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Coppenger: 'one life, one school'
 committed to the things of God By James A. Smith Sr.

Baptist Press
 4/23/96

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)--The Christian world desperately needs "an array of stalwart institutions" to provide direction in a "stunningly disoriented world," declared Mark Coppenger in his inaugural address April 22 on the campus of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

"What shall the name Midwestern Seminary signify? Shall it bring to mind an institution wholly committed to the things of God, or shall it be known as just one more place where they played at consecration?" Coppenger rhetorically asked. "Forbid the latter. Let us resolve that Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary demonstrate to the world what one school wholly committed to God might mean."

The inaugural ceremony concluded a weekend of activities held in a 1200-seat tent pitched on the campus of the Kansas City, Mo., seminary. Other activities celebrating the inauguration of Coppenger as the seminary's third president included a community rally with Adrian Rogers and a 24-hour prayer vigil.

Evangelical theologian and prolific author Carl F.H. Henry provided the keynote address of the inaugural ceremony.

Alluding to the imagery of "prairie fire" advocated by Coppenger in his first months in office to promote revival in the Midwest/Great Plains region, Henry said, "Sometimes it is hard to get a fire going, but God can fan the dying embers to flame, and he promises to do so for a people eager for the Holy Spirit's warmth and glow."

Henry also reminded the audience of trustees, faculty, students and academic delegates that fire in the Bible has both positive and negative aspects.

"The choice is yours -- tongues of fire to carry the gospel worldwide in every language, or defaming God with tongues set aflame by the fury of hell. In a moment of weakness, Peter warmed himself by the fire, whereas when Lot ran from Sodom and Gomorrah those pagan cities fell in judgment," Henry said.

"Playing with fire is a risky venture," he said. "Our God is a consuming fire. You had best be sure that you bear God's full armor and walk with Christ who can quell the flames at their height."

The fact that preaching on the doctrine of hell has fallen into disfavor and the notion that hell is merely symbolic also met with strong words from the 83-year-old Baptist theologian.

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"A generation unscared of hell has produced the most wicked century in the history of humanity," Henry declared. "To be sure, the incomparable good news is amazing, amazing grace. Fail to preach God's love and we distort the Bible and vilify Jesus. But no less does one falsify God if he implies that God is lenient and tolerant of sin. Strip Jesus of his teaching about hell and you deprive of legitimacy his teaching about heaven."

Trustee chairman Lewis Adkinson, pastor of Circle Drive Baptist Church, Colorado Springs, Colo., presented the charge to Coppenger and led the investiture. All five of Coppenger's Southern Baptist Convention seminary presidential colleagues participated in the ceremony, led by Paige Patterson, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., and current president of the presidents' council.

The inaugural ceremony was briefly interrupted during Coppenger's address by the loss of the generator supplying power to the tent's electrical devices. The previous evening's event was marked by the same troubles after a fierce thunderstorm and high winds delayed Adrian Rogers' message. Rogers, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Cordova, Tenn., preached on the necessity of the seminary to be "the fountainhead of a great soul-winning movement that will reach this nation."

Like Rogers, Coppenger left the platform and finished his address walking the isles of the tent reminiscent of 18th- and 19th-century tent evangelists. Coppenger likened the potential of a seminary to the life's desire of 19th-century evangelist D.L. Moody, who said, "The world has yet to see what God can do through one man whose life is totally committed to Him. I will be that man."

"I want to lead your thoughts to the splendor of one single life, one life wholly committed to God. It should be our aim to treat each student life as potentially that one life which Moody named. And each student should, in turn, consider Moody's resolution that his or hers be that life," Coppenger said.

"We might now extend the concept by asking whether the world has yet seen a school wholly surrendered to God," Coppenger said. "Some shine brightly at their founding, but almost all fade fast in compromise with the world."

Noting once-great minister-training educational institutions like Harvard University and Chicago Divinity School long ago left this calling, Coppenger asked, "How does it happen?"

