



SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES
Historical Commission, SBC
Nashville, Tennessee
-- BAPTIST PRESS
News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

APR 01 1996

NATIONAL OFFICE
 SBC Executive Committee
 901 Commerce #750
 Nashville, Tennessee 37203
 (615) 244-2355
 Herb Hollinger, Vice President
 Fax (615) 742-8919
 CompuServe ID# 70420,17

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Martin King, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 898-7522
DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 333 N. Washington, Dallas, Texas 75246-1798, Telephone (214) 828-5232
NASHVILLE 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300
RICHMOND Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va., 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151
WASHINGTON Tom Strode, Chief, 400 North Capitol St., #594, Washington, D.C. 20001, Telephone (202) 638-3223

March 29, 1996

96-54

TENNESSEE--News Advisory.
 SALT LAKE CITY--Salt Lake conference examines Mormonism for '98 SBC meeting.
 DALLAS--Medical rates won't rise July 1 in Annuity Board plan.
 DALLAS--Annuity Board teams with consultant to help participants choose investments.
 DALLAS--Annuity Board plans new look for materials about services.
 NORTH CAROLINA--Stanley Lott selected Chowan College president.
 ILLINOIS--Acting Ill. leader hospitalized as search for new exec begins.
 VIRGINIA--First-Person: Holly lived life as a celebration.
 MISSOURI--First-Person: Her missionary work in Africa now relies on Baptists' prayers.
 DALLAS--Church opts against moving to 'less-challenging area.'
 CALIFORNIA--Answer to one question matters most, pastor says.

NEWS ADVISORY: Baptist Press will carry an update by Georgia Baptists' Christian Index newsjournal of the 3/28/96 story, "Ga. church criticized for asking that infant be buried elsewhere." Because of various developments and additional information being gathered, Baptist Press and The Christian Index recommend the updated version be used, rather than the 3/28 story.

Salt Lake conference examines
 Mormonism for '98 SBC meeting

By Bill Merrell

Baptist Press
 3/29/96

SALT LAKE CITY (BP)--Home Mission Board interfaith witness department representatives gathered in Salt Lake City for a five-day conference to determine how Southern Baptists can best relate to the predominant religious group in Utah when the SBC assembles there for its annual meeting in 1998.

State convention IFW representatives gather annually for a conference to examine alternative religions and appropriate Baptist responses to them, said Phil Roberts, director of the department.

He said Salt Lake City, world headquarters of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, or Mormons, was chosen for this year's conference, because of the upcoming SBC meeting there. "We extended the conference in order to give a more intensive look at Latter Day Saints, or Mormonism, which is so pervasive in this part of the country," he said of the longer-than-usual Marbh 22-26 meeting.

The conference focused on LDS history, theology and mission, and combined the theoretical and theological with the practical. Mormon officials were provided an opportunity to speak to participants, and the group was given a tour of Temple Square by Mormon missionaries. Program participants also included people who had left the Mormon church, theological and philosophical experts and those with insight into LDS history.

--more--

Representatives of the IFW group met with a Mormon General Authority March 23 in Temple Square. Of that meeting, Roberts said, "I suppose for the first time in history a General Authority of the LDS, one of the top 70 leaders in the church, spoke to a group of Southern Baptists and described in his own words some the essential doctrines and teachings of the Mormon church."

The group also went to Provo, Utah, to tour Brigham Young University and to see the missionary training center where Mormon young people are prepared prior to beginning a two-year missionary tour.

Addressing the question of whether Mormonism is Christian permeated the entire conference. "The answer to that question," Roberts said, "can only be determined by examination of their doctrine in comparison to the Scripture. The LDS church is obviously not an orthodox Christian group. It does not in any way advocate biblical Christianity, a biblical view of God, of Jesus, of the Holy Spirit or of salvation. Nor does it hold a biblical view of authority because they claim that the LDS church with its prophet/president is the only true church and spiritual authority on the earth. So there are vast differences between historic orthodox Christianity and Mormonism."

