



BAPTIST PRESS

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March 4, 1988

88-37

N-CD

Crowders Contribute
Suit Balance To CP

By Dan Martin

NASHVILLE (BP)--A check for \$223.79 has been contributed to the Southern Baptist Convention Cooperative Program unified budget by people who pressed a lawsuit against the SBC and its Executive Committee to its final appeal at the U.S. Supreme Court.

Robert S. Crowder, a retired Birmingham, Ala., layman and his wife, Julia, mailed the check to Harold C. Bennett, president-treasurer of the SBC Executive Committee, saying it was what was left in the account that had been established to file and pursue the lawsuit.

Crowder, his wife, and two other people, Henry T. Cooper of Windsor, Mo., and H. Allen McCartney of Vero Beach, Fla., filed suit Dec. 5, 1985, in federal district court in Atlanta, claiming their rights had been violated by parliamentary rulings by then-SBC President Charles F. Stanley of Atlanta, during the 1985 annual meeting and concerning election of the 1986 Committee on Boards, now called the Committee on Nominations.

After losing the case in district court May 5, 1986, the Crowders and others appealed to the circuit court of appeals in Atlanta. When the circuit ruled against them Sept. 28, 1987, the case was appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court. The high court, on Feb. 22, 1988, declined to review the decisions, thus upholding the rulings of the lower courts.

The check to Bennett -- received by the Executive Committee March 4 -- was accompanied by a mimeographed letter addressed to "all those who made contributions to Baptists Committed to Fairness," the organization set up to prosecute the lawsuit.

It includes a "final accounting for the funds donated for the attempt to have the bylaws of the Southern Baptist Convention upheld" and shows \$51,505.65 was contributed. Crowder told Baptist Press "about 40 or 50 people" contributed but declined to be specific about whether there were any large contributors.

"We are thanking the group as a whole, treating everybody alike," Crowder said.

As for expenses, the letter says the Atlanta lawfirm of Bondurant, Mixson and Elmore was paid \$51,248.81 for "legal fees and attendant expenses." It also adds: "Please note: The firm of Bondurant, Mixson and Elmore have honored their original commitment to put a cap on their legal fees of \$50,000. We are grateful to them for this and are indebted to Mr. Emmet J. Bondurant II, Mrs. Jane F. Vehko, Mr. John E. Floyd and to other members of the firm for their commitment to this cause. ..."

After deducting \$33.05 for checkbook, rubber stamp and other expenses, the amount left in the fund was \$223.79, which was forwarded to Bennett as a contribution to the SBC.

In a news release sent to Baptist Press, Crowder, writing on behalf of the plaintiffs, said: "It is with very deep regret that we must now accept the decision ... i.e., that disputes over the SBC's bylaws are 'ecclesiastical' regardless of whether the dispute is over a matter of religious doctrine, or over simple administrative matters such as violation of bylaws, making a contract for insurance, funding an annuity program or anything else.

"The price of religious freedom has gone up in the SBC, or in any state Baptist convention, or in any associational meeting, and in the respective agencies of each.

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"If our bylaws and constitution are to be upheld as accepted or amended in the future, the messengers present at each (annual meeting), henceforth, must make a successful challenge to any action that is perceived as a violation thereof. This challenge must be mounted at the time the perceived violation occurs. This carries with it the responsibility for each messenger attending the convention to be knowledgeable of the SBC bylaws, of what issues are likely to be addressed and to be present and alert throughout every business session ... and the presentation of any report ... on any matter from any internal or external source."

The news release concluded: "If this lesson is learned thoroughly and is implemented, our heartbreak at having to take this action against our current leadership and the cost thereof is but another small down payment for the ongoing religious liberty of Southern Baptists and other Christian bodies in the United States."

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N-CO
(NC)

Southeastern Seminary Nominee
Meets With Faculty, Students

By R.G. Puckett and L.E. High

Baptist Press
3/4/88

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary students, faculty and administrators were introduced Feb. 29-March 1 to Lewis A. Drummond, the seminary trustee search committee's nominee to succeed W. Randall Lolley as president of the Wake Forest, N.C., school.

