

(BP)

BAPTIST PRESS
News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

August 30, 1996

96-153

NORTH CAROLINA--Elliff leads first convocation at Southeastern Seminary campus.
GEORGIA--Follow-up continues with Olympic contacts.
ARKANSAS--Arkansas governor, church leaders join forces to combat church arson.
ARKANSAS--Draper highlights priority of building relationships.
MISSOURI--Bible as 'moral compass' must be restored: Cooper.

**Elliff leads first convocation
at Southeastern Seminary campus**

By Lee Weeks

**Baptist Press
8/30/96**

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--If Christianity is to advance through revival in the 21st century believers must first repent of their sin and return to the cross, said Tom Elliff, president of the Southern Baptist Convention.

"There's a view of the cross which most of us or at least many of us have lost," Elliff said Aug. 29 on the campus of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Elliff, the newly elected SBC president and pastor of First Southern Baptist Church, Del City, Okla., visited the Wake Forest, N.C., campus to lead the first of seven convocations scheduled to be held on the SBC's six seminary campuses as well as at Mid-America Seminary over the next two weeks.

Elliff scheduled the convocations to call Southern Baptists to pray for a spiritual awakening throughout the world.

"I have been overwhelmed at the fact that the presidents of our seminaries have been willing to set aside not just an hour but a day, in fact set aside their agendas so that we might gather here today and seek God's face for an awakening in our land. ... If we come to the end of this century it will be the first century in which we have not had a remarkable awakening."

Henry Blackaby, author of the widely-distributed "Experiencing God" discipleship study, and Avery Willis, author of the popular discipleship program, "Master Life," spoke during the four-hour service which included praise and worship through singing as well as several interludes of individual group prayer.

"The cross is diametrically opposed to every interest of our society," Elliff told the audience of more than 1,200 seated in the packed Binkley Chapel. "It makes us feel good to talk about revival. It doesn't make us feel so good to talk about holiness. It makes us feel good to talk about power. It doesn't make us feel so great when we think about the crucified life and sacrifice."

Servanthood, Elliff said, is an attitude that desperately needs to be employed in the pulpit as well as the pew.

"It's time for the world to see Christian servants," Elliff charged. "We'd rather do almost anything except carry the towel and basin and wash feet. We'd like ours washed. We'd like to have an engraved basin and a monogrammed towel that others can use while they wash our feet."

Elliff blamed the lack of respect for God's inerrant and infallible Word proclaimed from the pulpit for the spiritual decay in society.

--more--

"Many pulpits across our land have lost their passion ... Many preachers have become buffoons, why? Because we have looked many times at the minister as the CEO rather than servant of God."

Elliff said God is calling preachers to put away vain ambition, so they may be true men of God. "Men who are not so focused on losing tax exemption that they fail to speak prophetically and convictionally in the pulpit."

"He will use preachers who have come to the cross, who have laid aside human, personal ambitions and agendas and aspirations."

Elliff continued: "Preachers who have said God, I've got one thing in mind, what do you want with my life? What do you want me to say? How can I speak as an oracle of God?"

Elliff said a widely-held misconception in the church is that revival is for the unsaved.

"Revival is for the regenerated," asserted Elliff. "You may be asking them (unsaved) to experience something which is impossible for them to experience -- because revival is for the regenerated."

Revival, Elliff said, should not be measured statistically.

"I think in some circles revival has become a rather self-serving term," he said. "We have filled our church rolls with people who have been victimized by the preaching and the teaching and the practicing of what for the lack of a better term, we would like to call the synthetic gospel."

"There's been preaching that has been short on repentance, Holy Ghost conviction, Lordship and we have filled not our churches, but our church rolls. We may not be 15 million strong as Southern Baptists. We probably are more like 10 million weak."

Elliff said it is his incessant prayer that the day of prayer convocations will be more than just an event.

"Our prayer has been that as we go away from this campus, we go away with a burden. A burden not only that we would identify with Jesus on the cross and come to the cross ourselves, but that we would carry this fire in our hearts back to our churches and our families, back where we work and that the lives of those of whom we touch would sense somehow that contagious, infectious moving of God which is taking place in our own hearts."

Students, pastors, professors and visitors alike described the highly-publicized convocation as spiritually uplifting yet not showy.

"It was a time of real spiritual renewal, a time to re-examine ourselves," said Tim Rogers, pastor of Leesville Road Baptist Church in Durham, N.C..

