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92-100

Shackleford accepts post
as Mature Living editor

By Terri Lackey

NASHVILLE (BP)--After two weeks of prayer, longtime Southern Baptist journalist Al Shackleford has accepted the position of editor of Mature Living magazine published by the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board.

Mature Living, a magazine for senior adults with a monthly circulation of 355,000, is published by the board's family ministry department.

"I felt a definite, clear leadership of the Lord to accept this position and that is why I told Doug Anderson (director of the family ministry department) I would accept it," Shackleford said.

"I am relieved, excited and ready to start work July 1."

Shackleford, dismissed in July 1990 as vice president for public relations and director of Baptist Press of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee, said he has been unemployed for 23 months. He has held several part-time, temporary positions.

Anderson offered Shackleford the job June 3 with encouragement from board President Jimmy Draper but Shackleford said he was unwilling to accept it until he felt God's clear direction.

"I appreciate the confidence of Doug Anderson and (board President) Jimmy Draper in offering me the job but I wanted to be sure it was the Lord's will in my life. There have been many days in my life where it was good to be able to go back and say, 'I'm here because I felt the definite leadership of the Lord.'"

Draper said: "We are excited to have someone of Al's expertise and ability to minister in this strategic area of senior adults. It is my prayer that the years ahead for Al will be filled with satisfying and fulfilling ministry."

When information became known that Shackleford was considering a job offer from the board, Draper said he heard from a number of SBC leaders, including members of the Executive Committee, expressing support of Shackleford for the position.

Anderson said Shackleford "is the candidate of choice for this position because of his Christian commitment, sense of God's leadership, his age, perspective and his proven track record in Christian journalism. I believe Al will be deeply loved and respected by the readers of Mature Living."

Shackleford said he believes his experience and his age (he turned 60 June 14) will help him "be more sensitive to the needs" of Southern Baptist senior adults."

"I can identify with this group and I look forward to working with them," he said. "Many senior adults face unemployment through mergers, retirement or career changes and I hope my recent experiences will help me be sensitive to their needs."

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Shackleford said he believes senior adults of today are more active and more interested in ministry than they were a generation ago. He said he plans to address new senior adult issues and trends in the magazine and focus stories on churches where senior adults are making an impact in their community.

Shackleford, a 35-year employee with state conventions and SBC agencies, said he "feels comfortable" accepting the role as editor of Mature Living.

"I started my first job with Southern Baptists in 1957 editing a magazine (The Beam) with the Radio and Television Commission. So the cycle has come around again."

Shackleford left the Radio and Television Commission in 1961 to become technical director for the public relations office at the Baptist General Convention of Texas. From 1965-76, he served as editor of the Indiana Baptist and director of public relations for the State Convention of Baptists in Indiana. He began editing Tennessee's Baptist and Reflector in 1976, leaving that position in 1987 to become vice president for public relations and director of Baptist Press for the executive committee.

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Pastor of barred church
writes open letter to SBC

By Art Toalston

Baptist Press
6/18/92

RALEIGH, N.C. (BP)--An "Open Letter to Southern Baptists" has been issued by the pastor of a North Carolina church now barred from the Southern Baptist Convention for approving a marriage-like "union" of two homosexual men.

Mahan Siler, pastor of Pullen Memorial Baptist Church in Raleigh, wrote that his congregation initially was "not intending to confront the denomination with the issue of homosexuality." But his letter challenges Southern Baptists' reaction to the issue.

The open letter was delivered to Baptist Press June 16. Subsequently Mark Coppenger, SBC Executive Committee vice president for convention relations, issued a formal response.

Messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention in Indianapolis voted June 9 to declare Pullen "not in friendly cooperation," along with another North Carolina Baptist church, Binkley Memorial in Chapel Hill, which has licensed a homosexual divinity student to the gospel ministry. The SBC action stipulates contributions from the churches will be refused as will their messengers to SBC annual meetings.

In May, the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina's general board took similar action and the Raleigh Baptist Association disfellowshipped Pullen. Binkley does not belong to its area Baptist association.

Siler, in his open letter, wrote he does not regret "the process followed or decisions made by our congregation" but does regret "the painful dilemma in which our actions placed many Southern Baptist friends and causes." In dealing with the issue, he wrote, "Our congregation was responding to a pastoral request by an active member" for the union with his homosexual partner.

