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High court strikes down ban
on homosexual rights laws

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press
5/22/96

WASHINGTON (BP)--The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled as unconstitutional a state amendment which prohibited local or state laws granting civil rights status to homosexuals.

The 6-3 decision striking down Colorado's Amendment 2 as a violation of the U.S. Constitution's equal protection clause drew stinging dissent from the court's minority, led by Associate Justice Antonin Scalia, and pro-family organizations.

Critics of the Romer v. Evans opinion, however, could find slight solace in the high court's failure to elevate homosexuality to the status of a protected class, such as race. The high court also failed to mention its 1986 Bowers v. Hardwick opinion, which upheld a state's right to criminalize homosexual conduct.

The court's 14-page opinion, written by Associate Justice Anthony Kennedy, rejected Colorado's argument the amendment only forbids special rights, not equal rights, for homosexuals.

"To the contrary, the amendment imposes a special disability upon those persons alone," he wrote. "Homosexuals are forbidden the safeguards that others enjoy or may seek without constraint."

Amendment 2 "is at once too narrow and too broad," Kennedy wrote for the majority. "It identifies persons by a single trait and then denies them protection across the board. The resulting disqualification of a class of persons from the right to seek specific protection from the law is unprecedented in our jurisprudence.

"A law declaring that in general it shall be more difficult for one group of citizens than for all others to seek aid from the government is itself a denial of equal protection of the laws in the most literal sense."

The purpose of the amendment's classification of homosexuals is "to make them unequal to everyone else," Kennedy wrote. "A state cannot so deem a class of persons a stranger to its laws."

Colorado voters approved Amendment 2 in 1992 with a 53 percent majority. It overturned homosexual rights ordinances already in force in Denver, Boulder and Aspen.

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In a 6-1 decision in October 1994, the Colorado Supreme Court upheld a lower-court ruling against Amendment 2, the first state provision against homosexual rights. In its opinion, the state's highest court said Amendment 2 violated the rights of homosexuals and bisexuals to equal participation in the political process. The state appealed the opinion to the U.S. Supreme Court, which heard oral arguments in the case last October.

In his 20-page dissent, Scalia said the citizens of Colorado had "adopted an entirely reasonable provision which does not even disfavor homosexuals in any substantive sense, but merely denies them preferential treatment."

The majority not only failed to mention the Bowers decision from only 10 years before but contradicted it, Scalia said.

"If it is constitutionally permissible for a state to make homosexual conduct criminal, surely it is constitutionally permissible for a state to enact other laws merely disfavoring homosexual conduct," Scalia wrote.

He also described as "insulting" the majority's suggestion Amendment 2 was motivated by animosity toward homosexuals.

"Of course it is our moral heritage that one should not hate any human being or class of human beings," Scalia wrote. "But I had thought that one could consider certain conduct reprehensible -- murder, for example, or polygamy, or cruelty to animals -- and could exhibit even 'animus' toward such conduct. Surely that is the only sort of 'animus' at issue here: moral disapproval of homosexual conduct, the same sort of moral disapproval that produced the centuries-old criminal laws that we held constitutional in Bowers.

"The Colorado amendment does not, to speak entirely precisely, prohibit giving favored status to people who are homosexuals; they can be favored for many reasons -- for example, because they are senior citizens or members of racial minorities. But it prohibits giving them favored status because of their homosexual conduct -- that is, it prohibits favored status for homosexuality.

"This court has no business imposing upon all Americans the resolution favored by the elite class from which the members of this institution are selected, pronouncing that 'animosity' toward homosexuality ... is evil."

Scalia attacked the opinion for its lack of a sound basis. He called it "long on emotive utterance" and "short on relevant legal citation." It "has no foundation in American constitutional law, and barely pretends to," Scalia said.

Joining Kennedy in the majority were Associate Justices Sandra Day O'Connor, David Souter, John Paul Stevens, Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Stephen Breyer. In addition to Scalia, Chief Justice William Rehnquist and Associate Justice Clarence Thomas dissented.