"Faculty are often eager to gain the acclaim of lost and backslidden academics in other institutions," Coppenger began to answer. "Disoriented by years of academic deference to skeptics, they stumble through their careers, yearning for crumbs from some backslider's table. Trustees taken more with the honor of it all than with the theological integrity of the school, let things drift into apostasy. Administrators corrupt themselves in the pursuit of dollars and peace.

"God, grant us a school which stays with the stuff through the years for his name sake," Coppenger declared.

"I think of Midwestern at a youth meeting, for we are a school in its adolescence. We've had our share of follies of youth, the starts and stops of a budding institution. And it is now time to set our course for effectual Christian maturity. It's decision time. The Lord issues the invitation. The altar is open. The music begins, 'All to Jesus, I surrender. All to Him I freely give.' One school. One life. Perhaps our school. Perhaps your life," Coppenger concluded to a standing ovation and a chorus of "Amen!"

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**N. Korea asks Southern Baptists
to feed flood-devastated city**

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LONDON (BP)--North Korean officials have asked Southern Baptists to help feed a flood-ravaged city for the next six months.

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"We were asked to help from now until October in the rescue of a city. We would supply one meal a day to about 50,000 people," said Bill Cashion, a member of a team sent in April by Cooperative Services International (CSI).

CSI is a Southern Baptist overseas relief and development organization. The six-member team included representatives from CSI, the Southern Baptist WMU women's organization and men's Brotherhood Commission.

North Korean officials appealed to the team to provide food to one of any number of cities or villages in the nation's disaster area. Food shortages in flood-stricken areas have affected up to 5 million North Koreans.

"This is one of the highest priorities for Southern Baptist relief work," Cashion said. "From what we saw, literally thousands of people will starve this winter without our help. God has given us a wonderful opportunity to help others in the name of Christ."

The critical situation in North Korea has prompted the government there to open doors that have been firmly locked against the outside for many years.

"I was impressed with the openness of the government officials with us," said Genevieve Bradley, a WMU representative on the team. "We were warmly received. They said they were impressed with our team's sincerity. They said a lot of groups have come to see and promised to help, but gave only an initial donation. Now they need ongoing help."

While gripping scenes of suffering and hardship met team members in each area they surveyed, the vast destruction of farmland in the north overwhelmed them.

"I had anticipated seeing the aftereffects of flood damage -- lost homes, crops and the twisted wreckage of buildings and bridges. But I don't think any of us were prepared for what we saw in the far north," one team member said.

Last August's flooding dumped tons of sand and silt onto more than 320,000 acres in the north. What once was one of the most fertile regions in the nation has turned into a desert-like wasteland.

"A layer of sand, 4 to 6 inches deep, covered every bit of land we could see," Cashion said. "In some spots, we saw sand dunes 6 to 8 feet tall. We drove and drove and drove through this area and it never got any better. As far as the eye could see, there was nothing but sand. This was once the food basket for the nation, but nothing can be grown there now. It will take years to recover."

The farming communities of the region now have no work -- and almost no food.

"We were told that the people in this area are down to one or one-half of a meal a day," Cashion said. "That means they get less than four ounces of rice a day and are left to find something green to eat with it. People are pulling weeds to eat."

As they toured the remains of one farming community, team members watched a woman carefully plant corn on a small plot of dirt.

"She was alone, working down on her knees in a patch of dirt surrounded by this huge sea of sand," Cashion said. "She must have carried the topsoil in and spread it out onto the sand. I recall thinking, 'If she can get these seeds to become seedlings, where is she going to eventually plant them?'"

Southern Baptists have already sent several shipping containers of food, plus tons of wheat flour and corn, with much more on the way. In January CSI announced it would spend \$500,000 in Southern Baptist hunger relief funds to send food aid into the isolated communist country.

During their visit, Brotherhood and WMU representatives also gave \$1,000 to a badly damaged elementary school in the northern part of the country.

Financial contributions to the North Korea relief project may be sent to CSI, P.O. Box 6841, Richmond, VA 23230; to the WMU Vision Fund, 100 Missionary Ridge, Birmingham, AL 35242-4352; or to the Brotherhood Commission, 1548 Poplar Ave., Memphis, TN 38104.

