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**Chuck Kelley inaugurated as
New Orleans' 8th president**

By Debbie Moore

**Baptist Press
10/31/96**

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--The inaugural service for Charles S. Kelley Jr. as he officially became the eighth president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary on Tuesday morning, Oct. 29, more than anything else was a time of worship.

"We have come into his house and are gathered in his name to worship Christ the Lord," said C. Ferris Jordan as he welcomed representatives from fellow academic institutions in the Association of Theological Schools and Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, seminary trustees, executives from Southern Baptist Convention agencies, Kelley family members and local dignitaries, as well as the faculty, staff and students of New Orleans Seminary and others.

"... this is a time when we reaffirm our commitment to ... the Lord of this school, and when we acknowledge Dr. Kelley as the servant leader who is serving under the lordship of Jesus Christ," said Jordan, chairman of the inaugural committee and professor of adult education at NOBTS since 1978. He also occupies the J.M. Frost Baptist Sunday School Board Chair of Christian Education.

The invocation was given by the father of the president, Charles S. Kelley Sr. of Beaumont, Texas, who has been acquainted with the seminary since its days as the Baptist Bible Institute in New Orleans' Garden District in the early 1900s. He has been on the seminary's foundation board for many years.

Marc H. Morial, mayor of New Orleans, greeted guests to the city and the inaugural service, told of his thankfulness for the seminary and presented Kelley with a key to the city.

"I grew up not too far from this seminary ... and I remember the days as a child when the seminary's gymnasium was open to us so we could play basketball," Morial said. "This is indeed an impressive, beautiful campus, and I want to thank the seminary for what you do as a good citizen in our community but most importantly what you do to train and prepare religious leadership, not only for New Orleans ... but for the entire world."

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Morial thanked Landrum P. Leavell II, NOBTS president 1975-95, for his many years of leadership and service in the city.

To Kelley, Morial said, "I salute you today. ... You take over the helm of an institution for which people have great expectations, but I simply want you to know that I am here and the city is here to work with you." Morial asked those in attendance to pray for Kelley to have the wisdom "to do what is right to continue to lead this institution as we begin the new millennium."

To several rounds of applause, Morial commended Kelley for marrying a New Orleans' native, the former Rhonda Harrington who grew up in the lakefront area and who completed the doctor of philosophy degree in special education and speech pathology at the University of New Orleans in 1983.

Roy H. Glapion, councilman for the district in which the seminary is located, presented a proclamation of recognition to Kelley on behalf of the city council.

"New Orleans is a city of churches. ... Where there are differences among us, there is also community," Glapion said. "Though our city is troubled by poverty and crime, by hate and indifference, we come together in peace in the commitment our citizens find in their churches."

Greetings also were presented by the president of the NOBTS Student Body Association, J. Randall Driggers, a third-year master of divinity degree student from Birmingham, Ala.; by the president of the NOBTS National Alumni Association, David F. Meacham, executive director of the Nevada Baptist Convention; and by the chief executive officer of the SBC Executive Committee, Morris H. Chapman, who brought congratulations on behalf of the nearly 16 million Southern Baptists in the United States in nearly 40,000 churches.

"There is a great heritage here at this wonderful institution, and there is an even greater future," Chapman said. To Kelley, he said, "I am grateful this morning on behalf of all Southern Baptists that has brought a man of your dedication, your giftedness, your burden for lost souls, your anointed and powerful preaching, your leadership, your vision. ... I know that I speak for Southern Baptists who support this seminary with their gifts and with their prayers as we pray for you in these coming days ... and we believe your future is as bright as the promises of God."

Scriptural challenges were presented to Kelley by each of the five other SBC seminary presidents, first led by Paige Patterson, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary who also serves this year as chairman of both the council of SBC seminary presidents and the SBC Inter-Agency Council.

"Although some might call us institutions in competition," Patterson said, "the truth of the matter is that we are institutions deeply committed to one another and to the success of each of the other."

William M. Hamm Jr., chairman of the NOBTS board of trustees and a layman from Shreveport, La., performed the official installation and presentation of the president, saying, "Dr. Kelley was unanimously and enthusiastically elected by the board of trustees on Feb. 23, 1996. He has loved this seminary since his days here as a student over 20 years ago. The presidential search committee and the trustees feel that the guiding hand of God was with us in leading us to a strong unanimous decision that Dr. Kelley is God's man to lead this seminary into the 21st century."

The presentation of the presidential medallion was made by the immediate past president of the seminary, Landrum Leavell, who served as president and professor of evangelism for 20 years.

Martha Ann Powell of Liberty, Miss., president of the seminary's foundation board, read the dedication Scripture, Matthew 28:18-20, known as the Great Commission, and Matthew 22:37-40, known as the Great Commandments. Kelley's mission statement for New Orleans Seminary is for the school "to equip leaders to fulfill the Great Commission and the Great Commandments through the local church and its ministries."

The Kelleys' pastor, David Crosby of New Orleans' First Baptist Church, presented the dedication prayer as the Kelleys knelt together at the front of the platform.

The inaugural address was presented by Patterson, who married Kelley's sister Dorothy. Titled "On the Retrieval and Employment of Mantles," the sermon referred to 2 Kings 2:8-14 and the account of the prophet Elisha taking up the mantle of the prophet Elijah after Elijah went up into heaven by a whirlwind.

"Dr. Kelley, you cross Jordan today to begin a new phase of your ministry among God's saints," Patterson said. "You also inherit a mantle -- the mantle of precious scholars, presidents and prophets who have preceded you here."

Patterson presented "five modest challenges for the use of your mantle in the discharge of the sacred duties to which you are now called in the guidance of this seminary."

"First, never pass a burning bush that is not consumed. Moses' decision to turn aside from shepherdly duties to spend time with God was not optional if he were to have God's anointing in his life. ...

"Second, as you direct the teaching mission of the seminary, choose Jesus as your pedagogical example. Being a seminary president in the contemporary milieu is a complex assignment. Distance learning, compressed interactive video, computer technology, you need it all -- and you must have it all. But someday when the sun sets on your own ministry, be warned that these matters of contemporary concern will be of little consequence. What matters will be the lives you touched, the faculty you trained and the students you taught and inspired."

Third, "see to it that the theology written and expounded at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary is 'church theology' rather than 'cloister theology.' Let it never be the arid 'history-of-religions' approach, hedged about from any touch with the heart. ...

"Fourth, every era presents its own uniqueness. Theology has to be written afresh in every generation, not because theology changes, but because the pertinent questions of each era vary. Theology must address the new situation. You, Mr. President, must pay the price to be cognizant of the rise and fall of popular culture-mystiques. You must know the waterfront and insist that your faculty and students are similarly aware. You must be constantly alert to the inroads of process theism, post-modern cynicism and other contemporary vacuous alternatives to the faith once and for all delivered to the saints. ...

Fifth, "Mr. President, your primary task is not the preparation of a coterie of research scholars, though such must be a determined adjunctive function of the seminary. It has little enough to do with the granting of degrees, the publishing of journals and books, or the building of libraries. Your assignment is to prepare a generation of men and women to reach the world for Christ."

At the end of his sermon, Patterson made a surprise presentation to Kelley, an old cane once belonging to evangelist Gipsy Smith. "In the concluding 20 years of Gipsy Smith's life, the cane went with him to every crusade and revival and was by his side when he died. It is one of my most treasured possessions," Patterson said. "Since I cannot leave you today a tangible mantle from those who have proceeded you here in New Orleans and since I happen to know that you are a collector of canes, I have decided that the influence of this cane needs to live on after me.

...

"I give you today the cane of Gipsy Smith as a perpetual reminder of what you must be. You have been a gifted preacher; you are a well-known and greatly loved professor of evangelism; and now for the immediate future, you will be the president of one of America's great seminaries.

In his response, Kelley said, "It is time to get to the task. ... We will judge the health of our seminary by the health of the churches our graduates lead."