During his visit to the Southeastern campus, Drummond, professor of evangelism at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., stressed his role as a "reconciling agent" who can help the seminary "catch the vision again."

Seminary trustees will meet March 14 to act on the search committee's nomination. Drummond, 61, was recommended unanimously last month by the committee. Lolley announced last fall he would resign because of differences with the board of trustees.

Before a meeting with seminary students, Drummond participated in a forum with faculty and administrators. He also met with Lolley. Drummond was accompanied by trustee Chairman Robert D. Crowley of Rockville, Md., and Vice Chairman James R. DeLoach of Houston.

In a special faculty meeting to interview Drummond, Crowley suggested the press be excluded, but the faculty voted unanimously for the meeting to remain open. Secular as well as Baptist reporters were present.

New Testament Professor Archie L. Nations presided over the meeting. Ordinarily the seminary president presides over faculty meetings, but Lolley deemed it inappropriate for him to preside at the special session with his possible successor.

Crowley introduced Drummond to the faculty by reading three letters he had received endorsing Drummond, one from evangelist Billy Graham. Thomas A. Bland, professor of Christian ethics and sociology, opened the discussion by asking Drummond to state his philosophy of leadership and direction for the seminary. Other professors asked questions during the two-hour meeting. Drummond told the faculty essentially the same things he said to the students the following day.

The 90-minute meeting with students included Drummond's responses to written questions that had been submitted in advance.

"The function of a seminary is the same as the church -- to further the cause of Jesus Christ in the world," Drummond told students. "We need to hone our sword to a sharp edge intellectually, but we also have to know how to use it. We're derelict in our duty if we don't try to enhance students' spiritual experiences while they're here."

As president of the seminary, Drummond said, he would "gladly" sign the school's Abstract of Principles, a statement of faith signed by seminary staff; the Baptist Faith and Message Statement as adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in 1963; and the Glorieta Statement drafted by the six Southern Baptist seminary presidents last year.

He added, "I also find no problems either" with the Chicago Statement on Inerrancy.

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In response to a question concerning women seminary faculty members, Drummond said: "God willing, if, if, if, I become the next administrator of this institution, we're going to have the best people with the best theological competence and the best spirit for your sake -- men, women, black, white, young, old."

"God doesn't draw those kinds of lines. Who on earth am I to draw any kind of lines?"

Drummond also explained the ordination of women is a matter for the local church to decide: "Ordination is not dependent upon the seminary. If the local church wishes to ordain women for anything -- great. If they don't, that's their business. They (churches) send them (women) to us, whatever their attitude may be toward ordination, and we educate them."

With regard to the beginning date of his service if elected president of the seminary, Drummond said the proposed April 1 date is "out of my hands. This is a trustee matter."

Introducing Drummond to the students, Crowley said: "We feel God directly led us to nominate Dr. Drummond. We believe God Almighty himself has answered prayer and sent this man to lead this great seminary."

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SBC Moderate Leaders
Want Return To Roots

By Toby Druin

Baptist Press
3/4/88

N- CO
(Texas std.)

DALLAS (BP)--Describing the Southern Baptist Convention as a denomination "that is wounded, in turmoil and in pain," seven moderate leaders issued a call for prayer and "a return to the priorities and principles that have characterized this denomination from its beginnings."

A two-page "press statement" and letter from W. Winfred Moore, pastor of First Baptist Church of Amarillo, Texas, and former first vice president of the SBC, were sent to Baptist state papers, Baptist Press and other news media March 3.

Joining Moore in the statement were six others described by Moore and in the statement as representing "widely diverse aspects of Baptist life." All are identified with the moderate group in the SBC theological/political controversy.

