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November 24, 1986

Couple Will Separate  
On Seminary Commencement Day

F-SWBTS 86-175

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)—Seminary graduation has finally driven one couple to separation.

John and Karen Rambo both will receive seminary degrees Dec. 19, but they will walk across platforms miles apart.

Karen will receive the masters degree in Christian education from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.; John will receive the master of divinity degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas.

But this house divided isn't in trouble. The two began seminary studies at the different schools while single. Karen says they corresponded during the one and one-half years she was at Southern and he was at Southwestern.

The letters started out as a way to compare the two seminaries. "But over a period of time we realized we were in love," she explains.

They married in May and spent the summer as church planters. The hours John gained through the summer enabled him to graduate, but he missed the July commencement.

John now is living with Karen in Louisville while she finishes at Southern. He will return to Southwestern in December for graduation ceremonies.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: The following article originally appeared in the Raleigh, N.C., News and Observer. The author is religion writer for that paper.

Theologian Links Catholic,  
Southern Baptist Challenges

By Diane Winston

M-CO  
Baptist Press  
11/24/86

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)—Similar challenges are confronting the Roman Catholic and Southern Baptist churches, according to Harvard theologian Harvey G. Cox.

"The same issues are underlying both groups," Cox, a Baptist who attracted public attention 21 years ago with the publication of his book *The Secular City*, said.

"Are Southern Baptists going to retreat into a religious and intellectual ghetto like some people at the top would like the Roman Catholic church to do?"

During two decades at Harvard Divinity School in Cambridge, Mass., Cox has explored religious experiences ranging from Zen meditation to Latin American Catholicism. He has written several best-sellers about his findings.

Cox visited Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., to deliver two lectures on "Baptists and Liberation Theology." Between sessions, he discussed similar challenges he thinks are facing Catholics and Baptists.

For the past seven years, Southern Baptists have been divided by a conflict between moderates and fundamentalists over whether the Bible is without error in all matters. Recently, Roman Catholics have been stirred by papal attempts to set a uniform standard for the church by silencing dissenters.

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"Take inerrancy," Cox said. "That may function like papal authority. It's not so much the substance of papal authority at issue but who's in control, who's running things.

"It's a control issue masked under an authority issue masked under a theology issue. Catholics have a powerful symbol in the pope. Baptists have a very powerful symbol in the Bible."

Cox said the bottom line was not who controlled the denomination, but what kind of church resulted.

"It's not a question of winning or losing but what kind of church will Southern Baptists be 25 years from now," he said. "Will it be a church with a national and international mission that can find its way into a variety of cultures and social patterns? Or will it be an even more regional church with intellectual and cultural assumptions that are highly provincial?"

Cox said that liberation theology—a movement among Catholics in Latin America to make religion relevant to their daily life—had much in common with Baptist tradition.

"It's Bible-centered, there's lay leadership and it's very focused on the gospel of Jesus Christ," said Cox, describing liberation theology. "There's a number of basic similarities between what the Bible says and what base communities of the liberation theology movement say."

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Cox Links Baptist Ideals,  
Liberation Theology

N-SEBTS

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11/24/86

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)—Liberation theology and basic Baptist beliefs have a lot in common, theologian Harvey G. Cox said in a series of lectures at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C.

Cox, for two decades professor of divinity at Harvard University Divinity School in Cambridge, Mass., was the 1986 Carver-Barnes Lecturer at Southeastern.

In stating the case for liberation theology, Cox, himself a Baptist, predicted: "If liberation theology comes to North America, it will be done by the Baptists. Baptists proclaim liberty and rediscovery of the full gospel, the gospel that applies to both personal and social arenas of life in both religious and secular ways."

Cox took on critics and discounted popular misconceptions about liberation theology. "It is not," he said, "a liberal theological movement, class hatred or violence, the marriage of Christianity and Marxism, reductionism or the protestantizing of the Roman Catholic Church."

"Liberation theology is the reclaiming of the full gospel in all spheres of life to bring liberation from all bondage."

He noted liberation theology has gained its major impetus in Third World countries where, since 1976, the majority of Christians now live.

Several factors contributed to the success of liberation theology movements, Cox said. Foremost was the focus on Christ as the key element of faith. Also, congregations with capable lay leadership and the mushrooming of tens of thousands of Bible-centered study groups, or base communities, in homes are key elements.

