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Bush nominated
as SEBTS dean

By Marv Knox

WAKE FOREST, N.C. (BP)--L. Russ Bush III has been nominated as vice president for academic affairs and dean of the faculty at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C., announced Southeastern President Lewis A. Drummond.

Bush is associate professor of philosophy of religion at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. His nomination has been opposed by the Southeastern faculty, who gave him a vote of no confidence in November.

Southeastern has been marked by controversy since October 1987, when the seminary's new conservative trustee majority changed the way the school chooses its teachers, vesting more responsibility with the president and trustees.

President W. Randall Lolley, Dean Morris Ashcraft and six other administrators subsequently resigned. Lolley and Ashcraft cited the policy changes -- which they interpreted as ensuring that only biblical inerrantists could be added to the faculty and as dismantling their apparatus for allowing faculty leadership in selecting new teachers -- as the reason for their decisions.

A Southeastern Seminary news release announcing the Bush nomination said: "Russ Bush has been considered and investigated in depth by Dr. Drummond. The president is absolutely confident in recommending him to the board of trustees."

"His reputation as a scholar is excellent, and he is a pleasing, thoughtful and warm personality," Drummond said. "He has received high recommendations from many sources across the Southern Baptist Convention."

Bush meets the criteria he had set for a dean, Drummond told Baptist Press: "We wanted him to be the traditional things -- a Southern Baptist, involved in theological education, with a good track record of an academic. He meets all those qualifications highly. He's a man who can work with people. He has a lovely spirit."

If the nomination procedure goes as scheduled, Bush will meet with Southeastern faculty, administrators, students and trustees before trustees vote on his appointment March 13-14, said trustee Chairman Robert D. Crowley.

"I think there's no question about him being elected," said Crowley, pastor of Montrose Baptist Church in Rockville, Md. "Some will oppose him, but I feel certain that Dr. Bush will be elected." Crowley predicted a 25-5 trustee vote in Bush's favor.

Despite trustee support, Bush's nomination is opposed by the faculty, according to a statement from the Southeastern chapter of the American Association of University Professors.

"This nomination was made in spite of a unanimous vote by the faculty on Nov. 16, 1988, not to support the candidacy of Dr. Bush due to his lack of qualifications," the statement says. "While Professor Bush was not supported for this position, six other candidates submitted by President Drummond were affirmed by the faculty as possible nominees."

The statement notes a disagreement over the search process and claims the longstanding procedure, which involves the faculty, "has been disregarded." Crowley said, however, the process is being conducted by "approved guidelines."

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The statement also cites current investigations of Southeastern by two accrediting agencies: the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

"The nomination of Professor Bush by President Drummond conflicts with the clear counsel of the faculty, intensifies the troubled circumstances on campus, disregards the counsel of the Southern Association and contributes to conditions leading to the seminary's sharply declining enrollment," the statement concludes.

C. Michael Hawn, professor of church music and president of the AAUP chapter, explained why the faculty's statement claimed Bush is unqualified for the post: "The most glaring example is there is no evidence on his resume of any administrative experience whatsoever. This is not the kind of position to cut your teeth on administratively -- a very demanding position.

"The dean of the faculty has to have the faculty's confidence to function. He is to be the faculty's advocate in counsel to the administration."

For his part, Bush said, he hopes he can gain the faculty's confidence when he meets with the professors. "I am anxious to talk to them and see if this is the Lord's will," he said. "I have not actually gone to the seminary yet. What I have agreed to do is take the next step in the process. I look forward to talking to them -- faculty, students, trustees."

Drummond's dream for the seminary is one he shares, Bush added: "I have talked to Dr. Drummond. He has told me his dream, his vision for bringing healing and reconciliation. He said the one thing that attracted me to him is that I've spent my whole career in one seminary; I'm intimately acquainted with seminary life and what it's like to be a faculty member.

"I think he (Drummond) is trying to overcome the difficulties the school has faced, to lead the school back toward the mainstream of Baptist life, or at least as it is perceived. He's said to me, 'Come, and let's build the greatest seminary Southern Baptists have ever had.'"

