



BUREAUS

ATLANTA Jim Newton, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 898-7522
DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 333 N. Washington, Dallas, Texas. 75246-1798, Telephone (214) 828-5100
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 Chief, 200 Maryland Ave., N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002, Telephone (202) 544-4226

December 13, 1990

90-170

Chapman invites SBC committee
appointment recommendations

N-CO

NASHVILLE (BP)--In an "Open Letter to Southern Baptists" released Dec. 12, SBC President Morris Chapman solicited recommendations for the SBC committee appointments from "any person within our Southern Baptist family."

Chapman focused attention on people to serve as members of the 1991 Committee on Nominations, Resolutions Committee, Credentials Committee and Tellers Committee, all of which are appointed by the president.

In the open letter Chapman said, "I hope to appoint persons whose spirit reflects a deep love for and a fresh walk with our dear Lord Jesus Christ.

"People serving on these committees should have a genuine burden for lost souls."

Chapman reiterated three other personal qualifications which he frequently has identified. The person appointed must:

1. Be a cooperating Southern Baptist;
2. Have a commitment to perpetuating an allegiance to God's perfect word through the institutional life of Southern Baptists; and
3. Be in agreement with the Peace Committee's statement on scripture.

"While I will stay within these cooperative and theological guidelines in my appointments, I will, as I have pledged, reach beyond perceived political parameters," Chapman said.

Procedurally, Chapman asked that all recommendations be submitted on a form that may be obtained by writing Mrs. Martha Gaddis, The Executive Committee, 901 Commerce Street, Nashville, TN 37203. Only recommendations submitted on approved forms and containing all of the requested information will be considered.

The open letter concluded with a Christmas greeting to all Southern Baptists from the president and his wife, Jodi, that "every person who submits a recommendation can be assured of my careful and prayerful consideration."

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(A copy of the open letter is available upon request from Baptist Press.)

FMB trustees pray for Persian Gulf,
refer move proposal for study

By Robert O'Brien

N-FMB

Baptist Press
12/13/90

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board trustees prayed at their December meeting for ways to influence the crisis in the Persian Gulf, noted an upsurge in missionary appointments and approved a proposal to study the location and facilities of the Foreign Mission Board.

The trustees, meeting Dec. 10-12, referred the study proposal to their administrative committee for future deliberation. The action followed an earlier motion by trustee Ron Wilson of California to consider criteria for moving the board. That motion was tabled at the October meeting after speculation arose that it was motivated by the Southern Baptist Convention controversy.

Trustees, who prayed in thanksgiving for the pre-Christmas release of hostages from Iraq and Kuwait, also noted that another prayer had been answered for Southern Baptist hostage Maurice Graham. He had prayed he would be released from the besieged U.S. Embassy in Kuwait in time to help promote Southern Baptists' Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for foreign missions.

During the annual week of prayer for foreign missions, Southern Baptists across the United States also prayed, at the urging of FMB President R. Keith Parks, for a resolution of the hostage problem. Trustee chairman Bill Hancock of Kentucky told trustees: "I don't think it's accidental or incidental" the hostages came home when they did.

Hancock urged trustees to join with Graham and others in leading Southern Baptists to reach the Lottie Moon offering's \$86 million goal. If reached, the goal will fund 47 percent of the board's \$182.7 million 1991 budget.

Prayer also centered on the Persian Gulf crisis in general and Iraqi President Saddam Hussein in particular. Concern for the gulf situation took an unusual twist when trustee Horace Hamm of North Carolina asked trustees to pray that one of their number could go to Iraq to tell Saddam about "the message of redemption and hope in Jesus Christ."

Hamm singled out a trustee he said he thought of when he was on his knees in prayer. The trustee, who will pray for an opportunity to go to Iraq, has spiritual commitment and the status to attract attention there, Hamm said.