"Liberation theology primarily has been a movement within the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America," said Cox. "That movement can be directly traced to the election of Pope John XXIII and the Second Vatican Council in 1961. The Catholic Church under Pope John XXIII received its official mandate to become 'The Church of the Poor.' For the first time, the Catholic Church had an open exchange of ideas and development of friendships among Roman Catholic leadership worldwide as they met in small groups at the Second Vatican Council. That sowed the seed for today's liberation theology movements.

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Cox noted Brazil has become the largest Roman Catholic nation in the world, and Roman Catholicism there has made startling changes in recent years. "The church is recentering its authority on Christ, not the pope, in Brazil," said Cox. "Many Roman Catholic structures are increasingly being seen as irrelevant. Both the Bible and Christology are becoming more central to Roman Catholic life in Brazil.

"Increasingly, Third World Christians are viewing God as 'the poor God' through whom 'the poor Christ' identifies with the powerless of the world," said Cox. He added this identification is being seen as God's willingness to be present with his people and to contend with personal and social evils experienced in their everyday lives.

Cox, author of the popular book, *The Secular City*, noted apostolicity, the authentic church in continuity of discipleship to Christ, and universality, the potential to impact church life on a worldwide basis, were the main characteristics of churches capable of true liberation theology.

"Besides the Roman Catholics, only the Baptists are everywhere. There are Baptists everywhere you look in the world, and that fact gives Baptists global church potential to proclaim Jesus Christ as liberator as well as redeemer in peaceful social change," he said.

Cox urged his audience to remember the model of Saint Francis of Assisi and the "poor Christ" of the gospels.

"In Brazil 80 percent of the children suffer from malnutrition, 25 million children are living in the streets and 1,000 children die daily from starvation," he said. "The Christ of the gospels commissioned his disciples to go and meet such needs worldwide. Liberation theology is one way Third World Christians are following the Great Commission."

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Asians To Swap  
Mission Teams

By Erich Bridges

N-FMB  
Baptist Press  
11/24/86

HONG KONG (BP)--Baptists from eight Asian nations and Hong Kong plan to exchange mission teams soon.

The teams, the Asians hope, not only will carry out short-term evangelistic projects and crusades in their countries but also other mission projects, perhaps involving Asian Baptist college and seminary students.

The exchange plan emerged from the latest meeting of Asian Baptist leaders interested in expanding their foreign mission efforts, held in Hong Kong in late October. Participants represented South Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and two Baptist conventions in the Philippines. Korean pastor Han Ki Man is chairman of the regional group.

It was the Asians' third regional meeting since world Baptist leaders interested in international missions gathered last year at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center for a global evangelization consultation.

Besides the exchange agreement, the Asian leaders decided to do three other things:

-- Establish a formal committee to meet annually to discuss and decide on strategies. The group's first meeting will be next April. The committee will be composed of the participating conventions' executive secretaries and "mission specialists" or leaders of convention mission boards, committees or agencies, and a non-voting missionary consultant from each country.

-- Encourage each convention to sponsor missions promotion and education meetings, especially among pastors, and invite speakers from other Asian conventions to exchange ideas and "cross-fertilize."

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— Establish a small research committee, including group leader Han Ki Man and three other Asian convention representatives plus a Southern Baptist missionary consultant, to continue studying the feasibility of a joint regional mission body. Such a regional body could evolve into a missionary sending agency. Han has named Bob Davis, based in Hong Kong, as the committee's missionary consultant. Davis is the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's specialist for evangelism and church growth in Asia.

The Asian Baptists have spent the past year discussing the merits of a joint mission agency, and some favor establishing one now. Others believe it is too early to commit to a single missionary-sending board.

The difference of opinion highlights the "different levels of development" within the various conventions, said Southern Baptist missionary Bill Fudge of South Korea, who assists and translates for Han Ki Man in the Asian meetings.

"Some of the conventions already have a sending agency in place and missionaries on the field," Fudge explained. "Others see themselves having that potential and want to develop it in their own convention. Others do not see any possibility at this time of developing their own sending agency but think they could participate in one if it were put together on a joint basis."

The Hong Kong meeting also produced a formal statement of purpose adopted by the leaders: "The purpose of the Asian Baptist Mission Consultation Committee is to coordinate, cooperate, inform, organize and strategize for missions in Asia and beyond. This would include the possible formation of an Asian Baptist Foreign Mission Coordinating Committee in the future if thought necessary."

