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March 1, 1993

93-37

- NASHVILLE -- SBC Cooperative Program gifts down in February by 8 percent.
- HOUSTON -- SBC president requests committee nominations.
- NEW YORK -- NYC minister thankful she wasn't at her desk when bomb exploded.
- KENTUCKY -- Southern Seminary student leaders protest announcement.
- KENTUCKY -- 'Friends of Southern Seminary' voice encouragement for future.
- LOUISIANA -- Bosnian student weighs fate of her family, her future.
- HOUSTON -- Houston pastor teaching 'Jesus is Jewish Messiah;' photos.
- NEW ORLEANS -- Businessman tells students to be responsible ministers.
- MISSOURI -- Small church has big ideas for media library training.

SBC Cooperative Program gifts down in February by 8 percent

Baptist Press
3/1/93

NASHVILLE (BP)--Southern Baptist Convention Cooperative Program receipts for February were down 8.28 percent compared to the same month a year ago, according to Morris H. Chapman, president and chief executive officer of the SBC Executive Committee.

February gifts totaled \$10,996,497 compared to \$11,988,817 in February 1992, or a difference of \$992,320. The 1992-93 SBC monthly basic operating budget requirement is \$11,683,366. The current year's SBC Cooperative Program Allocation Budget is \$140,200,395.

The year-to-date totals for the Cooperative Program, however, remained ahead of the previous year: \$58,760,504 compared to \$57,954,409, for a \$806,095 difference, a 1.39 percent increase. The SBC fiscal year is Oct. 1 through Sept. 30.

Designated gifts for February also were down: \$35,369,335 compared to \$40,831,800, or a difference of \$5,462,464 or 13.38 percent. Total designated gifts for the year dropped 1.94 percent below the comparative period of a year ago: \$64,929,599 to \$66,213,413.

The Cooperative Program is Southern Baptists' method of supporting missions and ministry efforts of state and regional conventions and the Southern Baptist Convention. Designated contributions include the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for Foreign Missions, the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for Home Missions, world hunger and other special gifts.

State and regional conventions retain a percentage of Cooperative Program contributions they receive from the churches to support work in their areas and send the remaining funds to the Executive Committee for national and international ministries. The percentage of distribution is at the discretion of each state or regional convention.

SBC president requests
committee nominations

HOUSTON (BP)--Southern Baptist Convention President Edwin H. Young has asked Southern Baptists to suggest names for the four committees he will appoint.

The SBC bylaws direct the president to appoint the committee on committees, resolutions committee, tellers committee and credentials committee. Each of these committees involves both laypersons and people in church-related positions.

"The task of putting these committees together is a tremendous one," Young said. "I need the assistance of Southern Baptists throughout the convention. I ask for their prayerfully considered suggestions as I undertake this work."

The forms ask about prior SBC committee service, church Cooperative Program participation and church baptism figures.

Forms are available at the SBC Executive Committee, 901 Commerce St., Nashville TN 37203 (615-244-2355).

When completed, they should be mailed to Dr. H. Edwin Young, Second Baptist Church, 6400 Woodway, Houston TX 77057. The deadline is March 21.

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NYC minister thankful she wasn't
at her desk when bomb exploded By Karen L. Santiago

Baptist Press
3/1/93

NEW YORK (BP)--Southern Baptist minister Ruth Fowler credits God's intervention in surviving the Feb. 26 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in lower Manhattan.

Fowler works as a secretary on the 58th floor of Tower One at the World Trade Center, which officials now say was dynamited.

At least five people were killed and more than 1,000 injured in what is being labeled the nation's worst terrorist attack ever.

Survivors spoke of billowing black smoke that spread within five minutes of the noontime blast to the top floors of the twin buildings that are a focal point of the Manhattan skyline.

Almost all the buildings' 100,000 occupants -- employees and visitors -- walked down as many as 107 flights of unlit stairways to the streets below.

"God was with me," said Fowler, bivocational pastor at Richboro Baptist Church, one of three Southern Baptist congregations in the borough of Staten Island. "He had all the details worked out."

Fowler, a native of Cisco, Texas, who has ministered in the New York City area for 13 years, regularly eats lunch at her desk, a typical habit of many New Yorkers who battle time zones as much as paper in their workaday world. But Friday, she and co-workers celebrated a birthday lunch on the mezzanine level of the World Trade Center.