Siler voiced a "parting concern" over the end of Pullen's relationship with the Southern Baptist Convention: "... you are making as a condition for cooperation in Christian ministry a particular position in regard to homosexuality."

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That position, Siler wrote, "seems to include the following assumptions: in contrast to heterosexuality, homosexual orientation is chosen, not discovered ... the role of the church is to persuade homosexuals to abandon their sexual orientation or at least remain silent and celibate ... no distinction should be made between biblical condemnation of promiscuous, idolatrous homosexual behavior and homosexual intimacy within a monogamous, lifelong committed relationship ... religious and cultural violence against homosexuals is not a major social injustice to which the church should give clear prophetic witness ... homosexual 'life style' means any expression of homosexual behavior ... being gay and being Christian are incompatible identities."

Siler continued: "You would expect me to challenge these assumptions. But more important is the creation of a climate where debate and differences of opinions are respected. In the face of this complex issue dogmatism is unwarranted. Devout, learned Baptists disagree. I hope, within the Baptist tradition of dissent, you will support safe places for continuing dialogue in the common search for the mind of Christ."

Siler added, "The cost of facing more openly this 'closeted' subject has been higher than most of us expected. But much 'soul searching' has begun concerning the church's response to homosexual persons and their families in our day."

The full text of Siler's letter may be obtained from the church at 1801 Hillsborough St., Raleigh, NC 27605.

In a response to Siler's letter, Coppenger wrote that both Pullen and the SBC have "expressed their compassion for homosexuals and they've both offered strong prescriptions. These prescriptions are, of course, radically different.

"Pullen prescribes affirmation for 'committed' and 'monogamous' homosexual relationships. Southern Baptists prescribe repentance and redemption," Coppenger wrote.

"It is not enough to say that some have strong homosexual tendencies. For Ephesians 2:1-3 teaches that we have all been beset with unholy tendencies. The answer is not to accept or affirm these tendencies," Coppenger wrote. "Instead, we must turn to God in Christ for deliverance. This is true for homosexuals, just as it was for the rest of us. The same grace and regeneration we've enjoyed is available to them. That is the message of God's love."

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Audit keeps ministers
on the cutting edge

By Lesley S. Vance

Baptist Press
6/18/92

NASHVILLE (BP)--Seminary Extension has developed a new program to help affirm ministers' strengths and identify areas of their lives and ministry needing further growth.

The new LifeAudit program helps ministers stay on the cutting edge in their vocations, said its author, Doran C. McCarty, executive director of Seminary Extension, a Nashville-based arm of Southern Baptists' six seminaries providing ministry education.

LifeAudit, which can be used in pastor retreats, director of missions conferences and other association gatherings, helps ministers take a look at key aspects of life -- family, friends, financial, recreational, educational and spiritual -- to determine where enrichment is needed.

"Seminary Extension's LifeAudit program has helped me look at my life holistically and helped me see areas where I need to grow," said Bob Moore, missions director for the Baptist Convention of Pennsylvania/South Jersey and current LifeAudit participant. "It has helped me be more effective as a Christian, a husband and a worker in my field."

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Moore said the LifeAudit program will be used as a centerpiece to develop the Pennsylvania/South Jersey convention's strategy for providing training for their ministers.

The convention places a heavy emphasis on minister orientation programs, Moore said, through a two-day program addressing family life and ways to handle stress.

"We will be using the LifeAudit as part of a total ongoing support system" to help ministers acquire pastoral skills and get acclimated to their fields of service, Moore said. There tends to be a lack of tenure of pastors when they enter a new field, he said, because of a lack of orientation and continuing support.

"It is our goal that this would meet their needs and increase their tenure of service," Moore said. LifeAudit also will help new ministers in personal development and defining needs for continuing education, he said.

Meanwhile, the state convention's directors of missions are using LifeAudit as a part of their mentor program for ministers.

LifeAudit is only one way Seminary Extension is providing continuing education for ministers. As one of the largest theological training programs in the world, Seminary Extension has approximately 1,500 students in correspondence courses and 4,000-plus students in courses at local Seminary Extension centers. It was established following World War II in 1951 when Southern Baptists became aware that many of their pastors had only limited formal education for ministry.

