



**-- BAPTIST PRESS**  
News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

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Andrew's devastation tally  
includes 4 Baptist churches

By Art Toalston

Baptist Press  
8/25/92

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (BP)--At least four Southern Baptist churches are among the thousands of buildings and homes demolished or badly damaged by Hurricane Andrew.

Destroyed, according to the earliest count by Florida Baptist officials, were:

- First Baptist Church of Cutler Ridge in Miami.
- First Spanish Baptist Church in Homestead, where the eye of Hurricane Andrew passed through.

Badly damaged were:

- First Baptist Church of Homestead.
- Wayside Baptist Church in Miami, where an auditorium wall was blown down.

A four-person Florida Baptist disaster response unit was en route to Homestead Aug. 25 to assess relief needs in coordination with the Red Cross, reported Don Hepburn, public relations director of the state Baptist convention.

Andrew's Aug. 24 rampage through south Florida put Dade County pumping stations out of commission thus creating a water shortage. Hepburn said Baptist disaster relief teams working in the Miami area will need to carry their own water supplies.

Five disaster relief units operated by state Baptist Brotherhoods are in the devastation area, according to the Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission, which coordinates the units' work from its Memphis headquarters. The units include tractor-trailer rigs and fifth wheels.

The Florida unit will be operating from First Baptist in Cutler Ridge while the South Carolina unit has been assigned to First Baptist in Homestead. Three units are in the Miami area: North Carolina's, Kilpatrick Baptist Association's from Georgia and Rehoboth Baptist Association's also from Georgia.

A sixth unit, from Ohio, is en route to Miami, while Tennessee's unit has been placed on alert for needs once Andrew slams into New Orleans or elsewhere on the Gulf Coast.

Anti-lottery rallies  
stir Georgia Baptists

By James Dotson

GAINESVILLE, Ga. (BP)--Conventional wisdom once held a Georgia lottery was inevitable but opposition leaders say the tide is turning.

That was the consensus at a recent rally -- one of 21 being held throughout the state -- by Baptists Organizing Lottery's Defeat, one of the strongest efforts fighting the constitutional amendment on the Nov. 3 ballot to make a state-run lottery legal.

The rally at First Baptist Church in Gainesville drew more than 1,200 people to hear reasons why a state lottery is not only a bad idea on moral grounds but also violates fundamental fiscal and tax-policy principles.

Georgia Baptist Convention President J. Truett Gannon led off the evening stating a lottery would place the government in the same business that is currently a felony if practiced by a private individual. Not only is it gambling, he said, but the odds of winning are worse than almost any other form of gambling.

"They're only saying give us your money and every now and then we'll give one of you just a tad of it back," he said.

J. Emmett Henderson, executive director of the Georgia Council on Moral And Civic Concerns and the educational speaker at all of the rallies, refuted various lottery proponents's arguments.

The facts, he said, show lotteries have not worked in any state where they have been touted as the answer to financial problems -- including the savior of education as pledged in Georgia.

In Florida, he said, Gov. Lawton Chiles has called the lottery a "gigantic hoax" on the people, with its promises of aid for education unmet in reality. Administration and promotion costs eat up much of the profits, Henderson said, and money that does reach education is of little value because other appropriations for education somehow get reduced.

Henderson issued a challenge for lottery proponents: "If a Georgia lottery could help public schools ... show me one state where in the long run the public schools ended up better with a lottery than without it. There is no such state.

"Lottery will not make you rich," Henderson noted. "If you buy a lottery ticket a week, (the odds indicate) it will take you 184,615 years to win the ultimate million-dollar lotto jackpot. That is 190 times as long as Methuselah lived."

Not only is the lottery regressive taxation targeting those who can least afford it, Henderson said, but it also diverts spending toward tax-exempt purchase of lottery tickets rather than taxable purchases of other goods.

Thus, if \$833 million worth of tickets are sold, \$45 million that would have been collected in sales taxes on that spending is wasted. He added because a dollar normally is turned around four to five times in the economy, "what we're really talking about is a loss of \$252 million."