Alvin Reid, associate professor of evangelism and church growth, holds the seminary's Bailey Smith Chair of Evangelism. Reid said he was moved by the response of those lining the altar in prayer at the conclusion of the service.

"To see lots of students staying to pray, that's encouraging," Reid said. "There's just a real hunger (for revival). "I think we're off to a great start."

--30--

**Follow-up continues
with Olympic contacts**

By Sarah Zimmerman

**Baptist Press
8/30/96**

ALPHARETTA, Ga. (BP)--Although the Olympic and Paralympic flames have been extinguished in Atlanta, the Home Mission Board continues to receive response cards from people reached through volunteer ministries.

Of 2,723 cards returned by the end of August, 1,613 people reported making professions of faith and 1,110 people requested more information, said Jack Smith, HMB associate director of personal evangelism.

--more--

Response cards are from interactive pocket guides which listed athletic record holders as well as the plan of salvation. People could indicate they had made a profession of faith, request Bible study materials or ask to be contacted by Christians in their area. They could also report they are not ready to make a profession of faith but would like more free information.

Response cards from people in other countries are sent to the Foreign Mission Board for follow-up, Smith said. Response cards from U.S. residents are sent to state evangelism directors who forward information to local associations or churches.

A copy of each U.S. card is also sent to Mission Service Corps volunteer Brenda Johnson who coordinates the follow-up process. New Christians receive packets of material including a "Beginning Steps" HMB booklet. Those who request more information receive four investigative Bible studies by Campus Crusade founder Bill Bright.

Each mailing includes another response card. Recipients can indicate if they are still not certain of their salvation, if they have not been contacted by a local church or if they would like additional information. New Testaments are sent to people requesting them. Other follow-up material includes books from the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and an HMB correspondence Bible study.

Smith said he expects to continue receiving response cards through the end of the year. He praised the hundreds of volunteers who distributed the pocket guides and the Foreign Mission Board staff and state evangelism directors for their cooperation with follow-up.

Smith noted many churches using the interactive pocket guides asked people to respond to the church rather than return the card to the Home Mission Board. Consequently the number of cards he has received do not indicate the actual success of the guides.

--30--

**Arkansas governor, church leaders
join forces to combat church arson** By Russell N. Dilday

**Baptist Press
8/30/96**

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (BP)--Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee has announced a four-fold plan to aid black churches burned in the state.

As a part of the Aug. 26 press conference at the state capitol, Arkansas Baptist leaders presented a financial gift to two burned churches. The checks came from an offering collected during the 1996 Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting to help burned African-American churches across the South.

Huckabee told reporters he decided on the action because "I want to make sure the state of Arkansas understands that today there will be a solid and very unified response to what, at least on the surface, appears to be the intolerable and outrageous burnings of churches in eastern Arkansas."

Fires claimed the facilities of St. Matthew's Missionary Baptist Church and Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church, both predominantly African-American congregations near Turner, on Aug. 21. A white congregation, Kentucky Missionary Baptist Church near Benton, lost its building in an Aug. 24 blaze. Preliminary reports from authorities indicate arson may be the cause of all three fires.

"Up until recently, our state has been able to be one of the only southern states in the country that had seemingly escaped these racially-motivated, targeted attacks against places of worship," Huckabee remarked.

--more--

The governor made his remarks at the conference with clergy and church leaders from several denominations standing behind him in support. Representing the Arkansas Baptist State Convention were executive director Emil Turner; state convention president Rex Horne; Jack Kwok, director of the ABSC cooperative ministries department; and Fred Major, pastor of Turner Baptist Church.

Turner presented a check for \$2,000 to D.L. O'Neal, president of the Regular Missionary Baptist State Convention of Arkansas, to aid in relief for the two recently-burned churches.

"This is a gift for each of these churches, \$1,000 for each church," Turner told O'Neal. "They come from Southern Baptists across America through the Arkansas Baptist State Convention. We understand that you are co-workers with us and we are co-workers with you. This is to express our hearts. When the churches burned, our hearts burned."

The \$2,000 check was made available through an offering collected during the 1996 SBC annual meeting in New Orleans to help black churches that have been burned in a two-year-long rash of arson-related fires across the South.

Responding to former SBC president Jim Henry's call to "be doers of the word by taking an offering to help our brothers and sisters in Christ," SBC messengers contributed more than \$282,000 in cash and pledges to the offering.

To date, the SBC has received more than \$293,000 in the arson fund, which was disbursed to 14 state conventions this summer. The ABSC received \$3,000 in the disbursement, which was formulated by the SBC Inter-Agency Council's Racial Reconciliation Task Force.