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In reference to his repeated call for revival across the country, in the city of New Orleans and at the seminary, Kelley said, "I believe there is an awakening left before Christ returns. ... I believe if we hold up the candle, God will strike the match."

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(BP) photo available upon request from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary public relations office.

**Phil Roberts defends SBC stance
in Christian-Jewish panel session**

By Keith Hinson

**Baptist Press
10/31/96**

STAMFORD, Conn. (BP)--Participants in an interfaith dialogue reacted with strong, even angry, disagreement after a Southern Baptist speaker told them all people, including Jews, need Christ for salvation.

"If John 3:16 is true, then the most anti-semitic act, we believe, would be to fail to evangelize (Jews)," said Phil Roberts, director of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board's interfaith witness department.

Roberts' remarks were part of a panel discussion on "Evangelism and the Jews" at the 15th National Workshop on Christian-Jewish Relations, Oct. 27-30 at the Sheraton Hotel in Stamford, Conn.

A Jewish panelist sharply criticized Roberts' belief that Jews need Christ for salvation. "Jews ... are not in need of the Son or of the Holy Ghost. We are already with the Father. The covenant is already there," declared Rabbi A. James Rudin, director of interreligious affairs for the American Jewish Committee.

Rudin took issue with the idea of a "Resolution on Jewish Evangelism" approved by messengers to the 1996 Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in June. Copies of the resolution had been distributed to conferees when then session began.

Such a resolution would call for similar resolutions, Rudin suggested, for evangelizing Catholics, homosexuals, women, Islamic people, native Americans, immigrants and "500 other groups."

The panel discussion began at 9:30 p.m. Oct. 29 and was followed by a question-and-answer period that lasted until midnight. The audience was estimated at 300 by one conference official.

At one point, a panelist asked for a show of hands on how many conferees were Jewish and how many were Christian. Observers said the division was approximately equal.

In his opening statement, Roberts said Christians must evangelize Jews or risk betraying the founder of their religion, Jesus Christ.

Bible-based Christians, including Baptists, "believe it is part of Christ's mandate to share the gospel, lovingly and graciously, with all the world," Roberts noted. "Disobedience would be tantamount to high treason to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who commanded us to begin at Jerusalem and Judea ... and to go to all peoples in all of the world to share it."

Panelist Robert B. Lennick, rabbi of the Greenwich (Conn.) Reform Synagogue, said, "If a Christian believes I can only be saved if I give up my faith in favor of his or hers, then the phrase, 'killing me with kindness,' becomes spiritually literal.

"So, thanks for the offer. But don't kill me with your theological kindness. God tells me I don't need to die spiritually in order to live. That is what God tells Christians," said Lennick, who served as workshop convener.

During one particularly lively and often-loud exchange, Roberts was asked by a Catholic man from Spain, "Are you ever going to be satisfied, as long as there are any Jews around?"

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Roberts replied, "I hesitate to answer that question."

The questioner and several audience members immediately shouted "Why?"

Roberts answered, "Because it makes it look as if evangelism is synonymous with eliminating the Jews."

Many audience members quickly responded with shouts of "It is!" and with loud clapping and vocalizations to indicate agreement with the notion that evangelism aims to eradicate Judaism.

"I understand that's the way you feel," Roberts responded. "My absolute, complete, total, honest evaluation is for Jewish persons to believe that Jesus is the Messiah is not -- in my opinion ... a forsaking of their Judaism. ... That's where we differ, obviously and dramatically."

Many conferees and panelists took issue with Roberts' choice of terms in his opening statement. In referring to persons who were born Jewish and later make a faith commitment to Christ, Roberts called them "Messianic Jews" and "Hebrew Christians."

"Many of these believers worship on (the Sabbath), observe Jewish festivals and practice their faith while contributing vitally to Baptist life," Roberts stated.

Rudin disputed the legitimacy of Roberts' terminology and said the terms are offensive. "I won't dignify it by calling them 'Messianic Jews,' because all Jews are messianic. ... Whether we believe in a personal messiah or a messianic age, all Jews are messianic.

"To cede to the 'Hebrew Christians' -- and I don't like the word 'Hebrew' -- they are Christians, Southern Baptists -- it's a great mistake," Rudin said.

Lennick suggested the terms "Messianic Jews" and "Hebrew Christians" represent a distortion of the facts.

"(It is) dishonest Christianity and has nothing to do with Judaism," Lennick stated. "The Jewish messiah that Jews await for ... is not the Messiah that Christians have prayed to, understood, yearned for, hoped for; it is a different messiah.

"So for a Jew to say, 'I believe in the Christian Messiah,' is to be a Christian. That's the equation. Any Jew who says, 'I believe in the Christian Messiah, and I am still a Jew,' is lying to themselves -- and it is lying to every other Christian."

During the question-and-answer period, a Jewish woman gave an illustration to try to emphasize why Christians who were born Jewish should no longer be considered Jews.

She asked the audience to try to imagine a group of Christians who became convinced that the Koran -- not the Bible -- was "the ultimate religious document." Furthermore, she asked, imagine that this group of believers came to hold the "promised Messiah is no longer Jesus, but God's final prophet is Mohammed."

For such a group to call themselves "Muslim Christians" would be rejected by Christians, she suggested. "I suspect what you would say: 'It's a free country, and you have the right to your own belief. But I cannot call you a Christian. Once you have given up the authority of Jesus and the ultimate authority of the New Testament, you are no longer a Christian.'"

During his opening statement, Roberts raised a question that appeared to go unanswered during the session. Quoting one Messianic Jewish leader, Gus Elowitz, Roberts said they are asking, "Why can't we be Jews and believers? How is it that an agnostic, atheistic or even a Jew who practices Buddhism is not singled out for ostracism, but we are?"

Gerald Anderson, a United Methodist official with the Overseas Ministries Study Center, criticized the workshop's leadership for refusing to include a Messianic Jew on the panel.

"I think our Jewish-Christian dialogue lacks credibility without their participation," said Anderson, who was the only panelist supportive of Roberts' position on Jewish evangelism.

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"If St. Paul himself showed up at our workshop tonight, I doubt that he would be allowed to speak. I find an attitude toward Messianic Jews -- or Hebrew Christians -- that smacks of contempt, intolerance, lack of respect and theological denial."

David Zauber, an ordained Southern Baptist minister and missionary for the Christian Jewish Foundation, appeared to be the only Messianic Jew present in the room.

"I am a Jewish person who believes with all my heart and with all my soul and all my might that our Messiah has already come -- and his name is Jesus," said Zauber, who spoke from a microphone during the question-and-answer session.

"I love my people and I love my heritage. The people that I hang out with now -- the Gentile believers in Jesus, who really love Jesus -- they love the Jews," stated Zauber, who is a member of Covenant Baptist Fellowship, a Southern Baptist church in Atlanta.

"They love us, and they're the kind of people that would die with us and die with my parents, as 22 of my people died in the (Nazi death) camps (of World War II)," Zauber said.

A few minutes later, another audience member reacted angrily to Zauber's comments. "Mr. Zauber, don't flout your credentials as having dead Holocaust relatives. You have 22; I have 130," said a Jewish man. "So don't pull that. ... I'm a rabbi of a congregation. We have two cemeteries. You couldn't be buried in either one of them, because you would defile the ground."

Roberts indicated Southern Baptists and others who share the gospel are willing to endure the barrage of criticism for efforts to evangelize the Jews.

"We gladly accept your rebuke. We would disagree with it. We gladly accept any insult, any indifference or antagonism or anger you would have. We do believe the gospel is a scandal," said Roberts, as many audience members were heard to gasp.

Amplifying his comment, Roberts said, "It is not one's tradition or religion -- whether it be Baptist, Jewish, Islamic, any form of Christianity that saves a person -- it is their faith and trust in Jesus Christ."

