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**Churches damaged by arson
receive book offer from BSSB**

**Baptist Press
7/23/96**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--As an expression of concern and support, the Baptist Sunday School Board is contacting churches damaged or destroyed by arson in the last 18 months with an offer of up to 13 free books.

"As a publisher of resources for churches and church leaders, we are making available at no cost some books which we hope can be useful in replacing those which may have been lost or for your use in planning for the future," BSSB President James T. Draper Jr. wrote in a letter being sent to the churches.

Draper said church names and addresses are being compiled by the BSSB from numerous sources, including state Baptist conventions, Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission, lists published in newspapers and others.

"We certainly understand that our action does not begin to address the overall needs of these churches as they rebuild and look to the future," Draper said. "However, we wanted to do something tangible to communicate our concern and support. We believe these resources can be valuable tools for leaders and members."

He said the offer is being made to African American and other churches victimized by arson. It is not limited to Southern Baptist churches. The list of 13 books from the board's church growth group and Broadman & Holman Publishers includes study resources such as the "Experiencing God Bible," "Holman Bible Dictionary" and "Holman Bible Handbook" as well as books for leaders including "Kingdom Principles for Church Growth," "Church: God's People on Mission" and "Church Leadership Team Handbook."

The board has established a toll-free number for churches to call and place orders after receiving Draper's letter. The number is 1-800-357-7029.

Draper said the board's actions on churches damaged by arson are an outgrowth of an ongoing policy through which the board provides some free materials and discounts on many items to Southern Baptist churches that experience disasters such as fires, floods and storm damage.

In related SBC actions, Southern Baptists attending the 1996 SBC annual meeting June 11-13 in New Orleans, contributed \$282,000 in pledges and cash gifts to assist African American churches victimized by arson. In early July, \$246,712 was distributed to 12 state Baptist conventions to use in assisting churches rebuild. The Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission is working through state conventions to contact churches that have experienced arson. As needs are identified, the commission is matching them with groups that have volunteered to help with rebuilding. The SBC Home Mission Board is compiling a list of people willing to volunteer their time to rebuild churches damaged or destroyed by arson.

**Church opens its arms
to cycling spectators****By Sarah Zimmerman**

ATLANTA (BP)--The church had two choices: cancel services and tell members to stay home or welcome the world and ask members to come minister.

Second-Ponce de Leon Baptist Church faces the course -- marked by a blue stripe in a six-lane road -- for three Olympic cycling and two marathon races. The church's family life center is a press room and parking lots are a broadcast compound and makeshift locker rooms for athletes.

"We sensed a tremendous chance for ministry, although many people sensed a tremendous chance for traffic," said Dan Hayes, director of the church-based Atlanta Community Ministries. "The world is coming to us. Deciding to do something was almost a no-brainer."

The church decided to seize what pastor Jim Denison called an "unprecedented mission opportunity." As the Olympics drew closer, parking lots began to resemble a prison with chain-link fences providing security for equipment and personnel. Church schedules were altered to accommodate the Olympic agenda, and members were encouraged to ride a shuttle since two parking lots were off-limits.

The first event at the church was women's road cycling July 21. Although the race did not start until 11 a.m., streets closed before 8 a.m., and spectators lined the sidewalks by 9 to claim a shady spot. At the time church members typically gather for Bible study and worship, they were mingling with race fans, offering cups of water and providing first aid. Similar activities will take place during races July 31 and Aug. 3.

"We want to show people that the God of the nations is the God who loves, the God who saves, the God who heals. We want to do that by meeting the very real needs of people," said Clay Ramsey, layman and organizer of the ministry activities.

Spectators' children were quickly bored with sitting on the sidewalk and waiting for the race to start. Parents seemed relieved when church members offered free face painting, balloon sculptures, bean bag tosses and basketball throws to amuse the children. Clowns and a music group assigned through Baptists' Atlanta International Ministries '96 helped entertain the crowds.

Cyclists had to complete eight laps to finish the course. The pattern church members adapted during the race was mingling and entertaining the crowds, listening for the helicopters hovering over the race which signaled the cyclists' approach, moving with the crowds to the sidewalk to watch the bikers go by and returning to ministry activities until the cyclists came by on the next lap.