Bush told Baptist Press he empathizes with the faculty: "I realize Southeastern's been under a lot of stress. The faculty has gone through an emotional time. There needs to be reconciliation.

"I've been on a faculty for 16 years. Seminary education has been my life. Everything I've done has been related to seminary work. I realize the pressures a faculty goes through when an administration changes. I'm praying that the Lord will work on both sides of this and bring about a healing."

Bush added he does not take the faculty's opposition personally: "There may be a lot of reasons they would do that. I don't know what their reasons were. They may have had somebody special they wanted, and I understand that. If they knew me and voted that way, it would be different. But I don't take it personally."

Crowley said the faculty's position on Bush will not sway the trustee's vote: "It didn't interfere with the trustees with Dr. Drummond, and it won't interfere with Dr. Bush. We would have expected that. It's no big news. They don't want somebody with conservative theology."

Bush has not been the seminary's lone candidate, Crowley said. The list of possible nominees "started off between 25 and 30" names, Drummond added.

The 10 names presented to the faculty in November included three who were opposed, one who withdrew and six who were approved, Hawn said.

The three opposed were Bush; Richard Melick of Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary in Memphis, Tenn.; and Wayne Grudom of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Ill. Robert Dale, formerly of Southeastern and now church-minister relations director for Virginia Baptists, withdrew. The six approved were Bruce Powers and Delos Miles of the Southeastern faculty; Daniel Aleshire and Gerald Borchert of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.; William Schweer of Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley, Calif.; and Gordon Harris of North American Baptist Seminary in Sioux Falls, S.D.

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"We left the president plenty of latitude, a variety of theological positions," Hawn said. "All of them (the six approved) are conservative, and there's a lot of administrative experience represented, and they are very published people."

Bush, 44, has taught at Southwestern Seminary, where he earned master's and doctor's degrees, since 1973. He also earned a bachelor's degree from Mississippi College in Clinton, and he has studied at North Texas State University and the University of Cambridge, England.

He is one of the general editors of the new commentary to be published by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's Broadman Press. He has been interim pastor of churches in Texas.

He is a member of the American Academy of Religion, the Evangelical Theological Society, the Evangelical Philosophical Society, the Society of Biblical Literature and the Society of Christian Philosophers. He has written articles for such publications as "The Handbook of Christian Philosophy," "Southwestern Journal of Theology" and "Criswell Theological Review."

He is married to the former Cynthia McGraw, and they have two children, Joshua and Bethany.

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Indiana tabs Abernathy
as director of missions

Baptist Press
1/24/89

INDIANAPOLIS (BP)--James W. Abernathy, director of evangelism and stewardship for the State Convention of Baptists in Indiana since 1980, has been elected the convention's director of missions.

Abernathy was elected through a poll of the Indiana Baptist executive board's executive committee, said Mark Coppenger, executive director-treasurer of the convention.

Abernathy succeeds Jack Redford, who was elected state missions director last fall but was unable to assume the post due to personal health problems. Redford, director of associational missions in Cisco, Texas, formerly was director of church extension for the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board and was secretary of the state missions department in Indiana from 1962 to 1967.

Redford was preceded by Glen Ray, who resigned in March 1987 in a dispute over the use of designated funds.

Abernathy, 63, was offered the leadership of the Indiana Sunday school/church training program when Redford was elected. Coppenger, who also has assumed the evangelism/stewardship responsibilities in a move to reduce the size of the convention staff, said convention leaders will continue the search for a Sunday school/church training leader.

Prior to joining the Indiana convention, Abernathy was director of associational missions in Philadelphia, Pa. He also has been pastor of churches in Kentucky, Indiana and Tennessee.

Abernathy is a graduate of Catawba College in Salisbury, N.C., and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky. He has been president and vice president of the Indiana convention and has been a member of the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board, Committee on Committees and Resolutions Committee. He also has been on the executive boards of the state Baptist conventions in Kentucky and Indiana.

He and his wife, Ellen, have three daughters and one son.

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Despite lull, AIDS is issue
facing churches, say leaders

By Louis Moore

NASHVILLE (BP)--Although the spread of AIDS has leveled off in recent months, the disease eventually will plague every Southern Baptist association in the country, Southern Baptists who are studying the issue said.

