



BAPTIST PRESS

News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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May 4, 1989

89-72

Resolutions Committee chairman
appeals for early resolutions

By Linda Lawson

N-SSB

NASHVILLE (BP)--To assist the Southern Baptist Resolutions Committee for the convention's 1989 annual meeting in getting a head start on its work, the chairman has appealed to messengers to send him advance copies of resolutions they plan to submit June 13 in Las Vegas, Nev.

Mark Coppenger, executive director-treasurer of the State Convention of Baptists in Indiana, asked that resolutions, preferably typed, be sent by May 24 to his attention at P.O. Box 24189, Indianapolis, Ind. 46224.

Coppenger was named in late April by SBC President Jerry Vines to chair the 10-member Resolutions Committee.

The committee plans to meet in Nashville Friday, May 26, to get acquainted, get organized and review advance resolutions submitted to the committee, Coppenger said. The group also will meet Saturday, June 10, in Las Vegas, to continue its work.

Messengers who send advance copies of resolutions must also submit them on the first day of the convention, he said. Committee representatives will be at a table near the platform in the convention center to receive resolutions during business sessions that day. Titles of proposed resolutions will then be read into the convention record by a convention officer and forwarded to the committee for consideration.

According to SBC Bylaw 21, the committee has the "duty ... to prepare and submit to the convention resolutions which the committee deems appropriate for adoption and to report on all matters submitted to it by the convention, with or without recommendation or amendments."

The bylaw also requests that proposed resolutions be sent to the committee 30 days in advance of the annual meeting.

"We will do our best to draft resolutions that are pleasing to God," Coppenger said.

Bylaws specify that three members of the Resolutions Committee also be members of the SBC Executive Committee. They are Jerry Brown, a truckstop operator and member of Emmanuel Baptist Church of Edmond, Okla.; Joy Dorsett, a homemaker and member of Central Park Baptist Church in Birmingham, Ala.; and Walt Tomme, pastor of Tyson Community Baptist Church in McLean, Va., but affiliated with the District of Columbia Baptist Convention.

Vines also named the chairman of the 1988 Resolutions Committee, Jerry Sutton, pastor of Two Rivers Baptist Church in Nashville, to serve on the 1989 committee.

Other members are David Allen, pastor of Audelia Road Baptist Church in Dallas; Kenneth Hemphill, pastor of First Baptist Church of Norfolk, Va.; David McAlpin, pastor of First Baptist Church of Pine Castle in Orlando, Fla.; James Merritt, pastor of First Baptist Church of Snellville, Ga.; and Linda Shrewsbury, a member of Memorial Baptist Church in Tulsa, Okla.

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Lack of sponsorship doesn't send
anti-Semitic signal, Lewis says

By Joe Westbury

N-HMB

Baptist Press
5/2/89

ATLANTA (BP)--The Southern Baptist Home Mission Board intends to continue dialogue with Jews, even though the agency declined to co-sponsor a recent Christian-Jewish workshop, HMB President Larry Lewis said.

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Lewis made the clarification after two Southern Baptists charged the board with undermining interfaith relations by withdrawing from the 11th National Workshop on Christian-Jewish Relations. The event was held March 27-30 in Charleston, S.C.

In the past 18 years, the board's interfaith witness department has co-sponsored 15 dialogues with Jews. Support for this year's workshop was withdrawn after the agency's board of directors expressed concern about the selection of two of the Southern Baptist speakers, Lewis said.

The speakers in question were Nancy Hastings Sehested, pastor of Prescott Memorial Baptist Church in Memphis, Tenn., and Robert Maddox, president of Americans United for Separation of Church and State.

In separate open letters to the HMB, Sehested and former HMB employee George Sheridan, who also participated in the conference, accused the agency of undermining interfaith dialogue with Jews by withdrawing from the workshop.

Sehested charged the agency with sexism and "denigration of women ministers." Sheridan alleged the board withdrew support because Maddox had spoken at a conference of homosexuals while a speechwriter for President Jimmy Carter a decade ago.

Lewis denied those charges and said he regretted "misunderstandings" that resulted from the HMB administrative committee's decision to withhold sponsorship. Some members of that committee did not believe Sehested and Maddox were representative of the majority of Southern Baptists, he said.

