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July 16, 1992

92-115

Home Mission Board elects new  
vice president for ministry

By Sarah Zimmerman

ATLANTA (BP)--Larry Martin, director of missions for the Greater Boston Baptist Association, unanimously was elected Home Mission Board vice president for ministry by HMB trustees.

Martin assumes his responsibilities Sept. 1, succeeding Paul Adkins who is retiring after 23 years with the Home Mission Board. Adkins received a plaque and a standing ovation from trustees during their July 15 meeting.

During Martin's nine years in Boston, the association tripled its number of churches and developed an extensive use of volunteers in ministry. In his new role, Martin will oversee chaplaincy, church and community ministries, special ministries and volunteers.

Martin, a Kentucky native, previously was director of missions for the Greater Detroit Baptist Association and as a pastor in Kentucky.

Eight other people also were elected to fill vacant staff positions during the summer meeting.

Martin King, director of public relations and marketing for Community Hospital in Anderson, Ind., was elected director of public relations and development. King is also a journalism instructor at Ball State University in Muncie, Ind. King succeeds Jim Newton, who left the HMB in May for a post with World Vision International.

In related action, board members dissolved the office of planned giving which was created but never staffed. The board voted to add development to the public relations director's responsibilities.

The board also approved a change in the Mega Focus Cities program, moving the unit from associational missions to the executive office. Mega Focus Cities is a strategy to help associations in the nation's largest metropolitan areas reach the cities for Christ.

Hugh Townsend, who has been assistant director of the metropolitan missions department since 1990, was elected national manager of Mega Focus Cities.

Michael J. Cox, presently associate director of black church extension, was elected assistant director for the east regional office of Mega Focus Cities.

Robert L. Moore, state director of missions for the Baptist Convention of Pennsylvania/South Jersey, was elected national manager of town and country thrust and metro thrust.

John W. Hutchins Jr., director of evangelism for the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina, was elected director of the evangelism church growth department. The former pastor has also worked for state conventions in Texas and Virginia.

Keith Walker, associate director of the evangelism church growth department, was elected associate director of the personal evangelism department.

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George C. Pickle, chaplain at Brotman Medical Center in Culver City, Calif., was elected director of health care chaplaincy and pastoral counseling. The Texas native is a former pastor and campus minister.

Carlos A. Ferrer, accounting and finance administrator at the Hispanic Baptist Theological Seminary in San Antonio, was elected controller. The native of Cuba is a graduate of the University of Texas at Austin.

In other action, the board requested permission to use money from the Cooperative Program capital needs allocations for new Home Mission Board offices to be completed in 1995.

The Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee must approve reallocation of the money.

The board sold its offices near downtown Atlanta for \$14.5 million in 1990, planning to use receipts from the sale to buy land and construct a new facility. But the cost of the new building is now estimated at \$16 million.

The board also agreed to increase the maximum loan available from the church loans division from \$1 million to \$1.5 million.

The change is necessary because of increasing land and construction costs, said Bob Inlow, director of the church loans division. He noted most of the division's loans are to new churches for their first buildings, but costs up to \$1.2 million are not unusual in metropolitan areas.

President Larry L. Lewis reminded board members of the priority of evangelism. He noted this year marks his 40th year in the ministry and he said the most important thing he ever learned is the importance of soul winning.

Lewis also announced 1,043 people made professions of faith during the Crossover Indianapolis evangelistic thrust that proceeded the SBC annual meeting in Indianapolis in June.

In recognition of 1992 being the 500th anniversary of Columbus discovering America, Lewis noted the Southern Baptist Convention includes 2,600 Hispanic congregations with more than 300,000 members. He said the September issue of "MissionsUSA" magazine will be a special tribute to Hispanic ministries.

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Wailing Wall plans stir  
complaints from Jews

Baptist Press  
7/16/92

ATLANTA (BP)--Plans for Southern Baptist churches to dedicate Wailing Walls this fall have stirred complaints from the American Jewish Committee, which calls it a "manipulative use of Jewry's holiest site."

The Wailing Wall is part of the "See You at the Pole," a Home Mission Board-sponsored youth prayer emphasis planned for Sept. 16. "See You at the Pole" is an attempt to gather youth at their school's flag pole before class to pray for their peers.