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**Roberts: Faith in Christ is key
to Jews, all others for salvation**

By Keith Hinson

**Baptist Press
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STAMFORD, Conn. (BP)--Southern Baptists are a young and new church with often-misguided theology, claimed speakers at the 15th National Workshop on Christian-Jewish Relations, Oct. 27-30 at the Sheraton Hotel in Stamford, Conn.

During a two-and-a-half-hour panel discussion on the topic of "Jewish Evangelism," panelists and audience directed comments to Southern Baptist representative Phil Roberts criticizing the convention for their belief that Jewish people need to be evangelized.

An Orthodox Christian priest stated to Roberts, Home Mission Board director of the interfaith witness department:

"We ... would say to you: You have ignored history. You are non-apostolic, non-historical, untraditional Christianity -- bordering on heresy, if not heretical," declared the priest, who was an audience member speaking at a microphone during a question-and-answer session.

The priest suggested Baptist evangelization of the Jews is as offensive as Baptist evangelism directed to other Christian groups, especially denominations older than Baptists.

"Southern Baptists ... do to Russian Orthodox and Romanian Orthodox and Greek Orthodox Christians, frankly, what they do now to Jewish people," the priest declared. "They're saying your faith is not enough -- that only Southern Baptist proclamation of Christ can be enough."

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Roberts responded that a person's salvation is determined by whether they have personal faith in Christ. "Some people say, 'You Baptists are so narrow. You only believe Baptists are going to make it to heaven,'" Roberts noted. "Our response is we don't even believe all Baptists are going to make it, because one needs a personal faith in Christ as Savior and Lord for salvation."

Eugene J. Fisher, associate director of the secretariat for Catholic-Jewish relations for the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, indicated partial agreement with Roberts.

"For all Christians, the Christ-event is that event through which grace comes to save all humanity. ... That's a theological framework I think we share very strongly, and all Christians are called to proclaim that universally to everyone," said Fisher, who was panel moderator and national planning chair for the workshop.

"There may be a theological difference among Christians on the statement, 'One needs a personal faith in Christ for salvation,'" Fisher said. "I'm not sure we in the Roman Catholic tradition would put it quite that way. All human beings need Christ's grace for salvation ... but a personal faith in Christ, we would have problems with, because we also believe the doctrine of God's universal will to salvation ... (Some) human beings, through no fault of their own, don't attain a personal faith in Christ in one way or another."

The panel discussion began at 9:30 p.m. Oct. 29 and was followed by the question-and-answer session that lasted until midnight. The audience was estimated at 300 by one conference official. At one point, a panelist asked for a show of hands on how many conferees were Jewish and how many were Christian. Observers said the division was approximately equal.

A woman who identified herself as a Jew from Israel and "a child of the Holocaust" criticized Baptists for misunderstanding the teachings of Jesus.

"We do not believe in Jesus as our God, but we look upon him as a great teacher -- and you distort that (view)," she said. "You do harm to the image, to the figure of Jesus Christ among Jews as a great teacher. ...

"You want to go to the Muslims? Fine. You want to try the Greek Orthodox? Fine. They won't let you, because they've had enough. Just leave us alone in Israel. Leave the churches and leave the Jews alone," the woman declared loudly during her impassioned remarks.

Another Jewish audience member with similar sentiments referenced a line of thinking from the widely known Jewish scholar Elie Wiesel: "Whenever you are in the presence of a person or group of people that say they know absolutely the truth, with no questions ... you are in the presence of evil." Then the speaker added, "I never really understood that statement until tonight."

Gerald Anderson, a United Methodist official with the Overseas Ministries Study Center, suggested the opponents of Baptists have misdirected their fury.

"Anyone who has a problem with the resolution -- their problem is not with the Southern Baptists; rather, their problem is with the New Testament," declared Anderson, who was a panelist. "Any effort to build a case which seeks to exclude the Jews from the universal Christian mission of all peoples, on the basis of the New Testament, trivializes Scripture. ... The church is missionary by its very nature."

One discussion topic addressed whether Jews should be a focal point of evangelism or whether Christians should preach the gospel without specifically focusing on particular demographic groups.

"Any kind of Christian organizations specifically set up to outreach to, to missionize, to evangelize Jews will have a chilling effect on the freedom of faith relationship between God and the Jewish people," Fisher said. "It scares them, it frightens them, it recalls the past: ... forced conversion and a number of other things."

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Anderson, who identified himself as a church historian and missiologist, disagreed. "The fact is that most Christian missionaries feel called by God and are sent to bear Christian witness among a particular people -- whether it be an ethno-linguistic group, nationality, locality, vocation or religion," Anderson noted. "I do not know of any missionaries who are commissioned to work at large or to address their witness 'to whom it may concern.' ... The fact that Southern Baptists have assigned a missionary to work among Jews is not exceptional."

Jim R. Sibley of Dallas, the HMB missionary specializing in outreach to Jews, was present during the session. Rabbi A. James Rudin, director of interreligious affairs for the American Jewish Committee, noted Sibley's attendance, but did not reference him by name. Sibley did not participate in the question-and-answer session but engaged in informal conversations with several conferees before and after the formal discussion.

Roberts noted the Home Mission Board only employs one missionary to the Jewish people out of 4,500 total. "Is that really a point of overburdening or overemphasizing Jewish evangelism to the extreme? Our department of interfaith witness actually began as a ministry of evangelism to the Jewish people in 1921 and remained solely so until the 1960s," Roberts told the group.

Southern Baptists have appointed missionaries to work with other groups as well, Roberts said. He told the conferees of the SBC's work with native Americans for 130 years and the presence of 300-400 Arab-speaking congregations within the SBC.

Panelist Robert B. Lennick, rabbi of the Greenwich (Conn.) Reform Synagogue, suggested one's doctrine of God can determine how he feels about the necessity and means of missionary activity.

"The largesse of God has room for all of us, no matter the spiritual truth equation we happen to apply to our standard. That is not relativism," said Lennick, who was workshop convener. "It is simply the acknowledgment that the God of Israel, the God of life keeps promises, creates new spiritual possibilities in different ages and in different times -- and that we are blessed by those possibilities."

But Roberts said if John 3:16 is true -- "and with all of our heart, we believe it is -- then evangelism to all in the best and truest sense of the word will be the order of the day. There will be no hidden agenda, no ulterior motive but to join the first Christians in speaking of him who loved the world and gave himself for us."

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Organization's 'Exodus 2' role:

6,000 Jews find a home in Israel

By Daniel Walker Guido

Baptist Press

10/31/96

WASHINGTON (BP)--Relocating Eastern European and Russian Jews to Israel has proven so successful the government has doubled its estimates of how many immigrants will arrive this year, the nation's minister of public affairs, Barukh Binah, said during an Oct. 29 briefing at the Israeli Embassy in Washington.

About 6,000 Eastern European and Russian Jews have emigrated to the Holy Land this year, surpassing initial estimates. The nation is prepared for a total of 12,000 to 13,000 this year, Binah said.

Binah presented an update on current events in Israel to those attending the second "Annual Day of Christian and Jewish Solidarity" in Washington, sponsored by the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews. The Chicago-based organization's "On The Wings of Eagles" outreach has helped relocate thousands of Jews to Israel in what many are calling "Exodus 2."

Among the members of the fellowship's board of directors is James T. Draper Jr., president of the Baptist Sunday School Board.

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Binah said Israel now expects to take in 325,000 new immigrants, mostly from Eastern Europe and Russia, and some from Africa, within the next five years. Several of those in attendance questioned whether that figure was too low, considering a rise in anti-Semitism in many nations throughout the world.

Binah said Israel would continue to work to provide homes, jobs and career training for all new Jewish immigrants. The nation offers each family free room and board for six months, Hebrew language lessons and job training.

Many of the former Russian Jews are highly trained and educated but often have to take other jobs once they arrive in Israel until a position opens in their career field. Binah said it is not uncommon to see an engineer working as a laborer.