He continued, "However, there is an obvious desire on the part of the LDS church to be identified with Christianity, especially with evangelical Christianity. We heard a great emphasis from LDS representatives upon knowing Jesus, of the personal relationship to Jesus, and not so much on Mormon distinctive doctrines. There was an obvious attempt, while not to deny their own doctrines, to appeal to us as much as possible, to try to find some common ground between us. The general authority, however, was very clear that they have, as he said, both a monotheistic and a polytheistic view of God. Of course, you can't be both; you must be one or the other."

Describing IFW goals in preparation for the '98 SBC annual meeting, Roberts said, "We want to be as thorough as we can in helping Southern Baptists know what Mormons believe, to show their distinctives and to demonstrate that while the vocabulary is often the same, the meanings and the definitions are often completely different."

Speaking of the need of evangelism, Roberts said, "We don't want Southern Baptists to forget that Mormons are just like other people anywhere with hurts, disappointment and joys, and that they love their families. At the same time, they need Christ. We can effectively share a personal testimony of our faith in Jesus Christ. We're not going to Salt Lake City to validate Mormonism; we're going there to validate the gospel and to validate our Baptist brothers and sisters who have carried the gospel through the Salt Lake Valley."

--30--

Medical rates won't rise
July 1 in Annuity Board plan

Baptist Press
3/29/96

DALLAS (BP)--Rates for the Personal Security Program, comprehensive medical plan will not rise on July 1, the Annuity Board of the Southern Baptist Convention announced March 29.

The medical plan, available to church employees and seminarians on an individual application, is reviewed each six months to determine if rates should be changed. Last January the rates were increased for the first time since July 1992.

Joel H. Mathis, senior vice president for insurance services, said, "I am delighted our latest analysis of claims makes it possible to hold the line on rates for the entire year of 1996. The increase we applied Jan. 1 has proved adequate for our claims experience since the last review."

Mathis said there would be another rate review in the fall for Jan. 1, 1997.

--30--

Annuity Board, consultant to help participants choose investments

DALLAS (BP)--The Annuity Board of the Southern Baptist Convention has teamed with Frank Russell Company as consultant to assist participants in its retirement plans to make savings and investment decisions.

A proprietary educational program called LifePoints has been customized for the Annuity Board and licensed for use only by the Annuity Board and its plan participants.

A new 13-fund investment structure will soon replace the Annuity Board's four current retirement investment funds. To help each participant select an investment strategy appropriate for him or her, every participant will receive the LifePoints investment education program.

A free investment education seminar, which will include a walk-through of the LifePoints program, is scheduled in every geographic area of the country and at institutional and agency places of employment. Participants who cannot attend a seminar will receive a LifePoints kit by mail in late summer.

Curtis D. Sharp, vice president in fiduciary services at the Annuity Board, is spearheading the communications effort. Officers and staffs in the member services and fiduciary services divisions, state annuity representatives and others trained by the Annuity Board will conduct dozens of seminars.

"The educational seminars will help participants select an investment strategy that they feel is right for them," Sharp said. "The program's ultimate objective is to help each one act on what he or she learns. The exercises will lead our people through a process to reallocate their retirement account accumulations from current plan investments into one or more of the 13 new Annuity Board fund choices. The new funds will be available in 1997."

The LifePoints investment education program was developed by Frank Russell Company, headquartered in Tacoma, Wash. Russell has been helping people and companies with investment needs since 1936. The firm is a pension consultant and full-service provider of retirement savings plans. The LifePoints program is based on three profiles: Beginnings, Midway and Transitions. These "life points" represent stages of retirement planning.

"The program presents four general investment strategies, ranging from conservative to aggressive, using four of the 13 new Annuity Board fund choices. These four investments are 'pre-mixed,' well-diversified, blended funds," Sharp said.

A series of exercises will help each person determine where he is in the retirement planning process and which LifePoints profile best represents him or her. A short quiz will help a participant determine a personal investment risk tolerance.