This year, churches also are asked to establish a Wailing Wall. The wall would be a place where youth could put pictures of their friends in crises. The wall would serve as a reminder for youth to pray for their peers.

The American Jewish Committee's statement said "The Western Wall has profound meaning for Jews within the specific context of Jewish history and Jewish experience. To lift it out of that context and use it to promote witness to another faith is abusive and offensive."

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Home Mission Board officials said there was no attempt to reflect negatively upon the Jewish faith.

"We see the wall as place of prayer, a sacred place," said Bob Banks, HMB executive vice president. "Our purpose is to lead young people to pray for the crises in the lives of their fellow students. We also will want youth to share how their faith has helped them deal with crises in their lives."

Banks noted the youth Wailing Wall is an in-church event and is not meant to select people from another religious group for direct evangelism.

"The roots of our Christian faith come out of the Old Testament and are reflected in the New Testament," Banks said. "We have deep respect for Jewish history and faith. It is the foundation of our faith."

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HMB trustees authorize  
\$24 million bond recall

Baptist Press  
7/16/92

ATLANTA (BP)--The church loans division of the Home Mission Board plans to recall \$24 million in high interest bonds officials claim are costing the agency more than \$1 million a year.

HMB board members voted during their July 15 meeting to authorize the recall of the bonds, which have an average annual yield of 10.58 percent.

The bonds, which were made available between 1985 and 1990, were issued to raise money for church loans, said Bob Inlow, director of the HMB church loans division.

Lower interest rates in the 1990s, however, mean the high return bonds are no longer a fiscally responsible way to raise money for loans, he said.

"The bonds were designed to be called at a time like this," said Inlow. "I doubt that many Southern Baptists would want us to pay 10.58 percent interest for church loan capital at a time when the money could only be loaned at 8 3/4" percent.

Mike Arnott, director of financial services for the church loans division, agreed.

"It is just time to change in an environment of significantly lower inflation and lower interest rates," he said. "The conditions of the '80s that contributed to high interest rates are no longer with us."

While Arnott said the move makes economic sense, he said it may disappoint many of the 700 predominately Southern Baptist bond holders who might find it difficult to achieve similar rates of return in the 1990s.

"We regret any disappointment on the part of the bond holders," Arnott said. "It's just a different interest rate environment."

The prospectus for the bond issue, or the advisory of the terms for the bonds, clearly stated they were subject to early recall, Inlow said. The highest interest bonds were scheduled to begin retiring in 1998, Arnott said.

Inlow added the structure of the bonds required deposits to a growing fund from which to pay principal and interest on the bonds. That fund, which would be used to pay off retired bonds, now totals about \$10 million. This means that \$10 million must be held in a bank account instead of being used for church loans, Inlow said.

"Failure to call them is a clear cut case of poor stewardship," Inlow said, adding that officials have had to weigh their duty to bond holders against their duty to all Southern Baptists.

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With interest rates at the lowest they've been in many years, similar recalls have been common in the corporate bond market, an investment bank researcher said.

"It absolutely has been a record year for bond recall," said Joseph Bencivenga, managing director of research for Solomon Brothers in New York.

The Baptist Church Loan Corporation, an independent agency of the Texas Baptist General Convention, recalled about \$3 million worth of bonds three years ago, said President Bruce Bowles.

"It's almost universal now that bonds that are callable are being called, whether it's a for-profit corporation or a non-profit," Bowles said.

Church loan executives investigated establishing a hardship fund for some retired bond holders, but legal counselors advised that offering preferential treatment to some holders would go against the terms of the bond agreement, violating state and federal security regulations, Arnott said.

Funding for buying back the bonds will come from two sources, Arnott said:

-- \$14 million from bank loans or the sale of church loans to the Baptist foundations.

-- \$10 million from the account set up during the life of the bonds to pay principal and interest.

Church loans officials are negotiating possible low interest loans from commercial banks for future church loans money needs, Inlow said.

Last year, the church loans division approved 119 loans totalling \$19 million, reports show. Most of those were for congregations building their first structure and for smaller churches with building needs, Arnott said.