Besides Moore, others joining in the statement were John F. Baugh, Houston, Laity For ... the Baptist Faith and Message; W. Henry Crouch, Charlotte, N.C., Southern Baptist Alliance; George W. Steincross, Liberty, Mo., steering committee, SBC Forum; James H. Slatton, pastor, River Road Baptist Church, Richmond, Va.; Libby S. Bellinger, Waco, Texas, SBC Women in Ministry; and Walker Knight, Decatur, Ga., editor, SBC Today.

Steincross told Word and Way, newsjournal of Missouri Baptists, the joint statement was issued to illustrate that various moderate groups "are all part of the same train, going in the same direction, even if we are traveling in different cars."

He said the statement has no relation to a Feb. 24 news conference held by the current SBC president and two former presidents, adding, "I was given permission by the Southern Baptist Forum steering committee to sign this joint statement during a Feb. 1 meeting."

Steincross said he does not know who initiated the moderates' joint statement but is glad to be a part of it.

The statement charged that for the last 10 years, "this denomination has been subjected to the 'takeover' efforts of (Houston layman) Paul Pressler, (Dallas educator) Paige Patterson and other fundamentalist leaders."

"They have stated openly that they would 'go for the jugular' of our convention, that they would take control and enforce their views, and they have done so," the statement adds.

For nine years "fundamentalists leaders have been elected as president and it is time to assess the results," the statement says.

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The statement asks a series of questions about the present condition of the denomination. "Are we better off?" it asks. "Are we united, consecrated to the task of winning people to Jesus Christ? Or are our efforts being directed away from Christian witness to control ... lockstep ... to conforming to the religious, and often to the political views, of a small and radical group of leaders?"

The statement asks if Southern Baptists are now a better witness for Christ; better off in media coverage; on seminary campuses; on convention boards "stacked with people who march to one tune"; in a mission effort where one of the boards is "torn with controversy and bitterness"; in enhanced fellowship; healthier churches and associations.

"This denomination is on the verge of neutralizing its great witness to a lost world," the statement claims. "So we call for prayer; prayer that our denomination might renew its commitment to working together in missions, evangelism, education and ministry; prayer that we might once again be a people under the leadership of God's Spirit."

It adds: "We call, too, for a new direction. To put it simply, we are no longer headed in the Baptist way. We are headed in the wrong way."

Urging a "new direction," the statement said it is not "the Baptist way," to focus on control instead of ministry; to minimize the priesthood of the believer; to hold up a high priestly authoritarian concept of ministry instead of a servanthood model; to depreciate the service of women; to tamper with the authority of the local church; to try to manipulate local church pulpit committees; to flirt with creedalism; to let the denomination be used for secular political purposes; or for people to present themselves as speaking for all Baptists.

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(Additional material for this story was provided by Bob Terry, editor of Word and Way.)

Lebanon Still Closed
To Missionary Presence

N-FMB

Baptist Press
3/4/88

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Southern Baptist missionaries will be kept out of Lebanon for at least another year.

The U.S. State Department has extended its ban on American citizens using their U.S. passports to enter that country through February 1989. The passport restriction was extended because officials feel conditions in Lebanon have not measurably improved during the past year, according to a letter to Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board President R. Keith Parks from a State Department official.

Twenty-four Southern Baptist missionaries were forced to leave Lebanon last year because of the original ruling.

The extension disappointed Parks, who had appealed to Secretary of State George P. Shultz in January that missionaries be allowed to return -- even amid risk -- if they sensed God's leadership to do so.

Parks had asked that permission at least be granted for Americans to return to East Beirut "if they are engaged in a charitable and humanitarian service."

Responding to the extension ruling, Parks said the State Department obviously operates from a different philosophy than he does, because he feels missions ministry is important enough to continue working in many situations which are not completely safe. In other places around the world equally dangerous, the State Department has not banned U.S. citizens, Parks pointed out.

Lebanese Baptists continue to report "great opportunity, great need" in their homeland and feel the presence of missionaries would enhance the situation there, Parks said. "We long for the time when it will be possible for them to re-establish a presence and a ministry in Lebanon," he added.