Once one determines a risk tolerance and a "life point" profile, he or she will have the opportunity to select an investment strategy using the new fund choices. A written election will authorize the Annuity Board to reallocate account accumulations and contributions to new fund choices on Jan. 1, 1997.

--30--

Annuity Board plans new look for materials about services

Baptist Press
3/29/96

DALLAS (BP)--The Annuity Board of the Southern Baptist Convention has implemented a new identity program to enhance communications with participants.

As current supplies of printed materials are exhausted, they are being replaced by new standardized designs.

--more--

Among new materials participants in retirement plans will receive is the "LifePoints Savings & Investment Program for Individuals." This booklet, customized and licensed to the Annuity Board by Frank Russell Company of Tacoma, Wash., is the centerpiece for investment education seminars being held across the country from spring through fall of 1996.

Another new printed piece is a 34-page booklet, "Investment Funds," that describes in detail the 13 investment funds to be available Jan. 1, 1997. Each participant can use these two publications to make a decision by Nov. 1, 1996, where to place his or her investments effective Jan. 1.

A publication, "Changes '96," is being distributed to all participants on an as-needed schedule to keep readers informed about new retirement plan products and enhanced services from the Annuity Board.

--30--

Stanley Lott selected
Chowan College president

Baptist Press
3/29/96

MURFREESBORO, N.C. (BP)--Stanley G. Lott of Pineville, La., was selected March 28 as the next president of Chowan College, Murfreesboro, N.C.

Lott, 60, will become the 21st president in the 148-year history of the college, which is the second oldest of North Carolina's seven Baptist colleges and universities.

Presently Lott is vice president for academic affairs at his alma mater, Louisiana College, Pineville, La., a position he has held for 15 years. During his tenure, he served as acting president of the college in the summers of 1985 and 1989. From 1967-80, Lott was professor of sociology and religion at Tift College, Forsyth, Ga.

Regarding Lott's selection, trustee chairman Robert B. Spivey said, "After an intensive nine-month search, the board of trustees is pleased that someone of Dr. Lott's ability will be taking the reigns at this critical point in Chowan's history. In the midst of its transition to four-year status, the institution is poised to become an education leader in the region. Dr. Lott brings great wisdom and experience to the office of president."

In response, Lott stated, "I am deeply grateful and humbled by the trust and confidence placed in me by the faculty, staff, students and trustees of Chowan College.

"Chowan College has a storied past and a promising future, and I look forward to joining hands with all who are part of the college as we strive boldly into the 21st century. I am also eager to join North Carolina Baptists in their efforts to spread the gospel and to preserve historic Baptist principles."

Lott holds two earned doctorates. He completed the doctor of education in higher education administration at the University of Georgia, Athens, in 1981. Lott also is a graduate of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, where he earned both the doctor of theology in systematic theology and the bachelor of divinity degree. He completed undergraduate work in sociology at Louisiana College in 1957.

He is a past president of the Conference of Academic Deans of Southern States. During 1993-94, Lott served as president of the dean's group of the Association of Baptist Colleges and Schools.

In addition to his teaching responsibilities, Lott has held two pastorates in Louisiana. And as a member of Emmanuel Baptist Church in Alexandria, he has served as deacon, Sunday school teacher and finance committee chairman.

Lott is married to Johnnye Jo Foshee, who currently manages a Sylvan Learning Center, which the couple owns.

--more--

The Chowan board of trustees employed Academic Search Consultation Service of Washington to assist with the selection of the president. The agency has worked with nearly 400 colleges and universities of all kinds in the process of seeking and selecting presidential and senior-level administrative leadership. Bruce T. Alton, a former faculty member, dean and president of two church-related colleges, served as principal consultant.

A 14-member committee consisting of Chowan alumni, faculty, staff and students examined a total applicant pool of more than 100 names. L. Clement Yancey, a retired Oxford, N.C., businessman and Chowan trustee, chaired the committee. After months of deliberations, the applicant pool was narrowed to six semifinalists who were interviewed in Norfolk, Va. Three finalists were invited to the campus to meet the college community.

