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African Americans sought
for foreign missions careers

By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press
8/27/96

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Of approximately 55,000 American Christians serving as foreign missionaries throughout the world, only about 100 are African Americans.

Of Southern Baptists' career foreign missions force of 4,200, only seven are black, according to David Cornelius, black church relations consultant at the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

After its establishment in 1845, the Southern Baptist Convention appointed 61 African Americans as foreign missionaries in its first 30 years. In the 20th century, only 10 have been appointed.

A former foreign missionary to Ghana, Cornelius now focuses his energies on spreading the word among African American Southern Baptists that they are wanted and needed on the foreign mission field. He took his message to Black Church Leadership Week, Aug. 19-23, at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Conference Center.

Despite these statistics, Cornelius is optimistic the future is bright for African American Southern Baptists serving as career foreign missionaries.

"I'm happy to say I'm seeing change in more black Americans being interested in going to other parts of the world as missionaries," Cornelius said. "I am convinced God is calling more."

He noted that about 15 Southern Baptist African Americans presently are preparing for foreign missions service. As many as six could be appointed in 1997.

"If all 15 get to the field, we will have more serving as career missionaries than anytime since the 1800s," Cornelius said.

As he travels throughout the nation visiting African American churches, Cornelius emphasizes the importance of a comprehensive missions education ministry for all ages.

"This has been critical to the success of Southern Baptists" in building a career foreign missions force, he said. "Unfortunately I see in many Anglo churches a diminishing of missions education."

Cornelius affirmed churches that provide missions experiences for their members but emphasized the best results are gained when experience is coupled with education.

In addition to churches, he regularly visits colleges and seminaries looking for potential career missionaries. Some young adults who've completed short-term service are now exploring career missions.

In addition to his own efforts, Cornelius works with five volunteer field representatives and two volunteer missions assistants.

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"I am convinced God is calling more African Americans to go halfway around the world," he said. "The world is our mission field."

African Americans interested in exploring foreign missions opportunities may contact Cornelius at 1-800-999-3113, ext. 1422.

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Reach and equip men
as church leaders: Luter

By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press
8/27/96

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Effective male leaders in a church are FAT men.

Not fat as in large around the middle, but men who are faithful, available and teachable, Fred Luter told participants in a conference on reaching and ministering to African American males during Black Church Leadership Week at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Conference Center.

"Reaching men has been a passion of mine," said Luter, pastor of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church in New Orleans and second vice president of the Southern Baptist Convention. "I've always felt that to grow a church, men had to take their places of leadership."

Acknowledging a lack of men as members and leaders is a common problem in many African American churches, Luter urged deliberate efforts to reach men, including establishing an active men's ministry.

To start an effective men's ministry first requires the support and participation of the pastor, he said.

"Sunday school, Bible study and men's ministry meetings are the three things I emphasize every Sunday," he said.

Second, Luter said the pastor must choose an effective leader for the men's ministry -- one who is a Christian, a role model for other men, a good listener, compassionate, biblically sound and a skilled leader.

Third, he said information about the ministry must be communicated in a variety of ways, from pulpit announcements to posters to word of mouth. A kick-off event that is "non-churchy, non-formal and non-threatening" must be planned.

At Franklin Avenue, where 35-40 percent of church members now are men, Luter said he began the men's ministry with an event at his home that included watching a championship boxing match.

Meetings must be held consistently, Luter said.

"We started out once a month and then moved to every other week," he said. "Now we meet weekly."

Finally, Luter emphasized, ground rules for the ministry must be set and enforced. He listed four:

- Meetings must not include male-or female-bashing sessions.
- Everything shared in the meetings must be kept confidential.
- The ministry must exist to meet the spiritual and emotional needs of men.
- Participants must hold each other accountable.

Luter cited a survey by Jawanza Kunjufu in which non-church-attending men listed 21 reasons they did not go to church.

"All of these are excuses, but they are real to these men," Luter said. Factors included hypocrisy in the church, a feeling that the church would not meet their needs and tithing.

"Where the wife is saved and the husband is not, one of the biggest fights in the home is over giving money to the church," Luter said.

Other reasons included the perception that the pastor is the dictator of the church, that the services are too emotional and that Jesus is the "blue-eyed, long-haired image over the baptistry," he noted.