Henderson also told of how then-Lt. Gov. Zell Miller once told him rather than fighting pari-mutuel betting -- as had been Henderson's concern at the time -- he should be campaigning against the evils of a lottery. "The fact, according to Lt. Gov. Miller, was that lottery is what really would hurt Georgia's poor," Henderson said.

"Lottery is a sordid business. It changes the role of government from protecting its poor ... to exploiting them and defrauding them," he added.

Henderson encouraged each person to convince 10 other people that a lottery is not in the best interests of the state.

"If we can do that, we'll win. It's that simple," Henderson said. "We are given only a few opportunities to make a decisive difference in the moral and family life of our state. This is one of those opportunities.

"What we have in lottery is not a harmless little game ... and it's not just politics. What we are seeing here is the powers of darkness. And that's why Jesus Christ is calling each and every one of us to get involved," he said.

Although a year ago chances of defeating the lottery amendment appeared slim, Henderson said many secular sources -- newspapers, teachers and others -- have joined church groups in opposition. One recent poll in The Gainesville Times, he said, found 53 percent of the participants were against the lottery.

"The momentum is going our way. People are changing their minds. And surely with Jesus Christ we can say nothing is impossible," he said.

The Georgia Council on Moral and Civic Concerns has prepared a kit for churches with materials and ideas for organizing opposition to the lottery on the local level. Buttons, bumper stickers, yard signs and an informational video also are available for purchase through the Georgia convention's public relations department.

Charles Skidmore, GBC public relations director and coordinator of the BOLD rallies, said the Gainesville meeting was the largest to date and momentum is building going into the fall.

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Baptists prepare for '96  
by observing in Barcelona

By James Dotson

Baptist Press  
8/25/92

ATLANTA (BP)--Ray Johnson saw only one Olympic event -- a baseball game between the United States and Spain -- during his trip to Barcelona.

But that was enough -- the visit he made with three other members of the committee coordinating Southern Baptist ministry at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics had little to do with the actual games.

Their interest was more on the periphery, particularly the many ministry activities that brought thousands of volunteers from around the world.

The lessons learned, he said, place the Atlanta committee in a better position to begin deciding exactly how Baptists need to be involved when the games come to town.

"I think it's helped us decide what we can do as a Baptist ministry," said Johnson, director of the Georgia Baptist Convention's education division and chairman of the as-yet-unnamed committee coordinating Southern Baptist ministries at the '96 Games.

"I think the realization was we can do everything or we can do certain things. We're just going to have to find those certain things we can do effectively that will touch the most people and affect the most lives," he said.

Johnson said a primary objective was to observe the various ministries and to meet with missionaries, other evangelical groups and other important contacts for coordination of ministry efforts in '96.

A key point to any ministry at the Olympics, Johnson said, is most efforts probably will not be centered on the athletes themselves, accessible only under strict control of the Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games.

"The real ministry is with international visitors, families and just general visitors -- visitors from around the country and the people who live right here in Atlanta. We've got the opportunity to impact those folks and use the Olympics as a reason for doing some very important things," he said.

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The specifics are yet to be determined. The 28-member committee has thus far concerned itself with organizational details and an overall strategy. Objectives of the committee include organizing evangelistic efforts, providing services to meet basic needs of people attending the games, using volunteers in ministry, supporting the committees and officials of the Olympics and ensuring follow-up on all ministry contacts.

The ministries will be carried out on three different levels, he said. On one level, Baptists will work through the ACOG to minister to athletes and others involved directly in the Olympics. But there also will be ministries conducted solely by Southern Baptists and ministry in cooperation with other Christian groups.

"We expect to be on all three levels, with our major thrust being on Baptist ministries," Johnson said.

He noted seeing other ministries at work and getting an idea of which groups would be suitable for cooperative efforts was one of the most important aspects of the trip.

In Barcelona, he said, several things struck him as particularly significant.