Each finalist participated in an intensive day of meetings with various groups of Chowan constituents. On March 28, the search committee's recommendation that Lott be named president was unanimously approved by the board of trustees.

Chowan College was founded in 1848 by Baptists of northeastern North Carolina and southeastern Virginia. In 1998, the institution will celebrate its sesquicentennial year.

Chowan currently offers more than 20 majors, the most popular of which are business administration, teacher education, physical education, art and printing production and imaging technology.

--30--

Acting Ill. leader hospitalized
as search for new exec begins

Baptist Press
3/29/96

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. (BP)--Keith Stanford, acting executive director of Illinois Baptist State Association, suffered a mild heart attack March 22 and underwent successful bypass surgery March 25.

The Illinois Baptist State Association board of directors had tapped Stanford as acting executive director March 4 and, the next day, elected a seven-member search committee to seek a new executive director to succeed Gene Wilson, who now is on disability due to a massive brain hemorrhage Aug. 30 of last year.

Stanford said he felt "severe burning" in his chest and couldn't get his breath as he left the office Friday, March 22. Pain in his left arm, chest and jaw persisted through Saturday morning, when he went to Memorial Hospital in Springfield, where doctors said the attack was still in progress.

A catheterization indicated 90 percent blockage of the main artery leading to the left ventricle of the heart, Stanford said. Surgery was performed Monday to clear the artery.

Stanford, who is expected to be out of the office a few weeks, has been director of IBSA's church development division since 1989. Previously, a five-person "management team" had provided leadership to the IBSA staff in Wilson's absence.

IBSA President Roger Ellsworth offered the motion to the board to start the search process for Wilson's successor, saying: "In light of the incapacity of Dr. Gene Wilson and the appearance of continued incapacity ... I bring this motion to the board with a great deal of personal sadness." Ellsworth said he had hoped and prayed Wilson "by this time would be able to resume his leadership here in our state. It has become evident to me in the past few weeks that Gene has quite a long period of time yet before he is able to resume even something of a normal lifestyle."

If Wilson could speak to the board, Ellsworth said, "I think that he would remind us that there is a vast harvest field out here in Illinois and that we need to be pressing on with that harvest.

--more--

"I don't bring this motion to you lightly. It's not an easy thing to do. But I believe it is time for IBSA to move ahead and to press this business of reaping the spiritual harvest."

No board members questioned the motion. They passed it, without opposition, on a voice vote.

Roger Marshall, chairman of the newly elected executive director search committee, asked Illinois Baptists to join the committee in prayer as it begins the process of seeking a new leader.

"We want Illinois Baptists to join the search committee, from the very beginning, in praying for the process and for the man that God would have to lead us in the future," Marshall told the Illinois Baptist newsjournal.

Ellsworth and IBSA Vice President Gene Gibson will be ex-officio members of the search committee. Three alternate members also were named.

Recommendations and/or resumes should be mailed to: Executive Director Search Committee; Illinois Baptist State Association; P.O. Box 19247; Springfield, IL 62794-9247.

The board, in its March meeting, approved two proposals to provide financial relief for Wilson. One of those actions was a policy change that will affect other employees on disability.

To help ease the Wilsons' financial burden, the board voted to defer payments toward a \$10,000 loan granted to Wilson when he became executive director. There is a \$9,477 balance on the loan, which will be paid "at such a time when the property is sold."

A second action that affects the Wilsons' finances came in the form of three additions to IBSA's policy regarding employees on disability.

IBSA now will "continue making employer contributions to the employee's retirement account in an amount equal to 10% of the compensation last in effect," if the employee had at least one year of service.

The association also will continue paying premiums on life and accident insurance until other policy procedures take effect. And IBSA will provide medical insurance for disabled employees and their dependents in the same way that it does for regular employees.

The retirement account change would be retroactive to Jan. 1, 1995, said Janet Craynon, resource management department director.

--30--

Based on reporting by Ferrell Foster.

EDITORS' NOTE: The following article is an excerpt of "From the Rankin File," a column by Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board President Jerry Rankin in the board's monthly magazine, The Commission. In his March 1996 column, Rankin quoted his wife's tribute to Holly Larm, a first-term missionary who died last fall during a bout with malaria.

