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News Service of the Southern Baptist Convention

NATIONAL OFFICE

SBC Executive Committee
901 Commerce #75
Nashville, Tennessee 37203
(615) 244-2355
Herb Hollinger, Vice President
Fax (615) 742-8911
CompuServe ID# 70420.1

BUREAUS

ATLANTA Jim Newton, Chief, 1350 Spring St., N.W., Atlanta, Ga. 30367, Telephone (404) 898-7522
DALLAS Thomas J. Brannon, Chief, 333 N. Washington, Dallas, Texas 75246-1798, Telephone (214) 828-5232
NASHVILLE Lloyd T. Householder, Chief, 127 Ninth Ave., N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, Telephone (615) 251-2300
RICHMOND Robert L. Stanley, Chief, 3806 Monument Ave., Richmond, Va., 23230, Telephone (804) 353-0151
WASHINGTON Tom Strode, Chief, 400 North Capitol St., #594, Washington, D.C. 20001, Telephone (202) 638-3223

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California church reports
1,200 conversions in Russia

By Mark A. Wyatt

Baptist Press
9/8/92

EL SOBRANTE, Calif. (BP)--More than 1,200 professions of faith were reported during a recent two-week long Russian mission trip organized by First Baptist Church of El Sobrante, Calif.

Among the new converts were many individuals from Islamic backgrounds, said Danny Griffin, minister of music at First Baptist. Griffin led the 13-member group during the July 17-30 mission trip.

"When the Islamic people found out they can trust Jesus, too, they started getting saved. It was incredible," Griffin said.

"We didn't ask them to become Christians," Griffin explained, "we asked them to trust Jesus. When they heard they could do that, a lot of Islamic people got saved."

In addition to members of the El Sobrante church, the mission group included members of Russian Baptist, San Francisco; Trinity Baptist, Livermore; and Alaskan Baptists in cooperation with the Alaska Evangelistic Association directed by Griffin's father, Felton Griffin.

Ministering in children's camps, prisons, villages and at a military base, the group found crowds of Russians eager to hear the gospel.

In one instance, Griffin said the group "surprised a children's camp by driving up to the gate and asking if they would like to hear about God.

"Immediately a cheer went up," Griffin said. The children gathered in the auditorium and more than 90 made professions of faith.

More than 100 decisions were registered when the team presented the gospel for the first time to officers and others at a former communist military base. Griffin said area residents had learned of the existence of the base only last year.

Griffin said group members "actually counted the number of people that came forward" during public invitations to accept Christ as savior.

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"Afterwards we met with them and spent an additional 30 minutes to two hours of follow up time" to make sure those who responded understood their decisions, Griffin said. Frequently others attracted to such follow up sessions also made professions of faith, he added.

Among the converts was a Russian woman whose Jewish family had been corresponding with the El Sobrante church for about two years. Griffin said the church had sent a Bible to the family and exchanged letters with the woman who subsequently joined the mission group in Russia as translator.

"While she was interpreting for us she got saved," Griffin said. "Now we're trying to figure out what we can do to help her," he added, explaining the woman's decision to accept Christ had caused problems with her family.

In addition to evangelistic work, members of the group conducted seminars for Russian ministers and teachers. One seminar aided Russian pastors in theological issues and church growth methods. Another seminar taught children's workers how to write and build Sunday school programs.

Griffin said the mission trip produced six new churches. He added Russian pastors and laymen project another 14 new churches by the end of the year.

Griffin praised Ronald Fullerton, pastor of First Baptist, El Sobrante, who "really supported" the mission project but did not accompany the group.

The group took some medical supplies donated by American doctors. Griffin said a follow up mission project is being planned to send additional medical supplies, clothes and church supplies to Russian churches.

"If some church wants to help us, we'd be glad to hear from them," Griffin said.

Summarizing the group's experience, Griffin said, "My life will never be the same. The presence of the Holy Spirit was atmospheric. Watching people's expressions turn from total despair to hope and joy is an experience I shall never forget.

"I am a dry-eyed person, but tears flowed from my face to think God would let me see and participate in a revival like this."

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(EDITORS' NOTE: For more information about donating supplies, contact Danny Griffin at (510) 223-2760 or (510) 724-667.)

