments, as some members from each church left. But the core groups stuck together, and the church is now one with a growing congregation and a warm fellowship across racial lines.

"They see him as pastor -- all sides. All sides see me as pastor," Eaton said. "That's what's different about it."

Worship services have different styles every week -- some black, some white, some a combination of the two. Eaton and Lee take turns preaching and leading in worship.

"People who are coming really like the experience of blacks and whites coming together to worship together," Lee said.

And well they should, according to Vicki Eaton, Allen's wife. "It sort of reflects what heaven's going to be like," she said. "There's not going to be any separation. We're all brothers and sisters, so why not begin to practice it here on earth?"

**5-woman volunteer team
stays busy at Paralympics**

By Traci Muller

ATLANTA (BP)--Even the prospect of sleeping on the floor didn't dampen the spirits of five California Baptist women volunteering for the Paralympic Games.

"I even practiced for two weeks, just to get myself ready for it," admitted Phyllis Avery. "Then we found out we were staying at a mission house. I can't say I was disappointed."

Avery, Deborah Davis, Karen Glatze, Cynthia Townsend and Diane Varady are members of churches in East Bay Baptist Association, San Leandro, Calif. They were guests of North Woods Baptist Church in Chamblee, Ga., during the two weeks they volunteered.

Held from Aug. 15-25, the Paralympic Games featured 3,500 athletes from 127 countries who have overcome physical disabilities to become world-class competitors.

The women took part in the colorful Paralympic opening ceremony at Olympic Stadium. Avery, wearing one of the Baptist "More Than Gold" pins, met athlete Al Mead. He was one of the final athletes to participate in the torch relay preceding the lighting of the Paralympic cauldron.

"He wanted my pin to give to a friend because he already had one," Avery said. "He told me he was a Christian. And in return, he gave me a pin from the Paralympic torch relay."

Originally, Avery and Glatze were assigned to greet Paralympic spectators in front of the Techwood Center as they walked to downtown venues. But, at that time, the Olympic Village and Centennial Park were closed and as a result they saw little foot traffic in the area.

Instead, they worked in the Baptist center, which houses doctors, dentists, social service personnel and a food pantry. Avery pushed elevator buttons for the waiting clients. During the elevator ride, she witnessed to passengers.

"Wearing my 'More Than Gold' pin, I asked them if they knew what the five stars meant," Avery said. "I told them what the colors stood for in relation to the plan of salvation. I got to do this over 30 times!"

Varady worked with a street clown ministry team by acting as the "civilian" who went along with the clowns. "They bounced balls off of me and acted silly. We had a lot of fun," she said.

Varady and Davis also worked at a pick-up/drop-off station in front of the Olympic Village where the Paralympic athletes were housed. They helped athletes, many using wheelchairs, as they entered or exited the village.

"We really were able to make a difference," Varady said. "The hill in front of the village was a bit steep and there were a few pot holes in the street. We were not supposed to help them unless they asked and eventually most of them did."

One athlete gave the two women flowers to express his appreciation, Davis said.

Varady and Davis talked with a Georgia state patrolman assigned to security for their area. Suffering from stress and anxiety from a divorce, the man gradually began to open up to the two women.

"One day an AIM '96 (Atlanta International Ministries) volunteer came into the village with the hospitality packs," Davis said. "They gave one to David and he asked us why we hadn't given him one of the interactive tracts earlier. That opened the door so we could share with him about Christ's love for him and his son."

Later, Avery and Glatze worked at the Transportation Mall where athletes caught buses going to and from the venues where they competed. It was hot work and involved long waits for buses. But they eased flaring tempers and frustrations with a kind word or a smile.

"People recognized that we were trying to help them and appreciated the courtesy," Glatze said.

Avery said she felt especially moved to share the gospel with those she met. "I felt very bold in sharing and not afraid at all."

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(BP) photos (black and white) available upon request from the Home Mission Board news office by calling (770) 410-6536.