Lewis said HMB directors wanted to distance the agency from a meeting where Southern Baptist representation was limited to controversial personalities.

"We strongly endorse the workshop and intend to support it in the future," Lewis said. "Our withdrawal was an attempt to keep our agency from becoming further embroiled in continued controversy.

"The administrative committee felt it could not in good conscience support the program of this particular workshop. It was a one-time action that applied only to this event, and does not preclude Home Mission Board participation in future workshops."

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Phoenix church finds pull tabs
have little redeeming value

By Karen Merrick

F-10
(Ariz)

Baptist Press
5/4/89

PHOENIX, Ariz. (BP)--The project sounded worthwhile enough.

When youth at Love Baptist Church in Phoenix, Ariz., heard they could help pay for kidney dialysis for a teen-age girl by collecting pull tabs from aluminum cans, they jumped at the chance to lend a hand.

Church members banded together to help, wriggling stubborn tabs off can after can to help the unfortunate girl. Thousands of tabs later, though, the group learned their project was probably not a legitimate one, leaving youth a little embarrassed and somewhat disillusioned about charitable efforts.

Youth director Alice Thornton, who also is Arizona Baptist Children's Services' coordinator for foster care, had heard about the project through a services employee who also was interested in helping the needy teen.

"I was skeptical about it" at first, Thornton said, but she was given details about the program that made it seem legitimate. Little information about the girl was provided, however, supposedly to protect her privacy.

As the Love Baptist group began accumulating tabs, Thornton delivered them by the bagful to the services residential treatment center, which also was collecting the tabs. The tabs ultimately were supposed to be taken to a hospital that would provide dialysis for the nameless girl.

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Thornton abandoned the project after trying unsuccessfully to obtain details about the girl and to locate a hospital involved in a pull-tab collection program.

"We just couldn't make any sense of how it worked. ... I was unable to verify it," she said.

"There has never been any truth to that pull-tab rumor," said Drew Lybrook, group public relations manager for Reynolds Aluminum Recycling Company. "We've tried for years to track down the origins of these rumors, and we've never had any success."

The rumors have been circulating off and on for 20 years and have involved collecting portions of cigarette packages as well as pull-tabs, said Gladys Stahl of the communication department at St. Joseph's Hospital and Medical Center in Phoenix. The hospital has never been involved in such a program, she said.

"It's impossible when you consider what it costs for dialysis that collecting pull tabs is going to do anybody any good," she said.

The cost of dialysis is about \$30,000 per year, said Pat Ames, director of community service and development for the Arizona Kidney Foundation. Ames, a member of North Phoenix Baptist Church, said that, contrary to the underlying principle behind the pull-tab rumors, needy people are never denied dialysis because of lack of income.

In almost all cases, 80 percent of dialysis costs are covered by Medicare, and the Kidney Foundation covers remaining expenses as needed, she said.

Ames, who said she has received many calls about pull-tab collection, noted the rumors often involve children, although children are rarely dialyzed.

"Many times people get very angry," she said. "One man told me one day that I had to be wrong, because Notre Dame (University) does this."

In fact, a variety of groups has been involved in collection projects, she said, citing schools, church groups, banks and even nurses' groups as examples.

In response to nationwide pull-tab rumors, Reynolds Aluminum began a program last year to encourage the collection of cans, rather than tabs, to aid the National Kidney Foundation.

Pull tabs, which actually are called "stay-on tabs," are not designed to be removed from cans and are virtually worthless, Lybrook said. Although the common rumor is that one tab will provide one minute of dialysis, the pull tabs are worth only the tiny amount they can bring at recycling plants, he said.

"The whole can is worth a lot more than the tab," he said.

Operating under the slogan "Keep Tabs on Those Cans," Reynolds recycling centers offer the option of donating money to the Kidney Foundation rather than paying cash for cans.

In states without Reynolds recycling centers, Lybrook suggested, groups interested in helping the Kidney Foundation should take cans to any recycling plant and personally send money they collect to the foundation.