Pastor named Tennessee exec
following close board vote

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BRENTWOOD, Tenn. (BP)--James M. Porch, pastor in Tullahoma, Tenn., was elected executive director/treasurer of the Tennessee Baptist Convention Sept. 4.

Porch, 51, was elected by the TBC executive board and will succeed D.L. Lowrie who resigned to become pastor of First Baptist Church of Lubbock, Texas. Lowrie, Tennessee executive for three and a half years, leaves this month after announcing his resignation in May.

Porch was elected in a close secret ballot vote with 54 percent of the ballots cast. There were 78 votes (43-35) cast, with one abstention, and 21 absent of the 100-member board.

The Mississippi native will take office Nov. 1.

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The board's search committee chose Porch, also a member of the executive board, from among four finalists. He was presented to the board's executive committee regular meeting at the convention offices in Brentwood on Sept. 3. On Sept. 4 his resume was given to the full board with a recommendation that a vote be taken at a called meeting Sept. 15.

However, upon a motion by Wallace Parham of Chattanooga that the vote be taken at the Sept. 4 meeting, the board approved his motion and proceeded to vote.

In accepting the position, Porch said the TBC needs a broad umbrella.

"I believe sincerely in the possibility that we as a state convention can pull together," Porch told the board. "The vote indicates there is work to be done. I am fully aware of what you've decided ... I pledge my love, energy and heart to all of you."

Porch's annual salary will be \$72,000, slightly more than a reported base salary figure, but lower than Lowrie's current salary.

Porch made his profession of faith in Christ, was licensed and ordained to the ministry all at Pelahatchie (Miss.) Baptist Church. Author of two books and numerous published articles, Porch is a graduate of Mississippi College in Clinton, and received master of divinity and doctor of theology degrees from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Pastorates, in addition to the Tennessee church, included churches in New Orleans and in Yazoo County, Bogue Chitto and Clinton in Mississippi.

He is married to the former Martha Lynn Sullivan, daughter of Dr. and Mrs. James L. Sullivan of Nashville. The couple has two children: Scott Jackson, 21, and Terri Lynn, 16.

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Wm. Fletcher Allen, editor of the Tennessee Baptist and Reflector, contributed to this story.

Annuity Board announces
gift of \$1 million

By Kirby F. Warnock

Baptist Press
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DALLAS (BP)--A North Carolina couple has contributed the largest personal gift in the SBC Annuity Board's history.

Paul Powell, board president, said Hughy and Wyndolyn Royster Hollifield of Winston-Salem, N.C., donated a planned, irrevocable gift of \$1 million, earmarked for the Mission Church Assistance Fund.

The fund provides five-year, decreasing supplements of retirement contributions for pastors of new or small churches. The board uses the fund to support Bold Mission Thrust, an SBC effort that includes planting of thousands of new churches throughout the nation by the turn of the century.

"I am thrilled to receive word of this gift," Powell said. "In recognition of the Hollifields' contribution, the name of the Mission Church Assistance Fund will be changed to the Wyndolyn Royster Hollifield Mission Church Assistance Fund."

The North Carolina Baptist Foundation, which holds trust assets for the Hollifields, was instrumental in the presentation of the gift. Edwin S. Coates, executive director of the North Carolina foundation, said, "The Hollifields are truly excited about their involvement in both assisting retired pastors and families who now have great need, as well as helping in a permanent way young churches and pastors to eliminate, or reduce, these circumstances in future generations."

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The Annuity Board currently is conducting "A Time To Remember" campaign. The three-year fund-raising program is an effort to raise \$5 million in endowment for the Retired Ministers' Support Fund, \$2.25 million for the Adopt An Annuitant ministry and \$1 million for the Mission Church Assistance Fund. The campaign encourages Baptists to care for their own by raising endowment to supplement retirees' income.

To date, commitments and contributions exceed \$2.25 million of the total \$8.25 million "A Time To Remember" campaign goal.

The Retired Ministers' Support Fund is the board's permanent endowment fund, which strengthens benefits for those ministers or widows who, for whatever reason, receive little or no retirement income. As of August, some 9,888 annuitants among the board's total of 22,207 receive \$200 a month or less in retirement benefits.

