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- BARCELONA -- Baptist choir wins gold in Barcelona, with photo.
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CLC asks Bush, Clinton to clarify positions on homosexual rights

By Tom Strode

Baptist Press  
8/10/92

WASHINGTON (BP)--The Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission is pressing President Bush for clarification of his position on homosexual rights. At the same time, it also is asking Democratic presidential candidate Bill Clinton to specify his public policy stance on the issue.

Bush recently signaled a willingness to allow homosexuals to serve in his cabinet, while Clinton, a Southern Baptist, has expressed public support for civil rights protection for homosexuals.

"We took these actions in light of recent disturbing comments from the president and vice president and in light of Bill Clinton's seeming endorsement of homosexual rights," said James A. Smith, the CLC's director of government relations.

"We felt it was imperative because of the clear conviction of Southern Baptists to uphold biblical morality in public policy as it relates to homosexuality. We thought it was absolutely essential that we directly request both candidates to clearly answer the question of how they will deal with so-called homosexual rights should they be elected president."

CLC Executive Director Richard D. Land asked the president to make clear his "public policy intentions" on homosexual rights in an Aug. 4 letter. Land's request followed a July 24 letter from President Bush that failed to address an earlier request by the CLC director for a new executive order affirming the traditional family and opposing civil rights based on homosexuality.

Land expressed "outrage" and a "sense of betrayal" in a July 1 letter after the president said on ABC's "20/20" he would not have a "litmus test" preventing known homosexuals from serving in his cabinet. (Vice President Dan Quayle seemed to confirm the president's "litmus test" comments in an interview in late July.) For the third time, Land asked for the executive order, which directs the policies of the administration's agencies and departments.

"The time for meetings is past," said Land, who, along with other evangelical leaders, had twice met with Bush about homosexual rights. "It is time for action. Actions speak louder than words."

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President Bush, in his letter to Land, made no direct reference to the executive order nor to whether he would appoint homosexuals to his cabinet. He remains a "firm believer in traditional family values," the president said.

"I must say that I am troubled by the fact that some of my friends inferred from my remarks on '20/20' that I may have backed away from my stance on the importance of a commitment to family values among my appointees to Federal office," Bush wrote. "Nothing could be farther from the truth."

In his Aug. 4 response, Land wrote, "I am troubled by your suggestion that we 'inferred' any lack of commitment to traditional family values in your administration. Mr. President, your response to the question of knowingly hiring a homosexual to a cabinet position was, 'We have no litmus test on that question here and there aren't going to be any.' The contradiction between your espousal of the traditional family values agenda and your apparent willingness to appoint homosexuals supposedly to carry out that agenda requires no inference. Your statement was, and is, troubling to many Southern Baptists."

Land asked the president two questions intended to clarify Bush's public policy position:

-- Will you veto any bill granting civil rights protection to homosexuals or having the same effect, including lifting the prohibition against homosexuals in the military?

-- Will you implement the executive order on the family issued by President Reagan in September 1987? If so, provide your definition of the family for policy purposes.

"While some evangelical leaders and organizations have been willing to accept private assurances from the White House on these questions, we believe that only a public policy commitment will clearly indicate what President Bush will do in the future on homosexual rights," the CLC's Smith said.

In his letter to Clinton, Land said, "Many Southern Baptists are deeply troubled by your position on homosexual 'rights.'"

He asked the Arkansas governor questions similar to those asked Bush:

-- Will you, as the 1992 Democratic platform says, sign a bill giving civil rights protection to homosexuals or having the same effect, including lifting the ban on homosexuals in the military?

-- Will you enforce or rescind President Reagan's executive order on the family? If you plan to implement it, define family for policy purposes.

The questions were asked in response to "numerous requests from our constituents," Land told Clinton.

Not only does the Democratic platform support homosexual rights, but Clinton has endorsed a national homosexual rights law on at least one occasion. Clinton expressed support for such legislation at a May fund-raiser attended by about 600 homosexual activists in Los Angeles, according to USA Today. In the same appearance, Clinton said he would reverse the ban on homosexuals in the military.