"Southern Baptists must realize that these are people who have suffered massive loss, people who are desperately hungry, and people who -- without outside help -- will face starvation," Cashion said.

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(BP) photo (vertical) mailed 4/23/96 to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press. Cutline available on SBCNet News Room.

**Innovation needs purpose,
Hybels tells drama leaders**

By Charles Willis

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--The goals of innovation and drama in worship should be larger than just the desire to be creative, Bill Hybels told more than 300 local church drama leaders April 19.

Hybels, senior pastor of Willow Creek Community Church in suburban Chicago, said the interdenominational congregation's 20-year history of innovative worship services was born out of needs for effectiveness, attentiveness and inspiration. He spoke at the Baptist Sunday School Board's church drama conference.

"We have never sought to be an innovative church for the sake of innovation," he said. "If you are not careful, you can start a kind of competition in the kingdom (of God) as to who is 'out there' the furthest."

Willow Creek, he said, innovates for effectiveness in a desire "to turn unreligious people into fully devoted followers."

"We asked (ourselves) how best we can make the gospel come alive for them."

As an example of Jesus' ability to create drama, Hybels cited Jesus' actions in Luke 5 where the disciples, after catching no fish, lowered their nets at his instruction and found them full to overflowing. He said creativity in worship has been a part of Willow Creek's desire for the lost "to see God for who he is, to see grace for what it is."

Using innovation to enhance attentiveness on the part of the congregation, he said, counters boredom, "the great enemy of some congregations."

When people are exposed to a different kind of communication, he said, "they leave autopilot, leaning forward in their seats to know."

In seeking inspiration through innovation, he said, "we stretch our creativity to actualize our creative potential, to stir up the gift within us."

"If you reduce the person's church experience to a talking head and a robed choir, that's just too narrow."

But he cautioned about the ways in which churches "stretch people's comfort ranges," suggesting adding a different kind of service is better than taking away a tradition that is meaningful to some people. Leaving the established service in place allows people who do not favor change to have what they want, while giving innovators the creative opportunity they desire, he said.

"Change management in a local church is one of the most challenging endeavors you can put your hand to," he observed. "If your church has a low tolerance for change, just don't do it."

At Willow Creek 16,000 people each week attend four worship services, one of which is directed to the X-generation, 20-something-year-olds whose learning style, Hybels said, "tends to be more interactive."

For that service, he said, the format is to teach, use drama, add music and then stop for questions and discussion. Then another "package" of teaching, drama and music is presented.

Baby boomers, the target group for the other three services, are increasing in their thirst for truth, he said. They want clear teaching from the Bible "for every imaginable subject matter. They want to know what God's Word says about such issues as ethics, morality, marriage and family -- and life beyond the grave."

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(BP) photos (color, horizontal), posted in the SBCNet News Room. One photo is of Hybels and the other features participants in a conference session.

**Scripture, self-confidence
imparted via Bible drills**

By Johnie Sentell

**Baptist Press
4/23/96**

VINCENT, Ala. (BP)--It has been a familiar sight in Baptist churches for years: Children line up in front of the congregation and display their expertise in locating verses of the Bible in a few short seconds -- putting most adults to shame.

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Years ago, the words of preparation sounded like something that could have come from this year's Oscar-winning movie "Braveheart." "Attention!" "Draw swords!" And after the verse was announced, the final instruction: "Charge!"

Old warriors might remember a Bible they used with a shield embossed on the front along with the words: "And the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:17).

Nowadays the instructions have a kinder, gentler sound:

"Attention!" "Present Bibles!" And the final instruction: "Start!"

But hearts are probably beating just as fast as those in past years, and certainly the fingers fly just as quickly in pursuit of book, chapter and verse.

Children in grades four through six participate in drills at their church and in their association. Their last competition is at the district drill. Youth in grades seven through nine, however, can go on to the state drill, with a state winner to be named, "the best Bible driller on that particular day," according to John Long of the Alabama Baptist State Convention's discipleship training department.

Strong contenders each year in Alabama Bible drills include participants from Calvary Baptist Church in Vincent.