Up to now the leaders have been working toward a consensus of purpose, but the formal statement "nailed down very firmly what they are about," said Fudge.

Foreign Mission Board President R. Keith Parks, in the region for visits to Hong Kong, Taiwan and China, addressed the closing session of the meeting. Later he expressed excitement about the Asians' initiative.

"These things are happening together, where good leadership is being elected in the conventions and the desire to do missions is stimulating organization and focus," he said. "I just feel like the Lord is moving in a remarkable way among these conventions."

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Richmond bureau of Baptist Press

Iowa Church Finds Its Ministry  
In Midst Of The Farm Crisis

By Bill Bangham

F-B.C.

Baptist Press  
11/24/86

ALBIA, Iowa (BP)—It's called Helping Hands. And while it may be just an old building on a side street off the town square in Albia, Iowa, helping hands it is ... and they are.

Helping Hands holds a cold cup of water in a land parched by the hot winds of economic change—a land where people are blown like chaff by forces over which they have little or no control.

The farm crisis has hit Albia with a vengeance.

Helping Hands is an ecumenical community food and clothing ministry open to anyone in need. Some might be uncomfortable with the word ministry, or the word ecumenical, but not those involved.

"Originally our church had a clothes closet for about 15 years," says Lonney Hulsey, pastor of First Baptist Church in Albia. "And Trinity United Methodist had a food pantry. Together we decided it was time to make it a community thing."

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Both churches had cooperated for some time. The food pantry and the clothes closet seemed to fit together like two hands. And they sensed a need to get their ministries out of the closet, out of the pantry, out of the church and into the community.

"People wouldn't come, whatever the reason," explains Hulsey. "We needed to get into neutral territory, into community ministry ... not just church, not just community, but all working together.

"I think it's just great," he says.

Helping Hands catches people who fall between the cracks, people who have moved looking for work, in the several weeks before the food stamps and other aid kicks in. It also supplements aid that is admittedly meager.

This summer, 26 families—96 people—in August and 14 families—43 people—in June, looked to Helping Hands for food. Fifteen to 20 people a day stopped by for clothing.

"And that's our slow period," says Byrle McCombs, coordinator at Helping Hands and a member at Trinity Methodist. "We'll have more people this winter. There's a lot of odd jobs in the summer. It's a busy time and people don't have a hard time finding work."

But McCombs worries about the winter and what it will bring: "People who moved away are now coming home. But there are no jobs for them. We're now seeing a lot of new faces."

Most of the people she sees at Helping Hands are single mothers on Aid for Dependent Children or food stamps. She doesn't see many farmers.

"The biggest problem with Iowa farmers is pride," notes Hulsey. "They don't want to be seen coming to a place like this. They're independent people and have been for a long time."

Some might criticize the ecumenical approach of this ministry and the heavy community involvement. It's not the traditional Baptist way. But the community is solidly behind it. Helping Hands used to depend on selling newspapers at \$25 a ton for support. But now support comes through donations from individuals, civic organizations and area churches. A recent radio telethon netted \$4,800. Kness Manufacturing donates the building and pays the utilities.

Neither Hulsey nor McCombs has a problem with their ecumenical approach. Both have seen a few families come into their churches through it.

"We need to meet people's physical needs before they're awake to their spiritual needs," insists Hulsey. "Jesus didn't always get converts, but he always ministered to the needs of people."

"That's what we're doing."

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Brotherhood Commission

Discipleship Leaders  
Emerging Within SBC

By Terry Barone

*N-Texas*

Baptist Press  
11/24/86

DALLAS (BP)--Discipleship is the answer to Southern Baptists' hunger for spiritual growth, according to Larry Roberts, minister of evangelism/discipleship at First Baptist Church of Nashville, Tenn.

Roberts is a rare breed, one of a small number of fulltime ministers of discipleship in Southern Baptist churches. But, his breed is growing because of the trend toward discipleship in the denomination.

Roberts was one of 50 "discipleship coordinators" who recently attended the Institute of Christian Discipleship at First Baptist Church of Garland, Texas, to discuss how to improve discipleship ministries in their churches.

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The discipleship emphasis is growing "out of a grassroots level of frustration to get on with what needs to be done," Roberts said, noting people are "dissatisfied with their own level of spiritual growth and want to get into something that will help them with their problems and meet needs."

