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92-39

Emerging trends require
change in ministry methods

By Terri Lackey

NEW BRAUNFELS, Texas (BP)--In a day when documents can be sent by telephone lines and computer networking allows cross-continent conferencing, antiquated attempts to get people to church are not effective, according to a Southern Baptist Sunday School official.

"Hanging a sign outside your church saying, 'Ya'll come,' is not going to cut it in this day and age," Ray Conner, director of the board's church recreation department, told a group attending a "Rec Lab" seminar in New Braunfels, Texas.

"Not a day goes by when something in our world doesn't change," Conner said concerning issues churches must deal with in the 1990s.

Recreation ministers could become the trendsetting church staffers who offer the community creative and innovative programs, Conner said. But they have to know what the people want.

Books and research are easily available for recreation ministers interested in determining what might make church leisure activities attractive to a gadget-happy population, Conner said.

But what is not so readily available is affirmation from the church membership for a recreation minister to institute quick-paced change, he said.

"We have not been very effective as ministers in terms of change," Conner said. "To encourage change in church, you have to be diplomatic. Change has to be a gradual process" to gain acceptance.

Churches back away from making changes for several reasons, Conner said. They might be afraid of failure or even of success. The membership often sees change as uncomfortable. In a world where everything about us is changing so rapidly, Conner said church becomes a comfort zone where members know they can come and be safe.

Many just like to "do things the way they always have," he said. "Some church members just absolutely resist change."

Issues needing immediate attention, Conner said, include the growing senior adult and teen-age populations and a leisure-starved work force.

The surging growth of senior adults should prompt church leaders to rethink their ministries to older adults, Conner said. The fastest growing segment of people in America is senior adults 85 and older. "The average life expectancy by the year 2000 will be 90," he added.

Conner said one-half of all senior adults 65 and older live alone. Recreation ministers need to consider ways to use this growing resource as well as minister to it.

"Many people are living longer, they are in better health and they have much more to contribute to society. Those same adults who are living longer have a lot of skills that could help a church," he said.

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Conner said recreation ministers also should be aware of the pending teen-age population surge. "A lot of our churches have their heads buried in the sands when it comes to teen-agers," he said. "When teens get in trouble, their families and their churches just don't like to talk about it."

Recreation ministers could gain the confidence of young people during play and be there for them when they need to talk, he said.

Recreation ministers also could implement programs to encourage families to play together. A result, Conner said, could be stronger family relationships.

The amount of time adults spend in leisure has decreased significantly since 1970, he said, noting that those who are employed feel they have to work longer work hours to keep their jobs.

Recreation ministers should educate adults on the importance of leisure, Conner said. "We have a responsibility as ministers of recreation to introduce adults to a variety of fun things to do. A lot less money would be spent on divorce and psychiatrists if people would just understand the importance of leisure."

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Building staff relationships
takes time and hard work

By Terri Lackey

Baptist Press
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NEW BRAUNFELS, TEXAS (BP)--Pastors who see themselves as chief executive officers and operate their churches like large corporations seem to have forgotten they were called by God to be servants, according to a Tennessee pastor.

"My theory is many pastors take on the business world concept that they are CEOs," said Richard Emmert, pastor of Manley Baptist Church of Morristown, Tenn. "They take the biggest offices, the nicest furniture and all the great phone equipment."

Members of their staff then get smaller offices with less expensive furniture and "you go on down the line from there," Emmert said during an address to a group attending a Rec (church recreation) Lab seminar on staff relationships.

"Our problem in churches is that we inherit how the world does it," Emmert said. "But what we should be looking at is how Christ does it."

"Christ was a servant. If we could see ourselves as servants first to God and then to each other, it would make a tremendous difference in how we treat each other."

Emmert said churches would be better served if the pastor and the rest of the staff saw themselves as a team, believing that "when one does well we all do well."

Because the pastor is the leader servant of the church, Emmert said he is responsible for relaying and carrying out this message. As the "player coach," he said the pastor is responsible for making sure "everybody on the team receives support and encouragement."

Naturally, church staffers will have differences of opinion, Emmert said. "But it is important to deal honestly and biblically with these differences."

Ideally, members of a church staff should feel like a close-knit family, Emmert said. "We should value each other, do things together and relax with each other."

Emmert and Rec Lab participants suggested retreats, praying together, regular staff meetings and informal get-togethers as ways to feel closer to each other.

Members of his church staff pray together at least three times a week, he said.

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Phyllis Gamble, minister of activities at First Baptist Church of Lufkin, Texas, said she sends birthday cards and staff anniversary cards to every employee of the church, including housekeeping.

Ed Jenkins, minister of activities at Central Baptist Church in Fountain City near Knoxville, Tenn., said staff members at his church become involved with each others' ministries or programs.