A hospitality tent in front of the church served as a water station for spectators and distribution point for Olympic pocket guides that include the plan of salvation.

With nearly 200 people ministering on the church campus, Denison called it a "marvelous day." One church member who has been a missions volunteer in other countries said the Olympic ministry was the greatest day of her life.

When the race was over and the gold medal was given to Jeannie Longo of France, the church gathered for worship. Members were tired from being in the heat and wet from being caught in a rainstorm. Yet layman Denton Harris said, "I've been coming to this church a long time, and I've never seen it look this beautiful. Let's do it again sometime."

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(BP) photo to be posted on SBCNet this week. To request prints, call Sarah Zimmerman in the HMB news office at (770) 410-6533.

**Tom Elliff: Media can be used
to boost family values, prayer**

By C.C. Risenhoover

OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)--The president of the Southern Baptist Convention said media as a form has no conscience of its own, that any person who uses it presses his or her own particular conscience on an audience.

"It's a tool, and because it's a tool, media can be used positively or negatively," said Tom Elliff, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church, Del City, Okla., who was elected SBC president at the convention's annual meeting in June in New Orleans.

Elliff said many people using media in an immoral way confuse the concept of freedom with license.

"In America, free speech is a right and privilege," he said, "but freedom carries with it a responsibility. Free speech is a trust that should be used to build up the moral values of the nation, not tear them down.

"Greed is often the driving factor behind the media's promotion of immorality. Some people don't care what they do as long as it makes money."

Elliff said it is his conviction media are driven by an agenda, whether it be broadcast of a Christmas pageant at a church or a secular editorial in a newspaper or magazine.

"The Bible is the communication of God's nature and agenda for the ages," he said.

Elliff said while some Christians throw up their hands in despair at how some writers, directors and producers use media to perpetrate immorality, there is a great deal Christians can do to stem degenerate behavior by use of the same tools.

"The Christian message shines brightly in contrast to the world's message," he said. "A Christian should shine brightly against any backdrop of deviant behavior and influence projected by those who have an immoral agenda. The church should use media to articulate Christ's message in word and deed.

"Unfortunately, the church is often portrayed by media as being reactive instead of proactive. We need to be proactive, on the offensive, sowing seeds through media that weed out evil."

As for entertainment, Elliff said Christians ought to spend, or not spend, their dollars to send a message.

"It's ironic that so many purported Christians excuse subscribing to a cable service by saying they're going to be selective in their choice of channels," Elliff said. "Their subscription fee, however, pays for all sorts of salacious material. It's like a guy who says he's a Christian but who works as a bartender. He can say he doesn't drink and that he doesn't want families to be destroyed by alcohol and lives to be lost by drunk driving, but he is willing for that to happen so he can make a living."

Regarding an SBC resolution June 12 that asked the Walt Disney Company to return to family values entertainment, Elliff said, "We are simply asking Disney to be responsible in the use of free speech. We've challenged Disney to think seriously about their position and challenged Southern Baptists to respond accordingly.

"The irresponsible use of media pains and grieves me," Elliff said. "And we should not be silent about it. But we should offer something better. The burden of my heart is for Southern Baptists to jump on all available media as a tool by which we clearly identify ourselves and our mission. Any program we produce should show our mission. Producing programs that simply parallel secular media does little for us or the gospel of Jesus Christ. The thing that characterizes Southern Baptists is proclamation of the gospel. We don't have to water down what we do, and we don't have to apologize for the message. If anything, we need to saturate the media with it. If we have the opportunity to say just one thing, it should be the right thing."

Elliff said a key responsibility of the new North American Mission Board (NAMB) should be to define the role of Southern Baptist media in North America.

"We need to seize the day, be on the leading edge of technology in proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ," he said.

"We live in a media-oriented society, and failure to use this technology is equivalent to continuing to send missionaries to foreign countries by boat. We ought to look at such things as the jet airplane and cyberspace with missions in mind.

"We should have the greatest media network. But we must never lose sight of our purpose, which is the proclamation of the gospel."

Elliff said whether preparing a radio/television broadcast or cutting the grass around the church, his church's slogan is: "Whatever we do ought to be fit for the King."