Programs alone will no longer get the job done, he insisted: "A process must occur. Something must happen in people's lives so they will go out and share the gospel with others."

John Kramp, associate pastor for discipleship ministries at First Church of Garland, said there is a growing trend "for individuals to be responsible for their spiritual lives. People are beginning to say, 'I have a Christian life, and I am responsible for it.'"

Southern Baptist laypersons no longer are willing "to sit back and rely on someone else to do the work. Laypersons are realizing they must help do it," Roberts said.

Kramp added he believes the trend in discipleship is due to "God doing something supernatural in awakening which is evidenced by spiritual hunger."

Roberts agreed and said the stirrings not only are being experienced by Christians in the United States but by Christians throughout the world in countries such as Japan, Korea and nations in Africa. "In our world with barriers such as culture, language and denominations, God is speaking and beginning his movement," he noted.

Roberts and Kramp both believe the trend of discipleship will change the local church. Roberts said churches must begin reassessing where they are and where they are headed. "Churches will have to take a new look at who is to do ministry and the role of the pastor, other staff members and the congregation," he said.

After this is done, Kramp said, there will be a "fundamental change in how churches measure effectiveness. It will be as important for churches to look at themselves to see if their members are growing as it is to look at how many new members there are."

With this movement toward discipleship, Roberts said the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board "has been responsive to the groundswell and is moving rapidly to meet these needs."

MasterLife was one of the board's early discipleship tools. More than 150,000 people worldwide have been certified to lead MasterLife. It has been translated into 42 languages and has been presented in all 50 states and in more than 100 foreign nations.

With the church members wanting discipleship tools and with the Sunday School Board responding to those needs, Roberts and Kramp both said, the church will have to respond with people who can interpret and lead congregations in this direction.

"Churches are going to have to do something," Roberts insisted. "Sometimes it will be a person in a volunteer position, or the church will add a staff person." He also suggested that it may be the pastor who will shift his emphasis from one of "physical growth" to one of "spiritual growth."

Discipleship begins with evangelism and continues through spritual growth, said Kramp. Because of this, many "discipleship ministers will have heavy evangelistic responsibilities."

Roberts also said he believes a discipleship approach will help a church grow: "Churches now work on the basis of addition. Discipleship works on the basis of multiplication."

Another effect of discipleship, Kramp pointed out, is the calling out of more people. "When discipleship is biblical," he said, "more persons become Christians, more effective leaders are discovered, more persons volunteer for ministry and more missionaries are called out."

Roberts echoed Kramp's remark, saying, "We already are seeing this happen in churches where discipleship is an integral part of the congregation."

He also added seminaries are responding to the needs of discipleship ministers by offering classes in discipleship.

Hispanic Pastor Ministers  
On Rural Missions Field

By Ken Camp

F-Texas

DALLAS (BP)—Like an old-time circuit rider traveling the Blackland Prairie of North Texas, David Tirado covers rural Fannin County and the surrounding area as pastor of four Hispanic missions.

Tirado's service to the field of churches is part of his responsibility as minister of missions and associate pastor at First Baptist Church of Ector, Texas. Although the rural church averages little more than 70 in Sunday school, it sponsors four satellite missions.

Tirado is pastor at Bonham Hispanic Baptist Mission and at home Bible study-type missions in nearby Trenton and Whitewright, all sponsored by First Church of Ector. He also leads the Bible study for the Hispanic group in the tiny community of Telephone, a mission sponsored by Telephone Baptist Church.

First Church of Ector also sponsors an Anglo mission, Enterprise Baptist Mission in Ely. Each mission has received a start-up gift made available by Texas Baptists' Mary Hill Davis Centennial Offering for State Missions.

Texas Baptists have set a \$22.8 million goal for the 1986 state missions offering as part of the "Triple/Triple" emphasis. Churches last year were encouraged to triple their 1984 offering, and this year they are challenged to triple the 1985 offering.

Tirado came to Ector about four months ago. He and pastor Lanny Loe conducted surveys, looked at the unchurched pockets of people in and around Fannin County, and then mapped out a strategy for reaching those groups.

Loe, a former home missionary to the Ute Indians in Utah, sees nothing out-of-the-ordinary about a small, rural church adopting a missions strategy. "In the pioneer missions areas--anywhere other than in the Bible Belt--it wouldn't be at all unusual for a church our size to be starting missions," he explains.