One of the reasons for the success of Calvary's drillers is Frances Elliott, who has worked with Bible drill for 30 years.

"I got interested in it when my children were young," she said. "I wanted them to be knowledgeable about the Bible. I had seen Bible drill done, and I knew that was one way. I wanted them to be in it.

"I felt the same way about other children," Elliott continued. "It excites me to be in Sunday worship when the preacher says, 'My Scripture reference this morning is in Ecclesiastes.' My former Bible drill children can flip to Ecclesiastes," but the adults have to look to the index to see where Ecclesiastes is.

Said Bobby Frizzell, an eighth-grader at Vincent Middle School, "Bible drill means learning more about God's Word and being able to quote Scriptures when I'm down or when I need to know certain Scriptures from the Bible.

"It was always a lot of hard work," Frizzell continued. "It definitely takes determination. You always have to be walking with God. You will never forget a lot of the verses and things that you learn. I have a lot of good memories from it. Mrs. Elliott is a great Bible drill teacher. She cares a lot for her Bible drill students, and she gives you time to learn at your own pace."

Said Elliott, "People always say encouraging things to me about how they appreciate my work with the children and the results they have seen. My church is very supportive of me, but that's not why I do it. I enjoy seeing children grow in their Bible knowledge as a result of Bible drill.

"Increasing Bible knowledge -- that is what it's all about," she said.

"You have five different kinds of drills, and one part is you memorize Scripture," Elliott explained. "You have 25 verses to memorize and 10 Scripture passages to remember where to locate, so each year you learn verses."

Students can participate in the children's Bible drill for three years and the youth drill for three years. Then they can take part in a speakers' tournament during grades 10, 11 and 12.

"If they go all the way through, they are getting nine years of Bible training," Elliott said.

Glenn Pender, pastor at Calvary, said, "I have always supported the Bible drill at all the churches I have served. I have watched these kids that have participated. They are the ones that come to the head of the class. They are successful kids.

"Memorizing Scripture has always been very important," the pastor said, "but I think it is probably more so today because of the lack of Scripture being allowed in the public school and public life. We need those Scriptures. Church is the only place you are going to get them. The verses are there in times of crisis. You don't have to go look them up. You have got them."

Felicia Boland, a member of Broadway Baptist Church, Rainsville, Ala., agreed. "It gives them Scripture to refer back to if they are experiencing bad times. Something they learned during Bible drill and Scripture memorization can help them."

Boland, assistant principal at Plainview High School, has been working with Bible drill at Broadway for four years.

"I see the children here at school and at church. Children that are so introverted at school, when you see them at church and they perform so well, you can see their confidence building," Boland said. "It brightens their faces. It really helps to build their confidence in all areas when they feel they have been a success in something like this.

"You can see progress right away as they see the older ones and how well they perform," she said. "They become encouraged. We have a lot of children that enter Bible drill that are shy, and they probably wouldn't participate in anything in front of a crowd other than this type of activity."

"It is rewarding to watch the children grow and change and become more spiritually aware as a result of the training," Boland added. "It is a blessing to me to see them learn that the Bible is not just a book written thousands of years ago. It is still relevant today."

Steve Daffron, associate pastor and youth pastor at Broadway, said, "I am amazed in working with the youth how the Bible memorization sticks with them from year to year, especially those who repeat. It seems to become a knack for them. Many of them in classes I teach know the verses. A lot of them will quote them.

"It is a major plus for our church and in the lives of our kids," Daffron said. "It is for their benefit, and God will be glorified in that."

Developing a proficiency in Bible drill and Scripture memorization doesn't come quickly, Elliott noted.

"It takes many, many hours of practice," she said. "I always say to them: 'First of all, you have to have some help from home; you can't do it all at church. Go over it at least once every day at home. You have got to practice every day.'"

Amanda Smith, a seventh-grader at Vincent Middle School, said, "You have to put a special time aside for it to help you prepare. My parents help me study for it and encourage me to do my best.

"Whether I make it to the next drill or not," Smith said, "it is still the right thing to do."