"This ought to characterize Southern Baptist use of media," the SBC president said. "Successful people are usually lopsided. They use every tool available to achieve their goal. A local church and our convention should be lopsided toward sharing the gospel. In any involvement with media, the local church and our convention should be focused to drive home its purpose. The message should be taken right to the heart. That means knowing what you're about, your purpose and message."

Other religious groups have created perceptions of strengths in areas that have always been mainstays of Southern Baptist life, he said, and have been quite focused in their use of media.

"Southern Baptists are the family life people in this country, not the Mormons," he said. "And we were the traditional family values people before politicians coined the phrase. Our use of media should communicate and strengthen such reality."

First Southern Baptist Church has a daily 30-minute radio broadcast on KQCV in Oklahoma City and a weekly one-hour broadcast on KSBI-TV in Oklahoma City, which is carried on cable throughout the state. Both the radio and TV program are called "Living in the Word."

The church also has a global tape ministry and a home page on the Internet. Elliff uses e-mail to correspond with missionaries around the world.

"Never underestimate the power of radio in proclaiming the gospel," he said. "As good as TV is, it's confining. Radio isn't. That's why many of the nation's greatest ministries use only radio."

First Southern also does prime-time TV specials throughout the year, and with its 40-foot production trailer is not confined to one location.

When the federal building in Oklahoma City was bombed two years ago, killing 167 people, the church immediately began using media to minister to the community. Billboards were utilized and a prime-time TV special was produced and broadcast.

"Because of our production mobility, we were able to move quickly," Elliff said. "We did a video titled, 'When Tragedy Strikes.' We ran the program on a local station and our counseling ministry received hundreds of calls. So did the TV station. The manager of the station asked permission to run the video two other times and didn't charge us.

"In addition, a corporation in town paid for duplication of the video and distributed copies throughout the city.

"Our children's minister put together a free audio tape for children, which also received wide distribution.

"In every media utilized, our focus was ministry. We dealt with the tragedy from a Christian perspective."

Elliff said Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tenn., pastored by Adrian Rogers, sent \$32,000 to help First Southern in its ministering emphasis. First Southern received gifts from many other churches to help minister to the people of Oklahoma City.

"Because of what we experienced here, we can readily identify with the grief of families who lost loved ones in the recent TWA crash," Elliff said.

Thirty-six members of First Southern worked at the federal building. None were killed in the blast, but all suffered loss of friends or relatives. Elliff conducted several funerals within a period of a few days.

"Our media ministry is supported completely by the church," he said. "Its focus is to develop the local congregation, so we concentrate primarily on the Oklahoma City area. It is not as extensive as we would like it to be, but we are saturating Oklahoma. Our television and radio broadcasts are also carried outside the state at the request of other stations.

"One of my dreams for a Southern Baptist media ministry would be the utilization of all available technology for a daily worldwide prayer ministry. Through prayer together, we can find the inner strength and resources to proclaim the gospel throughout the world. Southern Baptists ought to marshal the greatest prayer force in history. Our radio- and television-related entities could help us develop such a force through daily communication of prayer needs and victories."

Churches' 'servant evangelism' tearing down gospel barriers

By Sarah Zimmerman

INDIANAPOLIS (BP)--People used to refer to First Baptist Church, Knightstown, Ind., as the church that split. This spring, pastor Mark Tabb overheard someone describe it as the church that washes cars. He prefers the new image.

Free car washes are not publicity stunts or church growth gimmicks, Tabb says. Instead they're part of an intentional strategy of "servant evangelism."

In addition to offering car washes, members of First Baptist have shoveled snow for neighbors and given away popcorn, flower seeds and Olympic guides that include the plan of salvation. They have offered drinking water to fishermen as they leave boat ramps and gone door-to-door at Halloween giving away surprises instead of taking candy.

"I can't say that we've seen large numbers of people saved, but we've only been doing it since August," Tabb said. "It has changed the mind-set of the church. Now we ask, 'How can we serve others?' It's also changed the image of the church in the community and torn down all sorts of walls."