"Thankfully all of these people are not in need," said Powell. "Many have other sources of income, but we believe more than 3,000 of our retired ministers or widows are living below the federal poverty level. Some do not even receive Social Security. The Cooperative Program provides just over \$600,000 a year for relief, but these funds are decreasing."

The Adopt An Annuitant program provides an extra \$50 per month for retired ministers or widows. At the end of August, 1,083 retirees were receiving this benefit. The Hollifields previously established a planned gift of \$75,000 to endow 10 Adopt An Annuitant monthly checks.

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Kirby F. Warnock is promotions editor for the Annuity Board.

Leaders of growing churches
reveal their secrets

By Sarah Zimmerman

Baptist Press
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FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--The secret to church growth is there is no secret to church growth.

Though a myriad of models were shared during the Nationwide Church Growth Conference in Fort Worth, none of the speakers claimed to have a magic formula for growing churches.

Instead, speaker after speaker offered warnings like, "This worked in my city, but it may not work in your situation." John Bisagno, pastor of First Baptist Church of Houston, told participants: "Don't swallow all of this. Pray over it and filter it through your personality."

The "great mistake" Southern Baptists make in trying to grow churches is "we think it's a head matter rather than a heart matter," said Charles Redmond, pastor of First Baptist Church of Pasadena, Texas.

The heart of church growth, he said, is vision.

"The pastor himself must have a vision to grow ... and the vision must come from God," Redmond said. "Visions from anyone other than God won't work when the going gets tough."

Visions come during "daily appointment times with God," Redmond said. Without a personal devotion, pastors "have no hope of experiencing the abundant life or leading the church to do something that can't be done in the flesh. There will never be growth outwardly until there is growth inwardly," Redmond said.

Growth means change, however, and Redmond noted change can lead to conflict. He said pastors and church leaders must respond spiritually to people's reaction to change.

"Lead the positive people, and as best you can, love the negative people," Redmond said.

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Churches must "expect to grow," said Tom Freeman. "God loves you and he loves your church and he wants it to grow."

In March, Freeman became pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church in Houston after being pastor of Harvey's Chapel Baptist Church in Hot Springs, Ark., for seven years. Though the Houston church has had no notable increases in 18 years, Freeman said he believes the church will grow.

"If you don't expect anything to happen, it won't " he said.

Freeman's strategy emphasizes Sunday school. He said the key components are training workers to witness; organizing Sunday school for maximum member involvement, including goals set by members and visitation at times they can attend; removing anything -- from schedules to classes -- that is not productive; and keeping things that do work.

Other speakers stressed the bedrock church growth principle of prospect cultivation.

A door-to-door "people search" was the tool Jack Still implemented when he became pastor of Elkton Road Baptist Church in Athens, Ala. Forty-six teams surveyed 500 households, resulting in 400 church prospects.

After regular contacts, 250 of the prospects enrolled in Sunday school. In two years, the church had 152 new members, 90 of them by baptism.

Gerald Otahal, bivocational pastor of Princeton Southern Baptist Church in Princeton, Ind., said a door-to-door survey would be unproductive in Princeton because residents are weary of solicitations from Jehovah's Witnesses.

Instead, Otahal said his church uses telemarketing. Church volunteers call residents listed in the phone book in the town of 10,000, looking for people who are not involved in any church.

People who express an interest are sent printed material about the church. Additional contacts include a visit from a Sunday school worker and a deacon or the pastor.

"Since we started telemarketing, we've never lacked for visitors," Otahal said. The church's Sunday school enrollment has grown from 25 in 1989 to 105 currently.

Another effective strategy for Otahal's church is designating specific Sundays for evangelistic thrusts. On these Sundays, members know that if they bring a guest, the pastor will preach about salvation, rather than discipleship issues.

The church attempts to tie its evangelistic Sunday thrusts with the evangelistic emphasis in the Baptist Sunday School Board literature so the prospect hears an evangelistic message in Sunday school as well.

Worship services which are times of celebration, thanksgiving, repentance and commitment will draw non-Christians to Christ, said Mark Turman, pastor of Crossroads Baptist Church near Marshall, Texas.

"Worship is our expression of gratitude to God," Turman said. "It is time to express our needs to each other and to God, to gain encouragement and get correction and instruction and energy and power for living."