One was the need for language-speaking people. "The language barrier is gigantic," he said, noting the committee might consider coordinating as many foreign missionaries as possible who are in the United States on furlough to join in the effort.

"We've got to somehow get language-speaking people in the vicinity of the people in that particular language group and there are ways we can do that," he said.

Follow-up is another concern that also could call upon Southern Baptists' network of missionaries and cooperating Baptists groups worldwide. In Barcelona, Johnson said, there were thousands of Christians doing ministry but few likely were able to keep in touch with the people they had reached.

"Atlanta is just going to be overrun with different Christian groups doing different things and that makes us doing meaningful long-term things all the more important," he said.

Also, Johnson said, he was amazed at the number of young people who seemed to descend on the Olympics. "You met them everywhere," he said. He noted the youth hostels so prevalent in Europe are not present in Atlanta.

"We may have a way we can really minister to these young people by providing a youth-hostel sort of atmosphere, a place to stay," he said.

Johnson said he discovered several other ministry possibilities. The large number of police officers, for example, could be targeted in some manner. Also, the popularity of enameled lapel pins at the Olympics provides an excellent opportunity for evangelistically oriented pins.

The goal, with pins and with other evangelistic tools, is to produce something that won't be thrown away, Johnson said.

"Some of the companies gave away fans or different things that had advertising on them. We might do something like that, something that is useful people will keep," he said.

As for the committee, Johnson said members hope to have a name -- which must be approved by ACOG -- within a few months. Other plans, including financing for an effort that could require a full-time coordinator, also are uncertain.

The committee is composed of representatives from the Georgia Baptist Convention, Home Mission Board, Foreign Mission Board, Woman's Missionary Union, Brotherhood Commission, Sunday School Board and associations in the metro Atlanta area.

Church ventures into care  
for community's seniors

By Rich Reasoner

SAVANNAH, Ga. (BP)--Betty Dixon uses TenderCare day-care center at Immanuel Baptist Church almost daily but she has no children. The center is for her mother, Darline Zuber, an 85-year-old who needed activity and fellowship.

She found it at TenderCare -- a church-sponsored senior adult day-care center Georgia Baptist Convention leaders hope will be the first of many across the state.

"This center has truly been a godsend," Dixon said. "Whenever there are things I need to accomplish during the day, I don't have to worry about who will take care of my mother anymore. I just bring her to TenderCare and I feel good about it."

James N. Griffith, GBC executive director-treasurer and a catalyst in encouraging church-based adult day care, said he believes "centers for those who are in reasonably good health and ambulatory is a marvelous idea."

D.F. Norman, director of the GBC pastoral ministries department, took Griffith's lead and asked Peggy Beckett to help start the ministry. Beckett is administrator of Newtonhouse, a Georgia Baptist Medical Center facility with an adult day-care center. The center serves as a prototype for potential church programs and Immanuel was the first church to follow through.

"We don't have any more than 10 participants, so we can bring the church people in and show them how we operate and teach them the functions of an effective care center for senior adults," Beckett said.

"It is a wise church that reaches out to this population," she added. "People need to realize adult day care is and will be a serious need. Right now there are more people in our society who are over 65 than under 25. To me, that is what ministry is all about -- finding what the need is and doing something about it."

Beckett met with the committee from Immanuel during a senior adult retreat and TenderCare opened in March.

"Caring for an older adult in need of special attention on a daily basis is a large responsibility," said Carol Ewing, director of the center. "Whenever someone needs a half day to run errands, a whole day to relax or regular care while at work, that's what we are here for."

Senior adults at TenderCare have activities throughout the day, from ceramics and arts and crafts to sing-alongs.

"We also do a lot of physical games for exercise, like bowling, dart-throwing and bean-bag toss," Ewing said. "We also have Bible study once a week."

Ewing also takes clients to the senior citizens center in Savannah once a week, where they eat lunch, participate in circle dancing and socialize with other senior adults.