David Wheeler, Indiana director of evangelism, introduced state churches to the servant evangelism concept last year. The approach is based on the book, "Conspiracy of Kindness," by Steven Sjogren. Wheeler noted Sjogren, a Vineyard Christian Fellowship pastor in Cincinnati, is not Southern Baptist, but his ideas nevertheless can be useful without adopting his theology.

Sometimes servant evangelism includes sharing Christ directly with someone. Earlier this year a youth group went to a parking lot to wash car windshields and led seven people to make professions of faith.

In other cases, servant evangelism is simply doing something nice for someone. New Heritage Baptist Church in Indianapolis is in a community where prices for new homes start at \$250,000 and security systems are tight. "We can't go ring doorbells," said pastor Mark Patton. "We have no entrance to their homes, and they're not attracted to a Baptist church."

To reach people in the affluent community, the church took eight-inch gourmet chocolate chip cookies to area homes this spring. Each cookie was sealed with a gold label and an invitation to a gardening seminar led by a lawn care expert at the church. Thirty people attended the May meeting, and Patton hopes it's the first step to introducing them to Christ.

The approach appeals to Christians uncomfortable with traditional evangelism approaches, but it's "not an end in itself," Wheeler said. "It's an entry-level way to get people involved in evangelism."

When Fall Creek Baptist Church in Indianapolis began a servant evangelism approach, Neal Gore, associate pastor of ministry, said, "I could not believe how difficult it was for these people to talk about God's love."

One of the church's first projects was wrapping Christmas gifts at a mall. When shoppers asked why the church provided the free service, some church members hesitated to say, "This is a practical way to show you God's love." That made Gore realize they probably weren't leading anyone through a gospel tract or presenting the Roman Road to people either.

Church members have since handed out soft drinks in crowded parks, given away copies of the "Jesus" video and taken coffee and donuts to workers at construction sites.

"We call it light work," Gore said. "It's evangelism without the pressure."

Servant evangelism is necessary in an unchurched culture, Gore said, because "people are so far away from God; it takes several touches to bring them to the point of salvation."

In neighboring Kentucky, servant evangelism for members of Rockford Lane Baptist Church, Louisville, has included giving out quarters to people preparing to do their laundry at a laundromat.

The response went beyond surprise, said pastor Ron Abrams. "They were shocked," he said, adding once they recovered, they expressed appreciation. The gift also included a card indicating the gift is from Rockford Lane Baptist Church and listing a schedule of church activities.

Servant evangelism is "a great intergenerational ministry," Abrams said. Having his 9-year-old son, Adam, teamed up with his 19-year-old son, Aaron, and the church's associate minister, Philip Hedgecoth, helped break through the disbelief people at the laundromat first expressed. "Adam disarmed them," the pastor said.

**Georgia Baptists offered
new media witness journal****By Art Toalston**

ATLANTA (BP)--An additional avenue of media witness has been launched by The Christian Index, newsjournal of the Georgia Baptist Convention.

The first issue of The E Street Journal is making its debut in conjunction with the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta.

The E Street Journal, to be published quarterly in a magazine format, will have a different thrust than The Christian Index, which is a weekly newspaper, managing editor Johnny Pierce said.

The Christian Index -- in its 175th year -- will continue to provide news and features of interest to Georgia Baptists.

The E Street Journal, meanwhile, according to its mission statement, "is an eclectic, faith-affirming feature magazine which utilizes Christian writers and artists to educate, entertain and enrich a diverse readership and provide a positive image of the Christian faith and lifestyle."

The E Street Journal will reflect elements from various popular magazines, like Southern Living's travel features and Guideposts' personality profiles, all with a family friendly approach, Pierce said.

Additionally, there will be high-quality art work, history-type stories, Christian fiction, poetry and missions features "in a broader sense in how people put their faith into action," Pierce said.

"We think it's a niche that no one else is filling," he said.

The E Street Journal will seek to appeal "to people who are not necessarily Baptists or even Christians," Pierce said, and it can be a witness tool in a range of everyday settings, such as local businesses, hotel lobbies, doctor's-office waiting rooms and auto repair shops. Pierce also intends for the journal to make its way to local newsstands.