FIRST-PERSON

Holly lived life
as a celebration

By Bobbye Rankin

Baptist Press
3/29/96

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Each time I visit a new country, one of my prayers is that the Lord will not allow me to exit as I entered but will change me in a significant way. I desire to know our missionaries and the peoples with whom they work and to understand more specifically how to intercede for them.

After spending three wonderful weeks in Togo, West Africa, in September, I came home with a mild case of malaria. This malady is common among our missionaries in many mosquito-infested areas. The Lord answered my prayer in helping me to understand how to pray for them, and I certainly returned in a condition different than when I arrived!

--more--

I was totally unprepared for the phone call on Oct. 14 from Betty Kay Yamaoka, associate area director for west Africa, telling us about the death of Holly Larm. A missionary to the Ivory Coast, Holly, age 32, wife of Allie and mother of Amber, 9, and Luke, 7, had attended the last women's conference in Togo. I remember her, not only as a beautiful and vivacious young missionary, but as a woman whose heart was sensitive and responsive to the Lord.

Holly contracted malaria and began to experience heart palpitations after her first dosage of medication. Whether from the malaria or some other complications, the palpitations became more severe, and she experienced cardiac arrest during the night.

Holly's testimony prior to their appointment to the Ivory Coast reflects her personal commitment to an unequivocal call to foreign missions. "The idea of missions excites me more than scares me," she said. "I believe my children will enjoy the mission field as well. We are a close family and love our prayer time together. They will see what God is doing firsthand and see people come to know the Lord as their Savior. They will also see how God can and will use them for the furtherance of his kingdom. The sacrifice is small compared to all that."

The comments of her colleagues in the Ivory Coast brought smiles and tears intermittently as Mary Dean Phillips, wife of the area director, shared them with our Thursday morning prayer group. "It's not Holly's death that we wish to report today, but rather her life ... and how she did live! Holly was known to all for her zest for life, her positive spirit, her ability to out-arm wrestle any man or woman around and her ability to hit a baseball farther than you or I ever dreamed."

As I pause today to remember Holly's death and to celebrate her life, I will ever be grateful that her life touched mine. Many unanswered questions remain, and the parallels of our lives evoke deep reflection on my part. Holly and I met in west Africa and both had our first brush with malaria. Mine was a mild case with controllable palpitations; her case was more severe and life-threatening. At 32 years of age I, like Holly, was a missionary with two children -- a daughter, age 9, and a son, age 7. I came home to America, but Holly went to sleep and woke up in her heavenly home on my birthday.

May we always be aware of the precious gift of life given to each of us and to our families and friends. May Holly's testimony encourage us to share the life of Christ and his love in the world in which we live. Let us celebrate life where God has placed each of us, recognizing, "In him was life; and the life was the light of men" (John 1:4).

--30--

FIRST-PERSON

Her missionary work in Africa
now relies on Baptists' prayers By Jennifer Mauldin

Baptist Press
3/29/96

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)--I spent today trying to pack everything my family will need for four years into a space about the size of a small walk-in closet. Who am I? I'm a Southern Baptist missionary preparing to leave for Ghana, west Africa.

Right now I am overwhelmed with tons of toilet paper, piles of pasta and scads of sunscreen. In the middle of this mess, I look back to what brought me to this point. What I find is a series of God-orchestrated events that have directed me to foreign missions.

God has been preparing me from childhood for this assignment. I first learned about missions as a young girl in GAs.

Later, while in college, I went on a short-term mission trip to Kenya. It was there God showed me the urgency of spreading his love around the world.

At that time, I knew the facts and I understood the need, but I had not yet committed myself personally to missions. That commitment came when I realized God would take care of my family no matter where we lived.

--more--

Now I know it is God's plan for me to serve him in west Africa. I know it as well as I know the sun will rise each day. God has given me a peace only he can provide about the unknown that awaits me in Africa.