"Most of the people at this age have lost all their friends and socializing is important," Ewing said. "If these people just stay with their families all day they don't do much. If we get them out with other people it gets them motivated and active."

The program provides welcome relief for caregivers as well.

"I've noticed a change in my mother," said Dixon, whose mother was the first participant in TenderCare. "I feel so much better knowing she is at a church. She is so much happier and her health is getting better too."

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"She is an entirely different person now. I used to lay in bed at night wondering what I could do for her. But then the Lord said, 'Look under day care in the phone book,' and I found Immanuel," Dixon said. "It was answered prayer."

Dixon added Immanuel's program is among the best she has seen. "We've tried some of the other day-care centers before. Their programs took my mother to the mall and sat her on a bench all day while they went shopping. I could not stand the thought of someone treating my mother badly."

Lucille Rogers, 81, a 50-year member at Calvary Temple Church in Savannah, is another satisfied participant. "I like this place. I just love the singing and I love my friend Darline (Zuber)," Rogers said as she held a flower arrangement she made at TenderCare. "Carol (Ewing) does a good job here and we are not going to let her go."

But success has not come overnight for Immanuel. Norman said many churches may have problems to overcome in starting a care center such as the need for a registered nurse, dietary consultation, physical therapy, social services and meals for participants.

Churches planning a center also should consider carefully finances, Norman said. The program at Immanuel, for example, costs \$30 a day per participant, a fee that does not cover all expenses.

Norman said these problems need to "be adapted to what the church can do. Churches will need to consider these projects as a ministry. The projects are not going to pay for themselves. It has to be a ministry of the people that is supported by the church with prayers, their time and their tithes and offerings."

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Reasoner is an editorial assistant with The Christian Index, Georgia Baptists' newsjournal.

Big Brother of the Year misses  
White House for mission trip

By Tim Nicholas

Baptist Press  
8/25/92

BRANDON, Miss. (BP)--David McNair could have visited with President Bush in the Oval Office but missed his chance. Instead, he was in Kazakhstan, doing volunteer missions.

McNair, of Brandon, had been named National Big Brother of the Year by Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America for his work as Big Brother to 10-year-old Josh Cashion. But the award presentation by the President took place at the end of April when David was in the middle of a six-week stint in Alma Ata, Kazakhstan.

Josh got his trip to see the president anyway, traveling with a Jackson area Big Brother staffer. Josh reported to David concerning the President, "Gee, he's tall." And Mr. Bush affirmed to Josh that he did, indeed, know where Kazakhstan is.

This October David and Josh have been invited to New York to attend the National Hero Awards program which honors American heroes and benefits Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America.

The purpose of being a Big Brother is to provide a positive role model for young people, particularly where there is only one parent present. David has taught Josh to swim. And when the family's home burned last year, David provided moral support.

Himself single, David directs a single adult Sunday school department at First Baptist Church in Jackson.

David traveled at his own expense to Moscow, with travel to Kazakhstan and local expenses paid by the institute where he taught. His appointment was processed through Cooperative Services International, Southern Baptists' international aid arm.

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David, who owns a mini-storage business in Jackson, conducted small business training at the Kazakhstan Institute of Management and Economics. The institute was formed at the instruction of the president of Kazakhstan to teach free-market principles and set up a graduate program in economics, including an MBA program.

"I taught private enterprise in a free market, bank financing and marketing, among other topics," David said. He did a case study of a carpet factory in the process of privatizing and a furniture company that was the first privatized under the new law. The people in the classes included the heads of the republic's agro-industrial complex.

Once he was invited to speak to the newly elected leaders of the regional and local Soviets -- which are a type of city and state council. "They wanted me to speak on state and local governments. I also talked about county government which they had no knowledge of," David said. The group must have liked what he had to say, because the group invited him to speak to their bosses, members of the Supreme Soviet, the country's congress. The Supreme Soviet, which has 360 deputies was not in session, but 60 members and staff attended David's talk.