"The blast originated four levels below where we were sitting," Fowler said. "We heard a very loud explosion. I said it's a bomb and everyone else said I was crazy."

"We just knew something was terribly wrong," Fowler continued. "We felt the building shake and saw the glass ceiling begin to shatter. We ran outside, saw the thick black smoke and knew it must be a bomb."

Fowler said she considers herself extremely fortunate to have been on the mezzanine level rather than at her desk.

"I never would have made it if I would have had to walk down 58 flights," Fowler said. "God knew what he was doing when he sent me to the mezzanine for lunch."

Fowler has knee and other physical problems that curtail her movements.

As they reached the street, the group noticed the metal garage doors on the underground parking lot had been buckled outward as if they were paper, Fowler said. Almost immediately, injured people began to be carried out with glass sticking out of them.

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"It was like a war zone," Fowler said. "We ran across the street to the World Financial Center, thinking the further we were from the towers, the safer we would be. We watched from there as the emergency equipment began to arrive and it became obvious to us that we would only be in the way by staying."

Once on the street, it was not her knees but the weather that gave her concern. Fowler's only protection from the blowing snow and a wintery wind was a light sweater.

Fowler opted to take a cab home rather than to walk several blocks to the Staten Island Ferry.

"The first two cabs that stopped said they wouldn't take me," Fowler said. "They said they didn't want the long ride back to Manhattan without a passenger. I told the third driver I would make it worth his while if he would just please give me a ride."

The driver charged her \$50 for the 90-minute ride. Fowler also gave him a \$20 tip.

"It was either pay for a cab or pay for a doctor," she said.

Fowler expected to be sent by her employers to an alternate work location by midweek. On Monday, she called in a tuner for the church's piano and handled other church matters.

"I just never have enough time to attend to the details of the church work so I grabbed this unexpected day off as a gift," Fowler said. "I'm grateful to be alive and uninjured. I thank God for his watchcare over me."

Richboro Baptist Church has 18 members and ministers to more than 100 other people through its children's and women's ministries and its ministry at a nearby Navy base.

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Southern Seminary student
leaders protest announcement

Baptist Press
3/1/93

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Five student leaders at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary have written the chairman of the school's trustees protesting the public announcement in Nashville of R. Albert Mohler Jr. as the nominee for the school's next president.

The students said they first learned of the nominee from a Louisville, Ky., Courier-Journal article the day after the Feb. 22 news conference.

The trustees' chairman, in an interview with Baptist Press, said a process designed to inform the seminary community failed.

The students' letter said the news conference in Nashville announcing Mohler's nomination heightened "the fears and instability on our campus."

Wayne Allen, a suburban Memphis, Tenn., pastor and chairman of the seminary's board of trustees, said Feb. 26 he was responding to the students' letter but would not comment specifically on that response.

However, he told Baptist Press the seminary's presidential search committee guidelines, established in 1981, allow for a search liaison committee composed of people from the seminary's executive staff, administrative staff and faculty. The guidelines call for the search committee to work through the liaison committee in sharing information with the seminary community.

Allen said he contacted the chairman of the liaison committee, who was not identified, the morning of Feb. 24, the day of the news conference, and informed him of Mohler's nomination and asked him to inform the seminary community at the same time as the new conference.

"There was supposed to be a simultaneous release of the information on the seminary campus to faculty and the seminary community at the time of the news conference," Allen said. "It didn't happen!"

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The Feb. 24 letter, made available to Baptist Press by the students, was signed by Ruth Davison, president of the Student Government Association; Tommy Fitzgerald, president of the Public School Executive Committee; David Olive, president of the M.Div. Council; Hope Straughn, chairperson of the Organization of Student Social Workers; and Michelle Tooley, president of the Graduate Club.

"On several occasions, the Presidential Search Committee has emphasized the importance of following the process," the student leaders wrote Allen. "The actions on Feb. 22 (in Nashville) compromised the presidential search process."

The student leaders said they had voiced their concerns that the committee follow the process when they met with the committee Dec. 4. They said they were told the committee would announce the nominee at the April trustee meeting on the campus of the seminary.

