



March 11, 1991

91-36

Moderates' group takes steps  
to solidify its organization

By William Neal & R. Albert Mohler Jr. *N-CC*

ATLANTA (BP)--The Baptist Fellowship, to this point a coalition of moderate Southern Baptists, is making plans to solidify its organization by incorporating as a legal entity, establishing a commissioning agency for world missions, and developing a permanent Coordinating Council to replace its interim Steering Committee.

That steering committee, meeting in Atlanta March 7-9, announced what it termed "significant decisions" for the future of The Fellowship. Committee members agreed on a statement of purpose, a proposed constitution and bylaws, a system of representation for its permanent council, and a working document that outlines the rationale for a proposed Missions Center.

"Our intention is not to start a new convention," said Daniel Vestal, Atlanta pastor who is chairman of the steering committee. "That is not our deliberate intention but I'm not going to be naive or dishonest and say that is not a possibility. But I do see a new association of Baptists that at this point is existing within the Southern Baptist Convention. What will happen in the future, only God knows."

When moderates met in Atlanta last August for their first convocation, they elected the 70 members of the interim steering committee and approved an alternative missions funding program, the Baptist Cooperative Missions Program, Inc.

That fund accepts contributions from churches and individuals and distributes them to Baptist causes according to the contributor's directions. The process bypasses the SBC Executive Committee in Nashville, which normally receives and disperses the national portion of Cooperative Program gifts. The plan, in effect, allows moderates to support selected SBC causes without contributing to programs or agencies with which they are in disagreement. In most cases the state conventions have continued to receive money from those churches through designated gifts.

According to printed material released by The Fellowship, about 125 churches have contributed about \$1 million to the Baptist Cooperative Missions Program to date. One official of the group projected the program would receive between \$4 and \$5 million during 1991. Most of that money has ended up going to SBC and state convention causes normally funded through the Cooperative Program. Under The Fellowship's new budget, some of that money is expected to go to support the proposed Missions Center and other expenses of The Fellowship.

All recommendations approved last week by the steering committee are subject to approval by the convocation meeting May 9-11 at The Omni in Atlanta. Last year's meeting drew about 3,000. About 10,000 are expected in May.

The Missions Center task force report said the proposed center is designed to equip "individuals and churches for involvement in the world mission of the church" and to "link or match individuals and congregations with needs and opportunities not being met by others." There was no clarification of what those needs might be.

Although plans for this Missions Center were vague as presented last week, the Missions Center task force is to provide specific recommendations for missions projects to the convocation in May. Officers of the steering committee were authorized to seek out an executive director for the Missions Center.

--more--

The task force is composed of Anne Neil, former president of the Southern Baptist Alliance, former Southern Baptist missionary to West Africa, and former adjunct professor of missions at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C.; Cecil Sherman, pastor of Broadway Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas; and Alan Neely, professor of missiology at Princeton Theological Seminary and former executive director of the Southern Baptist Alliance. They said they understood their assignment to include "what has been referred to as Home and Foreign missions." They proposed that Woman's Missionary Union be invited to be a part in implementing their recommendations "in/with the hope that our causes and theirs can be one united cause."

Larry Lewis, president of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, said he was "profoundly disappointed" The Fellowship proposed to establish a commissioning agency. "I see this as yet another issue that is divisive and will further kindle distrust in the Southern Baptist Convention," Lewis said, adding, "I see absolutely no need or reason for another missions agency. Both the Home Mission Board and the Foreign Mission Board have fervently sought not to allow partisan politics in the SBC to effect the appointment of missionary personnel." Lewis said the proposed Missions Center would be in "direct competition" with the two SBC mission boards.

Foreign Mission Board President R. Keith Parks said he was not surprised The Fellowship has focused on missions, "since time and time again we have stated that missions is who we are as Southern Baptists." He also said he saw the proposed center in direct competition with the FMB though he said that step was "not unprecedented," citing large SBC churches which support and send out non-FMB missionaries. Parks said the move indicated "continued fragmentation" in the denomination.