"Many have a problem with Hollywood's portrayal of characters in the Bible as all white," Luter said. "But in the Bible we're in there from the front to the back."

The length of worship services also was cited in the survey. Conference participants, including Luter, agreed some African American worship services can last too long, especially if activities such as announcements take too much time.

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"If the service is too long, people don't have time for fellowship afterward," he said. "One thing we've got to accept, whether we like it or not, is that we're dealing with a new generation" geared to doing everything on a faster schedule. However, conferees also agreed that most Anglo worship services are too tied to a 60-minute limit.

As men become Christians, Luter said emphasis must be given to helping them grow spiritually and meeting the biblical standards of leadership. Then the pastor must be willing to make hard decisions if someone fails to live up to the standards.

"One of the worst things we can do is put a brother who is living a lie in a leadership position," he said.

When Christian men are involved in church life and effectively filling leadership roles, they will make a dramatic impact on their churches, Luter said. He cited six results of quality male leadership in a church:

- Men will be serving as leaders in ministries throughout the church.
- Men will be winning other men to Christ.
- They will lead in stewardship.
- The church will have spiritually strong men.
- The church will have spiritually strong families.
- The church will be spiritually strong.

"If we get the head right, the body will follow," Luter said. "If we're going to get things right in America, we've got to get the man right."

Black Church Leadership Week was sponsored by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's black church development, Foreign Mission Board's black church relations, Home Mission Board's black evangelism and Woman's Missionary Union.

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A list of 10 goals of an effective men's ministry listed by Luter is posted in the SBCNet News Room. Filename is goals.txt.

Christianity reached Africa
in biblical times: McCall

By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press
8/27/96

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--To counter claims of African American youth that Christianity is a white man's religion, Emmanuel McCall believes education is needed to show that Christianity was present in Africa in biblical times.

In fact, McCall, pastor of Christian Fellowship Baptist Church in College Park, Ga., is planning a special revival focus in September on the "black presence in the Bible and early centuries of Christian history." Church members are being encouraged to invite friends and family members.

He led daily sessions on black heritage during Black Church Leadership Week, Aug. 19-23, at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Conference Center.

Charges that Christianity is a white man's religion come especially from representatives of the Nation of Islam led by Louis Farrakhan, he said. He noted for every nine converts to Islam in the United States, eight are African Americans.

A second origin of the myth can be traced to the 1960s when hippies and others claimed Christianity was the "white man's way of keeping the black man down," McCall said.

"We haven't done a good job of writing about our history or providing information," he acknowledged.

McCall, who also teaches black studies courses at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., cited the importance of white and black Christians understanding the presence of black people in the Bible.

For example, he noted in the book of Jeremiah, an Ethiopian tribal leader, Ebed-Melech, obtained the king's permission to rescue Jeremiah from a cistern.

In the New Testament, the man who carried Jesus' cross, Simon of Cyrene, was a black man who was in Jerusalem for the feast of the Passover.

After witnessing the crucifixion, "do you think he went back home without being affected by what he had experienced?" McCall asked.

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In the book of Acts, people from many nations had converged on Jerusalem when the Holy Spirit descended at Pentecost, he noted. In Acts 8:26, the Ethiopian official being driven in his chariot was studying the Scriptures when Philip led him to accept Christ as his Savior.

"He got baptized and went back to Ethiopia a saved man," McCall said. Many believe he started the Ethiopian Coptic church which still exists today.

The basic theology of Christianity was hammered out 350-500 A.D., McCall said. Nine of the 18 church fathers of this period were African, although it is not known how many were black. They included Clement, Origen, Tertullian, Cyprian, Augustine, Dionysius, Athanasius, Didymus and Cyril.

Africa's reputation as the "dark continent" of paganism was perpetuated by sailors and merchants seeking to justify slave trading, McCall said.

They criticized Africans for not wearing clothes and not speaking English, he said. They did not consider the temperatures of Africa or the fact that Africans had their own languages.

"Some of us bought into these notions," said McCall, who has made five trips to Africa and urges African Americans to visit the continent. "Our eyes can be opened by a trip over there."