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Ministry To Kickapoos
Helps Clarify Calling

By Ken Camp

F-Texas

DALLAS (BP)--Ten weeks spent with an American Indian tribe unknown to most Texas Baptists helped Annie Boyter of First Indian Baptist Church in Grand Prairie, Texas, clarify and confirm her missions calling.

Last year Boyter, an American Indian, then a student at Dallas Baptist University, worked as a Rio Grande River ministry summer missionary with Mission Service Corps volunteer Charlotte Martinez in the Kickapoo Indian ministry of Primera Baptist Church of Eagle Pass, Texas.

That ministry extends both to the majority of the Kickapoos who live about 15 miles from Eagle Pass on an established homeland purchased for the tribe by private individuals and to a smaller group who live under the bridge connecting Eagle Pass with Piedras Negras, Mexico.

Boyter's responsibilities included helping Martinez operate Christian social ministries, including a clothes closet and food pantry for the Kickapoos, many of whom live far below the poverty level. Most of her time, however, was spent teaching a preschool class at Nuevo Nacimiento, the Kickapoos' privately owned homeland.

"Most of the Kickapoos speak Kickapoo and Spanish. Many of the Kickapoo people want their children to learn English so that they can go to school and have a better life," she said. "We averaged about 10 children in the Kickapoo preschool, which is really more than a preschool, seeing that the oldest child is eight years old."

English was "caught" as much as "taught" to the children as Boyter and Martinez played with them, taught them crafts and showed them pictures, speaking English all the while.

"A few times the parents would even come with their children, but they were pretty timid and we didn't get to teach them much," Boyter said. "But they are learning through their children, picking up the language."

One highlight of the summer was a trip to Falls Creek Baptist Encampment, near Davis, Okla., for an American Indian missions retreat.

"Christ really spoke to me during the morning and evening services toward the middle of the week," Boyter said. "I really felt his presence and was able to come back to Eagle Pass with a zeal to serve him."

The retreat at Falls Creek and the total summer missions experience helped Boyter to clarify a divine calling to missions that she had felt at age 16.

"I love all people. I witness to all people. But I feel God wants me to work with my own because I can relate to them better than I can with anyone else," she said.

"Missions is everywhere, not just where you're commissioned to go by the (Southern Baptist) Home or Foreign Mission Board, though that's part of it. Every day you live, you meet people who have needs. I believe my calling as a layperson is to help meet those needs and share Christ with those persons on a one-to-one basis."

Although no Kickapoo Baptist church exists at Nuevo Nacimiento today, Boyter is confident the seeds planted last summer and the continuing work of Martinez will one day result in a harvest of converts to Christ.

"It may be many years before we see an Indian Baptist church among the Kickapoos, but it will happen," Boyter said. "We have shared God's love with them, and that's something they'll never forget."

Boyter expressed that same optimism in an Aug. 4 entry in her daily summer missions journal: "One thought that has really been comforting during this time has been the reality of knowing that we are helping the younger generation of Kickapoos. Right now, there really is not much we can do for the children's parents. But praise God, someday these children will know Christ.

"Now these people are not just a tribe of people -- the Kickapoos -- but each and every one is a person and special."

Baker: Justice, Human Dignity
Should Fuel Anti-Porn Efforts

By Kathy Palen

N-BJC

WASHINGTON (BP)--The religious community's battle against pornography should grow out of a commitment to justice and a concern for human dignity, said N. Larry Baker, executive director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission.

Baker told participants at a national Religious Alliance Against Pornography conference anti-pornography efforts should not stem from an anti-sexual theology or an attempt to make society into the religious community's own image or a narrow social or political agenda.

Rather, he said, a concern about the family, people, children, character and the cause of the underdog should be the shaping conviction behind actions in the fight against pornography.

Individuals who join the war against pornography "open themselves to misunderstanding and to misrepresentation," warned Baker, who spoke on the moral, ethical and spiritual implications of pornography.

But, he said, appropriate and urgent reasons demand involvement in the battle.

"Each of us comes with some sense of what life ought to be like," Baker said. "It causes us to be for some things and against some things."