Seminary Extension has more than 87 courses available from how to understand the Bible to systematic theology. In addition, it has courses in several languages such as Spanish, Korean, Laotian and Cambodian.

For information about LifeAudit and other programs contact Seminary Extension at (615) 242-2453.

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Taking sermon notes helps
congregational memory

By Keith Hinson

Baptist Press
6/18/92

NASHVILLE (BP)--Some people are restless during the Sunday sermon. They doodle on the bulletin, which is discarded soon after the service.

But a growing number of pastors are encouraging their listeners to write down something worth saving: notes from the sermon.

The practice has become popular in some churches, where a high percentage of the congregation is busy taking notes while the preacher preaches.

"It seems to me that almost everybody in our church is taking notes," said Buddy Gray, pastor of Hunter Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Ala. "The response has been overwhelming. People love it."

Gray and other pastors encourage note-taking by inserting a sermon outline in the Sunday bulletin. The outline usually lists the main points of the sermon and omits a few key words, which are written by the congregation as they "fill in the blanks."

David Dykes, pastor of Green Acres Baptist Church, in Tyler, Texas, said, "I've had parents say that even their youngest child uses the outline and fills in the blanks. It makes the children listen to the sermon."

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Many pastors also print the sermon's scriptural passages on the outline.

"It allows me to use the version I think best renders the translation," Dykes said, "and everybody's looking at the same version. Sometimes I can use the Living Bible, sometimes the Williams translation or whatever version seems to say it best."

Congregational note-taking also helps people remember what they've heard.

Rick Warren, pastor of Saddleback Valley Community Church in Mission Viejo, Calif., cited a survey by the United States Air Force. "It discovered that we forget 90-95 percent of what we hear within 72 hours, if we don't write it down," he said. "If you want a statistic to depress the average pastor, that's it.

"What that means is I spend 16-20 hours preparing a message for Sunday. I get up, I deliver it and they've already forgotten it by Wednesday. They only remember maybe 5 percent, unless they write it down," Warren said.

Some laypeople keep their sermon notes in a file or binder for future use.

"It's encouraging to me to go into somebody's home for supper," Dykes said, "and there in their Bible, they'll have a stack of sermon notes. They've got every blank filled in completely ... with even stuff between the blanks. It lets me know they listened."

Nathan Blackwell, pastor of Cornerstone Baptist Church in St. Cloud, Fla., told of a couple in his church who were counseling friends in a troubled marriage.

"They were able to go back and pull out some of the outlines from my series 'Building a Strong Marriage.' That helped them minister," Blackwell said. "I've had that happen on more than one occasion."

Other laypeople use the outlines to lead Bible studies at work or home. Warren said dozens of businessmen in his church use the outlines as a basis for Bible studies at work.

"I always present the message in a transferrable form so they can pass it on," Warren said.

Jeff Iorg, pastor of Greater Gresham Baptist Church in Gresham, Ore., also encourages note-taking. He grew up in Elmcrest Baptist Church in Abilene, Texas, which he said trained its members to take sermon notes.

"I came into adulthood thinking everyone took sermon notes," Iorg said.

He was pastor of a Missouri church where many people took notes for six and a half years. Later he moved to Oregon as Greater Gresham's founding pastor under a Home Mission Board appointment.

"I preached the first couple of weeks and noticed no one was taking notes," Iorg said. "So we had a meeting and I made a comment, 'No one's taking sermon notes. What do we need to do about this?' And one of the women said, 'I don't have any idea what you're talking about.'"

Iorg began giving the church what he calls a "listening guide," similar to the outlines used by other pastors. He said about 75 percent of the people now take notes.

"It's so noticeable because whenever I get to a certain point in the message where they have to turn the page over," Iorg said, "the noise is such a distraction that usually I just stop, let them flip over, refold and then here we go again.

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"I've even had to learn to be careful what I put at the end of the page," he said, "because I don't want to be in the middle of one of my key applications and everybody's flipping pages."

Dykes sometimes has a similar experience toward the end of the sermon. "The funniest thing about these outlines," he said, "is that when people fill in the last blank, even if you're not through preaching, you can hear them get their purses, car keys and Bibles."