Once unchurched groups were discovered, Tirado began working to establish Bible studies among them. The largest group, Bonham Hispanic Mission, currently meets in the Fannin Baptist Association office building and hopes to build its own church building in the near future. The mission has a regular Sunday morning schedule of Sunday school and preaching, and it averages about 20 in attendance.

Tirado's weekly schedule finds him in Whitewright on Monday, in Telephone on Thursday and in Trenton on Saturday for visitation and outreach Bible studies.

Because Bonham Hispanic Mission includes several established families as well as seasonal workers, both Tirado and Loe expect it to grow into a church-style mission that may eventually be self-supporting. The other mission fellowships include mostly undocumented workers, so their continued existence almost certainly will depend upon a sponsoring church.

"With illegals, it's hard to say what will happen in the future. When winter comes along, a lot of them will leave," says Tirado. He also notes the undocumented group is reluctant to gather in a traditional church setting.

"Illegals will not come out to go to your church. You have to go to them," he says.

Knowing he will have only a limited time with any given group of undocumented workers, Tirado follows the same routine in any setting. He begins by seeking to win non-Christians to Christ, and then he teaches them Baptist doctrine and trains them in evangelism.

His objective in working with the undocumented group is two-fold: "First, we're trying to reach these people so that when they go back to Mexico, they can witness there and begin new work there. At the same time, we are trying to bring into existence lasting missions in Whitewright, Trenton and Telephone."

People skills are vitally important in working with undocumented workers, he adds.

"All the titles and degrees in the world and all the books you read can't substitute for an understanding of people," points out. "Especially in working with illegals, you don't come out with, 'Doctor so-and-so said in such-and-such a book that it's true.' That doesn't impress them. What matters is that you understand people and that you know how to work with them."

Although they realize that ministering to undocumented workers is a delicate situation, the members of First Baptist Church of Ector consider it imperative.

"We don't bring them into the country, but once they're here we have a responsibility to minister to them. We don't ask them to show a green card before we let them come to church," says Loe.

"Once they're here, it would be a violation of the Great Commission for us not to try to reach them."

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Prison Chaplain  
Shares Good News

By Billy Dugger

F - HMB  
Baptist Press  
11/24/86

GULFPORT, Miss. (BP)—Perry Hilton goes behind bars to share his good news.

"A friend asked me in early 1984 if I would be interested in conducting a jail ministry," remembers Hilton, a volunteer chaplain. "I prayed about it, asking God to direct me if this were his will."

"At first I just listened to the prisoners," he recalls. "They asked who I was, what I wanted, why I was coming to the jail. Things were fairly stilted for a while, but I kept going, walking up and down the rows of cells, introducing myself to prisoners, learning their names. Then the distance between us began to disappear. I gave them Bibles and study materials, and most of the men became friendly."

Soon Hilton was asking prisoners about their knowledge of the Bible, what they understood about God's plan for their lives—if they understood what it meant to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

What Hilton did not do was act judgmentally. "I've talked with, prayed with and for murderers, rapists, drug addicts and thieves, but I have never condemned any of them," he says. "That's not the way Jesus ministered. He showed love and compassion."

In two years, Hilton has seen changes in the lives of prisoners. One who became a Christian now witnesses to new inmates who share his cell. Another Christian prisoner, now released, has a steady job on the Gulf Coast.

There are times Hilton unexpectedly drops in at the jail. "It's easy to see the impact the Word of God is having," he says, "when I see them studying their Bibles and pouring over study materials. Others tell me this prisoner or that prisoner is praying daily and witnessing."

Hilton's jail ministry extends beyond the bars that separate prisoners from society. On occasion, he meets with families of jailed men, helping them cope with having a family member in jail.

"Most people are not concerned about prisoners until a member of their family gets locked up," he explains. "Then they realize the prisoners do have needs. Sometimes they give me money to buy Bibles or stationery or postage stamps."

Hilton realizes the legal system is imperfect, but he still is moved when efforts to mete out justice fail. A heavy case load keeps some prisoners waiting months for arraignment hearings. In other instances, prisoners are found innocent, but have spent months behind bars.

Hilton realizes prisons have a useful place in maintaining an orderly society. He has learned to cull the "cons," the pitiful stories of prisoners who blame everyone but themselves for where they are and what they have done. Many of these prisoners, he finds, spend all their time reading law books and looking for loopholes to get out of jail.