Slave traders also engaged in a "stripping process" to seek to rid slaves of their African culture, he said. Actions included breaking up families, changing their diet, forcing them to learn English, changing their names and choosing some slaves to have authority over others.

Despite these actions, McCall listed five areas in which African American faith and worship has been influenced by African culture:

- freedom in worship;
- mystical temperament that places a strong influence on rituals such as the Lord's Supper;
- notions of invisible influence for good (angels) or bad (devil);
- influence of the priest (pastor); and
- rhythm in music.

"Christianity did not first come to Africa with David Livingstone," he said.

Black Church Leadership Week was sponsored by the Baptist Sunday School Board's black church development, Foreign Mission Board's black church relations, Home Mission Board's black evangelism and Woman's Missionary Union.

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McCalep urges efforts
to break down barriers

By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press
8/27/96

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--While God has torn down the barriers dividing people from God and from each other, barriers of race, denominationalism and tradition still exist, George McCalep told about 650 leaders attending Black Church Leadership Week Aug. 19-23 at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Conference Center.

"Christ has torn down every wall separating man from God and man from man," said McCalep, pastor of Greenforest Baptist Church in Decatur, Ga., and teacher of the book of Ephesians in daily sessions during the conference. "God offers us today a finished plan of reconciliation.

"We should remove every obstacle to keep a person from accepting Christ except the uncompromising gospel of Jesus Christ," McCalep said.

Noting the Apostle Paul wrote about divisions between Jews and Gentiles in his letter to Christians at Ephesus, McCalep said, "I'm going to talk about white folks and black folks."

"It bothers me in 1996 that whenever we black pastors get up we're knocking white prejudice, but we don't say anything about black prejudice," McCalep said. "It's as if because we've been called 'boy,' 'nigger' and other things, we think we have a right to prejudice."

He urged caution in the use of terms such as "Afrocentric" and "Eurocentric." He noted "centric" means center.

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"Christ is the chief cornerstone," McCalep said. "What Christ has done is melt us both (white and black) down to make us one."

While delineating problems, he emphasized, "God is moving in this country. God is working to carry out his total plan of reconciliation."

He contrasted African American athletes in 1968 who raised their fists in the sign for black power during the playing of the national anthem with African American athletes in 1996 who "felt free to weep" when the national anthem was played during their gold medal ceremonies.

Walls of denominationalism that keep Christian groups from working together also need to be broken down, McCalep said.

As an African American pastor of a Southern Baptist church, he cited as progress recent speaking invitations to meetings of other denominations and to nondenominational groups.

Finally, he criticized traditions "in our churches that are keeping people from coming to Jesus."

He listed the pulpit, the altar and robes "with all our doctor's stripes" as material things that are not sacred. Also, he said, "there is no such thing as a sacred tempo for music."

He challenged conferees to complete a "Breaking Down Barriers" exercise identifying a barrier separating themselves from an individual or group and to identify an action they could take to break down the barrier.

"God has given us a finished plan of reconciliation. We need to be about the business of carrying out the plan," McCalep said.

Black Church Leadership Week, Aug. 19-23, was sponsored by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's black church development, Foreign Mission Board's black church relations, Home Mission Board's black evangelism and Woman's Missionary Union.

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John Cross receives
black heritage award

By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press
8/27/96

RIDGECREST, N.C.(BP)--The pastor who gained national attention when thrust instantaneously into a national spotlight in 1963 by the racially motivated bombing of his church in which four girls were killed, received the first Black Southern Baptist Heritage Award Aug. 21 during Black Church Leadership Week at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Conference Center.

John Cross, then 36, had been pastor of Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Ala., about 16 months when the bomb exploded on Sunday morning, Sept. 16, in the church basement. Four girls, ranging in age from 12 to 14, had left Sunday school early and were in the lounge changing clothes for the 11 a.m. worship service in which they would usher and sing in the choir.

Racing around the side of the building, Cross walked through what had formerly been a solid wall and into a crater where four civil defense workers helped him pull away debris.

They soon discovered the four bodies "almost lying on top of each other, as if the blast threw them together," Cross said in an interview which appeared in a 1993 issue of "Black Church Development" magazine published by the Baptist Sunday School Board. Twenty-two other persons were injured in the blast.