"It's clear that if Gov. Clinton is openly embracing homosexual rights, most Southern Baptists will find it difficult to support his candidacy in spite of his religious affiliation," Smith said.

On Cable News Network's "Larry King Live," Quayle was asked if the president's campaign wanted homosexuals out of the Republican Party.

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"No, look, we stand firmly for non-discrimination," Quayle said. "We have a policy of non-discrimination and the president just won't tolerate discrimination of any sort or of any kind."

King asked, "So if someone's gay working in the White House, they don't lose their job?"

"Let me just be very clear," Quayle said. "We have a clear-cut policy of non-discrimination. That has always been the policy."

President Reagan's 1987 executive order on the family requires agencies and departments to consider "the autonomy and rights of the family" in drafting and implementing policies. The order mandates an annual report be submitted including recommendations to guard the interests of the family.

Such a report has never been issued during the Bush administration, the Family Research Council said in a recent document. Gary Bauer, president of FRC, was largely responsible for drafting the 1987 executive order while domestic policy advisor in the White House.

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Baptist choir wins  
gold in Barcelona

By Linda Fisher & Mike Creswell

Baptist Press  
8/10/92

BARCELONA, Spain (BP)--If they gave gold medals for Olympic music performances, First Baptist Church of Dallas would be a contender.

The church's 176-member chapel choir and orchestra gave 12 performances during a 13-day stay in Barcelona during the Summer Olympics. By the time they left, local observers agreed their polished program had given a much-needed boost to Baptists' image in Spain, a country leery of evangelical Christianity because of centuries of Catholic tradition.

More than 200 singers, musicians, helpers and directors from First Baptist made the Barcelona trek on a chartered Boeing 757 jet. A year of planning went into the venture. Total cost of the trip reached \$200,000, said Jody Mazzola, minister of education who went along as a chaperon.

The group performed a medley of American songs and Christian music Aug. 4 at the prestigious Palace of Music in downtown Barcelona before a standing-room-only crowd of more than 1,500. They shared the stage with a bevy of world-class athletes, including American speedster and long jumper Carl Lewis. An active Christian, Lewis spoke of God's presence in victories as well as defeats. He went on to win his seventh and eight career Olympic gold medals during the games in the long jump and 400-meter relay, helping set a world record in the relay.

Larger halls could have been rented for less money but the Palace of Music has an image of quality that Baptists in Spain need, said Southern Baptist missionary Fred Dallas, who helped plan the evening.

Only two Baptist churches exist in Barcelona, a city of 5 million people. And only about 70,000 evangelicals of all kinds live throughout Spain, a country of 40 million people.

The First Baptist group also performed at a former Roman Catholic seminary in the city of San Cugat del Valles, where Baptists hope to establish a church.

"The choir's performance has made a great opening for us in this community," said Roberto Velert, pastor of Bona Nova Baptist Church in Barcelona and president of the Evangelical Baptist Union of Spain.

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The seminary's chapel, completed in the 14th century, is no longer used for religious services, an indication of how much even Catholics have declined in this increasingly secular country. But city officials, who now control the facility, were reluctant to allow non-Catholics to use it.

Final approval to use the building came just days before the event. Velert and other organizers at first feared attendance would suffer as a result. But colorful posters of the choir decked out in Texas-style Western wear were soon plastered about the city. Before the concert, choir members set up a puppet stage outside the building to attract passers-by to the performance. More than 400 people came, almost filling the ancient chapel.

As choir members ate a hasty sandwich supper in a nearby park before the event, the acting mayor visited them. He was so impressed he went home to bring his wife and son back for the concert.

At the close of the performance, First Baptist Church evangelist Larry Walker presented a gospel message while Velert translated. Velert asked the audience to indicate whether they felt the presence of God. The mayor and his wife joined those who raised their hands in a positive response. The couple then remained for more than an hour after the concert to question Velert about Baptist beliefs.

A similarly enthusiastic response met the choir at Manlleu, a city of 16,000 people about 45 miles north of Barcelona. The usually sedate Sunday evening activities in the main plaza came to a halt as the Western-costumed young people came skipping, clapping and singing across the square. Several hundred people gathered to watch the hour-long program that began with a medley of songs saluting Texas.