However, "though the tendency will be to place the blame for this in one direction, it must be placed in two directions," Parks said. "I really wish that those who are in elected leadership in the SBC would reach out to be more inclusive to draw this group back in." He suggested the proposed center was the "inevitable result" of the denominational controversy.

Officials at the Woman's Missionary Union responded with shock and surprise at the proposal the WMU be invited to participate with The Fellowship's Mission Center. "I do not know how to respond to this," said WMU Executive Director Dellanna O'Brien. "We have had no contact with The Fellowship or with any individual" concerning the issue, she said.

Concerning the possibility of WMU involvement in the proposed center, O'Brien said it would have to be an "organizational decision." She added the WMU was formed as an auxiliary to the SBC, and had voluntarily supported the mission boards of the convention, "because it was the will of the membership." She said there were no known legal constraints which would prohibit the WMU from supporting other agencies, "but there would be much more involved than legal entanglements."

The steering committee also adopted the following statement of purpose: "The purpose of The Baptist Fellowship is to enable the people of God to carry out the Great Commission under the Lordship of Jesus Christ in a fellowship where every Christian exercises God's gifts and calling."

The steering committee agreed in principle to establish a working relationship with the semi-monthly newspaper SBC Today for news coverage of The Baptist Fellowship, paid advertising, publication and promotion of books and representation on the board of directors of the newspaper.

Commenting on the unity he felt during the committee's three-day meeting, Vestal said: "This is a diverse group of Baptists -- geographically and in methodology; we represent lay people, clergy, men, women and ethnics. This committee is modeling what Baptists have been in the past that has made them an effective instrument of God.

"We are modeling unity in diversity. We have lively debate, at times distinct differences, but we have great mutual trust and respect and a common commitment to one purpose -- the fulfillment of the Great Commission."

Virginia Supreme Court to hear  
appeal of \$1.56 million ruling

By Art Toalston

N-FMB

RICHMOND, Va. (BP)--The Virginia Supreme Court has agreed to hear the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's appeal of a \$1.56 million judgment against it in a lawsuit brought by a former missionary to Africa.

The court also agreed to hear the former missionary's appeal of negligent breach of contract charges against the board that were dismissed prior to the July 1990 trial of her lawsuit in Richmond Circuit Court.

The former missionary, Diana Sue Wade, originally sought \$141 million from the Foreign Mission Board when she filed suit in behalf of her four children in April 1988 in Virginia, where the board is headquartered. Claims amounting to \$100 million of the \$141 million later were dismissed. At the conclusion of last July's five-day trial, a jury awarded the four children \$1.56 million in damages.

Wade filed her own lawsuit last November seeking an additional \$5 million in damages from the board. The trial in that suit is scheduled to begin Aug. 12 in Richmond Circuit Court.

Wade has contended she and her children, now ages 18 to 23, suffered trauma because board officials learned her then-husband, G. Thomas Wade Jr., was sexually abusing their oldest daughter but did not disclose it to Wade. She contended her husband continued to abuse the daughter as well as two other daughters.

During last year's trial, Foreign Mission Board attorney Lewis T. Booker of Richmond argued board officials who handled the family's case acted reasonably under the circumstances. The administrator who first learned of the abuse testified he told Wade to see a counselor in Africa. At that point, the administrator did not know the extent of the abuse and was assured it had stopped two years before. When the missionary failed to obtain help, the official ordered him to return to the United States with his family for counseling.

The Wades were missionaries in Kenya and Botswana from 1976 until their departure from Africa in 1984. Wade, 41, and her children now live in Anchorage, Alaska. Wade, now 50, was arrested for sexual abuse of his daughters in 1985 and is serving a 12-year sentence in an Alaskan correctional center.

Legal documents detailing the appeals must be filed with the Virginia Supreme Court by April 15, said Booker. Rebuttal briefs will be due by the end of May. Oral arguments before the court likely will be scheduled in the fall, Booker said. The court's decision in the appeals will be final because no federal judicial issues are involved, Booker said.