"I teach a Sunday school class and get involved in choir," he said. "Some of the other staff members participate in what I do." This fosters a feeling of team participation, making everyone interested in the success of the others' programs, he said.

Informal conversations at church over coffee can help create better relationships among staff members, one participant suggested. Another cited periodic social gatherings of church staff members and spouses.

"I had been at my job for just a short time when the pastor came in and brought two cups of coffee and just sat down and started talking," said Terry Fleming, recreation minister at First United Methodist Church in Athens, Texas. "I kept wondering when he was going to lower the boom but after about 45 minutes he just got up and left."

Fleming said when he survived the initial fear, he realized what a good public relations move his pastor had just made and he tried a similar approach with an employee he supervised.

Intimate relationships between staff members take time, Emmert said. "It can be hard to build intimacy among staff members, but with work, it can be done."

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Church development conference offers
help for language, ethnic groups By Frank Wm. White

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NASHVILLE (BP)--Leadership training for church workers in at least 11 ethnic and language groups will be provided at the National Language Church Development Conference Aug. 3-6 in Orlando, Fla.

Sponsored by the special ministries department of the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board, the conference will provide training to help language churches meet the challenges of the 21st century, according to Peter Kung, manager of the language church development/new work section in the special ministries department.

Planners expect as many as 3,000 people to attend the conference at the Hyatt Orlando Convention Center. The conference will be preceded by a Baptist Hispanic Fellowship meeting Aug. 1-3.

"The growth of immigration and ethnic population in the United States and the challenge of reaching this new generation of more than 100 million ethnic persons in the United States" provides a challenge for all ethnic churches, Kung said.

Kung said the conference will be the first national training conference specifically for ethnic leaders conducted by the Sunday School Board.

Joint worship service sessions on Monday and Wednesday evenings will feature Anthony Campolo, professor of sociology at Eastern College in St. Davids, Pa., and a nationally known evangelical author and speaker, and Oscar Romo, director of language church extension at the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board in Atlanta.

Worship services for Hispanic, Korean, Vietnamese, Chinese, multiethnic in English, Filipino, Greek, Cambodian, deaf and Haitian participants will be Tuesday evening.

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Leadership conferences for pastors and church workers will be available for Sunday school, discipleship training, church administration, church music and family ministry. In addition to the 10 groups represented in the Tuesday evening worship services, leadership training will be provided for American Indians.

A discipleship youth celebration will provide recreation, Bible study, concerts, discipleship training and workshop for youth attending the conference. A day camp will be provided for children in grades 1 through 6. Provisions will not be available for preschoolers.

Registration materials are available from the Special Ministries Department, #180, Baptist Sunday School Board, 127 Ninth Ave. N., Nashville, Tenn. 37234, or from state convention offices. The registration fee is \$60 for adults, \$40 for youth and \$35 for children. Group leaders with 40 paid registrations will receive a \$500 payment to cover expenses. Lodging and airline information will be provided to participants after registration forms and fees are received.

For additional information, contact the special ministries department at (615) 251-2702.

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Utah Baptist leader named
Salt Lake City 'ambassador'

By Art Toalston

Baptist Press
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SALT LAKE CITY (BP)--A leader of Southern Baptist work in Utah is among 16 recipients of 1991 Ambassador Awards by the Salt Lake Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Clyde Billingsley, executive director of the Utah-Idaho Southern Baptist Convention, was honored for his efforts to bring the 1998 Southern Baptist Convention meeting to Salt Lake City.

The SBC could rival Salt Lake City's largest-ever convention, the National Square Dance Convention, which brought 18,000 visitors to the city in June 1991.

"The Salt Lake Convention and Visitors Bureau was lucky to know 16 Utahns last year," said Richard E. Davis, the bureau's president, in honoring Billingsley and 15 other Ambassador Award recipients Feb. 20. They "gave the bureau an edge over other cities when it came to competing for a number of upcoming meetings and conventions," Davis said.

Salt Lake City, with a metro population of 725,000, is roughly 60 percent Mormon, according to various estimates.

Billingsley has been executive director of the Utah-Idaho Southern Baptist Convention since 1989 but the Knoxville, Tenn., native has a long history of involvement with the two states and other areas of Southern Baptist pioneer work.

He was director of missions, stewardship and Brotherhood work for the Utah-Idaho convention from 1975-77 and held the same position for the Northern Plains Baptist Convention, based in Rapid City, S.D., from 1977-81. He was director of evangelism for the Northwest Baptist Convention from 1981-85 and an adjunct professor of evangelism at Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley, Calif., in 1984.

For four years before returning to Utah in 1989, he was director of evangelism for the Florida Baptist Convention.

When Billingsley was in full-time evangelism from 1966-74, his concentration was Utah and other areas of new work. He doubled as evangelism consultant for the Utah-Idaho convention from 1970-72.