Some professional musicians, several of whom have played in the world's largest concert halls, can occasionally be found providing impromptu sidewalk musical interludes for commuters and shoppers in order to keep their instruments and their playing ability sharp while they work at other jobs.

"Many, many more people want to come," Binah said. "It is a homecoming to return." Israel has used government loan guarantees from the United States and financial support from Jews and Christians worldwide to help defray the cost of building housing and absorbing new immigrants. The United States recently approved a new \$10 billion loan guarantee. Israel has never defaulted on a loan, Binah said.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has called for diversifying the nation's economy by selling off some of its government-owned corporations and by attracting more private investment capital from other nations. Both programs are proceeding, Binah reported, and many investors are beginning to make substantial investments in the Holy Land.

Although tensions sometimes flare, Israel remains one of the safest destinations in the world for tourists, Binah stated. He suggested Christians might consider making vacation plans to visit the Holy Land sometime in the near future as a way to signal their support of Israel.

Recently, some other nations and various people have called for splitting Israel's capital city, Jerusalem, into two halves, reminiscent of Berlin under communist and Allied control. Binah said Israel will never relinquish control of Jerusalem, its historic capital and the heart of its nation. Many Christian travelers are surprised to find Palestinians in control Christ's birthplace, Bethlehem, he added.

"For the past 30 years, Jerusalem has been one city, and it has prospered," Binah said. "We will not turn back the clock. All of us want peace, but not at the expense of our security."

Sporadic clashes between Israeli troops and Palestinians have not seriously eroded the nation's tourist trade. In recent years, Christian trips to Israel have surged to become more than 60 percent of the nation's influx of tourists. Israeli tourism officials say most Christians do not cancel their pilgrimages due to unrest.

Israel provided guns, including assault weapons, and training for Palestinian police, several of whom recently fired on Israeli troops in a skirmish at the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

Binah said the Palestinians used the opening of a new entrance for an Israeli tourist tunnel near the ruins of Solomon's Temple, at the Temple Mount's base, as an excuse for undermining the peace talks. Until then, Israeli troops often conducted joint police patrols with Palestinians, he said.

Several of the 15 Israeli soldiers killed at the recent Temple Mount clash were officers who tried to halt the fighting by attempting to talk to Palestinian police at the scene, Binah said. "Instead of talking, the Palestinians opted to shoot."

Nonetheless, Israel recently concluded its "Jerusalem 3000" celebrations, which marked the city's 3,000th birthday. Binah said festivals were safely conducted throughout the year in the city.

Clashes between Palestinians and Israeli authorities briefly flared up again Oct. 29, but few injuries were reported. These latest skirmishes have occurred as talks regarding the status and security of Hebron -- one of the oldest Jewish cities in Israel, with the grave sites of Abraham, Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca -- have stopped without an agreement being reached.

"There has, as you know, been a change of guard in Israel. The new government doesn't always have same policies as before," Binah said. "Prime Minister Netanyahu honors all legitimate agreements that have been signed, but demands accountability and reciprocity by both sides."

The only constant in talks with Palestinians has been their constant demand that Israel immediately vacate Hebron and agree to other Palestinian positions, Binah said.

"The proposed security system for Hebron was not satisfactory. We cannot simply leave behind our residents without protection provided by the Israel Defense Forces," Binah said.

The many Palestinian demands for Israel to part with more hard-won land in defensive war actions is a "classic case of brinkmanship on the other party's behalf. We could have signed the papers on Hebron last week. The Palestinians, however, want to reopen agreements already made," Binah said.

Arabic nations surrounding Israel, most of which remain hostile to the nation's existence, are in economic and political "disarray, having lost their superpower partner, the Soviet Union," Binah said, noting Israel is closely monitoring the Arab states' actions to identify any potential threat.

Of the surrounding 22 nations, 14 remain in some kind of conflict with Israel, having denied its right to exist, Binah said.

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**Get rid of 'spiritual earwax,'
Hunt urges, for revival to come**

By Douglas C. Estes

**Baptist Press
10/31/96**

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--Believers who listen to the Word of God yet miss the message threaten to drown out the rumblings of revival stirring throughout the country, Johnny Hunt warned during the fourth annual Sandy Creek Week Revival at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary Oct. 22-24.

"I'm here to tell you ... that based on the authority of the Word of God, many in our congregations have so much earwax, spiritually speaking, they do not have the capacity (to listen)," said Hunt, pastor of First Baptist Church Woodstock, Ga. "As a result of this earwax, we're not able to hear God."

The inability to listen to God is stemming the tide of possible revival, Hunt asserted to the Binkley Chapel audience at the seminary's Wake Forest, N.C., campus.

"Only in recent days has God so worked in my own life personally that I not only want to see revival and know we need revival, I believe we might be on the brink of revival," Hunt said. "It does grieve my heart to realize that there's not been a hundred-year period in recorded history that there's not been some type of spiritual movement and great awakening save (except) the 20th century."

The seminary's annual revival meeting is named after a church near Greensboro, N.C., where revival broke out in the mid-1700s under the preaching of Shubal Stearns. That revival spurred the founding of more than 40 churches along the eastern seaboard.

During the revival services led by Hunt, a 1983 alumnus of Southeastern, more than a dozen people made professions of faith, including three seminary students. More than 100 people rededicated their lives to Christ.

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"I believe that the church needs to get cleaned up, confessed up, dressed up, and get into the presence of God and begin to cry out before Almighty God in weeping and fasting and mourning, and brokenness, and maybe once again God would come and rend the heavens," Hunt exclaimed.

During the morning and evening services, Hunt was in his characteristic intense style, often pounding the pulpit and with hands trembling leaning over the pulpit, exhorting believers to seek God's face and serve him without reservation, chastising those who remain in the "wilderness" on their walk with God.

"The average believer will stay in the wilderness, give testimony of God's provisions, and will never know God's best for them," Hunt said. "Until God shakes us out of the lethargy of our comfort zone, we'll never go where we've not been before. We are not making the impact on this world ... that we should make, and the reason is that we are in our comfort zones, and we're not willing to go into those uncharted waters."

Alluding to the crossing of the Jordan in the Old Testament, Hunt insisted ministers be the first to dive in those waters. "I've never known the waters to divide in miraculous power in churches until the leaders were willing to put their foot in the river of impossibility."

Many pastors in Southern Baptist churches today will not lead the church because they are practicing universalists, secretly hoping all will enter the gates of heaven, Hunt explained. "If this is true, the cross at Calvary was a cruel joke, and pastors preach in vain."

The world believed Noah preached in vain, Hunt said, while adding he longed for the ability to preach as Noah preached to his generation. "I'll guarantee you that when he (Noah) went to the ark to preach in those last seven days, his message was not 'I'm OK, you're OK,'" Hunt said. A pastor who preaches as Noah preached "will come with fire in our eyes and an urgency in our hearts to get that message out."

Hunt, who serves as chaplain at a local race track near Woodstock, said believers must go where the lost are and not simply expect the lost to come to them. "I believe if Jesus were in town on Saturday night, He'd not be looking for a camp meeting, he'd be over at the race track with those sinners that needed his cleansing blood and he'd be ministering to them there."

Christians need to return to the point in their lives when they accepted Christ as their Savior in order to reignite their smoldering coals into a burning flame of commitment and devotion to Christ, Hunt said.

"The night I came to Jesus Christ as my personal Savior, I had never owned a Bible, I had never had a Bible given to me; I was 20 years old. And I had never read a verse out of the Bible. I knew none of the songs, I knew none of the stories, but I'll tell you what I did know that night: I knew that I had been radically changed."

A radical change is all that assures believers of total victory, Hunt said.

"Well, one day when we step on shore and find heaven, breathe the new air and ... reach out and touch a hand and find it's God's, (we'll) wake up in glory and find it's home."

Until then, Hunt said, believers must be totally sold out to God and his will for their lives if this country is to experience another spiritual awakening before the turn of the century.