"We are getting calls (about how to deal with AIDS) from small towns across the width and breadth of the country, as well as from the big towns where AIDS is more widely known," said Doug Anderson, director of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's family ministry department.

"I have talked with a number of pastors who have experienced it (AIDS) in their own families or in their own congregations. You might even describe the tone in some of these calls as desperate.

"We cannot be lulled to sleep because of the positive reports that are cropping up about the slowdown in the spread of the disease."

While the spread of AIDS among homosexuals appears to have leveled off and the disease has not exploded in the heterosexual population, about 32,000 new cases were diagnosed in the United States in 1988, observers said. This brings the total number of the country's AIDS cases to 83,000, resulting in almost 50,000 deaths.

Larry Braidfoot, associate director of the Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission, recently attended a national AIDS seminar in Washington. Afterward, he cited a number of encouraging as well as troubling signs that emerged in the meeting.

The most encouraging developments have been in the areas of research and education," said Braidfoot, whose assignment at the Christian Life Commission includes helping to keep Southern Baptists informed about AIDS. "Research continues to indicate that the HIV virus is not easily contracted and is not casually spread. The virus is spread almost exclusively by intimate sexual contact, by needle-sharing among intravenous drug abusers and by prenatal infection during pregnancy.

"The more discouraging news, in addition to the lack of progress on development of a cure and a vaccine, is the growing number of intravenous drug abusers contracting the disease."

Sen. Alfonse D'Amato, R-NY, spoke at the conference and estimated 80 percent of the 200,000 heroin drug addicts in New York City now are infected with the AIDS virus, Braidfoot said.

"A corollary is an increase in AIDS cases among children," Braidfoot said. "By 1988, the number of children age 13 and under with AIDS was about 1,300, many of them infants infected by their mothers' blood." D'Amato estimates this number soon will grow to 10,000 to 20,000.

Such a dramatic increase in the number of infants and children with AIDS almost certainly will precipitate concerns and questions in church nurseries and day-care centers operated by local Southern Baptist churches throughout the country, Braidfoot and Anderson said.

The growing concern among Southern Baptists about AIDS points to the need for a comprehensive education program to help pastors and laypeople cope with the sociological, psychological and spiritual impact of the disease, they added.

Response to the AIDS crisis at the national (governmental) level has been growing," said Braidfoot. "Federal spending on AIDS research and education has increased dramatically from the early years of detection.

"Much still remains to be done, especially in the area of ministry to victims and families of AIDS. As Christians, we Southern Baptists are called to respond to this challenge."

Retired Hollywood character actor
settles as Tennessee Baptist layman By Lohnie Wilkey

MEDON, Tenn. (BP)--For 41 years, Gene Evans rode the range and fought battles on the silver screen while coping with the hustle and bustle of Hollywood.

Today, Evans is content watching the golden sunset on his tranquil west Tennessee farm where the only hustle and bustle is the wind rippling through the trees.

Movie and television Western buffs will remember Evans as a veteran character actor who has appeared in more than 50 motion pictures and more than 100 popular television shows, including "Gunsmoke," "Bonanza" and "My Friend Flicka," in which he had a starring role.

And although his acting talents garnered three Emmy nominations for his roles on "Gunsmoke," he is better known today by the congregation of New Union Church in Medon as a caring neighbor and fellow church member who loves pecan pies.

A native of Arizona and longtime resident of California, Evans was not a candidate to retire to west Tennessee.

Evans had never been to Tennessee until an acting job led him to the Volunteer State in 1972. He had a role as Sheriff Thurman in the first "Walking Tall" movie, which was filmed in and around Jackson.

While in Tennessee for eight weeks, Evans recalled, he saw a great deal of countryside and made several good friends, whom he often returned to visit.

By then, he was thinking of eventual retirement, and when the opportunity arose in 1976 to buy the farm in Hardeman County, he seized it.

After he bought the farm, Evans built a log cabin that eventually was destroyed by fire while he was away in California. At first tempted to sell and not rebuild, Evans reconsidered at the urging of his daughter, who visits regularly from California.