The E Street Journal will seek to offer churches "a quality outreach piece," Pierce noted.

Churches purchasing a minimum 500 copies will be able to personalize the magazine's back cover to highlight upcoming events and ministries each quarter or simply to list the times of services and names of staff members, Pierce said. It will offer churches a less-expensive form of promotion than printing full-color brochures, he said.

Individual subscriptions also will be sold for \$8 a year or \$14 for two years through The Christian Index offices at 2930 Flowers Road, South, Atlanta, GA 30341; phone, (770) 936-5312.

In the planning for two years, The E Street Journal's first run included a mailing of 60,000 to subscribers of The Christian Index and 40,000 copies made available for Olympics hospitality sites operated by Baptists' Atlanta International Ministries '96. The next run will be 50,000.

The cover of The E Street Journal's first issue features a full-color painting, "Final Preparation," of athletes forming a circle of prayer before competing, by Frank Murphy, minister of youth and outreach at First Baptist Church, Rome, Ga. Murphy's body of work includes a painting of Bear Bryant in a museum named for the legendary coach in Tuscaloosa, Ala.

The original "Final Preparation" painting is on display, along with other works by Murphy, in AIM '96's downtown ministry center, and prints are being sold as Olympics mementos.

Murphy is one of many artists, writers and poets for whom Pierce hopes The E Street Journal will be a creative outlet. "There are a lot of Christian folks out there with gifts seeking ways to get out further," he said.

The journal's first issue also includes a range of Olympics information and athlete profiles, an article on the role of religion in Olympics history, an Atlanta restaurant and things-to-do section and a feature on the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, N.Y.

The journal is named after E Street in Washington, where the mother newspaper was founded by Luther Rice 175 years ago as The Columbian Star. It was renamed The Christian Index and moved to Georgia in 1833.

**Pastor urges Baptist churches
to break 'the cycle of debt'**

By Carrie Brown

DOTHAN, Ala. (BP)--The national debt. Credit card debt. Business loans. Car loans. Mortgages. Debt is common among people of all ages, races, economic backgrounds and social classes across the United States.

Businesses are in debt. Families are in debt. And what worries pastor and author Rodney Culpepper is many churches are in debt.

And the example churches are setting.

Culpepper, pastor of Cloverdale Baptist Church, Dothan, Ala., used his interest and experience in the area of debt reduction to write "Breaking the Cycle of Debt: A Cutting Edge Approach to Church Stewardship."

"There are hundreds of books and articles and seminars about families going into debt, but there's very little about churches and why churches should operate with the same kind of standards," Culpepper said.

Culpepper cites data from the Baptist Sunday School Board showing Southern Baptist churches were more than \$2 billion in debt at the end of the 1993 fiscal year. Based on average interest rates, Southern Baptist churches are paying more than \$182 million a year in interest payments alone.

Culpepper has learned how to deal with church debt through his experiences at Verbena (Ala.) Baptist Church and now at Cloverdale.

When Culpepper became the pastor at Verbena in 1989, the church owed more than \$35,000.

"In February of 1992, I led the church to borrow another \$40,000, increasing our debt to \$75,000," Culpepper said. "After that experience, the Lord really convicted me, and we committed ourselves to debt reduction. Operating on a \$69,000 budget, we paid off a \$75,000 loan in three years."

Culpepper became Cloverdale's pastor in April 1995. At the time, the church owed just over \$89,000. Although reducing the debt was on his mind from the beginning, Culpepper did not tackle the issue until November. By this time the debt had decreased to \$63,000, and Culpepper challenged the congregation to "Defeat the \$63,000 Giant" by May 5, 1996.

"We didn't pay off the \$63,000 in six months on May 5. We paid off the \$63,000 in three months on Feb. 5," Culpepper said.

Currently Cloverdale is promoting a building fund emphasis for a new fellowship hall. "We have committed ourselves to build it debt-free, and we are convinced that the Lord will enable us to do this," Culpepper said.

One of the main reasons Culpepper is concerned about church debt is it seems "to put more trust in what people can do than in what God can do."

Debt is not only a church problem, Culpepper said; he sees it as a convention-wide problem that needs to be examined. He cited an example from the 1995 annual meeting of the Alabama Baptist State Convention.