A high point of the evening came when the Texas flag was unfurled to the strains of "The Eyes of Texas Are Upon You." Puppet skits, handbell choir performances and a varied program of Christian music kept the audience attentive and applauding until the last notes died away.

"We've never seen anything like this in Manlleu!" declared Dolors Rovila, city councilman for culture, education, youth and sports. "It is just great to see so many young people with such a professional program."

Rovila and several other city officials remained on a balcony of nearby city hall during the entire concert. Afterwards they invited Fred McNab, choir director, to the mayor's office for a presentation of books about the region. McNab presented them with cowboy hats like the ones worn by choir members, then signed the city's guest register reserved for distinguished visitors.

Such recognition for evangelicals is unheard of in Spain, said Dallas, who is pastor of a 40-member congregation in Manlleu. "We'll get a lot of long-term recognition out of this."

A 24-member ensemble from the choir, called "Masterpiece," also sang at a chapel service attended by Olympics competitors in the Olympic Village, and Walker preached. On Sundays the choir divided and attended area Baptist churches to sing.

Choir participants, chaperons and assistants paid \$2,700 each to make the trip. That included hotel rooms and four chartered buses required to transport the choir and their equipment to performance sites. Many participants used vacation time to make the trip.

It was the 20th such music mission tour for Jane Mann, the choir's clothing coordinator. She made her first trip at age 15; this year her son, Eric, is on his third tour.

What keeps her coming back year after year? "It is just so exciting to see how the Lord works and the changes he brings in the lives of these young people through the tours," she said.

It was the sixth tour for her husband, Louie. As security director for the congregation, he was responsible for the health and safety of the choir members. Translation: A strict Christian standard of behavior. "You have to love kids but you also have to be firm with them," he said.

Despite the heavy performance schedule, the choir managed to attend several Olympic events. But "the point was driven home that the sole purpose of this trip is the Lord Jesus," Mazzola said. "We want the kids to stay focused on the spiritual needs of this part of the world. It has been great to see the zeal in their hearts to spread the gospel message as the Lord has opened doors before us."

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

Wayland has its own  
'Northern Exposure'

By Vikke Sanchez

Baptist Press  
8/10/92

ANCHORAGE, Alaska (BP)--The uniqueness of Alaskan life has fueled the hit TV show "Northern Exposure," probably because relatively few Americans ever get a firsthand look at our far-off sister state and her inhabitants.

But Southern Baptists in Texas, via the educational programs of Wayland Baptist University, have had opportunity to get inside the life and times of native Alaska and get a true taste of the Alaska experience.

While the weekly show earns high ratings in the Lower 48, most people in the Anchorage area are not fond of it, said Harvey Angel, director of Wayland's new Seattle center and former director of the Alaska center in Anchorage.

"You can't enjoy that program if you live up there," Angel said. "It's not Christian-oriented and it is exaggerated to the point it isn't realistic ... there are many discrepancies between the show and real life."

Like the show, however, many of the people in Alaska are quite eccentric. "The people there are very independent," Angel said. "They're pretty confident about what they're doing."

"One of the things I really noticed is that the people in Alaska are quick to help you if you need help. They're ready to jump right in. They don't say, 'Well, I don't want to get involved.' If you see a car break down on the side of the road, you may see six cars there trying to help the person get going. They help each other in order to survive."

One of the biggest challenges for the faculty and staff at WaylandUs Alaska center has been the environment, both academic and natural. However, with challenge also comes reward.

"We were dealing with a different kind of people in Alaska," Angel said. "They have a frontier mind-set. They are highly motivated people, which is a great asset during the long winter months when it stays dark for so long." That motivation also helps them make it through Wayland's academic program.

Alaska's rugged natural environment does provide rare opportunities, however. For instance, ecology classes have been able to witness and study the state's pristine environment in a unique setting, utilizing an instructor obtained through the federal Bureau of Land Management.

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The average age of students enrolled in the Alaska center is 35. When the center first started, the students were about 90 percent military. Now, the center is reaching out to more civilians in the community and only about 66 percent of the students are in the armed services.