Trustees also appointed 35 new missionaries and reappointed eight former missionaries at the December meeting to bring the 1990 total to 414 -- the highest number since 1985's record 429. The total, a 25 percent jump over 1989, includes 236 new career and associate missionaries and 178 International Service Corps workers who serve two years or more.

"I'm encouraged that appointments are up after four years of decline, and I'm particularly encouraged that career and associate appointments are up," said Lloyd Atkinson, the board's director of personnel selection.

"But we need to average 480 new missionaries a year" to make the Bold Mission Thrust goal of 5,000 missionaries on the field by the year 2000, he said. "So we're still not where we need to be."

The board counted 3,846 missionaries assigned to 121 countries as of mid-December, with the addition of the 43 appointments and reappointments to the mission force, the additions of Denmark and Czechoslovakia to the country count and the deletion of Western Samoa.

The FMB location study proposal, which would lead to establishing criteria for a possible relocation of the board, was tabled in October at Wilson's request after speculation arose about its motivation.

Wilson, denying the motion had any connection to the SBC controversy, said that it was intended to get the board to develop criteria to determine merits of a move either in or out of Virginia. Major corporations do the same thing, he said, to evaluate best use of resources.

Speculation centered on belief that Wilson's motion was meant to apply political pressure on Virginia's state Baptist body, which was scheduled to meet the following month to consider alternative funding for cooperative Southern Baptist causes in reaction to the SBC controversy.

Some trustees commented that such a funding action by Virginia Baptists, later approved at their annual meeting in November, should cause the Foreign Mission Board to consider reviewing its location.

However, trustee chairman Bill Hancock of Kentucky said in an interview during the December meeting that the board "has too much at stake to allow politics or emotion to prevail" in any such deliberations.

Parks said the location question has been reviewed seriously with stewardship and efficiency in mind ever since the board moved to its 3806 Monument Ave. location in Richmond in 1959. The board has been in Richmond for its entire 145-year history.

Parks said several such evaluations, the latest in 1989, came as the board made decisions to add facilities and purchase additional property. Each time, he said, studies have revealed that the space for growth was adequate and that a move would not be worth the cost.

About a year ago an analysis by one trustee, who reviewed a Harvard University study on moving major corporations, said the study estimated such moves could cost anywhere from \$33 million to \$150 million.

"We have adequate space, we are concerned about stewardship, and we have a strong commitment to try to increase the percentage of total budget sent overseas," Parks said. "Last year, we sent 89 percent overseas. While I'm always willing to study the situation as times change, I would not want to be part of anything so expensive it would reduce what we send our missionaries."

On the question of speculation about a possible move, Hancock said the discussion has resulted in "emotional reactions on both extremes from some trustees and some Virginia Baptists We've got to get in the middle and be objective. Individual trustees do not speak for the entire board," he said.

"The primary thing here is not to consider moving this agency out of Virginia," Hancock told trustees. "The primary thing is to determine how we can utilize and be good stewards of what we have" wherever the board is.

He said he hoped Southern Baptists "will have enough confidence in staff and trustees not to think we're going to do something premature or of a reactionary nature. Our concern is for the long-range program of missions, and I trust there's nobody here (at the trustee meeting) who ... thinks we would do something without a proper evaluation" of the board's total ministry.

In another action related to Virginia Baptists, trustees voted to consider a bylaw change at their next meeting. The change would eliminate, by attrition, the 12 local Virginia trustees elected to the board above the three Virginia Baptists elected on a population representation basis.

Boards and agencies across the SBC adopted the practice of extra local trustees in earlier years when they held fewer meetings, transportation was time-consuming, quorums hard to achieve, and trustees needed to be available to conduct business between sessions.

The trustee action followed a request by the SBC Executive Committee that SBC entities study the concept of local representatives for a possible amendment to their charters.

The Executive Committee request came after a referral of a motion at the 1989 annual SBC meeting, made by Foreign Mission Board trustee Gary Smith of Oklahoma, that the Executive Committee study the local trustee question.