"At this meeting we voiced concerns about the fears and instability on our campus. Members of the committee urged us to calm fears and anxieties by trusting the process. We were committed to follow your advice," the students wrote.

"We are at a loss to understand your actions (in Nashville). Why was the announcement made at a hurriedly called news conference in Nashville rather than at the April meeting of the trustees? Why was the announcement made at the SBC Executive Committee instead of in the presence of the community it most concerns?"

"The Presidential Search Committee gave no official announcement to the seminary community which is most directly affected by this critical decision," the students said.

The students also requested Allen to make the April trustee meeting, where Mohler will be presented to the trustees, an "open" meeting.

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'Friends of Southern Seminary'
voice encouragement for future

By Pat Cole

Baptist Press
3/1/93

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP)--Representatives of various constituencies of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary voiced their support for the school at a Feb. 25 rally on the Louisville, Ky., campus.

About 150 people braved the threat of Louisville's most severe winter storm in years to attend the event sponsored by a loose-knit group called "Friends of Southern Seminary." The group is composed of faculty, students, alumni and community supporters of the seminary.

"We want to encourage a positive future for the seminary," said Louisville pastor William P. Tuck, who presided at the rally. Tuck, noting the word, educate, comes from a Latin word which means "to make a plant grow," said his hope for the seminary's future is "the plant here will blossom and continue to grow and not wilt."

The rally came just three days after Southern's presidential search committee announced it will recommend to trustees R. Albert Mohler Jr. become the seminary's ninth president. He would succeed Roy L. Honeycutt who will retire Dec. 31. However, the rally was scheduled before the search committee's public announcement.

"It is in all of our best interests (the next president) succeed and I will do everything in my power to make that a reality," Faculty Association President Gerald Keown told the rally, adding nobody at the seminary or in the Southern Baptist Convention would be helped by the school's failure. All, he said, will benefit from the "continued integrity and continued successful mission" of the school.

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Laurel Ward, a Southern student from Huntsville, Ala., noted students are concerned about the future of academic freedom and academic integrity at the school. Students, not just professors and administrators, have a responsibility to encourage academic freedom and responsibility, she said, criticizing students who secretly register complaints about professors. "We have a responsibility to be biblical in the way we deal with each other and go to our brother and sister and confront them with any sort of problem," Ward admonished.

Another Southern student, Aubrey Williams, a Louisville attorney who is a past president of the local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, recounted some of the school's accomplishments in civil rights.

Southern graduated its first black student at a time when Kentucky law prohibited the joint education of blacks and whites and "years before" the University of Kentucky integrated its graduate program, Williams said. The teaching of race relations at the seminary dates back to 1918, he said, adding Southern professors worked for integration in Louisville.

The school's civil rights record still has shortcomings, said Williams, noting the trustee board and administration are exclusively white and the faculty and student body are overwhelmingly white. Nevertheless, he said, the African-American community has a duty to support the school.

On a personal note, Williams said Southern has "enhanced my intellect, broadened my horizons and furthered a sense of compassion and community in me, the likes of which I never expected."

Two non-Baptists from Louisville spoke in support of Southern, Eugene March, dean-elect of the Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, and Georgine Buckwalter, an Episcopal minister who represented Bishop David Reed of the Diocese of Kentucky. March said Southern and Louisville Presbyterian have had a "long and rich relationship" for more than a century. The two seminaries, located only about a mile from each other, share libraries and allow cross registration of students.

The relationship has depended on respect for diversity and honest, open inquiry, March said. "Our hope and our prayer is that we will walk together in many years to come. It is our intention, so far as it is ours to foster, that this climate will continue."

Buckwalter said the diocese has "looked up to Southern Seminary for her academic excellence, her theological integrity and her commitment to ecumenical endeavor." Professors and students have preached, taught and counseled in Episcopal parishes, said Buckwalter, a Southern graduate. Southern has also encouraged Episcopalians as the church has entered its "Decade of Evangelism," she said.

Southern graduate Reba Cobb, director of the Center for Women and Families in Louisville, said she hoped the seminary will continue to affirm women preparing for ministerial careers. "I have a vision and a dream for Southern Seminary that when Al Mohler retires in 30 years he will have so led this institution that we will be able then to name a woman to succeed him," said Cobb, who has been a leader in the Southern Baptist Women in Ministry organization.