"I've often kidded the congregation and said, 'I think I'm going to put one blank down there, final, that I don't ever give you what it is, just so you'll keep listening,'" Dykes said.

Some printed sermon outlines take only two panels -- front and back of half a sheet of paper. Others may be on the four panels of a full sheet folded in half.

John Compton, pastor of Oak Grove Baptist Church in Mount Carmel, Tenn., said his church has eliminated some things from the bulletin to make room for the outline. "We no longer put in wedding announcements and those fancy things so that we can put in sermon notes. That's the people's choice," he said.

The outlines vary in complexity, according to John Kramp, an editorial unit supervisor with the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board's discipleship training department in Nashville.

"At one end of the continuum would be the preacher who uses the outline as a resource that he gives to his people, but really doesn't refer to it while he's speaking," said Kramp, who was pastor of Westside Baptist Church in Lake Oswego, Ore., until May when he went to work for the Sunday School Board.

"On the other end of the continuum," he said, "is a preacher who wants to just guide them through point by point. You can do that, and that's where I think people can get too tedious with it. It becomes almost like a seminar."

Kramp describes his own approach to outlines as "somewhat in the middle."

Some pastors described note-taking as habit-forming.

"I don't think they miss me when I'm not here on Sunday morning," said Compton with a chuckle, "but they miss the notes that are not in the bulletin. They look forward to it."

Gray described note-taking as "almost addictive." Some of his members feel frustrated when they visit other churches that don't provide notes or where "they perceive the preacher as not being organized in thought," Gray said.

Some pastors praise the printed outline as a way of organizing their sermon preparation.

"It makes me get ready," Gray said. "It makes me think about what I'm going to say. My deadline is 8 o'clock on Friday morning. It must be on the secretary's desk by that time."

Dykes's deadline is noon Wednesday. "I kind of appreciate that," he said, "because it helps make sure that halfway through the week, I've already got my outline finished up."

Kramp's experience was similar. "By deciding where I was going early in the week, that put the main part of the pressure behind me," he said. "I didn't have that late-week panic of 'What am I going to do?' It let me know I was ready. It was wonderful."

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Blackwell has found many visitors like the ease of making notes on a printed outline. Part of the positive response comes from a "feedback card," an idea he credits to Rick Warren.

"I send a card to everyone who visits our services," Blackwell said. "I often get responses on the idea of the outline. They appreciate having something in their hand that not only encourages them to take notes but makes it easier for them to follow along."

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Keith Hinson is a bivocational pastor and free-lance writer in Montevallo, Ala.

Warren urges preachers
to give outlines to flock

By Keith Hinson

Baptist Press
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MISSION VIEJO, Calif. (BP)--For many people, Rick Warren has popularized the idea that a preacher should provide his congregation with a printed sermon outline.

Warren is pastor of Saddleback Valley Community Church in Mission Viejo, Calif. In the past several years, more than 12,000 pastors have attended the annual Saddleback Church Growth Conference which he leads, Warren said.

During the conference, Warren urges pastors to provide their congregations with a printed outline that also includes all verses of Scripture covered in a sermon. He lists eight reasons for doing so:

-- People are more likely to remember the sermon. Since a printed outline makes a sermon easier to follow, people are more likely to take notes, which helps them remember the content later.

-- Writing involves them in the sermon and encourages active participation, not merely passive listening.

-- The outlines may be used as the basis for discussion in smaller Bible study groups at work, home or church.

-- The unchurched often don't bring Bibles to church, a reason for printing Scripture on the outline.

-- When the unchurched do bring their Bibles to church, they often have difficulty finding the text. This can be embarrassing to an unchurched person sitting next to a longtime Christian who finds the Scripture quickly.

-- A preacher can cover more material in less time, especially in sermons that refer to several passages of Scripture. Because the verses are printed on the outline, the congregation doesn't have to take time to find each passage.

-- The congregation can read the Scripture aloud together from the outline -- an otherwise difficult task because of the numerous translations people bring to church.

-- A printed outline allows the use of multiple translations during the sermon. On the same outline, the preacher may print verses from several translations, using whichever is best for a particular point in the sermon.

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