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Baptist on Bush's
public liaison staff

N-BJC
By Kathy Palen

Baptist Press
5/4/89

WASHINGTON (BP)--Les Csorba might spend his morning in a briefing with a group of Seventhday Adventist ministers, while devoting his afternoon to hosting a state championship high school basketball team. That evening, he might be found helping with a dinner for people involved in the fight against homelessness.

So goes the schedule of a Southern Baptist working in the White House Office of Public Liaison.

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Csorba, a member of First Baptist Church of Alexandria, Va., joined the Bush administration as deputy to the special assistant to the president for public liaison. He previously worked on both the Bush presidential transition team and the Bush/Quayle campaign.

The Office of Public Liaison, Csorba explained, works to build support for the president's policies and to educate constituent groups. Each staff member is responsible for a portfolio of issues and constituent groups, he added.

Csorba's portfolio includes Protestant and evangelical groups, conservative and youth groups, sports-related groups and European Americans, as well as issues related to the Nicaraguan conflict, homelessness and Eastern Europe.

By arranging White House briefings, tours and meetings for various constituent groups, the public liaison staff is able to get to "know where the groups are coming from and let them know where the president is coming from," said Csorba, a 1985 political science graduate of the University of California, Davis.

The office also receives input -- through telephone calls, written correspondence and personal visits -- from individuals and groups across the nation concerning White House policies and actions, he said, adding the input is passed along to the president and other White House staff members. In addition, the office plays a role in shaping speeches and other forms of communication coming out of the White House, said Csorba, who is working on a master's degree in public administration at George Mason University in Fairfax, Va.

Under the Reagan administration, the Office of Public Liaison employed about 40 staff members, Csorba said. In keeping with President Bush's commitment to streamline White House operations, he explained, the current staff is made up of less than 15 people but carries a similar load of responsibilities.

Also, the office now has three directors -- each of whom is responsible for specific areas -- rather than one director as during the Reagan years, he added.

Csorba recently resigned from the Southern Baptist Convention Public Affairs Committee, citing his position with the Bush administration.

"There could have been a conflict of interest," he said. "I want to do what's best and what's right. I don't want to compromise my integrity."

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Missions 'hooks'
Baptist couple

By Elizabeth Young

F-CD
(A:2)

Baptist Press
5/4/89

TUCSON, Ariz. (BP)--Not all people who come to Arizona for their health are allowed to sit back and prop up their feet.

Virgil and Judie Bruns encountered "pushers" who gave them a taste of mission work and led them to become mission addicts when they moved to Tucson from Denver in late 1984. Their addiction led them to join the Southern Baptist Mission Service Corps program as full-time volunteers in 1987.

Doctors in Denver suggested Mrs. Bruns move to Arizona -- where the breathing is easier -- following brain surgery for a tumor on her pituitary gland in 1982. Two more brain surgeries, an operation to remove her adrenal glands, and several battles for life itself have made her a living medical miracle. A combination of medications are now necessary for her daily survival.

Yet the medical struggles have been a blessing in disguise, she said: "We don't see my illness as a horrible thing that happened to me but as an opportunity to serve the Lord earlier than we would have been able to. We have all these extra years we wouldn't have had if Virgil had stayed at the bank and retired at 65."

According to the world's standards, the Brunses gave up much when they became Mission Service Corps volunteers. He was highly visible in Denver -- starting a bank from scratch, serving as president of several community organizations and on a first-name basis with leaders from four city governments.

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"Twelve years ago when I married, I thought I had everything," she said, "but I had acquaintances, not friends. ... Thank you, Lord, for allowing me to be in Mission Service Corps."

The Brunses met at a Denver bank, where he was executive vice president and she was a new employee. He was a widower with three children, and she also was a single parent of three children. They both had been praying that God would direct them to a Christian spouse who would love them and their children.

When they married, they and their flock -- ages 18, 17, 16, 14, 14 and 8 -- were dubbed "the Bruns bunch." By the time they moved to Tucson, all but the youngest child were living away from home.

The Brunses encountered their first mission "pusher" at Twenty-Second Street Baptist Church in Tucson. Deacon Arlie Mixer told them about the opportunities for service at Pascua Baptist Center in Tucson.