After making the decision to follow God's call in my life, my husband, Jimmy, and I contacted the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board and started a journey that is about to change our lives. We answered questions, filled out paperwork and underwent physiological and psychological exams. We learned more about ourselves through the process, and in the end we received approval.

At that point our lives changed radically. We both quit our jobs in Alabama and moved to Kansas City, Mo., where Jimmy started classes at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Many of our co-workers could not understand why we would leave promising careers and move to Ghana. I was expecting a baby during this time, and they were appalled we would choose to raise a child in a Third World country. God provided many opportunities for us to share just why we are going.

Moving back to Missouri was a coming home of sorts for me. I attended college at the University of Missouri, Columbia, where I received my bachelor of journalism degree. During my time in the Show Me State, I never dreamed I would be back in preparation to follow God's call overseas. In seven months, my husband had the theological training required for missionary appointment.

Our pilgrimage ended with a special appointment service in Knoxville, Tenn. In February, we were among 27 people appointed as foreign missionaries. It was a time of sharing, caring and genuine love. We shared with Baptists from all over the country just how God was working in our lives. In return, they pledged their prayer support.

As we watched flags from around the world parade into a packed auditorium and listened to a choir of adults, youth and children sing of God's love, we were encouraged and uplifted.

We will look back to our appointment service as an important marker in the journey that takes us to Ghana. It was wonderful for us to see that we will not be alone as we travel thousands of miles away. Christians will be lifting us up in prayer. Our ministry is not possible without them.

I've said our journey ended, but in fact it's just beginning. Jimmy and I, along with our five-month-old daughter Katie, soon will be living in rural Africa. We will no longer have a Wal-Mart, McDonald's, or any store for that matter.

We'll buy meat about 18 hours from our home. The only phone in the area is several miles of dirt road away. Jimmy and I will learn a tribal language that is common in the area, while our baby will just pick it up as she learns to talk.

Jimmy will serve as administrator of the Nalerigu Baptist Medical Center in extreme northern Ghana. I hope to work with women in the area, but I'll wait and see what God has planned for me. When our baby is old enough for school, I will be her teacher.

We look at this as a wonderful opportunity for us to share Christian love. While missionary doctors tend to physical needs, patients also will hear how Jesus can heal their souls.

As we leave for Africa, I ask that you remember us in prayer. Specifically pray for my daughter Katie's health, as she is too young to take the strong anti-malaria medicine we will be using. Also remember the other missionary families already working at the hospital. We want to be a help to them and not a burden.

Above all, please pray for the families we leave behind. We will not come back to the United States for four years. I believe our commitment to mission work is more costly to them than it is to us.

Please remember that we are your ambassadors overseas, and our work is impossible without your commitment and support of missions through the Cooperative Program and prayer.

**Church opts against moving
to 'less-challenging area'**

By Orville Scott

DALLAS (BP)--It took a lot of faith for members of Willow Grove Baptist Church in Dallas to commit to constructing a multi-purpose facility including a 1,500-seat sanctuary, gymnasium and a school and day-care center.

The African American congregation in south Dallas averages 65 in Sunday school and has an annual budget of \$66,000.

But members' pledges eclipsed \$159,000 during a United We Build fund-raising campaign.

"Their pledges would have been considered generous at \$100,000," said Frank Palos, consultant in the Texas Baptist church stewardship department, "but they've put feet to their faith that will enable them in God's power to make a great impact on their community."

The church has outgrown its space and is even holding a Sunday school class in the bathroom.

"We could have moved to a less-challenging area," said pastor E. Chester Williams, "but we decided to stay in south Dallas because that's where we're needed most."

"In south Dallas, the harvest is plentiful, the laborers are few. At Willow Grove, the harvest is plentiful, the laborers are growing, the resources are few."

One of the "laborers" is Harold Cannon, who became a member of the church after his release from prison where his life was turned to Christ through a "MasterLife" course taught by ex-offender Don Dennis of Ennis, Texas.

Since Dennis pioneered the teaching of MasterLife in prisons, it and other Lay Institute for Equipping courses have been taught to more than 3,000 inmates in state and federal prisons across the country.