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On the other hand, "the prisoners who have accepted Christ and have taken responsibility for what they have done are trying to make the most of their situations," he says.

His advice to people who would start a jail ministry is simple: Pray and seek God's leadership, talk to the jail chaplain and offer services, seek training that might be available and encourage others to get involved.

"Seeing what the Lord is able to do in the lives of people is exciting," Hilton says. "I am compelled to keep going, and I know God is giving me the desire to work with prisoners. I'll do this as long as I can."

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(Billy Dugger is supervisor of employee communications, Mississippi Power Company, Gulfport.)  
(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Atlanta bureau of Baptist Press.

Minister Seeks Next Challenge  
 After Near-Death Experience

By Frank Wm. White

N-B55B  
 Baptist Press  
 11/24/86

MINNEAPOLIS (BP)—Mike Pike is on the comeback trail again.

After being hospitalized nearly two months through mid-September, he anticipates at least three more months of recovery from a near-deadly bout with encephalitis, an inflammation of the brain.

Struggles are not new to Pike. Two years ago, after cultivating a \$60,000-a-year farm supply business to \$1 million in annual sales, Pike sold the business for \$1 rather than file bankruptcy. It had collapsed along with the farm economy.

After closing his business, Pike became minister of education at Mobridge Southern Baptist Church in Mobridge, S.D. He had accepted Christ during the peak of his business, he says, even though he had been a church member for several years.

Applying business principles of delegating responsibility, requiring accountability and following up on prospects to the Sunday school, Pike saw attendance grow from 60 to 160 in 18 months.

His work with the church abruptly halted in July when he became ill. In August when he was transferred to a Minneapolis hospital near his parents' home, he was only partially conscious. Doctors were unsuccessful in identifying the illness and helplessly watched as his condition continued to worsen.

"They had samples of me scattered all over the country for tests," Pike quips.

Before the doctors finally identified Pike's illness, they became even more puzzled that his condition suddenly began to improve. Pike tried to convince them that the prayers of Southern Baptists who knew of his condition had led to his recovery.

"They said things like that sometimes happen," Pike says, noting the doctors' skepticism.

Now with a hospital bill of more than \$13,000 not including doctors' bills, Pike is walking with a cane, beginning to test his driving skills and writing and talking clearly.

During his illness, his right side had been paralyzed affecting his ability to do simple tasks as well as distorting his speech and vision.

"I learned to be totally dependent on God—physically, financially, emotionally and spiritually. There was nothing else I could do," Pike says.

Now, when members of the Mobridge church call or visit, Pike asks eagerly about the church and the work he once led. Learning that the church is doing well and the workers are continuing to carry out their responsibilities brings bittersweet feelings, he admits: "They are doing what they were trained to do. I guess it's good they can get along well without me."

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Pike doesn't know whether he will be returning to Mobridge after his recuperation. He wants to be certain of God's leadership in his job decision. But he is thankful for the church experience: "Mobridge was like a lab experiment for me. I made a lot of mistakes, but it was a chance to try my ideas."

He says his illness has made him more sensitive. "I was flinty. To get a spark out of flint you have to strike it. God had to strike me to get my attention," he explains.

Now, he believes God has given him a second chance. "I haven't learned everything I needed to learn from this, but I've learned a lot," he says.

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by BSSB bureau of Baptist Press

Arkansas Baptists Approve  
Cautious Budget, Adjust CP Formula

N-CD

Baptist Press  
11/24/86

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (BP)—Messengers to the Arkansas Baptist State Convention adopted a cautious \$12.3 million budget and took steps to head off a brewing financial crisis when they met for their annual meeting Nov. 18-19 at Geyer Springs First Baptist Church in Little Rock.

Convening under the theme, "Renewal, Revival and Rejoicing," 1,163 messengers unanimously re-elected all three convention officers and adopted eight resolutions.

The 1987 budget represented a 0.75 percent increase over 1986 and directs 41.41 percent to national Southern Baptist causes, an increase of 0.74 percent over 1986. Arkansas Baptists have been increasing the percentage of receipts diverted to national causes by 0.75 percent each year in an effort to achieve a 50-50 distribution of mission dollars.

