



-- BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE

SBC Executive Committee
901 Commerce #750
Nashville, Tennessee 37203
(615) 244-2355
Alvin C. Shackelford, Director
Dan Martin, News Editor
Mary Knox, Feature Editor

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Jim Newton, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 873-4041
DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 511 N. Akard, Dallas, Texas 75201, Telephone (214) 720-0550
NASHVILLE (Baptist Sunday School Board) Lloyd T. Householder, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300
RICHMOND (Foreign) Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va. 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151
WASHINGTON Stan L. Hasteley, Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

March 23, 1988

88-49

N-HMB

Southern Baptist Alliance
Here To Stay, Crouch Says

By Joe Westbury

MACON, Ga. (BP)--Referring to members of the Southern Baptist Alliance as "the real Baptists" of the Southern Baptist Convention, outgoing Southern Baptist Alliance President Henry Crouch praised the members for surviving the organization's pangs of childbirth during its first year and reported the Alliance "is alive and doing well."

The review of the past year's accomplishments came as nearly 400 participants from across the nation met on the Mercer University campus in Macon, Ga., for the Alliance's second convocation March 21-23.

Crouch, pastor of Providence Baptist Church in Charlotte, N.C., speculated that whether or not moderates win at the SBC annual meeting in June 14-16 in San Antonio, Texas, the Alliance will be around for several years into the future.

If a win occurs, he said, the Alliance "must remain an advocacy group that constantly reminds our denomination of the historical foundations that made us great. But if we lose, then our cause becomes even more important as we become the remnant of what Baptists used to be."

The Alliance does not view itself as a political organization and refuses to endorse a candidate for the denominational presidency, Crouch said, but it does oppose the conservative control of the denomination's boards and agencies and its inerrant interpretation of Scripture.

"Homer Lindsey, Jr., is quoted as saying, 'I believe one of these days they will quit and give up. And I'll just rejoice when the day comes, when they start pulling out of the Southern Baptist Convention.' 'Pulling out' has not been our goal nor our intention," Crouch asserted, to a round of applause from the chapel crowd.

The organization has no intentions of launching a new denomination, he maintained. "The Alliance allows us a fellowship, a forum, a place to be home -- and still remain a Southern Baptist.

"It's not easy to step out and take a stand. To be labeled 'liberal' for being a long-time, cooperating Baptist who dares to speak out when principles are violated is a new experience for me. But I don't want to be one of those who pleads peace and remains silent in the midst of the darkest period of our Baptist history.

"Don't be mislead," he warned. "Fundamentalist architects are not, as they claim, steering Southern Baptists back to their roots as a basis for a new direction. ... Rigid doctrines and hierarchical structures are not congenial to religious freedom."

Crouch said the Alliance, which has grown from 22 members to 25,300 since its founding 13 months ago, will continue to financially support Southern Baptist Women in Ministry and the faculty legal defense fund at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C.

Although the Alliance never has solicited churches for missions funds, it is receiving a growing amount of gifts which have been designated for "disenfranchised or embattled agencies of the denomination," Crouch reported.

The pastor said he has noticed, in particular, a trend toward churches voluntarily cutting into their Cooperative Program funds and sending gifts to the Alliance earmarked for the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs.

Other gifts that would have gone to the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board through Cooperative Program channels have been sent directly to the Alliance for use at its discretion in home missions.

Crouch said even though the Alliance does not encourage the practice, he does see the organization beginning to play a larger role in channelling funds to agencies which have experienced budget cutbacks at the hands of conservatives.

The Alliance has "no pre-conceived ideas" as to its future if conservatives continue their control of the denomination. But, he added, the group would find it "very uncomfortable to support indefinitely the present trend of leadership.

"C.R. Daley, former editor of Kentucky's Western Recorder, was quoted in Virginia's Religious Herald on Nov. 5 as saying, 'In years to come many Southern Baptists will ask, "Where were you when fundamentalists took over the convention? Why did you not lift a finger when our beloved denomination was destroyed and replaced with another?"' Crouch said.