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Interfaith witness director  
to perform Freemasonry study

By David Winfrey

Baptist Press  
7/16/92

ATLANTA (BP)--The director of the Home Mission Board's interfaith witness department will take a three-month leave to produce a study comparing Masonic lodge teachings with Christian doctrine.

Gary Leazer, director of the department since 1987, will be personally responsible for researching and writing the study, said Darrell Robinson, HMB vice president for evangelism. "He can involve others as he sees fit."

Leazer, who has been with the interfaith witness department since 1979, has a doctorate in philosophy of religion from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

The Southern Baptist Convention voted for the study during its meeting in July after messenger James "Larry" Holly made a motion to form a committee to determine whether Freemasonry is compatible with Christian doctrine.

The report will compare arguments by Holly and other Mason critics with responses by Mason advocates, Leazer said. After each debated point, Leazer will offer an analysis of both sides, he said.

Leazer said he hopes to find whether modern Masons agree with the interpretations offered by Holly and other critics of Masonic writers from the 19th century.

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"Most of these (anti-Masonic) writers have used Albert Pike, Albert Mackey and others who basically are writers of 100 or so years ago," Leazer said.

"Modern (Masonic) writers have not been given the opportunity to respond, and I'm going to give that opportunity," he said. "It's going to be a balanced, objective, scholarly study."

Leazer added he's been inundated with about 100 offers of information or assistance from Masonic opponents and supporters since the study was requested in early June.

"I appreciate it, but I get snowed under having to answer all these letters and phone calls and I have a hard time getting my study done," he said. "That's why I want a three month study leave."

During the HMB's July board of directors meeting, a trustee noted Holly had sent several mailings concerning Freemasonry to all board members and suggested Holly address the board.

Chairman Ron Phillips, however, opposed the idea, adding, "We have had more publicity over this than starting churches and winning souls."

Phillips promised board members they would get an opportunity to review Leazer's report before it was presented to next year's Southern Baptist Convention in Houston.

"I hope when the SBC's over next year we will have finished -- at least 'til five years from now when it comes up again -- whatever we are going to do," he said.

Holly, a Beaumont, Texas, physician, has contended Freemasonry is a religion antagonistic to Christianity and of pagan and, ultimately, satanic origin.

Since the subject arose, Freemasonry and the board's study have been among the most debated topics on the letters to the editor pages of several state Baptist newspapers.

According to a poll by the Baptist Sunday School Board, 14 percent of Southern Baptist pastors questioned were or had been members of a Masonic lodge.

Masonic lodges in the United States have some 3.5 million members, according to the 1992 Encyclopedia Americana.

At least three denominations have adopted stances against membership in Masonic Lodges, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, the Assemblies of God and the Presbyterian Church in America.

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Seminary professor testifies  
in Kentucky 'right-to-die' case

By Mark Wingfield

Baptist Press  
7/16/92

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--A Baptist biomedical ethicist and seminary professor took the witness stand July 14 in Kentucky's first "right-to-die" court case.

Paul Simmons, professor of Christian ethics at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, was called as an expert witness in the case of Martha Sue DeGrella before the Jefferson County Circuit Court.

A Catholic priest who teaches at Bellarmine College in Louisville also testified in the case.

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Both Simmons and the priest, Fred Hendrickson, joined DeGrella's family in arguing that the feeding tube which has kept DeGrella alive for nine years should be disconnected. The family has said DeGrella would not have wanted her body maintained on life support systems.

DeGrella has remained comatose since she was beaten and burned in a 1983 assault. Doctors have said she has no hope of recovery.

DeGrella's mother filed a petition earlier this year requesting the withdrawal of life support. The comatose woman's ex-husband also has asked she be allowed to die.

Although this is thought to be the first "right-to-die" case to be heard in a Kentucky court, it is not the first case where legal action has been involved, Simmons said.

The crucial point in this case, he said, is the withdrawal of hydration and nutrition, which is specifically excluded as a treatment that can be rejected in Kentucky.

Simmons said this is the first time he has testified in such a case as an expert witness. "The questions posed were about how a bioethicist would deal with a case like this," he explained. "We did get into questions of theology because one of my points was that the reason people disagree is because of religious commitments."