Recounting an experience he had sharing the gospel with Ted Turner, owner of CNN and the Atlanta Braves, Hunt said Turner's rejection of the gospel should be a motivation to professing believers.

Quoting Turner's response to the invitation of the gospel, Hunt said: "If I ever begin to believe what you believe, I will go to any extreme to get that word to the whole world."

"And that ought to be the heartbeat of every believer, that we ought to get after it," Hunt said.

Challenging preachers and laypeople alike, Hunt said God needs believers' availability more than their abilities.

"Too many of us think that God has called us to be manufacturers when he has really called us to be distributors," said Hunt, underscoring the believers privilege to share the riches of God. "We're channels of God's resources, not reservoirs."

In order to experience lasting revival, Hunt said, the church must adopt a forgiving spirit.

"We need to be constantly reminding our people that there is a divine obligation; no one can go to heaven without the righteousness that is offered through the forgiveness of the cross that is made possible through God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ."

Forgiveness plays a vital role in hearing the Word of God and seeking revival, said Hunt.

"Forgiveness is the act of setting someone free from an obligation to you that's the result of a wrong done against you.

"When I got saved on Jan. 7, 1973, God not only forgave my past, God forgave my present, and just for the record's sake, the Lord Jesus Christ has already forgiven my future," said Hunt, an admitted teenage alcoholic and high school dropout.

"An individual that's never been forgiven by God, or doesn't understand what it means to be forgiven," often cannot forgive, Hunt said. "But if you ever just begin to be overwhelmed by the marvelous forgiveness of Almighty God, you will have no trouble forgiving anyone."

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**'People Sharing Jesus' weekends
specialize in equipping laypeople**

By Susan J. McDaniel

**Baptist Press
10/31/96**

GERMANTOWN, Tenn. (BP)--Bill Darnell accepted Christ when he was 16, and the first thing he did was win his best friend to Christ.

Then he and his friend won most of their friends to Christ. In the process, God gave Darnell a motivation to win people to Christ but not to do it alone.

After graduating from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1970, Darnell served as minister of evangelism and counseling at First Baptist Church, Pasadena, Texas. His pastor was Darrell Robinson, now Southern Baptist Home Mission Board vice president for evangelism and author of the book, "People Sharing Jesus."

"Through Darrell's leadership, I learned how to make evangelism an ongoing strategy of the church," Darnell recounted. "He had 300 people trained to go out and share Jesus with the community, and they did it all the time. I saw how it could work."

Darnell subsequently became pastor of First Baptist Church, Weatherford, Texas, and adopted the People Sharing Jesus approach before any of the material was written.

"We literally knocked on every door in Weatherford in two years and had people saved every Sunday," Darnell said. "We experienced an incredible moving of God because of obedience to those principles. Then I got the vision of beginning People Sharing Jesus Witness Weekends in other churches and taking laypeople with me."

Describing himself as a "full-time evangelistic equipper," Darnell has dedicated his life to training laypeople to share Christ effectively.

Through People Sharing Jesus Ministries, Inc., Darnell and a team of laypeople conduct People Sharing Jesus (PSJ) Witness Weekends in churches. A PSJ Witness Weekend begins on Friday evening. "I do a little teaching and then the laypeople come up," Darnell said. "I always take six to eight laypeople with me. All of them actively share their faith. They talk about how they share Christ on the job, how God blesses and how people respond." The weekend continues with more teaching and lay testimonies on Saturday morning, followed by a witnessing experience in the afternoon.

At a PSJ Witness Weekend at First Baptist Church, Palacios, Texas, for example, 27 people prayed to receive Christ Saturday afternoon. When Darnell and his team left, they left behind an group of equipped laypeople to work with the pastor.

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"The key is laypeople," Darnell stated. "We preachers can never do it. God doesn't even call us to do it by ourselves. God calls us to equip the church to do it. I'm afraid we equip the church to do a lot of stuff that has very little to do with what Jesus asked us to do. That grieves me. For the remaining years of my life, I'm going to train as many laypeople as I can to effectively share Jesus."

When a church schedules a PSJ Witness Weekend, Darnell asks the pastor to lead the church in prayer for six weeks before the weekend. They pray for laborers, for people in the community who need Christ and for the church to saturate the church and community with prayer. When the weekend is over, Darnell aims for the church to have everything it needs to continue the process.

"We leave the pastor with the challenge to keep the church on a continuing strategy," Darnell said. "We encourage the pastor to lead 13 worship services using the Home Mission Board's People Sharing Jesus material."

The People Sharing Jesus process is designed as a user-friendly approach to personal evangelism. An assortment of products allows the process to be adapted to a variety of learning environments -- flexibility which enables the teaching to be as condensed or in-depth as desired.

"We also challenge the pastor to establish what we call a People Sharing Jesus Witness Day one Sunday a month. The whole church stays for lunch after morning worship, the pastor issues an evangelism challenge after lunch, and the people go out into the community that afternoon, sharing Jesus door-to-door."

Kirby Woods Baptist Church in Memphis, Tenn., where Darnell served as pastor from 1981-86, incorporated PSJ Witness Days each month for five years. They averaged having three people pray to receive Christ on every witness day. "After a PSJ Witness Weekend, we ask the pastor to commit to having a PSJ Witness Day for 12 months and hope that he will do it for the rest of his ministry," Darnell noted.

A PSJ Witness Weekend at Level Park Baptist Church, Battle Creek, Mich., was attended by 25 people, and six people were saved during the Saturday afternoon witnessing experience. Pastor Ron Kinzel started having a PSJ Witness Day every month, and they continue to see people won to Christ.

In Houston, 70 members participated in a PSJ Witness Weekend at Memorial Baptist Church. When the weekend was over, 76 people had prayed to receive Christ.

"The People Sharing Jesus Witness Weekend was one of the strongest revival and evangelism events we've ever had," pastor Jay Gross said. "The impact on the church family was as strong as the impact on the lost. And the results are continuing to last. Our people are excited about witnessing." His church spent the first six weeks after the PSJ Witness Weekend discipling those won to Christ and following up on contacts. Gross has already planned another PSJ Witness Weekend for early 1997.

PSJ Witness Weekends are designed with the flexibility to meet the needs of each church. The church is asked to house the laypeople who accompany Darnell, and a love offering is taken to assist with travel expenses.

"We want to be a service organization," Darnell said. "We're there to help and train and equip. What we're trying to do is develop a lifestyle strategy that fulfills what Christ commissioned the church to do. That's the only way that we could ever fulfill the Great Commission."

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McDaniel is assistant editor in the HMB evangelism division. To order Robinson's book, "People Sharing Jesus," or other PSJ materials, call HMB customer services at 1-800-634-2462 or fax, 1-800-253-2823. To schedule a People Sharing Jesus Witness Weekend, call or write Bill Darnell at People Sharing Jesus Ministries, Inc., P.O. Box 38217, Germantown, TN 38183-0217; phone, (901) 853-6343.

**Baptists in 4 Asian countries
report religion freedom concerns**

By Wendy Ryan

WASHINGTON (BP)--Baptist leaders in Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Vietnam and Burma (Myanmar) are asking Baptists around the world to pray for and speak out on their behalf on urgent religious freedom issues in their countries.

In Sri Lanka, while the constitution currently guarantees religious freedom, Baptists along with other Christians are fighting against proposed changes in a new draft constitution to stop conversion to Christianity, control the building of new churches and give Buddhism, the majority religion, special protection and control.

Sixty-seven percent of Sri Lankans are Buddhist.

According to leaders of the Evangelical Alliance and the Christian Consultation of Sri Lanka, an organized campaign has been waged over the past five years to pressure the government to enact legislation to stop conversion. "The claim is that this is a Sinhala Buddhist country and other religions have no place," said one Christian leader.

Much of the opposition comes because many people are being converted to Jesus Christ and Christian churches are being accused of "unethical conversion," the Christian leaders report.