The opinion "represents a body blow against freedom of belief and freedom of association," said Will Perkins, chairman of the board of Colorado for Family Values, the organization which spearheaded the Amendment 2 effort.

The citizens of Colorado "hated no one, but merely wanted to keep government out of the business of legislating private decisions and historic controversies," Perkins said in a written statement. "Those forces bent on forcing a deviant lifestyle down the throats of the American people have moved a long step forward in making government their pet bully."

Will Dodson, director of government relations and legal counsel for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, called the decision "yet another victory for those in our nation who are bent on destroying any remaining moral foundation upon which this nation very shakily stands."

Homosexual rights activists hailed the ruling.

"This decision is an outstanding moral victory," said Elizabeth Birch, executive director of the Human Rights Campaign, the country's largest homosexual political organization.

The opinion "merely ensures that Colorado -- and every other state -- cannot pass laws to deny gay and lesbian Americans equal access to the democratic process," she said.

President Bill Clinton supported the decision, his press secretary said.

"The Colorado law denied a group of citizens the right to participate effectively in the political process in Colorado, and the president believes that's bad public policy," said Michael McCurry, according to The Washington Post.

Citing a lack of a federal role, Attorney General Janet Reno decided last year not to have the Department of Justice file a brief in the case. Some homosexual rights advocates expressed displeasure with the Clinton administration's refusal to join the case on their side.

The Christian Life Commission signed onto a friend-of-the-court brief written by the Christian Legal Society which argued Amendment 2 protected religious freedom for churches and individuals in a way religious exemptions would not. The Colorado Supreme Court said such exemptions would provide adequate protection.

Focus on the Family, the National Association of Evangelicals, the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights and the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod joined the CLC and CLS on the brief.

Others filing briefs supporting the state included American Center for Law and Justice and Concerned Women for America, as well as the states of Alabama, Idaho and Virginia.

Among those filing briefs on the other side were the Human Rights Campaign; NAACP; National Education Association; American Bar Association; AFL-CIO; American Psychological Association; American Psychiatrist Association; People for the American Way; American Jewish Committee; United Church of Christ Office for Church in Society; the bishop of the Episcopal Church, and several pro-homosexual religious groups, including Evangelicals Concerned. Also supporting the Colorado Supreme Court's decision were the states of Iowa, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nevada and Oregon.

Southern Baptist leaders in Colorado were among those publicly supporting the amendment during the '92 campaign. The executive board of the Colorado Baptist General Convention unanimously endorsed it.

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**Divisions continue between
Baptists in South Africa**

**Baptist Press
5/22/96**

EAST LONDON, South Africa (BP)--Unity talks between the predominantly white Baptist Union of Southern Africa and the mainly black Baptist Convention of South Africa have broken off, according to a report in Ecumenical News International.

The talks proved futile," the Baptist convention's general-secretary, Desmond Hoffmeister, told ENI, because the Baptist union "is not ready to deal with people of color."

ENI, which reported on the controversy May 9, is a news service sponsored by the World Council of Churches and three other religious bodies and is based in Geneva, Switzerland.

Hoffmeister called off the talks in March but said the convention is ready to resume them when the union "unequivocally demonstrates" its readiness for genuine reconciliation, ENI reported.

ENI also reported that Hoffmeister, in a recent statement, additionally had said negotiations proved fruitless "because of the intransigent and contradictory actions of the union that negate the spirit of reconciliation permeating the South African community."

The ENI report drew a note of regret from Denton Lotz, general secretary of the Baptist World Alliance. "The BWA still is concerned about furthering talks between the Baptist convention and union in South Africa," Lotz said May 22. "I have indicated to the convention and union that press releases, new articles, etc., is not the proper forum for the necessary dialogue and conversations aiming towards understanding and reconciliation.