Creating an atmosphere for worship includes being concerned about mechanical things such as room temperature, lighting, sound system and appearance of the sanctuary, Turman said. But he warned pastors to avoid getting so caught up in developing a worship experience they lose their personal sense of worship.

Publicity techniques can
improve church's image

By Sarah Zimmerman

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Churches with an image problem -- either hurting from a bad one or lacking a good one -- can take steps toward reversing their problem with a few publicity techniques.

A strong church marketing program is necessary because "your competition isn't quitting" said Tom Cheyney, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Morgantown, W.Va.

A positive community image also maintains morale among members and gives the church an advantage over churches which do not advertise, Cheyney said during the Nationwide Church Growth Conference.

Church publicity must go beyond an ad in the local newspaper's religion section, Cheyney said. He noted most non-Christians do not read the religion section, so an ad there is an ineffective evangelistic tool.

One of Cheyney's suggestions for effective publicity is to seek media announcements or coverage of things a church typically offers, such as ministry projects and choir programs.

Some of his other ideas for effective publicity include:

-- Adapt the pastor's column from the church newsletter for a column in the local newspaper.

-- Be part of community festivals and county fairs.

-- Present an award to an outstanding citizen, and seek media coverage of the presentation.

-- Give something away, such as cups at football games.

-- Host art events such as piano concerts at the church.

-- Offer seminars to the community on topics from child care to budgeting.

In addition to special events, churches should develop brochures about specific areas rather than general brochures, Cheyney said. "When you emphasize everything, you emphasize nothing."

An active church could easily have five or six brochures, Cheyney said. Possible brochure topics include the pastor's vision for the church or how to find a church home.

Church brochures need to have a meaningful or provocative front cover, comprehensive graphics and stylish print and colors. If pictures are used, they should be candid shots showing action rather than posed photos.

Ineffective church brochures are those which inaccurately portray the church, Cheyney noted. "Does your brochure whisper when it should shout?" he asked. "Be sure it reflects your image."

Church brochures should be simplistic but never dull, Cheyney said. They should be visually entertaining and printed on paper with various textures.

Churches that do bulk mailings should remember that better results are achieved in January, February, October and September. The worst months for bulk mailing are July and August because people are outdoors, rather than inside reading their mail.

"The worse the weather, the better the climate for direct mailing," Cheyney said.

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Churches without a lot of money to spend on publicity should still seek to have "dignity, quality and a professional appearance in their material," Cheyney said. "Excellence is doing the very best with the resources you have."

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Healing, recovering possible
from homosexual behavior

By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press
9/8/92

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--Rick Hughes delivers a message of warning and of hope, a message based in personal experience and pain: "God is going to judge homosexual behavior, but he's not going to judge it any differently than any other sin."

Even as God offers forgiveness to people who confess their sins and ask forgiveness, so he also offers healing and recovery, Hughes, director of Eleutheros Ministries of Winter Park, Fla., told participants in a seminar on redemptive ministry with homosexuals during the Sept. 4-7 Labor Day Weekend Single Adult Conference at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center.

A Bible college and seminary graduate who had struggled with homosexual tendencies since age 11, Hughes acknowledged in 1988 to his wife, Gwen, his homosexual behavior and agreed to seek help.

In the intervening four years, he has received therapy, earned a master's degree in counseling and now directs a Christian support ministry for others struggling with homosexuality.

Hughes differentiates between homosexual orientation and homosexual behavior. "I don't think the Bible talks about homosexual orientation," he said. "It talks about homosexual behavior."

He believes the tendency toward homosexual behavior occurs when a child does not receive from his same sex parent during the first six years of life the kind of love and nurture that will enable him to feel affirmed in his sexual identity.

"Not getting needs met in the first six years doesn't make persons homosexual, but it sets them up to be confused and to make invalid decisions," Hughes said.

Between the ages of six and 12, children focus on same sex peer group relationships. Boys tend to play with boys, and girls with girls.

"Those who didn't get proper help in the first six years don't know which side of the playground to go to," Hughes said.

Then when healthy children move on between ages 12 and 15 to develop opposite sex relationships, those who were deprived in the first six years are "still stuck back in trying to learn what it means to be a boy (or girl)," he added.

While Hughes acknowledged statistics about the number of people struggling with homosexuality in the United States range from 2.5 percent of the population to 25 percent, he said he believes the number is closer to 25 percent.