Christian ministries that target the poor and underprivileged also are being attacked because they are seen as buying conversions.

The opposition has been especially severe among people in rural villages, where one pastor has been killed, others assaulted and more than 18 churches burned.

Sri Lankan Christians leaders said much of this anti-Christian and anti-conversion sentiment is stirred up by the media which gives the impression that a religious crisis is imminent and the laws to curb conversion are the only thing that will head it off.

Leaders of the consultation and alliance have written to the government with their concerns and recently met with government representatives, but the leaders said there is strong pressure on the government to move forward with the changes.

"We are not anti-government," one Christian leaders said. "We just want religious freedom."

In Indonesia, a cry for religious freedom is being voiced by Ingrid Subagyo, president of the Women's Fellowship of the Union of Indonesian Baptist Churches and wife of the general secretary.

"Evangelism in Indonesia," she said, "is not allowed to be done freely anymore."

Subagyo, who reported at the meeting of the Asian Baptist Women in Sri Lanka, Oct. 2-8, said when Indonesia became independent from the Dutch in 1945 the government accepted Islam, Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism and Buddhism as "legal" groups.

During the years of communist rule in Indonesia, Christian churches grew rapidly since they were free to evangelize, while the attention of the Muslims, who comprise 90 percent of the population, was turned to fighting communism. Once communist rule ended in 1967, key Muslim leaders turned their attention to Christians.

Subagyo said Christians are accused of buying conversions and Christians fear that Indonesia will become a Muslim country.

In order to maintain stability, the government, influenced by Muslim political leaders, has established rules to make spreading tracts and door-to-door evangelism illegal.

In the past year, there have been numerous attacks on churches in east Java, especially on Pentecostal, Catholic and other mainline churches, and while no Baptist churches have been harmed, their evangelistic work is very much affected.

In Vietnam, meanwhile, believers also must be very careful, and churches must be registered.

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In an Oct. 13 visit, Tony Cupit, Baptist World Alliance director for evangelism, education, study and research, along with Bill Hogue, BWA vice president, Young Shim Chang, president of the Asian Baptist Women's Union, and Edwin Lopez, general secretary of the Asian Baptist Federation, worshiped with more than 300 Vietnamese believers at Grace Baptist Church Baptist Church in Ho Chi Minh City.

"We could not speak in the service," Cupit said. "Foreigners never speak in church."

In spite of the restrictions, pastor Lee Kwok Chanh sent a letter especially to the Vietnamese Baptist Churches Fellowship in the United States and leaders of the Southern Baptist Home and Foreign Mission boards pleading with them to help send workers to the church.

"Now I am sixty years old and feel my strength faint," Chanh told the Baptist visitors. "I am praying to God who will call ministers and laymen to return to Vietnam to serve the Lord among millions of our beloved countrymen's souls and serve our wounded country after many years of war."

He described how the growing work among Baptists was stopped by the communist government in 1975 when all the other Baptist churches except the one in Ho Chi Minh City remained. The training of Christian workers was also limited, and with the exodus of many church members to the United States, the Baptist work declined. Grace Baptist Church, however, has grown from 50-60 members to more than 500 today.

There are two new areas of Baptist work led by two Christian workers, but the pastor noted, "The training of leaders and laymen is limited."

In spite of their restrictions, Cupit reported there are about 16 major house groups and many smaller ones in Vietnam.

While Baptists in Myanmar (Burma) have religious freedom, a report has come to the BWA that Baptists from the Karen tribal groups are being forced by government troops to build a Buddhist monastery in a village near the Thailand border.

The Oct. 15 report from the Karen Refugee Committee said soldiers forced the Baptists at gunpoint to help build the monastery and then worship the brick they laid down.

For years, the Karens have been involved in a border war of independence with the government.

The BWA will make a human rights visit to Karen refugee camps in north Thailand from Dec. 1-4. The BWA delegation will include General Secretary Denton Lotz; Cupit; Lopez; and Human Rights Study Commission chair Thorwald Lorenzen.

"On Dec. 8, BWA Human Rights Day, the BWA asks all Baptists to join hands and prayers together to work for human rights and secure religious liberty for all peoples in Jesus' name," Lotz said. "It is time for Christians and men and women of good will of every religious tradition to stand up for human rights."

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Montana Baptists hike budget, re-elect slate of officers

**Baptist Press
10/31/96**

MISSOULA, Mont. (BP)--Montana Baptist messengers increased their 1997 budget by 5.3 percent and re-elected the past year's officers during their annual meeting Oct. 9-10 at Trinity Baptist Church, Missoula.

The fellowship's 1997 budget will be \$1,054,407, with the increased \$53,038 equaling 5.3 percent. The budget includes an anticipated \$66,977 in Cooperative Program giving from the state's 130 churches and missions, with 22 percent to be used in support of Southern Baptist national and international ministries. The percentage is the same as the current year.

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Re-elected as fellowship officers were president, Jim Shaver, pastor of First Southern Baptist Church, Great Falls; vice president, John Hunn, pastor of Rimrock Baptist Church, Billings; and recording secretary Bert Murphy, retired Montana pastor and member of First Southern Baptist Church, Great Falls.

Messengers adopted a resolution "that we uplift our state fellowship and each other in prayer and encouragement as we continue our progress toward the goal of 2X2000," of 2 percent of Montana's population active in Baptist churches by the year 2000. The resolution also affirmed "that we be accountable to each other and our state staff by providing the necessary information to assess our progress toward 2X2000."

A total of 106 messengers attended this year's meeting, representing an estimated 12,500 Southern Baptists in Montana.

Next year's annual meeting will be Oct. 8-9 at Rimrock Baptist Church in Billings.

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Tensions ease at manufacturer after boss meets Jesus Christ

By Ken Walker

**Baptist Press
10/31/96**

LEXINGTON, Ky. (BP)--Most of the automotive products manufactured by MetalForm Industries can't be seen -- such as seat and frame supports and metal bars to protect passengers during side collisions.

But the peace that fills general manager Kevin Stuban is so noticeable it led several employees to accept Christ as Savior or rededicate their lives.

Among them is his younger brother, Dale. "To this day my dad says, 'I don't know where you're getting this patience from, but one of these days you're going to explode,'" said Stuban, who turned to Christ in the spring of 1994.

"I tell him it's my relationship with the Lord. I pray for this patience every day. It's not a gift God built into me."

Nor is it one he acquired growing up around the automotive industry. His father's Michigan plant helps supply Detroit's auto makers and provided his first part-time employment at 15.

He joined the company after high school and later worked for two competitors before rejoining MetalForm. One lesson he picked up from his travels was an industry standard.

"In the automotive industry the intimidating things I learned, like verbal abuse, raising your voice and demanding things, were considered OK," Stuban said. "The words 'ethical' or 'moral' never came up."

That is, until he moved to central Kentucky to manage MetalForm's new division. It opened in mid-1993 to service the growing number of automotive manufacturers in the South. Although the Lexington operation began with just six employees, in a couple months everyone's nerves were on edge, Stuban said.

It got so bad his brother and a longtime employee who had also moved from Michigan confronted him one day.

"They said, 'Kevin, do you really like your job? Do you really like your life?'" Stuban recalled. "They said, 'Yes, the plant is doing well, but look at the conditions we're doing it under. People are stressed out and are afraid to make a mistake.'"

Stuban said he realized his perfectionist tendencies had gone too far. He also saw his relationship with his brother reflecting the animosity that once drove him and his father apart.

As the year progressed and business increased, it became apparent they needed to add a second shift, Stuban recounted. But that proved more unsettling: "We knew that storm was coming, but I didn't have any peace with myself. I was lost."

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Stuban had attended church as a child and was searching for spiritual fulfillment. He and his wife, Kathy, also wanted to provide some biblical training for their children. However, their visits to a string of congregations proved fruitless. Nothing "clicked" until some neighbors invited them to the Church at Andover.