While there, David saw Pat Robertson on TV along with a program on the Ten Commandments. It is not permitted to preach the gospel on the streets, but one can give out Bibles and David had opportunities to share his faith. "You don't go as a missionary, you go as a business person," he said. "It is lifestyle evangelism" where people ask questions about religion and David could freely answer. Once asked a tough question about biblical justice, David responded, "I'm not a theologian, I'm under the new covenant."

David said his volunteer trip helped him realize "you are a part of a long process of people who had gone before and come behind you."

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(BP) photo available upon request from The Baptist Record, Mississippi Baptist newsjournal.

Bible student from Russia  
speechless at opportunity

By Gary W. Griffith

Baptist Press  
8/25/92

BOSSIER CITY, La. (BP)--Ukraine Baptist Alexander Goncharov sometimes finds himself speechless these days -- most often in English but also in Russian.

But the 22-year-old native of Kiev, capital of the Ukraine, was not at a loss for words about a year ago when he met pastor Fred Lowery. Alexander shared his dream with the former Louisiana Baptist Convention president of studying at an American Bible college.

With the help of Lowery's congregation, First Baptist Church of Bossier City, La., Alexander now is a student at East Texas Baptist University in Marshall.

"I did not think that Dr. Lowery would take it as seriously and really help," Alexander recalls. "But when I got the invitation for admission (to college), I was surprised. I can't express appreciation in English or even in Russian."

Alexander arrived in May and will complete his one-year studies next spring. First Baptist Church is covering his travel, living and medical expenses; East Texas Baptist University is providing scholarships for tuition and books.

Alexander met Lowery last September, when the pastor preached in Alexander's church, Svyatosheno Baptist Church in Kiev. Lowery was on a trip in the former Soviet Union with Morris Chapman, former Southern Baptist Convention president and president-treasurer-elect of the SBC Executive Committee. Lowery had been SBC second vice president the previous year during Chapman's first year in the SBC post.

Lowery says he extended an invitation to Alexander "on the spot because we have a church that has a big enough heart that would sponsor him."

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The invitation was important because of the quality Bible and theological training available in the United States that is not available in the Ukraine, Lowery says. "By bringing any Russian Bible student who is serious about studying the Bible over to the United States, a year's training here will in essence put them three to five years ahead of one of their contemporaries in Russia."

A new Baptist seminary was launched last year in the Ukraine port city of Odessa but Alexander says it was not possible for him to go there because of its distance from Kiev and only a few dozen students, at least 25 years old, are admitted to the seminary.

Alexander's brother-in-law, Egar, is attending the Odessa seminary where the faculty includes Nikolai Alexandenko, an emeritus professor of the religion department at Louisiana College in Pineville.

Alexander says he wanted to study the Bible in a Baptist college in the United States because American professors "know the ropes" in Bible education and have many resources.

"In our country Bible teaching is at the beginning so not everybody has opportunities to study with Bible teachers. Just self-education you know," he says.

When Alexander arrived in the United States in May, he left behind in Kiev his wife of five months, Tanya, who is due to deliver their first child in early October.

Even though Alexander thought about the possibility of his wife accompanying him to the United States, "I never believed it possible (for her to come)," Alexander says. "It is very expensive."

When leaders of Lowery's church learned of the situation, they helped begin the paperwork and process necessary to bring Tanya to the United States. She arrived Aug. 9 at the Shreveport (La.) Regional Airport, with Alexander and about 100 FBC members there to greet her.

Media minister Jeff Young says church leaders were determined to bring Tanya to the United States when they learned Kiev is about 45 miles from the Chernobyl nuclear disaster site.

Alexander says the Chernobyl radiation has caused many deaths, particularly among children. Many babies born in the area now have cancer or are still births. "Nobody wants to live near Chernobyl. Our nature is so polluted now. You can see it. Nobody knows the truth how really bad our nature is," he stresses.

A doctor who has examined Tanya since her arrival "said the baby boy is in good shape and looks healthy," Alexander said.