Because the economy depends on the oil and petroleum industry, it is foremost on the minds of students involved in the oil business. Many students work on a week and off a week, so scheduling adjustments are made for them.

One of the rewards Angel saw during his eight years at the Alaska center was the number of students taking Bible courses. A student who graduated this past May came to know the Lord through one such class and she continues taking more undergraduate Bible classes because, as Angel says, "She's hungry to know more about the Lord."

Another Baptist influence on Anchorage has been through Wayland's criminal justice program. One police officer and highly motivated student, Michael Livingston, came to the criminal justice program and was so excited about it he promoted it throughout the police department. The Alaska center now counts 35 graduates from the Anchorage police department with another 30 working on their degrees. The group represents about half of the town's police department.

Angel says that Debi Russell epitomizes what the Alaska center is all about. Doctors found a brain tumor after she entered the academic program. She had to have surgery so there was an interruption in her education.

"Taking someone like her who had the desire and motivation to finish her degree but had so many obstacles, and being able to carry her and encourage her, that represents what our center is about. She had the tenacity and we had the Christian heart to minister to her and she was able to finish her degree and go on into the masters program."

Charles Nelson is another example of the impact of the Alaska center. The first native Alaskan to graduate from Wayland, Nelson was a product of the mission outreach of Baptists in Alaska.

Despite the harsh climate, Angel calls Anchorage a wonderful place. "We really enjoyed working up there with Wayland," he said. "We reached a lot of people and touched a lot of hearts."

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Sanchez is a newswriter at Wayland Baptist University.  
(BP) photo available upon request from Wayland.

Wayland off-campus programs  
thrive from Alaska to Hawaii

By Bobby Hall

Baptist Press  
8/10/92

PLAINVIEW, Texas (BP)--For more than 80 years, people in the Panhandle/South Plains region of Texas have known Wayland Baptist University as an educational institution striving for quality.

Through expansion of its off-campus programs, however, students as far away as Alaska and Hawaii are finding the same, albeit non-traditional, academic opportunities.

In 1974, Wayland opened its first off-campus center at Sheppard Air Force Base in Wichita Falls, Texas. The center started with one full-time director, two staff members and 25 students.

From those humble beginnings, Wayland's off-campus program has expanded to include centers in Lubbock, Amarillo, Wichita Falls and San Antonio, Texas; Phoenix, Arizona; Honolulu, Hawaii; Anchorage, Alaska; and the newest center in Seattle, Wash.

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Average student age is 36 and most enroll after prior higher education experience, completing the bachelor of science degree in occupational education in 23 months.

"In this day and age of multiple careers and redirection of employment, adult education programs are at the forefront of educational needs," said Bill Hardage, WBU vice president for external programs. "Programs are especially needed that have a Christian orientation and are strongly steeped in ethics. The majority of our students seek degrees for career change, career advancement or to satisfy their own personal desires to complete a degree."

Wayland's off-campus center graduates, like their younger counterparts on the Plainview campus, have gone on to notable careers in a variety of fields, as well as enrollment in doctoral programs and law and other professional schools.

But quality in the academic curriculum is only part of the commitment WBU makes to its students.

"There is a tremendous mission effort in evidence in these centers where you have the opportunity to present both Old and New Testament biblical teaching, with proven professors giving students a chance to experience Christianity," Hardage said. "This is the first encounter with Christianity for many students. For others, it may not be the first, but the first in a long time. This aspect of our off-campus operation has had a very positive impact on many, many lives."

Wayland's off-campus centers serve both military and civilian personnel. The United States Air Force has issued the university a "Memorandum of Understanding" that allows it to teach at any USAF installation if a need is evidenced.

Wayland has qualified many military personnel for entry into Officers Candidate School. More than 300 Wichita Falls graduates, for example, have become commissioned officers in the Air Force.

"Most of our centers have been built around the military," Hardage said, "but civilians have also come to us in increasing numbers. For example, our second-largest center, in San Antonio, has almost 40 percent civilians among its 424 students. Others, such as the 300-student Wichita Falls center located on the base, enroll primarily military personnel."