"Your churches are full of people struggling with homosexuality," said Hughes, a Southern Baptist.

He advocates redemptive Christian ministries that help people go back in their lives, discover problems rooted in their childhood and then move forward toward maturity and healing. He offers his own experience as testimony that healing is possible.

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Abandoned by his father at 18 months, he was never allowed to ask questions about his father. Also, he was sexually abused as a child. His marriage represented an attempt to escape his homosexual desires, a route Hughes said many take.

His wife's refusal to give up on him and the help he received have given him a new life dedicated to helping others.

"Can I fall again? Absolutely," wrote Hughes in a brochure describing his struggle with homosexual behavior. "Am I still tempted? Believe it! Is my identity defined by my feelings? No! Do I have to fall? No way!

"The fact that I can deal with my temptation in a mature way while experiencing a fulfilled opposite-sex relationship with my wife and healthy same-sex relationships with other men is evidence that God is doing a work in my life," he continued.

The recovery process normally takes two to three years, but the struggle is a life-long one, Hughes said. However, those who get help move forward in the maturing process, something he believes would benefit all Christians.

"We are all tarnished by sin," he said. "All Christians should be in recovery because we're all recovering from the effects of sin."

The Labor Day Weekend Single Adult Conference was sponsored by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's discipleship and family development division.

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Bible teaching methods
must appeal to learners

By Chip Alford

Baptist Press
9/8/92

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP)--Teachers interested in building a quality Bible study must learn to respect the needs of different types of learners, a Bible teaching expert said at the Nationwide Church Growth Conference, Aug. 31-Sept. 3.

"We tend to teach the way we like to learn, but if we ignore other methods and styles of teaching, we can alienate three-fourths of our class," Keith Williams, a Sunday school consultant for the Baptist General Convention of Texas, told those attending his seminar, "Quality Bible Study That Excites and Attracts."

Williams discussed four different types of learners and teaching strategies that meet the needs of each group.

"Assimilators", which represent about 24 percent of all learners, enjoy fellowship with other class members, dislike conflict, and tend to be people-oriented rather than content-oriented.

"They don't care what you know (about the Bible), they want to know how you feel about it," Williams said. Case studies, small group discussion, and "sharing" are all effective teaching methods in reaching this type of learner.

About 22 percent of all learners are "Convergers," thinking individuals who are logical and content-oriented. This group enjoys structured lessons that include lectures supplemented by outlines, maps and charts. Williams said Convergers dislike group activities or other creative teaching methods.

The largest number of learners (about 33 percent) are "Accommodators." These learners need to see some practical purpose for studying the Bible. "They are skill-oriented, 'hands-on' doers who like practical application and interaction with others," Williams said. "They want fast-paced lessons because they bore easily if the pace drags."

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"How-to" lessons are effective with this group, he said, as are case studies, illustrations and other creative methods.

The final category -- about 21 percent of all learners -- is "Divergers." For this type of learner, the experience of learning is more important than the result. Because they like to experiment with new ways of learning, they are often considered different and sometimes make their classmates uncomfortable, Williams said.

Brainstorming, role-playing, and any activities that include music, art, drama, or creative writing will appeal to this group, he said.

Teachers studying the above learning types will soon realize their Bible study class consists of "all of the above," Williams said, adding many people are composites of different types.

So, what's a teacher to do?

"The bottom line is this: If we want a Bible study session that attracts and excites people, we have to take into account the way they like to learn," Williams said. That means teachers will have to get out of a one-method teaching approach such as lecturing and try several different methods in each class session, he said.

Williams suggested teachers keep a notebook and write down the needs and interests of each class member and the way they seem to enjoy learning. That will provide teachers with ideas for practical application and a guide to know who to draw in as a bridge to particular learning activities, he said.

"We need to provide for (our class members) an experience so that each of them can have their 'a-ha' moment and learn God's truth in that setting," he said.

The Nationwide Church Growth Conference was sponsored by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, Home Mission Board and the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

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103-year-old Southwestern seminarian
is 'Moore' than meets the eyes By Matthew Brady

Baptist Press
9/8/92

ROSWELL, N.M. (BP)--"When will the war against sin be over?" the teacher asked the class of young preachers. "I say when there are 10,000 missionaries in the field, and 10 million of God's people willing to put it all on the altar of God for his kingdom."