"Members of the Southern Baptist Alliance will be able to say that they did something -- they spoke out. We are those who found non-involvement to be beyond comprehension and without excuse."

--30--

Congress Overrides Veto
Of Civil Rights Bill

By Kathy Palen

N-BJC

Baptist Press
3/23/88

WASHINGTON (BP)--Congress has overridden President Reagan's veto of legislation designed to restore broad coverage of federal civil rights laws.

Both the Senate and the House of Representatives March 22 voted by more than the needed two-thirds margins -- 73-24 in the Senate and 292-133 in the House -- to override Reagan's veto of the Civil Rights Restoration Act, thus putting the measure into law.

The new law overturns a 1984 Supreme Court decision that held a federal anti-discrimination ban applied only to the specific program receiving federal funds, not the entire institution. Proponents of the legislation argued it does no more than restore institution-wide coverage of the civil rights statutes. But opponents claimed it goes far beyond its stated purpose and imposes new regulations on churches, their institutions, and other entities such as small businesses and family farms.

President Reagan said he vetoed the measure because of its threats to religious liberty.

Much of the debate in both houses of Congress focused on a national campaign -- headed by the Moral Majority -- that generated thousands of telephone calls to congressional offices. In a widely distributed "memo" to pastors, Moral Majority Chairman Jerry Falwell claimed the bill would force churches to "hire a practicing active homosexual drug addict with AIDS to be a teacher or youth pastor, etc."

A number of members of Congress spoke against the national effort, some mentioning Falwell by name. Although no member came out in support of the Falwell campaign, a number did argue in support of sustaining the veto by saying changes should be made in the legislation, including a religious tenets exemption that would have expanded current law exempting institutions "controlled by" a religious organization to cover those "closely identified with the tenets of" a religious organization.

During debate in the House, Rep. W.G. (Bill) Hefner, D-N.C., characterized the campaign as the distribution of "falsehood under the name of religion." He called such actions "reprehensible."

--more--

"I do not blame the thousands of people that have called because they are frightened," said Hefner, a Southern Baptist. "It is enough to frighten a pastor when he gets a letter that says that this is a gay rights bill that was slipped in on us during the presidential primaries. It is enough to frighten anybody. I do not blame them for not listening to us when we say this does not do that, especially when people go on television and go into tirades that if they are a mom and pop operator of a grocery store and if they take food stamps that they are going to have to hire a homosexual or a transvestite or will have to hire a practicing homosexual drug addict with AIDS to be a youth pastor."

Hefner, a member of North Kannapolis Baptist Church in Kannapolis, N.C., said he would rather lose his seat in the House of Representatives than "cave in to false information and base my vote on what people believe to be true but which I know to be not true."

In a long statement addressing Falwell's charges, Sen. George J. Mitchell, D-Maine, argued that nothing in the bill overrides the free exercise of religion guarantee of the First Amendment. "No American government has ever had or could ever get the power, under our Constitution, to dictate any choice of pastor in a church -- whether it be a youth pastor or any other," Mitchell said.

Even some members who voted to sustain the president's veto voiced concern over the Moral Majority campaign.

Sen. Alan K. Simpson, R-Wyo., said he was "a little disturbed" about the "massive misinformation campaign being waged against this legislation, which charges that all sorts of new rights will emerge as a result of this bill."

While criticizing labeling "religiously motivated people across this country" as against all civil rights bills, Sen. Orrin G. Hatch, R-Utah, said there "have been some extreme comments made by some people opposed to the bill."

Rep. Thomas J. Tauke, R-Iowa, said: "A clarification of the religious tenets exemption to reflect the current environment would at a minimum ensure that institutions closely identified with religious institutions would not be forced to comply with a regulation which was in direct conflict with their religious principles but proponents of this bill did not support this amendment."