"At the 1995 convention, we discussed (an issue relating to Samford University) for about 90 minutes, and the discussion resulted in three ballot votes," Culpepper said. "According to The Alabama Baptist, about 500 people left the conference after that issue was discussed."

What happened next disturbed Culpepper.

"Within less than 15 minutes, we had three recommendations from the state convention to borrow \$3.5 million for construction at Judson (College), to borrow \$125,000 to buy some new property for the University of Mobile and to borrow \$6 million to expand the state Baptist building," Culpepper said.

"We discussed the Samford issue for 90 minutes and then in 15 minutes voted to spend \$10 million that we don't have," he said. "We've reached the point that debt has become our automatic first choice. I would love to see us explore a few more options rather than automatically borrowing money."

Culpepper said while the decision to go into debt varies from situation to situation and from church to church, there are some questions the church should ask, including:

- Has the church been in debt before?
- How long has the church known it needs or might need improvements or expansion?
- Has money been budgeted into savings to prepare for future building?

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By asking these questions and others, a church can determine whether it has adequately planned for a building project and is ready to proceed, said Culpepper, who also conducts workshops on debt reduction and serves as a building fund drive consultant. He noted by planning ahead, a church can minimize, if not eliminate, the amount of debt it has to take on to complete a project.

In the foreword to the book, Jim Henry, pastor of First Baptist Church, Orlando, Fla., and past president of the Southern Baptist Convention, calls *Breaking the Cycle of Debt* "arresting reading that embraces practical principles of Christian stewardship, firmly based on hundreds of verses from God's word."

"This book, with its practical, biblical, no-nonsense approach, will help your church, regardless of its size, break the cycle of debt," Henry writes.

For more information about Culpepper's ministry or the book, *Breaking the Cycle of Debt*, contact Culpepper at 708 Mullins Drive, Dothan, AL 36301 or (334) 677-7598.

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A three-hour church week could reach busy members

By Charles Willis

**Baptist Press
7/23/96**

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--People today are too busy to attend church-sponsored events several times a week, and many will not begin a study, no matter how relevant, slated to meet once a week for several weeks in a row, researchers confirm.

Churches wanting to minister to people who are living "in the fast lane" need to heed the evidence of researchers, observe the lifestyles around them and respond appropriately, a Southern Baptist associational leader said during the National Conference for Church Leadership at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center.

Margaret Slusher, associate director of missions for Noonday Baptist Association, Marietta, Ga., noted many researchers, among them George Barna in his book "User Friendly Church" and Faith Popcorn in "Clicking," validate what many church leaders see in their communities. People are living "99 lives," Slusher said.

When they are not at work, they are cocooning, some out of fear for their safety at night. Those who are not overloaded at work in a downsized environment are "cashing out," seeking a slower lifestyle with fewer pressures and claims on their time.

Barna, in fact, writes that the lives of people today are geared to participate in church approximately three hours each week.

In the face of these facts, Slusher said, many churches are looking at creative ways to streamline church -- to offer a five-star church in a three-hour week. In order to offer Bible study, discipleship, Woman's Missionary Union, Brotherhood and music activities (the five stars) to people who have limited time to participate, rethinking schedules is necessary.

Some churches offer worship on Saturday nights, with discipleship provided on Wednesday nights when other activities are scheduled, she said. "Clumping" programs together at selected times, and not always traditional times, may better meet the needs of the targeted participants.

Further, Slusher said, churches are looking more specifically at meeting people's needs instead of offering an overwhelming number of options that get marginal response.

"Look at the total person," she urged church leaders. "We need to change from being program-oriented to people-oriented -- meeting their needs. Survey people. Know their life issues. And survey people outside the church if you want to reach them."

In training people for leadership, she said, churches are planning intensive sessions, such as a mini-retreat that may begin on Friday night and conclude at noon on Saturday. For some, this has been more successful than spreading training out over several weeks, particularly when some people are not in town every week. She said the experience of some churches is that 12- to 13-week courses do not work. Many people drop out after six weeks.