Gov. Huckabee, a former Arkansas Baptist pastor, announced a set of plans to protect black congregations from arson and to help victimized churches recover from their losses.

The first action, he said, calls for "the director of the state police, the director of the crime lab, as well as the state fire marshal to give highest priority to work with the federal authorities who will be taking the lead in the investigations of these and any other churches where arson is expected."

He said he also "will be proposing legislation for the session in 1997 which will increase the level of criminal penalty for activities directed against congregations, whether they be churches, synagogues or mosques."

Although the specifics for the legislation have yet to be formulated, he said proposed measures may be similar to comparable legislation recently passed in Tennessee.

Third, he announced a campaign called for churches to "adopt" sister churches. "We realize the level to which government can go is limited," he noted. "There are no limits for the churches to act like churches.

"We are calling on churches to voluntarily open their hearts as well as their hands to do more than simply say, 'We are going to pray for you,'" Huckabee explained. "This is an extraordinary opportunity for many of the predominantly white congregations in our state to finally do something that will demonstrate that the days of racial bigotry that often long existed in our churches have come to a screeching halt."

He suggested the church-to-church partnerships "will be initiated within the churches" and that congregations might participate in "what amounts to a neighborhood watch for churches" and to "perhaps set up a grant program to have alarms installed on some remotely located churches."

Huckabee's fourth emphasis was the announcement "that funds have already been set up to assist the two churches which burned." Included in funds is one set up within the ABSC to aid any black congregation that loses its building through fire.

Speaking in support of the funds, St. Matthews pastor Ken Daniels emphasized with "your prayers and support, with God's grace and God's love, we can build more churches than they can burn down."

Turner told the Arkansas Baptist Newsmagazine following the conference the \$1,000 for each church "is the same amount our missions department gives to a white Arkansas Baptist church that burns."

Horne, pastor of Immanuel Church in Little Rock, added while the "seed money is significant" to furthering race relations in the state, "I can't help but think how far we still have to go.

"Sometimes it's the easiest thing to do, whether we are in a local church or a statewide need like this, of giving something and not changing our own attitude or willingness to watch out for our brothers," he said. Urging fellow Baptists to additional commitment to racial reconciliation, he said, "I'm ready to get past the starting line and see even more significant things take place."

Huckabee, recounting the story of Joseph in Genesis 51, remarked that Joseph said to his brothers, "What you intended for harm, God has used for good." I think we should say very clearly today that what some have intended for harm, God is going to use for good.

"If this brings a new fellowship, if it brings new centers of worship for these churches, if it makes clear that this kind of behavior will be met with an even greater level of resistance and prosecution, then all of those things will have served to advance both the kingdom of man and the kingdom of God upon us."

--30--

**Draper highlights priority
of building relationships**

By Trennis Henderson

**Baptist Press
8/30/96**

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (BP)--Declaring "whatever the future holds for Southern Baptists is going to be built on the wings of relationships," Jimmy Draper put that philosophy into practice during a recent visit with Arkansas Baptist leaders.

Draper, president of the Baptist Sunday School Board, has scheduled trips this year to 14 state Baptist conventions in an effort to "open lines of communications and address issues of concern to the states." His recent trip to the Baptist Building in Little Rock was his ninth such excursion of the year. He plans to visit every state convention staff during a span of three years.

"It dawned on me back in January that I know all these state executives but I had never been in their offices on their home turf," Draper explained. "I've come to feel that each of us is a steward of our influence and relationships. I felt I needed to do my part to build relationships."

With that goal in mind, Draper met with Arkansas Baptist executive director Emil Turner as well as convention department directors whose work relates to the Sunday School Board. "I'm here to listen," he emphasized. "I want to know what Arkansas is doing, what concerns they have. There is a wide range of differences and diversity that ought to be applauded and encouraged."

Turner agreed Draper's visit "is an acknowledgment that the denomination of the future will be based on relationships between its agencies and their constituents. The stronger the relationship," Turner added, "the more healthy and viable those relationships will be."

Draper noted staff members in several states have raised "a lot of questions about how we will do ministry for women and men; how we are going to do field service -- it really touches on every area. If I don't know there is a problem, I can't fix it."

Evaluating the board's ministry role, he pointed out, "We don't have the program of Sunday school; we have the process of Sunday school. The program of Sunday school belongs to the churches."

With its numerous products geared toward local churches, however, the Sunday School Board has "networks into the churches and we've got to strengthen those networks," he explained.