Sen. Hatch echoed a similar concern, saying: The fact is the debate today is not over discrimination. It is whether we can have an effective civil rights policy without regulating the activities of the church or synagogue.

"Are we really helpless in our ability to draft legislation that would protect against discrimination while still protecting the rights of religious congregations, prayer rooms and other activities in the church?"

--30--

Mississippi Couple Honored
For Interfaith Witness Work

N - HMB

Baptist Press
3/23/88

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)--Hollis and Eunice Bryant of Clinton, Miss., were honored for outstanding work in training Baptists in Mississippi to share their faith with people of other religious backgrounds.

During the national conference of state Baptist interfaith witness coordinators, Bryant was recognized as state interfaith witness coordinator of the year by the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board. Bryant is consultant in the Cooperative Missions Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention, and is state interfaith witness coordinator for the Home Mission Board.

Mrs. Bryant was honored as interfaith witness associate of the year, an award instituted this year for the first time. Each was presented a plaque from the Home Mission Board by Gary Leazer, director of the board's interfaith witness department.

Leazer said Mrs. Bryant is certified to lead training conferences in more subjects than any of the 412 interfaith witness associates in the nation.

--more--

He explained Mrs. Bryant is certified to lead conferences to train Baptists to share their faith effectively with persons of eight different religious backgrounds: Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, The Way International, the Unification Church (Moonies), the Worldwide Church of God, Islam, the occult, and New Age. In addition, she has studied extensively and led conferences dealing with beliefs of the Bahai, Hare Krisna and Seventh Day Adventists.

Leazer commended the Bryants as a couple who have linked their lives together as a strong team in helping Baptists understand other religions. They have provided a model and example for others to follow, Leazer said.

Bryant is a former pastor of several Mississippi Baptist churches, and former director of missions of three associations in Mississippi. The Bryants were missionaries of the Home Mission Board serving in Anchorage and Juneau, Alaska, for eight years. He was director of missions of Calhoun County Baptist Association in Mississippi before assuming his current position with the state convention in 1978. Both were born in Calhoun County, Miss.

--30--

Religious Magazines' Sales Tax
Exemption Before High Court

By Stan Hastey

N- BJC
Baptist Press
3/23/88

WASHINGTON (BP)--The U.S. Supreme Court has agreed to decide if state laws that provide a sales tax exemption to religious periodicals violate the Constitution's ban on an official establishment of religion.

At issue in the case -- to be argued and decided during the high court's next term -- is a Texas law on the books between 1984 and 1987 that restricted what had been a general exemption from the state sales tax for all magazines to religious periodicals alone.

Claiming the law violated the establishment clause of the First Amendment, Texas Monthly magazine took the state to court. Although a trial court agreed with the 280,000-circulation magazine and struck down the law, a state court of appeals later reversed the lower panel, leading to the Supreme Court appeal.

Even though the Texas legislature reinstated the broader exemption last year, Texas Monthly is seeking to recover nearly \$150,000 in refunds for the three years it had to pay the sales tax.

The high court's decision in the case could affect laws still on the books in 11 other states that provide exemptions for religious publications but deny them to all others.

--30--

Mike Thomas: Master
Of The Five-Minute Language

By Bill Bangham

F-(O)
(Bhood)
Baptist Press
3/23/88

BELTON, Texas (BP)--When James Ngila calls Mike Thomas master of the five-minute language it's more than a joke.

They converse for a moment in Swahili. "He speaks it well, what little he speaks," said Ngila with a laugh. "But it only lasts five minutes."

Ngila and Thomas are part of an international community at Mary Hardin-Baylor University, Belton, Texas. Ngila, from Kenya, is a student. And Thomas, a language professor, is director of Logos Institute, part of the university's World Missions Center.

Through Logos Institute Thomas has become master of many a five-minute language -- 22 in fact.