For example, he said, many Christians don't want their bodies to be artificially maintained because of their belief in the afterlife, Simmons said.

"I pointed out that from this religious perspective, many people regard the maintenance of vital signs ... as a kind of biological idolatry. What's important is spiritual life, not simply biological functioning.

"From that point of view, I said theologically, many people would regard Sue DeGrella to be as good as dead. There's no capacity there for response to God or any possibility for recovery of health."

But in testifying from the standpoint of a bioethicist, Simmons said, he also spoke to issues other than religion. One such issue is determining how medical decisions should be made when a person can't speak for herself, he explained.

"I argued that in medical circles and biomedical circles, the stress on autonomy typically translates into family responsibility for decision-making when the patient is no longer competent," he said. "I emphasized the prerogatives of the family in making judgments about the appropriate care."

In DeGrella's case, an attorney has been appointed by the court to represent her interests instead of granting that role to her family.

A decision in the case should come later this summer, probably by the end of August, Simmons said.

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Trip to Russia changed layman  
more than the people he helped

By Mark Wingfield

Baptist Press  
7/16/92

MADISONVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Ray Tucker went to Moscow to help change the lives of hungry Russian people, but his life is the one that changed the most, he said.

"I'll never be the same," the Baptist layman explained just days after returning to Kentucky from participation in Project Brotherhood. Tucker repackaged bulk foods and helped distribute the family-sized portions as part of the relief project sponsored by the Baptist World Alliance and Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission.

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"This trip opened my eyes," Tucker explained. "I can't get it off my mind. How do you explain that? I don't drive down the road that I don't see something and think, 'How could I get that working in Russia?'"

As he returns to his routine as a salesman in Madisonville, Tucker continually is thinking of additional ways to help the Russian people he met. Already, he has arranged for a leg brace to be sent to a Russian woman he met who had nothing better than crude wood splints to ease her crippling condition.

Leg braces are only one example of the many medical treatments Americans have easy access to but most Russians have no hope of obtaining, he explained.

Tucker said he hopes to find a way to collect such items from Americans who no longer need them to send to Russians whose lives would be transformed by them.

Baptists have a long tradition of ministering to the disabled in Russia, he said. "The communists never acknowledged having crippled people. They always shunned them and kept them out of sight.

"Baptists existed in Russia during the time of communism by ministering to the handicapped and their families."

The 13-day visit to Moscow was filled with hard work, said the member of First Baptist Church in Madisonville, Ky. Baptist volunteers lived in a hotel with roaches and undrinkable water, but that was far superior to what many Russians live in every day, he explained.

"The days we went and made distribution to the families, it was heartbreaking. I cried for two weeks."

Despite the overwhelming needs the Russian families have, most gave something back to the volunteers in gratitude. "It never failed, before they left (the food distribution center) they would heat the water up, fix tea and feed us with homemade bread. In a couple of places, they had meals for us."

The Americans gave out of their abundance, Tucker noted, but the Russians gave back out of their poverty.

Although he was apprehensive about going at first, Tucker said he discovered the people he once considered America's arch-enemies are "very open, warm people."

And in faith, the Russian Christians put Americans to shame, he added: "I've never seen a stronger faith in my life. Those people are at a higher level than we'll ever be ourselves. I met a man who spent 34 years in Siberia because of his faith."

Tucker said he believes it is imperative for Americans to seize the window of opportunity now available in Russia. "If we don't keep positive things going into Russia while this door's open, what's going to happen? The first thing that will lead people to a rebellion is not getting enough to eat."

And while he contemplates what to do next, Tucker said, he hopes the Russian people he met will understand how much he and other Christians care about them.

"It's like gathering food to feed the hungry at Christmastime, and in January you wonder what those people are doing now," he related. "Today we're taking them something to eat; the next time they get hungry they can at least think there were some American people we didn't know who cared enough to come over here and bring us some food."

But Tucker sincerely hopes it doesn't stop at that. He's eager to find a way to go back and help some more. "I don't relax long that it doesn't come back to me that I need to do something," he said.