**Hospitality House: 10 years
of aid to prisoners' families**

By Ken Camp

HUNTSVILLE, Texas (BP)--Texas Baptists from around the state gathered at First Baptist Church, Huntsville, on Aug. 18 to celebrate the Hospitality House's 10th anniversary and to recommit the prisoner family ministry "to the glory of God."

The day had started for Hospitality House directors Bob and Nelda Norris when their phone rang sometime around 3 a.m. The caller was a woman who had stayed at the house while visiting her husband in prison. Her son had just died, and the boy's stepfather wouldn't even be able to attend the funeral. She didn't know who else to call.

She was one of more than 52,000 people who have visited the Hospitality House since it opened 10 years ago as a place of refuge for the visiting families of prisoners. At least 450 have made professions of faith in Jesus as a result of the Hospitality House's ministry, which is supported in part through Texas Baptist gifts to the Mary Hill Davis Offering for State Missions.

William M. Pinson Jr., executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, said three words characterize the commitment that birthed the Hospitality House: Christ-centered, compassion and cooperation.

"This is not just a humanitarian Hospitality House. It is a Christ-centered ministry," Pinson said.

"It is seen in the words of Jesus: 'I was a stranger and you took me in ... I was in prison and you came to me.' It is seen in the example of Jesus and his ministry to the powerless. And it is seen in the transforming power of Jesus in the lives of people."

Jackie Warmsley of Abilene, Texas, was one of the earliest visitors at the Hospitality House, and she has returned 193 times in the last 10 years.

"The first time I came, I carried clean sheets and towels in my little blue suitcase because I didn't know if they would have them," she said.

Offering thanks for the love she found at the Hospitality House, she praised it in verse as "a shelter from the storm./A place where loving arms so warm/would hold to hug and hugging steal/away the pains that are so real."

Patti Stagno of Kerrville, Texas, initially resisted staying at the Hospitality House "with all those inmates' families," she recalled. But the first time she visited her 22-year-old son in prison, she stopped at three motels before finding one clean enough for an overnight stay.

"I was so scared, I piled all the furniture in front of the door before I felt safe. Then I laid on the bed and cried," she said.

"The next time, I went to the Hospitality House. I couldn't believe how beautiful and clean it was, and how the people there were so sweet to me. They are like family to me now. I don't know what I would have done if it weren't for them."

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**Folksy pastor gets attention
of SBC, Disney, townspeople**

By Carol McGraw

**Baptist Press
8/22/96**

BUENA PARK, Calif. (BP)--It's a recent evening at First Southern Baptist Church in Buena Park, Calif., and Brother Bob Gillis is singing hymn No. 35: "Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to Thee; How great Thou art, how great Thou art!" His 83-year-old voice is all Southern comfort transforming this urban sanctuary into a dusky rural church.

The song usually brings tears to pastor Wiley Smead Drake's eyes, but on this sticky summer evening, he's too busting with energy to be much overcome.

The congregation leans forward in synchronized excitement as Drake takes the pulpit. They're anxious to hear how in heaven's name it happened. They've been talking about it for days in the church's soup kitchen and thrift store where they feed and clothe the down and out.

Now, they want to find out from the horse's mouth just how it came to be that their pastor of eight years went off to New Orleans to attend the Southern Baptist Convention's annual gathering as a fairly obscure preacher and ended up in their living rooms duking it out with the Walt Disney Co. on the national news.

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"If someone told me to guess which local Baptist preacher would convince 13,000 messengers to boycott a major entertainment company over family values issues, I would have guessed it was him," says Wayne Derrick, head of the Orange County Southern Baptist Association, which represents more than 20,000 local members and 100 churches. Derrick, who pastors Orangewood Avenue Baptist Church in Garden Grove, adds, "Drake's a gadfly. No doubt about it."

Drake, starched and pressed and wearing his fancy red tie with a majestic eagle on it, jumps to the podium and looks over his homey, modest church at a crowd that is mostly working class and elderly.

Pulling his suitcoat forward over his suspenders, he thanks them for praying for his mama, who lives in his boyhood hometown of Magnolia, Ark. -- a town he ran away from to join the rodeo and ride bucking bulls when he was barely 13. "I got to visit her on my trip, and we had fresh corn and peas from the garden. Praise God!"