Logos Institute helps English-speaking Christians share their faith in other languages. Through the materials it offers -- and a modicum of discipline -- people can master enough in any one of the 22 languages to do just that.

--more--

"Most people think, 'Gosh, I'd have to go to language school for a year,'" said Thomas, "and then work to become fluent in the language before they can witness."

But Thomas has found that just isn't true. "Foreigners don't expect Americans to speak their language," he said. "The key is to speak enough to plant a seed. Then you can give them literature."

Logos supplies audiotapes, workbooks, the method, even follow-up literature. You supply the discipline. That's all it takes, according to Thomas.

"Anybody can learn anything through repetition," he said. "That's the way children learn."

"Like Christ said, receive the kingdom as a child. If people will open themselves to another language and culture as a child and just accept it ... it's their's."

Logos Institute was founded on the heels of a Lay Renewal Weekend in 1979. At the time, Thomas was a language professor at the University of Houston, a new Christian feeling something of a call to foreign missions, and a young father.

He was trying to pull all those elements into an acceptable whole, when the spiritual-emphasis weekend was held at his church.

"I don't think Logos could have happened without Lay Renewal," he said. "The concept of Lay Renewal -- that laypeople are ministers and that it was up to me to discover what my ministry was -- was the key. I realized I can be a layman and a minister, but not necessarily in the traditional mold."

The following summer he trained 26 college students in Portuguese for a year of volunteer service in Brazil. And over the next two summers he developed and refined a formula for teaching the basics of a language in a short period of time.

Logos Institute was born. Since then, it's methods and materials have been used around the world. And several state Baptist conventions use them.

Texas gives Logos' Spanish materials to volunteers in the River Ministry and the partnership relationship projects with Mexican Baptists.

Thomas doesn't know much about where the majority of his materials is used or how people find out about it. There's never been a large advertising budget, or money for follow-up surveys.

For a couple of years the institute was located in the back bedroom of his Houston apartment. "We were literally filling orders and changing diapers on the same bed," said Thomas. "We made jokes that it was going to run us out of the house. It almost did." Fortunately, they moved to Mary Hardin-Baylor about that time.

When they first considered moving there, "I thought, what is international about Belton, Texas?" said Thomas. But on the small, tree-lined campus he found 120 students from 33 countries. Since then, "I've had a lot of free language study," he said.

He also found translators and talent for cassette recordings and literature to expand Logos's ministry to 22 languages. And a home for the institute under the umbrella of the university's World Missions Center.

For the future, there are still other languages to codify in the Logos system. Ultimately Thomas would like to have programs in all the world's major languages, and a few of the minor.

It's estimated there are 3,500 languages in the world today, said Thomas; 200 with at least 1 million speakers each. And it's possible to communicate with roughly 75 percent of the world's population through 20 languages; through 200 languages, better than 95 percent can be reached.

"Except for some kind of Pentecostal miracle, you're limited in who you can communicate with (in English)," said Thomas. "But they're coming here, even if you're not going there."

Thomas would like all people to hear the gospel, even if it's only five minutes at a time.

Boomers Create Need
For Special Churches

By Barbara Denman

F-10
(F10)

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (BP)--For years Madison Avenue has been targeting the Baby Boom generation to sell everything from soap to sex. Now a church-starting specialist is using marketing and advertising methods to start non-traditional churches to reach Baby Boomers for Christ.

John Worcester, 36, has started two Southern Baptist churches in Georgia and California for Baby Boomers, young adults between the ages of 22 and 41.

Worcester, of Huntington Beach, Calif., believes church starting is the most "biblical and effective way to reach this generation for Jesus Christ." And his experience has proven him correct.

In the churches Worcester has started, most of the growth -- nearly 70 percent -- has come from people making first-time professions of faith in Christ. And in its slowest year, his latest church registered one baptism for every four resident members.