The case nevertheless could be precedent-setting, he added. "There's never been a case that I'm aware of where an employer has been held responsible to the children of an employee for an employee's misdeeds," he said.

--30--

CLC trustees pave way  
for merger with PAC

By Louis Moore

N-CO  
CLC

Baptist Press  
3/11/91

NASHVILLE (BP)--Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission trustees have approved unanimously bylaw changes that would pave the way for the Southern Baptist Convention in June to merge the Southern Baptist Public Affairs Committee into the Christian Life Commission.

The proposed merger would reduce from three to two the number of organizations that represent the SBC on religious liberty issues. The 1990 convention in New Orleans expanded the Christian Life Commission's program assignment to include religious liberty. The Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs is the other organization with an endorsed religious liberty assignment.

--more--

Terms of the proposed merger call for temporarily enlarging the CLC's trustee board by nine members and transferring the remaining nine members of PAC's board of trustees to the CLC's board. As the former PAC trustees complete their terms of service on the CLC board, their positions would be eliminated on the CLC board. Thus, by 1998 the CLC board would return to its present size of 32 members, after ballooning to 41 temporarily.

Previously, PAC consisted of 19 members, who also were members of the board of trustees of the BJC. The BJC recently adopted a new representation formula which reduces the number of SBC trustees from 19 to 12.

The proposed SBC plan calls for eliminating immediately seven ex officio PAC trustees and one at-large member, who is an agency executive. In June when the merger is scheduled to be voted upon, two of the 11 remaining trustees will complete their terms of service on the board.

After the merger, the CLC's board would choose trustees to serve on the BJC's board.

Although the merger was approved with little discussion, later during the CLC's semi-annual board meeting the subject of prayer in public school surfaced. No trustee action was taken on the issue.

The discussion occurred during staff reports when CLC General Counsel Michael Whitehead and CLC Executive Director Richard Land countered rumors that the CLC's new Washington office is working actively against efforts of those who want a return of prayer in public schools.

The CLC neither supports nor opposes such a proposal, Land said.

"There is a real division among Southern Baptist conservatives on the issue of prayer (in public schools)," Land said. "One of the things we hope to do now that we have a religious liberty assignment is to foster discussion on this issue as a way of helping Southern Baptists to understand the complexities of this issue. Most Southern Baptists supported the 1962 and 1963 Supreme Court decision which said the state should not be setting required Bible readings and should not be setting a required prayer."

Land and Whitehead said the CLC supports the concept of equal access by which public school students are able to meet in clubs for Bible study and prayer. Both said they also believe religious leaders should be allowed to speak and pray at public school commencements without censorship.

"Now it seems to me that if we go beyond guaranteeing equal access and we start saying that we're going to tamper with the Constitution and we're going to say that there's going to be a time for prayer during the school day required time, we're faced with a dilemma," Land said. "Either we're going to have to try to set up a non-sectarian prayer, which will be largely open to abuse or meaningless, or we're going to have to try to set up a Christian prayer, which will violate the constitutional rights of the people who aren't Christians, or we're going to do it on a rotating basis."

In other action, trustees authorized CLC staff to invite to the CLC's 1992 annual seminar all announced, major candidates for the U.S. presidential race in 1992. Trustees said the candidates should be invited to speak regardless of their stand on abortion. CLC trustees a year ago said pro-choice speakers should not be invited to CLC seminars. The CLC's 25th annual seminar will be March 2-4, 1992, in Washington.

Trustees also asked the staff to consider the possibilities of installing an toll-free phone number for Southern Baptists wanting quick information on pending legislation in the U.S. Congress and to design a mailing program that would rapidly inform Southern Baptists about legislation.

Land, others tell Bush  
need for religious liberty

By Louis Moore

N-CO (CLC)

NASHVILLE (BP)--In the wake of the the Allies' victory over Iraq, Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission Executive Director Richard Land and 11 other U.S. religious leaders met with President George Bush March 7 to express concern about religious freedom in the Middle East. The group told Bush "a good starting point would be greater freedom of religion for foreign employees who are working in the kingdom of Saudi Arabia," Land said.