As horrible as the tragedy was, Cross told Baptist Press the human toll would have been 10 times greater if the bomb had gone off five minutes later when everyone was making the transition from Sunday school to worship.

Elgia Wells, black church development consultant at the Baptist Sunday School Board, said the purpose of the heritage award which will be presented annually is to "show respect for those on whose shoulders we stand today. We didn't get where we are by ourselves."

In the days, weeks and months that followed the bombing, Cross prayed and studied the Bible as never before, seeking to prepare sermons to bring healing to his wounded congregation.

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"It wasn't easy to keep the people from losing faith in God or desiring to take up arms," he said. "But I think our membership realized the world contained people of different persuasions and different mind-sets and different levels of love and hatred and the bombing did not make them condemn every Caucasian."

In his sermons, Cross told church members "suffering will come to everyone." He assured them "that God through Christ gives us the strength to endure the suffering."

He learned spiritually and experientially what he already knew intellectually, "that grief lasts longer than from the funeral to the cemetery."

Cross sought to bring healing not only through his preaching but even through the redesign of the building. For the young people who voiced fear about returning to the basement, an intermediate level with rest rooms was added.

Looking back on the experience "I'd never want to go through again," Cross describes the bombing of Sixteenth Street church as a "spoke on the wheel of the Civil Rights movement in this country."

It escalated the pace of change toward greater inclusiveness and ignited the concerns of many in the white community, Cross recalled.

Cross stayed on at Sixteenth Street Church until 1968 when he felt the healing process was well underway. He moved to Montgomery, Ala., to work with Southern Baptists, "to influence change from the inside out." He served for three years as director of a Baptist Fellowship Center, campus minister at Alabama State College and director of an extension center at Selma University.

In 1971, he moved to Atlanta to become associate pastor of Oakhurst Baptist Church for six and one-half years before joining the staff of Atlanta Baptist Association in 1977 as director of black church relations. He retired in 1989.

Cross said he has seen progress among Southern Baptists in the area of racial reconciliation, "but not as much as I'd like to."

The 1995 Southern Baptist Convention racial reconciliation resolution was a positive step, he said, but the challenge now is "to put words into deeds." Leadership must come from pastors of local churches, he believes.

"Southern Baptist pastors are not as involved in trying to bring about change in the local setting," Cross said. He'd like to see more of them "active in the civil rights and social action struggle."

In the months after the 1963 bombing, Cross stopped giving interviews about the tragedy, convinced he had nothing else to tell. Today, he feels a stewardship of the experience and welcomes opportunities to share his reflections.

He recently was interviewed by Spike Lee for a documentary the entertainer will release in September 1997.

"We forget so easily," he said. "It takes certain things to bring us back to reality."

Cross cited the rash of fires, many ruled as arson, that have damaged or destroyed African American churches in the last 18 months.

"It has made us realize we're not free yet. There are still bridges to cross and walls to be torn down."

Black Church Leadership Week, Aug. 19-23, was sponsored by the Baptist Sunday School Board's black church development, Foreign Mission Board's black church relations, Home Mission Board's black evangelism and Woman's Missionary Union.

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(BP) photo to accompany this story is posted in the SBCNet newsroom. The article, "A Love That Forgives: The Bombing of Sixteenth Street Baptist Church" by John Cross as told to Olivia Cloud Frazier also is posted. Filename is cross.txt.

Baptist port ministers argue
Congress may harm seafarers

By Keith Hinson

Baptist Press
8/27/96

PORTSMOUTH, Va. (BP)--A group of Southern Baptist ministers to seafaring people is opposing national legislation that would deny access to U.S. courts by seafarers on ships that fly a foreign flag.

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A resolution by the Southern Baptist Seafarer's Minister's Fellowship urges U.S. Senate leaders to eliminate the "Cruise Ship Tort Reform" section from the Coast Guard Authorization Act of 1996.

"Foreign seafarers have had access to U.S. Courts since 1915. ... The implementation of Cruise Ship Tort Reform would ... undermine the incentive of flag-of-convenience operators to raise the crew's standard of living and give advantage to substandard operators who choose to exploit their crews both physically and economically," according to the resolution, passed unanimously during the fellowship's Aug. 1-3 meeting in Portsmouth, Va.