The prophet Isaiah's admonition to seek justice and correct oppression extends to "those who are victimized, abused, humiliated, enslaved and destroyed by pornography," Baker said: "We cannot remain silent. We cannot remain disengaged. We cannot be passive. We must join the battle."

The Religious Alliance Against Pornography, founded in July 1986, includes leaders from almost 40 denominations and religious organizations and focuses on the problem of illegal pornography.

Other Southern Baptists appearing on the conference program included Alan Sears, legal counsel for Citizens for Decency through Law; and Oscar Romo, director of language missions for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

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Toll-Free Calls Leave
No Stones Unturned

F-SSB

Baptist Press
3/4/88

NASHVILLE (BP)--Fortunately, nobody tried to order the proverbial kitchen sink March 1 on the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's new toll-free ordering system.

With that exception, however, more than 600 callers took a no-holds-barred approach as they prowled for flags, puzzles, Bibles, offering plates, envelopes and nearly every supply imagined.

One day hardly qualifies as the basis for determining trends, but first-day orderers seemed to lean toward Vacation Bible School materials more than any other single product area, said customer service center Manager David Wilkins.

They also ordered Convention Press and Broadman books, home mission study and January Bible study materials, church study course products, communion ware and church literature.

The board hopes to let churches call one number to order anything produced by a program component, Wilkins said. Some special order items -- such as steeples, choir robes or computers -- have to be referred, but the customer service representatives should be able to handle nearly every order for board materials, he added.

Even for a kitchen sink, all is not lost. A kitchen sink educational product for children is available from Broadman, but the customer service representative at 1-800-458-BSSB will refer calls to another number to get just the right size and color.

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CORRECTION: Please change the lead of the 3/1/88 Baptist Press story titled "WMU Annual Meeting To Kickoff Second Century" to read:

SAN ANTONIO (BP)--Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union will launch its second century during its annual meeting June 12-13 in San Antonio, Texas.

Also, please change the third-to-last graf to read:

Closing the annual meeting will be a commitment service, held on the San Antonio Riverwalk.

Thanks,
Baptist Press

BTN Satellite Viewing Allows
For Televised Live Seminars

By Terri Lackey

N-SSB

Baptist Press
3/4/88

NASHVILLE (BP)--Thanks to modern technology, about 100 youth ministers sitting in an Oklahoma Baptist University communications center were on the receiving end of some stark facts about AIDS, teen sex, pregnancy and promiscuity.

The 600 miles or so which separated the speakers and the audience had no bearing on the information which was transmitted via satellite from the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's Baptist Telecommunication Network studio to OBU's Sarkey Communications Center in Shawnee.

Organizers of the Oklahoma Association of Youth Ministers conference in Shawnee gave thumbs up to becoming participants in the Feb. 18 test project in which cameras, telephone lines and television monitors joined the group with Richard Ross, youth ministry consultant in the board's church administration department. The project was a joint venture between the church administration department and BTN.

"We thought it was a neat concept, and it allowed our guys to have input from resources we might not have otherwise had," Dave Fuller, youth consultant in the religious education department of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, said of the live broadcast.

The potential problem of teen-age church members contracting AIDS is one which haunts today's youth ministers, he said, noting, "We asked Richard if he would address the AIDS issue."

Ross along with Larry Braidfoot, general counsel for the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, presented facts on problems teens may face about their sexuality.

A brief tape of U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop speaking on AIDS was inserted into the 70-minute broadcast just before Ross opened the floor for questions transmitted by amplified telephones from the Shawnee group.

Questions included concerns of youth ministers about how to deal with a youth group if a member is diagnosed as having AIDS, the extent of AIDS and sex education which should be taught to junior high and high school students and how to deal with the media blitz concerning so-called "safe sex." Youth ministers also were concerned about how parents might deal with the AIDS issue should it arise in their church. How to deal with teen-age pregnancy among youth group members also was addressed.

By the early 1990s, about 250,000 cases of AIDS will be reported, said Braidfoot, who stressed churches must deal with the issue.