"People go to church for relationships," she said. "We need to provide teaching and ministry that offers refuge, relevance and relationships. We need to understand the time limitations of people, lifestyle trends and what is going on in the world. People want a church that lets them participate with relevance."

The National Conferences for Church Leadership, July 12-15 and July 15-19, focused training on leadership, ministry and worship and were sponsored by the BSSB's church leadership services division.

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**Church targeting 'Mack Man,'
hoping to get 'Mack Woman' too**

By Karen L. Willoughby

McKINLEYVILLE, Calif. (BP)--Meet "Mack Man."

He's a composite of unchurched men in this far northwestern California town.

And he's helping John McCain grow a church.

"There's a tremendous opportunity here," said McCain, pastor of New Heart Community Church, which turned a year old on Easter, with about 135 people now attending Sunday worship.

"In the past 10 years there has been a major demographic change in the community," McCain explained. "Our conclusion was that (the town's 10 or 11 other churches) weren't reaching the newer segment who make up most of the rapid growth, many of whom are unchurched."

In early 1995, McCain and the other members of a church-planting team from Trinity Baptist Church in nearby Arcata developed a demographic profile of the unchurched "Mack Man" who would be attracted to and would benefit from an innovative place of worship and Christian education in McKinleyville.

"Mack Man is 25 to 55 years old, married, has a couple of kids, makes \$30,000 to \$55,000 a year and has some college education," McCain said. "We believe that by focusing on Mack Man we will attract Mack Woman as well."

Mack Man wants everything to be done with an eye to quality, the church planting team determined. The initial flyer direct-mailed to 4,700 homes (everyone in McKinleyville with a sewer hookup) is an example.

To the right of a cartoon that pokes fun at sermons is a question: "Do you think all church services are boring?"

And an answer: "At last! A new church for those who have given up on traditional church services. New Heart Community Church has been planned with your needs in mind. We're a group of friendly, happy people who believe attending church should be enjoyable!"

Below that is a section that says, "At New Heart Community Church you'll find: a friendly, encouraging atmosphere; exciting, contemporary music; people who are interested in you, not your wallet; positive, practical messages; quality children's care and children's programs; and casual attire."

On the reverse of the 5.5- by 8.5-inch card is a list of upcoming messages on "Breaking Free" from life's negatives.

If this all sounds familiar, it's because New Heart is heavily influenced by the Saddleback and Willow Creek style of growing a seeker-style church, targeting the unchurched.

"John gleans from all different sources," said his wife, Robin. "God has really blessed Rick Warren (pastor at Saddleback Valley Community Church in Lake Forest) and we have benefitted from that up here." Being effective is far more important, John McCain said, than being original.

"I have these sheep up here, and I go to market to get them the best quality food I can," McCain said. "We value-enhance it, take out what's not applicable and add to the vision components and spiritual nutrients that they need."

Does it work? On opening Sunday, 190 people showed up. More than 150 people attended an outdoor service in the middle of July. And fifteen people joined the mission church in its first 10 months, 12 by baptism.

New Heart meets on Sundays in the community center, paying \$31 an hour -- the full commercial rate -- to do so. Children gather in the community gym, for \$15 an hour. Adults also meet weekdays in one of six small groups at homes for Bible study.

The small groups are a vital part of New Heart's ministry, McCain said. As the attenders grow together and close to God, they will along with other evangelical Christians in the area be able to change the moral climate.

"What we're really passionate about is making a difference together through Christ," McCain said. "He's the source of power."

"I think the church is the bride of Christ and is God's chosen instrument in the world today," he continued. "The real key to the work here is that God has given a lot of people unified hearts. There are people praying. That's why God is behind this work."

ANALYSIS

**New Agers' interest in angels
can yield witness opportunities****By Dwayne Hastings**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--We have an obsession with angels.

These divine supernatural beings adorn coffee mugs, T-shirts, note cards, checkbooks, license plates, postage stamps and even soap dispensers.

Angels appear to be the religious, and secular, symbol of choice in the late 20th century. Bookstores, secular and Christian alike, abound with newly published books on angels; yet many falsely portray these mysterious beings as some sort of spiritual mentor that will provide a pathway to a source of higher energy.