Seventy-five years after scribbling those words in his notebook at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 103-year-old David Moore remains a soldier for Christ. For Moore, the war will not be over until his commander calls him home.

"I told him (God), 'When you get ready to take me out of this world, take me out. Otherwise, I'm going to preach the gospel as I see it, not as I hear it,'" Moore said.

Moore is one of the last survivors of Southwestern's infancy. Men like L.R. Scarborough and W.T. Conner helped shape his life and developed in Moore a deep appreciation for the seminary.

God's call brought Moore from Kansas to Southwestern in 1916. The young, fast-growing seminary was "the attraction of the nation," he said. He and his wife, Jettie, went to work starting a church in what is now the Oak Cliff area of Dallas. But the joy of building a church was interrupted a few months later by the death of his wife.

Talking about the events leading to her death still brings tears to Moore's eyes.

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It was a Sunday afternoon when Jettie became sick. As she grew steadily worse Moore called Scarborough, president of the seminary at the time.

"I called him and told him, 'my wife is mighty sick. I'm here, a stranger, no money and I'm afraid I'm gonna have a doctor bill, hospital bill and all of that,'" he said. Scarborough told him to "get that girl ready and take her to the Baptist hospital in Dallas," Moore said.

Moore got her to the hospital in time to have her appendix removed, but she died the next day from pneumonia. Scarborough conducted the funeral. Afterward, he asked Moore how he had arranged to pay the doctor bills. "I haven't," Moore said. Scarborough said, "Well, don't."

After Jettie died Moore shared a room in Fort Worth Hall with B.B. McKinney. He described the prolific hymn writer as "one of the dearest Christians you ever met."

In 1918 he married Pauline Watkins Pierce, a widow with one daughter. Today that daughter takes care of Moore in Roswell, N.M.

Mary McKnight said Southwestern means a lot to her dad. "He was just a young Christian and a young preacher. It gave him a good foundation," she said.

Moore was pastor of churches in Missouri, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas. After retiring in 1957 and he moved to Roswell where he became interim pastor and later visitation minister at First Baptist Church.

After more than 75 years of ministry, Moore remains thankful for Southwestern. "My indebtedness there will never be paid," he said.

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

Churches urge singles
to feel good about life

By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press
9/8/92

RIDGECREST, N.C. (BP)--"I've been single all my life and I've enjoyed it. At my house, when I'm ready to go, everybody's ready to go," Ron Churchill told more than 2,200 single adults attending the Sept. 4-7 Single Adult Conference at Ridgecrest (N.C.) Baptist Conference Center.

Churchill, pastor of First Baptist Church of Plant City, Fla., was the featured speaker at the conference, one of four held over the Labor Day Weekend and sponsored by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's discipleship and family development division. A total of 5,443 attended simultaneous conferences at Ridgecrest, Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center, San Diego, and St. Louis.

Only a few years ago, Churchill said, single adults in a church were viewed either as "swingers, losers or perverts. We have moved away from that and I am so glad. Being single is a viable option in our day."

Noting about 50 percent of adults in the United States today are single, Churchill said too many churches are focusing their total energies on reaching the 7 percent of the population that make up the traditional family of mother, father and two or more children.

"We do need to reach the world with the gospel. We need to understand when we say that who the world really is," he said.

In citing positives about being single, Churchill emphasized he was not putting down marriage. "I think most people ought to be married. There are positives and negatives of any life stance."

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He challenged single adults to commit themselves to being ministers where they are, to reach out and touch the lives of other singles and to be affirmers rather than critics.

"I think it's a sin for singles to have a down-in-the-mouth attitude about their singleness," Churchill said. "It's a terrible witness for our Lord Jesus."

He acknowledged some people still suggest people are incomplete until married.

"We find our completeness in Jesus Christ, not by finding someone to marry," he emphasized.

He urged singles to be affirmers, to build up other people, and not be evaluators who tear others down.

"The healing antidote for rejection is affirmation," Churchill said. "We nurture other people when we tell them what is good and noble and honorable in them. One affirmer is worth 1,000 evaluators.

"Listen to the people who want you to succeed," he urged. "Think about the people who are for you."