Like the vote on the proposal to consider the board's location, the action on local trustees raised speculation that it was aimed at Virginia Baptists.

"It's nothing against Virginia Baptists," Smith said. "They serve the board well. I had no object of malice. I just wanted to balance the board. I felt it was something of the past that needed to be examined."

Trustees also received copies of a statement of beliefs drafted by European Baptists in response to recommendations Foreign Mission Board trustees tied to their May 1989 transfer of the Baptist Theological Seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland, to European Baptists.

Steve Hardy of North Carolina, who chairs the Europe, Middle East and North Africa committee, said the committee will develop a report during the next four months on European Baptists' response to trustees recommendations.

One of the 10 recommendations suggested "a written statement of European Baptist principles common to all European Baptists" to define the seminary's biblical commitment and "to which seminary teachers would subscribe."

Seminary trustees drafted such a statement. It has been approved by the executive committee of the European Baptist Federation and will receive final consideration when the federation's council meets next September.

The statement contains sections on God's sovereignty, the Scriptures, the nature of salvation, the church and the Christian hope.

During the meeting, trustees stood to applaud Davis and Mary Saunders for a 39-year career in missions. Saunders, vice president for Africa, retires Dec. 31.

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Foreign Mission Board
location to be studied

By Robert O'Brien

F - FMB

Baptist Press
12/13/90

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board trustees approved a proposal at their December meeting to study the location, facilities and utilization of the Richmond, Va.-based board's offices.

The study proposal, referred to the trustee administrative committee for deliberation, followed an earlier motion to study criteria for moving the board. That motion, made by trustee Ron Wilson of California, was tabled at the board's October meeting.

Wilson said in October that his motion was intended to get the board to develop criteria it would use to decide the merits of a move either in or out of the state. Many major corporations do such studies. He had been asking for such a study for five years, he said, and he stressed it had no connection to controversy in the Southern Baptist Convention, as some observers felt.

Wilson said he asked trustees to table his motion in October after it raised speculation he was trying to apply political pressure on Virginia's state Baptist body. Virginia Baptists were scheduled to meet the following month to consider alternative funding for Southern Baptist causes in reaction to the SBC controversy.

Some trustees commented that such a funding action by Virginia Baptists -- an action that was approved at their annual meeting in November -- should cause the Foreign Mission Board to consider reviewing its location.

However, trustee chairman Bill Hancock of Kentucky said in an interview during the December meeting that the board "has too much at stake to allow politics or emotion to prevail" in any such deliberations. It should be decided, he said, on the basis of stewardship and efficiency of operation.

Foreign Mission Board President R. Keith Parks said the location question has been reviewed seriously with stewardship and efficiency in mind ever since the board moved to its present location at 3806 Monument Ave. in Richmond in 1959. The board has been in Richmond since its formation 145 years ago.

Several such evaluations, the latest in 1989, came as the board made decisions to add facilities and purchase additional property, Parks said. Each time, he said, studies have revealed that the space for growth was adequate and that a move would not be worth the cost.

About a year ago an analysis by one trustee, who reviewed a Harvard University study on moving major corporations, said the study estimated such moves could cost anywhere from \$33 million to \$150 million.

"We have adequate space, we are concerned about stewardship, and we have a strong commitment to try to increase the percentage of total budget sent overseas," Parks said. "Last year we sent 89 percent overseas. While I'm always willing to study the situation as times change, I would not want to be part of anything so expensive it would reduce what we send to our missionaries."

On the question of a possible move, Hancock said the discussion has resulted in "emotional reactions on both extremes from some trustees and some Virginia Baptists We've got to get in the middle and be objective. Individual trustees do not speak for the entire board."

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"The primary thing here is not to consider moving this agency out of Virginia," Hancock told trustees before the vote to refer. "The primary thing is to determine how we can utilize and be good stewards of what we have whether it be on this corner or somewhere around this city or somewhere else in this nation."