Perhaps spurred on by a New Age fascination with spirituality and angelology, even those within the evangelical community are, in seeking to satisfy their craving with anything having to do with angels, drawing close to flirting with worship of the created instead of the Creator.

Historically, Christian theology has offered little more than "embarrassed silence" on the subject of angels, suggests Duane Garrett, Hebrew and Old Testament professor at the Canadian Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

"Theology books break this silence only long enough to say a few words about angels as a kind of aside and then quickly abandon them to languish in isolation," Garrett writes in his book, "Angels and the New Spirituality." He further notes, "... the message from the church is a babble of confusion" about angels.

It's important to separate fact from fiction in this spiritual fad, pulling from the speculation and fantasy that which is scripturally based. People know just enough about angels to be dangerous, says David Lanier, New Testament professor at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, N.C. "It's a tantalizing subject, but we have to very careful.

"When you're talking about angels, Scripture is pretty clear that angels are a creation of God, and that they were originally intended to glorify him," Lanier says. Angels are simply ministering spirits sent to minister to those who are to be heirs of salvation, he adds.

The most complete scriptural account on angels, found in Hebrews 1:5-2:9, makes clear Christ is higher than the angels. They are servants; he is the Son. Yet society's overblown infatuation in decorating with these man-made replicas of God's messengers suggests a lack of interest, or ignorance at best, in acknowledging the divine hierarchy.

"Angels are subordinate servants under God and unworthy of worship, while Christ is sovereign Lord worthy of all worship," notes Danny Akin, vice president of academic administration at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky.

"The unique Son is the fulfiller of the Davidic promises outlined in the Old Testament," Akin says, pointing out the Hebrews passage makes clear Jesus is in a "divine relationship" to the Father.

"As the fulfiller of Davidic kingship, he is the Son without successor," explains Akin, citing the "divine nature" of Christ laid out in the passage. "The unique Son is the unique possessor of divine attributes," he says.

With Christ as divine Lord, Akin continues, he is "the fulfiller of Davidic kingship, he is sovereign over the angels who serve.

"Christ's deity rests on Old Testament proofs which lay the basis of his divine relationship, nature and position," Akin concludes. "Christ is uniquely worthy of worship without alternative or competition."

Garrett notes while angels are portrayed as giving instructions from on high to biblical prophets, they were only "joyful heralds or obedient servants" for Christ.

"Jesus not only claimed to have authority over the angels, he was surprised that the disciples did not realize this," Garrett writes, citing Matthew 26:53, where at Jesus' arrest, he says to Peter who desires to strike out against the guards, "Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?"

Evangelist Billy Graham, in his book, "Angels: God's Secret Agents," calls angels "God's messengers whose chief business is to carry out his orders in the world."

"Angels are not to be our source of information," Lanier says, "unless God sends them -- as in the case of Michael and Gabriel. Our source of information is to be the Scriptures."

In his Bible study series on Hebrews, Chuck Swindoll presents a concise wrap-up of these passages:

- God's angelic servants impress us and intrigue us, but only God's Word can enlighten us.
- God's angelic servants minister to us, but only God's Spirit can minister in us.
- God's angelic servants protect us physically, but only God's Son can save us spiritually.

Man cannot live by bread alone, Lanier says. "There is a spiritual side of man's nature that must be attended."

Lanier believes just as the romanticism of the early 1800s was a reaction to the sterility of the Age of Reason in the late 1700s, the rise of the New Age in general and the interest in angels in particular can be traced to the spiritual coldness of the modern technical age.

"The New Agers are asking the wrong spirits, but their curiosity is perfectly human," Lanier explains. "Every angel you try to contact, every voice from the other side of the veil, does not come from God," he warns.

"I suggest we don't get too concerned or too infatuated with angels, but we could use the world's renewed interest in the subject to secure a witness for Jesus Christ," Lanier muses. "It's a place of common ground where a Christian can talk to a New Ager and it might lead to a witness of rightful spiritual things."

"The folly of the current craze over angels could not be more pronounced," Garrett writes. "People prefer lesser spirits to the creator of all spirits. They seek revelation from angels rather than learning from the final revelation in the Son. If we reject God, to which one of the angels shall we turn for help?"

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