When he first moved to the farm, Evans came to know Harold Armstrong, a neighbor and member of New Union Church. Afterwards, he was clearing the property near his pond at the rear of his cabin when Armstrong came by on a "bushhog."

Evans asked Armstrong if he would bushhog the weeds and overgrowth, which his neighbor did gladly. After he completed the task, Armstrong refused payment. Finally, at Evans' persistence, Armstrong told him to make the check payable to New Union Church.

"That made an impression on me because, we live in a materialistic society, especially where I come from," Evans noted.

"Here was a guy who worked out a way to make me feel I was not taking advantage of our friendship, while getting his message across."

Evans, who was baptized as a child, still had not begun attending a church in the area, but he soon became acquainted with Danny Moss, pastor of New Union.

He eventually began attending regularly when he was in town. After about a year, while Evans was in California, the church burned in January 1987.

This brought back memories of how his cabin burned. "I had made so many friends," Evans recalled, "and when I returned they were 'up the long creek.'"

For several months, the church, which had inadequate insurance, met in an old school building that was hot and "had many mosquitos in attendance," Evans related.

Noting he wanted to help but didn't know how, Evans "worried" for a long time before finally turning it over to God in prayer.

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He decided to help the church raise money for rebuilding by getting the local theater group in Jackson to perform a benefit play.

After talking with Moss, who admitted he first had reservations simply because something like that had not been done before, Evans proceeded with plans to present "Arsenic and Old Lace."

"You do whatever you need to do and God blesses it," Moss said.

Using the Jackson Theatre Guild as his base, Evans involved many of the local people in the production, including Moss, who portrayed an Episcopal priest.

Church members helped build sets, sell soft drinks, and make posters to promote the project.

In addition, Union University allowed the theater group to practice on campus, and Lambuth College, a Methodist-affiliated school, donated the use of its theater for the play, which ran to packed houses at all eight showings.

The effort made people "aware there was a little church in the boonies that was going to come back and do something," Evans said.

Moss related that, including donations from people who learned about the plight because of the theater production, the effort netted the church about \$20,000.

The play also had other benefits, Evans said. He noted people who never had seen a live play attended and like it.

And while the play helped the church and community, it also "did a lot for me," Evans admitted.

When he first bought the property in Hardeman County, people "would look at me funny" thinking they recognized him but not quite knowing for sure, he said.

He related that most of the local communities have strong family ties, and people tend to be wary of anyone who moves into the area. And the fact Evans was a "celebrity" added to the suspicion. The locals wondered, "Why did he want to be here?" Evans said.

"Perhaps they thought all I would do would be have wild parties," he laughed.

His involvement, however, with New Union Church definitely was the turning point as far as his acceptance in the community, Evans affirmed.

"The people knew I was serious," he said. "I became a real person."

Evans, who now accepts only one acting job a year and tends to stay on his farm more and more with fewer trips to California, has entrenched himself in the community. Neighbors know of his love for pecan pies, and occasionally will drop by with one for him to test.

Although "retired" he's active. He has been "repaying" the Jackson Theatre Guild for its help with the church benefit by assisting in plays to raise funds for a regional theater, a goal that is nearing reality, he noted.

And, at New Union where he joined, he is ready to serve when called upon, as evidenced by his narration of the church's Christmas cantata.

Although Evans, a widower, still goes to California for an occasional acting role or to visit his three children, his heart is in Tennessee.

"It's so quiet here that it takes me a long time to get used to the 'racket' out there when I do visit," he said.

He's definitely content on his new "home on the range."

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(BP) photo available upon request from the Baptist & Reflector, newsjournal of Tennessee Baptist Convention

1st 'professor on mission'
describes Kenya experience

By Brenda J. Sanders

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP)--The first faculty member to participate in the "professor on mission" program at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary recently returned to the Kansas City, Mo., campus from a five-week trip to Africa.

F. William Ratliff, registrar and associate professor of Christian philosophy and theology, went overseas through the program, which links the seminary in partnership with the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

The program is designed to meet specific missions needs by involving Midwestern faculty members directly in short-term teaching and ministry assignments overseas. The program is financed by the V. Lavell Seats Fund, an endowment named in honor of the institution's senior professor of missions.