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"It is our fervent prayer," Lotz continued, "that discussions will resume and that our Baptist brothers and sisters in South Africa will one day be able to celebrate in a public service that unity for which Christ prayed. The BWA continues to stand ready to participate in future discussions by sending a team."

The union and convention, including Hoffmeister and the union's general secretary, Terry Rae, received a seven-member BWA delegation Nov. 14-18 of last year in Johannesburg. A BWA news release at the time stated, "At the end of the meetings, convention and union participants in the sessions agreed to continue to meet with the hope of a common agreement" The delegation was sent in response to controversy between the two Baptist bodies aired during the previous August's Baptist World Congress in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

Key topics during November were theological education, property and movement of churches from one group to the other, the BWA reported at the time.

Baptist churches, like other denominations, had not been immune to the apartheid system, Hoffmeister recounted in the ENI report. According to the ENI report: In 1927 the union created the Bantu Baptist Church for black members, while retaining overall white control; 50 years later, black pastors and congregations of the former Bantu Baptist Church broke away from the union to form the Baptist Convention of South Africa, which coordinates about 130 mainly black congregations.

"Relations after that become very acrimonious," Hoffmeister told ENI, "and negotiations to unite have stalemated because the union's racist modus operandi has not changed."

For unity to take place, Hoffmeister said, "both sides must be regarded as equal, but we feel the white church is not ready to accept us as partners. They want to retain power, although they disguise their unwillingness to reconciliation by citing so-called theological difference," he said.

Rae, of the Baptist union, was unavailable for comment for the ENI report. But Rae had said in an open letter to the convention that the union regretted the latest development.

"The negotiations have been long and hard," he said. "More than once we have asked ourselves whether there was sufficient gain to justify the pain."

Rae added: "If we are to remain separate Baptist bodies -- and we respect your desire to maintain and develop a separate identity -- should we not be existing in harmony?"

The Baptist union remains committed to continuing negotiations, Rae said.

Hoffmeister, in his statement, said the convention requested "the prayerful and moral support, understanding and spiritual discernment of the international Baptist community to achieve the objective of reconciliation among Baptists in South Africa."

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Coppenger: Ministers should be like Paul, rather than King Saul By James A. Smith Sr.

Baptist Press
5/22/96

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)--King Saul and the apostle Paul provide contrasting models of ministry, Mark Coppenger told graduates of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Whereas Saul destroyed his ministry by being captivated by fear, Paul's ministry thrived as others feared him, said Coppenger, recently inaugurated as Midwestern's third president, urging the graduates to emulate the apostle Paul's ministry in an address during the 36th commencement exercises of the Kansas City, Mo., seminary May 18.

"Each morning, you need to decide whether you are going to be Paul or Saul It's the fundamental decision of the day," Coppenger told the 103 people who received degrees.

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The seminary awarded 25 doctor of ministry degrees, 48 master of divinity degrees, 19 master of religious education degrees, six master of church music degrees and five associate/diploma degrees.

Although King Saul began his ministry with great promise, he was soon overtaken by various fears -- his calling as king, his enemies, his friends and the lack of recognition -- with tragic results, Coppenger said.

"He lost God's anointing. God simply took his hand away from (Saul) and an evil spirit came to him," Coppenger said. "He turned to false and evil authorities. When the Word of God was not in his life, he turned to the witch of Endor.

"We see this pattern in our own day," Coppenger said. "We have men and women who are very promising at the outset" until they are overtaken by fear.

Many ministers today, like Saul, fear God's calling, Coppenger said, noting a prominent Southern Baptist leader advised him against taking a certain ministry position, calling it a "career dead end."

"Can you imagine someone approaching Paul or Peter or John and saying, 'Listen, I know you are earnest about going to Macedonia, but I think it's going to be a career dead end,'" Coppenger asked rhetorically.

"Because we don't think things are lined up handsomely, because we're career obsessed, we say 'no' out of fear that we will lose something. We say 'no' to God's calling."