"We are delighted to be at our (FBC) church and the Christians there are so friendly, considerate, very kind," Alexander says. "We were surprised how kind. It was unexpected for us."

Alexander is quick to credit God's blessings in his life to the service and commitment of his father and grandfather, who are longtime Baptist preachers. "They were persecuted from KGB (Soviet police), particularly my grandfather," he says. "They were faithful, so I think this is not our blessing from God to come to the United States to study. God is blessing our grandfather and father who made for God so much. We have this opportunity because of God's blessing of them."

Alexander also has known KGB persecution. He says there was a law that no one under 18 years of age could participate in church service or be baptized with water. "But we did it anyway. Sometimes we got a ticket (from the KGB) for breaking law and have to pay fine. It was difficult. We tried to hide it from authorities but they knew how (to find out). Someone in church must have told KGB when young people baptized," he says.

"KGB knew about each member. They always tried to make us not become a (church) member. Everyone had trouble with communists."

Though he had attended church with his family all his life, Alexander did not become a Christian until he was 17. He was baptized shortly thereafter at Svyatosheno Baptist Church. His wife, Tanya, became a Christian at age 14 and was baptized a year later.

Despite his praise of the United States, Alexander plans to return home to Kiev next spring with new skills in Bible interpretation. "I will be a pastor in the future, because I am pretty young. I have a great desire to be a pastor and to serve God. I don't know exactly but we are ready to do any service to God anywhere. We just wait for God. But (until then) I can help my pastor."

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(BP) photo available upon request from East Texas Baptist University's public relations office.

Retirement center crisis  
confronts Alabama Baptists

By Mark Baggett

Baptist Press  
8/25/92

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (BP)--Alabama Baptist Retirement Centers has "threatened the financial integrity" of the Alabama Baptist State Convention with plans to build a nursing home in Dothan, according to Troy Morrison, convention executive secretary-treasurer.

In an unprecedented action, the convention's State Board of Missions Aug. 11 voted to recommend to the annual convention in November the following steps:

- to request ABRC consider no new projects for one year.
- to escrow the convention's 1993 budget allocation to ABRC.
- to conduct an independent audit of ABRC financial records.
- to appoint a five-person committee to study the feasibility of ABRC's ministry.

The board, by 73 of the 74 votes cast, adopted the recommendations after deciding ABRC, a convention agency, violated state convention bylaws by incurring an indebtedness without convention approval.

ABRC officials denied the agency violated any bylaws and that the convention had suffered any exposure of liability. ABRC President M.P. "Pat" Harrison said after the Aug. 11 meeting ABRC had not been given the opportunity to explain the complex legalities of the Dothan project.

At the Aug. 11 meeting, ABRC officials responded to the charges by issuing their own set of recommendations and agreeing to the moratorium but asking the convention to continue to fund ABRC at a level that would avoid interruption of the ministry.

The ABRC also recommended the convention provide funding for a complete audit "in cooperation with" ABRC's own auditing firm and the convention hire a nationally recognized firm to do a feasibility study of ABRC operations.

ABRC's set of recommendations was not acted on by the executive committee.

The immediate source of contention has been ABRC's plans to develop the nursing home facility in a joint project with Flowers Hospital, Inc., of Dothan.

According to Harrison, ABRC's original plans -- to build on property given by First Baptist Church of Dothan -- were altered because ABRC could not get federal funding for the project.

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Then when the state convention raised concerns over its potential liability, Harrison said ABRC "did the next best thing," asking Flowers Hospital to relocate the site and build on Flowers property. The agreement provided a way to preserve the hard-to-obtain "Certificate of Need" issued by the state, Harrison said. In the view of ABRC officials, the arrangement also shielded ABRC and the state convention from liability on the debt.

But the state board of missions' executive committee, still concerned about indirect liability and about ABRC incurring a debt without convention approval, appointed a special committee to study the bylaws question. That committee presented its motions in meetings Aug. 10-11 in Montgomery.