But it's what else Drake did on his trip that is the real food for thought. Drake got representatives of the 16-million-strong Southern Baptists, the largest Protestant denomination in the country, to come around to his way of thinking.

At first, they were considering merely giving the Walt Disney Co. a public rebuke for what they perceive as anti-Christian and anti-family trends in its movies. They criticized Disney's decision last year to extend health benefits to partners of gays and lesbians and for "promoting homosexuality" by approving gay nights at its theme parks. But some were afraid that boycotting the company might be too harsh and that the action might make the conservative denomination look foolish.

But when Drake felt the spirit move him to put in his 2 cents worth, he bore down on Disney like one of the cyclones that used to churn up the grit near his paternal grandpa's sawmill.

Drake told the convention to send Disney a clear message -- that there would be no storm cellar they could hide in if they were bent on damaging the morals of America's children. He hit a righteous chord with the messengers. They voted to threaten a boycott of Disney products, theme parks and movies if it continues its ways.

Disney has increasingly been under attack by conservative religious groups, including Catholics upset about a gay cleric portrayed in "Priest," a movie distributed by subsidiary Miramax.

Defending themselves, Disney officials first said they found it "curious that the Baptists would boycott the world's largest producer of wholesome entertainment." A few days later, Disney Chairman Michael Eisner told reporters, "They're a very small group of Southern Baptists that took a very extreme position, which we think is foolish."

Within a week, Disney announced it would increase its emphasis on family values. However, the company insisted the decision had been made months ago and had nothing to do with what happened in New Orleans. Soon after that, Disney announced it had named a Jesuit priest, Leo J. O'Donovan of Georgetown University, as a board member.

"Disney's heading for the hidey-hole," a pleased Drake says.

He tells his congregation the boycott is voluntary. In fact, he has some annual Disneyland passes he uses when his three grandkids come to visit, and he's not about to waste all that money by tearing them up. He suggests using such passes until they expire, but just don't buy any of those "Mickey Mouse things and concession foods."

The battle with Disney has spilled over to the gay community, which calls Drake and other supporters of the boycott homophobic and un-Christian. Drake, in turn, offers the "love the sinner, but hate the sin" argument. "We don't hate homosexuals. But we believe that it is abnormal, biologically unhealthy, as well as contrary to Bible teachings."

Patricia Lefler, who heads a predominantly gay congregation at Christ Chapel Metropolitan Church in Santa Ana, retorts, "They quote the Bible, but you can take any passage out of context."

"In one place in the Bible you can find a passage that says someone hanged himself," Lefler says. "In another place, you can find the words, 'Go out and do likewise.' But intelligent people don't try to put them together and then go out and kill themselves."

Drake wasn't always so concerned about things biblical. As a kid, Drake drank, chewed tobacco and stole minor stuff like gasoline from his neighbors. He never got along much with his dad, a roughneck in the oil fields. He spent most of his time with his horse-trader maternal grandpa, Hamp Smead Beasley, who not only taught him horse sense but took him to revival meetings.

"We called them brush-arbor meetings," Drake recalls. "They weren't held in tents. The churches were small and mostly out in the woods, so they'd build shade arbors out of poles and brush for the churchgoers that would come from all over."

But religion didn't agree with him in those days, and after winning a rodeo purse by staying on a big red horse named Thunderbolt, Drake ran off to the rodeo circuit and sometimes did carnival work. He says he had to steal food and slept in the back of pickups. "I know what it feels like to be real hungry," he says.

At 17, he returned home just long enough to have his daddy send him to the Navy on recommendation of the sheriff. In Hawaii he met his future wife, Barbara, with whom he has four children.

One night aboard the Kitty Hawk off the coast of Vietnam, he was drawn to a group singing Christian tunes.

"One of them asked me if I knew for sure I was going to heaven if I got killed in this war," he recounts. "I said, 'I hope so.' He said, 'Christians don't just hope. They know.' He prayed for me, and I accepted Jesus right then and there."