Ross and Betty Hanna, home missionaries and center director, were major "pushers" at Pascua who led the Brunses to participate in a variety of activities. The Brunses found themselves devoting more and more time there, and "it just became part of us," she said. Hanna led the Brunses to consider becoming Mission Service Corps volunteers.

As they were facing her final brain surgery in 1987, the Brunses separately made commitments to spend the rest of their lives in mission work. They already had been working at Pascua, but that was a half-hearted commitment, he said noting, "We were playing at being involved in mission work."

After joining Mission Service Corps, the Brunses returned to Denver to sell everything they owned, and in the process, they learned a life-changing lesson.

"I always felt that the only way things would happen was because I made them happen," he said. Selling their house, located outside of Denver in a farming community on the plains of Colorado, was a real concern, because property did not sell well in Denver in October.

On Wednesday, he prayed and "turned the situation over to the Lord." On Friday, she prayed, "If you want me in Arizona, we'll go -- even if we have to keep the house and make payments or rent it out."

At a prayer breakfast Saturday morning, he requested prayer for the sale of his house, and at the close of the meeting a breakfast participant linked him by phone with a buyer. In two hours on Monday morning, all transactions related to the sale were completed. It was a miracle, said Bruns, the banker, explaining the process usually took weeks.

Within one week, the Brunses disposed of everything -- their house, furniture, a van, boat and camper. People came in the middle of the night to buy things, she said. One man dusted six inches of snow off the patio furniture and then bought it, virtually sight unseen.

For Bruns, accustomed to long-range forecasting in the banking industry, "it was difficult to think about not being worried about tomorrow." Yet the Brunses have learned "to turn each day over to God," he said. "We don't worry about next year. It's a peace of mind you can't describe when you know the Lord and do his will."

As mission addicts, the Brunses fondly remember their previous assignments, which have crisscrossed the state, and look forward to the next one, wherever it may be.

At Pascua, they worked in the literacy ministry, due to "pusher" Laurel Wiese, director of the program; in the food and clothing ministry; in the scouting program; in summer day camp and in the mission on Sunday.

The food and clothing ministry stretched to towns on the Arizona-Mexico border. Mrs. Bruns tells of giving her own sweater to a shivering woman in Sasabe whose sweater was held together with about 50 safety pins.

When Bruns noticed the sweater was missing, he remarked that it was a good thing the woman hadn't needed shoes. She did, but his wife's were too big.

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The next week, she measured people's feet on sheets from a yellow legal pad so she could match shoes and sizes from the supply in Tucson.

When she noticed an undernourished baby in the congregation at Sasabe, she brought a sack of baby food the next week for the mother. The following week more babies were present, so she brought more food. Finally, 21 babies and their mothers were coming to church, and she had involved Baptist Woman's Missionary Union groups in Tucson churches in providing the baby food.

He, too, tells how God supplied the resources for ministry. One of his banking associates was a bean broker. In just one day in Denver, Bruns was able to buy a trailer for Pascua and fill it with pinto beans, which Pascua purchased at less than one-third of the going rate in Tucson.

"If the Lord hadn't been involved in that," he said, "it wouldn't have happened."

Last April-September, the Brunses worked at Paradise Valley Baptist Conference Center in Prescott. While she cooked, painted and helped with repairs, he also did maintenance work, helped in the bookstore and maintained the swimming pool -- a chore he didn't like at home in Denver but that he didn't mind at camp.

The Brunses then spent more than two months with First Baptist Church of Fort Mohave, until the desert dust forced her back to Tucson. They were able to start a senior adult outreach program by conducting blood-pressure checks in the campgrounds, and they started a children's music program at the church, which grew from six to 21 children.

His volunteer work also has extended to helping with construction of Desert Sands Baptist Church in Hyder, Manzo Mission in Tucson, the parsonage of Grand Canyon Baptist Church and a mission on the border at Agua Prieta.

Now the Brunses are "pushers," too. They work as Mission Service Corps consultants in Catalina Baptist Association, telling their story and recruiting volunteers.

She figures if people will just spend one week of vacation in a volunteer mission endeavor, they'll be "hooked."

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Stetson gets
\$2.08 million

N-CO

Baptist Press
5/4/89

DELAND, Fla. (BP)--A \$2.08 million gift from the M.E. Rinker Sr. Foundation of West Palm Beach, Fla., will fund a new institute for tax and accountancy in Stetson University's School of Business Administration.