Marshall Sanders, a member of the Southern Seminary Foundation Board, warned against the creation of what he called a "trust deficit." "It is time for each of us to show compassion for one another and (be) less critical toward one another ...," he said. "We must realize Baptists come in all flavors and we must be tolerant of one another."

Louisville pastor Phil Christopher, a member of Southern's national alumni board, said thousands of alumni stand in support of the faculty and students. "There are alumni around the world who have stood in admiration of faculty and students of how you have persevered and how you have run the race," he said.

"We applaud you this morning and will continue to applaud you."

The seminary has been extremely helpful in serving human needs in the Louisville community, said Dale Tucker, director of human services for the City of Louisville. "We have again and again looked to your faculty members as people who can lead us to truth and lead us to greater service," said Tucker, a Southern Baptist alumnus and former Southern Baptist foreign missionary. "We have continued to rely on your students to help us provide that cup of cold water, that clothing for the naked and that home for the homeless."

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Bosnian student weighs fate
of her family, her future

By C. Lacy Thompson

Baptist Press
3/1/93

ALEXANDRIA, La. (BP)--As soon as she said she was from Bosnia-Herzegovina she had the attention of everyone in the room.

For weeks now, the brutal fighting in the former Yugoslavia region has been headline news. But it was news from far away.

But this was not far away for this girl from the besieged city of Sarajevo who had traveled to the United States as an exchange student and been cut off from her country by civil war, this young music student from Louisiana College in Pineville who had last talked to her parents in July, who had received word from them only three times since, who worried her older brother might be drafted into the fighting, who found the whole situation incomprehensible.

She spoke to the Alexandria luncheon crowd in a quiet voice. She answered questions about the situation "back home." At times, her voice grew soft and seemed to quiver. Someone asked if she would like to sing a song from her native country. "No," she said quickly and then again to reemphasize the point. "No."

And she sat down.

Later, Tinka Milinovich sits on a blue leather couch in the Louisiana College student center trying to make sense of what is happening among her native people.

Two phrases are repeated again and again: "It makes no sense" and "I don't know," both expressing bewilderment at the sudden crisis in this 19-year-old's homeland.

Milinovich came to Louisiana as an exchange student for her final year of high school. At the end of the year, she planned to return home for the summer, then come back to Louisiana College to study music.

But the fighting had started in her republic and Milinovich's parents told her to stay in the United States. They sent her money for the first year of college.

It has been many months since Milinovich has seen her homeland. But she remembers it and she remembers the drift toward war that began with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe. "I remember thinking, 'Hey, this is great Germany is one.' But here we were arguing."

In time, the arguing between Yugoslavia republics led to fragmentation and fighting. "But I was thinking, it'll never come to my republic. Nobody is lunatic enough to start fighting here."

Milinovich pauses, looks out the window to her left then back. "But there they are. And it happened so fast."

In the Yugoslavia Milinovich remembers, differences in people made no difference at least among her friends. "Nobody cared for a long time what you were. And then suddenly, in maybe '91, even friends started with, 'Yeah, I'm this and I'm this.' And we would always tell them to shut up, that it didn't matter."

Milinovich says it is hard for her to understand exactly what is fueling the war. "I don't think it's ethnic as much as just some kind of hatred. Maybe there is some ethnic but from the 13th century or something. I don't know.

"My philosophy is we are so equal (that) it doesn't matter. We all have same blood. More or less, we are all connected in some way. What difference is it what name (or ethnic background) you have?"

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Milinovich still looks at the fighting from the perspective of a Christian who grew up in a city and a republic evenly divided among Christians, Muslims and Greek Orthodox adherents. For her, Sarajevo always was a mixing ground.

Now, it is a killing ground of sorts and Milinovich says she has a hard time coming to terms with what that means. "It's kind of weird. I'm thinking how it's going to be when I come back home. It's going to feel so awkward going there and seeing all the ruined places. It's kind of scary because when I left everything was fine. Now"

She leaves the sentence unfinished. It needs no completion. Now the news is full of the fighting and dying and suffering. Now any sense of normal life has ceased for an entire republic. Now the mail is empty and the telephone is silent as Milinovich awaits word from her family. Occasionally, when someone is leaving the country, family members can get a letter to Milinovich. She has received two letters since July; the last was written in October and received last month.