Under a "flag of convenience," a ship owner in one country may register a vessel with another country -- often nations such as Panama, Liberia or Cyprus, according to Philip Vandercook, fellowship vice president and executive director of the New Orleans Baptist Seaman's Service.

"American flagging of ships is decreasing dramatically, because when they're flagged here in the States, they have to abide by U.S. law, which is often more stringent than other countries -- especially these flags of convenience," Vandercook noted.

But even with the looser regulations that other countries may offer ship owners, foreign seafarers docked in American ports can sue in the U.S. judicial system under current law, said Tim Rice, director of seafarer's ministry for the Charleston (S.C.) Baptist Association.

"Cruise Ship Tort Reform would keep foreign sailors who are injured or denied wages (from suing in U.S. courts) while they're working for an American company that reflags a ship, for example, under a Bahamian flag to avoid our maritime laws," stated Rice, president of the fellowship, which has members in 35 port cities.

Tim Posey, secretary-treasurer of the fellowship and a chaplain at the New Orleans Baptist Seaman's Service, said the legislation "is reportedly so vague that it could be construed to be any vessel flying any foreign flag."

The Coast Guard Authorization Act is currently in a House-Senate conference committee that is trying to iron out differences between two versions of the bill. The House version (HR 1361) contains cruise ship tort reform, and the Senate version (S 1004) does not.

Ed Lee, a professional staff member of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, said Cruise Ship Tort Reform is designed to protect U.S. taxpayers and the American judicial system.

"Why should a British seafarer injured on a Liberian-registered vessel in the middle of the Pacific Ocean be allowed to come to the U.S. to sue?" said Lee, whose assignment includes working with the Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Subcommittee. "(An employee) at a General Motors plant in Mexico may work for a U.S. company, but they do not have the right to come to the U.S. to sue GM for an injury claim."

Regarding seafarers aboard foreign ships, Lee said the committee feels "they need some sort of connection with the United States to sue in our courts and use our taxpayers' money in an already overcrowded court system and require Americans to serve on the jury," he stated.

Lee acknowledged the legislation would affect more than just cruise ships and said the tort reform proposal would allow seafarers on foreign-flagged vessels access to U.S. courts under certain circumstances.

"If they could not sue in their own courts, (the restrictions) would not apply," Lee said. "Basically what the provision would do is not allow (a lawsuit) if there is an adequate remedy available in a foreign court where those individuals that are injured are from -- and the cruise ship or operator. If the cruise ship owner would agree to appear in the foreign court, (the seafarers) could not sue in a U.S. court."

The congressional conference committee is considering a number of compromises, Lee said, including a proposal that would limit the reform to cruise ships only. He said he did not believe the reform would affect breach-of-contract suits -- such as disputes about wages -- but only injury-related claims.

Rice said he sees the fellowship's opposition to tort reform as compatible with biblical emphases.

"It's standing up for the oppressed. It's claiming justice for those who have been wronged," Rice declared. "I don't believe we should hire attorneys for every little thing, but (the resolution) was a call from all the people who are doing port ministry, wanting to give a united voice of opposition to the legislation."

Posey said the legislation "could set the work of port chaplains back over 100 years. The already-poor living conditions and crew treatment on flag-of-convenience ships will decline rapidly. ...

"In light of the fact that the United States in years past has sent troops around the world to fight for the rights of others, it would seem that this legislation goes against everything that is American," Posey said.

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**NSM director: Southern Baptists
need to reach 'college market'** By Karen L. Willoughby

**Baptist Press
8/27/96**

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--Southern Baptists should take a hint from the corporate world and make an investment in college students a priority.

So says Bill Henry, director of the Baptist Sunday School Board's National Student Ministry. He recently returned from a marketing conference in New York City that was focused on how to reach the college market and develop brand loyalty.

"When students go to college, they've basically been using the brands that Mom liked," Henry said, referring to information gathered at the marketing conference. "But 30 percent of all college freshmen change their brand loyalty during their first year in college, and by the time they are seniors, 85 percent of them will have switched brands.

"Corporations are realizing if they can invest in students and secure their brand loyalty, they have an excellent chance of keeping them as customers as adults and reaping the profits of their investment year after year," Henry continued.