The total gift currently pledged is nearly \$3 million when added to a prior 1986 commitment from the Rinker Companies Foundation, Stetson officials said.

A major activity for the new tax and accountancy insitute will be an annual national seminar for tax lawyers and accountants on current tax-saving legislation and procedures, said Stetson President H. Douglas Lee.

Stetson is a Florida Baptist school located in DeLand.

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Adversity, age
cannot stop Lee

By Orville Scott

F-Texas

Baptist Press
5/4/89

DALLAS (BP)--After two heart attacks, by-pass surgery and the amputation of a leg in June of 1986, doctors gave Dallas P. Lee little hope for survival.

But today, the 81-year-old former coordinator of ethnic missions for the Baptist General Convention of Texas is proof of the power of faith in Jesus Christ.

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Moving nimbly on an artificial leg, he leads weekly worship services at Vintage Retirement Complex in Denton, Texas, where he was once a patient and late last year helped start the new Northeast Baptist Church, which is averaging about 50 people in Sunday school. He brings the opening devotional to the adult Sunday school class of the new congregation, a mission of First Baptist Church of Denton.

Lee also works with Jim Gayle, minister of missions at First Baptist and former missionary to Indonesia and Vietnam, helping start Bible studies in apartment complexes in the north Texas city.

Lee was secretary of the language missions department of the Texas Baptist convention from 1960 until he retired in 1972.

During his tenure as ethnic missions leader, Lee helped unify the Mexican Baptist Convention of Texas with the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

He also helped establish of the Rio Grande River Ministry, which has resulted in thousands of volunteers from hundreds of Texas Baptist churches bringing pure water and other necessities, along with 'the water of life,' to millions of people along both sides of the 900-mile-long Rio Grande.

Earlier in his ministry, Lee was missions secretary of District 6 of the Texas Convention and pastor of churches in Graham, Quanah and Edinburg, Texas.

Lee calls himself "a product of cooperative missions and the Southern Baptist Cooperative Program" unified budget.

"Before the Cooperative Program was instituted in 1925, Southern Baptists were not considered a major denomination in the United States," said Lee. "I remember representatives from various institutions coming to individual churches and preaching up a storm and taking a collection. The problem was that the one who inspired the people got all the pie, and there wasn't much left for the next one."

Lee remembers as a child going around with his buddies, tacking up posters on the "75 Million Campaign," the fund-raising effort that led to the adoption the Cooperative Program.

He recalls that while he was growing up in San Antonio, Texas, the city only had 12 Southern Baptist churches, and churches were located by the lowest cost of the property -- "even if it was on the wrong side of the tracks."

"It was only after the Cooperative Program began that we began working together and got a vision of reaching out to our state, nation and world," he said. "We were nobodies till the Cooperative Program came along."

After retiring, Lee worked for six months in development for Mexican Baptist Bible Institute, now Hispanic Baptist Seminary in San Antonio.

He and his wife, Margaret who shared his life and ministry for 58 years before her death last year, also helped start a Hispanic mission. Later, he was a supply pastor and taught Sunday school at First Baptist Church of Lewisville, Texas.

The saddest page of their life together was when she was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease.

"It really hit me when she got to the place she couldn't select her clothes," said Lee. "It was heartbreaking to see her mind and personality go. She was my best friend, partner, buddy and helper. We did everything together -- suffered together, lived and played together. We were as close as a couple could be."

In 1986, Lee had to have a leg amputated due to a blood clot following surgery. Doctors didn't give him much chance of survival. Eventually he recovered, but Mrs. Lee, in the latter stages of Alzheimer's in a nursing home in Colleyville, Texas, always thought he had died.

"I kept asking the Lord to let me get well to take care of Margaret," Lee said.

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While he was recuperating in Vintage Retirement Complex, he was concerned because no Bible study or worship services were conducted.

Finally somebody said, "There's nobody to conduct them." But he volunteered.

Today, he leads a devotional Bible study in the complex. "They think they're my congregation, and I'm their pastor," he says of participants. "It's good for me because it gives me a specific need to study my Bible in order to present something to the group."