WBU also has felt the support of Southern Baptists in its off-campus work. "Almost all of the centers have started from a two-fold need, both military and civilian," Hardage said. "The Baptist connections in most operations were instrumental in our decision to establish the center."

In Hawaii, for example, WBU held classes for several years on the campus of Hawaii Baptist Academy and has had a strong relationship with the Hawaii Baptist Convention.

The tremendous growth in non-traditional programs both at Wayland and across the nation makes Hardage expect a bright future. "Wayland has been blessed with continued growth in its off-campus programs and we project that to continue at least in the immediate future as we find new ways to meet the needs of students."

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Hall is Wayland's executive director of university relations.

SBC Handbook filled  
with facts, figures

By Chip Alford

Baptist Press  
8/10/92

NASHVILLE (BP)--Item: The number of church members gained by Southern Baptists from non-Baptist churches in 1991 exceeded the number lost to them by more than 22,000.

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Item: The highest growth rate in the Southern Baptist Convention between 1986-1991 was reported in Wyoming where more than 58 percent of churches experienced membership growth greater than 10 percent. The lowest rate of growing churches -- 17 percent -- was reported in the District of Columbia during the same time period.

Item: 32,709 Southern Baptist churches have full-time preaching on Sunday mornings and evenings. Less than half that number have a weekly evangelistic visitation program.

These are just a few of the facts, figures and trends included in the Southern Baptist Handbook 1992. Compiled and published by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's church administration department, the handbook includes sections on Southern Baptist trends and highlights, church growth, receipts and expenditures, church program enrollments, foreign missions, home missions, Bold Mission Thrust and world religion. The handbook also contains a directory of SBC agencies and institutions and a new section on the characteristics and influence of Southern Baptist baby boomers.

Joe Stacker, director of the church administration department, said the handbook is designed as a resource Southern Baptist pastors and church leaders can use for planning and "to see how their church fits in with the total life of the convention."

Among the questions answered in the 144-page handbook are:

-- Q. How many Southern Baptist churches reported zero baptisms in 1991? A. 5,596, or 15.4 percent of SBC churches. (In addition, more than 3,000 churches reported only one baptism during the year.)

-- Q. How many resident members did the average Southern Baptist church have in 1991? A. 289, up from 286 in 1990.

-- Q. What percentage of Southern Baptist churches had a predominantly white membership in 1991? A. 93.9 percent. (Even so, churches with predominantly Asian/Pacific Islander, black, Hispanic or Native American members had higher growth rates than Anglo churches.)

-- Q. Which state has the fewest number of Southern Baptist churches? Rhode Island (six). (Texas has the most with 4,342.)

-- Q. How many unevangelized people groups remain in the world today? A. At least 188 in 40 countries, according to the Foreign Mission Board. (These unreached groups represent more than 652 million people.)

-- Q. In what state is the Peaks of Otter Camp, a Southern Baptist state assembly, located? A. Virginia.

The "Southern Baptist Handbook 1992" is available in Baptist Book Stores or by calling the Sunday School Board's Customer Service Center at 1-800-458-2772.

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EDITORS' NOTE: The SBC Handbook has been mailed to all state Baptist newspaper editors.

'Young nobody from nowhere' now  
is SBC president with a vision

By Jon Walker

Baptist Press  
8/10/92

WAKE FOREST, NC. (BP)--The pulpit committee was impressed. They had been told the young preacher's abilities stretched far beyond the small church he was pastoring. Yet they were concerned because theirs was a large church and they weren't sure if the young man with a crewcut could do the job.

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After deciding not to call the 29-year-old pastor, the chairman of the pulpit committee told John Roberts, then editor of a Christian publication in North Carolina and now editor of South Carolina's Baptist Courier, "We liked him fine but he's just a young nobody from nowhere, and with our big church we just can't take that chance."

That "young nobody" was Ed Young, elected in June as president of the Southern Baptist Convention. Young is the first graduate of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary to hold the position. In the past 30 years, Young has earned a reputation for powerful preaching and innovative evangelism. Along the way, in every church he has served as pastor, the congregation has at least doubled in size.