State convention leaders, however, foresaw a financial crisis brewing because percentage increases from the 1,275 Arkansas Baptist congregations were not keeping pace with the growing percentage sent to the national mission causes. Consequently state mission funds were being diverted to fund the national increase, with the result that the 1987 budget actually reflected a slight decrease of state programs.

Acting on a recommendation from the state executive board, messengers adopted a proposal which will tie future increases in the percentage of receipts diverted to national causes to the percentage increase received from Arkansas churches. The minimum increase each year will be set at 0.25 percent, and, given adequate increases, may be raised as high as 1 percent.

Messengers also adopted an executive board proposal to commission a task force of 100 pastors, laymen, and denominational leaders to encourage congregations to increase the percentage of their local church budgets designated for state and national causes through the Cooperative Program, the Southern Baptist unified giving plan.

In other business, messengers voted to integrate \$238,000 into the base portion of their unified budget formula for budget year 1988 to assist the convention-owned Southern Baptist College in Walnut Ridge, in its move toward status as a four-year institution and to support a new, expanded annuity plan for ministerial retirement.

The eight resolutions adopted by messengers addressed a wide range of topics. One expressed dismay at favorable media coverage of legalized gambling without an equal emphasis on its destructive aspects. Another resolution denounced the Arkansas Legislature for enacting laws which allow liquor sales in dry counties through the licensing of private clubs. The resolution urged Arkansas Baptists to lobby their legislators for repeal of those laws.

A third resolution declared opposition to "school-based clinics" that distribute contraceptives without parental consent and offer counseling that promotes promiscuity. Resolutions passed in the convention are seen as an expression of the opinion of those messengers present and voting and are not binding on any church or denominational agency.

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Lawson Hatfield, pastor of Fordyce First Baptist Church, was re-elected president of the convention by acclamation, as was First Vice President Eddie McCord, director of missions for Independence Baptist Association in Batesvill. James W. Bryant, pastor of Grand Avenue Baptist Church in Fort Smith, was re-elected second vice president.

The 1987 convention will be held Nov. 17-18 at First Baptist Church of Fort Smith.

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Police Chaplain Gives  
Kids Reasons To Live

By Elizabeth Watson

Baptist Press  
11/24/86

ARLINGTON, Texas (BP)—Harold Elliott had just delivered a death notice to a widow who thought she was still a wife.

It was the 54th suicide response in Elliott's 13-year police chaplain career. But the job still wasn't easy.

Elliott works fulltime with the Arlington, Texas, Police Department. He is a graduate of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and had been a Southern Baptist pastor and volunteer chaplain for 22 years. His responsibility now is to minister to citizens and officers in crises—suicide, homicide, accidental death, divorce, stress and burnout.

Since 1984 Elliott has specialized in teen-age suicide prevention.

After responding to three teen suicides within a two-month period, Elliott decided to do something to stop the senseless deaths. He formed Suicide Is Not Painless, Inc., to inform teens and parents about the realities of suicide.

In 1985, Elliott produced the 22-minute film "Suicide Is Not Painless," a docudrama aimed at youth considering suicide. The educational film is designed to be shown in schools and churches.

Nearly half of the suicides in Arlington during Elliott's chaplaincy have involved teen-agers. He attributes this to a "total misconception about tragedy and death" among teen-agers.

"This is a generation that has never been tested," Elliott explains. "To most teen-agers, trauma is having to watch a black and white television. They just don't know how to cope with real tragedy when it comes along. Many teen-agers think tragedy is forever and see death as an escape."

He quotes a 17-year-old boy's suicide note: "We've gone to this other life not knowing what to expect, but whatever happens, it has to be better than this."

"This teen-ager, like many others, probably picked up a distorted 'eternal-utopia' view of death in church and at funerals," Elliott says.

He believes the solution to teen suicide is teaching youth that life and its problems are temporary. "Commitments to spiritual truths can give them hope," he insists.

Elliott's pastoral experience equipped him to share spiritual truths with teens and families of suicide victims.

"As I was driving to the scene of this last suicide, I was thinking about how many times I've had to do this," Elliott says. "That part has become somewhat ordinary. But having to tell the family about what has just happened is never ordinary at all.

"When I had to deliver the death message today, I was so glad I was the one doing it because I know God called me to this. He gives me grace for the job.

"But that still doesn't take away the lump in my throat as I stand on the doorstep about to knock on the door."

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(Watson is a student newswriter at Southwestern Seminary.)  
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