Ratliff taught classes in historical and systematic theology at International Baptist Theological Seminary of East Africa in Limuru, Kenya. His students were African Baptists involved in various ministries in the area. They included pastors, church starters and directors of missions.

"I enjoyed the students immensely," Ratliff said. "They were well prepared and had good English skills. Just getting to know them was the highlight of my trip."

Discussions with the students triggered some theological reflection for Ratliff. "I had some very good conversations with them about the nature of sacrifice in tribal religions," he reported. "That will help me in thinking about and teaching the doctrine of atonement."

In addition to his teaching duties, Ratliff preached in area churches every Sunday. He only needed the help of an interpreter twice, when his sermons were translated into Swahili, he said, noting most of the Kenyans he met understood English.

Ratliff also talked with administrators at the African seminary about possibilities for future contact through the professor on mission program. He said the Kenyans were "excited about the program and appreciative of the initiative Dr. Seats and Midwestern have taken along this line."

They also discussed the possibility of faculty and student exchange programs between the two seminaries, he said: "I think we had a very good first experience with the Professor on Mission program. The nationals and missionaries in Kenya like the approach we're taking and want to encourage it."

Ratliff said he gained a great deal from the trip. He appreciated being able to visit with two Midwestern graduates now serving as missionaries in Kenya, Ben Hess and Sam Turner.

"After being on the field with them, I think I now have a keener insight into the parameters in which a missionary works these days," he said. "I'm more sensitive to the relationship with national conventions and have a more realistic perception of the lifestyle and requirements of contemporary mission work."

These insights will affect his teaching in the classroom and will help him be a better adviser to students interested in career missions, Ratliff said. "Now I can share from firsthand knowledge what I think might help a person be better prepared for missions service," he explained.

In addition, he gained an increased awareness of the interrelation of ministry around the globe, he said, noting, "We're in a cooperative venture as ministers."

The problems faced by missionaries in other lands are concerns all Christians should consider prayerfully, he added, saying, "I hope to be a person who reflects constructively on those problems."

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Ratliff is an enthusiastic supporter of the professor on mission program: "I think that all my colleagues would benefit from and enjoy the opportunity to go to Kenya or elsewhere. It can't help but be a growing experience for our faculty."

M. Vernon Davis, vice president for academic affairs and dean of the faculty, said no definite plans have been made for a second faculty member to participate in the program. However, "there are a lot of dreams for where the program could go from here," he said.

"In the future, the program will expand, and more professors will go. I think it will broaden the horizon of our teaching here."

"Through this program, Midwestern professors will bring back a new appreciation of missions. As a result, they become inspiring influences to students as they consider missions as a vocational choice."

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Church architects urged to place
theological integrity before art

By Charles Willis

Baptist Press
1/24/89

LAKE BUENA VISTA, Fla. (BP)--A worship center should be designed and built to provide the setting for corporate worship, not primarily to be a work of art, more than 60 church architects were told during a mid-January national workshop.

"Designing Worship Centers" was the theme for the annual Workshop for Architects, held at Lake Buena Vista, Fla.

"The theological issues involved in the worship experience are more significant than artistic issues related to style," said Gwenn McCormick, director of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's church architecture department.

McCormick acknowledged artistic style is important because it "may either underscore or undermine the essence of the gospel the church proclaims. Therefore, the starting point in designing worship centers is with the church's understanding of the gospel, the experience of Christian worship and the nature of the church itself.

"The building can suggest that God is up in the dim recesses of a remote chancel, or worse, that he is out beyond an East window," McCormick explained. "Or the building can lift up the promise of Christ, 'Where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there.'"

McCormick said he believes a church's building committee and the architect need to talk about worship before they can be ready to discuss architecture.

"As church architects you will be involved with churches of varying levels of theological understanding and commitment," he continued. "Some churches will be able to articulate clearly and pointedly their theological commitments involved in the worship experience. Other churches will be only remotely aware that theology should have a prominent place in the design of the worship center."

But McCormick told the architects there may be times when their "greatest initial contribution will be to assist the building committee in focusing its own theology related to worship and the design of the worship facility."

He said he believes church architecture too seldom reflects a real understanding of what takes place in corporate worship.