During a conference on Reaching People Through New Work, sponsored by the Florida Baptist Convention March 14-16, Worcester said Baby Boomers will not be reached by the traditional church but through a new type of church that targets their needs, likes and dislikes. "We are out to reach non-Christians, not please existing churches," he said.

Baby Boomers are concerned with the practicalities of life and how Christianity fits into their needs. "They want to know what to do when the two-year-old throws yogurt on the mini-blinds," Worcester said.

With 76 million babies born from 1946 to 1964, Baby Boomers represent the largest generation in American society. Baby Boom households account for one-half of the United States population. One publication refers to them as "a pig in a python."

Because of their number and economic potential, Baby Boomers have been courted by advertisers and businesses. They expect churches to cater to them also, Worcester said.

But he does not encourage traditional churches to try to change their appeal, because that would alienate people who presently are being drawn to the church.

Instead, Worcester advocates reaching Baby Boomers through new churches that share the gospel with them "eyeball-to-eyeball;" provide practical Bible teaching to apply to everyday life; use a worship style to their taste, which might include soft rock music; emphasize small-groups that promote intimacy; streamline the church structure; emphasize major ministry in modest facilities; equip women as well as men for significant places of ministry and leadership; and help them develop vital contact with God.

Techniques he has used in reaching this group include sending direct mail; providing clean, attractive nurseries; adopting a casualness in dress consistent with their lifestyle; and dropping Southern Baptist from the church's name but "teaching cooperation with and loyalty to Southern Baptist churches."

But Baby Boomers have not been reached effectively by anyone's churches. Polls indicate they are one-half as likely to attend church as the generation before them. Worcester estimated 87 percent are non-Christians.

"The Baby Boomers want God," he said. "But they have been turned off to the traditional church as they know it because they didn't see it having an effect on their parents." He added most of those parents saw church as a social activity or business contact.

Worcester said he believes television has been the most influential factor on the generation: "I grew up in a culture with TV. When I didn't like it, I just changed the channels. Baby Boomers have changed the channels to our churches."

--more--

Television also bound Boomers together as a group, made them more tolerant and less prejudiced and caused them to miss intimate relationships with their families.

"They're starving for intimacy," Worcester said, which is one reason the generation now is more open to the gospel.

Baby Boomers now are more open to the gospel for several other reasons, Worcester said. The oldest ones are hitting middle age and questioning why they have not attained their goals; their approach to marriage has not worked; and many are in the nesting stage of life and are relatively open to the right kind of church.

A recent Gallup poll substantiated his conclusions, noting 54 percent of the unchurched Baby Boomers are open to becoming involved in a church.

To reach just one-fourth of that 54 percent, Worcester said Southern Baptists must start 36,000 churches with 200 members each. "We need hundreds of these churches in metropolitan areas where Baby Boomers reside," he stressed.

--30--

Illinois Man
Living With AIDS

By Bill Webb

F- (O)
(Ill.)

Baptist Press
3/23/88

ALTON, Ill. (BP)--Stanley Webb is living with AIDS.

The 33-year-old Alton man has made a new start in his life, a life he knows could end in a matter of weeks or months.

Webb, who contracted Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome in the most common way -- by homosexual contact -- walked away from a lifestyle that included homosexual behavior and alcohol and tobacco addiction.

He has recommitted himself to Christ and now is a member of Curdie Heights Baptist Church in Alton.

In an interview at the home of his parents where he lives as he undergoes treatment for AIDS-related throat and skin cancer, Webb accepted responsibility for his condition.

"This illness would not have affected me at all if I had not put myself in a high risk group," he admitted. "I was not living for the Lord. That was a major factor in what was going on, although I do not believe God put this on me as a plague," he added, propping his feet to control swelling.

Webb began feeling ill in late 1985 and was diagnosed as a carrier of the AIDS virus in mid-1986.

"In all those years I ran from the Lord, I always ran to him when I needed him," he said. "This time I didn't. I tried to cut down on everything -- drinking, cigarettes, night life.