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"This area in general is more open to the gospel than I've ever seen," Billingsley told Baptist Press March 2. "We had the second highest growth (percentage-wise) in Sunday school in the nation last year. Our baptisms were the highest they've been in 10 years." Even some of the smaller towns, where Mormon influence is strongest, "are beginning to swing wide open to us," he said.

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Baptist workers in Iowa
get thousands of valentines

Baptist Press
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DES MOINES, Iowa (BP)--Even weeks after Valentine's Day, valentines from Southern Baptist girls are streaming into Iowa.

Thousands of valentines have been mailed to Southern Baptist home missionary couples in four Iowa towns.

The valentines, from across the country, are from Girls in Action groups, the Woman's Missionary Union organization for girls ages 6-11. Iowa was the featured missions study in the February edition of the GA magazine, Discovery, and the GAs were encouraged to pray for and send valentines to four home missions couples in the state.

"Most of the girls just stated, 'I am praying for you and I love you,'" recounted Jean Hulsey, one of the valentine recipients and director of the Iowa Southern Baptist Fellowship's Woman's Missionary Union. "What wonderful good that does for a home missionary's heart." Her husband, Lonney, is pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Glenwood, Iowa.

"I'm praying for you. I mean I'm really praying for you," wrote one girl to Bob Pinkerton, HMB-sponsored pastor of Lincoln Street Baptist Church in Mt. Pleasant, Iowa, and his wife, Betty.

The Pinkertons estimate they have received 3,000 valentines, while the Hulseys' estimate stands at 4,000-plus from 43 states and even from Korea and Portugal. Jong Koo Lee, pastor of the Korean Baptist Church in Iowa City, and his wife, Ok Soon, say they have received "hundreds and hundreds" of greetings.

Dan Eddington, pastor of Crest Baptist Church in Creston, Iowa, estimates he and his wife, Debbie, have received 5,000 valentines. They have involved Crest Baptist members in opening the mail and, on one of the church's walls, keeping track to how many valentines have been received from each state. The flood of mail, the Eddingtons said, has given church members a sense of the scope of Southern Baptists' praying for missions.

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Texas Baptist teams travel
to Jordan, former USSR

By Ken Camp

Baptist Press
3/3/92

DALLAS (BP)--At the request of the Foreign Mission Board, six Texas Baptist volunteers left Dallas March 2 bound for Ajloun, Jordan, to repair the ice storm-damaged Jordanian Baptist conference center.

A series of freak winter storms in recent weeks felled 65 trees up to three feet in diameter at the conference center in Jordan, which in turn snapped electrical and telephone wires, according to John LaNoue, Texas director of Baptist Young Men and off-site coordinator for the disaster relief team. Frozen pipes also have burst, disrupting plumbing at the center.

In recent days, high temperatures have reached 45 degrees in the afternoon but they continue to dip to zero during the night.

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The chainsaw-wielding Texas volunteers will clear the conference center property of fallen trees, LaNoue said. After shoveling the knee-deep snow, the Texans then will replace overhead electrical and telephone wires with underground wiring and repair damaged plumbing.

The volunteers were scheduled to arrive in Amman, Jordan, March 3 and begin work early March 4, just six days after the Foreign Mission Board relayed the request to the Texas Baptist Men organization through Jim Furgerson, adult division director of the SBC Brotherhood Commission.

Former Southern Baptist foreign missionary Tommy Adkins of Park Ridge Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas, is team leader and translator. Adkins served nearly two years in Jordan in the early 1980s after a lengthy missions tenure in Gaza and Hong Kong.

Adkins was administrator of a former Baptist hospital adjacent to the Jordanian Baptist conference center. The hospital, supported by Baptists for three decades, was transferred to government ownership in the mid-1980s.

Adkins said Graydon Hardister, Southern Baptist worker in Amman, Jordan, told him the area has received five heavy snowfalls since Christmas. All roads into Ajloun were closed for one week but Hardister finally was able Feb. 28 to deliver food to Baptists stranded at the conference center.

In another project, Texas Baptist Men President George Crews of North Richland Hills Baptist Church in Fort Worth; Ray Newman, Brotherhood director for Georgia Baptists; and Furgerson of the SBC Brotherhood Commission will conduct a fact-finding tour of several former Soviet republics later this month to locate sites for about 50 potential construction and food distribution projects.

The fact-finding mission will begin about two weeks before the launching of Project Brotherhood, a massive food distribution effort in Moscow initiated by the Baptist World Alliance and coordinated by the Brotherhood Commission.

About 40,000 families are expected to benefit from the delivery and distribution of 570 tons of USDA surplus food in Moscow.

Texas Baptists are among those expected to work with representatives of the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists in repackaging the food, monitoring its distribution and maintaining records.

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Also available upon request:

-- Feature by Gary Griffith about a Louisiana woman's grief recovery, book and ministry after son's suicide.