Mission volunteers help start  
Korean-Russian congregation

By Trennis Henderson

KHABAROVSK, Russia (BP)--State-owned Hospital No. 3, still adorned with a Soviet hammer-and-sickle emblem, sits on Lenin Square in downtown Khabarovsk. An imposing statue of Lenin, Russia's first Communist dictator, keeps constant vigil.

Even with the remarkable changes in the former Soviet Union during the past year, Hospital No. 3 appears an unlikely site for the birth of a new Baptist congregation.

Paul and Kathy Lee immigrated to the United States from Korea in 1979 and became American citizens in 1986. More recently, they both earned diplomas from Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary in Mill Valley, Calif.

Yet even with the Lees' sincere commitment to Christian ministry, Khabarovsk appears an unlikely site for a middle-aged Korean-American couple to help establish a new Baptist congregation.

But as God declared in Isaiah 55:8, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways." How true.

Lee was not even a Christian when he and his family moved to the U.S., but Mrs. Lee was confident it was God's will for them to immigrate.

"There was no fear of our future life in America because it was in God's hands," she recalled. "I had a strong feeling from God that I could serve God more in America than in Korea."

The couple settled in California with their three children and Lee started his own business. Mrs. Lee, who had been active in church, Sunday school, choir and Woman's Missionary Union while in Korea, continued her church involvement in the U.S.

With his wife's steady encouragement, Lee soon became a Christian, became actively involved in church and was ordained as a deacon.

"Year by year, he committed more and more and finally he dedicated his whole life to ministry," Mrs. Lee recalled.

"I gave up my business," Lee noted. "My family and everybody was surprised, asking why I was going to seminary. I answered, 'I don't know. God called me. That's why I have to do it.'"

"I made the better choice by deciding to serve God," he added. "My heart was filled with joy because I was doing what God wanted me to do."

Following seminary graduation, Lee was called as assistant pastor of Miracle Land Korean Baptist Church near Los Angeles and Mrs. Lee became the church's minister of education. But God had even more in store for them.

Lee's one regret is that he lived so much of his life without a personal Christian faith. "I'm committed 10 years, very short," he pointed out. "I'm short walking for God; long walking for my own life."

"We were praying every morning, 'God, use me. If you ask me, I will go anyplace.'"

When the Lees heard about the need for teachers among Korean-Russians in Khabarovsk, they sensed it was an answer to their prayers.

Their pastor suggested they contact Cooperative Services International, the Southern Baptist Foreign Mission Board's international aid organization. The Lees did so and soon received a two-year assignment to Khabarovsk as CSI volunteers.

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When the Lees arrived in Khabarovsk earlier this year, they discovered a largely unchurched Korean-Russian population.

"I saw Korean-Russians who didn't have any hope or vision," Lee said. "I want to put God's vision in their hearts. After they accept Jesus, they can change their lives and gain a new vision and find hope."

Seeking to help establish a Korean-Russian Baptist church, the Lees faced the immediate obstacle of securing an appropriate, accessible and affordable facility. They visited several community leaders but found either dead-ends or empty promises.

But that changed during a recent visit to Khabarovsk by a Missouri Baptist volunteer mission team. John Malinak, a member of Calvary Baptist Church in Columbia, Mo., spent much of his time in Khabarovsk helping the Lees make additional contacts with local officials.

During one such visit, Malinak said, the director of Hospital No. 3 agreed to make the hospital's 300-seat auditorium available for the new congregation six hours a week -- at no cost.

"The Lees are ecstatic," Malinak added. They also are quite busy.

They immediately began contacting as many Korean-Russians as possible to tell them about the new church start. When the Khabarovsk Korean Baptist Church met in the hospital for the congregation's first official service, there were 40 people in attendance.

Following God's call to Russia has been exciting for the Lees -- but not easy. "The lifestyle is not convenient," Mrs. Lee acknowledged. "We don't have enough items we need for daily life. But even though we are in this kind of situation, we are very thankful to God because we can meet our own people and talk to them about Jesus Christ in our own language.

"The main point is we are very excited to meet these people," she emphasized. "We feel like we can help make their hearts warm and sweet. That should be our duty -- to plant in their hearts God's love and strength and wisdom."