"Kuwait has been one of the more open societies in the Middle East, certainly more open and less restrictive than Saudi Arabia," he said.

"Saudi Arabia is one of the most restrictive societies in terms of freedom of religious or political expression of any nation in the world."

The religious leaders told Bush they would "work with him to try to exert pressure to remind the people of the Middle East -- the Saudis and the Kuwaitis -- of our concern about this issue, according to Land.

"Unless and until there is progress, this (issue) is going to continue to be a subject of discussion, and it is going to be a matter of concern to people of faith in the United States and an object of concern of our government," he said.

Bush invited the 12 religious leaders to the White House because they "had been supportive of our efforts in the (Persian) Gulf and his leadership in the Gulf," said Land.

"The President said that he wanted to tell us 'thank you'," Land said. "He made a point of the fact that there has not been unanimous support, not even perhaps a majority of support among religious leadership or what is perceived to be religious leadership in this country. He said he respected their right to dissent. He understood that this was an issue about which good and honest people could differ, but that he certainly appreciated our leadership."

Included in the group were SBC President Morris Chapman, Southern Baptist theologian Carl F.H. Henry, Rabbi Alexander Schindler, Roman Catholic Archbishop Philip M. Hannan and independent Baptist pastor Jerry Falwell.

During the meeting, Bush issued a call for National Days of Thanksgiving on April 5-7. In his proclamation, he asked Americans to "gather in homes and places of worship to give thanks to Almighty God for the liberation of Kuwait, for the blessings of people and liberty, for our troops, our families, and our nation."

In reporting his meeting with the President to the CLC's board of trustees, which was meeting concurrently in Nashville while Land was in Washington at the White House, Land said, "We were not there to serve Mr. Bush and the Republican Party. We were there to serve God and the Southern Baptist Convention. That cuts across party lines. We are there (in Washington) to do our best to bring to bear Baptist convictions and insights as Baptist have expressed them on moral and public policy and religious liberty issues of the day. That sometimes is going to make the Bush administration mad. Sometimes it's going to make the Republican leadership mad. Sometimes it's going to make the Democratic leadership mad. And sometimes it's going to make all three of them mad.

And that's okay."

--30--

Nevada executive director  
announces retirement

N-CO (Alec)

Baptist Press  
3/11/91

RENO, Nev. (BP)--Ernest B. Myers, the Nevada Baptist Convention founding executive director-treasurer, will retire June 30, 1992.

--more--

Myers, 65, has been Nevada's chief executive officer since January of 1979. His retirement actually begins March 15, 1992, but he will use accrued vacation until the end of June. The announcement was made during the March session of the Nevada Baptist Convention executive board held in Reno this week.

"I believe this is the right timing for my retirement," said Myers. "This will give the convention an opportunity to find God's man for this important job and have him on the field by the time I leave."

Since the state convention's organization in 1979, the number of churches has more than doubled, total membership has grown to 23,000 and the state budget has expanded from \$390,000 to more than \$1.7 million.

Myers worked 14 years with the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board as a church architectural consultant. Prior to coming to Nevada, he was director of assemblies development and architectural consultant with the Arizona Baptist Convention.

Michael Rochelle, Las Vegas pastor and chairman of the executive board, said he hoped the convention could call a new executive who could be on the field by Jan. 1, 1992, in order to have a time of orientation with Myers.

"I believe God in his wisdom has brought Ernest B. Myers to Nevada and his ministry has been a great benefit to Nevada," Rochelle told the board.

--30--

---

CORRECTION: In (BP) story titled "Educators' meeting spawns Baptist network" dated 3/6/91, please make the following correction in the 11th paragraph:

" ... trying to perpetuate a coal-fired machine in a nuclear age."

Thanks,  
Baptist Press

---

BWA sends encouragement letter  
to Middle East Baptists

By Wendy Ryan

F-10  
(Wash.)