Some ministers also avoid preaching "the whole counsel of God" out of fear of influential church members, Coppenger said. Instead, "they become a kind of happy-talk preacher, a joke-preacher, not a prophet.

"We see ministers cowed by the culture," Coppenger added, describing ministers who fear their enemies as Saul did his.

"You have the potential to lose God's anointing, to become as ineffectual as Saul," Coppenger warned.

Ministers who have lost the anointing "gravitate toward evil authorities," Coppenger said. "No longer getting a clear word from God and the Bible, they turn to secondary, backslidden sources and hope to prop themselves up with things of the culture. Just as Saul turned to the witch at Endor in the Old Testament, they turn to people who are less than surrendered to the inerrancy of God's Word."

Noting "those are hard words," Coppenger implored the graduates, "I beg you, do not let fear of man, do not let career obsession rob you of your power."

In contrast, although he was persecuted and eventually executed, the apostle Paul feared God and "the results are stunning in his case. Whereas Saul went down, Paul was a magnificent servant of God because his life was not marked by fear," Coppenger said.

"Will you be Saul, beset with fear ... and thus, a candidate for a tragic life?" Coppenger asked the graduates. "Or will you take seriously the example and instruction of Paul to fear God and not man? Will you then be fearsome to the devil and not fearful in the presence of the devil? I urge you to choose Paul and not Saul as your model. Fear God and fear not man."

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**GGBTS graduates faced
with one last exam**

By Cameron Crabtree

**Baptist Press
5/22/96**

MILL VALLEY, Calif. (BP)--Graduation candidates at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary faced one last "final exam" during commencement ceremonies May 17.

"I want to pose one final question to you," said seminary President William Crews. "It's not a hypothetical question, but one those in ministry are sooner or later called upon to answer -- will you serve God for nothing?"

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Citing the Old Testament story of Job -- who lost his family, health, wealth and close friendships during a test of his faithfulness to God -- Crews urged the graduates to establish their lives on the "unshakable rock of faith," without regard to circumstances.

"You will never know the fullness and depth of your commitment to God until you come to the point of serving him regardless of his blessings upon your life," Crews said in his charge to the graduates. "If you can have that kind of faith, God will be able to use you in ways beyond your imagination.

"Whatever we have done for you," Crews added, "I hope you leave here with that kind of faith."

Sharing her testimony, graduate Chloe Ting Tse echoed the president's sentiment, noting God's love is the right motivation to serve and study.

"I've tried to find God in every class I've taken, not just to inform me but to transform my life," Tse said. "Golden Gate Seminary has been God's instrument to mold me the way I am and will be."

She added: "The past three years have been a life-changing experience, full of joy, purpose and God's grace."

Pointing to 2 Corinthians 12:9 ("My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness), graduate James Ingram Jr. voiced similar affirmations.

"I can testify to you that God's grace is sufficient," he said. "So many of my life's pivotal points took place through the people of God at Golden Gate Seminary," he said.

The seminary, based in Mill Valley, Calif., awarded degrees to 106 students representing five countries and 15 states. The occasion marked the seminary's 50th annual spring commencement.

The graduating class included the largest number of students from the Ethnic Leadership Development program, which provides ministry education and training in languages other than English.

Crews presented the annual President's Award for Excellence in Leadership to Theodore "Ted" P. Fields of California. His master of divinity degree culminated 21 years of study.

"The ability to stay with a task is one mark of a good leader, but it takes more than just perseverance," Crews said, presenting the award to Fields. "I know the excellence with which he has pursued his work at seminary and his ministry."

The faculty's annual Harold K. Graves Award for distinguished service was given to Charles Carter, former executive vice president of the seminary. Carter and his wife, Sue, live in Madison, Miss. He was recognized for his work on the school's Seminary Ridge property development project. The project, begun in the early 1980s, is near completion and will add about \$5 million to the seminary's endowment funds.