"Too many churches and architects have been content to copy the solutions of others rather than engage in the discipline of asking probing questions and seeking creative solutions," he observed.

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"Make no mistake about it," McCormick cautioned. "The building will speak, and the message it proclaims will either have theological integrity or it will be muddled and confused. Wherever there is confusion between the profession of the church and the proclamation of the building, the building almost always wins.

"In designing the building, architects do far more than draw lines and develop form," he continued. "You are helping to create sermons in stone and mortar and glass. Working with a church in designing the worship center gives the architect an opportunity to make a significant contribution to theological integrity for that congregation for years to come."

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Rural church sends signal
of concern via cable TV

By Mark Wingfield

Baptist Press
1/24/89

FRENCHBURG, Ky. (BP)--Through television, a rural Southern Baptist church has sent its community a signal of concern for local ministry.

Using home video equipment, members of Frenchburg Baptist Church in Frenchburg, Ky., produce a variety of programming for their local cable system. The broadcasts have built a bridge into the community for evangelism and invigorated the church's sense of ministry, according to pastor John Ramsey.

Although the programs are not as polished as those the major networks produce, response from the 350 homes on the cable system has been positive, Ramsey said. The city council recently required a new cable operator to honor the church's contract with the previous operator before agreeing to a franchise.

Frenchburg, in Menifee County with a population of 6,000, is 25 miles from the nearest Wal-Mart, and has no local newspaper or radio.

After a year and a half on the cable system, Frenchburg Baptist Church has increased both baptisms and attendance. More importantly, Ramsey said, the church has better access to the community.

"Being on TV changed our image in the community in the first six months in a way that would have taken 25 years otherwise," Ramsey said. "After a month or so, we realized we had something bigger than the church itself. This was something that could influence our community positively like nothing else ever had."

The church broadcasts Sunday services live, taking advantage of the opportunity to show the unchurched what goes on inside the church. Ramsey conducts baptisms and the Lord's Supper on live TV, carefully explaining the significance of each.

"Seeing what we're doing inside the church gives people the sense that they've already been there," Ramsey said. "They're not afraid to come in. Many people who were hostile to the church have opened up."

But this 200-member church has extended its television ministry beyond Sunday services.

One layperson teaches a Sunday school class for the homebound. Another gives weekday news reports, including school lunch menus, weather and birthdays. The church airs profiles of local businesses and televises local sporting events, complete with folksy color commentary.

"There's more to evangelism than revivals," Ramsey explained. "This is a different type of evangelism. It's breaking down walls and barriers. It's an opening-our-home-to-you type of evangelism.

"That's what is unique about what we do," he said. "It's ministry."

Neither Ramsey or his church members had experience in video production.

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Using home video equipment helped, because it is simple to operate. "A lot of people have trouble operating a VCR, so how are you going to teach them something more difficult than that?" Ramsey said.

The home video equipment also cut expenses to about \$3,000. This made the project feasible for a church which took in only \$74,000 in total receipts last year. The church's Brotherhood took the effort on as a mission project and provided the needed money.

Ramsey said he was reluctant to undertake such a bold endeavor at first. An inactive church member gave him the idea after the church got a satellite dish to receive BTN broadcasts from the Baptist Sunday School Board and ACTS from the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission.

That inactive church member was the first person reached by the television ministry, Ramsey said. He is now active and has been installed as a deacon.

Through an agreement with the local cable operator, the church provides regular transmissions from ACTS which are pre-empted for the church's local programming.

Ramsey believes the local religious programming has a credibility which national televangelists lack. Because the church is located in a rural area where most people know each other, non-church members easily identify with people seen on the local broadcasts, he said.

"Ministry is putting something into the community, not asking for money. What we're doing on local cable is putting into the community without asking for anything in return."

While helping the community the church has gained a better self-image, Ramsey said.

"For the first time we began to see ourselves as other people see us. We didn't like some of what we saw, so some things changed. It has increased our self-worth and our self-image.

"The community was shocked that this could be done. We've been told for so long that we can't do much as a poor, rural town. This gave us all a feeling of pride that we can do something unique.

"What God has done for us through the TV ministry has been revival -- progressive, day-by-day revival."

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