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Securing modern office
equipment takes planning

By Terri Lackey

N-SSB

Baptist Press
5/4/89

NASHVILLE (BP)--Mimeograph machines, address-o-graphs and typewriters are words -- and equipment -- fast becoming obsolete in church offices today.

The vocabulary of church secretaries and office workers now revolves around floppy disks, laser printers and keyboard commands.

An estimated 6,100 Southern Baptist churches now have computer systems, and projections indicate by the year 2000 almost half of the denomination's 37,000 churches will be computerized, according to specialist in the field.

Almost 700 church secretaries from 25 states attended the 1989 National Conference for Southern Baptist Secretaries at the denomination's Sunday School Board in Nashville April 26-29.

Secretaries hoping to upgrade their office equipment should go to church financiers with a plan, said Carol Mifflin, administrative assistant to the associate pastor of administration at Casas Adobes Baptist Church in Tucson, Ariz.

"Success in getting the new equipment you need depends in large part on your ability to present a purchase proposal that is thoroughly researched, cost-conscious, sensitive to the church's goals and presented at the right moment and in the right format," she said.

"Doing your homework" is at the top of her list in obtaining the office equipment needed for faster, more efficient service, she said: "You don't want to buy a piece of equipment just for today. It must meet your needs in the future, also. Talk to someone with expertise in the piece of equipment you are looking at, but not someone with an ulterior motive, like selling you that equipment."

Define the requirements and needs of the church and determine what equipment would serve it best, she said.

"Talk with various office personnel in the church to find out what other departments, like the library, need," she said.

Next, analyze the cost of the equipment, she added, noting: "Of course, the initial purchase price will be the primary consideration. But you need to look for hidden costs.

"Make a point of telling the finance committee how the new equipment will save more money in the long run, not just how much it costs. And be ready, because they are going to want to see some hard numbers."

Mifflin also said the secretary in charge of researching new equipment should make the staff aware that work will slow down while everyone is learning to use the equipment.

The ideal time to present an equipment purchase plan to the church finance committee is when the budget is being planned, she said. "Do your homework well in advance, and don't wait until a new budget has been adopted."

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Church secretaries
wear a lot of hats

By Jim Lowry

N-SSB

NASHVILLE (BP)--From the first line of ministry to the last word in explaining the whereabouts of staff members, church secretaries keep the church wheels rolling smoothly, according to secretarial specialists.

Almost 700 secretaries from Southern Baptist churches, associations and state conventions got together April 26-29 at the denomination's Sunday School Board to attend the fourth National Conference for Southern Baptist Secretaries.

How to balance responsibilities and take advantage of available resources was one of the primary areas of focus for the secretaries, said Donna Gandy, consultant for church secretaries in the board's church administration department. Registrants attended personal enrichment and vocational specialty conferences and workshops to help them better understand how they fit into the ministry team in a local church.

The issue of the widely varied responsibilities facing secretaries was addressed, and help was offered on dealing with potential sources of stress.

In one conference, secretaries listed the different things they might be called on to do in any given day. The list included mediator, babysitter, comforter, information source, nurse, keeper of keys, reservations taker, keeper of the lost and found, copy queen, confidante and benevolence source.

Brooks Faulkner, senior manager of the church staff support section in the church administration department, led a conference on "Making Stress Work for You," which addressed the everyday workplace problems combined with being a mother, wife, cook and taxi driver at home.

After listing several common personality traits in stress-prone individuals, Faulkner offered some practical ways to deal with stress in a preventative manner.

Several secretaries were anxious to discuss stress caused by staff members who do not leave information about anticipated office hours for the day and how to deal with angry people who call the church office.

For the latter, Faulkner said: "There are some things you can't do anything about. Just listen, say, 'thank you for calling,' and that you must get on to another responsibility. You have done all you can do."

Pastors and other staff members are making unreasonable demands on church secretaries to expect the secretaries to explain staff members' schedules when they have not been given any information, he said.

Gayle Hilligoss, a secretarial consultant from Lee's Summit, Mo., who was a secretary in a Baptist church for several years, said secretaries need to complement the skills of their supervisors.