Hancock said he believes Southern Baptists "will have enough confidence in staff and trustees not to think that we're going to do something premature or of a reactionary nature. Our concern is for the long-range program of missions, and I trust there's nobody here (at the trustee meeting) who is so immature in their thinking that they think we would do something without a proper evaluation of our total ministry."

The matter should be reviewed from the standpoint of stewardship of resources and efficiency of operation, Hancock said. The review should be carried out by "a responsible group of trustees and staff," he added, who would draw information about how others, such as Texas Baptists, Virginia Baptists and the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board and Woman's Missionary Union arrived at criteria to decide to move to other locations.

"The first step," Hancock said, "should be to review how we can stay in Richmond."

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HMB church loan division
to expand services

By Sarah Zimmerman

F- NMB

Baptist Press
12/13/90

ATLANTA (BP)--With a change in leadership has come a change in strategy of the church loan division of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board.

After operating as the lender of last resort, the division is beginning to solicit loans to all qualifying churches.

The church loan program began in 1882 with \$500. Assets at the end of this year are expected to exceed \$125 million.

The division has primarily served as the "loan fund of last resort in areas where Southern Baptists are relatively unknown," says Bob Kilgore, division director since 1965 when its portfolio totaled \$18 million.

Kilgore, a Texas native, is retiring at the end of this year. Bob Inlow moved from Dallas in June to observe the operation of the church loan division and become its director upon Kilgore's retirement.

In Kilgore's 25 years with the division, almost 5,000 loans have been made to churches. If each of those churches grew to 200 members, then 1 million people worship in churches built with loans from the church loan division while Kilgore was director.

Church loans, Kilgore says, "fit into ministry hand in glove."

Kilgore has no agenda for his retirement, though he has been offered four jobs. "If I had wanted a job, I would have kept the one I had," he says.

As Kilgore retires, he says "the future will require many, many changes in the church loan division because of its growth, the change in economic climate, increased building costs and environmental issues such as asbestos and toxic waste sites."

During the transition period, Inlow has begun considering some of those changes.

While continuing to serve church starts in new work areas, Inlow says he wants the division to make loans to established churches as well. "My goal is to make us the best church lender there is, period."

Some changes already have been made to increase the division's loaning capabilities. The maximum loan limit has been raised from \$750,000 to \$1 million. A weekly loan review meeting has been implemented as the beginning of an in-house loan committee. Fees and interest rates are being evaluated for possible restructuring.

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Inlow believes borrowing money from the HMB church loan division will be attractive to larger churches because the division's interest income will be invested in loans to new churches.

The church loan division does not receive any Cooperative Program or Annie Armstrong Easter Offering funds. Money from insurance companies, foundations, pension funds and from the public through Home Mission Board bonds is used to finance the loans.

Inlow is an Oklahoma City native who began his business career in Dallas. He spent 17 years in the mortgage banking business, including two chief executive officer positions, before becoming director of the church loan division.

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

Boston churches set
'impossible' goals

By Sarah Zimmerman

F-NMB

Baptist Press
12/13/90

BOSTON (BP)--Larry Martin has only one explanation for eight years of growth in Greater Boston Baptist Association: "God is doing it."

"Almost everything our churches attempt is humanly impossible," says Martin, associational director of missions. "God keeps opening the doors, and we keep trying to catch up."

In 1982, Boston was the largest city in the United States without a Southern Baptist association. Since the association began in October that year, the number of congregations has tripled and ministries have mushroomed.

Volunteers are a key to the growth. Of 22 people who work for the association, only three receive a salary. Some volunteers are seminary graduates raising their support, others are retired people supported by their retirement income, and still others are business people who devote their off-hours to the association.

"In 1985 we began developing long-range plans. We set goals that were far beyond us," Martin recalls. "We began praying for volunteers and found that God was already answering our prayers. Volunteers are now in charge of every area of our associational life."