Overseas relatives attempt to keep in contact with her family by amateur radio. In November, Milinovich received word her family was all right. But they also said something about men being drafted for the fighting, which causes Milinovich to fear for her 22-year-old brother.

"You don't know if he's ... ," a reporter begins to ask.

However, Milinovich cuts off the question, "He better not be."

But so much has changed and Milinovich's hope cannot be sure.

She tells of hearing from a girlfriend who fled with her family to another republic. The friend said people there look down on the family as "refugees," and Milinovich pronounces the word in a way that communicates the contempt being placed on that status. "I don't understand that. It's the same people."

She shakes her head. "But suddenly everything is different. I can't believe it."

The friend also told of two boys Milinovich knew in Sarajevo, one a Muslim, one a Christian Serb. They were "definitely best friends," she recalls. Now, they are fighting on opposite sides. "It doesn't make sense."

For Milinovich, stopping the fighting seems so logical. "Sometimes I think we are great people but as much as we are great we are" Words fail her. She swipes at her forehead in a gesture indicating a people who have lost their minds.

"I mean, who would want to live in war and not have electricity or water? I don't see reason why they still fight. And definitely I think they could clear one region and say, 'Hey, all you Serbs go here and all you Muslims go here and whatever.'"

It seems so right, Milinovich says. But she has little hope of it happening soon.

Sometimes, she dreams of being in Sarajevo, being home, being in war. Lately, she has dreamed about her parents a couple of times. "And I'm thinking something's happened to them because I never had (dreamed) before. But I don't think so," she adds quickly.

Awake, Milinovich wonders what will happen when the fighting is done. Her future is uncertain enough; she has money only for this year of school and only one set of stateside relatives in New York.

She said she is not sure what will happen at the end of this semester. But what she wonders most about is not that but her family and how they are, her friends in Sarajevo who never finished high school and how they will make up for the lost time, what has been destroyed and how it can be rebuilt.

She has mixed feelings about returning home. "I usually say I'm joking a little bit but I'm serious too a little -- I don't want to go there unless they rebuild everything the same because I don't want to go and spend my life building what they ruined."

Whether Milinovich returns home or not, she is sure she wants to go where there is peace, "where I can have regular life and regular basis for life."

And she is sure of the words she would offer to those in her country.

"Stop fighting. Find peace. It doesn't matter who you are," she says.

"Just get a life.

"I mean, I don't know how they can live through that. Nobody over there has normal life anymore. And it's scary ~~drinking~~ friends are still there. We just got a life. We needed something. And who knows when it's going to end?"

Milnovich pauses, but before another question can be asked, she begins:

"I don't know how it's going to be, but I'm thinking of Second World War. It only lasted like four years but I think, God, how could they survive four years being in war?"

"Now, I'm thinking if this lasts just four years, that's great. It would be great to last not more than four years."

She pauses, looks away and back to voice again her disbelief and her fear and it is a fear that reaches beyond herself.

"I don't know. I can't believe this is happening in my home. And I'm scared. Maybe if U.S. troops come, it may expand (and other neighboring) countries will get involved, then someone else will and someone else will and whoosh, there goes the whole world."

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EDITORS' NOTE: This is the first of four stories from Houston that will move on Baptist Press before the Southern Baptist Convention's annual meeting there, June 15-17.

Houston pastor teaching
'Jesus is Jewish Messiah'

By Kelly Capers

Baptist Press
3/1/93

HOUSTON (BP)--Believing in Jesus is a very Jewish thing to do, says Gus Elowitz, pastor of the Congregation of Messiah Jesus.

"Conflict between Jewish tradition and Christian faith leaves as soon as we realize that Jesus is the Jewish Messiah," he says.

As a believer in Jesus, Elowitz understands conflicts that arise between Jewish and Christian beliefs. Going door to door in Jewish neighborhoods, Elowitz reaches out to people with a common heritage, sharing the truth he has found: "Jesus is the fulfiller."

Raised in a conservative Jewish family, Elowitz felt a void in his life at an early age. At 7, Elowitz lost a father and a president in one week.

"My father died five days before JFK was assassinated. After that week I had a void because I didn't have a father," Elowitz says.