The original motion, presented by Leon Ballard, chairman of the four-person committee and pastor of First Baptist Church in York, claimed ABRC's "Development Agreement" with Flowers Hospital violated convention bylaws by "exposing ABRC and the convention for an amount to exceed \$4.5 million for a facility totally owned by Flowers Hospital and built on land owned by Flowers Hospital with provisions for a 20-year lease agreement."

The motion also charged ABRC incurred a \$370,000-\$500,000 debt for preliminary work "without prior approval of the Alabama Baptist State Convention."

Citing various sections of the state convention bylaws, Chriss Doss, general counsel to the board, said the bylaws prohibit any convention agency from incurring any such indebtedness without prior convention approval.

ABRC argued the agreement does not expose the convention to liability and suggested convention officials were delving improperly into day-to-day affairs of ABRC.

Under the "Development Agreement," signed by ABRC President Harrison and Flowers Hospital, Inc., of Dothan March 23, 1992, ABRC officials claimed the agency has the right to vacate the project upon its completion with no financial obligations and the state convention would be released from any claims.

Mentioning a pledge made to the people of Houston County to build the nursing home, ABRC, in a proposed resolution during the August meeting, stated "the overall integrity and reputation of the state convention would be adversely affected by a failure or refusal to honor the prior pledge regarding a new nursing home facility in Dothan."

But Morrison, as well as other members of the 19-member executive committee, maintained the agreement could expose the state convention to liability for the debt.

"Unless you take a firm, solid, definitive action," Morrison told executive committee in an Aug. 10 meeting, "you could take millions of dollars that would go to our missions programs and spend it instead on building programs."

Morrison and others also questioned whether the agreement was a sound business venture. "It is a terrible business deal," he said. "It is a building built on land owned by Flowers Hospital and therefore will belong to the owner of the land. Yet ABRC is to stand for a \$4.5 million loan."

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God can use you at work,  
layman tells students

By Charles Willis

Baptist Press  
8/25/92

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Executives and peers in the corporate world are watching every step Christian co-workers make, a Baptist layman told students attending the student conference in mid-August at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center.

Michael Arrington, vice president for corporate services at the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, said the consistency of a Christian's life shows non-Christians how God works.

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"The corporate world, your cohorts, those who are ungodly want you to fail," he said. "They can tear you down if you don't stand for what you believe."

Arrington, whose career included numerous management positions in public utilities before joining the board in 1991, said he believes availability and sensitivity to the needs of others can place Christians in the workplace in the best position to witness for Christ.

"A touch on the shoulder, the way you respond to people in need," can show others "there is something different about your life," he said. "In the corporate world, you can't always get away with going up to people offering to share the gospel. You don't want to throw up a barrier, but to do what you can to be in the best position to witness. You have to live your faith to show others there is something different about you."

Arrington said when others compliment or ridicule the differences they see in your lifestyle, the door has been opened to explain the source of that difference.

Christians should exhibit qualities that set them apart at work, he said. Among those are fairness, openness, compassion, concern, confidentiality, integrity, trust, mutual respect, loyalty, flexibility and consistency.

Such qualities "position you to be available to give advice, wisdom and service" to others, Arrington said.

For a successful career, he recommended students "start every day in God's Word. Pray that God will use you that day. There is not a circumstance in life that God's Word cannot address.

"Your decisions and actions and activities are going to be different when you start the day focusing on God," he continued. "If you want to be the very best at your vocation, spend time with God."

Individual gifts determine how Christians approach witnessing to others, he added.

"Some of you may be able to share the gospel in the blink of an eye," he acknowledged, "but all of us can honor God, be an example.

"Be available with your individual gifts," he challenged. "God demands the best we have."

Ridgecrest Student Conference was sponsored by the student ministry department of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

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CORRECTION: In (BP) story titled "CBF leader lists 6 questions he will pose to FMB leaders," dated 8/21/92, in the fifth paragraph please correct the date Don Kammerdiener becomes FMB interim president to Nov. 1, not Oct. 1.

Thanks,  
Baptist Press

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