--more--

Acknowledging his first five years as BSSB president have been challenging, he said personnel downsizing "has been the most traumatic thing I've ever gone through." The board's full-time staff has been reduced by approximately 130 employees during the board's restructuring process.

On the positive side, Draper added, "I feel good that we've been able to make substantive changes to provide more economical resources to the churches." Noting the board has "26 to 28 good competitors" in the area of Bible study curriculum, he remarked, "We've got to be the very best at what we do if we're going to command the respect of our people.

"Change is inevitable but I think the massive changes are over," he said. "We've relied on the strength of the past while moving into new areas."

Evaluating the board's current ministry efforts, Draper affirmed, "The greatest thing is to see our people cut loose to dream. I tell our people it's okay to risk and fail. It's not a sin to fail. It's a sin to not move past failure."

--30--

**Bible as 'moral compass'
must be restored: Cooper**

By James A. Smith Sr.

**Baptist Press
8/30/96**

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)--The moral deterioration of American society can be traced back to the rejection of the Bible as God's inerrant word, Lamar Cooper contended in the annual convocation address at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Accepting the authority of God's word as the nation's "moral compass" and placing human reason under its authority must be the goal of the next generation of seminarians, Cooper told a capacity crowd during Midwestern's Aug. 29 convocation.

The convocation begins the new academic year with a formal address and a ceremony in which newly elected faculty sign the seminary's statement of faith, "The Baptist Faith and Message." Four faculty members, teaching in the fields of theology, missions, preaching, and religious education participated in the signing ceremony.

Comparing America's moral decay with the "moral, spiritual, social and physical disintegration of Israel" recorded in Isaiah 5:8-23, Cooper illustrated the ethical predicament of the United States with a recent comment by Jack Kevorkian, the infamous suicide doctor.

"Had Christ died in my van, with people around him who loved him, (it) would have been far more dignified," Cooper quoted a recent Kevorkian comment recorded in USA Today.

"Dr. Kevorkian, how dare you compare the death of my Lord and Savior to your flagrant, misguided and deranged roster of death which mocks the sanctity of a precious soul created in the image of God," Cooper asked rhetorically. "You sir, are not God." The existence of such moral confusion occurs "whenever truth is suppressed in favor of error," Cooper said.

A nation's "moral compass" is also lost when the Bible is forgotten as the source of a believer's devotional life.

"Our lack of spiritual discernment in this day can be traced to our lack of knowledge of the Word of God and to our failure to meditate on its precepts," Cooper said, noting "truth is spiritually discerned."

Although the Gallup polling organization found in 1950 only six percent of Americans failed to receive religious instruction as youths, today that percentage has risen to nearly 40 percent, Cooper said. The lack of religious education for young people has resulted "in a culture where sin is made to look normal and righteousness to look abnormal," he said.

--more--

"Unless we return to preaching against sin by proclaiming the whole truth of God's Word, we will not reset the moral compass of our generation," Cooper said. "No one of us is wise enough, eloquent enough or powerful enough to accomplish what only God can do -- namely, transform a human life."

Cooper said "outside influences" are a third way in which the "moral compass of the Word has been undermined," noting the influence which is of most concern to him is "the drift of modern theology into the abyss of liberalism."

"Rejecting the Word of God as infallible and inerrant truth, as divine revelation, never leads individuals to deeper spiritual commitment," Cooper declared. "It never leads to less sinful human conduct. It always invites a more relaxed commitment to truth which encourages error."

The Southern Baptist Convention "came dangerously close to succumbing to this malady," Cooper said.

"Today the popularity of relativism and religious pluralism are a legacy of the erosion of truth and the erosion of biblical authority," Cooper said.

While relativism is widespread on secular college campuses, Cooper said he confronted it in his own education at a Southern Baptist seminary.

Unlike many students who lose faith in the veracity of God's Word, Cooper said his confrontation with relativism brought a determination "to work for the day when no one attending one of our seminaries would ever have to apologize or feel disenfranchised for believing the Bible is the infallible, inerrant truth from God."

Signing Midwestern's statement of faith during the convocation were: Mark DeVine, assistant professor of theology; Ron Rogers, associate professor of missions; Bruce Merrick, assistant professor of religious education; and Ben Awbrey, assistant professor of preaching.

Midwestern's president emeritus, Milton Ferguson, offered the invocation at the convocation. Ferguson served as president of Midwestern Seminary for 23 years, retiring in 1995 after Mark Coppenger was elected by the board of trustees as the institution's third president.

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