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Experiencing God Study Bible
scheduled for release in NIV

By Ken Walker

Baptist Press
5/22/96

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--The most popular study Bible published by the Baptist Sunday School Board's Broadman & Holman Publishers will soon be available in the contemporary translation most popular with Christian readers.

The New International Version (NIV) of the "The Experiencing God Study Bible" will be released June 1.

Wendell Overstreet, Bible marketing manager for Broadman & Holman, said when the study Bible was first published in the New King James Version, it was "extremely well-received. Many readers expressed their appreciation for a Bible that brought the concepts of the 'Experiencing God' study course to life in a full Bible. Still, many people loyal to the NIV translation requested that B&H produce an NIV version, so there is a substantial demand for this Bible,"

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The current New King James Version (NKJV) of the study Bible has sold approximately 115,000 copies since the fall of 1994, with a third printing under way. This information alone provides a favorable outlook for the NIV version, Overstreet said, since it outsells the NKJV in the general Bible market by more than 2-1.

Using a series of 15 symbols in two interactive studies, the study Bible points to examples in the Scriptures of God's work. For example, within the text:

-- A burning bush denotes God's call to people to proclaim Jesus Christ to a lost world.

-- An envelope represents the Lord's invitation to become involved with him in his work.

-- A heart shows where God pursues a love relationship with people that is real and personal.

-- A set of tablets refers to God speaking through the Bible, prayer and circumstances or the church.

The NIV version will include the wide margins, symbols, 60 biographies of biblical characters and study questions that appear in the current version.

Part of the The Experiencing God Study Bible's popularity comes from its unique approach, Overstreet said -- instead of supplying simply facts and figures, it stimulates readers to consider their one-on-one personal relationship with God.

Overstreet said people have shared comments with Broadman & Holman such as, "I've read the Bible all my life but I never thought of God as someone who desired a relationship with me." Others have said they never thought of God as someone who actually needed them.

That feedback pleases Henry Blackaby, who believes the Holy Spirit should serve as Christians' primary teacher. He said the main purpose of this Bible is to note where God is at work, then let individuals make the personal application based on that Scripture.

"The same dynamics are at work in this Bible as in the Experiencing God course," Blackaby said. "The Bible asks what God reveals to us, what crisis of belief we face, what adjustments we need to make and what we're going to do about it. The Bible doesn't just leave information with people, but with real 'life changes' from their study of God's Word."

The Experiencing God Study Bible is part of a phenomenon that has extended the influence of Experiencing God far beyond the customary cycle of most teaching materials. Sales of the course are nearing 1.6 million copies and a youth version has sold more than 200,000 copies. Blackaby and his son, Richard, are developing another study, "God's Invitation," for college students that will be released by the board's discipleship and family development division in mid-July. Richard is president of the Canadian Southern Baptist Seminary in Alberta.

Other companion products have been created as well. Broadman & Holman's trade book version, "Experiencing God: How To Live the Full Adventure of Knowing and Doing the Will of God" has sold more than 100,000 copies and a perpetual calendar with daily Scripture readings sold 15,000 copies in just three months.

"The Experiencing God phenomenon is not limited only to Southern Baptists," according to Sam House, Experiencing God venture specialist in the board's discipleship and family development division. "It has become a tool for helping people from many denominations to know and do the will of God." Among them are Assemblies of God, United Methodists, Church of Christ, Episcopalians, Presbyterians and Nazarenes.

"The one thing we see that is so exciting to us here at Broadman & Holman is that this Bible is part of a real movement of God among his people," Overstreet commented. "The Experiencing God Study Bible carries people beyond just concept and becomes a real factor in every aspect of our daily lives."

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Walker is a free-lance writer in Louisville, Ky.

EDITORS' NOTE: Baptist Press today begins a column by David Burzynski reviewing computer software of interest to ministers and other church leaders. Burzynski is pastor of Southeast Baptist Church, South Milwaukee, Wis., and also a columnist for Christian Computing magazine. He began this monthly column earlier this year in The Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist newsjournal.