Formerly a mission of Lexington's Trinity Baptist Church, the contemporary, suburban assembly featured exuberant praise and worship music. Kathy visited first and excitedly urged, "You've got to go!"

"I went and it blew me away," Stuban said. "The Lord definitely spoke to me, woke me up and said, 'This is where you need to be.'"

It took several Sundays before he saw that his quest for peace would only come through a relationship with Jesus. When pastor Mike Osborne invited those who wanted to commit their lives to Christ to walk forward, Stuban felt too shy.

So he prayed in his pew, asking God to forgive him for all the time he had spent away from his family and for all the times he had ignored him as Lord.

"I will let you have complete control of myself and my life," he said. "I want you to give me inner peace with myself. Jesus, I invite you into my life."

He and Kathy were both baptized the next month and the couple immediately committed to attend a weekly fellowship group.

Their participation has continued to grow. Stuban is a trustee and plays guitar in the praise band, while Kathy is treasurer of the church's day-care center. The Stubans currently are teaching a Wednesday night class in building marital intimacy.

"They did what we wish more people would do and that's plug in," Osborne said. "They plugged in through a small group, services and a lot of ways. So they grew."

One of the reasons for their growth is the strong biblical message preached at the church, according to Osborne. Stuban especially appreciated that during his early days as a Christian.

"It was like all the messages were personally written for my situations," he said. "Almost every one of them applied to work or home on a weekly basis. I'm very fortunate because I don't think a lot of people in their walk have a chance to see that."

Another important principle he learned was that his old management style didn't line up with the Bible. "The Management Methods of Jesus" by Bob Briner sits in his office. But most changes MetalForm adopted the past 18 months originated with God's Word, he said.

The opportunities Stuban sees to win others to Christ come from the same source.

"If there are more people out in this plant who God wants me to minister to, I'm going to have the opportunity," he said.

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**Missionary finds new ministry
by fielding queries to RTVC**

By C.C. Risenhoover

**Baptist Press
10/31/96**

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--When Joy Neal was growing up in Beaumont, Texas, and felt God's call to foreign missions, she had no way of knowing the day would come when her ability to communicate God's love would work in tandem with technology to impact the lives of different people throughout the world.

Neal, who had been a foreign missionary prior to joining the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission staff in 1993 as a correspondence counselor, said God never "uncalled" her as a missionary. God simply changed her ministry location and, in her new role as a media missionary, has enabled her to use mass media in an individualized, person-to-person way.

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For example, several months ago a woman from South Africa heard a broadcast of the RTVC-produced program, "The Baptist Hour," and wrote the agency about a personal problem. Neal responded and gave her the name and address of a missionary in her area. Recently Neal received another letter from the woman, who had made contact with the missionary.

She wrote: "When I wrote you I had given up. I thought the last thing I could do was to ask for help, and if it did not work that would be the end. You will never know how much you have helped me, to have confidence and to take one day at a time -- just knowing there is someone who cares."

"Responses like that keep me going," said Neal. "It illustrates how our ministry links up with the ministry of our overseas missionaries, and how it sometimes gives hope when a person may be at the end of the rope.

"It's also an example of how we partner with other denominational agencies and churches in proclaiming the gospel. In the U.S., especially, we are always looking for opportunities to connect the people who contact us through any channel with a local church. And when someone from abroad contacts us, we try to connect them with a missionary."

One of the many letters to an RTVC-produced program that made an impression on Neal was from a woman in New York seeking help with a parenting problem.

"When we respond, as I did to this woman's problem, we always include something spiritual," Neal said. "Several months later this woman wrote again, told me she was Jewish, that she was reading the Bible and had a strange urge to respond to Christ.

"I responded, encouraged her and sent her additional spiritual material. A couple of months later she wrote me, said she had received Christ and had never been so happy."

Following graduation from South Park High School in Beaumont, Neal went to Baylor University in Waco, Texas, and earned a degree in English and secondary education. She then served four years on the staff of First Baptist Church, Klamath Falls, Ore., before becoming a missionary journeyman to central Africa.

"I sensed the call to foreign missions when a teenager at Calvary Baptist Church in Beaumont," she said. "The call was not to a specific location, but when I went through the journeyman process the job that fit my skills was in Africa.

"I never really wanted to go to Africa, but once there God gave me such a love for the African people that I fell in love with the continent. He called and his leading led to a lifelong fascination with the people and continent."

Neal was assigned to the Foreign Mission Board's Bible correspondence school in Zambia, which at the time, she said, was the only mission in Africa with that outreach. While there she worked on revision of the curriculum.

In the latter stage of her journeyman term she was sent to Kenya, where she helped lay the groundwork for a Bible correspondence school there. She actually wrote the manual for the school, revised it years later while assigned to an FMB area office and still later revised it again when serving as a career missionary in Africa. The manual was used as a standard for Bible correspondence schools in Africa and as a resource for Bible correspondence schools in other countries.

Prior to that, however, and following her stint in the journeyman program, Neal returned to the United States and enrolled in Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas. After receiving a master's degree in religious education, she rejoined the FMB. For the next 18 years she was involved in the agency's African ministry, serving eight years as a career missionary.

While on furlough in 1987 she began work on a doctorate at Southwestern and returned in 1991 to continue work on the degree. She received a Ph.D. from the seminary in 1995.

"At the RTVC, as in Africa, I see myself as a teacher. As a correspondence counselor, I'm helping enable people to find the full potential the Lord has for them."

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Neal said the people who call or write to the RTVC -- or contact the agency via the Internet -- come from all walks of life and have varied spiritual needs, Neal said.

"There are just so many dimensions to this ministry. Those of us in correspondence counseling are not therapists, but we are people who care. And many of those who call, write or contact us on the Internet need someone who cares. Like all of us, of course, each individual who contacts us needs the Lord's help more than ours. And that's our first priority, to provide that individual the insight to seek a life with Christ that enables him or her to take control of their life.

"What we do is respond as effectively as we can to perceived need, earn the right to give spiritual encouragement by developing a bond of trust, then share the love of Christ at every opportunity."

Neal's commitment to missions does not end with her work for the RTVC. She is a member of Rosen Heights Baptist Church in Fort Worth, where she teaches an adult Sunday school class, serves as missions education coordinator and directs the discipleship program. The church lends itself to her missionary background. It is in a transitional area where she has opportunity to minister to people of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

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**Preacher's kid finds calling
in SBC's radio ministries**

By C.C. Risenhoover

**Baptist Press
10/31/96**

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Growing up a preacher's kid, the last thing on his mind when he graduated from college was becoming involved in a ministry.

Kirk Teegarden, director of radio programming for the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission since 1986, recalled, "Though I had grown up in a church, I had no intention of going into church work or religious broadcasting. I didn't even know what the RTVC did or what I was getting into when I applied for a job at the agency. I just wanted a job. Now I know it was God telling me what I should be doing for the rest of my life.

"Some might call my going to work for the RTVC somewhat of a fluke. And I might have agreed with them at first. But it didn't take me long to understand that God was urging me into a media ministry for my own benefit and, at the same time, providing me work that would benefit others. It was a call to ministry."

When Teegarden graduated from Texas Christian University with a communications degree in 1972, he said he planned to go into television.

"I thought I wanted to produce commercials," he said. "The only problem was that TV jobs were scarce. So Dad suggested I contact the RTVC. I was offered a job as associate producer of 'Powerline' the same day I applied."

Teegarden was hired by Ed Malone, vice president of radio services. Years earlier, Teegarden's father had baptized Malone.

"Powerline," a weekly 30-minute radio program produced by the RTVC, has been aired by secular stations since 1969. When Teegarden began working on the program, it featured a "Top 40" format with a blend of Christian messages. The program still features contemporary music with a blend of Christian messages.

"In the '70s, Powerline was on more than 1,500 stations," said Teegarden, who has been producer of the program since 1976. "Reaching people for Christ has always been the purpose of Powerline. The purpose of our entire radio ministry has been to reach people who are not going to church through as many program formats as possible. Our preaching program has always been 'The Baptist Hour.' The RTVC added Powerline and 'Country Crossroads' to the format mix in 1969 as a means of reaching even more people."