"I thought, 'If I take care of myself, everything will be OK,'" he said.

That plan failed.

Early 1987 brought a throat infection and excruciating pain -- and spiritual conviction.

"The first part of February I was under such conviction," he said. "Sure I was frightened because I was trying to go through that thing alone. I was on death row and clasping hold of nothing.

"I wanted to give in and couldn't, so I called my mom into the room," he remembered. "I said, 'Would you hold me?' And she did. It was like the Spirit of the Lord around us in that room. She looked down and said, 'Are you ready to pray now?' We cried and prayed.

--more--

"If I am restored tomorrow, that's just the icing on the cake," he said. "If I have cancer the rest of my life, I'm still going to walk with the Lord."

An outgoing, optimistic spirit replaced the bitterness in his life. He began to reorder his priorities.

He made an emphatic break with his homosexual lifestyle. He denounced homosexuality -- and did so nationally in a television appearance on the "700 Club" -- and as a result is shunned by most of his old friends.

Today he has contact with only four of perhaps 400 friends from what he calls his "old life." To those few, "I've become the AIDS answer man," he said, smiling.

"I was not born a homosexual by any means," he said. "It was a choice I made due to environment and exposure. I gave in and followed the lifestyle of free will. God did not make homosexuals this way."

Webb witnesses to his faith in Christ to those who will listen.

"I don't cherish this illness," he said, "but through this illness the Lord has been able to use me in planting seeds."

He makes friends in the lobby while he is waiting for cancer treatments. He places gospel tracts in the magazines in the doctor's office.

A friend has accepted Christ and turned away from a homosexual lifestyle.

Webb had to overcome nerve damage in his fingers to develop a "card ministry, writing to shut-ins of our church" and other churches, he said. "I feel impressed with a calling to minister to lonely people.

"Sometimes I have to say to myself, 'Look, AIDS is not your master,'" he admitted. "I won't let AIDS stand in the way of serving the Lord."

Webb hasn't had to struggle alone with AIDS.

His parents prayed for him through the years and waited for their prodigal to come home. When he returned, they accepted him unconditionally.

Fellow church members and other Christians have been "loving and caring," he said.

"People talk about a hedge of protection and for me those are Christian friends I've been surrounded with."

He recalled the response after he gave his testimony at First Baptist Church in Bethalto -- people put their arms around me. I've had more support than anyone I know in this."

Webb is quick to thank God for progress with his treatments. He thought back to a year ago when doctors gave him two weeks to live.

"When I credit God, I've never had a doctor disagree," he said.

"I'm not out of the woods yet," he quickly acknowledged. "But I truly appreciate where I've come from. I've been forgiven of so much."

Southern Baptists Gifted
For All Ministry Needs

By Charles Willis

N-SSB

NASHVILLE (BP)--Instead of a nominating committee, Southern Baptist churches should have a committee to seek out members' gifts and then match them with ministry needs, a pastor told 130 participants in the National Church Media Library Seminar.

Kenneth Hemphill, pastor of First Baptist Church in Norfolk, Va., said every church should have enough people with the right talents to carry out any ministry opportunity that presents itself. He said churches must focus on the disciple to make Bold Mission Thrust a reality.

"We must be equipped. Media library persons should be partners in this work," he said.

Hemphill, author of a book on spiritual gifts to be released by Broadman Press in July, said "gifts create interdependence. My gift has no value apart from yours. When the body of Christ works properly, every member should have a task. If the church confronts a new task, God will gift it for that task.

"Every church ought to have sufficient laborers for every task," he continued. "Somewhere in the life of the church there is someone gifted to do the tasks at hand.

"Paul said to each is given a gift. If you want to improve someone's self-image, let them know God has gifted them for service."

Hemphill said the traditional committee process in churches results in people serving in areas for which they have neither the talent nor the interest and which may no longer even be needed by the church.