Baptist Press  
3/11/91

WASHINGTON (BP)--On behalf of its worldwide community of 70 million Baptists, the Baptist World Alliance has sent a letter of encouragement to Baptists in the Middle East in which it promises to enlist funds to alleviate the problems caused by war and send BWA leaders for a pastoral visit there "as soon as safe and suitable arrangements can be made."

The BWA also promises to encourage Baptists to visit the Middle East and Israel and "looks forward to the day when Baptists will be able to hold an international conference in the kingdom of Jordan," like they did in 1987.

Members of the BWA executive committee meeting in Washington March 5-7 voted to send the letter to BWA member bodies in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Israel and Baptist believers in Kuwait, Iraq and Egypt.

"We pledge ourselves to enlist funds for the alleviation of social problems caused by the war and for the care of refugees," the letter said.

"Since the Middle East is the home of three world religions and the home of many holy places, it seems proper that again pilgrims of peace visit all the countries. We pray that safety for all travelers will be guaranteed as a sign of a new era of peace."

Saying that "Jerusalem needs to be accessible for Christians, Jews and Moslems," the letter said that the BWA "would encourage again peaceful pilgrimages to the country of Israel as a sign of support for our Christian brothers and sisters there."

--more--

The BWA pastoral visit by its leaders would be a "sign of solidarity and an encouragement" to Baptists in the Middle East.

The letter of encouragement assured the Middle East Baptist community that the BWA community of Baptists around the world would have remembered them "with prayer and concern during these days of war and destruction, of hate and violence" and are continuing with them in prayer "for peace, justice and reconciliation in the Middle East."

The letter sends the BWA greetings and desire for a peaceful settlement of the many issues confronting the Middle East, not only to the Baptist "household of faith," but also to the "countries and peoples" of the Middle East.

"There is no place for any hatred or any animosity between peoples of different languages, races or religions," the letter said. "Indeed it is our prayer and hope that together we might become ambassadors of reconciliation and hope during these days of discouragement and disillusionment. May your faith in Christ shine as lights in the darkness as you minister to your grieving neighbors."

The BWA expresses its sorrow for the loss of lives due to the Gulf War.

"We encourage you to share with your people our grief at the loss of so many innocent lives," it said. "Indeed in your sorrow is shown the heart of God who grieves at the loss of innocent lives. In Jesus's name we join you in sorrow and encourage you to share with your people our grief at the loss of many innocent lives."

--30--

Agency presidents express  
gratitude for shared ministry

By Sarah Zimmerman

F-14MB

Baptist Press  
3/11/91

ATLANTA (BP)--In an exchange of plaques, presidents of two Southern Baptist Convention agencies expressed appreciation for more than 100 years of shared ministry.

Larry Lewis, president of the Home Mission Board, presented the J.B. Lawrence award to Lloyd Elder, president of the Baptist Sunday School Board. Elder, speaking during a chapel service for HMB employees, presented Lewis with a centennial award for the HMB's support of the Sunday School Board during its early publishing ministry.

"In every way, Lloyd Elder has been supportive of us as an agency and of me as a colleague. I couldn't have wanted for a more cooperative spirit," Lewis added.

"Larry Lewis is a Sunday school man to the core, and I revel in that," Elder said. "He's committed to the growth of the local church and reaching the lost."

The J.B. Lawrence award is named for the former HMB president who coined the phrase, "Trust the Lord and tell the people." Lewis said the award "stands for integrity in service and distinguished Christian commitment."

The Home Mission Board, then called the Domestic Mission Board, started with the Southern Baptist Convention in 1845, Elder noted. Two seminary professors began the Sunday School Board in 1863, but 10 years later it consolidated into the work of the Domestic Mission Board.

Issac Tichenor, then president of the Home Mission Board, shared his dream of the convention having its own publishing house with J.M. Frost. Their dream became a reality in 1891 when the SBC approved creation of a new Sunday School Board.