Over the years since, Drake seems to have managed to either endear or irritate just about everyone he deals with. Many praise his compassion and efforts to help the downtrodden, stamp out abortion and promote family values. But some see his stances as bullheaded and non-conciliatory.

Once at a public meeting, he called Garden Grove residents "racist" when he thought they were making it too difficult for a Korean minister and congregation to find a home. In Buena Park, city officials are upset that he lets the homeless camp on church property. Teens attending raunchy rap-group concerts are often met by a picketing Drake, who decries the music as ungodly. He's also picketed several movies he deprecates as sin-filled, including "Priest" and "The Last Temptation of Christ."

A pornographic bookstore owner gave up trying to move into Drake's church's neighborhood after Drake led his congregation in a noisy battle. A Veterans of Foreign Wars group met a similar fate when the minister was able to raise enough public outcry against having the post, which serves alcohol, move into his neighborhood. Even his next-door neighbor, a Masonic temple, tangled with him because the overflow from his homeless camp slept on their driveway and urinated on their lawn.

Drake, who has a college education, including advanced theological degrees, approaches his battles and the pulpit with his Arkansas good-ol'-boy manner. But in 52 years, he's learned a thing or two about how much influence boisterous public pressure can exert, especially coming from a man of the cloth and his flock.

He once ran for City Council, losing by a few score votes. He says more ministers need to wake up to politics. "When we separated religion from government, the country went downhill morally," he says.

He urges his congregation to be involved in such activism, which he calls "salt and light," referring to Matthew 5:13-14. ("Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt has lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? ... Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.") The passage warns that those who make no effort to affect the world around them are of little value to God.

But there are perils to taking such a bullish community-activist stance, he says, noting that more than a few members of his congregation left because they didn't like his take-charge manners.

Even those who agree with him sometimes have trouble keeping up with his whirlwind moral crusades.

Such community clashes mystify Bob Gillis, who has been a Southern Baptist 54 years and a member of First Baptist for 13. He says he doesn't always see eye to eye with Drake.

"Take this Disney stuff," Gillis says. "I wouldn't talk bad about them, because they are human beings, even though they are wrong. I figure all you should do is pray for them."

Still, Gillis likes Drake's leadership: "He knows his Bible. And he can preach real good when he's not shook up about something."

Christina Bush, 44, says she joined the church especially because of the way Drake "shakes up people to issues that need attending to."

The voter-registration clerk adds Drake's Bible knowledge impresses her: "When I'm clouded in a decision in my life, he uses the Scriptures in a very understandable way, so the answer to my problems becomes clear."

Steve Bryan, church youth leader, says what has impressed him most about Drake is, "He won't ask anyone to do what he won't do himself." But sometimes he thinks the pastor should delegate things more. He points to the time Drake ended up on crutches because he tried to move by himself a heavy trailer that houses the mobile puppet show. It fell on his foot.

Drake runs Here's Hope, the Orange County Southern Baptist Association's charitable program, out of his church. Volunteers provide meals for 450 families a month, distribute 10,000 pounds of donated food to the poor and operate a clothing bank.

Says Derrick, county Baptist association leader: "I couldn't take something like that on. And other ministers didn't want the job because they felt it would tie them down too much. But Wiley jumped at the chance. He has a special knack because of the things that he went through in his own life."

Over the years, Drake has always worked at least part time in churches. His first full-time ministry was a small church in Bloomburg, Texas.

"Sometimes over the years, I had doubts," Drake says. "I thought, 'Should I go out and make a lot of money or stick to this?' But I'm glad I didn't do it different."

These days, Drake's answering machine is packed with calls of both condemnation and support. He says when he took his Baptist convention stance, he never dreamed there would be such a "wide magnitude of response."

He pushes back in his chair and grins. "I'd be less than honest if I said I didn't enjoy it."

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McGraw is a staff writer for the Orange County (Calif.) Register. Used by permission of the Orange County Register, copyright 1996.