"There is nothing worse than being on a committee that is obsolete and destined to failure because we've asked people to serve on the basis of tradition and desperation," he said. "The whole function of the church ought to be based on prayer and helping people discern their giftedness.

"We put the Holy Spirit in a box," Hemphill continued. "God is still creative and is creating gifts for today, gifts that were not even needed in Paul's day."

Hemphill said he believes there can be no spectators in the life of the church because "we all must work together for the proper working of the body of Christ. No person is insignificant in the mission task of the church because all gifts are given for service," he continued. "We are co-workers for God, empowered by him."

Hemphill said there is no task too mundane for church members to perform, and there is no task too great for the church. "Spiritual gifts tell us nothing about the possessor," he observed, "but they tell us everything about the giver."

The seminar was sponsored by the Sunday School Board's church media library department.

--30--

Changing Family Lifestyles
Lead To Crisis In Nurture

By Terri Lackey

F-SSB
Baptist Press
3/23/88

NASHVILLE (BP)--Families are much smaller than 50 years ago; the farm is no longer the predominant workplace; and the hearth as a substitute for the classroom is an antiquated concept.

Hardly revelations.

More moms are working outside the home; one-fourth of the nation's 60 million children under age 18 live with only one parent; and the United States has the highest reported divorce rate in the world.

What's new?

--more--

By the year 2010, America will have a shortfall of 18 million jobs; the fuel crises of the '70s will resurface and endure; and the nation's aging population will grow almost as much as new technology.

What does it all mean?

It means that change is a constant, and those changes will affect the family function and the family structure, according to Michael Hester, director of the Gheen Center for Family Ministry, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky., who addressed a mid-March seminar in Nashville on caring for families of the '90s.

Sponsored jointly by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's family ministry and church administration departments, the seminar was designed to join the concept of pastoral care with ministering to families.

Hester said pastors, church staff and laypeople working with families must identify the challenges facing families today and develop church programs which can help families retain their inherent functions. "Families meet needs (religion, protection, socialization, work and play), and the needs are met differently today than in the past," Hester said.

"The family historically provided work for its own through the farm or a family business, but now we go off to work," Hester said.

Where the family formerly was the primary institution responsible for teaching social values, those values are now learned through school, television and other outside contacts, Hester said.

"Mothers and fathers now have very little involvement in the teaching of these skills," he said. "Likewise, the family historically met the primary, basic need for pleasure and enjoyment. They played together. But organized sports has taken that pleasure out of the backyard."

With the proliferation of churches in the last century, Hester said the family is no longer the primary source of religion. "We let our churches take care of that," he said.

And where the family played the role of protector of its own, "we now let the police, fire department, military and government tend to that," Hester said.

Hester said he believes the family of today is entering a crisis stage. "I believe we are entering a crisis of nurture. Who's going to hug us now? Who's going to provide that basic, sustaining force of encouragement, that nurturing function?" Hester asked.

Hester said the today's on-the-move family "has no time or energy to provide nurturing. There is no such thing as nurture-on-the-run."

Hester said one would think with the emergence of smaller families, nurturing would be easier. "You would think 'the less people, the more nurturing,' but that just isn't true. With smaller families there are less people to go around and do the nurturing," he said.

Another reason for the deterioration of nurturing, Hester said, "is that the cult of domesticity exists no longer. Women have always been the primary care givers, and now they have moved into a new world. Six out of 10 women with husbands and children will work. They now focus on self-esteem."

Single-parent families are another reason nurturing has fallen by the wayside. Nine of every 10 single-parent families are headed by women, Hester said.

And about 60 percent of the children under age 18 who have a woman as their sole parent live in poverty.

"It's hard to nurture when you're poor and you're having to work," Hester said.

Hester said he fears this generation of people focus only on themselves. "We have people whose creed is 'I want to do what's best for me,'" Hester said. "Who is going to provide the kind of nurturing children need for their self-worth?"