"If we can help Southern Baptists catch a vision for reaching college students, our denomination will reap the rewards for years to come," Henry said in an interview during Student Week Aug. 10-16 at Glorieta Conference Center in New Mexico. "If we don't we could lose our impact in the next generation."

Southern Baptists have student work on about 1,000 of the nation's 3,575 college and university campuses, said Henry, quoting from the Institute for International Research. About 14 million students will enroll in college or graduate school this fall; about 16.6 million are expected to enroll during the fall semester of 2005.

"We have to do more than simply commit to reaching the college market," Henry said. "We have to take time to learn who students are and understand their diverse needs."

That's where National Student Ministry comes in, Henry said.

"The way you reach students is changing," he said. "This generation is in to big events, excellence in planning and programming."

CrossQuest white water rafting, snow skiing and beach fun; Global Student Involvement (short-term overseas missions); Collegiate World Changers (hands-on work projects); Breakout '97 (resort-centered evangelism and ministry); Student Week at Glorieta and Ridgecrest Conference Centers; and regional evangelism conferences all are events sponsored and designed by NSM.

Several new discipleship training options also are now available from NSM:

-- "God's Invitation: A Challenge to College Students" is a seven-session interactive study on the life of the apostle John. It focuses on the application of the Kingdom principles as set forth in the best-selling "Experiencing God" course and how they apply to collegiate life issues.

-- "Heaven, A Place To Belong" by Joni Eareckson Tada is a six-session study designed to present college students with a fresh perspective on the joys found in being a part of the Kingdom of God.

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-- "Into Their Shoes: Helping the Lost Find Christ" by John Kramp and Allen Jackson, is a six-session interactive study designed as an evangelism tool for college students. It provides directions for building relationships with lost people and leads students to understand the search for God from the non-Christian's perspective.

-- Student magazine, with about 30,000 subscribers, is the only magazine specifically geared to the college-age student.

"Every month, Student meets them in the dorm room, the library corner, the campus grill -- provoking them with challenging calls to integrity, encouraging them with stories from people just like them who are making a difference, and showing them how by remaining steadfast in the Word," said editor Gina Howard. "And now each issue of Student comes with a pull-out devotional section, plus a built-in Collegiate Bible Study series written specifically for the college audience."

Summer, semester and Innovator missions programs coordinated by the Home and Foreign Mission Boards and state Baptist Student Ministries Departments provide an opportunity for missions involvement that lasts eight weeks or longer.

And the weekly or more often connection students have with their Baptist Student Ministries director or college minister -- often for discipleship training or small group prayer meetings -- is the third part of the ministerial circle of care Southern Baptists have provided for college students.

"If you look at the hard facts, our denomination is putting a lot of money into college students," Henry said. "We have 1,000 BSM programs, 400 full-time ministers and 400 directors, about 600 part-time directors. Add up their salaries, the 300 or more Baptist Student Centers worth probably \$300,000 each, and a normal budget for each BSU probably is \$10,000 conservatively -- you're talking about a program Southern Baptists do believe in.

"One side says how thankful we are for Southern Baptists," Henry continued.

"Southern Baptists do put millions into student work. But when money gets tight, hmm.

"We think ministry to college students is not a luxury but the lifeblood of the next generation of churchmanship," Henry said. "How many thousands of students do Southern Baptists lose because they don't see the value of college students?"

Too many people have the attitude that college students will be trying so many things that it's a waste to spend money on them, Henry said. Their attitude seems to be to let them sow their wild oats now, and minister to them when they're more approachable.

"But this is the last time these potential leaders will be together," Henry said. "Marketing people know they have a captive audience here.

"Sometimes I don't think Southern Baptists understand or appreciate the mission field of college students," he continued. "They are more reachable now than they'll ever be. They're idealistic -- they want something to be called to that is significant, that is important."

The Monday night celebration service at Glorieta's Student Week is a case in point, Henry said.

After a stirring sermon about giving up the things that had been kept from God, more than 200 students flowed down to the altar and then moved into side rooms for consultation. The altar filled again -- the entire space between the organ and the piano -- and those students also went for consultation.

The week focused on evangelism from the perspective of the lost person's thinking, and the need to form spiritual search and rescue teams.