The centennial plaque recognizes the HMB's early and continued support of the Sunday School Board, Elder said.

The two agencies "work together to start churches and disciple believers," Elder said. "That's not theory; that's shoe leather."

--30--

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

Piland urges Bible study  
outside church buildings

By Linda Lawson

F-SSB

NASHVILLE (BP)--With Sunday school enrollment in Southern Baptist churches topping eight million in 1990, Harry Piland believes the time is right for churches to consider expanding their Sunday morning Bible study concept to include Bible study groups meeting away from the church building.

For 1990, the SBC Sunday school enrollment grew to 8,009,498, an increase of 73,483 or 0.9 percent over the 1989 total of 7,936,015.

"The mainline Sunday school is alive and well in Southern Baptist churches," said Piland, director of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's Sunday school division. "Our opportunity is to build upon the mainline Sunday school by establishing Bible study groups away from the church to reach others."

Breakthrough -- reaching large numbers of unchurched people with the gospel -- "really is possible," said Piland. "In spite of all the negative things in the world, I believe we're on the edge of breakthrough. People are looking for meaning in life. This is our grand opportunity."

He cited First Baptist Church of Arlington, Texas, which is now conducting Sunday morning and evening Bible study groups in more than 100 apartment complexes in the Arlington area.

On the first Sunday in March, attendance in the Bible study groups meeting away from the church was 1,476, while 1,826 gathered at the church for Sunday school.

Tillie Burgin, who coordinates the Bible study groups, said it is vital that a church give strong emphasis to the ongoing Sunday school while also reaching out with Bible study and ministry to persons in the community.

"We take church to them," she said. "Our groups don't have their own buildings, so the facilities may not be as nice. But we have the same message."

In another area, Piland said several states experienced turnarounds in enrollment in 1990. North Carolina registered a numerical enrollment gain of 6,831 to a new total of 655,748 after four consecutive years of small decreases. North Carolina ranked fifth among state conventions in numerical gains behind Texas, Georgia, Florida and Alabama.

Robert Stewart, director of the Sunday school department for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, said he believes one factor in the gain is an "increased awareness on the part of pastors that they have to be personally involved in planning and leading the Sunday school."

Sunday school leaders have a greater concern for training workers, and more and better training is available at the associational level through ASSISTeams, Stewart said. He also cited state convention leadership for making priority funds available to support Sunday school work and for stating the importance of strong Sunday schools to the health of churches.

While enrollment is the basic standard for measuring Sunday school growth, Piland said he was encouraged that Sunday school average attendance increased by a higher percentage in 1990 than enrollment.

Average attendance grew from 3,802,216 in 1989 to 3,851,340 in 1990, for a gain of 49,214 or 1.3 percent. The 1990 attendance increase followed three years of attendance declines. Just over 48 percent of those enrolled in Sunday school attend on any given Sunday.

"If you're averaging close to 50 percent of your enrollment in attendance each Sunday, you're probably touching about 80 percent of Sunday school members," said Piland.

"Expect a minimum of 50 percent attendance, but don't be satisfied with that," Piland urged. He said average attendance varies by regions of the country with attendance in the eastern United States generally slightly higher than in the West.

--more--

New York led all states with an average of 58.5 percent of members in attendance, followed by North Carolina (53.7) and West Virginia (52.8).

Churches can increase Sunday school attendance, not by gimmicks, but by training teachers to do a better job of preparation and applying Bible truths to life needs.

"If people gain insights from the Scripture study, apply the truths and are involved in the session, attendance will increase," Piland said.

For the future, he urged churches to expand their vision for growth beyond their own facilities and traditional time frames.

"We're not limited by a Sunday concept of Sunday school," he said.

--30--

Minister's wife encourages healing  
among victims of forced termination By Chip Alford

F-BSB

Baptist Press  
3/11/91

NASHVILLE (BP)--They stand in long lines at book fairs and ministers' wives conferences, just for a chance to share their story with Myra Marshall.