Cannon, one of several ex-inmates at Willow Bend, teaches MasterLife at the Hutchins State Jail near Dallas where several inmates have expressed a desire to become members of Willow Bend upon their release.

Church secretary Marcia Bullock is among other church members involved in the prison ministry. Coming to Dallas several years ago, she said God led her to Willow Grove.

"When you come to Willow Grove, you get bit by the Willow Grove bug," she said. "Everybody is so warm and loving."

To help win their community to Christ, Willow Grove developed a "SWIM" (Soul Winners in Motion), ministry with members going door-to-door sharing the gospel.

"WRAP" (Willow Grove Religious Activities Program), which reaches out to youth of the community, will be greatly enhanced by completion of a new gymnasium and school buildings, said Williams. This summer the church is planning for 1,000 youngsters in Vacation Bible School.

--30--

**Answer to one question
matters most, pastor says**

By Cameron Crabtree

**Baptist Press
3/29/96**

MILL VALLEY, Calif. (BP)--Among the many questions students ask during seminary, the answer to one question holds the key to unlocking ministry effectiveness, said California pastor Sam Williams.

"Your view of Christ will determine two things -- your place of ministry and the power of your message," said Williams, pastor of BayMarin Community Church in San Rafael, Calif.

Williams, speaking to students at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary March 27, pointed to the importance of Simon Peter's confession of Jesus as the Christ in Matthew 16, noting Jesus asked, "Who do you say that I am?" in Caesarea Philippi, the northern boundary between the Jewish and non-Jewish world.

--more--

"There is a relationship between this mid-ministry confession of Peter and Jesus' end-of-ministry Great Commission," said Williams. "It was always intended by Jesus that we proclaim him not in the safe surroundings of people like us, but among those who are not."

Williams, who teaches leadership, church planting, evangelism and church growth at the seminary's Mill Valley campus, urged students not to only seek comfortable places of ministry.

"Some of you will look for a good church to go to when you finish seminary," he predicted. "Others will go to a hellish place."

Jesus asked his question, Williams said, in a place devoted to pleasure, where nature was worshiped and where people thought of it as the gateway to the spirit world. "It sounds a lot like San Francisco," he quipped. The seminary's Mill Valley campus is six miles north of the Golden Gate Bridge.

Williams noted when he moved to Marin County in 1992 after a 20-year pastorate in San Diego to become pastor of a small, contemporary church "nobody could understand it. People made comments about it being such a dark place ... it's so resistant to the gospel ... you can't build a church there.

"Let me tell you friends -- you can't build a church anywhere," he said. "There is no small amount of discussion about what is meant in the Matthew 16 passage by the 'rock' and the 'keys to the kingdom,' but if you get too far away from those things being the power of Christ and his message you've gone too far."

Williams acknowledged contemporary churches receive some criticism because they apply strategy and technique to developing ministries.

"I pastor a contemporary church, but the longer I'm a pastor the less sure I am of exactly what that means," Williams said. "I've got news for you -- techniques will not build a church and skills will not build a church. I'm not suggesting that we don't need to become as skilled as we can or that we don't need to understand effective methods -- Jesus was not an inept bumbler, you know -- but you don't technique people into the kingdom of God and you don't trick people into the church."

Williams said in his three years as pastor of BayMarin he has seen the lives of countless people transformed by the power of God.

"Techniques and contemporary ministry style did not do that," he said. "It is the Anointed King, the Son of God who is alive who did that."

Williams told students to "become as skilled as you can, become wise about the culture and historical things, learn as much as you can learn, ask as many questions as you can, but in the final analysis your ministry will be determined by your answer to the question posed by Jesus -- 'Who do you say that I am?'"

Golden Gate Seminary is one of six Southern Baptist Convention seminaries and the only SBC agency in the western United States.

HOUSE MAIL

(BP)	BAPTIST PRESS 901 Commerce #750 Nashville, TN 37234
F I R S T C L A S S	Southern Baptist Library and Archives