"They were asked at the Thursday morning Bible study how many had committed to Search and Rescue and I think three-quarters of the crowd raised their hand," Henry said. "It looked like every hand went up but I'm being conservative. Something special did happen at Glorieta. There were close to 400 decisions out of 1,700 people. That's significant."

One role of the National Student Ministry is to keep the Southern Baptist Convention as a denomination aware of the needs of college students, Henry said.

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"If I don't take a pro-active role, they are so busy they could go months without thinking about college students," Henry said. "I was won to the Lord as a freshman in college. I know firsthand the importance of college ministry. The ministry we're in is a holy ministry."

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**Apologist wants idols
of unbelief toppled**

By Douglas C. Estes

Baptist Press
8/27/96

WAKE FOREST, N.C.(BP)--Defenders of the Christian faith need "knowledge," "skills" and "fire in their bones" to topple the idols of unbelief so pervasive throughout the world, said Christian apologist James Parker III.

Addressing the Aug. 22 Binkley Chapel audience at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Parker said the world often places naturalism, aesthetics, and pantheism on God's throne.

"But the most devious and pernicious of all idols is an empty-shell Christianity, a Christianity, which is no Christianity," said Parker, director of The Trinity Institute, Tehuacana, Texas.

Parker said believers -- when defending Christian beliefs from heretical attacks -- would do well to adopt many of the traits of athletic champions.

Knowledge, skills, and the fire in the bones are intertwined within the equipped and empowered Christian, said Parker. "You got to have all three to win, both in athletics as well as the work of the kingdom of God."

Fire in the bones comes from within the heart of an athlete, but for the Christian, must come from the Spirit of God, said Parker. "The fire of God can anoint you and burn in your soul, but it is the job of the Holy Spirit.

"If you want to sharpen your knowledge and skills, and provide the Holy Spirit the opportunity to saturate you with the fire of God, then stand where Paul stood. Don't wait until you're ready, because then you'll never do it; but you'll be amazed at what it will do for your life and ministry," he said.

"We're in a war. It's a battle for the hearts and minds of human beings. This is a battle to the death and it's either us or them in spiritual warfare," said Parker. Christians must equip themselves to champion the athletics of apologetics, he added.

Knowledge of the game enables the athlete and empowers the minister, said Parker. "As you prepare for the ministry, you need knowledge of apologetics so you can defend the faith. School is not an afterthought while you're out trying to do ministry elsewhere."

The knowledge required to win the game and raze the standing idols of the world are contained in one book, said Parker, a former professor at Southeastern.

"If you want explicit knowledge about the will and mind of God, then you'll read the Scripture, and you'll learn it."

Expounding from 2 Corinthians 10:2-5, Parker said, "one of the tasks of apologetics is to eliminate false understandings of the nature of God and reality."

The false understandings of God circulating through the world are pretenders to God's throne, he said.

"The idols we face today are much more sophisticated than the idols Paul faced in his time." Parker said. "Our idols aren't made out of wood and stone; those are easy to smash. Idols that are difficult to shatter are the idols in one's mind, the false understandings of the nature of God."

However, Parker cautioned, the skills available to ministers are not the skills of the world.

"Our skills have divine power to demolish the strongholds of the enemy. The ungodly trust in these strongholds, but the wise man scales those walls and topples the strongholds."

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"Paul identifies the nature of these strongholds and we find they are ideological and conceptual; they are ideas," Parker said.

Comparing our era to the times of Athanasius and Martin Luther, Parker concluded, "There have been many times in the history of the church, when there was a time to stand up and be counted, and we live in that time right now."

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God is looking for a few
good hands, pastor says

By Teresa Dickens

Baptist Press
8/27/96

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--God is looking for Christians who are willing to join hands with him and reach out to those without Christ.

Allen Walworth, pastor of Park Cities Baptist Church, Dallas, Texas, sought to drive home this thought in his Bible studies during WMU Week at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center Aug. 3-9. Drawing from the week's theme "Hand in Hand," Walworth used the hand as the teaching object for his lessons.

The hands have a great sensory capacity, he said, noting that they are uniquely made for "sharing warmth and feelings."

"Jesus came to tell us God can be touched," he said. "He is reaching to us, wanting to join hands with us."