Others are too embarrassed or proud to talk about their family's problem in public, so they phone or write a letter. But all of these women have something in common -- they need to tell their story of how a forced termination impacted their lives.

"We talk together and we cry," said Marshall, a manuscript assistant in the Sunday school preschool-children's department at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board. "Most of these women just want someone to listen to them. I let them know that it is all right to grieve. They have to go through that process before they can work through their hurt."

Marshall knows first hand the painful effects of a forced termination. Her world shattered in 1980 when her husband, Frank, announced that he was resigning from his position as minister of music. A prospective pastor coming to the church "in view of a call" had asked that he be allowed to name his own staff. The chairman of the church's governing body then approached Marshall and demanded his resignation.

"I was totally devastated," Marshall recalled. "I had no warning, and things like that are just like a death. It doesn't really dawn on you at the time what is happening."

Although her husband resigned, "it wasn't a choice," Marshall explained. "We were definitely terminated. It was just like being fired."

The termination took its toll on the Marshall family, especially Myra. Pent-up anger, frustration and bitterness led to bouts with depression and a dependency on drugs initially prescribed to get her through seemingly endless sleepless nights. There were family problems, stress on her marriage and her relationship with her two children. Several friendships made at the church also were severed.

Her condition deteriorated to the point where her daughter found Myra trying to make a telephone call on a desk calculator. Finally, she found the courage to ask for help.

She found it from several sources, an important one being her brother, Dan McGee, a medical psychotherapist based in Arlington, Texas. A licensed marriage and family therapist, McGee is certified in pain management and recognized for his work in stress management.

"I just insisted that she get some professional help," McGee remembered. She complied by seeking out a counselor at the Sunday School Board and flying to Texas for "marathon therapy" with another psychologist at her brother's firm, Metro-McGee.

Recovery was a slow process for Marshall, and in some respect, is still ongoing.

"It took me six years to stop wanting to fight back," she said.

--more--

Part of Marshall's "therapy" was co-authoring a book about her experience. "Beyond Termination," described as "a spouse's story of pain and healing," was published in 1990 by Broadman Press. The book was written, Marshall said, "to help those hurting people out there who have gone through this and are going through this." Co-authors were McGee, who contributed clinical insights related to each chapter topic, and Jennifer Bryon Owen, a full-time writer living in Roswell, Ga., who helped with the book's design and content.

Two of the themes of the book are developing a healthy self-image and personal identity, two concepts difficult for many ministers and their spouses to grasp, McGee said.

"When ministers are in a church their whole identity tends to be consumed in their church, their calling and their ministry," McGee, an ordained minister, explained. "Their friends, social contacts and support system are within that framework. And the minister's family is as much a part of the church and his ministry as he is. So, when his ministry is terminated, it is a devastating blow to all of them."

Marshall said she has learned that her relationship with God "does not depend on any one church. You can mistake church activity for spiritual depth and growth in your relationship with God. I still love the church and I would never leave it. But God loves us as individuals, not as a staff member's wife or a staff member's child."

Other issues dealt with in the book include personal, marital and family stress caused by forced terminations; finding helpful resources and support groups; forgiveness; and keeping a grip on reality.

"I didn't write this book for revenge," Marshall explained, adding the name of her former church is not mentioned. "I just wanted to get across to people that you can get through this. It doesn't come overnight and it will not come automatically. It takes work and a conscious decision that you are going to forgive whether anyone asks for it or not. You are forgiving for yourself, so that you can pick up your life and move on."

That's exactly what Myra Marshall has done. In addition to her work at the Sunday School Board, she travels to women's conferences and book fairs to promote her book and talk with women and men who have been hurt by forced terminations. She also plays the organ at Bellevue Baptist Church in Nashville, where her husband is part-time minister of music. He is also district manager for Schulmerich Carillons, Inc., in Franklin, Tenn.

"I knew I was okay when I could go to chapel at the Sunday School Board without crying," Marshall said. "But my brother told me once not to ever let anybody tell me that things are the same again. They aren't. Something is taken from you."