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Although the music is different, as the name implies, the Country Crossroads format, like Powerline, blends music with Christian messages. Currently the most popular of the RTVC-produced radio programs, Country Crossroads is carried on 850 stations in the United States.

Other weekly radio programs produced by the RTVC are "MasterControl," a magazine-type format with Christian messages, and "On Track," a contemporary Christian music format.

RTVC-produced radio programs are carried on more than 2,400 stations in the United States and, through the efforts of Southern Baptist missionaries, are broadcast by many stations in countries where they serve. Programs carried by Armed Forces Radio and short wave also reach numerous countries throughout the world.

"With Powerline, we provide the same sound as the station carrying the program and blend in the Christian message," Teegarden said.

The producer attributes the popularity of Powerline over the years to three factors.

"We play hit music, provide the highest quality production possible and emphasize solid morals within the framework of a Christian message," he said. "We get numerous letters thanking us for the way we present the gospel within the format of the program. Some people even thank us for not asking for money, which they have grown to expect from many religious programs. The truth is that people throughout this country are hungry for the type of clean, moral entertainment we present through Powerline.

"We're all in the business of evangelism, and I believe the radio ministry is one of the most effective forms of evangelism for Southern Baptists. It reaches people who are lost, people who are hurting, people who are having their faith tested in the work place. Our programs reach people who might not listen to or watch any other type religious programming."

While Teegarden is proud of the quality and purpose of RTVC-produced radio programs, he is not one who thinks the RTVC's radio division should rest on its laurels.

"Ed (Malone) is always challenging us to find new and innovative ways in which to present the gospel through radio," Teegarden said. "We've done a lot over the years, but I think we have the capability to do much more. And I think we're going to be given that opportunity through the North American Mission Board."

In June 1997, the RTVC, Home Mission Board and Brotherhood Commission will be merged to become NAMB under the restructuring of the Southern Baptist Convention, begun in 1995 and called "Covenant for a New Century."

"You can present a lot of gospel with 30- and 60-second spots on radio," Teegarden said. "And there's no religious group in the world who can present the gospel with more clarity and passion than Southern Baptists.

"The future is really open for listeners to interact with our programs through the Internet. And the cost of radio is so much less prohibitive than TV. But I think it is vitally important that Southern Baptists use radio and television in tandem to present the gospel of Jesus Christ."

"Kirk is a creative doer," said Malone. "He's never content with the status quo, especially when it comes to presenting the gospel. He has boundless energy and is always anxious to get things done."

Teegarden's propensity for getting things done also is reflected in his personal life. In 1972 a college friend set him up with a blind date. On that date he asked the girl to marry him.

"She thought I was crazy, but there wasn't any reason to wait," he said. "I knew Carol was the one."

They married in 1973 and have two sons, Matthew, 20, and Blake, 17.

"There's a hurting world out there," Teegarden said. "We may not reach them all with radio, but we can reach millions."

**Estate donation launches
R.G. Lee center at Union**

By Keith Currey

JACKSON, Tenn. (BP)--A gift from the family of legendary Tennessee pastor Robert Greene "R.G." Lee to Union University has laid the groundwork for the establishment of the R.G. Lee Center for Christian Ministry on the Jackson, Tenn., campus.

In 1974, Lee, a Union trustee for 14 years, left a major portion of his personal library to establish the R.G. Lee Memorial Library at Union. Recently, Lee's family contributed the remainder of his collection -- including books, portraits, sermon manuscripts and Lee's trademark white suit -- to the university. Union also has acquired literary rights to Lee's body of work, with royalties from future publication of Lee's sermons and writings benefitting the R.G. Lee Center.

"We are grateful for this marvelous gift to Union University and the symbolic commitment involved with the gift," Union President David S. Dockery said. "Dr. Lee was one of the most influential pastors of the 20th century, and his strong relationship with Union will impact the work of the university and area churches for many years to come."

Lee's personal effects will form the centerpiece of the R.G. Lee Center, projected to open in the fall of 1997. The center would serve area churches through three continuing education emphases:

- a Christian education center designed to host conferences and seminars for updating and retooling church leadership.

- off-campus extension programs to equip bivocational pastors with formal biblical training leading to a diploma or associate's degree in Christian studies.

- similar training in church leadership for laypeople, also planned through conferences and extension centers.

"The R.G. Lee Center will underscore Union's commitment to finding new ways to serve the local church," Dockery said. "The center's efforts will enhance countless teaching, preaching and counseling ministries by providing quality training in both long- and short-term contexts. I think the center has outstanding potential to benefit the west Tennessee church community."

Lee, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis from 1927-60, became a legend in Southern Baptist life during his 60-plus years in the ministry. He preached more than 8,000 sermons in all 50 states and many foreign countries, including 1,275 presentations of his historic message "Payday Someday." Heralded as a "pulpit giant" and "the king of preachers," Lee authored more than 50 books of sermons and served multiple terms as president of both the Tennessee and Southern Baptist Conventions.

Union, a 2,000-student four-year liberal arts university founded in 1823, is the oldest university related to the Southern Baptist Convention.

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Currey is assistant director of public relations at Union.

**17-year-old's music voices
message of sexual purity**

By Tim Ellsworth

**Baptist Press
10/31/96**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--Jaci Velasquez doesn't have a boyfriend. In fact, she doesn't even date. But she's given her wedding a whole lot of thought.

"I just plan my wedding all the time," Jaci says. "Probably about 20 times a month."

Her ideas about dresses, flowers and colors for her wedding are constantly changing. That's OK, since Jaci's only 17 years old. But one thing isn't changing about the young recording artist's plans -- she's going to remain sexually pure until that time.

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"I have a friend in Michigan who's 14, and she and her baby both have full-blown AIDS," Jaci says. "You look at that and it makes you realize there's something definitely wrong. It could have been avoided. It didn't have to happen."

That tragedy prompted Jaci to write "I Promise," one of the songs on her debut album on Myrrh Records, "A Heavenly Place." It's a song about her pledge to God to remain sexually pure for her husband.

The chorus says, "So I promise to be true to You/To live my life in purity/As unto You/Waiting for the day/When I hear You say/Here is the one I have created/Just for you."

"I hope to communicate that saving yourself for marriage is not a negative thing," Jaci says. "And it's a lot more romantic, anyway ... when you do save yourself for that one person God has for you. To say, 'Here I am. I belong to you now.'"

But sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies are not the only reason to save sex for marriage. "Look at the Bible," Jaci says. "Sure, no bad things may happen, but you know, and God knows."

Jaci is getting a larger audience for her message all the time. Her first two singles, "If This World" and "Flower in the Rain," each rocketed to number one.

Right now, she's touring in England and Europe. Because she has a lot of people watching her, "I want to stay above reproach and not give anybody a reason to think of me in a bad way," she says.

But her success in Christian music doesn't change who she is, and she wants her fellow teenagers to know that. "It takes a lot," Jaci says about facing sexual temptation. "I struggle with it every day. It's normal. ...

"I'm there just to encourage people my age," she says. "To say, 'I put up with the same things you do. But we can make a difference if we do stand together.'"

Jaci comes from a strong Christian home. The youngest of five children, she says having her family's support helps in the battle for sexual purity.

But, Jaci says, even if her family wasn't behind her, she bears the responsibility for the way she lives her life. "You're the one who decides. You make the choice," she says.

She knows that people mess up. She knows there are those who haven't kept themselves pure for marriage. But she also knows there's a God who cares.

"He is forgiving," Jaci says. "If you've already messed up, that's OK. God forgives and forgets. But you still have to try."

That's what she's doing -- trying, trusting, waiting. As her song says, "Until then, O Lord/I will be content/Knowing that true love will come someday/It will only come from You."

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