Giving an overview of the functions of the hand on Sunday, Walworth used the week's morning sessions to teach on each of the five fingers, assigning a symbolic meaning to each finger and developing his point with passages from the New Testament.

The thumb is the most powerful part of the hand, Walworth said. It is the thumb that releases the hand for action. He used the stories of the widow's mite and the woman with the alabaster oil to expound on the thought that it is the choice of a Christian to give his life for action.

Referencing the fragrance created by the broken jar of alabaster oil, Walworth said, "Jesus did the same -- He gave his all and released a fragrance of forgiveness for all eternity."

The index finger, he explained, is commonly used for pointing beyond itself. As Philip pointed the eunuch to Christ, "Our lives must also point others to Christ," he said.

This must also be the priority of a church, he added. Churches must never become exclusive, he warned, but always remain inclusive, hanging out the message, "Anybody Welcome."

Like the middle finger, Christians must recognize their position in Christ and stand above the crowd, he said. Unfortunately, Christians too often find themselves like the woman in Luke 13:10 who was bent over because of an evil spirit in her. "Many times what cripples us is spiritual and emotional," he said. "We go through life bent double with past failures and hurt feelings.

"We have a need to know Christ," he declared. "We need to move toward him and those who represent him to find healing and the freedom to stand above the crowd."

The ring finger represents commitment, Walworth said. Often, Christians struggle with this concept in their relationships with God and fellow man. They fail to understand that a relationship with Christ is "a lifetime commitment" which has the primary purpose of "a love relationship" with him," he explained.

As Christians grow in their relationship with Christ, they begin to break down the barriers that cut them off from people around them, he said. "We stop isolating ourselves from those who need -- long -- to know God's love."

The little finger symbolizes the reality that, although small, every member has a significant role in the body of Christ, he said. However, Christians often become like Zacchaeus and hide from Jesus either because they don't think they can contribute anything or because they would rather sit back and watch the parade go by.

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But, Walworth concluded, "The only God there is, is the one who looked for Zacchaeus and is looking for us.

"Will you join hands with God?" he asked. "Is there a life who needs your touch? God is waiting with hands outstretched."

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**NAMB incorporators developing
presidential candidate profile**

**Baptist Press
8/27/96**

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Developing a presidential candidate profile and selection procedures dominated the Aug. 15-16 meeting of the incorporators of the new North American Mission Board.

Meeting at Ridgecrest Baptist Conference Center, the 13-member board also elected Mike Hamlet, pastor of First Baptist Church, North Spartanburg, S.C., as vice chairman, and heard a report from Les Csorba, vice president of A.T. Kearney, Inc., a Houston consulting firm.

Incorporators chairman Bill Hogue, retired California Southern Baptist Convention executive director, said a "number of candidates have been recommended" and the group continues to solicit names from interested parties.

The primary purpose of the incorporators is to nominate the president and chief executive officer of the North American Mission Board when it is officially created in June of 1997. The NAMB will be the product of a merger of the Southern Baptist Convention's Home Mission Board, Radio and TV Commission and the Brotherhood Commission. The merger is part of a restructuring of the SBC called for in the Covenant for a New Century, approved in 1995 in the convention's annual meeting.

The new organization's board of directors, to be elected in Dallas in June of 1997, will act on the incorporators' nominee as one of the first acts of business for the new corporation.

Hogue did not reveal the actual number of candidates recommended nor any detail on the candidate profile or selection procedures. Recommendations are still being solicited, he said, and can be sent to him. Southern Baptists are encouraged to continue to pray for the search, Hogue said.

Hogue also said he will meet with state convention executive directors. The next scheduled meeting of the incorporators group will be Sept. 27 in Dallas.

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**Georgia native joins
HMB news staff**

**Baptist Press
8/27/96**

ALPHARETTA, Ga. (BP)--Georgia native Lynne Jones will join the Home Mission Board staff Aug. 29 as associate director of news and information.

Jones has worked as an HMB research editor since February. In her new position she will primarily write news and feature stories for Baptist Press, the Southern Baptist Convention's daily news service.

For seven years Jones worked for Financial Service Corporation in Atlanta where she managed publications, created a semi-monthly newsletter and developed quarterly electronic communications.

Jones received a bachelor's degree in 1988 from Georgia State University in business administration marketing/management.

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