"My pastor told me he sees me practicing 'pain management.' I've learned that those waves of pain will come, but they will also pass."

Despite the difficulty of her experience, Marshall said she is excited that God is using it for good. "I've learned that I have something to give, that I can make this pain useful by helping others," she said.

--30--

Gyms become churches'

'customer service centers' By Terri Lackey & Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist Press

3/11/91

ATLANTA (BP)--Churches name their gyms everything from family life centers to activities buildings, but few churches label their exercise facilities customer service centers.

If gyms are used as an outreach tool, churches could think of them in terms of customer service, says John Garner, coordinator of field service events for the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board church recreation department.

"Service is the byword today. Any organization is going to be successful if they have a service that appeals to the public," he says. "I see churches with successful recreation ministries as those who look at participants as their customers."

--more--

Churches typically have one of two attitudes toward their recreation facilities, says Bruce Johnson, minister of Christian life activities at Immanuel Baptist Church in Lexington, Ky. "Some people see it as a health club. Others see it as a ministry to bring people in."

Some successful methods of bringing people into the church family through gyms include:

-- Regular sports.

Sandra Martin, interim family life center minister at First Baptist Church of Minden, La., recalls one unchurched man who came to the facility to play racquetball. He began playing with people who attend Sunday school, and he is now one of the church's most faithful members.

-- Sports clinics.

Steve DeVoss, youth minister at First Baptist Church of Norman, Okla., takes church members to pioneer areas to conduct sports clinics every summer. The church also conducts two week-long clinics at its Norman facilities each year.

In addition to creating a forum for sharing Christ with athletically inclined youth, DeVoss says the program develops an evangelistic mindset among church members.

"We are growing people in missions and evangelism who aren't very good at talking to people. They can't preach or sing, but they can do sports. So they use the gift God has given them."

"The greatest thing the camps in Norman do is expose people to our church," DeVoss says. "When we get them in our recreation facility and expose them to the ministries we have with our sports, they are easier for us to reach and have a relationship with."

-- Youth programs.

At First Baptist Church of Minden, La., the family life center is open every week for "Saturday Night Live." The gym is open from 7 p.m. to 11 p.m. for students in grades seven through 12. Church youth are encouraged to bring guests to play racquetball, skate or shoot basketball. In a city without a movie theater, the program offers a wholesome environment for about 40 youth each week.

-- Children's activities.

Some churches offer programs for children who would otherwise be at home alone after school. Immanuel Baptist Church in Lexington, Ky., makes its center available for birthday parties when the child's entire class or neighborhood may be invited.

Eastside Baptist Church in Marietta, Ga., offers a "Parents At Large on Saturday" program in its gym. Every other Saturday volunteers take care of up to 10 disabled children to give parents a break from care giving. Parents leave their children at the church at 10 a.m. and pick them up after lunch. Parents are charged \$5 a week, and the money is used to pay a special education teacher who leads the group.

-- People with health problems.

The recreation center at First Baptist Church in Minden is open to people whose doctors have told them to walk for their health. About 65 non-church members regularly use the facility to exercise their doctor's orders.

-- Family projects

Johnson plans programs for the entire community at his church in Lexington. Church families are encouraged to bring their neighbors to special events in the gym. Christian entertainment such as a mime or juggler is provided, and church members interact with unchurched families in a non-threatening environment.

Regardless of the type of activity, churches which view their gym as a customer service center use the events to find church prospects.

For example, at the family events in Lexington, people may be asked to register for a prize. The registration card asks about their church membership. Information about people who report no church affiliation is transferred to the church's visitation program.

Frank Drinkard, minister of recreation at Germantown Baptist Church in Memphis, Tenn., admits his church members were doubtful at first.

"When the church decided to build the recreation building nearly 15 years ago, a number of folks were very skeptical," he says. "I have had many of those same people come up to me in subsequent years and say, 'this facility is really making an impact on our community.'

"We teach our coaches and aerobic instructors that they have a real chance to impact someone's life through their leadership."

--30--

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