Thirty-three of the association's 49 churches have begun since the association was formed. Only 14 of the churches own buildings, yet the association is making plans to start 16 additional congregations.

Former Texans Elton and Lulinda Turner lend their knowledge of church organization to the infant congregations. They moved to the Boston area 20 years ago when they became aware of the need for lay leaders among New England Baptists. He owns a business, and she serves as associational Sunday school director.

The association includes 22 ethnic congregations which worship and teach in 11 languages. The 4 million residents of greater Boston speak more than 100 languages.

Vicky Brunson, Home Mission Board Mission Service Corps volunteer, directs ethnic ministries for the association. She helps new congregations find places to meet and helps develop ethnic leadership. Coordinating summer day camps for ethnic children and teaching English to internationals are also among her responsibilities.

Since the association was formed, campus ministries have grown from two ministers on two campuses to 13 ministers on nine campuses. Only one of the campus ministers is paid.

Betsy Draper, also a Mission Service Corps volunteer, coordinates the association's student ministries. The Boston area's 70 colleges and universities, including schools such as Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard University, attract 300,000 students.

Volunteers are also in charge of associational youth ministries and print media. Volunteer Laura Lee Barksdale, a Georgia native, leads churches to use mime, drama, music, puppetry, clowning and story telling to present the gospel message in public arenas.

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Though Martin gives God credit for the associational growth, he says God's work has been accomplished through volunteers. "There is no way to visualize what it would be like here without volunteers."

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Volunteer house proves
worth the investment

By Sarah Zimmerman

F-NMB

Baptist Press
12/13/90

BOSTON (BP)--If Boston Baptists could get cash back for the work of their volunteers, the association's \$255,000 volunteer home would be debt-free.

The seven-bedroom "Craft House" provides low-cost housing to volunteers for Greater Boston Baptist Association. In the area where monthly apartment rent begins at \$700, the house makes being a volunteer affordable.

"Probably six of the 10 residents wouldn't be here if it weren't for the house," says Jim Pierce, volunteer house coordinator. "If you figure \$25,000 worth of work is done by one volunteer each year, the house is a good investment. It's a real deal."

Larry Martin, associational director of missions, says the association depends on volunteers for everything from college and youth ministries to creative evangelistic performances at special events. Of the 22 people working for the association, only three receive a salary.

In 1985 associational leaders began making long-range plans and realized volunteers would be vital to their work. They also realized the cost of living in Boston would make being a volunteer prohibitive unless housing was provided.

When the association began looking for a house, Pierce says, "We had no money -- zilch. All we had was a dream."

In 1989 the association purchased a three-story house in the Boston suburb of Waltham. Leaders raised \$70,000 for a down payment and financed the remaining \$185,000 through a private source since no bank would grant the loan.

The house was named for Ira and Betty Craft, lay leaders from Columbia, S.C., who have been volunteers among New England Baptists for more than 20 years. The Crafts were also instrumental in raising funds to purchase the house.

The 85-year-old house was in good enough condition that it was occupied as soon as the donated furniture was in place. The first volunteers moved in during 1989, and at one time, 16 people lived in the house.

The summer is particularly busy as short-term volunteers move in and out. At times a volunteer moves out in the morning, clean sheets are put on the bed and another volunteer moves in that evening.

"It can be a little hectic keeping up with the keys," says Pierce.

Tenants each pay \$300 a month or \$10 a day in rent, but Pierce says, "We haven't evicted anybody yet." Rent income goes toward house payments and upkeep.

Residents contribute to the cost of the Wednesday night meal when they all try to eat together, but other meals are each person's responsibility. Chores and the phone bill are shared, but the Pierces pay the remaining utilities.

The role of Pierce and his wife, Eunice, is adviser and counselor. "In a sense, we're Mom and Dad," he says. Pierce, who is retired from construction work in the steel industry, makes most of the house repairs. Mrs. Pierce, who always worked as a homemaker, says she has yet to retire.