"AIDS is already affecting churches; unfortunately the worst is yet to come," he said.

Ministry needs and techniques must change as the threat of AIDS affects churches today, Ross said. Parents who close their minds to the disease must have it personalized and made real to them.

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"I think they would feel a need to deal with the issue more if they understood their children could possibly contract AIDS," he said.

Likewise, youth groups need to have the issue personalized, Ross said, noting, "They need to see that it is very possible one of their friends at school or at church may get the disease and die from it."

Meanwhile, teen-age girls who discover they are pregnant need the support of their churches, Ross said, noting about 1.1 million teen-agers become pregnant each year.

"Pregnancy comes to almost every youth group. The reason you don't see it often is because many times those girls drop out of church along with their families," he added.

Pregnant teens who opt to have their babies shouldn't be held up as heroes, but neither should they be shunned, he said: "They need the church to stand behind them. The alternative to having the baby is much worse than the pregnancy."

As part of considering future teleconferences from the board to groups around the country, Joe Denney, director of the telecommunications department, said he will evaluate the time and money the board saved by transmitting the broadcast to the youth ministers' conference in Shawnee.

"If consultants don't have the budget or the time to fly to a meeting, this is an option they can look at," Denney said.

Participation in the conference cost the youth ministers nothing, he said, adding, "However, in the process OBU became a BTN subscriber."

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

Division Organization Aligned
To Assist Church Evangelism

By Frank Wm. White

N-SSB

Baptist Press
3/4/88

NASHVILLE (BP)--Helping churches strengthen evangelistic efforts through the Sunday school is the goal behind organizational changes in the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's Sunday school division and changes in Sunday school curriculum, according to Harry Piland, who announced the changes.

Some curriculum changes will take as long as three years to appear in the literature, but "we don't intend to wait three years to provide churches what they want. Things we can do now to help churches are being done," said Piland, director of the Sunday school division.

Creating a structure that can help churches achieve evangelistic growth is the key organizing principle of a realignment of the division's staff, Piland said: "We are committed to keeping a focus on what is best for the churches. The basis of our reorganization is trying to help churches do their mission more effectively."

Within the division, three departments have been created. They are the Sunday school growth and administration department, directed by Don Trotter; Sunday school youth-adult department, directed by Max Caldwell; and Sunday school preschool-children department, directed by Muriel Blackwell.

Extensive improvements in Sunday school curriculum will first appear in October 1991 issues, Piland said. The changes, to be recommended to board trustees in August, are being developed after a two-year evaluation process.

Some other recommendations from the evaluation are being made as quickly as the production cycle allows, he said. Changes already evident or upcoming are:

-- The plan of salvation in Christ is now included in more than half of all Sunday school literature. By October, the plan of salvation will be printed in all Sunday school curriculum, usually on pages 2 or 3.

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-- By October 1990, 80 percent of the lessons in the Life and Work curriculum series will be related to specific books of the Bible rather than topics with Scripture drawn from various books.

-- Evangelism is being focused more clearly in lessons.

-- Collegiate Bible Study will be included in The Student magazine beginning in October as a cooperative effort of the Sunday school division and the student ministry department.

-- More Bible stories and more biblical content will appear in children's and preschool curriculum beginning in October.

-- Senior Adult Bible Study will be converted to a large-print size in October in response to requests from users of the materials.

In addition to its highlight in literature, evangelism will receive increased emphasis in the new Sunday school growth and administration department. "Church growth is well understood as a part of evangelism. We want to emphasize the Sunday school as key to church growth," Piland said.

The department will work with pastors and staff, volunteer Sunday school leaders and associational workers.

In the 32,000 churches that do not have a full-time minister of education, pastors must direct the Sunday school evangelistic efforts, and they need help knowing how to make the Sunday school grow, Piland said.

Volunteer Sunday school leaders also need more training and information about Sunday school growth and organization, he said.

To help smaller churches more effectively, each program area will have a consultant designated for work with smaller churches.