Elliott said, "Last year before the state drill I had the children coming to my house at 6:30 in the morning to practice about an hour before school. We probably did it three days a week for three months prior to the state drill.

"And that's just at the end. We usually start in October, and the drills start in March," she said.

The knowledge that comes from Bible drills has important applications, Elliott pointed out.

"I have seen some of the children I have worked with go on to do the same thing -- lead other children in Bible drill," she said. "I have seen some become Christians because of what they did with Bible drill."

Daffron said one of Broadway's members Lori Land, won the state Bible drill last year. "She has been a big inspiration to our church," Daffron said. "She has taught in the children's division this year. It has made a big impact on our children, a big influence."

Boland said Lori "was very quiet and shy. This has really boosted her self-confidence. She now wants to compete in the speakers' tournament next year -- something none of us that have worked with her nor her family thought she would do, because she is such a quiet person.

"This year she helped with the children's Bible drill and did a wonderful job. I think that really boosted her confidence."

Only about 10 percent of the churches in the Alabama convention participate in the associational Bible drills, according to Long. "The importance of children's Bible drill is that, as adults, we might not be able to remember verses we memorized last week, but we can recall Scripture we memorized as a child," Long said. "That is the value of Bible drills."

What would a church need to do to start a Bible drill program? "All they have to do is to have one adult who wants to begin this ministry," Long said.

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Hebrew scholar to join
Southeastern faculty

By Lee Weeks

Baptist Press
4/23/96

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--Highly respected among his colleagues for his scholarship and his rapport with students, Mark Rooker will join the faculty at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary this fall as associate professor of Old Testament and Hebrew.

The seminary's board of trustees unanimously elected Rooker to the post during their March meeting.

Rooker, 44, comes to Southeastern from Criswell College, in Dallas, where he has served as chairman and professor of Old Testament and Hebrew since 1992.

"In my opinion, Dr. Rooker is the brightest young Hebraist who is working in the Southern Baptist Convention today," said Southeastern President Paige Patterson in announcing Rooker's selection.

Rooker, a native of Dallas, is currently completing a commentary on Leviticus for the New American Commentary Series; the volume is expected to be released by Broadman & Holman Publishers in late 1997.

Rooker said he has a deep appreciation for the Hebrew language, having been trained in the language by Jewish scholars at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

A knowledge of Hebrew is key to a minister's full understanding of God's Word, he said.

Rooker received his master of arts and doctorate degrees at Brandeis University where he studied biblical Hebrew. He earned a master of theology degree from Dallas Theological Seminary.

Before going to Criswell College, Rooker served as assistant professor of Old Testament at Dallas Theological Seminary from 1988-92.

"Mark Rooker is one of the most outstanding of the young Old Testament scholars in the evangelical world," said L. Russ Bush III, academic vice president and dean of the faculty at Southeastern. "His expertise will strengthen our Ph.D. program and his spiritual depth will touch everyone that knows him.

"With a teacher like Dr. Rooker," Bush said, "the academic quality and missionary spirit of our campus will be assured for the next generation."

Rooker and his wife, Carole, have been married 14 years; they have three sons. Rooker will officially join the faculty Aug. 1.

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Law school preceded seminary
for new Christian ed prof

By Lee Weeks

Baptist Press
4/23/96

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary has added to its faculty a Christian educator with a background in the pastoral ministry, counseling, psychology and law.

Greg Lawson, currently assistant professor of religious education and director of counseling at Williams Baptist College, Walnut Ridge, Ark., has been named assistant professor of Christian education at Southeastern, according to seminary President Paige Patterson.

"Dr. Lawson is probably as multifaceted an individual as we've ever had," Patterson said.

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Southeastern's trustees unanimously elected Lawson to the post during their March meeting.

Lawson, 37, a native Tennessean, said he had been attracted to Southeastern long before being contacted by the school, having heard of the way God was working at the seminary.

Lawson said he wants to bring a holistic view of Christian education to Southeastern.

"Christian education is basically fulfilling the Great Commission," he said. "Winning (people to Christ), discipling and sending, I see that as the heart of Christian education."