Plans are underway to begin a similar ministry in an 11-bedroom house donated to the association by a local church. The church began meeting in the house, which it has since outgrown. It voted to give the dwelling to the association as long as it is used as a mission house.

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(BP) photos mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Atlanta bureau of Baptist Press

Home miss prepares
couple for future plans

By Sarah Zimmerman

F-NMB

TAUNTON, Mass. (BP)--If Perry and Donna Logerstedt eventually serve in foreign missions as they plan, their first home missions assignment will provide some of their best preparation.

Logerstedt, a Montana native, and his Texas wife learned quickly that people talk differently and eat differently in Taunton, Mass. But the spiritual void among the people has been the most difficult adjustment for the Southern Baptist missionaries.

"People here are very spiritually neutral," Logerstedt says. "They're open to us being here -- they're polite and courteous, but they're offended by talk of a personal relationship with Jesus."

Logerstedt spent two years in Liberia as a journeyman for the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board. He has found church planting in Massachusetts more difficult than being a missionary overseas.

"In Africa they were more friendly, more receptive to spiritual things," he says.

Though many people in Massachusetts have a strong Catholic background, some families have not attended church for generations.

Logerstedt spent his first week in Taunton trying to meet his neighbors. He says probably 100 people live in the block because the large houses have been converted to multi-family dwellings. He found three people who attend any church at any time.

Mrs. Logerstedt works in the sales department of a company with 50 employees. She has met one fellow employee who attends church, but she is not sure if he is a Christian.

Massachusetts residents who do attend church are not likely to have been exposed to an evangelistic congregation. Mrs. Logerstedt says, "There are some Bible teaching churches here but they do not have an outreach into the community. People here have not had a positive experience of a vibrant, healthy, evangelistic church."

The Logerstedts moved to Taunton in June after graduating from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. They have since begun a Bible study in their home with attendance ranging from two to eight. Their goal is to begin worship services by Easter.

To find prospects for the new church, Logerstedt serves as a hospital chaplain, plays basketball in a city league and leads summer programs for children. His purpose, he says, is to introduce people to the hope found only through Jesus Christ.

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New church members need
training, fellowship

By Terri Lackey

F-SSB

Baptist Press
12/13/90

NASHVILLE (BP)--"If a new member does not become bonded into the training and fellowship of a church within six months, you're going to lose him," warned Roy Edgemon, director of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's discipleship training department.

Edgemon defined bonding as the training and fellowship a new member should receive to know the Southern Baptist church and feel like a part of its family.

Edgemon was speaking to state discipleship training directors and associates during annual December planning meetings in Nashville.

"We are not giving people who join our churches the foundations they need to understand Southern Baptists," Edgemon said. The result is a dropout rate that exceeds new membership.

Edgemon said in 1988-89 Southern Baptist churches gained 17,734 resident members, but lost 77,308 resident members to non-resident status. Non-resident members are those who move away from one church and fail to join another.

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"We're losing members to the cults of inactivity and indifference," he said. "There is such a lack of commitment in churches today."

Churches that want to gain more in membership than they are losing must set goals to that effect, Edgemon said.

Edgemon cited a Foreign Mission Board study which revealed "that more than 80 percent of (Southern Baptist) churches today do not have goals. And 92 percent of those that have goals have them in the wrong place."

Goals should be set to strengthen the discipleship base of the church, he said. "If you have a strong discipleship base, you can build off that pyramid and begin extending your church through new classes or new missions.

"Churches must build a base of strong leadership before they become concerned about growing in other areas," he said. "Some churches set their priorities at the top of the pyramid before they've set goals for a strong foundation.

"So many churches do not have the proper infrastructure (of discipleship training). No wonder 70 percent of our churches are either losing members or have plateaued because of the way they are doing church work," Edgemon said.