CYBER CORNER

Print Shop, Print Artist:

What's the difference?

By David Burzynski

SOUTH MILWAUKEE, Wis. (BP)--There are thousands of programs produced for computers at present. Where does one start when looking at programs for your church or home computer? Well, I don't have the answer for you, but we will look at a couple of programs that can add a little pizzazz to your church bulletins, newsletters, calendars.

The standard answer for signs, cards, etc. has been PRINT SHOP.

Well, Print Shop, step aside. PRINT ARTIST, on CD-ROM and 3 1/2 disks, has more power and possibilities than a number of its competitors. Indeed, it's hard to compare it to other programs like it because of its flexibility for creating signs, banners, greeting cards, certificates and more. While programs like Print Shop give you a number of layouts, Print Artist does the same, but with a twist. You, the creator, can adjust and change the layout to your heart's content. One of the pluses to this program is that it is truly user-friendly.

Another of its selling points is its use of graphics. The number of graphics you can use is only limited by your resources to purchase available graphics.

As this is a Windows program, you can go to the toolbar and select Directory Setup under the File section and adjust your graphics directories. Print Artist has Graphics Grabber which allows this program to use Print Shop Deluxe and New Print Shop graphics. That's just the beginning; you can add other graphics such as PCX, GIF, BMP, TIFF and ESP by entering their directory on your hard drive. If you add new graphics to any of the above-mentioned graphics, the GraphicsGrabber will include them as it refreshes itself every time you start the program up.

The program comes with numerous layouts for each of the documents you may want to create, such as signs, postcards and business cards. You can take these layouts and replace the existing text with your information.

The SIGN category has subcategories of Blank, Templates, Retail, Office, Home, Education, Occasion, Event and General Purpose. With one such layout under the Retail category, using a layout for "Industries, 25 years," I turned it into a sign commemorating our church's 35th anniversary homecoming.

The templates are there for your use, but unlike the New Print Shop, you can amend the template to meet your needs.

When it comes to TEXT, this is where it really outshines New Print Shop and all other such programs. You can use an arch up shape, vase shape, taper up shape, rectangle shape and many other shape formats.

Then to top that, you can use special effects to enhance your text, including include multi-color, multi-outline, blended, horizontal strata, vertical strata, box strata, balloon and anchored shadow.

If that is not enough special effects, you can add zoom, which comes in vanishing, twist, spiral and perspective, or ladders, which comes in ladder, twist, vanish or perspective. Your only limitation for intriguing graphics is your imagination.

One added feature to this program is that the user's manual is easy to read and follow. A number of programs come with manuals that are useless or close to it. Print Artist's manual is a step above the normal manual in that it is explicit. The cost of the program is extremely reasonable for what it can do; retail of \$39.95 for 3 1/2 disks and \$59.95 for CD-ROM.

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Meanwhile, Calendar Creator Plus is a program that does just what its title implies. It creates calendars -- and does so with a flair from the normal calendar program. This is the same calendar program used by a number of groups in the Southern Baptist Convention.

The flexibility of the program is one of its important features. You can banner events, a strip of two to seven days in duration in the form of a boxed strip across the lower part of the individual days; add graphics; and use a variety of calendar formats. The program includes a copy of PowerAlbum to organize your graphic files into categories. It also searches for pictures by file name, file type or key word. This lets you choose a picture from a page of images instead of selecting a file name from a list.

The program includes QuickStyle which includes Standard as the default style. There are other styles such as Classic, Deco, Elegant and three other distinctive formats to create a unique calendar for any purpose or occasion.

You can create general-purpose calendars as well as specialty calendars for home and office. A company representative said version 2.0 is the current version for Windows 3.1 and that version 3.0 is only compatible with Windows 95. There is a CD-ROM version for Windows 3.1 with additional graphics in comparison with the disks version. The CD-ROM price is \$49.95 and the disks can be found for \$39.95.