A specialist in denominational relationships and long-range planning will help relate Sunday school goals to other agencies and board components for better coordination of themes, emphases and curriculum.

While Sunday School Board literature has long been noted for cost advantages, a new office systems and production management section will strive to increase quality while maintaining economy. "That's going to mean more color, better teaching aids -- things churches are asking for," Piland said.

Elevation of three groups to departments will enable these directors to work more directly with other agency leaders, he added.

In addition, Billie Pate, formerly director of the management support group, is now associate division director and coordinates the work of the three Sunday school departments and the division staff.

"She will see that evangelism, enlargement and enrollment in the churches are what each department is focusing on," Piland said.

He said he hopes Pate's new role will allow him more time to be involved in creative planning and to speak more in churches and associations to encourage Sunday school workers in evangelism.

The curriculum and organization of the Sunday school division are moving in the right direction, Piland said: "I feel good about where we are for right now. We are willing to change when needed if it helps churches reach the lost."

Prayer, Faithfulness, Grow
Confront Minister, Harvey Says

By Breena Kent Paine

N- (O)
(NOBTS)

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--No minister will escape criticism and no Christian is exempt from the responsibilities of prayer, faithfulness and growing, Charles Harvey told students during a campus revival at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

The director of evangelism for the Louisiana Baptist Convention told seminarians: "If you think you're going to escape criticism, you're mistaken. You're living with an illusion that's going to be quickly burst because of who you are and what you stand for.

"Many people think that one's reaction to evil will reveal his true relationship with God. Not necessarily true. One's reaction to goodness will reveal more often than not one's true spiritual discernment and his relationship to God."

He said: "Jesus was guilty of no sin, but the very presence of Jesus rebuked those with whom he associated, and many of them did not appreciate his presence. He revealed what they were.

"As you go into ministry, your goodness will rebuke," said Harvey, former pastor of Sunset Acres Baptist Church in Shreveport, La. "Those who are not right with God will react to your very presence. If you're not careful, you'll react to that (lack of) understanding. ... And they stand in desperate need of your ministry, your love, your compassion."

Ministers who are criticized should not use the pulpit to "retaliate," he urged, adding, "Real maturity comes when we can integrate affirmation and criticism. We must ever be able to detect the source of criticism and the reason for criticism.

"More often than not, a critical attitude, a censorious attitude, is covered with an ulterior motive. One who possesses a censorious attitude which is so inconsistent and incongruous with the Spirit of Christ is usually seeking to elevate himself at the expense of the character and integrity of another person."

One of the causes of a critical attitude is a laxness in the area of discipleship, he said: "It's so easy for us to claim immunity from the demands of discipleship. We preach to others as if we are exempt. We drift into criticism because we really are not mature enough to see people as God sees them."

One way Christians criticize is by saying, "'We can love people, but we don't have to like them,'" he added. "I've seen those who used that rationalization, that treat people with an attitude that could never be reconciled to the Spirit and teachings of Christ."

"I'm glad God never said to me, 'Charles, I love you, but I sure don't like you.'"

Although some Christians have talents others do not, "there are some things that fall in the realm of responsibility for every Christian," Harvey said.

First, "every Christian can pray," he said. "If you began this morning with a busy schedule, with multiple responsibilities, with the weekend coming and you don't have a sermon, and you didn't begin the day in communion with the Father, you've short-changed yourself.

"One of the greatest blessings and privileges and possessions of the Christian is the consciousness of the presence of God. We're not justified in letting the trivialities interrupt our prayer life with the Father. You can't fulfill ministry as it should be without prayer.

"Second, we can be faithful. Most students in college and seminary are living ... in anticipation of when they will be out there with this behind. Be faithful today. This is the only day that's been promised you.

"Last, you can grow. Most of our problems are caused by people in places of responsibility who quit growing a long time ago."

"Where are you?" he asked. "Have you come to possess a critical attitude? Have you become censorious, not appreciating what God has done in the life of a person? You're depriving yourself of joy. ... See as God sees, repent and let the love of God flow freely through your soul."