A study between the years of 1969-80 revealed that 87 percent of the people who joined Southern Baptist churches did not receive any new member training, Edgemon said.

"And today, in the 1990s, we are reaping that kind of result by not having solid leadership and having people not committed to evangelism."

Edgemon said churches must start immediately "planning a training program to strengthen their people."

That could include discipleship training resources such as "Survival Kits for New Christians," new member material, doctrine studies and Lay Institute for Equipping courses such as MasterLife.

"These are the kind of things designed to give a strong membership," he said.

Meanwhile, state leaders heard reports on discipleship training strategies such as DiscipleALL, a 1990-95 emphasis. DiscipleALL involves a balanced and comprehensive program which includes member, new member and leader training, training for all age groups, and training in doctrine, ethics, history, polity and ministry skills.

The 1991 doctrine book, "The Doctrine of the Lordship," was written by Tupelo, Miss., evangelist Robert L. Hamblin, and Bill Stephens, curriculum coordinator in the board's discipleship training department.

The number of churches reporting a Baptist doctrine study on the Uniform Church Letter has increased by 99.2 percent since the doctrine studies were introduced in 1977, according to statistics compiled in the discipleship training department.

Also, during the annual planning meeting, members of the preschool/children's section introduced new discipleship training curriculum materials to be released in October 1991. Presently, discipleship training teaching plans are found in preschool Sunday school periodicals.

The new curriculum, "Preschoolers at Church," will complete the discipleship training family of dated curriculum materials for all age groups.

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Discipleship training helps
Rambin combat shyness

By Terri Lackey

F-55B

Baptist Press
12/13/90

NASHVILLE (BP)--Before he attended Baptist Young People's Union as a teen-ager, Leon Rambin used to "walk across on the other side of the street to keep from talking to people."

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That is no longer a problem for the 84-year-old discipleship training director of Ingleside Baptist Church in Shreveport, La.

"I was the most stammering and stuttering person in the world until church training taught me to stand up and speak and say what I want to say," said Rabin, who recently was recognized as the 1990 Friend of Discipleship Training.

Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's Discipleship Training Director Roy Edgemon presented the award to Rabin during annual December planning meetings for state discipleship training directors in Nashville. Rabin was nominated for the award by his colleagues in discipleship training work.

Rabin's dedication to the program that taught him to stand up and speak has never waned.

Rabin has been a discipleship training director for 60 consecutive years -- all of those years at the same church.

"That's the longest I'm aware of anybody serving as discipleship training director -- especially at the same church," Edgemon said when presenting Rabin's award.

"I've been a church training director for 60 years, and I've resigned (as church training director) 60 times," said Rabin who acknowledges directing volunteer workers to teach discipleship training can be trying at times.

Rabin, whose wife of 64 years, Clara, accompanied him to Nashville, said he enlists only volunteer leaders who promise to be "dedicated and committed to the job.

"If you're not dedicated, I don't want you," he said.

Rabin proved his commitment to discipleship training many years ago when as a young man he realized golf was getting in the way of his witness at church.

A possible candidate for the professional golf circuit, Rabin cut off ties with tournaments that called for Sunday play when young people asked him about his game and not about church.

"I decided then and there to quit playing on Sundays," he said. "I could have been a professional golfer, but it got in the way of my church work."

Rabin said he can go into any church and start an excellent discipleship training program if he can find "five or six people dedicated to the Lord."

Rabin has a five-point check list on what he expects out of a discipleship training leader. His leaders must:

- Have a desire to lead; God must be the pilot;
- Be committed to God;
- Be willing to be involved in the total church program;
- Be enthusiastic at all times;
- Have a desire to change directions and follow God.

Rabin attributes the decline in discipleship training attendance in many churches to "the one-eyed monster."

"Once upon a time in the 50s it (discipleship training) was the place to be. That one-eyed monster in the living room is taking time away from my program.

"Television isn't bad, but people need to know how to turn it off and come to church," said Rabin.