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CYBER CORNER

Mid-priced Microsoft Publisher
excels in design capabilities

By David Burzynski

Baptist Press
5/22/96

SOUTH MILWAUKEE, Wis. (BP)--Most churches need a Desk Top Publisher (DTP) program to do bulletins, newsletters, signs, calendars, banners, etc. Most of the time the question is cost, while some of the time it is personal preference.

Those who first created such items might have used Express Publisher, First Publisher, etc. and stayed with the upgrades as they became available. As the amount of motherboard memory went from 640KB to 1, 2, 4, 8 and now 16 megs as standard, the ability of DTPs increased. The early "would-be" publications now rival that of local printing companies. The addition of inkjet and laser printers has increased the professionalism of documents from the "would-be" to professional category.

Microsoft Publisher is one of the mid-priced DTPs that's a pretty good buy for the money. The retail price is around \$99 (\$139, Canada). This writer found it on sale for \$79 about two years ago at a retail computer store. Publisher was upgraded to a CD-ROM disk a while later through Microsoft.

While a number of DTPs celebrate having a large amount of clip art, this is not so with MS Publisher. It only has 125 pieces of clip art with the disk version, while the CD-ROM has two categories of additional clip art. Needless to say, clip art is not its strong suit.

Its strong suit is its design capabilities that can be tapped even if you do not have design experience or training. Publisher simplifies the process by having templates and the Page Wizard features within the program itself.

When you go to create a "new publication," you are welcomed by a screen with four possibilities. The first choice is Use a Page Wizard Assistant; second, Use a Template; third, Start from Scratch; and lastly, Instructions.

The Page Wizard section allows you to create a publication by asking you questions and then it creates a custom document for you, including banners, calendars, flyers and three-panel brochures.

You can create documents by choosing the Template category if you want to create a document based on a predefined layout. There are more than 20 types of documents you can use templates for, including awards, brochures, cookbooks, fax forms, flyers, newsletters, posters, resumes, thank you cards and a much-needed "to do" list, with many others.

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The third choice is to create your own publication from scratch, which means just that. MS Publisher does, however, provide you with eight page formats, including full page, book, index card, business card, banner and three other card layouts. Publisher does provide a catalog that includes the PageWizard Design Assistants, Ready-Made Elements, Templates, Clipart, BorderArt and available Fonts. It would help to read this so you can see what the layouts look like visually before starting to use them. The fourth option is the Instructions, which is useful at times.

You can use MS Publisher as a word processor or you can import text. The text formats importable at present are MSWord, MSWorks, Windows Write, WordStar, Ami Pro for Windows, WordPerfect, RTF (Rich Text Format), plain text and ASCII.

You can add personal touches with special text effects from WordArt and can create your own logo with Logo Creator Plus. While the clip art is wanting, the Clipart Gallery that comes with Publisher is a fantastic plus. You can add your clip art collection to the Gallery. If you do not have a clip art gallery of one type or another, this is a good one to utilize.

While MS Publisher says it "gives you the power of a full-featured desktop publishing program," there are some features not included that would be helpful. One feature a number of people have asked about: "Is it able to do a space-and-a-half spacing?" The answer is, no. There are other features that would be nice, but even without them Publisher is a great DTP program for the price.

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Burzynski is pastor of Southeast Baptist Church, South Milwaukee, Wis., and also a columnist for Christian Computing magazine.

Vacation Bible School:
Much planning required

By Beth Clifton

Baptist Press
5/22/96

COLUMBIA, Md. (BP)--With the end of the school year, children will be at home with free time to fill. Before very long, parents will start hearing, "I'm bored. What can I do?"

For many children at some point during the summer, the answer to that question can be, "Why, go to Vacation Bible School, of course. It starts at the local Baptist church next week."

So, how does the local Baptist church get ready for this annual onslaught of children?