Buying into "the whole Hippie thing" as a young adult, Elowitz hitchhiked across the country looking for a sense of belonging. In 1976 as a freshman in college, his travels took him to Oregon where the caretakers of a KOA campground saw him struggling with a tent. They invited him to stay with them.

"They told me how special I was because of my heritage, but that I needed Jesus," Elowitz recounts.

For two years Elowitz contemplated the idea of Christianity, receiving calls from the couple in Oregon every few weeks. Finally in 1978, he returned to Oregon and accepted Christ.

"My life was ready for it," he says. "I needed a Savior. I needed peace. Those people really loved me into the kingdom."

A native of New York, Elowitz's new faith was not embraced by his family. Not completely rejected, Elowitz was told by his mother that while Christianity may be good for him, it was not for her. Ironically, his conversion inspired his mother to become fully involved in the synagogue.

"What Christians proclaim goes totally against Jewish tradition," Elowitz says. "Those we witness to who are not prepared by the Holy Spirit are often hostile, or sometimes simply reject."

At the request of his family, a rabbi talked to him for four hours encouraging him to reject Christianity. However, Elowitz says, "God gave me peace."

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Now as a Southern Baptist pastor, Elowitz leads a congregation of about 35 Messianic Jews. A Friday night group of 25 has been meeting for eight years and a Sunday morning group of 10 for two years.

His approach to sharing the Messiah: "Use every symbol you can to teach Christ in the most Jewish way possible."

One ritual Elowitz uses to teach that Christ is the fulfillment of Jewish faith is the Passover.

Elowitz says 125 people attended the congregation's Passover banquet last year. Teaching that the service is a picture of the broken Christ, he shows how Christ fulfills prophecy.

"The important themes help us teach of a risen Christ," Elowitz says.

In spite of his use of Jewish rituals to share Christ, Elowitz does not hide his intentions behind it. For that reason, his congregation chose the name Messiah Jesus. "We don't need a name completely Hebrew.

"People appreciate honesty," Elowitz says. "I am very up front about my beliefs."

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(BP) photos mailed to state Baptist newspapers by Atlanta bureau of Baptist Press.

Businessman tells students
to be responsible ministers

Baptist Press
3/1/93

By Brian K. Smith & Debbie Moore

NEW ORLEANS (BP)--"Pay attention to the small things in ministry," said John Wallace, a Tennessee businessman.

Wallace, president of Wallace Hardware Company in Morristown, Tenn., was the guest speaker for New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary's recent James H. Tharp Lecture Series, presented annually by an outstanding Baptist layman.

Wallace encouraged NOBTS students to be responsible, especially by giving the necessary attention to some of the seemingly minor details in ministry.

"It's not always the big things that keep us from doing what we ought to do," Wallace said. "Many times it's the small things."

Relating an experience he had with his car air conditioning, he detailed the discomfort he endured on a long trip when the cooling system failed. He now carries the repair bill with him as a reminder of how small things can make a major difference: the tiny blown fuse cost him only pocket change to repair.

Referring to the minister's Bible, he encouraged students to be consistent in their use of translations. While admitting no personal preference, he noted the frustration he experiences when a pastor preaches every service with a different translation.

Another small but important detail is to "keep your Bible neat," Wallace said. "Some of you will take better care of your golf sticks than your Bible."

Wallace also told students "to know the Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4-9) ... (and) read 1 Timothy 3:1-7 regularly" as they continue to be ministers.

Noting these passages as the two key guides for any minister, Wallace called on ministerial students to be responsible in their personal life as well.

First, referring to 1 Timothy 3:5, Wallace told students to value their marriage. Wallace's wife plays a major role in his life, he said. He believes a minister's wife and family should be just as important as the minister's work.

Another detail needing attention in a minister's personal life is "Finances!" Wallace said. "This one really bothers me. Don't be in debt!" Wallace said he is often discouraged to learn of a minister who has not been responsible with what God has given him.

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Concerning a minister's personality, Wallace frowns on servants of God who fail to express gratitude. "An unappreciative preacher is a contradiction in terms," he said. At Christmastime each year, Wallace sends turkeys to the staff members of the church he attends; he is always pleased when a staff member responds with a note of thanks.