Professor says Islam's upsurge stems from independence, oil

By Dwayne Hastings

**Baptist Press
8/22/96**

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--While Islam has grown steadily for 1,400 years, it has undergone a certain revival and resurgence since World War II, according to George Braswell Jr.

"A number of Muslim-dominated nations gained independence from their colonial administrators, including Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Algeria and Indonesia," writes Braswell, professor of world religions and missions at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, in a new book, "Islam: Its Prophets, Peoples, Politics and Power."

With independence, he writes, "Muslim nations have struggled to define the role of Islam in their governmental and political structures."

The religion's start was impressive enough: Within 100 years after the death of Muhammad in A.D. 632, Islam spread beyond the Arabian peninsula to the heartland of the Middle East, including Palestine and Jerusalem, across North Africa into Syria and on the edge of France, and eastward to Iraq, Persia, and into India and parts of Central Asia -- establishing roots among millions of people in diverse locations and cultures.

Hardly any other religious movement has done the same so quickly and widely.

The abundant petroleum resources of Muslim nations has allowed them to showcase their "newfound power and influence in the world" as a means to reassert their Islamic identity in the last 25 years, Braswell also writes.

"Some nations allocated great sums of money to spread Islam around the world by sending Muslim missionaries, building mosques and Islamic centers, and funding programs on university campuses to promote Islam. New wealth brought a fresh identity to Islam and to Muslims and a revivalism and resurgence."

The Islamic faith views the world as divided into two domains, writes Braswell, whose book was recently released by the Baptist Sunday School Board's Broadman & Holman Publishers.

"(There is) that world which was to exist under Allah, the teachings of the Qur'an, and the traditions of Muhammad; and that world which was still in ignorance and disobedience and which needed to be brought to submission under Islam."

Thus, Braswell reports, "Muslims look at the world as fertile ground either to restore or to plant the beliefs of and the practices of Islam."

Islam holds there to be no separation between one's religious life and other facets of life, explains Braswell, who served on the faculty of Islamic Theology at the University of Tehran from 1968-74.

"Life is of one piece. God commands the personal life, the family life, the society's life, and the government's life. God rules. God rules through his vice regents who follow the guidelines in the Qur'an with any needed assistance from tradition and law. Islam promotes a theocracy."

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In many Islamic-dominated societies, Braswell states, those advocating Christianity are unwelcome in the country or, at best, their activities are severely restricted. Mosques may be built in the United States, but no churches are allowed to be built in Muslim countries. Recent news accounts report restrictions which are even placed upon the religious expression of foreign embassy staffs in some of these countries.

Islam claims to appreciate its Hebrew-Christian roots but, Braswell notes, "it quickly states that the Qur'an (according to Islam, the Qur'an contains the very words which Allah revealed to Muhammad through the angel Gabriel) clarifies, refines, and gives the final and correct revelation through its prophet to Jews and Christians. Islam teaches that the Bible has been corrupted through its interpretations and translations."

Allah is the one and only God and does not share his divineness with any other creature, including Jesus, according to Islam. There have been prophets through history, including Abraham and Jesus -- "yet Muhammad is the final prophet with the final revelation," Braswell writes.

The evening news has been the primary source for most Americans' knowledge of Islam. "Words and phrases such as Islamic jihad (warfare), ayatollah (Muslim leader), and Hebollah (Muslim terrorist group) account for much of the information Americans receive and upon which they form various images and stereotypes," Braswell writes.

Islam remains a minority faith in the United States, but Braswell projects, "... with its anticipated growth rate, it will surpass Judaism in the near future as it moves toward seven to eight million adherents."

Braswell explains Islam and Christianity are two of the world's most committed missionary religions. And while Christian history records only "sporadic and few" attempts at missions and relationships to Muslims, Islam has been an aggressive and effective missionary religion for 1,400 years -- "attempting to penetrate the places and peoples of Christianity."

"The 20th century has been a time of advance for Islam in Europe and the United States," Braswell writes. "At the same time Christianity has not seen much advance into predominantly Islamic lands."

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