Lawson said he sensed God's call to Christian vocational ministry in 1981 while attending a conference at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center during a break from law school.

Before that conference, Lawson said, he had planned to practice law -- but God had other plans. After finishing law school at Campbell University in Bules Creek, N.C., Lawson enrolled at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, where he earned his master of arts and master of divinity degrees.

L. Russ Bush III, academic vice president and dean of the faculty at Southeastern, said Lawson will be a tremendous asset to the seminary inside and outside the classroom.

"Dr. Lawson is an outstanding leader," Bush said. "He will be a great prayer partner for students. In his personal life he has dedicated himself to students and to the enhancement of their ministries."

Lawson, who also has an earned doctorate in adult education from the University of North Texas at Denton, said he would like to help organize and participate in prayer and Bible study groups on campus.

Prayer, Lawson said, is the heart and soul of a seminary's spiritual vitality. "I want to have a part in raising up a new generation of preachers that want to seek the face of God," he said.

Lawson and his wife, Betty, have been married 13 years; they have two young sons.

Lawson will officially join the seminary faculty Aug. 1.

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RTVC 'Man to Man' series
to be telecast this fall

By C.C. Risenhoover

Baptist Press
4/23/96

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--In 1993 Arthur Hixson came away from a Promise Keepers conference in Boulder, Colo., feeling that God was leading him to develop effective Christian videos, some of which would help men to become all that they are capable of being as Christians.

More than two years later, Hixson, a former employee of the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission, formed Vine Alliance, LLC in Nashville, Tenn., for the purpose of producing and distributing a monthly one-hour subscription video magazine called "Man to Man."

In July of this year the first tape will be available. And, in the fall, a weekly 30-minute version of "Man to Man" is planned for telecast on FamilyNet and ACTS, the broadcast and cable television services of the RTVC. FamilyNet reaches into 33 million homes nationwide through more than 100 affiliates. ACTS, carried on the Faith and Values Channel, reaches into more than 25 million homes.

"The TV version is just a matter of taking my vision for helping men a step further," said Hixson, who said both the video and TV version of his project are a co-venture with several Christian businessmen and the RTVC through TimeRite, the agency's sales and marketing arm. "It's only because Jerry Stamps and Deborah Key understand my vision and have a heart for helping people that 'Man to Man' will soon be reaching the masses on FamilyNet and ACTS."

Stamps is senior vice president for administration at the RTVC; Key is vice president of network operations and general manager of FamilyNet and ACTS.

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Hixson said his series of one-hour "Man to Man" video tapes is designed for individual or small-group use.

"They give practical help on how to become a more effective Christian man," he said. "Each tape features a segment on a man's walk with the Lord. Other segments deal with being a more effective husband, father, worker and financial steward."

Hixson said each informative portion of a program features national experts and "men on the street" communicating an attitude of "men helping men" instead of "men lecturing to men."

The executive producer said each one-hour tape also has two "people" profiles.

"One profile features a guy who might sit next to you in church who has put his faith into action in a unique or interesting way," Hixson said. "The other profile is about a celebrity whose faith impacts his daily life."

The monthly one-hour tape series will be available through annual subscription, he said, at an approximate monthly cost of \$10.

Hixson said that while the 30-minute weekly TV program will be different than the one-hour monthly video, both the 'Man to Man' TV program and the monthly video will provide strong support for men genuinely committed to being men of integrity.

"God, obviously, is at work among Christian men," he said. "Using television and video to show how he is working will enhance the spread of the gospel."

A native of Lake Charles, La., and graduate of Baylor University, Hixson has more than 20 years' experience in Christian television, including two years as executive vice president of TimeRite, the sales arm of the RTVC.

"God is moving in a mighty way among the men of our nation," Stamps said, "which is clearly evident by the increased participation in the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission as well as the growth of the Promise Keepers movement. More than 1 million men are expected to attend the 22 scheduled Promise Keepers conferences this year.

"What God is doing among men in America is a primary reason we're so optimistic about 'Man to Man.' We simply want to join God where we see him working."

HOUSE MAIL

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