In her conference, "Mine are the Small Initials," she said secretaries can look at their role as unimportant or they can represent the efforts of an enabler who works side by side with a minister.

A seminar led by Doris McWilliams, pastor's secretary at First Baptist Church of Tampa, Fla., included suggestions for secretaries to perform their duties to the best of their abilities as part of a ministry team.

McWilliams told the secretaries to set high standards for their work and to strive to maintain personal initiative, tact and judgment.

"Be flexible and be adaptable," McWilliams advised the secretaries. "And be accountable as a professional member of the ministry team of the church."

Note to Editors: Kevin Mathews, 28-year-old son of Bob Mathews, died accidentally May 1, and his funeral was scheduled for May 4. Bob Mathews has been associate editor of the Baptist Messenger, newsjournal of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, for 25 years. Kevin had been a resident of Billings (Okla.) Fairchild Center for 10 years. Bob Mathews and his wife, Betty, have two other sons and a daughter.

Indian student dreams
of ministry to homeland

By Breena Kent Paine

F-10
(NOBTS)

Baptist Press
5/4/89

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--Wesley Paul has great dreams for India -- dreams of building schools and orphanages, planting churches and training leaders.

A student at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary from Bangalor, India, Paul is preparing to put those dreams into action and show his country the love of Christ.

To share Christ in India, Paul will face barriers of Hindu culture and religion, as well as economic separation of people through the country's caste system. One way he hopes to help poor people step over caste walls is through education.

But the only real answer is Jesus, Paul said: "When they become Christian, ... Jesus removes all the caste barriers. He transcends everything and gives (them) a new identity."

Although India is reported to be the country holding the largest number of Baptists outside of the United States, the percentage of Baptists to the population of India is still small, said William Wakefield, regional vice president for Asia and the Pacific for the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board.

Paul would like to increase that percentage. His dream for India includes providing evangelism ministries and organizing seminars for youth leaders: "India's population is filled with young people. They have so much potential. If we could direct that potential in the right way, we could see a lot of changes in India."

In addition, Paul encourages evangelistic teams from churches in the United States to lead revivals, teach seminars and help with churches and schools on a short-term basis.

"My burden is to reach people for Christ in India," Paul said. "I have big dreams, and I hope one day all these things will come true to the glory of God. ... But right now, this (New Orleans Seminary) is the place to train. I need to learn how to prepare myself for the future."

During his first two semesters at the seminary, Paul has already learned much, especially through his Continuing Witness Training course. "I'm constantly made aware I'm supposed to be an evangelist," Paul said. "All these things are helping me to mold myself to the ways of God."

He was reared in a Christian home and accepted Christ during adolescence. "Through church, I heard about God's love," he explained. "I had seen my friends in all their religions. No other god died for them or was raised to life. But I realized God loved me so much he died for me ... and rose again."

Throughout the ensuing years, Paul struggled to find God's purpose in his life, meanwhile seeing the needs of his fellow Indians. At last, he felt the call to be a 'missionary evangelist,' but to receive training, he had to step over many barriers.

Paul was accepted into a Bible school in Canada, but his parents had only enough money to give him a one-way ticket and \$25 spending money.

"I learned a very valuable lesson: to depend on God," said Paul, who, when he finished Bible school, stepped out on faith once more to attend Cumberland College in Lexington, Ky., without a scholarship. He took an on-campus job, however; and through preaching engagements and gifts from friends, "I saw God's hand provide for my needs," he said.

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Through his studies, "I realized God's call in my life more and more and felt the need to get more education," he said. After college graduation, he applied to New Orleans Seminary, again with no money; but the church he was attending raised funds for him, and he enrolled in the fall of 1988.

"I chose New Orleans Seminary because I've always heard it is a conservative school and is evangelistic," he said. "I've learned so much, especially in the areas of counseling and youth. I want to take it back to India and use it there.

"In India, there are Hindu temples on every street corner." His dream is to see a Christian church on every corner.

Paul's full name is Wesley Victor Devadass Paul. "Devadass" means "God's son." His Christian parents also named him after European evangelist John Wesley; "I want to be the Wesley of India," Paul said, then added, "I pray I'll bring revival wherever I am."

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Photo available upon request from New Orleans seminary