The key is good planning, begun well in advance, according to Aubrey Stewart, Sunday school director for Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware; Steve Stubblefield, minister of education at Middle River Baptist Church, Baltimore; and Donna Brann, former VBS director at Olney Baptist Church in the Montgomery (Md.) Baptist Association.

Stubblefield recommends having the VBS director enlisted by January. In fact, Stewart prefers the VBS director be included in the slate of officers and teachers coming from the nominating committee at the beginning of the church year. After the director is in place, that person enlists age-group directors. They, in turn, enlist additional teachers and assistants. Stewart urges a minimum of two workers be in any setting with children at all times.

A lot of churches are using teams: recreation team, music team, refreshment team and crafts team. This has several benefits. It gives the teachers one or more breaks during the day, and it lets people who have talents in areas other than teaching use those talents.

Planners need to make other early decisions: choosing the dates and times for the Bible school and selecting the materials to be used. Brann worked on enlisting teachers and workers and choosing the dates simultaneously, in order to avoid as many vacations as possible in order to get as many workers as possible.

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In choosing materials, according to Stewart, the primary consideration needs to be choosing the curriculum that is most effective for the learners -- not necessarily the curriculum that is the easiest for the teachers.

The theme for this year's Baptist Sunday School Board curriculum is "Go for the Goal." Middle River is using these materials and Stubblefield recommends using the "VBS Advance Planning Kit 1996." This is available in two versions, one for larger churches and one for smaller churches. Stewart recommends using the "VBS Plan Book 1996" and said it's best for the director and every age group director to have copies if that is financially feasible.

If churches are doing a nontraditional schedule in Bible school, they may want to look at "Adventure Zone" or "Team Kids", which are also available from the Baptist Sunday School Board. David C. Cook Publishing Co. also produces Bible school materials that some churches have used.

After the staff is in place, the materials selected, the dates and times chosen, there needs to be a full meeting of the staff -- preferably in May. At that time the workers receive their materials, look at the theme and begin talking about logistics. Stewart and Brann both noted the necessity for three full staff meetings: the initial meeting of staff, one just days before VBS is to happen to make sure everything is in place and one between those two meetings to cover whatever needs and questions have arisen.

Stubblefield said he also always holds an evangelism training session for the staff prior to VBS so the teachers will know how to give their personal testimony and know how to respond to a child who expresses a need to be saved.

The actual schedule of the schools varies. Olney has a daytime school, from 9 a.m.-noon, while Middle River has an evening school, from 6:30-8:45.

Stubblefield emphasized actively appreciating the workers. On the Sunday before VBS, Middle River holds a service to commission VBS workers as missionaries for the week. Also on Sunday, prayer cards listing each staff member's name, address and telephone number are given to those church members who are not working in VBS. They are asked to pray for the VBS workers that week and to let them know they're being prayed for.

Middle River also provides a "faculty lounge." A different Sunday school class provides the refreshments for the lounge each night. A lot of Middle River faculty have come straight from work without having had time to eat dinner, thus this service meets a real need.

Brann, Stewart and Stubblefield all agreed that some type of parent night or family night is a good way to end VBS. Stewart said it's a non-threatening way to get non-church people into a church. He recommended doing a very brief joint session, possibly showing slides or a video taken during the week, and then moving into the different departments for a presentation. He also suggested having a handout prepared to give to the parents at parent night. It should include the ongoing ministries the church offers for the children, and it can point out that ministries are available for adults as well.

"VBS can be such an effective outreach ministry. It is a bridge touching non-church homes," Stewart said. The majority of Baptist churches still have VBS, and Stewart recognizes it is not easy. It is both time- and work-intensive. And it's not really time to relax even after everyone goes home from parent night. Non-church children and families have been identified. For VBS to be most effective as an outreach tool, the week after VBS is the prime time for the pastor, director and others to follow up.

Stewart emphasized what is important is the churches have Vacation Bible School. What materials are used and how the time is scheduled need to be adapted to the particular church.

"One size does not fit all," he said. "Know your own church and community and customize."

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