Wallace also pointed out the necessity of a pastor being responsible to the Bible and applying it to his life. "If you're really connected to Jesus," Wallace said, "you've got to believe in the Bible and believe it the way it says."

Most importantly, "a preacher has got to be a warm, caring person if he is going to be a good minister," Wallace said, "for 'if a man says he loves God but hates his brother, he's a liar,'" he quoted from the Scriptures.

"Now, if we don't love and care for our brother, something is wrong!" Wallace said. "Some of them are a little harder to get along with than others, but God tells us to love our brother -- to care."

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Small church has big ideas
for media library training

By Charles Willis

Baptist Press
3/1/93

JOPLIN, Mo. (BP)--Being small doesn't have to limit ideas, dreams or achievements. Anyone who would question that concept should visit the church media library at Wildwood Southern Baptist Church in Joplin, Mo.

The library's more than 4,000 books, 200-plus recordings and cassette tapes, almost 100 videotapes, a new television set with built-in VCR and an enviably prominent location would lead some to believe Wildwood Church isn't a small church at all. The facts are that average attendance in Sunday school is 55 people and that Wildwood's leaders and members believe in training.

"You have to know more than you are trying to teach," said pastor Charles Edwards. "You have to have background. You can't teach what you don't know."

Eva Lycan, media librarian, agrees that when any teacher or leader asks for a specific tool, "we feel it's our obligation to provide that."

On a modest budget of 2 percent of offerings given through the Sunday school, Lycan and assistant librarian Ruth Millard have provided resources that could well qualify them as models for the 1993 national church media library emphasis, "Focus on Training."

"We endeavor not to spend unwisely," Lycan emphasized. "We watch for bargains."

Lycan and Millard search the mediagraphies in each issue of "Church Media Library Magazine" to be sure the library has some of the resources recommended to support upcoming church program needs.

Training to use resources is an important part of the media library's mission at Wildwood. Lycan recently scheduled a training session for teachers and leaders on "How to Use Bible Study Helps." In addition to enlisting the pastor's wife, Shirley Edwards, to demonstrate the use of various resources, Lycan and Millard produced a display of about 70 different Bible study helps, including pictures, maps, commentaries, dictionaries and other books.

Charles Edwards agreed for the library to have the time usually set aside for Sunday evening worship. So popular is the library that 32 people -- almost 60 percent of those who are regularly in Sunday school -- attended the session. The next Sunday, Lycan said, maps and other resources that had not always been used were checked out to Sunday school departments.

In addition to teacher and leader training, Lycan said she believes the library exists to train individuals, beginning with "training boys and girls to come to the library to learn to use the card catalog and to become readers."

"Books can go places we cannot go," Lycan declared. "It's a big undertaking when you challenge minds. We try to do that through books."

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Lycan and Millard regularly promote the use of library resources, often announcing reading competitions for various groups. One year they ordered "every Broadman Press mission book we could from the Sunday School Board" to encourage every church member to read a book on missions.

Church members respond with enthusiasm. Last year, the women outnumbered the men in reading competition by three to one. The year before, the men took the lead by a slightly larger margin.

Lycan said everything the library staff does is "to encourage them to use/do/read something that will improve their knowledge of the Bible. That's why we're here."

Neither Lycan nor Millard is from the "do-as-I-say-not-as-I-do" school of thought. Both have earned Media Skills and Media Services Diplomas through the Sunday School Board's Church Study Course.

Lycan is working on an associational diploma, is active in the Associational Church Media Library Organization, is media library director for the Spring River Baptist Association and has taught several classes for the association and the Missouri Baptist Convention. Millard, who also has taught media library promotion, said she takes advantage of every associational class offered.

Media library ministry "grows on you, especially when you see what it does in the lives of children and adults," Lycan said. "The more you work, the more you learn."

And ever conscious of the value of knowledge, Lycan said Wildwood "could not afford the education we can get by training with others in our association." And for herself, Lycan declares, "There is no way to know the value of the education Southern Baptists have given me."

Churches across the Southern Baptist Convention will observe Church Media Library Emphasis Week in April. Information about beginning or enlarging a church media library ministry may be obtained by contacting a local association office, state Baptist convention office or the church media library program at the Baptist Sunday School Board in Nashville, Tenn.

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