At Second Baptist Church in Houston Texas, where Young currently is senior pastor, about 1,000 people are baptized a year. With more than 18,000 members, it is the second largest church in the Southern Baptist Convention.

While still a student at Southeastern in the early 1960s, Young became pastor of First Baptist Church in Erwin, N.C.

Floyd Glover, who served as Sunday school director and chairman of deacons while Young was at Erwin, recalled Young brought the church's attendance to its highest level ever, and he says attendance has never been as high since.

Glover said Young came to the church as a "young boy" but proved to be a "great leader of people. He was everybody's preacher. He didn't just cater to one group."

John Roberts said Ed Young "hasn't changed much" in 30 years. In a column for the Baptist Courier, Roberts wrote that in 1962, the year Young earned his B.D. from Southeastern, Young told him his calling was to be a preacher. "That means," said the 25-year-old, "I must be fully prepared when I go into the pulpit. The people come expecting something and if I want them to come back again I cannot afford to send them away hungry."

Today, the 55-year-old Young says, "If you spend all your time filling appointments, then you're not filling everyone else with the Lord Jesus Christ. A person's only credentials in the ministry are their relationship with Jesus as Lord. He will give length and breath to our ministry. Our responsibility is the depth of our relationship with him."

Young said that depth comes from time spent in prayer. "It took a long time for me to figure out that God is not interested in large churches or programmed churches. God wants his house to be a house of prayer. The most important thing for anyone in ministry is to build prayer into his life and into his church."

Second Baptist of Houston has a 24-hour prayer ministry involving more than 3,000 people. The church, also known as "Exciting Second," uses innovative outreach methods to deliver an ancient biblical message to a world ever moving into the future. While the message of the church will never change, Young said, it is time to bring the church's methods into the 21st century.

Southeastern President Paige Patterson said Young's election as SBC president could not have come at a better time for the seminary. "It provides a basis for student recruitment that, perhaps, we wouldn't have had otherwise. It says to Southern Baptists as a whole that Southeastern Seminary is, in fact, producing men worthy of major leadership positions."

Trustee chairman Roger Ellsworth said he sees Young's emphasis on evangelism and spiritual awakening as right in line with the goals of the seminary. "Hopefully, this will encourage young men and women to consider coming to Southeastern," Ellsworth said. Young was a trustee at Southeastern from 1975 until 1978 when he resigned to serve at Second Baptist in Houston.

Young has made it no secret over the years that his student days at Southeastern were a "painful transition." He said he came to Southeastern from his native Mississippi and found the seminary's atmosphere "quite different" from what he expected.

However, he also believes the seminary "built a lot of good stuff" into his life. "It gave me an apologetic approach to my faith," he said. This "fight for his faith" caused him to read in areas he might not otherwise. As a counterbalance to authors such as Rudolf Bultman, Young began to read the apologetics of John Stott and B.B. Warfield.

Young said he also was impressed that the professors at Southeastern were "genuinely men of God." One of Young's former professors said Young was a "first-rate student." The professor said he thought the "left wing" moved Young to the "right."

"The best days of the seminary," Young said, "are ahead of it. Southeastern will build into students a sense of confidence in the Bible, a confidence to share their faith, a confidence in worshipping God and in the relevancy of their message."

Addressing seminary alumni after his election as SBC president, Young said, "Southeastern is becoming the strategic center for biblically based theological education."

Young has encouraged alumni who disagree with the changes at Southeastern to "take a long, deep look" at what happens. Eventually everyone will be "rejoicing," he predicted. Young said God uses different methods at different times and different seasons.

Regarding his recent election to the Southern Baptist Convention, Young said, "My thrust as president is this: We are going to establish certain kingdom goals and, to those who can buy into them, I say, 'Let's go.' We have spent enough time in introspection and debating the issues. I don't want to spend my whole ministry in a huddle. Revivals are breaking out all over the world and the Southern Baptist Convention is missing out on them. We need to get in on it. It's time to harvest."