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Music in worship termed  
vitamin or tranquilizer

By Linda Lawson

Baptist Press  
7/16/92

GLORIETA, N.M. (BP)--"Music in a worship service is either a vitamin or a tranquilizer," Robert Wagoner told participants in sessions on blending the old and new with integrity during the July 11-17 Church Music Leadership Conference at Glorieta (N.M.) Baptist Conference Center.

"Our music needs to prepare the people to hear the word of God," said Wagoner, minister of music at First Baptist Church of Euless, Texas.

Describing himself as a minister first and a musician second, Wagoner said his philosophy has evolved to a greater focus on appealing to the unchurched and seeing music as an integral part of church growth.

"When people consider joining a Southern Baptist church, a key factor is the effectiveness of the music ministry," he said.

Wagoner has been mixing the use of hymns and praise choruses in worship services since the 1970s when he was minister of music at First Baptist Church of Springdale, Ark., a church in a town of about 20,000 that grew from 300 members to 2,000 in 10 years. The use of choruses is gaining widespread popularity in Southern Baptist churches.

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He attributed his willingness to take creative risks to the freedom given him by pastors he served with on a long-term basis -- Cliff Palmer in Springdale and James T. Draper Jr. in Eulless -- and to the fact he grew up in First Baptist Church of Tulsa, Okla., under a creative minister of music, the late James Woodward.

"I was playing in the church orchestra when I was in the seventh grade," Wagoner recalled. "The seeds he (Woodward) planted in my life allowed me the freedom" to try new things.

During his more than 20 years in music ministry, Wagoner cited several ways his philosophy has changed.

First, he provides a basic order of worship for the congregation which provides a guide without including every element that will take place.

"This allows the Holy Spirit to do something we didn't plan on," he said.

Second, he favors greater use of drama and media because "this is what is reaching the unsaved."

Third, he prefers mission trips for youth and adult choirs rather than choir tours. He recalled a youth mission trip to Europe where the young people were expected to do one-on-one witnessing in addition to presenting their music.

He also prefers the use of pageants to cantatas for special presentations, especially at Easter and Christmas.

Pageants, he said include as much drama as singing. Participants dress in biblical costumes and not only sing but also act out the message.

"I see a pageant as an outreach tool," Wagoner said. "It is basically for the unchurched who see the message unfold. It appeals to the heart of unsaved persons and helps them see their need for Jesus."

Other ways to blend new and old include use of orchestras and sound tracks which do not overpower choirs or soloists, balancing worship and outreach, providing ensembles for every age group with varied styles of music, requiring excellence and majoring on freedom over formality.

At the Eulless church, Wagoner oversees a music ministry that includes 1,200 participants and 27 music organizations. With three Sunday morning services, Wagoner conducts three adult choir rehearsals during the week. Choir members are free to choose their rehearsal and the service in which they sing.

"We try to make it as easy as possible for people to be involved in choir," he said.

For the future in Southern Baptist music ministries, Wagoner predicts even greater use of choruses, Scripture songs and drama, including "more dramatic vignettes to go with the theme of the day and the pastor's message."

Use of multi-media and lighting to enhance worship also will continue to increase, he said.

The trend toward seeker services for the unchurched, which include more upbeat, contemporary music and less "language of Zion," likely will continue to escalate, Wagoner said.

The future also will include a greater emphasis on excellence and the flow of worship to eliminate dead time, he said. "Dead spots and dead space equal dead services."

All of these elements require even greater planning, Wagoner said. The focus must be the unsaved and the unchurched.

He urged ministers of music to write out their personal philosophies and to evaluate themselves by asking five questions:

- Why am I using this music, these methods, these avenues of ministry?
- What am I doing this year to stretch my creativity, my talent, my ministry?
- Is what I am doing achieving the overall goals our pastor desires our church to accomplish?
- Am I reaching the goals I have personally set for the music ministry?
- How could I be more effective?

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CORRECTION: Please make the following correction to (BP) story titled "Keith Parker will head European missions for Cooperative Fellowship" dated 7/15/92:

Replace the second sentence in the seventh paragraph to read: "Trustees hope to meet with European Baptist leaders in September to strengthen relationships."

Thanks,  
Baptist Press

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