Young said he wants to emphasize a program of work, missions, challenges and evangelism that will encourage people to work together. He said people working together are less likely to argue. He said he is asking people to do away with "pejorative" terms such as liberal and conservative.

When Young addressed Southeastern alumni at the SBC, he said, "I am tired of the 'us-them, you-they' terminology. When it comes to describing those going with God and kingdom business, from now on, the terminology will be 'we.'"

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Ed Young's 1962 graduation picture is available upon request through Southeastern's communications office.

Son of SBC president  
targeting baby boomers

By Matthew Brady

Baptist Press  
8/10/92

LAS COLINAS, Texas (BP)--Outside, red-vested parking attendants motion newcomers into a Wal-Mart-sized visitors parking lot. Inside, contemporary Christian music plays while announcements flash on a large screen on stage.

Welcome to the Fellowship of Las Colinas in Irving, Texas, where everything from its name (no mention of Baptist) to its bulletin (printed on recycled paper with soy ink) is designed to reach a new generation of unbelievers.

Pastor Ed Young, a 1987 graduate of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, believes that for churches to grow they must remove barriers to growth.

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This is Young's first pastorate. For seven years he was an associate pastor with his father at Second Baptist Church in Houston while earning his degree at Southwestern Seminary's Houston extension. The elder Young was recently elected president of the Southern Baptist Convention.

At the Fellowship of Las Colinas, Young said he is learning to address the fears and dislikes of his baby-boomer community.

Lesson No. 1: People aren't into denominational labels anymore.

"We found that denominational names are a barrier," Young said. He said he has been told many times, "I wouldn't have come to your church if I had known it was Baptist." He said people have the misconception Baptists are "mean and narrow," so he gets them in the door and shows them what Baptists are really like.

"We are Christians first and Baptists second," Young said.

Lesson No. 2: People are afraid if they go to church they'll be put on the spot.

Instead of a discussion-oriented Sunday school format, the Fellowship of Las Colinas uses a lecture format in its Bible study groups which allows for discussion at the end. In the worship services, visitors are not asked to stand, sit, raise their hands or apply large name tags to their clothing.

"People today are very skeptical of organized religion," he said. As a result, Young said visitors prefer to watch the service and remain relatively unnoticed.

Lesson No. 3: People tend to think church is boring, irrelevant and predictable.

"People go to where there is excitement and there is life," he said. "You win their loyalty Sunday by Sunday. They want something that is relevant."

Earlier this year Stan Durham, minister of music, walked the streets of Dallas with a video camera and asked people, "If you could sit across the table from God, what would you ask him?" The congregation watched the tape and then Young addressed the questions in a series of sermons.

These lessons and many more have helped the Fellowship of Las Colinas reach its community and beyond. Started in September 1989 as a mission of First Baptist Church in Irving, the church called Young as its pastor in February 1990. Attendance averaged 150. Seven months later the mission became a full-fledged church. In its first year the church baptized 128. Now attendance averages 1,300 every Sunday, with 250 to 300 visitors. The church has three Bible study hours and will begin three worship services in August.

Much of the growth is coming from previously unreached groups. Young said about half of his members and most of the visitors do not have a Baptist background. Former Buddhists, Jews and Catholics are included in its membership.

Prentice Scoggins and his wife, Doris, have been members for two years. Scoggins said he enjoys the emphasis on reaching the unreached.

"That's what it's all about," he said. "It's fun and exciting. It's not the same traditional church that I've been in for 40 years."

Future plans for the Fellowship of Las Colinas include buying property. The church now leases 28,000 square feet for Bible study, nursery and office space and rents the Irving Arts Center for worship services.

Young acknowledges his church is not for everyone.

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"Anytime you are reaching a target group of people, the service will make some uncomfortable," he said. "You can't be everything. You can't be a traditional church, a contemporary church, mid-contemporary, mid-traditional -- you've got to have your focus and go for it," he said.

"We have a mission that God has given us to reach this Metroplex for Christ. We will continue to grow until everyone knows Christ," he said. "It's a life or death situation. People are dying and going to hell all around us."

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(BP) photo mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Southwestern Seminary.